Honoring the life of a good, faithful servant

Bishop Emeritus John E. McCarthy

Bishop Emeritus John E. McCarthy chats with parishioners after Mass in 1996. Bishop McCarthy died Aug. 18 at the age of 88. (Photo by Helen Osman)

Bishop Emeritus John E. McCarthy, the third bishop of the Diocese of Austin, died Aug. 18 at the age of 88. A priest for more than 62 years, Bishop McCarthy was a “true son of the church,” said Bishop Joe Vásquez during the Vigil Service on Aug. 23 at St. William Parish in Round Rock.

“He was a man filled with joy, even at the end of his life when he was suffering greatly,” Bishop Vásquez said. “He embraced the joy that comes from living a full life with Jesus and with others.”

Bishop Vásquez gave thanks for his predecessor’s commitment to social justice. Bishop McCarthy marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement. As an Irishman, he was always ready for a fight, and he was not afraid to express his opinion, he said.

“Bishop McCarthy recognized it was Christ who chose him to serve the church as a priest. And he was appointed to go out and bear much fruit,” Bishop Vásquez said. Bishop McCarthy grew up in Houston, the youngest of four children raised by their single mother (his father died just after he was born). The family attended All Saints Parish in the Heights neighborhood in Houston, which is where the young McCarthy came to know Father Jack Perusina, who led a volunteer group that visited the slums and barrios of Houston to help the poor.

Father Perusina introduced McCarthy to the labor movement and to social justice and ultimately to the idea of service through the priesthood. After thousands of conversations over a three-year period, McCarthy began to think seriously about helping others as a life mission.

After graduating from St. Thomas High School in 1949, McCarthy enrolled at St. Mary Seminary where he completed his studies for the priesthood. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston on May 26, 1956, at St. Mary Cathedral in Galveston. He served at St. Pius V in Pasadena for five years, then was briefly assigned to St. Cecilia Parish before returning to serve at his home parish All Saints in the Heights in 1963.

While addressing a conference in San Antonio on the ties between worship and social justice, McCarthy caught the eye of San Antonio Archbishop Robert E. Lucey who quickly drafted him to work for the Bishops’ Committee for the Spanish Speaking. McCarthy was elevated to head the Spanish-speaking ministry although he did not speak the language. He made sure, however, that his successor was Hispanic. His new job took McCarthy to all corners of the U.S. setting up ecumenical groups to assist Spanish-speaking migrants. The groups McCarthy organized would then apply for federal funds under the Johnson Administration’s Great Society anti-poverty programs.

Between 1968 and 1969, he worked at the U.S. Catholic Conference, the predecessor of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. During that time, he helped draft several pastoral statements on race relations, poverty, welfare reform and other social action items. He worked closely with Johnson administration officials on issues of health and welfare as well as urban development. He assisted bishops in preparing responses to the national urban riots occurring throughout the nation.

Before making the trek back to Texas, McCarthy and six of his close associates cloistered in Ontario, Canada, and wrote a policy statement on Scripture-inspired and community-based self-help programs to address poverty. It sought to organize “groups of white and minority poor to develop economic and political power in their own communities.” The paper, adopted by the U.S. bishops’ conference, became the framework for the Campaign for Human Development.

“The Campaign for Human Development came out of the Los Angeles riots in 1964. Terrible problems and conditions existed and the church did not have the mechanisms in place to address them,” McCarthy said in 2008. Today, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development gives out

See McCarthy on Page 3
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 afflicting the Catholic community and life, while acknowledging the humanity of the community and examining, with courage, topics that challenge and encourage growth in the faith.

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• E-mail to catholic-spirit@austindiocese.org.
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THE VOICES OF THE CATHOLIC SPIRIT

Running on Faith

‘Do you also want to leave?’

By Shelley Metcalf | Catholic Spirit Editor

I am a cradle Catholic. I have worked for the Catholic Church, namely the Diocese of Austin, for 21 years. Even though I never expected to work for the church, landing the job of “Communications Associate” on May 19, 1997, was probably the biggest gift I will ever experience in my professional career.

In these years of church work, I have seen a lot. I have worked with people of the highest caliber of faith, and my faith has matured greatly. I have also seen people whose faith has been destroyed because they work for the church. Those are the people who have asked, “Why do you stay?” Until recently, I laughed that question off and typically dismissed it with a big smile and a flip of hand.


For several years, maybe even a whole week, as we all dealt with the anger and sadness surrounding the grand jury report, I asked myself that question over and over again.

Then I read the Sunday Gospel from John on Aug. 26. It’s the last installment of the Bread of Life discourse. In the previous Sunday Gospel reading, Jesus told the disciples that he is the Bread of Life. He tells them whoever eats of his flesh and drinks of his blood will have eternal life.

Those words from Jesus are hard for the disciples to believe. They are so hard that many actually left Jesus and “returned to their former way of life.”

Then Jesus asks the big question that immediately got my attention: “Jesus then said to the Twelve, ‘Do you also want to leave?’”

It was so close to the very question I had been asking myself for the last week. As my eyes filled with tears, I read Simon Peter’s answer to Jesus’ question: “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

Booo! There was the answer to my question, “Why do I stay?” I stay because I know that Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life, he is my Lord, my Savior, my Rock, my Strength. I stay because working for the church is the best way that I have found to share my love of Christ with others. I stay because I see the Holy Spirit working here too.

I stay because God has placed in me the desire to communicate the Good News of his love with others. I stay because of the Good News that you will find reflected in the life of Bishop John McCarthy (see Pages 1-4). I stay because of the loving and merciful work that our priests and deacons do on a daily basis (see story on Page 8).

Most of all, I stay because of the love and sense of community that I felt as I watched our bishop ordain a dying man to the diaconate on Aug. 4 (see story on Page 6). That day my eyes were opened to the heart of Jesus. That day my heart was broken and then gently stitched back together as I watched those big, tough men gently place their hands on the shoulders of Flora Guerra as they prayed the Litany of Saints (see photo on Page 6).

I stay because I want all of you to know that God is present, Jesus is alive and the Holy Spirit is at work in our church. I will not allow the pain and the sadness on Pages 10-15 to outweigh the joy and love found on every other page of this issue.

I love this church and all of its beautiful traditions, but I stay because I love God even more!

Official Appointment

Bishop Joe Vásquez has made the following appointment:

• Father Timothy Vaverek has been appointed priest (Canon) of the parish in the Austin Diocese, effective Aug. 27. He will continue to serve as pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Gatesville and St. Thomas Parish in Hamilton.

Advisory

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of Petronillo Cruz Figueroa is requested to notify Gloria Villareal as soon as possible at (512) 949-2482.

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Rest in peace, Bishop John E. McCarthy

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millions of dollars in grant funds each year to organizations engaged in social justice and anti-poverty efforts. The campaign is not without its critics who bemoan it supports left-wing causes, which often advocate anti-Catholic positions on such issues as abortion.

“When you start social justice, it’s not very long before you get involved in conflict,” McCarthy said. “Social justice involves the moral theology of the church. It is an imbalance of relationships where one takes advantage of the other, the stronger of the weaker.”

In 1969, McCarthy returned to Texas to pastor Houston’s St. Teresa Parish. He was eager to put into practice the many programs he advocated in position papers developed at the national level. He initiated a comprehensive program of social ministry that involved the entire parish. This initial effort at St. Teresa’s gave rise to the concept of parish social ministry throughout the U.S. Catholic church. After four years at St. Teresa, McCarthy was named the executive director of the Texas Catholic Conference, the state equivalent of the national bishops’ organization he had worked for during the 1960s. He spent the next seven years crisscrossing the state advocating the Texas bishops’ policy positions, promoting social service ministries, and encouraging priestly and lay formation. No ministry and no area of the state escaped his energetic attention.

His service to the church was recognized by Rome in 1979, when he was named Auxiliary Bishop of Galveston-Houston. As a bishop, he again got involved in social service issues at the national level. He secured a seat on the board of Catholic Relief Services where he was instrumental in exposing an unhealthy connection between the Catholic agency and the CIA. He helped reshape the direction Catholic Relief Services. He traveled to Ethiopia to see first-hand the pain caused by the famine that gripped that country.

At the end of 1985, St. John Paul II named Bishop McCarthy to replace his former seminary teacher, Bishop Vincent Harris, as the third bishop of Austin. Bishop McCarthy brought a new awareness to social involvement and a passion for missions at a time when the diocese was perched for unprecedented growth.

As McCarthy took the helm of the Diocese of Austin, Central Texas experienced an economic boom due to an explosion of high-tech companies. The population of the Diocese of Austin mushroomed to 2 million and the Catholic population to 400,000, or 20 percent of the population. The Catholic population grew to five times that of the diocese’s size at its founding in 1947.

To help meet the growth, Bishop McCarthy renovated the Chancery, converting its garages into office space and secured additional office space for a diocesan Pastoral Center to house the new programs he created as part of his social service ministering approach and those he expanded in response to the growth. He also renovated the diocese’s Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton.

A great believer in education, McCarthy guided the growth of St. Michael’s Catholic Academy, opened St. Joseph Catholic High School in Bryan, Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Temple and a number of elementary schools throughout the diocese. He also established campus ministry centers at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas State University in San Marcos and Baylor University in Waco.

Bishop McCarthy established the Office of Black Catholic Advisory Board in 1987. Johnnie Dorsey served as the director of Black Catholics from that time until his recent retirement. “Bishop McCarthy worked hard to address the needs, concerns, hopes and aspirations of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Austin,” Dorsey said. The bishop had a special affinity for Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Washington-on-the-Brazos, a predominantly black community, which is the oldest Catholic community in the Diocese of Austin.

“He loved that parish,” Dorsey said. “He told everyone he could about the history of the blacks and whites worshiping together there during the 1800s. He made sure they had a priest there to celebrate Mass each Sunday, and he helped them build a new church in 1995.”

To help fund many of his ideas for making the diocese more proactive in providing social services to those in need, Bishop McCarthy initiated the Catholic Services Appeal. He established the diocesan Mission Council and opened a center to assist immigrants. In 1990, Bishop McCarthy helped found the Diocesan Law Project to provide legal services to low-income families. The next year Bishop McCarthy created the diocesan Office for Parish Social Ministry and many parishes followed his lead and developed social ministry outreach programs. In 1993, the diocese started the Gabriel Project to aid women with unexpected pregnancies.

He established 19 new parishes in his 15 years as bishop. Among the new parishes established by Bishop McCarthy were St. Albert the Great, St. Paul, Holy Vietnamese Martyrs, Santa Barbara, St. Vincent de Paul, all in Austin and St. Patrick in Hutto. He founded Good Shepherd in Johnson City, St. Paul Chong Haang in Harker Heights, San Juan Diego in Stony Point, St. Stephen in Salado, Holy Family in Lexington, St. Matthew in Rogers, Our Lady of San Juan in Moody and the Texas State Catholic Student Center in San Marcos (now our Lady of Wisdom Parish). Finally, he established St. Andrew Kim now in Austin, St. Philip in China Spring, St. Francis of Assisi in Franklin, St. John Vianney in Round Rock and St. Peter Catholic Student Center in Waco.

Bricks and mortar are only a necessary part of a worship organization. McCarthy, as Msgr. Victor Goertz observed, came to the job with extensive experience in social ministry and of the “church in the modern world.”

“He was not inward but rather outward looking, a visionary in the good sense. I once said to him, he was a pragmatic philosopher and a functional theologian,” Msgr. Goertz said.

In keeping with his pragmatism and functionality, one of the first steps the new bishop undertook was to convene a diocesan synod to “discuss the role of the church in the future.” Some 530 delegates from 125 parishes and missions came to Austin to draft recommendations on pastoral care of the diocese.

Most of the participants were lay people. Some 28,000 parishioners and 6,000 college students responded to a survey mailed to them by the synod. They worked on the recommendations for four years and ultimately made 277 suggestions affecting nearly every aspect of the diocese.

Bishop McCarthy was keenly aware that the number of priests to parishioners was dwindling fast and he looked for ways to address the problem. He actively sought men to join the diaconate. During his tenure as bishop, nearly 150 men became deacons, a fourfold increase from when he arrived in Austin. The bishop also initiated a program to recruit parish business
Bishop McCarthy took his role in the church very seriously
Continued from Page 3

administrators to give priests more time to celebrate the sacraments with the people.

His time in Austin was not without controversy, yet his love for the church was evident throughout his time in Austin. He retired in 2001, but resided in Austin, which he had come to consider his home. Bishop McCarthy enjoyed numerous hobbies, including writing a blog. In 2013 he published a collection of his writings, “Off the Cuff and Over the Collar: Common Sense Catholicism.” He often hosted gatherings for various ministries in his home, and spoke often on behalf of Habitat for Humanity and the St. Louise House, a ministry that provides affordable housing and essential services to mothers and children experiencing homelessness in Central Texas.

Hundreds of people paid their respects to Bishop McCarthy as he lay in repose at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin on Aug. 23. His simple wooden casket was built by Msgr. Arthur Michalka, a priest of the Austin Diocese who died in 2009.

Several hundred lay people including many members of Bishop McCarthy’s family, nine bishops, 110 priests and 45 deacons were present for the Mass of Christian Burial on Aug. 24 at St. William Parish in Round Rock.

In the homily at Bishop McCarthy’s Mass of Christian Burial, Msgr. Elmer Holtman, a priest of the Diocese of Austin and a good friend of Bishop McCarthy’s for many years, said the bishop was not idle in his retirement.

“He loved to write letters and make phone calls,” Msgr. Holtman said. “Sometimes they were complimentary letters or phone calls, but he was also not afraid to be critical.”

Bishop McCarthy was a man of integrity, and he was always kept his word, Msgr. Holtman said. He also had a wonderful sense of humor.

“He did not take himself too seriously,” Msgr. Holtman said. However, he took the role of bishop very seriously.

“John knew that he had the ability to move the minds and hearts of people,” he said. “He saw laws as guidelines, and for him, people always came first. He had no trouble coloring outside of the lines if it improved the quality of the picture.”

Bishop McCarthy is survived by his sister-in-law Charlene, who was married to his brother, Frank. The bishop will be laid to rest in Houston with other members of his family.

The Bishop John McCarthy Memorial Fund has been established. Gifts may be mailed to Bishop John McCarthy Memorial Fund, 6225 E US 290 HWY SVRD EB, Austin, TX 78723.
Catholic schools begin the new year with tradition, progress

By Ricardo Gandara | Correspondent

The new school year has begun and more than 5,000 students grace the halls of the 22 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Austin. Several schools are implementing new models of education as well as significantly upgrading their existing programs, said Misty Poe, the diocesan superintendent of Catholic Schools.

“Tradition and progress are marking the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year,” she said. “Some of the new models our schools are adopting are not so new. They are a return to effective approaches that have fallen out of the mainstream in education.”

For example, St. Mary’s Catholic School in Taylor and Cathedral School of St. Mary in Austin are adopting the classical model of education in their classrooms over the next several years.

“Catholic schools used classical education to train seminarians and (it) was the core of public education 70 years ago,” said Heidi Altman, principal at St. Mary’s Catholic School in Taylor. Although many schools use various components of classical education, St. Mary’s is the first Catholic school in the diocese to fully implement the teaching approach this fall for all of its students, pre-K through eighth grade.

The Cathedral School — the oldest Catholic school in the diocese at 162 years — is also easing into classical education as a handful of teachers have been trained. “This transition will take about three years to fully implement,” Poe said.

The classical approach to education embraces the study of the three ways students learn to recognize, embrace and express truth, beauty and goodness they encounter in the world around them. The tools provided by this type of education correspond naturally to the developmental stages of each child.

Robert Whitworth, assistant superintendent of Catholic Schools, said the classical model is a consistent way of helping students grow in virtue. “The classical model helps students use their God-given freedom in a way that leads to the fullest development of their potential as human beings,” he said.

Robert LeGros, principal at the Cathedral School of St. Mary, said the ultimate goal is to make students aware of the transcendentals. “This is where students learn to think of what is true, beautiful and good. True is connected to the world of sciences and nature. Beauty is in the arts. The goodness is in religion, and that it’s connected with the mission of the church to form saints,” LeGros said.

The approach is enhanced by parent participation, Altman said. “This is educating for wisdom and virtue centered on Christ. We hope it encourages discussions at the dinner table,” she said.

New facilities

In the other Catholic schools around the diocese, there are several innovative and technological improvements taking place.

Reicher Catholic High School in Waco has opened a new science lab. “We are blessed to have raised over $500,000 to renovate our science wing and create a chemistry and physics classroom lab and a biology and anatomy classroom lab. These spaces will allow teachers to transition from classroom instruction to lab activities in the matter of moments,” said the Principal Mindy Taylor.

San Juan Diego Catholic High School in Austin has welcomed its freshman class of 60 into its new $11 million, 60,000-square-foot facility with 14 classrooms and a gymnasium. The new facility boasts cutting-edge technology and security features. The second phase of the project, which is to complete the second story, is slated to begin in the next few years.

St. Louis Catholic School in Austin has added a second Montessori class for 3-to-5-year olds that uses the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

The hallmarks of a Montessori education include a recognition of and respect for a child’s innate desire to learn and a teacher who facilitates that desire for learning by creating opportunities for students to engage in meaningful hands-on activity within the classroom.

The new class of 45 quickly filled, teachers said. “It’s testimony of the learning approach and religious aspect that is a big draw for parents,” said Isabelle Turner, a Montessori team leader.

Holy Family Catholic School in Austin is adding a new library, classrooms and pavilion this year.

Two schools have new leadership: St. Dominic Savio High School in Austin has a new principal Enrique Garcia. Heather Vallilee is the new interim principal at Santa Cruz Catholic School in Buda.

More accessibility

In addition, Sacred Heart Parish in Waco and Sacred Heart Parish in Austin are growing their parish partnership programs to families seeking financial assistance for tuition.

“This fulfills a dream for families to give their children a Catholic education,” said Missionaries of Faith Father Benjie Magnaye, pastor of Sacred Heart in Waco. “Our parishioners are very generous; we have families who sponsor a student. Students also hold fundraisers.”

This school year the Waco program helped 20 students who attend Reicher and St. Louis schools. The Austin program has helped about 160 students attend Catholic schools.

Supporting staff

In order to provide faculty and staff with added support for creating better learning environments, teachers can apply for grants of up to $3,000 through the “Advancing Our Mission” grant program, which is run by the Diocese of Austin. About $45,000 is available to support the efforts of teachers.

Through the allocation of diocesan funds, Bishop Joe Vásquez has implemented the “STOPit” program, which is a reporting system that allows concerned students to anonymously report unhealthy situations or circumstances on campus. Most campuses are setting up the system now.

“The implementation of STOPit is one more step the Diocese of Austin is taking to be proactive regarding student safety in our Catholic schools,” Poe said.

This year following the beginning of the school year Mass on Aug. 6, the diocesan Office of Catholic Schools hosted a professional development workshop on the Clifton Strengths Finder Assessment. Each teacher in the diocese was given the opportunity to take the assessment and then was presented professional development centered around the ways in which knowing one’s strengths allows teachers and staff to be more effective in the classroom and the school.

“Our teachers and our staff members are our greatest assets,” Poe said. “Our goal is to help them lead with their God-given strengths and talents.”

For more information on Catholic schools in the Diocese of Austin, visit www.csdatx.org.
The diocesan Diaconal Formation Program marked several important milestones in August.

On Aug. 4, Bishop Joe Vásquez received the Oath of Fidelity and the Profession of Faith from the Deacon Candidate Class of 2019 on Aug. 4. These candidates are scheduled to be ordained on March 30 at St. William Parish in Round Rock.

In their Profession of Faith, the future deacons affirmed their belief in "everything contained in God’s word, written or handed down in Tradition and proposed by the Church…" and vowed to "accept and hold [all] that is proposed definitively by the Church regarding teaching on faith and morals" and to "adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings" of the Magisterium.

In their Oath of Fidelity, the candidates promised in both word and deed to “preserve communion with the Catholic Church … [to] carry out with the greatest care and fidelity the duties incumbent on [them] … [to] hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety [and] faithfully hand it on and … [to] avoid any teachings opposed to that faith.” (Photo above of the Class of 2019 with Bishop Vásquez by Shelley Metcalf)

The Mass on Aug. 4 also included the unexpected but welcome ordination of Daniel Guerra to the permanent diaconate.

Due to Guerra’s ill health, Bishop Vásquez decided to ordain him early. With his wife Flora and extended family present, Bishop Vásquez laid his hands on Guerra’s head as he prayed to the Holy Spirit and ordained him a permanent deacon of the church.

Bishop Vásquez assigned Deacon Guerra to a ministry of prayer for the spiritual welfare of his fellow classmates, to unite his suffering to that of Jesus for the strength and courage of his brothers in formation.

"From this day forward you will be a servant of Christ and his church," Bishop Vásquez said to Deacon Guerra. "Your ministry will be different from most, but it is extremely important. I am appointing you to serve in the Office of Diaconal Ministry to minister to the men in formation, your brothers. Through your words of prayer and even suffering, I pray that these men will be transformed into true servants who devote their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ."

Eleven days after his ordination on the Solemnity of the Assumption of our Blessed Virgin Mary, the Lord called Deacon Guerra home. Bishop Daniel Garcia celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial on Aug. 18 at St. Anthony Parish in Kyle. Deacon Guerra’s family, classmates and fellow parishioners celebrated his life as he was laid to rest at Assumption Cemetery in Austin. He is survived by Flora, his wife of 26 years, and their four children and six grandchildren.

On Aug. 11, Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Garcia conferred to the men of the Diaconate Formation Class of 2022 the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders. This is celebrated when it has been established that the intention of those aspiring to holy orders is supported by the necessary qualifications and has achieved sufficient maturity. In this rite, the men publicly expressed their intention to receive ordination as a deacon. At their formation continues, the men will be instituted as lectors and acolytes before being ordained in 2022. (Photo of Class of 2022 courtesy Sherri Moreno)

Beginning this fall the Diaconal Formation Program offers inquiry sessions for men between the ages of 30 and 59 who are sensing God’s call to the permanent diaconate. For more information, call (512) 949-2459; e-mail diaconateformation@austindiocese.org; or visit www.austindiocese.org/diaconalformation.
Lakeway parish honors those ‘Aged to Perfection’

By Carla Smith | Correspondent

There was a time when Lakeway, just northwest of Austin, was a sleepy lakeside village of mostly retirees. Today the area is the busy and popular home of young professionals and families with school-aged kids. Many of these newish residents are active members of Lakeway’s Emmaus Parish, but so are countless senior parishioners and founding members. It’s those elder parishioners who are treated and honored at the annual “Aged to Perfection” event that has quickly become a staff favorite and something senior parishioners look forward to each year.

“My husband and I have attended this special event for the past five years,” said long-time parishioner Glenda Foreman. “We love it because seniors are honored and shown that we’re still an important part of our church family.”

Originating in 2011 when Father Samuel Hose wanted to show appreciation for the parish’s elder citizens, the luncheon and activity-filled day is held each spring and has quickly become one of Emmaus’ most popular events that everyone, from staff to volunteers to parishioners, look forward to each year. Dedicated to church parishioners who have reached the age of 80 or above, the luncheon is hosted by Father Hose, parish staff members and volunteers. This year’s affair was was attended by 105 seniors between the ages of 80 and 102.

“Our goal is to make them feel special, honored and certainly not forgotten,” said Jane Heckler, the business administrator at Emmaus. “It is truly one of the happiest and most rewarding events we have the pleasure of participating in and though we know attendees receive much joy from it, the joy our staff and volunteers receive from their grateful smiles and kind words is even greater.”

The event starts with photos as honorees and their guests arrive and then they are seated for a plated lunch prepared and served by staff members and volunteers. Staff members also provide entertainment, which began as simple musical numbers but has grown into full-on skits incorporating each year’s theme. Door prizes and gift baskets are also awarded to attendees who feel truly blessed and appreciated by the occasion.

“Besides being catered to like a princess with delicious food and fantastic entertainment, it is a wonderful way to show respect to the elderly of our parish,” said parishioner Bernadette Garretson. “We all come away feeling younger, blessed and happy to be alive!”

Each year’s theme is carefully considered and is traditionally one that reminds attendees of what was popular in their younger years. Everything from the famous “I Love Lucy” candy factory scene to an Italian-themed “Family Feud” has been presented. It’s this type of personal touch that makes it even more special for those being honored.

“This is a ‘feel good’ event for all. It gives us the opportunity to truly dote on these special parishioners and gives them the opportunity to be with their peers in a fun setting where they exude happiness and friendship.”

— Linda Rives, volunteer at Emmaus Parish in Lakeway

“I remember one theme that was a ‘Saturday Night Teen Party’ complete with a jukebox and roller skating staff members and volunteers,” said Lou Suffredini. “It was great fun and I look forward to laughing with my fellow parishioners and the staff at the next event.”

As much as the audience enjoys the entertainment, so does the talent. It’s no secret staff members love the opportunity to play dramatic and comedic roles, including costumes, while giving people 80 years and older,” said Patty Keel. “Everyone has such a good time and we all laughed until we cried. We have attended all of them and look forward to next year’s.”

The parish office shuts down to devote themselves fully to those they consider vital for their wealth of history, strength of character, leadership in ministries, and resilience in difficult times.

“They remind us of how our Catholic faith sustains us and that the true path to happiness is sharing our gifts demonstrated by their commitment to service,” Heckler said. “Plus, we just love their positive outlook and sense of humor!”

Laughs and smiles are abundant at the luncheon and even those attendees who are vision impaired can feel the warmth of all those present.

“The staff and their bright smiles just make the event,” Gladys Waggoner said. “I personally can’t see their faces and don’t really know that they are indeed smiling, but I can hear it in their voices and kindess toward me and everyone.”

For more information on “Aged to Perfection” at Emmaus, contact Jane Heckler at (512) 261-8500 or visit the parish website at www.emmausparish.org.
Deacon brings kindness, gentleness into Gatesville prisons

By Ricardo Gandara | Correspondent

In 2001, less than a year after he had been ordained a permanent deacon, Deacon Ronnie Lastovica received a call from a priest about a despondent family that needed help.

“All I had was names. God spoke to me that I’ve got to go,” he recalled.

Two teen-aged boys and a 20-year-old were in a county jail and charged with homicide. “I was in an uncomfortable place. I thought, this isn’t what I signed up for,” he said.

As it turned out, Deacon Lastovica’s kind and gentle demeanor was just what the family needed. He listened without judgement. Although the youths were eventually incarcerated, the deacon found out a lot about himself as he worked with them.

“I learned that deacons are ordained into the service of Christ,” he said.

Today, Deacon Lastovica is still listening to inmates’ stories and as a spiritual director he hopes they accept Jesus into their lives. It’s grueling work not for the faint at heart. That is, unless you have Jesus walking with you.

“God supplies. I’m only the vessel,” is how Deacon Lastovica describes his 17-year career in a Catholic ministry aimed at teaching the word of God to those incarcerated.

The last five years, he has been assigned to the Gatesville Region 6 of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the 10,000 inmates in six prisons. The inmates are mostly women including some on death row; one unit houses 3,000 men.

Several days a week, Deacon Lastovica and Father Harry Dean drive from Belton to Gatesville. It can be an intense 14-hour day.

What awaits them and several volunteers from parishes in the area is the unthinkable and unpredictable. Inmates often share the most intimate details of their crimes and their upbringings.

“We sit and listen,” Deacon Lastovica said. “You can’t imagine the conservations. We don’t parachute in and solve their problems. We walk with them in dark places.”

He hears a lot about the lives of gang members. “Some of these inmates were targeted by gangs as young as 8 years old. The gangs gave them attention to be part of something. Their mothers were dope addicts and prostitutes… that gives you an idea of what’s done to them at a very young age,” he said.

Those youngsters grow up to join gangs, a tough lifestyle that leads to criminal activity and eventually to crimes as serious as rape and murder. Deacon Lastovica and Father Dean encounter them daily. And, they do their work in faith, also guarded by the fact that inmates can try to manipulate them.

“That’s where God’s love and protection come in,” Deacon Lastovica said.

His outlook is unique.

“The mistakes we make in our lives don’t define us. Through the waters of baptism, we are all sons and daughters of God. We take the spotlight off of the event that got them there. We tell them they can still live a life as a child of God. But, they have to develop a relationship with Jesus, and that Jesus is right there beside them in that cell. They have to do their part,” he said.

It’s a grueling schedule for Deacon Lastovica and Father Dean. They work in the prisons for two days, take a day off for self-care, return to Gatesville for two more days then take another day off. The days off for self-care are important, Deacon Lastovica said.

Aside from paperwork on days off, Deacon Lastovica said he prays a lot.

“I’m always praying for people, and you learn the importance of holy obedience and keeping proper perspective,” he said.

Deacon Lastovica has a lot of support from his wife of 38 years and their three adult children.

“My family is part of my self-care, and I don’t bring the details of my work home to them,” he said.

He admits that the ministry of working with hardened criminals is taxing. Yet, he sees the good of his service.

“What it’s taught me is to love in a Christ-centered way. It’s a Christian love, and it’s not about me but someone else. Their lives are worth it,” he said.

His ministry isn’t possible without the three dozen or so volunteers from parishes in Temple, Copperas Cove and other surrounding communities.

At the prisons, Father Dean celebrates Mass for the general population. As a spiritual director and pastoral care coordinator, Deacon Lastovica leads faith formation. Some inmates get one-on-one sessions, even those who are in isolation.

Deacon Lastovica comes from a background of ranching. After getting his degree in agriculture economics from Texas A&M University in 1979, he became a helicopter pilot in the Army and returned to Texas to get into the livestock market business with his brother. He later retired and moved to Belton.

Then came that call from a priest in 2001. Since then, it’s been a walk of faith in a ministry for those written off by society.
CCCTX team reflects on their experience in RG Valley

By Enedelia J. Obregón | Senior Correspondent

It was the best of times in one of the worst of times for a team from Catholic Charities of Central Texas and the Diocese of Austin Pastoral Center.

In July the team responded to a call from Catholic Charities USA and the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops to help the Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley at their Humanitarian Respite Center. The Valley group needed a break from the constant work of helping immigrants arriving at the Texas border seeking asylum.

Making the trip from Austin to the Rio Grande Valley were CCCTX members Sara Ramirez, executive director; Christine Reyes-Paiz, disaster response coordinator; Kristen Erdem, major gift officer; Justin Estep, director of immigration and legal services; Libby Sittley, director of St. Michael’s Veteran Services; Rachael Guice, associate director of fund development; Rene Rubio, director of Gabriel Project Life Center; as well as Lily Morales, Hispanic Ministry coordinator for the Austin Diocese.

Ramirez said she chose the team based on their areas of expertise. The team not only helped with intake, but also coordinated the volunteers who were showing up to help from all over the world, the donations — goods and financial — that people are sending, and those who know the complexities of immigration law. Other Catholic Charities groups from the state and nation are also helping.

Ramirez said the priority upon arrival was to provide the families with the basics of humanity: food to nourish them, clothing to protect their bodies and shelter to protect them. They received hygiene kits and children received toys and coloring books and crayons. They also receive donated cell phones with six months of service.

“Everything we did was to restore their dignity, to help them feel that they have worth and are important,” Ramirez said. “Many of them had been wearing the same clothes for weeks. They had nothing else in their possession, not even an ID. Being able to restore that component is important. They can’t start healing until their basic needs are met.

Ramirez said the respite center was seeing about 250 new people a day; most recently that number jumped to about 400. After Immigration and Customs Enforcement processes the asylum-seekers, they drop them off at the bus station at all hours of the day and night. Catholic Charities volunteers pick them up immediately and bring them to the center.

“I could not have picked a better team,” Ramirez said. “They had the same smile for those arriving at 1 a.m. that they did when they started working at 8 a.m. Though they were working 11 to 12 hour days, clients were greeted as if they were the first clients of the day.”

After showering, getting fresh clothes and eating, volunteers helped children select toys or play games while parents dealt with immigration lawyers. But even standing in line to get a toy could be traumatic.

Guice remembered a little girl sobbing inconsolably as she stood in line. “She was afraid of being separated from her mother,” Guice said. “Children get lined up to be taken away.”

Estep said the scene was chaotic. Many were carrying packages of paperwork from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that they couldn’t read.

“Most don’t even know the difference between their parole date and their immigration court date,” he said. “Half are not literate or barely literate.”

Estep often found mistakes in the paperwork from ICE.

“ICE was not jotting down the addresses of their eventual destination,” Estep said. “They were instead putting the address of their first stop.”

That means when the government sends mail to them about future hearings, the asylum-seekers will not receive their mail. There is no way to forward it. If they don’t show up in court, they could be subject to immediate deportation, even if they have a credible reason for seeking asylum and even if ICE made the mistake.

Aside from reviewing documents, Estep and other immigration lawyers helped the immigrants fill out change-of-address cards and find consulates or embassies of their native countries so they could get new identification cards.

“It’s easy to fall through the cracks,” Estep said. “For them, it’s a matter of life and death.”

Estep said there are a lot of myths about asylum-seekers. But the reality is harsh. One of his clients was shot in the leg as she escaped with her son, whom gangs were trying to take.

“Imagine living in a state that is so violent you have to make a choice — join a gang or leave your native land,” he said.

Amid the fear and trauma, there was hope and a recognition of the universality of the Catholic Church.

“They are people of great faith,” said Morales, who said listening to their stories helped to know them as fellow members of the faith community.

“They know God has been with them through this journey.”

Guice said a fellow volunteer witnessed a group of families arriving at 1 a.m. who dropped to their knees upon seeing a crucifix on the wall.

“They knew they were with Catholics who were going to protect them,” she said. “When they heard (nearby) church bells in the morning the first thing they wanted to do was go to Mass.”

Erdem oversaw volunteer coordination as well as donations. The entire team had to learn to “pivot” — or change direction — to whatever area needed volunteers. As they waited for new families to arrive or as they shared meals, the team talked about ways to improve the processes. At the suggestion of Reyes-Paiz, Erdem put the procedural documents on a flash drive to leave for the next teams arriving to help.

Erdem was emotionally touched by a client who spoke a little English and told her soon after his arrival, “It’s time for me to work.”

Erdem said one little boy helped Reyes-Paiz make the beds so she could help him find the crayons he needed.

“People were always asking to help,” Erdem said. “We were there to help them, but they kept asking, ‘What can I do?’”

Estep said one of the first questions he was often asked was, “How do I get a work permit?”

“They want to work lawfully,” Estep said. “They also ask how they can get their children in school.”

Ramirez said CCCTX is accustomed to responding to crises such as the flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey in 2017. The crisis at the border, however, is “unapologetically a man-made disaster that was totally preventable.” And it is definitely a pro-life issue because it affects their life and dignity, and church teaching calls for respecting all life from cradle to grave, she said.

“What we do covers the whole Catholic social teaching spectrum,” Ramirez said. She recognizes the immigration system is broken and it will take a lot of work and willpower to fix it. CCCTX is here help those who need it and bear witness to the stories of those not just seeking a better life for their children, but ensuring that their children live, she said.

To make a donation to Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, go to www.catholiccharitiesrgv.org. Or mail checks to 700 N. Virgen de San Juan Blvd., San Juan, TX 78589.

To donate to Catholic Charities of Central Texas, go to www.ccctx.org or mail checks to 1625 Rutherford Lane, Austin, TX 78754.
By Cindy Wooden | Catholic News Service

“No effort must be spared” to prevent future cases of clerical sexual abuse and “to prevent the possibility of their being covered up,” Pope Francis said in a letter addressed “to the people of God.”

“I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons,” the pope wrote in the letter dated and released Aug. 20.

The letter was published less than a week after the release of a Pennsylvania grand jury report on decades of clerical sexual abuse and cover-ups in six dioceses. The report spoke of credible allegations against 301 priests in cases involving more than 1,000 children.

“The heart-wrenching pain of these victims, which cries out to heaven, was offered it, “and, on over a dozen occasions, the priests themselves appeared before us. Most of them admitted what they had done,” the report says.

When the children or their families reported what happened, “all of them were brushed aside, in every part of the dioceses “for the damage inflicted on the lives when they were kids.” It says better laws for “mandated reporting of abuse” are needed and say confidentiality agreement or non-disclosure agreements should not apply when it comes to criminal investigations.

“Priests were raping little boys and girls, and the men of God who were responsible for them leads to a split in the ecclesial body that would let older victims sue the dioceses “for the damage inflicted on their lives when they were kids.” It says better laws for “mandated reporting of abuse” are needed and say confidentiality agreement or non-disclosure agreements should not apply when it comes to criminal investigations.

Pope Francis also asked Catholics to pray and to fast so that they would be able to hear “the hushed pain” of abuse survivors.

He called for “a fasting that can make us hunger and thirst for justice and impel us to walk in the truth, supporting all the judicial measures that may be necessary. A fasting that shakes us up and leads us to be committed in truth and charity with all men and women of good will, and with society in general, to combating all forms of the abuse of power, sexual abuse and the abuse of conscience.”

Report details abuse, culture of secrecy that fanned it

By Rhina Guidos | Catholic News Service

The report begins dramatically, imploring its readers: “We, the members of this grand jury, need you to hear this.”

Plain and simple, at least 1,000 children identified in the investigation were raped in Catholic places of worship, in schools, and in diocesan owned vehicles, and were “groomed” through diocesan programs and retreats so they could be molested, wrote members of a 23-person grand jury. They heard those accounts over a period of almost two years of an investigation of clergy sex abuse said to have taken place in six dioceses in the state of Pennsylvania over 70 years. Their findings were unveiled Aug. 14.

In almost 1,400 pages, they describe graphic accounts of the abuse they say happened in the Catholic dioceses of Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Allentown, Scranton, Greensburg and Erie.

They detail accounts they heard of boys and girls whose genitals were touched, who were raped or made to perform a variety of sex acts. The report means to silence them.”

“The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain,” he said, “and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults.”

In his letter, Pope Francis insisted all Catholics must be involved in the effort to accompany victims, to strengthen safeguarding measures and to end a culture where abuse is covered up.

While the letter called all Catholics to prayer and fasting, it does not change any current policies or offer specific new norms.

It did, however, insist that “clericalism” has been a key part of the problem and said the involvement of the laity will be crucial to addressing the crime and scandal.

Change, he said, will require “the active participation of all the members of God’s people.”

“Many communities where sexual abuse and the abuse of power and conscience have occurred,” he said, are groups where there has been an effort to “reduce the people of God to small elites.”

“Clericalism, whether fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to a split in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today,” Pope Francis said. “To say ‘no’ to abuse is to say an emphatic ‘no’ to all forms of clericalism.”

In his letter, Pope Francis acknowledged the church’s failure.

“When with shame and repentance, we acknowledge as an ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realizing the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives,” he wrote.

“We showed no care for the little ones,” Pope Francis said. “We abandoned them.”

“Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient,” he said. “Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated.”

Recognizing the safeguarding policies that have been adopted in various parts of the world as well as pledges of “zero tolerance” for abusive clerics, Pope Francis also acknowledged that “we have delayed in applying these actions and sanctions that are so necessary, yet I am confident that they will help to guarantee a greater culture of care in the present and future.”

As members of the church, he said, all Catholics should “beg forgiveness for our own sins and the sins of others.”

Pope Francis also asked Catholics to pray and to fast so that they would be able to hear “the hushed pain” of abuse survivors.

He called for “a fasting that can make us hunger and thirst for justice and impel us to walk in the truth, supporting all the judicial measures that may be necessary. A fasting that shakes us up and leads us to be committed in truth and charity with all men and women of good will, and with society in general, to combating all forms of the abuse of power, sexual abuse and the abuse of conscience.”
By Cindy Wooden | Catholic News Service

Before celebrating Mass in a Dublin park, Pope Francis solemnly asked forgiveness for the thousands of cases of sexual and physical abuse perpetrated by Catholics in Ireland.

“We ask forgiveness for the abuse in Ireland, abuse of power and of conscience, sexual abuse” by clergy and religious, he said Aug. 26. “In a special way, we ask forgiveness for all the abuse committed in the different institutions run by religious men and religious women and other members of the church.”

In a litany of recognition and prayers for the Lord’s mercy, Pope Francis formally asked forgiveness for the forced labor that even children were forced to perform in church institutions.

And, responding to a request made by two survivors he had met Aug. 25, the pope asked forgiveness for all the babies taken from their unwed mothers and put up for adoption without their mothers’ consent.

The mothers were told later it would be a “mortal sin” for them to try to find the children, but the pope said explicitly: “It is not a mortal sin. It is the Fourth Commandment,” which states, “Honor your father and your mother.”

“We apologize for some members of the hierarchy who did not own up to these painful situations and remained silent,” he said. “We ask for forgiveness.”

The pope’s penitential plea followed the introductory remarks of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, who told the pope, “The church in Ireland has gone through challenging times. People have been wounded in the depth of their being by church people; people’s faith has been challenged and the church of Jesus Christ has been wounded.”

“Faith in Ireland is strong,” he said, and “faith in Ireland is fragile,” but that is not necessarily a surprise. “There is an intrinsic fragility in faith that can steer us away from arrogance and self-centeredness.”

The Mass was the official closing of the World Meeting of Families, and Pope Francis used his homily to urge families from around the world to harness their joy and use it to transform the world into a place where all people feel loved, welcomed and supported in their commitments to each other.

“The church as a whole is called to ‘go forth’ to bring the words of eternal life to all the peripheries of our world,” the pope told tens of thousands of people gathered in a slightly sodden Phoenix Park.

At the end of his homily, Pope Francis urged each person present — “parents and grandparents, children and young people, men and women, religious brothers and sisters, contemplatives and missionaries, deacons and priests” — to share “the Gospel of the family as joy for the world!”

The Catholic teaching on marriage and family life is often challenging and not universally accepted, he said, but Jesus himself promised that his words “are spirit and life.”

In fact, he said, it is the Holy Spirit who “constantly breathes new life into our world, into our hearts, into our families from around the world to harness their joy and use it to transform the world into a place where all people feel loved, welcomed and supported in their commitments to each other.”

The world needs such encouragement, the pope said, and laypeople in families are the best ones to give it.

Pope Francis said participants, filled with enthusiasm after the World Meeting of Families, also need to “humbly acknowledge that, if we are honest with ourselves, we, too, can find the teachings of Jesus hard.”

For instance, he said, “how difficult it is always to forgive those who hurt us; how challenging always to welcome the migrant and the stranger; how painful joyfully to bear disappointment, rejection or betrayal; how inconvenient to protect the rights of the most vulnerable, the unborn or the elderly, who seem to impinge upon our own sense of freedom.”

But that is when Catholics must affirm that they believe and will follow the Lord, Pope Francis told them.

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Psychologist, abuse survivor, offers advice for families

By Zita Ballinger Fletcher | Catholic News Service

After recent reports describing clergy sex abuse, Paul Peloquin, a Catholic clinical psychologist and a clergy abuse survivor, shared advice for victims and their families.

“For Catholics who have been abused by a priest or clergy, it’s doubly difficult because they have not only been psychologically traumatized, but spiritually traumatized,” Peloquin told Catholic News. “Unless that is addressed, healing is very difficult.”

His work as a Catholic psychologist is tied to his own journey as an abuse survivor.

“I’m a survivor myself,” said Peloquin, who is based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. “I left the church for over 30 years. I thought I had the perfect justification. I totally rejected the church and walked away.”

Peloquin overcame the effects of the abuse by reclaiming his faith and helping fellow victims in his professional life as a psychologist. Once suffering from spiritual doubt, he now works to promote spiritual healing.

“If one says, ‘the Catholic Church is bad’ or ‘all priests are bad,’ that’s too broad of a brushstroke. They’re not,” said Peloquin, who struggled with his beliefs for a long time. “I thought that way for a while.”

His decision to return to Catholicism was difficult. It resulted from experiences that changed his perspectives over time.

“I came to a point in my life where I came to my senses and realized I wasn’t finding what I was looking for in life — that there was a great spiritual void,” Peloquin said. “My heart started to soften over a period of time. It took many years.”

He started going to church while escorting his terminally ill father to daily Mass. Peloquin did not attend to worship, but attended out of a sense of duty and obligation.

As time passed, Peloquin sought out a one-on-one experience with God — not in a busy parish, but in the isolation of a Benedictine monastery in the mountains. He said he was able to develop his personal faith in God while experiencing the beauty of nature.

Peloquin said going to a church can trigger traumatic memories for victims. He advised survivors to seek spiritual healing in a place where they feel peace.

“If people can find a way to be quiet and still, the Lord wants to reach out to them,” he said.

He said while many survivors feel the need to vent their anger, it is only a first step in the healing process. Peloquin also does not believe money awarded in damages can restore victims to spiritual and emotional wholeness.

“If people say, ‘Well, I’m just going to get money,’ that’s not going to heal anything,” Peloquin said. “We’re talking about a psychological and spiritual wound.”

He advised parents to seek help from police or professional counselors if their child discloses sexual abuse.

“I would recommend that the parents get a consult with someone who is familiar with this, to see if they could ask the right questions, how they should react and how they are reacting,” he said. “Don’t go off and attack a priest or a teacher without getting the support of a professional.”

Professionals trained to interview children can often uncover details that parents cannot, while still being sensitive to the needs of the child.

“Oftentimes abuse is committed by someone that is known by the family members,” he said.

While most parents react emotionally because of disbelief or anger, Peloquin said it is important to keep calm. Open-mindedness, a caring demeanor and good listening skills prevent a child from “shutting down,” he explained.

Many children hesitate to come forward because of fear no one will believe them. Children who have been seduced over a period of time also feel guilty about being abused. Peloquin said parents must not allow their religious or personal views get in the way of listening to their child.

“The child needs to feel that they’re respected and protected in all things,” he said.

The psychologist said children should be educated about appropriate and inappropriate types of touching. Kids also should be encouraged to speak to a parent, teacher or other responsible adult if they feel uncomfortable with a particular adult. Doing so, Peloquin said, will enable children to recognize inappropriate behavior and not be seduced into an unwanted relationship. Children should also be encouraged to vocalize their concerns to others.

In advice to fellow Catholics who are struggling emotionally because of clergy sex abuse, Peloquin said panic is not the right response.

“Most priests are good people, but there are some who aren’t,” he said. “We need the priests. We don’t have the sacraments without the priests. But we need good priests, who want to live the life of the priesthood and as servants.”

Peloquin said during his years as a professional psychologist, he has never seen any harm resulting from parents supporting and listening to their child. Problems arise, he said, when parents are close-minded.

“If parents deny it and say, ‘this can never happen,’ that’s very harmful.”

Pastoral support for victims of sexual abuse

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

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.austindiocease.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.
By Chaz Muth | Catholic News Service

Pennsylvania survivors of clergy sex abuse spent the week after the release of the grand jury report finding their voice as bishops and priests in the state wrestled with how to address the scandal.

Several of the survivors traveled around the state to speak publicly about their victimization at the hands of predator priests, many of whom said their “coming out” is liberating them from decades of shame.

Ed Rodgers of Bradford said he found the courage to re-emerge more than 20 years after he accused a priest of molesting him as a youth.

Though Rodgers, now 45, said he was publicly shamed by the Diocese of Erie, lay Catholics in his hometown and the state legal system in the late 1990s, he said a recent scathing grand jury report inspired him to break his silence.

A Pennsylvania grand jury report released Aug. 14 detailed more than 1,000 cases of sex abuse spent the week after the release of the grand jury report finding their voice as SNAP, in front of diocesan buildings throughout Pennsylvania beginning Aug. 20, telling their stories, demanding changes in the statute of limitations laws, and calling for accountability from bishops and the church.

Reaction by church officials was different from diocese to diocese.

The Aug. 20 SNAP news conference at the Diocese of Pittsburgh was tense, angry and confrontational, while the Aug. 21 event at the Diocese of Erie was congenial, with gratitude expressed by the survivors who organized it.

As news camera operators jockeyed for position on the crammed Pittsburgh sidewalk to hear the survivors’ testimonies, a priest who works for diocese came out of the building to listen to the speakers.

The priest’s presence angered a few survivors who called Pittsburgh Bishop David A. Zubik a “coward” for not coming out himself.

While some of the survivors engaged in respectful dialogue with Msgr. Ron Lengwin, vicar for church relations for the Diocese of Pittsburgh, others began to shout, and the scene digressed into an anger-charged event laced with profanity.

By contrast, when the same group of survivors and SNAP organizers arrived at the Diocese of Erie the next day, they were greeted by Bishop Lawrence T. Persico, who invited them to move their news conference from the sidewalk along the street, which is a good distance from the front of the building, onto the diocesan headquarters property.

When the SNAP organizers said they were not allowed onto church property, Bishop Persico assured them it was within his power to grant them permission, at which time they appreciatively accepted the invitation.

Though the survivors still made demands and called for the church not to lobby against a change in the statute of limitations laws, the tone was in striking contrast to the event in Pittsburgh and organizers told members of the media they appreciated the bishop’s presence.

“I’m quite surprised,” said Judy Jones, SNAP Midwest regional leader. “I have done press events in many dioceses all over the country and he is the first bishop I have ever met.”

About an hour before the event began, Bishop Persico told Catholic News Service he wanted to go out and listen and his only hesitation was that he didn’t want his presence to overshadow what the survivors came there to say.

Ultimately, he opted to personally let the group know they were welcomed and that he was listening, which he said he thought was important for them and for the Catholic Church.

Though Bishop Persico acknowledged the reaction was reeling from the blow of the grand jury report, he said it was self-inflicted wound and that it was a moral obligation of church leaders to not only do penance for these sins, they needed to begin the healing process by listening to all of those who are suffering.

Following the event, Bishop Persico had a private meeting with Pittsburgh resident Jim VanSickle, who has accused a former teacher at Bradford Central Christian High School, Father David Poulson, of molesting him in the late 1970s.

Poulson was charged last May with indecent assault, endangering the welfare of children and corruption of minors, stemming from an accusation from two boys.

Like most of the survivors who testified before the grand jury, VanSickle is prevented from filing charges or bringing a lawsuit, because his accusations are nearly four decades old.

Though he had told his parents and wife about an incident involving Poulson many years ago, he didn’t speak out publicly until the priest’s arrest earlier this year.

“Before I started to speak out, I told my wife (Trish VanSickle), ‘If I do this, I’m doing it all of the way,’ he said. ‘She understood that meant media coverage and relinquishing our privacy. She was supportive, like she always is, and encouraged me to do it.”

VanSickle has given countless national media interviews since the grand jury report was released and has become a very public advocate to change Pennsylvania law to allow survivors to file charges and bring civil suits against their assailants decades later.

“It took me decades to come to terms with what happened to me, and I’m being punished for that with the statute of limitations, meaning, I won’t get my day in court,” he said.

Though his public crusade has drawn both praise and criticism, Trish VanSickle said it’s been cleansing and therapeutic for her husband, who was prone to erratic mood swings and outbursts before he came to terms with what had happened to him.

Though people are often afraid to come forward about such abuse at the hands of predator priests, they usually find tremendous relief once they do, said Father Raymond Gramata, pastor at VanSickle’s boyhood parish, St. Bernard in Bradford.

In the past it wasn’t unusual for accusers to be publicly shamed by parishioners who rallied behind their beloved priest, questioning their honesty and motives for coming forward, he said.

“We have to stop that kind of shaming,” Father Gramata said, “or else there can be no healing. The people who were harmed and damaged can’t heal if that happens and the church can’t heal either.

“We can’t continue to sweep this under the carpet,” he said. “We need to air this out and deal with it. Trust me, everyone needs to heal from this.”

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E. Dekarios Slackmon, OLSB, Diocesan, (512) 949-2471
USCCB president seeks papal audience to answer his many questions

By Catholic News Service

The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said he was “eager for an audience” with Pope Francis to gain his support for the bishops’ plan to respond to the clergy sexual abuse crisis.

In an Aug. 27 statement, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston said that the questions raised by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, former nuncio to the U.S., in a letter published by two Catholic media outlets “deserve answers that are conclusive and based on evidence.”

“Without those answers, innocent men may be tainted by false accusations and the guilty may be left to repeat the sins of the past,” the cardinal said.


Archbishop Viganò, who served as nuncio to the U.S. from 2011 to 2016, wrote that he was compelled to write his knowledge of Archbishop McCarrick’s misdeeds because “corruption has reached the very top of the church’s hierarchy.”

In response to the letter, Pope Francis encouraged readers to draw their own conclusions.

“We need to understand and respect the information you provide,” he said. “Follow up the answers that are conclusive and based on evidence.”

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“We need to understand and respect the information you provide,” he said. “Follow up the answers that are conclusive and based on evidence.”

“In other ways, we have failed you. This is especially true for adults being sexually harassed by those in positions of power, and for any abuse or harassment perpetuated by a bishop,” Cardinal DiNardo said.

“We will do better. The more she is buffeted by storms, the more I am reminded that the church’s firm foundation is Jesus Christ. The failures of men cannot diminish the light of the Gospel.”

Text of ‘Statement of Episcopal Commitment’ from US bishops’ charter

By Catholic News Service

In a lengthy letter to U.S. Catholics Aug. 16, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo announced three key goals and a comprehensive plan to address the “moral catastrophe” of the current abuse scandal hitting the U.S. church.

In the letter he references “A Statement of Episcopal Commitment” that is part of the bishops’ “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,” approved in Dallas in 2002.

Here is the text of the statement of commitment:

We bishops pledge again to respond to the demands of the Charter in a way that manifests our accountability to God, to God’s people, and to one another. Individually and together, we acknowledge mistakes in the past when some bishops transferred, from one assignment to another, priests who abused minors. We recognize our roles in the suffering this has caused, and we continue to ask forgiveness for it.

Without at all diminishing the importance of broader accountability, this statement focuses on the accountability which flows from our episcopal communion and fraternal solidarity, a moral responsibility we have with and for each other.

While bishops are ordained primarily for their diocese or eparchy, we are called as well to protect the unity and to promote the common discipline of the whole church (CIC, c. 392; CCEO, c. 201). Participating in the college of bishops, each bishop is responsible to act in a manner that reflects both effective and affective collegiality.

Respecting the legitimate rights of bishops who are directly accountable to the Holy See, in a spirit of collegiality and fraternity we renew our commitment to the following:

1. Within each province, we will assist each other to interpret correctly and implement the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,” always respecting church law and striving to reflect the Gospel.

2. We will apply the requirements of the charter also to ourselves, respecting always church law as it applies to bishops. Therefore, if a bishop is accused of the sexual abuse of a minor, the accused bishop is obliged to inform the apostolic nuncio. If another bishop becomes aware of such an allegation of the sexual abuse of a minor by a bishop, he too is obliged to inform the apostolic nuncio and comply with applicable civil laws.

3. In cases of financial demands for settlements involving allegations of any sexual misconduct by a bishop, he, or any of us who become aware of it, is obliged to inform the apostolic nuncio.

4. Within each of our provinces, as an expression of collegiality, including fraternal support, fraternal challenge and fraternal correction, we will engage in ongoing mutual reflection upon our commitment to holiness of life and upon the exercise of our episcopal ministry.

In making this statement, we firmly uphold the dignity of every human being and renew our commitment to live and promote the chastity required of all followers of Christ and especially of deacons, priests and bishops.

This Statement of Episcopal Commitment will be reviewed by the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations upon the next review of the charter.
Editor: Bishop, on Aug. 14, a Pennsylvania grand jury report that detailed claims of sexual abuse of more than 1,000 children over 70 years in six dioceses in the state was released. What was your response when you read that report?  
Bishop Vásquez: As I read the report, I felt as if someone had punched me in the stomach. I was sickened and outraged by the findings. The crimes attributed to former Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick and to the priests of those dioceses are unspeakable. Rightly so, many of our faithful are outraged by the findings in the report.  

First of all, as the bishop I am sorry for any abuse that has occurred at the hands of a clergy member. When someone experiences sexual abuse, the wound is devastating. Sexual abuse goes contrary to the vocation of the priesthood. As priests, we make promises before God and his church to live a celibate life and to protect the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society. As clergy, we know that we are blessed with the gift to serve the people of God, just as Christ did.

There is no doubt that the Pennsylvania report has undermined the credibility and confidence in us as bishops and the hierarchy of the church. People are wondering, for good reason, how they can trust church leaders when such horrific acts were allowed to take place in our church. The most difficult aspect of the report is reading about priests who repeatedly committed sexual abuse of minors after being removed from one parish and placed in another. We, including me and my brother bishops, must be held accountable and implement safeguards to prevent such terrible things from happening again. Those who perpetrate sexual abuse of a minor or any other type of criminal abuse must be immediately removed from ministry and held accountable for their actions according to the law.

Editor: Has the diocese dealt with any cases of child sexual abuse by clergy since the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was adopted in 2002?  
Bishop Vásquez: I was installed as bishop of Austin in 2010. There have been three cases brought to our attention involving sexual abuse of a child after 2002. I was informed that in 2004, a deacon was convicted of indecent exposure with a child and received a 10-year probated sentence. The deacon was removed from ministry and shortly thereafter died. I was also informed that in 2005 a priest, who moved here from another diocese, was charged with groping a youth. He was removed from ministry. The case ended in a mistrial, and soon after the priest died. In 2011, a deacon entered a guilty plea in a case involving indecency with a child, a family member. The deacon was permanently removed from ministry.

We received a few reports of inappropriate conduct by priests with children, such as inappropriate conversations or use of questionable language. These reports were investigated and acted upon. Other than those, I am not aware of cases of sexual abuse of minors by clergy occurring after 2002.

We received, after 2002, reports of historic sexual abuse against minors by priests who were previously in this diocese; for example, abuse that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. Some of those reports were found to be credible. The priests involved in those cases are deceased or are no longer permitted to be in ministry.

Editor: How can we be sure that pedophiles are not entering our seminaries?  
Bishop Vásquez: For the last several decades, our diocese, as well as most of the other dioceses in our country, has been using the social sciences, namely psychology and psychiatry, to screen men for suitability to the priesthood. These tests help us assess our seminarians and help us determine that they are holy men of God who will fulfill their sacred vows of celibacy and who will protect the weakest and most vulnerable of our society. Of course, these tests are not perfect; however, these tests help us tremendously as we help men discern their call to the priesthood.

Editor: Are you calling for any special Masses or novenas for the reparations of the sins of sexual abuse?  
Bishop Vásquez: Yes, in the next month, I will be asking the priests, deacons, religious and lay people of the Diocese of Austin to join together in a prayerful act of reparation. Please watch our website (www.austindiocece.org) and your parish bulletin for announcements. My intention is for all of us to come together to ask God for forgiveness and healing. We must be alert and we must be aware of any signs of abuse of a minor. If we see something, we must say something! If we have cause to believe abuse by a clergy member or by any adult has occurred, we must immediately report the abuse to the civil authorities and then to the diocese in accordance with our Ethics and Integrity in Ministry policies. Indeed, in this diocese we are blessed to have good and holy priests and deacons — men who love the church and who protect innocent lives on a daily basis. They have served for many years with fidelity, perseverance, commitment and joy. For them and their service, I am greatly indebted.

Our laity has always been so supportive of our clergy because they have witnessed their generosity in a multitude of ways. Our clergy celebrate the sacraments with love. They bring the love of Christ to those who are sick, they walk with those who have tragically lost a loved one, they counsel those who are seeking help, they work with ministries to bring God’s love and mercy to those on the edges of our society.

As leaders of the church in order to rid the church of the scourge of abuse, we must rely more on the laity for their expertise in areas of investigation, law enforcement, psychology, and other relevant disciplines. Together lay people and members of our clergy can move forward past these difficult days to raise awareness of sexual abuse and to speak out if and when we have cause to believe it has occurred and to stop perpetrators from committing such crimes again.

Editor: What is your prayer as we move forward?  
Bishop Vásquez: At this point of tremendous pain and suffering in our church, my prayer is that all victims of abuse may be consoled and wrapped in the loving arms of Christ. May we hold the leaders of our church, including myself, accountable for our actions and our errors. And may all of us, clergy, religious and laity, work together to end sexual abuse in the church and beyond.

“Sexual abuse goes contrary to the vocation of the priesthood. As priests, we make promises before God and his church to live a celibate life and to protect the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society. As clergy, we know that we are blessed with the gift to serve the people of God, just as Christ did.”

—Bishop Joe Vásquez
The Five Challenges of Jesus
Sept. 28-30
The Five Challenges of Jesus will be offered at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center Sept. 28-30. For more than 2,000 years these challenges have confronted the followers of Christ. They form the essence of Jesus’ life and teaching: how to forgive, how to resist temptation, how to live an authentic Eucharistic life of self-giving, how to surrender and how to die to ego. Franciscan Father Albert Haase, popular author and retreat director, will present this retreat. The cost is $225 for a private room, $180 for a shared room and $100 commuter.

A Journey of Transformation
Oct. 23, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
A Spiritual Journey retreat will be held at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Marble Falls Oct. 23 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The journey is a process of being transformed by the Spirit of God into the image of Christ for others. Franciscan Father Albert Haase, popular author and retreat director, will facilitate this day. The cost is $40 and includes lunch.

Retiro en Español
Oct. 27, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Alégrese y Regocijense se llevará a cabo el 27 de Octubre de las 9 a.m a las 2 p.m. en Cedarbrake Retreat Center en Belton. El Padre Jairo Sandoval, pastor de San José Parish en Austin, compartirá su reflexión, sobre la Exhortación Apostólica del Papa Francisco que lleva el mismo nombre Alégrese y Regocijense. El costo, que incluye comida y refresco será de $35 por persona. Para registrarse llame a Cedarbrake al (254) 780-2436.

Reflections on the Spiritual Journey
Nov. 2-4
Reflections on the Spiritual Journey will be offered at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center Nov. 2-4. See how Dorothy’s journey in the Wizard of Oz can give us an insight into the steps and curves of the true spiritual journey home. Come along, click your heels and enjoy this journey down the Yellow Brick Road of Life. Franciscan Friar Johnpaul Cañiero, a former police officer and currently the chaplain for the Illinois State Police, will present this weekend. The cost for this retreat is $225 for a private room, $180 for a shared room. and $100 for commuter.

For more information or to make a reservation please call (254) 780-2436 or e-mail us at cedarbrake@austindiocese.org.
The special collection for Catholic Higher Education was taken up in parishes Feb. 10-11. The collection helps campus ministry programs in the Diocese of Austin. Totals are listed below by deanery. To report an error, contact the diocesan Finance Office at (512) 949-2423.

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Creating Hope brings our community together to provide support for Catholic Charities’ mission to end poverty throughout the Central Texas. We invite you to participate and CREATE HOPE in our community by sharing amazing stories of those we serve.

**12th Annual Creating Hope Luncheon in Central Texas**

**RSVP to attend, give or lead others to join us by calling Kristen Erdem at 512-651-6132 or email kristen-erdem@ccctx.org.**

[www.CCCTX.org/CreatingHopeCentralTexas](http://www.CCCTX.org/CreatingHopeCentralTexas)
GOOD NEWS

SAINTS FOR OUR TIMES

Padre Pio: A 20th century ‘living’ saint

By Mary Lou Gibson | Columnist

Before Mother Teresa, the most famous “living saint” was Padre Pio. He was born Francesco Forgione on May 25, 1887, into a poor farming family in Pietrelcina, Italy. Often sickly as a child, Francesco was very pious and was drawn to the priesthood at an early age.

At 15, he entered the novitiate of the Capuchin friars at Morcone and took the name of “Pio” in honor of Pope Pius I whose relic was in his local chapel. He was ordained in 1910 and in 1916 was drafted into the army with many other young priests. Ann Ball writes in “Modern Saints” that he became ill and was diagnosed with tuberculosis in the military hospital.

His Capuchin superiors sent him to the monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo to die — instead he lived another 51 years.

While at prayer before a large crucifix one September day in 1918, he experienced excruciating pain and collapsed. When the friars carried him to his bed, they noticed wounds in his hands and feet. Ball writes that the doctor who examined him could not find any natural cause for the wounds. They bled continuously until his death 50 years later.

Ian Wilson writes in “Stigmata” that Padre Pio pleaded with his fellow friars to keep his condition a secret. But word leaked out that an Italian priest had the stigmata and the story became headline news in papers around the world by 1920. The stigmata is the spontaneous appearance of the wound marks of our crucified Lord.

His celebrity status alarmed church authorities and the Vatican who tried to minimize his contact with the public. He was prohibited from giving interviews or writing of his experiences. He was allowed to celebrate Mass but at a very early hour. This 5 a.m. Mass soon became the highlight of the day for the hundreds of pilgrims who came to the monastery hoping to see him and get his blessing.

Hundreds more waited for several hours every day to come to him for confession. He heard confessions for 10 to 12 hours every day and the confessional became his chief contact with his fellow man. He used the confessional to bring both sinners and devout souls closer to God. By 1934 Padre Pio was again allowed to perform public duties and often advised people to “Pray, hope and don’t worry.”

The stigmata caused Padre Pio pain every day. Rosemary Ellen Guiley writes in “The Encyclopedia of Saints” that the wounds bled constantly and the blood had the scent of roses and violets. He could not close his hands because of the wounds and had to wear special mittens at all time except during Mass.

Padre Pio’s legacy lives on in the hospital he had built near the monastery. The House for the Relief of Suffering was dedicated in 1956 and is open to anyone who appeals for assistance.

He also promoted prayer groups for adults and children in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Today, more than 200,000 people worldwide belong to Padre Pio Prayer Groups.

Padre Pio died on Sept. 23, 1968; more than 100,000 people attended his funeral. St. John Paul II recognized Padre Pio as a saint on June 16, 2002. He lived under six popes; four of them personally acknowledged his sanctity. And for one of them, Padre Pio had a special message. In 1947, he told newly ordained Karol Wojtyla (St. John Paul II), “You will be pope.”

An undated photo of St. Padre Pio. (CNS file photo)

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

Young Adult
DAY OF REFLECTION

SEPT. 29, 2018
9 A.M.–2 P.M.

Prayer Dialogue Mission

Young adults, both single and married, between the ages of 18–39, are invited to a free day of reflection for conversation, prayer and activities exploring the joys and challenges of being a young adult.

1345 PHILOMENA STREET
AUSTIN, TX 78723

No fee, lunch included
Register at austindiocece.org/youngadult

Have you considered Catholic school?

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
Diocese of Austin
Www.csdatx.org

September 29, 2018
Only love will bring justice, harmony, restore dignity

By F. DeKarlos Blackmon | Columnist

Recently, I was afforded an opportunity to speak with a man who critically railed against the U.S. bishops and the church for their stances on immigration, health care, poverty, and a myriad of other issues. During the course of our conversation, I began to think of how inconceivable and disrespectful the man was becoming because the church didn’t espouse his unjust perspectives about treating people with respect.

After our conversation, I began to consider the division felt in many of our communities. As I reflected on the widespread lack of civility in politics, the lack of respect shown the human person with whom we come into contact in everyday life, and the overall lack of affording people dignity simply by hearing their cries, I thought, “If we don’t step up and speak out, we would be allowing others to open wide the gates of injustice.” We cannot merely close off our ears to our brothers and sisters who need us. We must step up and speak out against the hypocrisy that is far from the Lord.

“Dear friends, we should not cry, “Lord, Lord,” while dehumanizing our brothers and sisters who need us. We cannot merely close off our ears to those who cry out to us in pain and despair. Failure to recognize the inherent and inviolable dignity of the human person would be to ignore that human dignity is the cornerstone of Catholic social teaching. Time and again, I point out that the Gospel illustrates a challenge and question for Peter that is relevant in our own daily lives. In the Gospel of John, Jesus asks Peter whether Peter loves him. We too are asked daily the same question by the Lord, “Do you love me?” This question is about dedication, fidelity and commitment for each of us. If we truly love the Lord, we must take care of one another — we must love one another. Illustrated throughout the Gospel by his words and deeds, Jesus’ command is to “love one another” (Jn 13:43).

This command to love one another is encapsulated in “Koinonia,” a song written by V. Michael McKay, a Christian composer. The lyrics speak to the heart of the call to love everyone. “Koinonia” states: ‘How can I say that I love the Lord, who I’ve never seen before? And forget to say that I love the one who I walk beside each and every day? How can I look upon your face and ignore God’s love, you I must embrace? You’re my brother, you’re my sister, and I love you with the love of the Lord.”

We must be as Christ expects us to be for one another. Without love there can be no true justice, no true harmony, no true righteousness and no true integrity. For this reason, we must illustrate and express more clearly our care and concern for each of God’s people, regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity or whether they are documented or undocumented.

SPECIAL COLLECTION
World and Home Missions

The special collection for World and Home Missions was taken up in parishes Feb. 14, Ash Wednesday. The collection goes to assist various missions in the U.S. and throughout the world. Totals are listed below by deanery. To report an error, contact the diocesan Finance Office at (512) 949-2423.

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GOOD NEWS
GOOD NEWS  CATHOLIC SPIRIT

FAITH THROUGH ART

A reflection on ‘The Pelican in Her Piety’

By C.D. Weaver | Columnist

Elie Wiesel, the Jewish Holocaust survivor, once said that “God created man because God loved stories so much.” One ancient legend or story that has enjoyed a long life is the age-old story of the mother pelican, who in times of adversity, famine, hunger and want, would peck her own breast in order to keep her chicks alive by feeding them with her own life-blood.

The story survived because it became associated with Christ’s self-sacrifice and his work of salvation. It was called “The Pelican in Her Piety” and this symbol of the mother pelican “vulning” or pecking her breast (from the Latin word “vulno” meaning “to wound”) appeared in paintings, wood and stone sculpture and in stain-glass in many medieval churches. The symbolism of the Pelican in her Piety was well established in the Middle Ages and there is a hymn, attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, “Adoro te Devote” or “Humbly We Adore Thee” where in the penultimate verse, he describes Christ as the “loving divine pelican, able to provide nourishment from his breast.”

King Henry VIII, in his revolt against the pope, seized monasteries and destroyed religious painting and sculpture, not because he objected to art (he maintained a private gallery of art) but because he used “popularism” in a shrewd political move. At the bottom of the title page of the first edition of the King James Bible (1611) is a picture of this symbolic pelican feeding her chicks. And there is a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I in the Walker Gallery in Liverpool, U.K., which was painted in 1573 by Nicholas Hilliard and shows the queen in all her regal finery and royal court splendor. There, highly visible, you can see, hanging around her neck, her very favorite silver necklace — the Pelican in her Piety. For that reason, this particular paintings has always been known as “The Pelican Portrait.” Long after, French Catholics brought this same beloved image to this country, where the pelican and her chicks remain on the state flag of Louisiana and shine forth from the state seal.

C.D. Weaver is a Presbyterian minister of 35 years and is the Artist in Residence at the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin. From a large block of limestone and with tools of my own making, I produced a relief carving. It is a contemporary statement of faith, showing little chicks under the outspread, protective wings of the mother pelican. They are looking up at the droplets on her breast — the promise of life.

C.D. Weaver carved this image of The Pelican in Her Piety from a large block of limestone. (Photo by David DiCarlo)

Get your signed copy of Msgr. Goertz’ book today by sending in the coupon below.

Order your copy today! Mail the following information as well as a check for $10 (made payable to Diocese of Austin) to Communications Office, 6225 Hwy. 290 East, Austin, TX 78723. Please allow 6 weeks for delivery.

Name (first and last): __________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________
City: ___________________ State ______ ZIP __________

Msgr. Victor Goertz, one of the Austin Diocese’s beloved, retired priests, recently autographed and wrote a personal message in another batch of 100 of his “Meandering through the Mystery” books.
Calendar of events


Sept. 6: High School Discernment Dinner for teenagers considering the priesthood from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. William Parish Rectory in Round Rock. Details: www.godiscalling.me.

Sept. 7: A Night with the King from 7 to 9 p.m. at St. Theresa Parish in Austin. Free praise and worship evening to kick off the third annual Catholic Women’s Conference. Visit: www.austindiocese.org/womens-conference.

Sept. 8: Third annual Catholic Women’s Conference “Generation to Generation” at Westlake High School Performing Arts Center in Austin. Register: www.austindiocese.org/womens-conference.

Sept. 9: Fatima Trinitarian 20 Decade Rosary is prayed every Sunday at 4 p.m. at St. Anthony Parish in Kyle (except on national holidays).

Sept. 12: Adult Discernment Dinner for men discerning the priesthood will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Borromeo House in Austin. Details: www.godiscalling.me.

Sept. 13: Byzantine Vespers, Procession and Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Holy Cross, 7 p.m. at Holy Cross Parish in Austin. Social afterwards; all are invited.

Sept. 18: Annual Red Mass will be celebrated at 6 p.m. at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin. This is a Mass of the Holy Spirit celebrated annually at the opening of the judicial year. A reception will immediately follow in the Bishop’s Hall.

Sept. 18: 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.

Sept. 22: Annuity Workshop for Adult Faith Formators will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the diocesan Pastoral Center. Details: www.austindiocese.org/annuity-workshop-for-adult-faith-formators.

Sept. 29: Young adults, both single and married, between the ages of 18-39, are invited to a day of reflection from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Seton Administrative Offices in Austin. Join the diocesan Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry for conversation, prayer and activities exploring the joys and challenges of being a young adult. Details: www.austindiocese.org/youngadult.

Sept. 30: Scout Recognition Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. at St. John Vianney Parish in Round Rock.

Oct. 3: 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.

Oct. 5: Project Miriam for young women discerning religious life will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin. Details: www.godiscalling.me.

Oct. 13: Bluebonnets over Regina Mass will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. at St. Edward’s University in Austin. Join Alan Graham, CEO of Mobile Loaves & Fishes, and the families and staff of Regina Mater to learn more about the programming and expansion plans. $125 for couples and $75 per individual. Tickets: www.reginamater.us or contact Jennifer Kirsch at janenpaulkirsch@gmail.com.

Oct. 21: Inquiry session on the Permanent Diaconate from 2 to 5 p.m. at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Austin. Come and explore the diacconate, discernment methods, qualities and characteristics sought in applicants, the formation journey, the diaconate’s participation in formation, and the application process. Details: www.austindiocese.org/diaconalformation or (512) 949-2459.

Burser events

Sept. 8: St. Joseph Parish in Marlin will host their Kids’ Fair from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free games and bounce houses for all kids to enjoy.

Sept. 8: XLT, an Adoration, Praise and Worship event, will begin at 5 p.m. at Community First! Village in Austin. All high school youth groups are invited to attend. There will be a tour of the village and a scavenger hunt as well as dinner and a movie. The Life Teen Band from St. Ignatius Marry Parish in Austin will perform. The cost is $20 per person. For details, visit st-ignatius.org/xlt.

Sept. 9: St. Joseph Parish in Marlin will host its Fall Festival from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Children’s fajita meal will include rice, beans, dessert and drink for $10 per plate, dine in or drive through. Live auction starts at 2 p.m. Games and activities for all ages.

Sept. 10: Holy Trinity Parish in Marlin will hold its annual Bazaar on the parish grounds. Mass will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. Barbecue and fried chicken will be served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will be live polka music during the meal, children’s games, live and silent auctions and kolaches for sale. Hamburgers will be available at 2:30 p.m.

Sept. 10: St. Margaret Mary Parish in Cedar Park will study “Doors of Mercy: Exploring God’s Covenant With You” by Father Jeffrey Kirby and published by St. Benedict Press on Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. through Nov. 13. Register via e-mail: graniebev@gmail.com.

Sept. 10: The Justice Faith program explores today’s issues through the lens of Catholic social teaching, and it is open to anyone who would like to participate. St. Albert the Great Parish in Austin will offer the JustFaith program beginning Sept. 19. Register: Cata Hasdorff at (512) 837-7195, cmhas13@aol.com or Linda Rodriguez at (512) 669-8915, lindarodriguez@gmail.com.

Sept. 22: Vianney Fest Golf Scramble from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. Details: www.jvroundrock.org/vianney-fest-2018.

Sept. 23: St. Joseph Parish in Tours will host its annual Picnic. Fried chicken, sausage and sides will be served starting at 11:30 a.m. Plates are $10 each. Live auction begins at 12:30 p.m. Fun, food and games for all ages.

Sept. 30: St. Mary Parish in Round Rock will host its annual Festival beginning with Mass at 10 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon. Live auction begins at 1 p.m. Games for all ages.

Oct. 5: Golf tournament beginning at 1 p.m. at Crystal Falls Golf Club in Leander benefiting Mobile Loaves & Fishes at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Cedar Park. Contact Jason Ferguson at (512) 843-4473 or mlfot@gmail.com.

Oct. 6: St. Mary Parish in Pin Oak will host its festival Oct. 6 beginning with Mass at 3 p.m. under the oak trees. Dinner will begin at 4:30 p.m. Live auction will start at 6 p.m.

Oct. 7: St. John Vianney Parish in Round Rock will host Vianney Fest from noon to 5 p.m. There will be events and activities for all ages including food, games, music, live and silent auctions, sports games and more.

Oct. 20: St. Ignatius Martyr Parish in Austin will host its annual Fall Fest from 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the parish grounds. There will be live music all day as well as a variety of food, beverages, entertainment, games and community.

Oct. 21: St. Paul Parish in Smithville will host its annual festival Oct. 21 beginning with Mass at 10:15 a.m. Lunch will begin at 11:30 a.m. Live auction starts at 1 p.m. Games for all ages throughout the afternoon.

Oct. 21: St. Helen Parish in Georgetown will host its annual Fall Festival beginning at 10 a.m. on the parish grounds. International foods and fun games will be available for the whole family.
**Retreats and days of reflection**

**Sept. 7-9:** Retrouvaille offers struggling couples the chance to rediscover themselves, their spouse and their marriage. For confidential information, call (800) 470-2230 or visit www.helpourmarriage.com.

**Sept. 11:** Solace for the Soul Journey, a day of spirituality, will be offered from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center in Burnet. Just as Mary pondered all the mercies of God in her life, this day of spirituality is an opportunity to reflect on the grace and actions of God in our personal salvation story. The cost is $35 per person and a light breakfast and lunch is included. Pre-registration is required. Register: www.evrw.org.

**Oct. 15:** The Diocese of Austin Catholic Committee on Scouting will present a Religious Emblem Adult Training Retreat Day at St. Thomas More Parish in Austin from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is a $15 registration fee. Details: www.austindiocese.org/scouting.

**Sept. 21-23:** Married couples are invited to Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend. Details: www.austindiocese.org or (512) 687-9963 or wwenmaustin@gmail.com.

**Sept. 24-28:** “Angels & Demons: Discerning the Glorious from the Fallen” by Fullness of Truth Catholic Evangelization Ministries will be held at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin. Learn more about the incredible trial of the Angels and the battle over the human family. Discover the mission and role of the Angels in our lives. Details: www.fullnessoftruth.org/copy-of-austin-angels-and-demons.us.

**Sept. 28:** The Five Challenges of Jesus, a weekend retreat, will be offered at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. The cost is $180 for a shared room and $100 commuter. Details: www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake.

**Oct. 1-4:** Annual Deacons’ Convocation, Holy Trinity Parish, Corn Hill, 8:30 a.m.

**Oct. 5:** Healthy Family … Healthy Society, a day of spirituality, will be held at Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center in Burnet. In a world filled with “fake news,” school shootings, internet temptations, families today are facing many fears and trepidation. Pre-registration is required. Register: www.evrw.org.

**Oct. 13:** The Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary will sponsor the second annual Blue and White Schol- arship Dance at the Millennium Entertainment Center in Austin beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are $25 pre-sale. Details: (512) 217-9616.

**Oct. 19-20:** Mercy & Mary Retreat at St. Theresa Parish in Austin. The retreat will feature bestselling author of 33 Days to Morning Glory and acclaimed speaker Father Michael Gaitley. Registration is $49.95. Visit: https://events.marianmissionaries.org/events/mer- cy-mary-retreat-austin-bx/ or Leslie Key at s.leslie9@gmail.com.

**Oct. 23:** A Journey of Transformation, a spiritual journey retreat, will be offered from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. Franciscan Father Albert Haase will lead this day. Cost is $40, which includes lunch. Details: www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake.

**Oct. 26-28:** “Together in God’s Love,” a weekend retreat for couples who are preparing for marriage or who are married and seeking to deepen their relationship with one another, will be held at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. The retreat focuses on Catholic marriage as a visible sign of the Holy Trinity and the relationship of Christ to the Church. The weekend includes talks on faith, communication, sexuality, and stewardship in the context of a Catholic marriage. Details: Call Rachel Sutterer at (512) 949-2486.

**Burse for July**

The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women has completed a burse for the Clerical Endowment Fund (CEF) in honor of Salvatorian Father Jozef Musiol, pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish in Chappell Hill.

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

- Austin: $712.00
- Bastrop/Lockhart: $451.00
- Brenham/Le Grange: $655.00
- Bryan/College Station: $399.00
- Georgetown/Round Rock: $234.00
- Killeen/Temple: $516.00
- Lampasas/Marble Falls: $104.00
- Waco: $1,860.00
- Previous Balance: $5,172.84

**Total:** $13,173.76

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

**Official schedules**

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

**Bishop Joe S. Vásquez**

- **Sept. 5:** Monthly Budget Meeting, Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.
- **Sept. 6-8:** Secretariat Directors, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
- **Sept. 7:** Diocesan Health Care Forum, CHI St. Joseph Health, Bryan, 10 a.m.
- **Sept. 8:** Mass at Diocesan Women’s Conference, Westlake Performing Arts Center, Austin, 8:30 a.m.

**Bishop Daniel E. Garcia**

- **Sept. 5:** Monthly Budget Meeting, Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.
- **Sept. 10-13:** USCCB Committee and Catholic Relief Services Meetings, Washington, D.C.
- **Sept. 15:** Mass for Society of St. Vincent de Paul, San Jose Parish, Austin, 10 a.m.
- **Sept. 16:** Confirmation, Holy Rosary Parish, Frenstat, 8 a.m.
- **Sept. 18:** Convocation for Retired Priests, St. John Paul II Residence for Priests, Georgetown, 9 a.m.
- **Sept. 19:** EIM Review Board, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
- **Sept. 20-23:** National V Encuentro, Gaylord Resort, Grapevine
- **Oct. 1-4:** Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Meeting, Austin
- **Oct. 2:** Confirmation, St. Anthony Parish, Kyle, 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.
- **Oct. 6:** Confirmation, Santa Cruz Parish, Buda, 6:30 p.m.
- **Oct. 8:** Mass at Retreat for TDCJ Alfred D. Hughes Unit, Gatesville, 11 a.m.
- **Oct. 13:** Annual Deacons’ Convocation, Holy Trinity Parish, Corn Hill, 8:30 a.m.
- **Oct. 15:** Confirmation, St. Margaret Parish, Giddings, 3 p.m.
- **Oct. 17:** Confirmation, St. Mary Catholic Parish, Round Rock, 1 p.m.

- **Sept. 24-28:** Rome
- **Sept. 29:** Annual Scout Mass, St. John Vianney Parish, Round Rock, 10 a.m.
- **Oct. 1-4:** Annual Priests’ Convocation, Austin Marriott Hotel, Round Rock
- **Oct. 4:** Fine Arts Reception, Pastoral Center, 5 p.m.
- **Oct. 6:** Annual Deacons’ Convocation, Holy Trinity Parish, Corn Hill, 8:30 a.m.
- **Oct. 8-10:** USCCB Subcommittee on Divine Worship in Spanish, Washington, D.C.
- **Oct. 11:** Secretariat Directors, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
- **Oct. 12:** Monthly Budget Meeting, Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.
- **Oct. 13:** Catholic Services Appeal Reception, St. William Parish, Round Rock, 1 p.m.
Haciendo un llamado para terminar con el azote del abuso sexual

Editora: Obispo, el 14 de agosto, un jurado de Pennsylvania reportó que reclamos detallados del abuso sexual de más de 1,000 niños en más de 70 años en seis diócesis en el estado fueron emitidos ¿Cuál fue su respuesta cuando escuchó este reporte?

Obispo Vázquez: Mientras leía el reporte, fue como si alguien me hubiera dado un puñetazo en el estómago. Me sentí enfermo y enfurrocido por los resultados del reporte de Pennsylvania. Los crímenes atribuidos al antiguo Cardenal Theodore McCarrick y a los sacerdotes de esas diócesis son inenarrables.

Con justa razón, muchos de nuestros fieles están furiosos con los resultados del reporte. Antes que nada, como obispo, siento mucho cualquier abuso que haya ocurrido a manos de un miembro del clero. Cuando alguien experimenta abuso sexual, la herida es devastadora. El abuso sexual va contra la vocación del sacerdocio. Como sacerdotes, prometemos ante Dios y su iglesia vivir una vida de celibato y proteger a los más débiles y vulnerables miembros de nuestra sociedad. Como clero, sabemos que estamos bendecidos con el don de servir a la gente de Dios, tal como Cristo lo hizo.

No hay duda que el reporte de Pennsylvania ha socavado la credibilidad y la confianza en nosotros como obispos y la jerarquía de la iglesia. La gente se está preguntando, y con justa razón, cómo pueden confiar en los líderes de la iglesia cuando actos tan horribles se permitieron que pasaran en nuestra iglesia.

El aspecto más difícil del reporte es el leer sobre sacerdotes que cometieron repetidamente abuso sexual de menores después de haber sido removidos de una parroquia y puestos en otra. Nosotros, incluyéndome a mí y a mis hermanos obispos, debemos asumir nuestra responsabilidad e implementar salvaguardias para prevenir que tales terribles cosas pasen de nuevo. Aquellos que perpetran el abuso sexual de un menor o cualquier otro tipo de abuso criminal deben ser inmediatamente retirados del ministerio y hacerse responsable de sus acciones de acuerdo a la ley.

Editora: ¿La diócesis ha lidiado con algún caso de abuso sexual de parte del clero desde que el Estatuto para la Protección de Niños y Jóvenes fue adoptado en 2002?

Obispo Vázquez: Fui instalado como obispo de Austin en 2010. Ha habido tres casos hechos de nuestro conocimiento que involucran abuso de un niño después de 2002. Se me informó que en 2004, un diácono fue condenado por exposición indecente a un niño y recibió una condena probatoria de 10 años. El diácono fue retirado del ministerio y poco tiempo después falleció. También se me informó que en 2005, un sacerdote, que se mudó aquí desde otra diócesis, fue acusado de haber tocado de manera inapropiada a un menor. Él fue retirado del ministerio. El caso terminó en un juicio nulo, y poco después el sacerdote murió. En 2011, un diácono se declaró culpable en un caso que involucraba indecencia con una menor, miembro de su familia. El diácono fue retirado permanentemente del ministerio.

Recibimos algunos pocos reportes de conducta inapropiada por parte de sacerdotes con niños, tales como conversaciones inapropiadas o el uso de lenguaje cuestionable. Estos reportes fueron investigados y se actuó en consecuencia.

Aparte de eso, no tengo conocimiento de casos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del clero ocurridos después del 2002. Recibimos, después de 2002, reportes de historial abuso sexual contra menores por parte de sacerdotes quienes estuvieron previamente en esta diócesis; por ejemplo, abuso que ocurrió en los años setenta y ochenta. Algunos de esos reportes fueron encontrados creíbles. Los sacerdotes involucrados en esos casos han fallecido o no se les permite ya servir en ministerio.

Editora: ¿Cómo podemos asegurarnos de que pedófilos no estén entrando en nuestros seminarios?

Obispo Vázquez: Durante las últimas siete décadas, nuestra diócesis ha sido bendecida con el poder liberar a la iglesia de este látigo sexual. También nos uniremos para pedir a Dios que cargue a sanar de la tragedia del abuso sexual. También nos uniremos para pedir a Dios que cargue a sanar de la tragedia del abuso sexual.

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Descanse en Paz, Obispo John E. McCarthy

Por el personal del Espíritu Católico

El Obispo John E. McCarthy, tercer obispo de la Diócesis de Austin, falleció el 18 de agosto de su hogar en Austin.

Hijo de George and Grace O’Brien McCarthy, nació en Houston el 21 de junio de 1930. Producto de la educación Católica, asistió al St. Mary’s Seminary y la Universidad de St. Thomas, obteniendo una licenciatura en 1956. El 26 de mayo del mismo año, se ordenó como sacerdote Católico Romano en la St. Mary Catholic Basilica en Galveston.

Su ministerio en la iglesia comenzó en St. Pius Parish, Pasadena donde inauguró un programa de ministerio social en la parroquia. Él disfrutaba contando cómo daba una bolsa de víveres a sus parroquianos y les pedía que se la llevaran a una familia necesitada, dando así la oportunidad de que la entregara de entender mejor las causas y ramificaciones de la pobreza.

Él citaba la Escritura “por sus obras los conocerán” con frecuencia durante su carrera, la cual incluyó, primero las Parroquias de St. Cecilia y de All Saints en Houston, antes de ser designado director ejecutivo del Comité de los Obispos para los Católicos de Habla Hispana con base en San Antonio. Una de las acciones más notables del comité durante su permanencia fue el apoyar a trabajadores de granjas a mejorar su situación.

Un período de dos años en Washington de 1967 a 1969, le permitieron ser uno de los fundadores de la Catholic Campaign for Human Development, actualmente el mayor esfuerzo doméstico contra la pobreza de los obispos. En medio de una nación consumida por el racismo y la pobreza sistemática, el CCHD (por sus siglas en inglés) proveyó un medio para que las comunidades locales pudieran tener los fondos para programas de auto ayuda e hicieran responsables a líderes civiles de mejorar comunidades. Durante un retiro de fin de semana, McCarthy y otros sacerdotes socialmente conscientes delinearon los conceptos iniciales del CCHD. En 1978, los obispos de Estados Unidos lanzaron la campaña, designando que proveyera de fondos para “proyectos tales como el registro de votantes, organizaciones comunitarias, escuelas manejadas por las comunidades, cooperativas de minorías y uniones crediticias, capital para el desarrollo industrial y programas de entrenamiento para el empleo, y el establecimiento de cooperativas rurales”.


En 1986 fue designado tercer obispo de Austin. De muchas maneras, Austin era todavía un pueblo somnoliento. La diócesis tenía cerca de 115,000 Católicos que se reunían en 107 parroquias. El consejo más citado del Obispo Vincent Harris para su sucesor fue que se mantuviera el apoyo a trabajadores de granjas para que proveyeran de servicios legales gratuitos a aquellos necesitados, y supervisó iniciativas mayores con una parroquia cerca de Monterrey, México y la Diócesis de Juticalpa, Honduras.

Tal vez todo su trabajo puede resumirse en su conclusión clásica, “Sigamos adelante, y sigamos juntos”.

Después de su retiro, el 2 de enero de 2001, el Obispo McCarthy disfrutó de numerosos hobbies, incluyendo un blog. En 2013 publicó una colección de sus escritos “Off the Cuff and Over the Collar: Common Sense Catholicism.” Es sobrevivido por su cuñada, Charlene McCarthy de Houston, y su familia extendida.

La familia recomienda respetuosamente las donaciones al Bishop John McCarthy Memorial Fund, 6225 E US 290 HWY SVRD EB, Austin, TX 78723.

El nuevo año ha comenzado y más de 5,000 estudiantes alegran las pasillos de 22 escuelas Católicas en la Diócesis de Austin. Muchas escuelas están implementando nuevos modelos de educación y están aumentando significativamente sus programas existentes, dijo Misty Poe, la Superintendente de Escuelas Católicas.

“La tradición y el progreso están marcando el comienzo del año escolar 2018-2019,” dijo. “Algunos de los nuevos modelos que nuestras escuelas están adoptando no son tan nuevos. Ellos son el regreso a las aproximaciones efectivas que se han dejado en la corriente principal de educación”.

Por ejemplo, St. Mary’s Catholic School en Taylor y la Cathedral School of St. Mary en Austin están adoptando el modelo clásico de educación en sus salones durante los próximos años.

“Las escuelas Católicas usaban la educación clásica para entrenar a seminaristas y esto era el centro de la educación hace 70 años”. Dijo Heidi Altman, directora de St. Mary’s Catholic School en Taylor. Aunque muchas escuelas usan varios componentes de la educación clásica, St. Mary’s es la primera escuela Católica en la diócesis en implementar completamente dicha aproximación a la enseñanza este otoño para todos sus estudiantes, desde pre-k hasta el octavo grado.

La Cathedral School of St. Mary en Austin – la escuela Católica más antigua en la diócesis con 162 años – se encuentra también acercándose a la educación clásica a través de un puñado de maestros que han sido entrenados.

“Esta transición llevará aproximadamente tres años para implementarse completamente,” dijo Poe.

La aproximación clásica a la educación abarca el estudio de las tres maneras en las que los estudiantes aprenden a reconocer, recibir y expresar la verdad, belleza y bondad que ellos encuentran en el mundo alrededor de ellos. Las herramientas proveídas por este tipo de educación correspondientes naturalmente a los estados de desarrollo de cada niño.

Robert Whitworth, Asistente de la Superintendente de las Escuelas Católicas, dijo que el modelo clásico es una manera consistente de ayudar a que los estudiantes crezcan en la virtud.

“El modelo clásico ayuda a los estudiantes a usar su libertad dada por Dios en una manera que lleve al desarrollo completo de su potencial como seres humanos,” dijo.

Robert LeGros, director de la Cathedral School of St. Mary, dijo que el objetivo último es concentrarse en los estudiantes de los asuntos trascendentales. “Aqui es donde los estudiantes aprender a pensar sobre lo que es verdad, bello y bueno. La verdad está conectada al mundo de las ciencias y la naturaleza. La belleza está en las artes. La bondad en la religión, y eso está conectado con la misión de la iglesia para formar santos,” dijo LeGros.

La aproximación se enfatiza por la participación de los padres de familia, dijo Altman.

“Eso es para la sabiduría y la virtud centrada en Cristo. Esperamos que anime a las discusiones en la mesa familiar,” dijo.

En otras escuelas Católicas en la diócesis, hay muchas mejoras innovadoras y tecnológicas llevándose a cabo.

Reicher Catholic High School en Waco ha abierto un nuevo laboratorio de ciencias. “Somos bendecidos con haber recaudado más de $500,000 para renovar nuestro ala de ciencia y crear un laboratorio y sala de clases de química y física y otro de biología y anatomía. Estos espacios permitirán a los maestros la transición de la instrucción de clases a las actividades de laboratorio en cuestión de momentos,” dijo la directora de la escuela Mindy Taylor.

San Juan Diego Catholic High School en Austin ha dado la bienvenida a una clase de primer año de 60 a sus nuevas instalaciones de $11 millones y 60,000 pies cuadrados que tiene 14 salones de clases y gimnasio. Las nuevas instalaciones despliegan tecnología de punta y características de seguridad. La segunda fase del proyecto, que es el completar el segundo piso, está proyectada para comenzar en los próximos años.

St. Louis Catholic School en Austin ha agregado una segunda clase de Montessori para niños de edades de 3 a 5 años que use la Catequesis del Buen Pastor.

Los sellos distintivos de la educación Montessori incluyen un reconocimiento respecto del deseo innato de un niño de aprender y de un maestro que facilita ese deseo por aprender a crear oportunidades que para que los estudiantes se involucren en actividades significativas prácicas en el salón.

La nueva clase de 45 se llenó rápidamente, dijeron los maestros.

“Da testimonio sobre la aproximación al aprendizaje y al aspecto religioso que este atraiga fuertemente a los padres,” dijo Isabelle Turner, una líder de educación Montessori.

Holy Family Catholic School en Austin está agregando una nueva biblioteca, salón de clases y pabellón este año.

Dos escuelas cuentan con un nuevo líderzago: St. Dominic Savio High School en Austin tiene un nuevo director de enseñanza Enrique García. Heath Vallilce es la nueva directora interina en Santa Cruz Catholic School en Buda.

Además, Sacred Heart Parish en Waco y Sacred Heart Parish en Austin se encuentran incrementando sus programas de asociación parroquial a familias buscando asistencia financiera para la colegiatura.

“Eso cumple un sueto para las familias de dar a sus hijos una educación Católica,” dijo el Padre Benjie Magnaye, pastor de Sacred Heart in Waco. “Nuestros parroquianos son muy generosos; tenemos familias que patrocinan un estudiante. Los estudiantes también llevan a cabo eventos de recaudación de fondos,” dijo. Este año escolar el programa de Waco ayudó a 20 estudiantes a que asistieran las escuelas Reicher y St. Louis. El programa de Austin ha ayudado a cerca de 160 estudiantes a asistir a escuelas Católicas.

Para proveer a los maestros y empleados con apoyo agregado para crear mejores ambientes de aprendizaje, los maestros pueden aplicar por subsidios de hasta $3,000 a través del programa de subsidios “Avanzando Nuestra Misión”, el cual es dirigido por la Diócesis de Austin. Alrededor de $45,000 se encuentran disponibles para apoyar los esfuerzos de los maestros.

A través de la colocación de los fondos diocesanos, el Obispo José Vásquez ha implementado el programa “STOPit”, el cual es un sistema de reporte que permite a estudiantes preocupados reportar anónimamente situaciones insanas o circunstancias en el campus. La mayoría de estos campus se encuentran instalando el sistema ahora.

“La implementación de STOPit es un paso más que la Diócesis de Austin está tomando para ser proactiva en lo que se refiere a la seguridad de los estudiantes en nuestras escuelas Católicas,” dijo Poe.

Este año, después de la Misa de comienzo de año escolar del día 6 de Agosto, la Oficina diocesana de las Escuelas Católicas fue anfitrión de un taller de desarrollo profesional sobre la Evaluación Clifton Strengths Finder. A cada maestro en la diócesis se le dio la oportunidad de tomar la evaluación y entonces se le introdujo al desarrollo profesional centrado en las maneras en las cuales él conocer sus propias fortalezas permite a los maestros y al personal ser más efectivos en el salón y en la escuela. “Nuestros maestros y miembros de nuestro staff son grandes recursos,” dijo Poe. “Nuestra meta es ayudarlos a guiar con sus fortalezas y talentos dados por Dios”.

Para mayor información sobre las escuelas Católicas, visite www.csdats.org.
“Todos lo que hicimos fue restaurar su dignidad, para ayudarles a sentirse que eran valiosos e importantes.”

—Sara Ramirez, directora ejecutiva por CCCTX
Youth from St. Louis Parish and Catholic School in Austin participated in the summer program at the Early Childhood and Development Center. They spent time each week helping social ministries prepare rice and beans for those in need. St. Louis Catholic School hosted its annual Family to Family back to school event. (Photos courtesy Carrie Vernieuw and Jessica Chaffee)

High school graduates were recently awarded $500 scholarships from Knights of Columbus Council 7600 of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Cedar Park. (Photo courtesy Susan Tull)

The Comfort Cap Ministry at St. John Vianney Parish in Round Rock delivered 294 caps and blankets to hospitals, memory care units and oncology centers in Round Rock. The ministry knits and crochets hats for babies, the elderly and cancer patients. The parish also held a summer music camp for children in second through fifth grades. (Photos courtesy Rilla Chaka)

The youth of St. Elizabeth Parish in Pflugerville participated in summer sports events, building community and fellowship throughout the summer. (Photo courtesy Tressi Breecher)

Faculty and staff from St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic School in Austin attended the Beginning of the School Year Mass on Aug. 6. (Photo courtesy Michelle Fontana)

St. Theresa Parish in Austin hosted "Music Alive," a sacred music and arts camp for youth. The parish also hosted Vacation Bible School and a Mobile Loaves and Fishes camp during the summer. (Photos courtesy Linda Gockel)

St. Mary’s Catholic School in Temple will be using the Virtues in Practice program to assist their students in better understanding the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The entire school studies the same virtue each month. (Photo courtesy Renee Morales)

Teens from Sacred Heart Parish in La Grange and St. Mary Parish in Wimberley traveled to Catholic Heart Workcamp in North Carolina during the first week of July. They worked, prayed and served with 200 Catholic youth from all over the country. (Photo courtesy Debbie Greene)

Send photos by the 10th of the month to catholic-spirit@austindiocese.org. Publication is not guaranteed.
Bishop Joe Vásquez celebrated the Beginning of the School Year Mass for all Catholic school faculty and staff members on Aug. 6. Several teachers and administrators were honored for their years of service. New faculty and staff from the 22 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Austin attended an in-service before the school year began.

(Photos courtesy Andrea Bizzanelli)

Janet Fontenette was recently installed as president of the Austin Deaneries Council of Catholic Women. Fontenette also works as the archivist for the Diocese of Austin. (Photo courtesy Karen Dunlap)

Holy Family Parish in Copperas Cove held a Back to School Backpack Drive to collect school supplies for youth and families in need. The Knights of Columbus Council #6658 helped collect and deliver the backpacks filled with supplies to local schools.

(Photo courtesy Rodney Davenport)

St. Francis on the Brazos Parish in Waco celebrated the 30th anniversary of Deacon Jessie C. Garza’s ordination with a potluck dinner and mariachis.

(Photo courtesy Orlando Salas)

St. Stephen’s KJT Society presented a check to the St. Vincent de Paul Society at Sacred Heart Parish in Austin. (Photo courtesy Sarah Vitek)

St. Stephen’s KJT Society presented a check to the St. Vincent de Paul Society at Sacred Heart Parish in Austin. (Photo courtesy Sarah Vitek)

Sister Christina Chávez celebrated her First Profession of Vows as a Sister of Divine Providence at Sacred Heart Conventual Chapel of Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio. Sister Chávez serves on the Campus Ministry Team at the University Catholic Center in Austin. (Photo courtesy Ana M. Sánchez)

Father Victor Mayorga, pastor of Santa Teresa Parish in Bryan, celebrated a Mass for vocations on July 13, feast day of Our Lady of Mystical Rose. The Mass was preceded by a rosary prayed for an increase in vocations and for the church.

(Photos courtesy Reyna Segura-Felipe)

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