Bishop thanks priests, blesses oils at Chrism Mass

By Shelley Metcalf | Editor

Bishop Joe Vásquez celebrated the annual Chrism Mass March 27 at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Austin.

During the Mass, the bishop blessed the three oils used to administer the sacraments.

“The oils we bless today will bring abundant joy and strength to many people in this diocese,” Bishop Vásquez said.

The oil of catechumens will be used for those preparing for baptism.

“It will give joy to parents and to those preparing to enter the church,” the bishop said.

The oil of the sick will be used to anoint the sick and those who are suffering and give strength and healing to those who are ill, he said.

The oil of chrism will be used to anoint the hands of priests and to consecrate altars and churches when they are dedicated, Bishop Vásquez said.

He shared a story of when he baptized Violeta Aurora, the grandchild of friends he has known since he was a seminarian.

“Many times as I celebrate the sacrament of baptism, the child cries” for a variety of reasons, he said. “At this baptism, though, Violeta Aurora — surrounded by her family and friends — was calm and peaceful. When I took the chrism and anointed Violeta’s head, she looked up and smiled. We were all amazed by her reaction. It was indeed a blessed moment,” Bishop Vásquez said.

The moment reminds us the Spirit of the Lord is upon those who have been baptized and anointed with the oil of gladness, the oil of chrism, and that we are all missionary disciples.

“This Chrism Mass reminds us that we are sent into the world, filled with the spirit of God,” he said.

During the Mass, the priests serving throughout the diocese also renewed their priestly promises. At least 150 priests attended the Mass.

“Today, we also give thanks to God for the service and witness of our priests,” he said. “Today they renew their commitment to that call and vocation they received from Christ.”

This year already, the bishop lamented, the diocese has suffered the loss of four priests: Father Leonard Leddy, Msgr. Frank Miller, Father Robert Becker and Father Wade Russell. Together these men gave nearly 200 years of priestly ministry to the church.

“They loved being priests,” he said.

Three of them lived full lives and enjoyed many years of ministry. However, Father Russell, whom Bishop Vásquez ordained in 2010, died from brain cancer at the “young age of 54.”

After he was diagnosed with cancer, Father Russell asked the bishop to allow him to remain as long as possible in the parish.

“He said to me, ‘I don’t know how long I have, I just want to be close to my people, the people I love, the people I serve,’” Bishop Vásquez said.

He knew what it meant to be anointed and sent to serve, the bishop said.

He encouraged the many priests present to use the oils blessed during the Mass with a “genuine sense” of prayer.

“If we do not pray for the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, we may fail to recognize the suffering of those who are without a shepherd,” he said.

“You will use these oils to bind wounds, to restore health and strengthen and bring meaning into lives through consecration to God,” the bishop said.

“When you are called in the middle of the night to anoint the dying, when you console the troubled and broken-hearted, when you absolve the sinner who has been absent from the church for many years, when you spend time in quiet prayer with our Lord, most especially when you celebrate joyfully the Eucharist, the mystery of salvation … Every time you do these things, you are united with Christ.

“Let us renew our priestly ministry allowing the Holy Spirit to draw us ever closer to his people,” he said.

Bishop Vásquez also asked the faithful to pray for the priests of the diocese, particularly those who are deceased and those who are sick.

“We have excellent priests. Men who work hard, who pray fervently and give of themselves generously, please pray for them daily,” he said.
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.

HOW TO SUBMIT INFORMATION
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Bishops: Pray for victims of Austin bomber

By Shelley Metcalf | Editor

In a statement issued on March 20, Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, of San Antonio and Bishop Joe Vásquez of Austin encouraged everyone to pray for the victims of the Austin bomber.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and the families and friends of all those affected by the package explosions which have taken place this month in Austin and San Antonio, the latest of which occurred early this morning. These appalling attacks have killed and injured innocent people, young adults and children who were in their homes, bicycling on the street and working at their jobs.

The randomness of these attacks and their increasing frequency are perhaps meant by their perpetrator to spread fear and cause division in our communities. However, as we have seen time and time again, tragedies such as these strengthen our bonds and bring our communities together in prayer and recognition of the sanctity and preciousness of life.

We know that law enforcement agencies are diligently striving to solve these cases and bring those responsible to justice. We place our trust in the Lord, as it states in Joshua, ’Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

We ask all people in our dioceses to remain vigilant, and to pray and work for peace.’

Over the course of a few weeks, exploding packages sent by Mark Conditt killed two people and injured several others. The manhunt for Conditt ended on March 21 when he detonated a bomb in a vehicle, taking his own life. Later police found a video of Conditt confessing to the bombings.

OBITUARY
Deacon Allen Desorcie died March 21 at the age of 80. He was born in Vermont, and served in the U.S. Marine Corps before marrying his wife, Patricia, in 1962. The couple moved to Austin in 1975.

Deacon Desorcie was ordained a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Austin in 1988. He worked as the business administrator at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Austin from 1998 to 2007. He was a Third Degree member of the Knights of Columbus Council in Andice. Bishop Daniel Garcia said Deacon Desorcie was active in church ministry for most of his life.

“He loved the church! He felt blessed to have the privilege to serve as a deacon, and he was dedicated to serving others. Deacon Allen loved the liturgy of the church and always wanted to do the best,” Bishop Garcia said.

Deacon Desorcie is survived by his wife of 55 years, and their four children, five grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated March 27 at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Austin. He was buried at Cool-Walden Capital Park Cemetery in Pflugerville.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association or American Cancer Society.

ADVISORY
Anyone who knows the whereabouts of Marcus Antonio Lerma is requested to notify Gloria Villarreal as soon as possible at (512) 949-2482.

Easter message from Bishop Joe Vásquez:

Brothers and sisters:
May the joy of the Risen Lord be with you and your loved ones throughout this Easter season.
The Knights of Columbus is now recruiting members online

By Enedelia J. Obregón | Senior Correspondent

The Knights of Columbus is trying a different way to recruit new members where they can be found today: online at www.knights.net.

The pilot program is an initiative of the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council, said Texas membership director Jack Gunn. “Younger people have a different way of interacting,” Gunn said. “We’re trying to establish a better presence with that medium and get the message to them about the benefits of being in the Knights of Columbus. Secondly, if they decide to join, they can do so online at their convenience.” He noted that one of the 53 new members signed up at 3 a.m.

If they are interested in participating in local service projects, they can later join a council at their parish, which is “where the action is,” Gunn said.

Texas roll out

The program was launched last fall in three small states, and the results looked promising. When the council chose to expand it to seven states, the Texas Knights of Columbus leadership suggested trying it out here before rolling it out nationwide because Texas has one of the largest number of councils with 107,000 members.

The Texas program was launched at the beginning of the year, Gunn said.

Since the organization was founded in 1882, recruitment has been done one-on-one or at a parish recruitment event. Knights of Columbus founder Father Michael J. McGivney, an associate pastor at St. Mary Parish in New Haven, Connecticut, gathered a group of men at the parish and proposed establishing a lay organization. The goal was to prevent Catholic men from entering secret societies whose membership prevented Catholic men from entering a lay organization. The goal was to strengthen the faith of its members.

Growing, changing

Doug Oldmixon, state deputy, said the Knights of Columbus is growing — reaching 1.7 million members a couple of years ago. The demographics of the group are also changing. “The Knights are a reflection of American Catholicism,” Oldmixon said. “It is getting younger and more Hispanic. In Texas, we are growing every year.”

The state Knights of Columbus has two full-time employees to focus on Hispanic membership, Oldmixon said. If a parish has a large Hispanic presence with Masses in Spanish, they look for someone who already is a Knight to help expand their presence. Or they will help launch a Spanish-speaking council at the parish level.

“We have a large presence in Mexico, so all our training and faith materials are available in Spanish,” Oldmixon said.

The Knights of Columbus growth is occurring despite the decline of traditional strongholds of ethnically European Catholics in the Northeast and Midwest. Overall, the average age of the Knights has “crept up,” Oldmixon said.

“Just like other fraternal organizations, young people don’t join unless those organizations meet their expectations first,” he said. “The organization must reflect the values that they hold dear.”

An example is Theology on Tap, which meets in pubs where young people like to congregate, he said. They learn about theology while socializing. “For a lot of young people, social engagement happens online,” Oldmixon said. “So we attempt to meet that expectation. It has to be interactive, and that’s what we’re doing.”

Getting together in meetings to plan events is changing, he said. “You can plan events without even being together in the same room,” Oldmixon said.

The beauty of an interactive online presence is the immediate feedback, he said. “It’s a different way of meeting people. If that’s the place where people go, then that’s the place we need to be to meet them and bring healthy content and value-laden communications.”

In the Austin Diocese

Kevin Brinkman, Knights of Columbus diocesan deputy, is overseeing the new program for the 90 councils in the Diocese of Austin, which has 12,500 Knights of Columbus members.

Knights are present at many dioce-
Faustina and her undying faithfulness and sought to model herself after St. to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy said. and complete healing of the child,” she solely trust in Jesus for the soul, sake of the Divine Mercy. Devastated and doubting, she turned everything over to the healing promises of the Divine Mercy. “I reached a point where I had to solely trust in Jesus for the soul, sake and complete healing of the child,” she said.

Eva made weekly visits to the family to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and sought to model herself after St. Faustina and her undying faithfulness as she recalled Jesus’ promise that “when they say this Chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person.”

Prayers were answered and today the boy is a healthy and happy 7-year-old who wants to be a priest when he grows up. The healing confirmed and bolstered Eva’s Divine Mercy devotion. Following the boy’s recovery, she and a group made a pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Massachusetts.

Her commitment to the message has inspired many, including Deacon David Pustka, who serves St. Mary Parish. He has been involved with the group since its inception.

“Before this group involvement, I had heard of Divine Mercy but had not done much to explore the message,” he said. Now that he has been “informed of the tremendous gift we have been given,” he encourages more people to learn about Jesus’ Divine Mercy.

The St. Mary Cenacle consists of three-year long study sessions that meet weekly. Traditionally, a Cenacle is a small faith-sharing group and the name is derived from “cena,” the Latin word for supper, and the image of the Last Supper. During formation, members delve into the writings of St. Faustina and her diary as well as the Eucharist, perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and the message of God’s mercy. The group’s goals are remembered with the acronym “ABC.” “A” is to ask for God’s mercy, “B” is to be merciful, and “C” is to completely trust in Jesus.

“God wants us to approach him in prayer and repent for our sins; he wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others; and he wants us to know that his grace is dependent on our trust,” Rivera said. “The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.”

With these thoughts in mind, the group starts each gathering by acknowledging how God touched and brought joy to their lives the previous week. They then typically have a lesson on a portion of St. Faustina’s Diary, Scripture, and the Catechism before offering prayers and petition through the Divine Mercy Chaplet. It’s a century’s old message that is more timely than ever, Deacon Pustka said.

“St. Faustina’s message of Divine Mercy knows no bounds and the message is as relevant today as it was when it was delivered to her,” he said. “Our world is disordered. We are caught up in materialism and plagued with acts of violence and feel like we have nowhere to turn. Through Divine Mercy, we are assured that God loves us and always has.”

The St. Mary’s group shows their love and mercy in many ways, one of which is through the support of 14 Cenacle groups in Mexico. Donations and fundraisers help furnish study books to their Mexican counterparts and help spread the message of Christ’s mercy. In addition, the group supports a Divine Mercy group of parishioners at Taylor’s Slavonic Benevolent Order nursing home and assisted living facility that was formed more than two years ago. By doing so, Rivera said mercy is both received and given.

“Mercy is needed more than ever today in order to heal our personal lives and those around us,” she said. “How can we be the light of Christ if we have not accepted Christ’s mercy and show mercy to those who are hurting and hungry?”

The group plans a special veneration during the Divine Mercy Masses on April 8 as well as the Chaplet of Divine Mercy at 3 p.m.
Program offers hope for those seeking citizenship

By Enedelia J. Obregón | Senior Correspondent

Hope is in the air at a small classroom in a portable building that serves as the parish hall for Dolores Parish in Austin.

Half a dozen students watch closely as Zach Lindsey writes on the chalkboard: Constitution is the supreme law of the land. What are amendments? What are branches of government?

Some students seated around long tables, call out the answers, their tongues tripping to quickly form the words in this difficult foreign language called English. Others, not too sure, glance at their workbooks or at each other for help.

Parte, a 31-year-old with an infectious smile who uses only one name, laughed as she tried to pronounce “representative.”

The test

A lot rides on these students knowing the answers and being able to pronounce them correctly in English. The students are legal permanent U.S. residents with green cards, preparing for their citizenship test. Their class is a collaborative effort between Manos de Cristo and Catholic Charities of Central Texas.

Lindsey said Manos de Cristo offers English as a Second Language classes and citizenship classes at various locations in the Austin area. This is the second year citizenship classes have been offered at Dolores Parish, located in east Austin’s Montopolis neighborhood.

“I’ve really enjoyed teaching citizenship,” Lindsey said. “Teaching ESL doesn’t feel like a job; it’s like talking to adults over coffee. But teaching citizenship is very special. These people are so passionate about learning. Seeing them go through this lengthy experience and process is amazing.”

Gloria Coronado said after many years with a green card, she is worried she might not be able to renew it given the current political climate. Citizenship to her means safety.

“I also want to get a good job,” said Coronado, who brings sons Leonardo, 12, and Emmanuel, 6, because her husband works late. “I also want to vote and to be involved in my sons’ activities.”

Parte wants to be a citizen because “everything in the United States is good. It’s number one in the world. I want to vote.”

She and her husband left Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, in 2004 and spent seven years in a refugee camp in Malaysia before coming to the U.S. more than four years ago.

They have a son who is now 7.

Her challenge is speaking English.

To submit their the citizenship application they must travel to San Antonio and be interviewed by agents of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a branch of the Department of Homeland Security.

In preparation, University of Texas student volunteers Trevor Moore and Stephanie Steele role-play the interview. They ask and answer questions from the 20-page application, which asks for detailed information. The students then practice with one another.

The stakes are high. It costs $725 to apply. Applicants have two chances to pass. Failing twice means retaking the class and paying another $725 to apply.

“The level of English is the reason most people fail,” Lindsey told his students. “(The application) is a complicated legal questionnaire. The agents can (speak) very quickly. You can always ask them to slow down or please repeat.

It can be a juggling act to be in class. Parte’s husband stays at home with their son while she attends class. Once she’s a citizen, he will attend classes.

Working with CCCTX

Recently there has been a spike in permanent residents starting the citizenship process. Previously CCCTX helped about 40 people a year obtain their citizenship. Over the last couple of years, that number has risen to between 110 and 120 a year.

Nationwide, the number of citizenship applications has jumped by 18 percent.

CCCTX hopes the citizenship grant with Manos de Cristo, which provides the teachers and materials such as books.

CCCTX used the grant money to hire staff knowledgeable in immigration law so they could guide their clients through the complicated process. Clients must meet 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines to qualify for a CCCTX immigration lawyer or Department of Justice accredited representatives who are knowledgeable in immigration law. That means a couple can have an annual salary up to $33,000. A family of four can earn up to $50,000.

Estep recommended that everyone applying for citizenship hire an attorney, which can be expensive. CCCTX charges about $90 for the whole process for those who qualify. In the private sector, it can cost from $2,000 to $5,000.

Estep said immigration law is complicated, and there are times that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will distribute an internal memo about a change in procedure but not make it public. A little change can doom someone’s application if they don’t have the help of someone who knows the law well. Immigration laws are often contradictory because they have been adopted piecemeal since there has been no comprehensive immigration reform, he said.

With citizens getting caught up in Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids, Estep offered some advice. Naturalized citizens should carry their naturalization cards at all times. It’s the law. Those born a U.S. citizen but who fear they may also get swept up during a raid are advised to get a passport and a passport card. Leave the passport at home and carry the passport card, he said.

CCCTX hopes the citizenship grant will be renewed; however, if not, CCCTX will return to the days of heavily discounted fees and a flexible payment plan even if the number of citizenship applicants increases, Estep said.

For more information about Immigration Legal Services at CCCTX, call (512) 651-6100.
Brother’s art reflects the work of the ‘Ultimate Artist’

By Ricardo Gandara | Correspondent

The eyes of the Brazilian children show despair. A smiling mother with a child on her lap depicts love and hope. The dancing women in colorful dresses during Carnival show joy. The landscapes put the viewer right there.

Holy Cross Brother Robert Weinmann’s paintings celebrate and bring to life the people of Brazil who have spent his vocation helping. Today, despite his declining health — his kidneys are failing and he needs around-the-clock oxygen support — the 77-year-old still sells his paintings to help fund a community center he founded in Brazil.

“The St. Brother Andre Community Center near Campinas provides social services for poor street children ages 6 to 17. The proceeds of his oil on canvas and wood paintings go directly to back the community center where children go to be fed and are provided hygiene and some medical services. The children — some of them homeless — wander the streets where drugs and prostitutes prevail.

“I easily fell in love with the people and the culture,” said Brother Weinmann, sitting at his work station in his residence at a retirement facility on the campus of St. Edward’s University in Austin. On the easel is an older child embracing a younger brother. His paintings come from photos he has taken.

Brother Weinmann’s journey to Brazil began after graduating from St. Edward’s in 1966. After spending time in California, he accepted a missionary assignment in Brazil to serve the ministries of the Congregation in Sao Paulo.

He earned a fine arts degree there in 1974 from the Catholic University of Campinas. He taught English, but it didn’t take long to recognize what the people needed.

“It was to help the street kids and give them the basic skills to survive like reading and writing,” he said.

With a trusty, small Kodak film camera in hand, he snapped photos that would eventually be turned into amazing and beautiful depictions of his missionary life. And it was always about the people and their eyes and faces that showed the despair of an unimaginably difficult life.

“The children immediately became a part of my life. They had nothing; they were begging for food. The gangs took them in to sell drugs, and the kids themselves took drugs. So the gangs took in and created customers. Mothers lived in favelas (slums) which had no running water or electricity. They lived in shacks with several children. Thus, they sold their bodies for dollars,” Brother Weinmann said.

With the help from parents of Colegio Notre Dame in Campinas, he founded the community center in 1985, using a donated furniture factory. While the sale of his paintings now plays a key role in helping fund the center, it did not begin that way.

“I gave many of my paintings away at first to help get my name out,” he said. Eventually, his work sold in exhibitions in Europe and South America.

Painting started as a hobby when he was child. In classes at St. Edward’s, a Holy Cross brother urged him to paint.

“I got praise and kept painting,” he said. He took private lessons, and his passion for art exploded in Brazil.

“I developed a high degree of sensibility for what surrounded me. I would never feel that my works have truth if I had not portrayed the reality which was part of my everyday life,” he said.

The street children captured his heart.

“I was a teacher, so I was always drawn to children. It wasn’t hard to look at these hungry kids and be concerned; they literally had nothing,” he said.

While the streets kids were his focus, there were many joyous moments, too, especially on the streets during Carnival in Rio de Janeiro. “It was mind blowing,” he said.

His work continues to help the community center, despite thrice weekly kidney dialysis treatments.

“It’s a drop in the bucket, but I pray and think about those kids every day and that motivates me to get better,” he said.

Today, he gets huge satisfaction when the children he helped send e-mails.

“They are adults now with their own children, and they say thank you,” he said. “I was a father figure to them, a man who didn’t take advantage of them. I respected them.”

Many pieces of Brother Weinmann’s work are on display in the current Religious Art Collection at the Pastoral Center in Austin. For information on how to purchase his paintings or make a contribution to the community center, contact Holy Cross Father Charles Van Winkle at (512) 382-7324.
Upcoming retreats at Cedarbrake in Belton

**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.

**The Heart of Worship, Journaling with Scripture and Art** retreat will be held at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton May 5 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Experience God’s word in a different way through journaling and art to give greater insight to God’s will. Practicing to read, record and reflect on God’s Holy Word helps one also to record how God is working and to realize even more how God is present in one’s life. Mary Pomeroy, spiritual director and retreat presenter, will facilitate this day. The cost is $40 and includes lunch.

**Discovering Your True Self** will be held May 23 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 Father 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. Spend the day identifying the false images you hold on and ask the Lord to show you your true beauty. Bev Collin, assistant director of Cedarbrake, will present this day. The cost is $40 and includes lunch. For more information or to register for these retreats, call Cedarbrake at (254) 780-2436 or visit www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake.

Couples invited to Marriage Encounter

Married couples are invited to strengthen, renew and rekindle their marriage sacrament by attending one of the upcoming Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekends: April 20-22 and Nov. 2-4. The emphasis of Marriage Encounter is on communication between husband and wife, who spend a weekend together away from the distractions and the tensions of everyday life, to concentrate on each other. For more information, visit www.austinme.org or call (512) 667-9963 or e-mail wwmeaustin@gmail.com.

Chorus Austin presents Stabat Mater

Chorus Austin will present Haydn’s Stabat Mater April 21 at 7:30 p.m. and April 22 at 3 p.m. at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church in Austin. This is a hymn to Mary standing at the foot of the cross. Tickets start at $15 each. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.chorusaustin.org or call (512) 719-3300.

DCCW is April 23-24 in Round Rock

The 69th annual convention for the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women will be held April 23-24 at the Marriott North Hotel in Round Rock. This year’s theme is “Women Embracing the Joy of the Gospel.” The conference will feature Vincentian Father Richard Gielow and several others. All women are invited to attend. Registration is $45 per person. To register, e-mail Mary White at mcwhite02@yahoo.com.
Catholic men gather to celebrate their faith

By Billy Moyer | Guest Correspondent

More than 900 men from the Diocese of Austin attended the sixth annual Catholic Men’s Conference, held Feb. 17 at the St. William Parish Evangelization Center in Round Rock. The theme for this year’s conference was “No Man Left Behind.”

The conference was hosted by the Central Texas Fellowship of Catholic Men (CTFCM). Other sponsors included the Knights of Columbus and the Diocese of Austin.

Robert Tummler serves on the board for the Central Texas Fellowship of Catholic Men and helped organize this year’s conference.

“The men’s conference gives men an opportunity to come out and grow in the Catholic faith and fellowship with our Catholic brothers. This was our sixth men’s conference, and I believe it was successful because of all the men that were involved in making it come together and all the prayers that were being said for the conference,” he said.

The day began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Joe Vasquez. Tom Peterson, founder of Catholics Come Home, was the first speaker.

He shared clips of the commercials Catholic Come Home has released noting that they have touched hundreds of thousands of people in the U.S. He urged men to never give up the fortitude and reminded them that as Catholics they are called to evangelize.

“God is calling us to be his soldiers in the spiritual battle,” Peterson said. “We must spread Good News to the ends of the earth.”

Andreas Widmer, a professor at Catholic University of America and author of “The Pope and the CEO,” shared stories from his time serving in the Swiss Guard where he had the privilege of protecting St. John Paul II. He invited men to become modern-day saints.

John Pridmore, an ex-London gangster turned Christian and the final speaker of the day, inspired men to be heroically virtuous.

“When we open our hearts to God, “he shows us who we are,” Pridmore said.

Jeremy Brown, a parishioner from St. Thomas More Parish in Austin who has attended the last two men’s conferences, said he particularly enjoyed sharing the experience with his 12-year-old son.

“All three speakers gave us topics to discuss,” he said.

This was Jay Holmaas’ first conference, which he attended with members of the men’s fellowship group at St. Helen Parish in Georgetown.

“I particularly enjoyed the fellowship at the conference,” he said. “The speakers were each unique in their faith journey and very motivational.”

The Central Texas Fellowship of Catholic Men will host the 10th annual Men’s Fellowship Mass July 21 at 10 a.m. at St. Elizabeth Parish in Pflugerville. Bishop Joe Vasquez will celebrate the Mass, and a reception will follow. For more information about this ministry, visit www.centexcatholic.com.

Andreas Widmer, former member of the Swiss Guard, shared his faith journey at the sixth annual Catholic Men’s Conference, held Feb. 17 at St. William Parish in Round Rock. (Photo by Rafael Riojas)
Pro-life Aggies award scholarships to parenting students

By Mary P. Walker | Senior Correspondent

Sometimes the goals we set are just not ambitious enough! The Pro-life Aggies, a recognized organization at Texas A&M University, wanted to raise $10,000 for scholarships for pregnant and parenting students. This was much more than they had ever raised before. To their surprise, they raised $30,000, which allowed them to award 15 scholarships to students who chose life for their babies.

An unplanned or crisis pregnancy is a great challenge to students. There are practical issues, such as finances and the need for child care, that make it hard for a mother to continue her education. In addition, pregnant or parenting students may feel alone and isolated. While classmates can focus on their studies and the fun of college life, parents have a child whose needs must always be put first. The Pro-Life Aggies live their convictions by emotionally supporting and materially helping these students continue their education and prepare for careers.

The 65-member group of Pro-Life Aggies not only raise money, but they also work peacefully to end abortion and protect life from conception to natural death through activism, volunteer work and education. One example of the practical help they offer is free babysitting to parenting students.

While many members are Catholic, the organization is nonpartisan and not affiliated with any religious group.

For the last seven years, their main fundraising activity was a 5K race combined with other donations. Each year they raised several thousand dollars, and in 2017 awarded $6,000 in scholarships.

Looking ahead, the Aggies decided to be even more ambitious for 2018, and set a goal of $10,000. Kristin Popp, fundraising director, knew that focusing on the race alone would not be enough. Over the summer, members received fundraising training from another pro-life organization. They learned how to approach potential benefactors, explain the purpose of the scholarships and ask for donations.

Three students received permission from their pastors to speak on Sundays in their home parishes.

“We were nervous to ask people for money, but after speaking with parishioners, we realized they were glad to give to such a great cause and see young people standing up for what is right,” said Kyle Kilgore.

Martin Bruich, a parishioner of St. Louis Parish in Waco, is grateful for his parish’s support.

“I found the experience to be motivating, not only because I had the chance to help these young mothers, but also because I could spread awareness about the Pro-Life Aggie cause,” he said.

In addition to speaking at churches, directly asking for donations, and the 5K race, the organization executed a social media campaign and publicized a GoFundMe site to accept gifts.

When it became clear that the $10,000 goal would be reached, the Pro-Life Aggies raised their goal to $20,000, and when that goal was exceeded, $30,000 became the final goal.

“This is incredible. We have never raised so much money or support for the pregnant and parenting students at Texas A&M,” Popp said.

To identify those who would benefit from scholarships, the Pro-Life Aggies e-mailed the entire student body. Undergraduate and graduate mothers and fathers, whose plans can also be disrupted by an unplanned pregnancy, were invited to apply. Of the 65 who applied, most of the graduate students were married and most of the undergraduate students were unmarried.

A committee reviewed the applications, and invited 18 in for interviews, ultimately awarding 15 scholarships between $1,000 and $5,000. Financial need and stability, as well as the applicant’s overall situation, were taken into consideration. The scholarships were awarded in a ceremony at the 5K race on Feb. 17.

For freshman Victoria Avelar, her $4,000 scholarship is a sign that God is providing for her needs and offering hope for the future. When she found out she was pregnant last October, she said, “I felt disappointed in myself and felt ashamed.” Now she is glad to have connected with the Pro-life Aggies, who are willing to help her work toward her goal of becoming a physician assistant.

Christina Figueroa, a graduate student in geology, received a $1,000 scholarship. Pregnancy forced her to give up a summer internship and pushed back her graduation date. Her baby girl is due in June, and she expects to graduate in December.

“I’m hoping that when I’m more financially stable I can help other unexpectedly pregnant women,” Figueroa said.

For up-to-date information from the Diocese of Austin, visit us online
On the Internet at www.austindiocese.org
On Facebook search @DioceseofAustin and @bishopjoesvasquez
On Twitter go to @AustinDiocese
Vatican holds marriage workshop in Austin

By Paul Madrid | Special Correspondent

The Diocese of Austin recently became the first American diocese to host a new workshop on Pope Francis’ pastoral plan for marriage and the family.

Officials of the Roman Rota — a Vatican tribunal that handles appeals of marriage cases — held a three-day workshop with priests and deacons of the Diocese of Austin in early March. Also in attendance were the Bishop Joe Vásquez, Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Garcia, lay persons of the diocese engaged in marriage formation, and members of marriage tribunals from dioceses in Texas.

The topics of the workshop centered on Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia, his reform of the process for seeking a declaration of nullity for a broken marriage, and his recent call for a new and comprehensive approach to marriage preparation. The principal presenters were Msgr. Pio Vito Pinto, the dean (chief judge) of the Rota, and Msgr. Alejandro Arellano Cedillo, an auditor (associate judge).

Bishop Vásquez first heard of the possibility of the workshop late in 2016 when Msgr. Pinto visited him after giving a talk at a canon law conference in Houston. During their visit, Msgr. Pinto discussed a course that he had developed on Pope Francis’ pastoral plan.

“Msgr. Pinto gave me a copy of the course he developed and told me of his plans to present the course in Rome to bishops from around the world,” Bishop Vásquez said. When that course was then broadened to take place in dioceses outside of Rome, Bishop Vásquez “was extremely pleased” that Austin was one of the dioceses selected to help promote Amoris Laetitia.

Father Christopher Ferrer, the judicial vicar of the diocese and pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Austin, said the workshop highlighted the importance of marriage and the family.

“That the Holy Father decided to send the Rota here shows his great care for the people of the diocese and the approval of the work that our bishop is already doing here both for people in broken marriages and for preparing the faithful to enter matrimony,” Father Ferrer said.

Phi Le, diocesan associate director of Family Life, said the workshop reminded him of the need for mercy.

“The church does not condemn. The church is for the salvation of souls,” he said. Regarding pastoral care for people in broken marriages, the workshop impressed Le with the need to “be more merciful” and to “accompany them in their difficult journeys.”

Nwazi Nyirenda, a canon lawyer and director of the diocesan Tribunal, echoed the same message from the workshop, “We cannot condemn the divorced;” instead, “the church must strive to save people.” Nyirenda believes the diocese is currently working along the path of accompaniment, especially through the Pathway to Healing retreat for those seeking or going through the annulment process.

“As a lay person, I participate in ministry at my parish,” she said, “and the content of the workshop, particularly the reading and explanations of Amoris Laetitia, reinvigorated me not just in my personal journey but in how I can be of greater service in accompanying others on a similar journey.”

Joanne Sanders, an adviser to the tribunal judges, found the presenters to be “very pastoral in their approach,” showing that Pope Francis’ goal in his pastoral plan “was to bring people back to Jesus.” The workshop was especially helpful for her as part of the diocesan task force “looking at how to address the matrimonial catechumene in an intentional manner from birth to adulthood.”

She was glad to hear of Pope Francis’ insight that “marriage preparation begins at birth.” Sanders also noted the workshop advocated for the wider use of permanent deacons in pastoral work to married couples as “they have had the experience of marital life and family.”

The workshop “is an invitation to all of us to look for creative ways to focus our attention on our marriage, how we influence our children and grandchildren in living a Gospel life, discerning how the world and culture influence our lives in both a positive and negative way,” Sanders said.

A few days after the conference, Bishop Vásquez received a pleasant surprise: a personal telephone call from Pope Francis expressing thanks for hosting the workshop.

“What an unexpected blessing that Pope Francis took time out of his very busy schedule to thank the clergy of the diocese,” Bishop Vásquez said. “I was so humble to have received this personal call from Pope Francis expressing his gratitude. He told me to pass on this message: ‘Please express my prayers, support and love for the priests of the Diocese of Austin and let them know that you and they are in my prayers.’”

For more information on the marriage annulment process, visit the Tribunal’s website at www.austindiocese.org/canonical-and-tribunal-services or call (512) 949-2482.
Youth ask church to listen during pre-synod meeting

By Cindy Wooden | Catholic News Service

The Catholic Church needs the enthusiasm, daring and hope of young people so that it can preach the Gospel energetically and respond to the questions men and women raise today, Pope Francis told some 300 young adults.

“We need to rediscover in the Lord the strength to get up after failure, to move forward, to strengthen hope for the future,” the pope said March 19, opening a weeklong meeting in preparation for October’s Synod of Bishops.

Most of the young people gathered with the pope at the Legionaries of Christ’s Maria Mater Ecclesia College in Rome were chosen as delegates by their national bishops’ conferences. Others represented a variety of Catholic movements or ministries, including religious life. But the Vatican also invited delegates from other Christian churches, other religions, including Islam, and young people who describe themselves as nonbelievers.

Pope Francis told the young people they are the ones who can help the church fight “the logic of ‘it’s always been done this way,’” which he described as “a poison, a sweet poison that tranquillizes the heart and leaves you anesthetized so you can’t walk.”

The church and its members must continue to go out, continue asking what God is calling them to and continue finding new ways to respond, the pope said.

Of course, he said, everyone must “keep an eye on the roots” of the church and preserve its essential teachings, but they also must find creative ways to share those teachings and reflect on how the Gospel responds to people’s questions today.

Spending the morning with the young people, Pope Francis heard directly from 10 of them, who represented every region of the world. Some lamented the amount of time their peers spend on social media, while others spoke of how technology helps connect young people and rally their movement.

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Yulian Vendziloyvych, a seminarian at Holy Spirit Seminary in Lviv, asked the pope how a young priest is to judge which parts of modern culture are good and which are not. He used the example of tattoos, which many young people believe “express true beauty,” he said.

“Don’t be afraid of tattoos,” the pope responded, noting that for centuries Eritrean Christians and others have gotten tattoos of the cross.

“Oh, of course, there can be exaggerations,” the pope said. But a tattoo “is a sign of belonging,” and asking a young person about his or her tattoos can be a great place to begin a dialogue about priorities, values, belonging, “and then you can approach the culture of the young.”

A young man from France, Maxime Rassion, told the pope he has not been baptized, but he has questions about the meaning of his life and his relationship to the world and to God, if God exists. He said he is not sure if he wants to approach the Catholic Church for help because it is so big and he doesn’t want to give up his freedom. But he asked the pope where he should start.

“You have already begun,” the pope told him. “The danger is not allowing the question to come up.”

Young people must have “the courage to tell themselves the naked truth” about their hopes and weaknesses, the pope said, and then they must find a wise person — someone patient, “who won’t be frightened by anything” — with whom they can talk through their questions.

Blessing Okodion, a young Nigerian rescued from forced prostitution in Italy, asked the pope what could be done to increase awareness of human trafficking and whether the church, which is “still too chauvinistic,” really is capable of helping young women and men relate to each other as equals.

Noting that the vast majority of Italians are Catholic, Pope Francis said one must assume that about 90 percent of the men who use prostitutes in Italy are baptized.

Prostitution is a serious problem,” the pope told the young people. It stems from a widespread mentality that says, “women are to be exploited,” he said, and he asked young people to “battle against this.

“One who goes to a prostitute is a criminal, a criminal,” Pope Francis said. “This is not making love. This is torturing a woman. Let’s not confuse the terms. This is criminal.”

Like many of the speakers, Angela Markas, a Chaldean Catholic and a delegate from Australia, spoke to Pope Francis and her peers about young people’s questions regarding their identity.

As the Australia-born daughter of two Iraqis, who lives in a multietnic country and is connected by social media with people all over the world, Markas said it was difficult to know “which path should I take, given that I can virtually take any.”

“As youth, we are in need of guidance,” she said. But from talking to friends, family and young people she tutors, “I feel young people are less drawn to seek this guidance from someone associated with the church. There are many reasons, but a consistent one is that youth feel disconnected from the church.”

“Youth do not always feel they have a place in the church,” she said. They need a place where they feel safe, welcomed and loved.”

But they also want the church to take them and their concerns seriously.

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But they also want the church to take them and their concerns seriously.
By Cindy Wooden | Catholic News Service

Celebrating Palm Sunday Mass with thousands of young people, Pope Francis urged them to continue singing and shouting “hosanna” in the world, proclaiming the lordship of Jesus and following his example of outreach to the poor and suffering.

The crowd that shouted “hosanna” as Jesus entered Jerusalem included all those for whom Jesus was a source of joy, those he healed and forgave, and those he welcomed after they had been excluded from society, the pope said in his homily March 25.

But others were irritated by Jesus and tried to silence his followers, the pope said. In the same way, people today will try to silence young people who continue to follow Jesus, because “a joyful young person is hard to manipulate.”

“There are many ways to silence young people and make them invisible,” the pope said. There are “many ways to anesthetize them, to make them keep quiet, ask nothing, question nothing. There are many ways to sedate them, to keep them from getting involved, to make their dreams flat and dreary, petty and plaintive.”

Pope Francis asked the young people “not to keep quiet. Even if others keep quiet, if we older people and leaders keep quiet, if the whole world keeps quiet and loses its joy, I ask you: Will you cry out?”

Gabriella Zuniga, 16, and her sister Valentina Zuniga, 15, were among the thousands in St. Peter’s Square. The sisters, students at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, had participated March 24 in the local Rome “March for Our Lives,” calling for gun control.

The Palm Sunday Mass marked the local celebration of World Youth Day and included the more than 300 young adults who, at the Vatican’s invitation, had spent a week discussing with input from the world’s bishops’ conferences, in drafting the working document for the Synod of Bishops in October, which will focus on young people, faith and vocational discernment.

Holding five-foot tall palm branches, the young adults led the procession to the obelisk in the center of St. Peter’s Square. They were joined by others carrying olive branches and by bishops and cardinals holding “palmurelli,” which are intricately woven palm fronds.

In his homily, Pope Francis said that the Palm Sunday Mass, which begins with the singing of “hosanna” and then moves to the reading of Jesus’ passion, combines “stories of joy and suffering, mistakes and successes, which are part of our daily lives as disciples.”

The acclamation of the crowd praising Jesus as he enters Jerusalem gives way to the shouts of “crucify him” as Jesus’ suffering and death draw near, the pope noted. “It somehow expresses the contradictory feelings that we too, the men and women of today, experience: the capacity for great love, but also for great hatred; the capacity for courageous self-sacrifice, but also the ability to ‘wash our hands,’” the pope said.

The Gospel also demonstrates how the joy Jesus awakened in some is “a source of anger and irritation for others,” Pope Francis said, and the same is true today.

Joy is seen in all those “who had followed Jesus because they felt his compassion for their pain and misery,” the pope said. “How could they not praise the one who had restored their dignity and hope? Theirs is the joy of so many forgiven sinners who are able to trust and hope once again.”

But others in Jerusalem, “those who consider themselves righteous and ‘faithful’ to the law and its ritual precepts” and “those who have forgotten the many chances they themselves had been given” find such joy intolerable, the pope said.

“Joy hard it is for the comfortable and the self-righteous to understand the joy and the celebration of God’s mercy,” he said. “How hard it is for those who trust only in themselves, and look down on others, to share in this joy.”

The shouts of “crucify him” did not begin spontaneously, the pope said, but were incited by those who slandered and gave false witness against Jesus, “spinning facts and painting them such that they disfigure the face of Jesus and turn him into a criminal.”

Theirs, he said, was “the voice of those who twist reality and invent their own benefit, without concern for the good name of others” and “the cry of those who have no problem in seeking ways to gain power and to silence dissonant voices.”

Pope Francis told the young people gathered in the square that in the face of such attempts to demolish hope, kill dreams and suppress joy, Christians must look to Christ’s cross and “let ourselves be challenged by his final cry. He died crying out his love for each of us: young and old, saints and sinners, the people of his times and of our own.”

“We have been saved by his cross, and no one can repress the joy of the Gospel,” he said. “No one, in any situation whatsoever, is far from the Father’s merciful gaze.”

Present in the Eucharist, Jesus transforms us, pope says

By Carol Glatz | Catholic News Service

Despite the chill and gusts of wind in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis welcomed the beginning of spring with an impromptu lesson about gardening and how to grow into being better Christians.

“Does a tree or plant that is diseased bloom well? No! Does a tree or a plant that isn’t watered...bloom well? No! And does a tree or plant with no roots bloom?” he said before delivering his general audience talk March 21.

Christians can learn from what makes spring flowers flourish, the pope said, because for Christians, their root is Jesus and the water that replenishes those roots are the sacraments and prayer, which makes lives bloom with Christian virtues and good works.

“I wish that this spring would be for you a spring in bloom and an Easter that blossoms, he said.

In his main talk, the pope continued his series on the Mass, focusing on the rite of holy Communion.

“This rite is a continuation of Jesus’ offer at the Last Supper, where he said, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him,” the pope said. The priest or deacon distributes to the faithful “the bread of life and the chalice of salvation” in Jesus, he said.

After the celebrant breaks the consecrated bread, the people reflect on the words spoken at the altar, proclaiming Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” he said.

This moment is an invitation, “calling us to experience the intimate union with Christ, source of joy and holiness,” the pope said. It is also an invitation to an “examination of conscience, enlightened by the faith,” he said.

On the one hand, “we see the distance that separates us from the holiness of Christ; on the other, we believe that his blood was shed to take away the sins,” he said.

Just as baptism washes away sin, he said, “we are all forgiven or will be forgiven each time we approach the sacrament of reconciliation.”

“Do not forget! Jesus always forgives. Jesus never tires of forgiving. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness,” he added.

When the people process toward the altar to receive Communion, the pope said, “in reality, it is Christ who comes toward us to assimilate us in him.”

Receiving the Eucharist means letting oneself be transformed by what is received, he said.

“Every time we take Communion, we resemble Jesus more,” increasingly being transformed in Jesus and stripping away one’s selfishness by uniting oneself closer with Christ, he said.

Just as the bread and wine are turned into the real body and blood of Christ, he said, so too are those who receive the gifts, transformed into “a living Eucharist,” becoming “body of Christ.”

“We become what we receive,” he said.

He encouraged people to use the time after receiving Communion to pray more deeply, silently speaking with Jesus from the heart.

“The Eucharist makes us strong, to give us fruit, flowers of good works,” he said. Receiving the Eucharist is receiving Jesus, who is “so good and so great,” he transforms people.
Interpreter for deaf sees God’s hand at work in her ministry

By Bob Zyskowski | Catholic News Service

A pang of conscience bothered Joleen Hunkins one day as she was about to interpret Mass in sign language.

“I was worried about giving my own version of the Gospel,” she recalled. “When I told our pastor at the time, he asked me, ‘Do you pray before you sign at Mass?’ I said yes, always. He told me, ‘Then don’t worry. God works through you just as he works through me.’”

Hunkins and her husband, Rich, are members of Sts. Edward and Isadore Parish in Flintville, Wisconsin. She was a stay-at-home mom for her four children. Now that they are adults, she’s a certified interpreter of American Sign Language working at Southwest High School in Green Bay.

Two of her six sisters also are professional interpreters for the deaf. Their family learned to sign to communicate with one of the girls, JoRita, who has been deaf since birth.

Much as the case with learning a second language, it helps to learn American Sign Language when one is young, Hunkins said, and it helps to be a visual learner as well.

“It’s a beautiful language” because it is so expressive, she told The Compass, newspaper of the Diocese of Green Bay. “Deaf people like it because it’s like their secret they get to share,” she said with a grin.

Hunkins has been doing plenty of sharing herself.

She volunteers with the Hand in Hand organization to teach elementary age students sign language and to support them and their families.

Along with regularly interpreting at Sunday Mass for the deaf community at St. John the Evangelist Parish, she volunteered this year to be the catechist working with two young deaf women in the Green Bay parish’s Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program.

She’s no stranger to sharing her faith. As a teenager, she taught young children in her parish faith formation program.

As an adult, she volunteered to teach freshman faith formation, then taught the confirmation class when her son, their oldest, went through preparation for the sacrament.

“I just keep getting drawn in,” Hunkins explained. “And I know it’s God doing it.”

The rocker on her front porch at her home in Pulaski is her favorite place to pray during the warmer months; otherwise she’s on the couch in the quiet of the mornings.

She has a special relationship with St. Therese of Lisieux, “the Little Flower,” and is remembered by her former students for teaching them St. Therese’s “Novena Rose Prayer,” which she knows by heart.

Teaching RCIA is new to her, though, and she is grateful for all the assistance she’s received.

With the help of Ann Vorpahl and Connie DeMeuse from the staff of St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Hunkins cobbled together learning materials and visuals that meet the learning and language-skill levels of 15-year-old Alexander Snyder from Haiti and 26-year-old Chai Yang, a Hmong-American, as they prepare to be baptized at the Easter Vigil at St. John.

“Father Christopher Clusman, a deaf priest from Milwaukee, helped me guide the girls through reconciliation,” Hunkins said, “and we walked all over the sanctuary before Mass one day to help them understand what goes on around the altar.”

The deaf community at St. John the Evangelist has been supportive as well. “It’s our responsibility to teach these girls, not just mine,” Hunkins said. “We’re not just giving them something, we are experiencing it with them.”

She encourages people to approach and talk with the deaf and hard-of-hearing, the preferred terms. “Hearing impaired” implies a disability, she said.

“The deaf are just like any of us, they just can’t hear,” Hunkins said. “They have the same feelings, the same nervousness meeting new people. Most are very patient; they are so excited you’re even trying to converse with them.”

As she has walked the RCIA journey with Snyder and Yang, Hunkins feels “both guilty and humbled,” she said.

“I get so much from it, I don’t think I do anything special. The girls I’m teaching, their childlike faith is such an example,” she said. “They know God loves us — it’s total faith. We can all learn from that.”

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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.

The Heart of Worship, Journaling with Scripture & Art: May 5

The Heart of Worship, Journaling with Scripture and Art retreat will be held at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton May 5 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Experience God’s word in a different way through journaling and art to give greater insight to God’s will. Practicing to read, record and reflect on God’s Holy Word helps one also to record how God is working and to realize even more how God is present in one’s life.

Mary Pomeroy, spiritual director and retreat presenter, will facilitate this day. The cost is $50 and includes lunch.

Discovering Your True Self: May 23

Discovering Your True Self will be held May 23 from 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. The retreat will be based on the book by Father 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.

Coming up... Summer Silence (aka Desert Solitude): June 8-13

The Institute for Spiritual Direction will begin training for people considering this ministry. The classes will start in January 2019. Applications are now being accepted. Visit www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake.
First auxiliary bishop ordained for Brownsville Diocese

By Rose Ybarra | Catholic News Service

In “a truly historic moment” for the Diocese of Brownsville, Bishop Daniel E. Flores ordained the first auxiliary bishop for the growing Catholic Church in the Rio Grande Valley.

The episcopal ordination Mass for Bishop Mario A. Aviles, an Oratorian priest, took place Feb. 22, the feast of the Chair of St. Peter at Antioch, at the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine in San Juan.

Retired Brownsville Bishop Raymond J. Pena and Bishop Eugenio Lira Rurgarcia of Mazamoros, Mexico, a longtime friend of Bishop Aviles, served as the co-consecrators.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the U.S., read the apostolic letter from Pope Francis appointing Bishop Aviles as the auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of Brownsville.

In attendance was Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston and 21 other bishops.

“I indeed, know well this is a truly historic moment for this growing and dynamic local church,” Archbishop Pierre said, noting Bishop Aviles was the first auxiliary bishop appointed in the 52-year history of the diocese, that this was the first episcopal ordination to take place in the diocese and the Oratorian priests are celebrating 50 years of service to the faithful in the diocese.

Sitting in the front row of the basilica were the new bishop’s family members, including his parents, Rafael Aviles and Maria Guadalupe Campos of Mexico City, who have been married for 62 years. Also in the congregation were 45 Oratorian priests and brothers from around the world and most of the priests and deacons serving in the diocese.

In an interview on the morning of his episcopal ordination, Bishop Aviles, 48, said the growth of the Catholic Church in the Rio Grande Valley spurred his appointment as auxiliary bishop.

He said there are clear signs the faith is growing rapidly in the diocese. He noted that three Rite of Election ceremonies had been held the weekend before his ordination to accommodate the more than 1,000 catechumens who are preparing to join the church at the Easter Vigil.

Bishop Aviles also pointed out new churches are opening and existing churches are expanding in the Diocese of Brownsville while other dioceses are shutting down and consolidating churches.

He also believes the U.S. Catholic Church is trying to be more attentive to the growing Hispanic community and is looking to respond to the needs identified through the church’s Fifth National Encuentro, or “V Encuentro.”

Bishop Aviles was in the fifth year of a six-year term as procurator general of the Confederation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, leading 85 oratories and more than 550 Oratorian priests and brothers around the world when he was appointed auxiliary bishop.

He was in South Africa when he received word of his appointment from Archbishop Pierre.

Bishop Flores said he petitioned Pope Francis for an auxiliary bishop two years ago to assist him in ministering to the more than a million Catholics in the diocese. Catholics make up 85 percent of the total population in the four-county, 4,296-square-mile diocese. It has 72 parishes and 43 mission churches, which are served by 109 priests.

“We have been given the gift of a grace to extend the apostolic ministry and mission of the church here in the Rio Grande Valley,” Bishop Flores said. “I welcome the help and I am grateful for it.”

Indian Catholic still enjoys going to Mass at 109

By Natalie Hoefer | Catholic News Service

When her granddaughter asks her if she remembers the sinking of the Titanic, Mary Weir scoffs just a bit.

“No, that was April 1912,” she said before adding, “I was too young.”

But she does remember staying safe in her family’s home on a hill during the Great Flood of 1913 — she was, after all, 4 years old by that time.

At 109, Mary Weir of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fortville may well be the oldest Catholic who attends Mass in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Her eyesight and hearing have devously lived for nearly 11 decades. Weir, born Feb. 16, 1909, on her parents’ farm in Franklin County, has four children, nine grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren and nine — soon to be 10 — great-great-grandchildren.

Life for Weir was much different before those nearly 39 descendents came along.

“We rode in a horse and buggy for a long while,” she recalled of her youth. “I think I was probably 5 years old. When we moved to Indianapolis for a while, I did laundry on a washtub. ... We used oil lamps inside and lanterns outside. We never did have electricity at home, but (my husband, Lawrence, and I) did when we moved to Indianapolis” for two years after marrying in 1928.

When the Great Depression began in 1929, Weir said, she was blessed.

“It didn’t affect me too much because my parents lived on a farm, and my husband had just started his (auto body repair) business in Greenfield, and it went well,” she told The Criterion, Indianapolis archdiocesan newspaper.

The Weirs had their four children between 1936 and 1946. In 1940, they moved from Greenfield to Fortville, where St. Thomas the Apostle Parish enters Mary’s story, creating a chapter that has continued for 78 years.

Weir’s ties to the parish are deep. She is its oldest member and has been a parishioner there longer than anyone, followed by her oldest son, David, now 81.

Her youngest child, Peggy Hunt, 71, helps care for Weir seven days a week. She recalls the importance her mother placed on faith while raising her children.

“She always made sure we went to church every Sunday,” Peggy said. “If you didn’t go to church, you didn’t go anywhere else that Sunday. And she made sure we got our catechism.”

Weir taught catechism at the parish. She chauffered religious sisters from St. Michael Parish in Greenfield to teach catechism at St. Thomas, helped clean the church, served dinners at parish functions and was part of a St. Thomas women’s euchre club.

When Weir refers to her parish home, the term takes on a dual meaning. When she and her family moved to Ingalls a few miles north of Fortville in 1948, they sold their home to the parish for use as a rectory. It’s still the parish rectory.

Her days of volunteering at the parish may be over, but she stays connected to the faith community.

As long as the weather permits, Weir still worships at Saturday evening Mass and joins in parish functions. Driving and accompanying her is either Peggy or Peggy’s daughter, Paige Hunt, who helps care for Weir five days a week.

“I just don’t know how anybody can get by without faith,” said Weir, who still prays the rosary daily. “I think how fortunate we are to have God in our lives.”

The members of St. Thomas feel fortunate to have Weir in their lives, said Father George Nangachivettil, pastor for the past four years.

“They know her very well,” he said. “Her birthday was Feb. 16. I was making announcements at the end of Mass, and someone stood up and said, ‘Don’t forget today is Mary Weir’s birthday!’”

The parish didn’t forget — Weir received 47 cards for her 109th birthday, many of them from St. Thomas parishioners.

Paige, 52, sees the attention from the parish as her grandmother simply reaping what she has sown.

“She’s just positive and happy,” Paige said. “She’s not pretentious. She’s not judgmental or prejudiced. ... She never spoke ill of anyone, which is wrapped up in her faith. ‘Be good to everyone’ — that’s kind of her persona. And she doesn’t just believe it, she lives it.”
Editor: Bishop, the Region X V Encuentro gathering will be held in mid-April in San Antonio. Please remind us of the focus of the V Encuentro.

Bishop Vásquez: The V Encuentro is an initiative of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; we began this process a couple of years ago following Pope Francis’ invitation to form authentic and joyful missionary disciples. The Encuentro process involves helping the church in the U.S. better respond to the Hispanic presence and to strengthen the ways in which Hispanics respond to the call of the New Evangelization as missionary disciples serving the entire church.

The goal is for these disciples to go out with the message of Jesus Christ to everyone in society, most especially to those in the peripheries on the edges of society, those who are often ignored and forgotten.

Editor: The Encuentro process began at the parish level, then parish delegates were sent to the diocesan Encuentro, which was held last October. What came out of the diocesan Encuentro?

Bishop Vásquez: Our diocesan Encuentro was a great success in that we had about 300 chosen delegates representing parishes across the diocese. I have to compliment our staff who took a great deal of time preparing for the event. Bishop Daniel Garcia and I were there to listen to the concerns and triumphs of the participants. The Holy Spirit was present in the people and the activities of the day as we listened to the experiences of so many priests, religious and laity — married couples, youth and young adults. This led to many lively discussions and honest conversations. This was a significant moment to see the church alive and active, and yes, there were concerns raised, but there was also a great sense of anticipation and hope.

In the months prior to the diocesan Encuentro, parishes held their Encuentro gatherings where people asked questions and received feedback from parishioners. One of the issues that arose and that was brought for to the diocesan Encuentro was how to help couples who are not married in the church. Another issue presented was how to get our Hispanic brothers and sisters engaged and more active in our parishes. How do we help them become missionary disciples?

Participants wanted to know how to get closer to God and how to teach their children about God and the church. There were concerns voiced about health care, academic opportunities for youth and establishing economic security. Yet, the primary question raised was how we as Catholics in the Diocese of Austin facilitate more active participation in our parish communities as a whole. Many participants said hospitality is a key component for Hispanics to get involved in the church. They believe once they have been welcomed by their pastor, the parish staff and the community, the people are more receptive to come forth to serve and work in parish ministries.

At the end of the day as we celebrated the Eucharist, we gave thanks for all of those who gathered to share their stories with us and to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us as we move forward. It was a memorable day for our diocese.

Editor: What will happen at the regional V Encuentro?

Bishop Vásquez: Delegates will come from Region X, which consists of Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas. The Diocese of Austin will send about 60 delegates to take part in this process. As the bishop liaison for Region X, I will participate in the regional Encuentro as well. Once again this will be a time for dialogue and discussion. We will depend on the Holy Spirit to raise up areas of concern, hope and blessing to be studied and prayed over. During the gathering, we will prioritize a list of themes that will be synthesized and brought forth to the national Encuentro, which will be held in Grapevine/Fort Worth Sept. 20-23.

Editor: Will there be delegates from Austin at the national Encuentro?

Bishop Vásquez: The Diocese of Austin will send delegates to the national Encuentro. In fact, each diocese in the U.S. will be represented at the September gathering. I look forward to the V Encuentro because I know it will a time of blessing and grace for the entire church in the U.S. This Encuentro process was designed to be a renewal of the whole church in the U.S. not just for Hispanics. I look forward to seeing the fruits of this journey.

Editor: What is your prayer for the upcoming Encuentro process?

Bishop Vásquez: I pray the church in the U.S. will listen to the Holy Spirit, especially speaking through the people participating in the Encuentro process. We recognize this moment as a time of grace that empowers new leadership in our church and invites all of us to be filled with missionary zeal and to go out to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.
The annual diocesan appeal surpasses its goal

As of mid-March, the Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) has raised more than $5.9 million in pledges from more than 20,000 families. The CSA surpassed its goal of $5.8 million on Feb 9.

Compared to last year, the CSA is 4 percent ahead in pledges, 7 percent in collections and 4 percent in average gift, said Lisa Rosenberger, the diocesan associate director of the annual appeal.

As of mid-March, the appeal has raised more than $5.9 million in pledges from nearly 20,000 families. Rosenberger said $4 million has been collected thus far.

The Good Shepherd Society, which was launched last year with great success, Rosenberger said, honors families who gave $2,500 or more to the appeal. To date, 365 Good Shepherd Society members have donated almost $1.6 million.

"Be One in Christ," the theme of this year’s appeal, encourages us to come together to proclaim the Good News and assist those who need help, Bishop Vásquez said.

“We support the clergy, provide education and faith formation for adults and children and encourage young adults to serve as priests, deacons and religious through this annual appeal,” the bishop said.

Rosenberger said the success of the CSA is also due to the support of the parishes in the diocese.

"The diocese is blessed to have the support of our wonderful parishes," she said.

“We are particularly grateful for the extra efforts that priests have made to support the annual appeal.”

As of publication, 69 parishes achieved their CSA goal, see the list below. Listed in blue are the 53 parishes that achieved their challenge goal.

The CSA final report will be included in the July/August issue of the Catholic Spirit. Visit www.austindiocese.org/csa or call Lisa Rosenberger at (512) 949-2450 for updated information on the appeal.

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Social Justice

Remembering our past to create a better future

By DeKarlos Blackmon | Columnist

Five years ago, we commemorated the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Four years ago, we commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was passed during a time when the federal government found itself wrestling with the constitution's prohibition of denying equal protection in terms of banning the use of racial, ethnic or gender criteria in an attempt to bring social justice and social benefits. And now, in 2018, we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In their statement on the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the U.S. bishops remind us, “The Dream of Dr. [Martin Luther] King and all who marched and worked with him has not yet fully become a reality. Remembering our past to create a better future for many in our country. While we cannot deny the change that has taken place, there remains much to be accomplished.”

The late Divine Word Bishop Joseph Abel Francis, a former pastor of Holy Cross Parish in Austin, often appealed to the conscience of Catholic America, calling for conversion in its way of thinking, speaking and acting relative to blacks. Today the clarion call is for conversion in our way of thinking and acting relative to all God’s people — whether red, yellow, brown, black, purple, green, blue or orange. The duty to be “neighborly” is rightly given to us in Scripture. We have a moral obligation to offer hospitality, even to those who do not look like us or talk like us.

In our culture, human life is repeatedly under assault. From the very moment of conception to natural death, life is threatened because our society has lost the true meaning of humanity, respect and basic human dignity. We must never lose sight of the fact that Christ became flesh so that we may come to know God’s love (1 Jn 4:9) and to make us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4). In Evangelium Vitae St. John Paul II explains “it is an absolute imperative to respect, love and promote the life of every brother and sister, in accordance with the requirements of God’s bountiful love in Jesus Christ.”

Our bishops have challenged us to “remember our collective past as a way to overcome historical ignorance and enact good public policy.” As a community who claims to be truly Catholic, and believes that the sacraments call us to “engage conversion of human hearts in racial harmony” in an effort “to transform attitude and action in ourselves and others,” we should consider the humanity and dignity of those striving under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). We should not allow the conversation about relief to be undermined by the rhetoric of illegal immigration.

Pope Francis brings attention to not only charity and mercy, but also to our responsibility of addressing social inequality by reminding us that “true power, at whatever level, is service, which has its luminous summit on the cross.” Like David and Isaiah, despite their faults, were chosen “for the great evangelization,” and so, too, are we chosen for the great evangelization. May we endeavor to work toward peace, love, joy and happiness in our communities this Easter season.
**SAINTS FOR OUR TIMES**

**St. Maria Crescentia goes from poor girl to saint**

By Mary Lou Gibson | Columnist

Anna Hoss was born in 1682, the daughter of poor wool weavers who struggled to provide for their large family in the small town of Kaulbeuren, Bavaria, Germany. Her only advantage against her poverty was her beautiful voice. Sarah Gallick writes in "The Big Book of Women Saints" that Catholics made up less than one third of the population of Kaulbeuren in the late 17th century, but many of them, including the mayor, would attend Mass to hear Anna sing.

From an early age, Anna wanted to become a Franciscan tertiary and enter the old Mayerhof convent of contemplative nuns of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. But because the convent was poor and without a good source of income, the superiors said they could not receive her without a dowry.

So the Protestant mayor who loved her singing and was impressed by her fine character offered the nuns a deal. David Farmer writes in the "Oxford Dictionary of Saints" that he told them he would get rid of a noisy neighboring tavern, which bothered them, if they accepted Anna as a novice.

The nuns took him up on this deal. Sadly, this gesture did not gain Anna any favor with the nuns. They resented the fact that she was admitted on the recommendation of a Protestant mayor, and they didn’t let Anna forget she had no dowry. In those early years, she had to sleep on the floor in the cells of other nuns and was made to do the most menial tasks. When she was finally given her own cell, it was small and damp. A new superior came in 1707, and recognized Anna’s holiness and made her a full member of the community. She was 21 years old and took the name Maria Crescentia.

One of her duties was as door keeper; she held this post for 16 years helping the poor who came to the convent. After a few years, she was appointed novice mistress and later in 1726, she became Mother Superior. In this role, she insisted on postulants being properly tested. She became a prolific letter writer and gained a reputation as a spiritual adviser and counselor. In the first six months of 1737, Sister Crescentia received more than 800 letters and answered them all, according to Gallick. Even Kaiser Karl VII and his wife, Maria Theresa, sought her counsel. She was also known to experience visions and ecstasies, especially of the Passion and gained a reputation as a mystic.

Editor Marion Habig, a Secular Franciscan, writes in the "Franciscan Book of Saints" that as Mother Superior, Crescentia had such prudence in material affairs that the circumstances of the convent became better than they had ever been — something of a miracle from the girl who came with no dowry.

Her health deteriorated in her final years and she died on Easter Sunday, April 5, 1744. Her tomb in Kaulbeuren became a place of pilgrimage.

Gallick writes that a few months after Mother Crescentia’s death, the local bishop assigned two priests to investigate her case, but they clashed with the nuns and the investigation ended. Then in 1775, the process of her canonization was begun again, but was stalled by the anti-Catholic policies of the German government in the late 18th century. She was finally beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1900, and canonized by St. John Paul II in 2001.

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

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**SPECIAL COLLECTION**

**Propagation of Faith, World Mission Sunday**

The special collection for the Propagation of Faith was taken up in parishes on World Mission Sunday, Oct. 22-23. The collection helps missionary activity around the world. Totals are listed below by deanery. To report an error, contact the diocesan Finance Office at (512) 949-2423.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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| GRAND TOTALS | $199,982.53 |
Lessons learned: A time for the church to lead

By Francesco Cesareo | Guest Columnist

Sexual abuse by those in positions of influence and power continues in this country. While the first light into such terrible acts was shed upon the Catholic Church more than a decade ago, since then incidents at institutions of higher learning, the USA Gymnastics team, among Hollywood executives, in the halls of government and even public schools, sexual abuse of minors – and adults – persists as a menace to our society and a threat to the innocent.

Sadly, the church and the aforementioned organizations failed victims of abuse. Too often, the entities sought to protect the accused or the institution and the victim was forgotten. This same response was apparently employed by Penn State University, Michigan State University, Hollywood executives, and the U.S. Congress when those organizations were recently faced with accusations of sexual abuse or sexual assault. Instead of learning from the mistakes of the church, they protected the institution, exacerbating the victims’ pain and trauma.

While these organizations failed to learn from the mistakes of the church, they would be well-informed to look to the church with regard to its comprehensive and unprecedented response to its sexual abuse crisis.

Following a 2002 meeting of the U.S. bishops in Dallas, the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was approved. This charter, which was adopted to address “allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy” provides comprehensive “guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse.” Since the charter was implemented, incidents of new allegations that have occurred since 2002 have decreased significantly. Why, then, have other embattled institutions – higher education, USA Gymnastics, Hollywood, and the U.S. Government – not looked to the success of the church’s response and implemented their own programs to prevent such acts and aid victims of abuse?

These organizations could collectively benefit from looking to and learning from the church on how to effectively respond to the sin and crime of abuse. The cost of sexual abuse should not be measured in dollars or the number of lives shattered from ignorance or the institution and the victim was forgotten. This same response was

The church has taken a leadership role in addressing this issue and today serves as a model for other organizations to emulate. The church also established a comprehensive program to provide victims a support system including Victim Assistance Coordinators and an annual audit of all dioceses on their compliance with the charter. Another example to be adopted by any organization providing services for youth: background checks and safe environment training for children on how to protect themselves from abuse and how to report such actions. To date, the church has conducted 2.4 million background checks as required by Article 13 of the charter and has trained more than 4.26 million children on how to detect and report abuse and trained nearly 3.38 million adults on proper interaction with children. There now even exists a screening process prior to an individual’s admission to the seminary to prevent future incidents.

As chair of the National Review Board, a lay-based group of individuals established by the charter to advise the bishops on how to prevent and respond to sexual abuse of minors and assess their compliance in the implementation of the charter through an annual audit, I have seen first-hand the effective reforms that emerged from the pain of the past. These reforms could undoubtedly discourage abuse in other areas of society.

Sexual abuse does not discriminate and, as learned from the despicable acts of Harvey Weinstein and Larry Nassar, can happen to anyone, male or female, young or old.

Many have, and will continue, to focus upon the Catholic Church’s shortcomings with regard to its initial response to the sexual abuse crisis. However, those with an earnest desire to address the problem of sexual abuse and assault at its core should instead focus upon and learn from the reforms that were implemented. The church has taken a leadership role in addressing this issue and today serves as a model for other organizations to emulate.

Francesco C. Cesareo, Ph.D., is president of Assumption College and chairman of the National Review Board of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.
Easter reflections on Angelico’s ‘Noli me tangere’

By Norman Farmer | Columnist

Among the Evangelists, the mystery of the Resurrection grows more vivid and intense in the Gospel of John, the only apostle to stand at the foot of the cross throughout the crucifixion and the only one to tell of Mary Magdalene’s unique encounter with the Risen Christ (Jn 20: 11-18).

When Blessed Fra Angelico painted this contemplative image in the first cell of the Convent of San Marco in Florence, however, it was not his intent to re-tell and humanize that story. Instead, he strides past mere story-telling and goes straight to the meaning of the Resurrection through images that reveal Easter, “the first day of the week” (Jn 20:1), to be the start of a new creation, and “Resurrection” to mean nothing less than God’s gift of new bodily life to all his people at the end.

Mary Magdalene, kneeling before the tomb (Jn 20:11), raises her eyes to see – a “gardener”? Indeed! And he is tilling anew a garden that looks precisely like the “hortus conclusus,” the “garden enclosed” – symbolic of the Virgin herself in whom the divine and natural, the seen and unseen, meet in a new creation at the Incarnation.

“Noli me tangere” – “touch me not” – he says, quickly side-stepping from her while saying, “I am not yet ascended to the Father” (Jn 20:17). Her outstretched hands, though, are not an act of pathos; she does not plead (look at the expression on her face!) rather her gesture expresses discovery. Look as well at what we now discover upon the space of green meadow that lies before and between them: a multitude of tiny red dots, some forming tiny crosses. The nearby stigmata upon Christ’s feet tell us what they mean, for the blood of the true Paschal Lamb now redeems the original garden itself, a total re-working of Genesis 2:8. The beautiful flowers (Aquinas calls them) upon Christ’s Holy body (“specialis décor”) now mingle with those of nature.

Today, San Marco is no longer a convent. The elderly remaining Dominican Brothers live elsewhere, and the multitude of paintings by the Blessed Angelico they left behind will seem to tourists like paintings in another secular museum. However, those who visit will know why this image in cell #1, just beyond the Blessed Angelico’s “Annunciation” at the head of the stairs, should initiate the other 23. As the master painter of the Order of Preachers would say, this too is something to meditate upon.

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.austin-diocese.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.austin-diocese/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.
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.

April 4: 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.

April 4: Bible Study on the Gospel of Luke on Wednesday at 7 p.m. at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Cedar Park. Details: bobgorski7@gmail.com.

April 5: Bible Study on the Gospel of Luke every Thursday at 9:30 a.m. at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Cedar Park. Details: bobgorski7@gmail.com.

April 7: Monthly Mass for Life at 8 a.m. at San Jose Parish in Austin. Prayer vigil after Mass at the church or an abortion facility. Details: www.austindiocese.org/sidewalk-ministry.

April 7: Marriage Packet Workshop for priests, deacons and parish staff from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Austin. Details: www.austindiocese.org/register-for-marriage-packet-workshop.

April 8: Eucharistic Adoration from 2 to 7 p.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Details: www.schoenstatt.us.

April 8: Fatima Trinitarian 20 Decade Rosary is prayed every Sunday at 4 p.m. at St. Anthony Parish in Kyle (except on national holidays).

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

April 9: Mass for the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord at 7 p.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Details: www.schoenstatt.us.

April 11: Discernment Dinner from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Borromeo House in Austin. Details: www.godiscalling.me.

April 17: Adoration for young professionals from 7 to 8 p.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Details: www.facebook.com/SchoenstattAustin.

April 18: Candlelight rosary at 7:30 p.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Details: www.schoenstatt.us.

April 21: 4th annual Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign Pilgrimage Day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. All who have received or who would like to receive the pilgrimage image are invited to this day. $10 registration fee. Register: Kyle and Graciela Hemmi at rosarycampaign@schoenstatt.us or (512) 202-6229.

April 21: Annulment Pathway to Healing Workshop from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Pastoral Center in Austin. The seminar is a time for reflecting on the demise of one’s marriage by taking a journey from pain and loneliness to acceptance and healing. Details: Deborah Patin at (512) 949-2478.

April 21: St. Mary’s Academy Catholic School Alumnae Reunion Luncheon at 11 a.m. at Maggiano’s in the Domain in Austin. Details: TNEJS@aol.com or (512) 837-3656.

April 23-24: The Austin Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (DCCW) will hold its annual convention in Round Rock. All women of the diocese are invited to attend and participate. The theme is “Women Embracing the Joy of the Gospel.” Details: mcowhite02@yahoo.com.


May 19: Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate at 10:30 a.m. at St. John Vianney Parish in Round Rock.

Burse

The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women has completed a burse for the Clerical Endowment Fund (CEF) in memory of Father Wade Russell, who died Feb. 17.

The totals for the burse as of Feb. 28, are listed below by council.

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

Community events

April 4: St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Waco will host a Healing Mass at 10 a.m. followed by lunch in the Parish Hall.

April 8: Radio Encuentro will host a Spring Fair from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. at St. Barbara Parish in Austin/Hornsby Bend.

April 8: Field of Flowers Day from 1 to 4 p.m. at Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery in Georgetown. Details: www.cotilo.com.

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

April 14-15: Be the Light Dance Party from 7 to 10 p.m. at St. Mary Parish in Temple kicks off St. Mary Parish Festival, which is April 15 from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Columbus Hall in Temple.

April 15: Spring Festival for St. Monica in Cameron from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Simon & George Hall. Barbecue chicken and sausage dinner is $10 per plate. Activities include a silent auction, sweet shop, cake wheel and country store.

April 21: Cougar Chase 5K Run/Walk/Kids 5K will be held at St. Louis Catholic School in Austin. Race starts at 8 a.m. Register at www.slscaustin.org.

April 21 and 22: Chorus Austin will present Haydn’s Stabat Mater April 21 at 7:30 p.m. and April 22 at 3 p.m. at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church in Austin. This is a hymn to Mary standing at the foot of the cross. Tickets start at $15 each. Details: www.chorusaustin.org or (512) 719-3300.

April 22: Spring Festival at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Waco from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Geneva Hall in Elm Mott. Activities include live and silent auction, country store, car show and games for all ages.

April 22: Spring Festival from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at St. Paul Chong Hasang Parish in Harker Heights. Food booths, entertainment for all ages and live music.

April 27: Cougar Classic Golf Tournament benefiting St. Louis Catholic School in Austin will be held at Teravista Golf Club. 1:30 p.m. shotgun start. Details: www.slcasAustin.org.

April 28: Spring Fiesta at St. William Parish in Round Rock from noon to 9 p.m. Activities include a garage sale, a variety of foods, train rides and live music. Details: (512) 255-4473 or www.saintwilliams.org.

April 29: St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Austin will host its first Spring Festival in 55 years beginning at 2 p.m. on the parish grounds.


May 15: Ninth annual Evening for the Ladies celebrating the Christ Child Society beginning at 6 p.m. at St. William Parish Hall in Round Rock. The Christ Child Society offers programs to support children in need throughout the Austin area. Tickets: Julie Schultz at (512) 468-8934 or Meg Beasley at (512) 810-8248.

May 19: St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in College Station will host a 5K Run and Children’s 1K Walk. Details: www.tabcs.org.

May 19: A Natural Family Planning Symposium will be held at St. Paul Chong Hasang Parish Center in Harker Heights. Parents, couples, grandparents, etc. are invited to learn more about natural family planning and raising children in today's culture. Details: Agnes Bayer at (214) 727-7940.
**Days of retreat, reflection and spirituality**

**April 24:** English Divine Mercy Workshop at St. William Parish Hall in Round Rock from 6:30 p.m. Francisco Gamez will delve into Jesus’ Divine Mercy. Details: Carol Troy at (512) 826-5910 or www.saintwilliams.org.

**April 25:** Spanish Divine Mercy Workshop at St. William Parish Hall in Round Rock from 6:30 p.m. Francisco Gamez will delve into Jesus’ Divine Mercy. Details: Carol Troy at (512) 826-5910 or www.saintwilliams.org.

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

**April 10:** The Spirituality of Giving and Receiving Care will be presented from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center in Burnet. The day will focus on the deeply human exchange of caring and being cared for by another. Cost is $35 per person. Register: www.euwc.org or (512) 715-0017.

**April 14:** Couples’ Time Out from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. There is “Resurrected Love: Calling to live sanctity in marriage.” Donation is $10 per couple. Babysitting is provided. Register: cto@schoenstatt.us.

**April 14:** Healing through the Heart of Jesus, a day of reflection, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrae Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. Father Charlie Garza, pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish in Dripping Springs, will be the presenter. Cost is $40. Register: www.austindiocese.org or (512) 667-9963.

**April 21:** 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 8-12 are invited to spend the day at the shrine to grow closer to Jesus through Mary with crafts, prayer and fun. Register: rgardner@schoenstatt.us.

**May 4:** Sixth annual Texas Women’s Retreat hosted by the Dominican Sisters of Mary Mother of the Eucharist. The retreat will include talks, testimonies, all-night Eucharistic Adoration, Mass and more. Details: Melanie Casal at dsomretreat@gmail.com or Sr. Maria Jose at (512) 863-4824.

**May 8:** “Seven Thousand Ways to Listen: Staying close to what is sacred” will be presented from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center in Burnet. Cost is $35 per person. Register: www.euwc.org or (512) 715-0017.

**Official schedules**

The official schedules for Bishop Joe Vásquez and Bishop Daniel Garcia are listed below. Dates and times are subject to change.
El Obispo Jose S. Vásquez escuchó y tomó notas durante el Encuentro diocesano del pasado octubre. (Foto por Enedelia J. Obregón)

Los siguientes temas surgieron de los participantes durante el Encuentro diocesano:

**Calidad de vida dignificada**
- La necesidad de una reforma migratoria integral
- Más oportunidades académicas para los jóvenes
- La búsqueda de estabilidad económica
- Mantener a familias unidas y a salvo
- Acceso a un amplio cuidado de la salud

**Estabilidad familiar**
- Proveer de hogares seguros para las familias
- Ofrecer talleres y clases para padres
- Acceso a la preparación sacramental, particularmente para aquellos que no están casados por la iglesia y para niños pequeños.

**Formación y Participación**
- Dando la bienvenida y motivando a hispanos para que regresen a la iglesia y participen en los sacramentos y en el ministerio.
- Animando relaciones activas y más profundas con Cristo.

**Evangelización**
- Aprender cómo invitar a miembros de su familia y a amigos a la iglesia
- Compartir información de la iglesia con los miembros de su familia y con amigos.

**Vocaciones**
- Compartir historias sobre la vocación con niños
- Ayudar a que padres y miembros de su familia comiencen conversaciones con sus hijos sobre la vida religiosa y el sacerdocio.

**Encuentro es un renovación para la iglesia entera**

El Obispo José S. Vásquez es el quinto obispo de la Diócesis de Austin, que es el hogar de más de 500,000 Católicos.

Editora: Obispo, la reunión del Encuentro de la Región XV se llevará a cabo a mediados de abril en San Antonio. Por favor recuerden el enfoque del V Encuentro.

Obispo Vásquez: El V Encuentro es una iniciativa de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos: comenzamos este proceso hace un par de años siguiendo la invitación del Papa Francisco de formar discípulos misioneros auténticos y gozosos. El proceso del encuentro involucra ayudar a que la iglesia en los Estados Unidos responda de una mejor manera a la presencia hispana y fortalezca las maneras en las que los hispanos responden al llamado de la Nueva Evangelización como misioneros discípulos sirviendo a la iglesia entera. La meta es que estos discípulos salgan llevando el mensaje de Jesucristo a todos en la sociedad, especialmente a aquellos en la periferia de la sociedad, aquellos con frecuencia son ignorados y olvidados.

Editora: El proceso del Encuentro comenzó en el nivel parroquial, entonces delegados parroquiales fueron enviados al Encuentro diocesano, que se llevó a cabo el pasado octubre. ¿Qué resultado tuvo el Encuentro diocesano?

Obispo Vásquez: Nuestro Encuentro diocesano fue un gran éxito ya que tuvimos alrededor de 300 delegados escogidos para representar a las parroquias de lo largo de la diócesis. Tengo que elogiar a nuestro diócesis. Tengo que elogiar a nuestro Obispo Vásquez es el quinto obispo de la Diócesis de Austin, que es el hogar de más de 500,000 Católicos.

Obispo Vásquez: El V Encuentro fue diseñado para ser una renovación de toda la iglesia en los Estados Unidos, no sólo para los hispanos. Espero con ansia ver los frutos de este viaje.

Editora: ¿Cuál es su oración para el proceso del Encuentro que se aproxima?

Obispo Vásquez: Oro por que la iglesia en los Estados Unidos escuchará al Espíritu Santo, especialmente hablando a través de la gente participando en el proceso del Encuentro. Reconocemos este momento como un tiempo de gracias que empodera al nuevo liderazgo en nuestra iglesia y nos invita a todos a ser llenados por un cielo misionero y a salir y proclamar la Buena Nueva de Jesucristo.
Los Caballeros de Colón están conociendo nuevos miembros en línea

Por Enedélia J. Obregón | Corresponsal

Los Caballeros de Colón están probando una forma diferente de reclutar nuevos miembros en donde se pueden encontrar hoy: en línea. El programa piloto es una iniciativa del Consejo Supremo de Caballeros de Colón, dijo el director del programa de membresías de Texas, Jack Gunn.

“Las personas más jóvenes tienen una forma diferente de interactuar,” dijo Gunn. “Estamos tratando de establecer una mejor presencia por ese medio y transmitirles el mensaje de los beneficios de estar en Caballeros de Colón. En segundo lugar, si deciden unirse, pueden hacerlo en línea de acuerdo a su conveniencia.” Él señaló que uno de los 53 nuevos miembros se había inscrito a las 3 a.m.

Si están interesados en participar en proyectos de servicio local, pueden unirse más tarde a un consejo en su parroquia, que es “donde está la acción,” dijo Gunn.

Lanzamiento en Texas

El programa se lanzó el otoño pasado en tres pequeños estados, y los resultados parecen prometedores. Cuando el consejo decidió expandirlo a siete estados, el liderazgo de Caballeros de Colón de Texas sugirió probarlo aquí antes de desplegarlo en todo el país ya que Texas tiene uno de los mayores consejos con 107,000 miembros. El programa de Texas se lanzó a principios de año, dijo Gunn.

Desde que la organización se fundó en 1882, el reclutamiento se ha llevado a cabo en persona de uno a uno o en un evento de reclutamiento de la parroquia. El fundador de los Caballeros de Colón, el Padre Michael McGivney, un pastor asociado en la parroquia. El fundador de los Caballeros de Colón del estado tiene dos empleados de tiempo completo para concentrarse en la membresía hispana, dijo Oldmixon.

Creciendo y cambiando

Doug Oldmixon, diputado estatal, dijo que los Caballeros de Colón están creciendo, llegando a 1,7 millones de miembros hace un par de años. La demografía del grupo también está cambiando. “Los Caballeros son un reflejo del catolicismo estadounidense,” dijo Oldmixon. “Se está volviendo más joven y más hispano. En Texas, estamos creciendo cada año. El grupo Caballeros de Colón del estado tiene dos empleados de tiempo completo para concentrarse en la membresía hispana, dijo Oldmixon.

En la Diócesis de Austin

Kevin Brinkman, delegado diocesano de los Caballeros de Colón, está supervisando el nuevo programa para los 90 consejos en la Diócesis de Austin, que tiene 12,500 miembros de los Caballeros de Colón. Los Caballeros están presentes en muchos eventos diocesanos, como en la Misa Pro-vida anual; sirven como guardias de honor para los obispos en diversos eventos. A nivel parroquial, organizan una variedad de actividades para recaudar dinero para seminaristas y hogares de maternidad, por nombrar algunas, dijo. El reclutamiento en línea es una forma de llegar a los hombres que no conocen a los Caballeros de Colón a través de métodos tradicionales y de lo contrario no se les puede contactar. “Se mueven tanto por el trabajo,” dijo. “Viven y mueren a través de sus productos electrónicos”. El objetivo es ayudar a los nuevos miembros en línea a tener una mente abierta acerca de involucrarse localmente, dijo Brinkman.

“El consejo local es donde está la acción,” dijo. “Estamos utilizando los medios en línea como la presentación final sobre quiénes somos. Si ven un evento que estamos haciendo, tal vez puedan venir y ayudar con él. Los haremos sentir bienvenidos y les daremos boletines informativos. No se unen a menos que esas organizaciones cumplan con sus expectativas primero,” dijo. “La organización debe reflejar los valores que ellos valoran.”

Un ejemplo es Theology on Tap, que se reúne en los lugares públicos donde a los jóvenes les gusta congregarse, dijo. Aprenden sobre teología mientras socializan. “Para muchos jóvenes, el compromiso social ocurre en línea,” dijo Oldmixon. “Entonces intentamos cumplir con esa expectativa. Tiene que ser interactivo, y eso es lo que estamos haciendo”. Incluso reunirse para planificar eventos está cambiando, dijo. “Pueden planear eventos sin siquiera estar juntos en la misma habitación,” dijo Oldmixon.

Los Caballeros de Colón están creciendo y cambiando. “Pueden planear eventos sin siquiera estar juntos en la misma habitación,” dijo Oldmixon. “Es una forma diferente de conocer gente.” Si ese es el lugar a donde va la gente, entonces ese es el lugar donde debemos estar para encontrarnos con ellos y llevarles contenido saludable y comunicaciones cargadas de valores”.

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Esperanza por aquellos buscando la ciudadanía

Por Enedelia J. Obregón | Corresponsal

Hay esperanza en el aire en un pequeño salón de clases en un edificio portátil que sirve como el salón parroquial para la Dolores Parish en Austin. Media docena de estudiantes observan con cuidado mientras que Zach Lindsey escribe en un pizarrón: la Constitución es la ley suprema de la tierra. ¿Qué son las enmiendas? ¿Cuáles son las tres ramas del gobierno? Algunos estudiantes se encuentran alrededor de unas mesas largas, dan las respuestas, sus lenguas tratando de formar las palabras rápidamente en este lenguaje difícil y extrañamente llamado inglés. Otros, no tan seguros, miran sus libros de trabajo o unos a otros buscando ayuda.

Parte, de 31 años con una sonrisa contagiosa que usa solo un nombre, se ríe al tratar de pronunciar “repre- sentativa”. Es de mucha importancia que estos estudiantes sepan las respuestas y puedan pronunciarlas correctamente en inglés. Los estudiantes son residentes legales y permanentes de Estados Unidos con green cards, preparándose para su examen de ciudadanía. Su clase es un esfuerzo colaborativo entre Manos de Cristo y Catholic Charities of Central Texas.

Lindsey dijo que Manos de Cristo ofrece clases de inglés como segunda lengua y clases de ciudadanía en varias localidades en el área de Austin. Este es el segundo año en que las clases de ciudadanía han sido ofrecidas en Dolores Parish, ubicada en el barrio este de Montopolis en Austin.

“Realmente he disfrutado enseñar las clases de ciudadanía,” dijo Lindsey. “Enseñar ESL no se siente como un trabajo; es como hablar con adultos alrededor de una taza de café. Pero enseñar ciudadanía es muy especial. Esta gente está muy apasionada por aprender. Verlos pasar por esta larga experiencia y proceso es maravilloso.”

Gloria Coronado dijo que después de muchos años con una green card, teme no poder renovarla dado el clima político actual. La ciudadanía para ella significa seguridad. “También quiero un buen trabajo,” dijo Coronado, quien trae a sus hijos Leonardo, 12, y Emmanuel, 6, por que su esposo trabaja hasta tarde. “También quiero votar e involucrarme en las actividades de mis hijos”.

Parte quiere ser una ciudadana porque, “todo en los Estados Unidos es bueno. Es el número uno en el mundo. Quiero votar”.

Ella y su esposo salieron de Myanmar, antes conocido como Burma, en 2004 y pasaron siete años en un campamento de refugiados en Malasia antes de venir a los Estados Unidos hace más de cuatro años. Ellos tienen ahora un hijo de 7 años.


En preparación, estudiantes voluntarios de la Universidad de Texas, Trevor Moore y Stephanie Steele actuaron la entrevista como ensayo. Ellos hicieron y respondieron a preguntas de la página 20 de la aplicación, la cual pide información detallada. Los estudiantes entonces practicaron unos con otros.


Puede ser un acto de acrobacia estar en clases. El esposo de Parte se queda en casa con su hijo mientras ella asiste a la clase. Una vez que ella sea ciudadana, él atenderá la clase.

Asociándose con CCCTX

Recientemente ha habido un aumento en los residentes permanentes comenzando el proceso de ciudadanía. Previamente CCCTX ayudó a cerca de 40 personas al año a obtener su ciudadanía. Durante los dos años pasados, el número ha aumentado a entre 110 y 120 al año. En todo el país, el número de aplicaciones a la ciudadanía aumentó un 18 por ciento.

Lindsey también dijo la bienvenida a Justin Estep, director de los servicios legales de inmigración de CCCTX y un abogado de inmigración, quien vino a la clase a contrastar las preguntas legales que tenían los estudiantes.

En el 2016, CCCTX recibió un subsidio de dos años de $250,000 del Departamento de Homeland Security para servicios legales para residentes permanentes aplicando a la ciudadanía. CCCTX dividió el subsidio con Manos de Cristo, que provee de maestros y materiales tales como libros. CCCTX usó el dinero del subsidio para contratar personal con conocimientos legales de inmigración para poder guiar a sus clientes a través del complicado proceso. Los clientes deben de cumplir con 200 por ciento de los lineamientos federales de pobreza para calificar para obtener un abogado de inmigración de CCCTX o representativos acreditados del Department of Justice con conocimiento sobre la ley de inmigración. Esto quiere decir que una pareja puede tener un salario anual de hasta $35,000. Una familia de cuatro puede ganar hasta $50,000.

Estep recomendó que todo el que esté aplicando a la ciudadanía contrate un abogado, lo cual puede ser caro. CCCTX cobró cerca de $90 por el proceso completo para aquellos que califican. En el sector privado, puede costar desde $2,000 hasta $5,000.

Estep dijo que la ley de inmigración es complicada, y hay ocasiones en las que U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services distribuye un memo sobre un cambio en el procedimiento pero no lo hace público. Un pequeño cambio puede arruinar la aplicación de alguien si no tienen la ayuda de alguien que conoce bien la ley.

Las leyes de inmigración a menudo son contradictorias porque han sido adoptadas poco a poco ya que no ha habido una reforma migratoria integral, dijo. Respecto a los ciudadanos atrapados en las redadas de Inmigración y Aduanas, Estep ofreció algunos consejos. Los ciudadanos nacionales deben llevar sus tarjetas de naturalización en todo momento. Es la ley. A aquellos que nacieron como ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos pero que temen que también puedan ser detenidos durante una redada, se les recomienda que obtengan un pasaporte y una tarjeta de pasaporte. Deja el pasaporte en casa y lleve la tarjeta del pasaporte, dijo.

CCCTX espera que el subsidio para los trabajos de ciudadanía sea renovado. Sin embargo, si no es así, CCCTX volverá a los días de tarifas muy reducidas y un plan de pago flexible, incluso si aumenta el número de solicitantes de ciudadanía, dijo Estep.

Para obtener más información acerca de los Servicios Legales de Inmigración en CCCTX, llame al (512) 651-6100.
El papa honra a una monja enfermera que salvó su vida

Por Cindy Wooden | Catholic News Service

El Papa Francisco utilizó una reunión con miles de enfermeros italianos para honrar a una enfermera que cree que le salvó la vida al decirle a sus médicos que necesitaba antibióticos más agresivos para el tratamiento de una infección pulmonar.

“Cuando yo tenía 20 años y estaba a punto de morir, fue ella la que dijo a los doctores, incluso discutiendo con ellos: ‘no, esto no funciona, hay que darle más’,” dijo el papa el 3 de marzo durante una reunión con miembros de la asociación de enfermeros profesionales de Italia.

“Sobre viví,” dijo el papa, gracias a los antibióticos y a la extirpación del pulmón infectado. “Le doy las gracias. Y querría nombrarla aquí, delante de ustedes: Sor Cornelia Caraglio”. La monja dominica de Italia era “una mujer estupenda, también valiente, hasta el punto de discutir con los médicos”.

El papa dijo a los enfermeros “Una caricia, una sonrisa, está llena de significado para el que está enfermo. Es un gesto simple pero animador, el o ella se siente acompañado, se siente más cerca de ser sanado, se siente como una persona, no como un número”.

—El Papa Francisco

Recorriendo nuestro pasado para crear un mejor futuro

Por DeKarlos Blackmon | Columnista

Hace cinco años, conmemoramos el 50 aniversario de la Marcha sobre Washington por el Empleo y la Libertad. Hace cuatro años, conmemoramos el 50 aniversario de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964, que se aprobó en un momento en que el gobierno federal se encontraba luchando contra la prohibición de la constitución de negar igual protección en términos de prohibir el uso de los criterios de raza, etnia o género en un intento de traer justicia social y beneficios sociales. Y ahora, en 2018, conmemoramos el 50 aniversario del asesinato del Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

En su declaración en el 50 aniversario de la Marcha sobre Washington por el Empleo y la Libertad, los obispos estadounidenses nos recuerdan: “El sueto del Dr. [Martin Luther] King y todos los que marcharon y trabajaron con él aún no se ha convertido en realidad para muchos en nuestro país. Si bien no podemos negar el cambio que ha tenido lugar, queda mucho por lograr”.

El difunto obispo del Vértice Divino Joseph Abel Francis, antiguo pastor de la Holy Cross Parish en Austin, apeló a menudo a la conciencia de la Américana Católica, pidiendo la conversión en su manera de pensar, hablar y actuar en relación con las personas de color.

Hoy el toque de clarín es para la conversión en nuestra forma de pensar y actuar en relación con todo el pueblo de Dios, ya sea rojo, amarillo, marrón, negro, morado, verde, azul o naranja. El deber de ser “buenos vecinos” se nos da correcta y brilloses en las Escrituras. Tenemos la obligación moral de ofrecer hospitalidad, incluso a aquellos que no se parecen a nosotros o que no hablan como nosotros.

En nuestra cultura, la vida humana está bajo asalto repetidamente. Desde el momento de la concepción hasta la muerte natural, la vida se ve amenazada porque nuestra sociedad ha perdido el verdadero significado de la humanidad, el respeto y la dignidad humana básica. Nunca debemos perder de vista el hecho de que Cristo se hizo carne para que podamos conocer el amor benéfico de Dios (1 Jn 4: 9) y para hacernos “participantes de la naturaleza divina” (2 P 1: 4). En “Evangelium Vitae,” San Juan Pablo II explica que “es un imperativo absoluto respetar, amar y promover la vida de cada hermano y hermana, de acuerdo con los requisitos del amor generoso de Dios en Jesucristo”.

Nuestros obispos nos han retado a recordar nuestro pasado colectivo como una forma de superar la ignorancia histórica y actuar de acuerdo a una buena política pública”. Como una comunidad que dice ser verdaderamente Católica y que cree que los sacramentos nos llaman a “comportar con la conversión de corazones humanos en armonía racial “en un esfuerzo” por transformar la actitud y la acción en nosotros mismos y en los demás, “debemos considerar la humanidad y la dignidad de quienes se esfuerzan bajo la Acción Diferida para los Llegados en la Infancia (DACA). No debemos permitir que la conversación sobre el dar alivio se vea menoscabada por la retórica de la inmigración ilegal.

El Papa Francisco apunta la atención no solo a la caridad y a la misericordia, sino también a nuestra responsabilidad de abordar la desigualdad social recordándonos que “el verdadero poder, en cualquier nivel, es el servicio, que tiene su cumbre luminosa en la cruz”.

Como David e Isaias, a pesar de sus faltas, fueron elegidos “para la gran evangelización,” así también somos elegidos para la gran evangelización. Esforcémonos por trabajar hacia la paz, el amor, la alegría y la felicidad en nuestras comunidades durante este tiempo de Pascua.

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Bishop Joe Vásquez installed members of the diaconate class of 2019 as acolytes on March 17 at Sacred Heart Parish in Austin. (Photo by Shelley Metcalf)

Father Javier A. Toscano, pastor of St. Mary Parish in San Saba and St. Peter Mission in Goldthwaite, earned his U.S. citizenship on Jan. 25. He was born in Columbia and has been in Texas since January 2007 as a priest in the Austin Diocese. Parishioners honored him with a special celebration on Feb. 3. (Photo courtesy Joanne Weik)

The Immaculate Heart of Mary Rosary Makers Guild from St. Anthony Parish in Kyle commissioned six new members on Jan 6. Deacon Jeff Cadenhead blessed 600 rosaries which were given to the Knights of Columbus to take to Haiti on March 6. (Photo courtesy Ernest Garcia)

High schoolers from Santa Rosa Parish in Andice presented the Way of the Cross in silhouette on March 2. (Photo courtesy Karen Kurtin)

Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Garcia celebrated the sacrament of confirmation Feb. 10 at Sacred Heart Parish in Austin. The parish Knights of Columbus led the honor guard. (Photo courtesy Ignacio Acosta)

The University Catholic Center’s STRONG ministry team presented the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit Retreat at Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center in Burnet. (Photo courtesy STRONG Retreat Team)

Students from the school’s Chinese classes performed at a Chinese New Year celebration in Austin on Feb. 24. (Photos courtesy Cristina Almanza)

Students, staff members and community members from St. Dominic Savio Catholic High School in Austin donated 80 ponytails during Cuts for Cancer on Feb. 9.

The seventh graders at St. Louis Catholic School in Austin visited the missions of San Antonio. Father James Misko celebrated Mass with the students at Mission San José. (Photo courtesy Carrie Vernieuw)

Send photos by the 10th of the month to catholic-spirit@austindiocese.org. Publication is not guaranteed.
Paulist Father Rich Andre served as chaplain on “A Paulist Pilgrimage to the Holy Land” Jan. 29-Feb. 9. The main stops were Jerusalem and Galilee. (Photo courtesy Father Rich Andre)

During Catholic Schools Week, Father Dean Wilhelm visited Holy Family Catholic School in Austin to celebrate Mass and led a Eucharistic Procession throughout the buildings. (Photo courtesy Cristina Almanza)

Students from St. Michael’s Catholic Academy attended the Austin Energy Regional Science Festival. Four students received awards for their science projects. (Photo courtesy Laura Duggan)

The Cathedral School of St. Mary celebrated Mardi Gras with a parade led by the Kinder Krewe. The school also held a Shining Stars Talent Show in late January. (Photos courtesy Esme Hoang)

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in College Station held a family retreat March 2-4. The parish also celebrated married couples on Feb. 10. (Photos courtesy Shannon Rother and Matthew Whiteacre)

The Girl Scout Daisy Troop from St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic School in Austin participated in Operation Cookie. They assembled Girl Scout cookie care packages for soldiers and veterans who receive Operation Cookie Donations. (Photo courtesy Michelle Fontana)

St. Mary’s Catholic School in Temple collected needed supplies for a local animal rescue group. Students donated dog food, treats, paper towels, toys, etc. (Photo courtesy Lana Shadbourn)

Women from Sacred Heart Parish in La Grange presented the worship service written by women of Suriname at the annual World Day of Prayer observed March 2 at the Second Baptist Church. (Photo courtesy Elizabeth Kallus)

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