

January 2019

Dear Friends,

Every January, we celebrate Catholic education nationwide during Catholic Schools Week. Because of *Encountering Christ*, our families and schools have even more reason to celebrate — \$5 million in campaign gifts will be directed to tuition assistance.

Although many families realize the value of a Catholic education, they simply cannot afford the cost of tuition. Your gifts to *Encountering Christ* will help reduce this challenge and provide more children access to Catholic schools. This tuition assistance will ensure Catholic education is available and affordable to all.

Like this campaign, Catholic schools strengthen the diocese, as they are integral to building the church and forming disciples and future church leaders. Our schools also strengthen families. Children take their classroom encounters with Christ home, often transforming their parents and empowering them in their faith.

Thank you for supporting *Encountering Christ* and Catholic education.

Blessings,



Misty Poe  
Superintendent



**DIOCESE OF AUSTIN**  
6225 E US 290 HWY SVRD EB  
AUSTIN, TX 78723  
encounteringchristcampaign.org  
(512) 949-2400

## Wave 1 parishes exceed goal

The 56 small and rural parishes in Wave 1 of *Encountering Christ* have now raised 104 percent of their collective goal of \$10.1 million, thanks to 4,260 gifts.

“We wanted to create a parish wave where our team could work solely with our smaller parish communities and provide them with specific, professional attention to address their local needs today and in the future,” said Scott Whitaker, director of stewardship and development.

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**More than \$36 million has now been raised toward  
the campaign’s overall goal of \$85 million.**

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“I’m thankful for and proud of the parishioners who have embraced *Encountering Christ*,” he added. “The goal of this campaign is to strengthen our diocese and our parishes, and through the generosity of so many, we’re achieving exactly that.”



*Father Bernard Hung and his campaign team at St. Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Caldwell celebrate their Encountering Christ success.*

Thanks to the success of Wave 1 and the Pilot Parishes, as well as leadership gifts received personally by Bishop Joe Vásquez, more than \$37 million has now been raised toward the campaign’s overall goal of \$85 million.

Pilot and Wave 1 parishes are currently set to receive \$5.3 million from *Encountering Christ* — 41 percent of the total, thanks to so many parishes exceeding their goals and

receiving 70 percent of all gifts received over goal. Parishes are directing these funds to a variety of local needs, ministries, programs and facility repairs, maintenance and upgrades. (To review details about parishes’ campaigns and local needs, please visit [encounteringchristcampaign.org/wave](http://encounteringchristcampaign.org/wave).)

*Encountering Christ* campaign staff are working with Wave 2 and Wave 3 parishes during 2019. Wave 2 will take place January through June; Wave 3, July through December. The 60 remaining parishes are significantly larger than those in Wave 1 and have collective goals totaling more than \$60 million.

Wave 2 pastors and their recruited campaign chairpersons began preparing for the campaign in September. They will involve new volunteers in February and March before publicly launching their efforts during a Kickoff Weekend on March 9 and 10. Wave 3, the final phase of the campaign, will begin this summer.



## Encountering Christ will help make Catholic education more affordable

Our 22 Catholic schools provide 5,235 students with a comprehensive, faith-based education, preparing their minds for college and their hearts for discipleship. Ensuring cost prevents no family from enrolling their children is a priority of *Encountering Christ*.

Studies show that children who attend Catholic schools outperform the national average on standardized tests, are more engaged as citizens, are more likely to graduate high school and attend college and are more likely to continue attending Mass and be active in their parishes.

Catholics have a responsibility to ensure future generations of well-formed disciples who are prepared and excited to share their faith with our world.

Tuition costs are challenging for many families. An estimated 34 percent of students enrolled in Catholic schools require tuition assistance. Our diocese can do more to make Catholic education available to more families. *Encountering Christ* gifts will be used to establish a \$5 million tuition assistance fund. Funds from this endowment will help us welcome more children to our schools for years to come, and spread the benefits of a Catholic education to more families.

For more information, visit [encounteringchristcampaign.org/videos](http://encounteringchristcampaign.org/videos) and watch the “Catholic Schools” video.

## DONOR PROFILE | Sherrie Yowell Anderson and Debbie Yowell Farley

Christian stewardship is second nature to the Yowell sisters — now Sherrie Anderson and Debbie Farley — because it was a “family affair” for them growing up.

“Our parents came from very humble beginnings but through God’s grace, hard work and good business decisions, they were able to have some success and were able to make, later in life, major contributions to their parish and the diocese,” said Debbie, a member of St. Paul Chong Hasang Parish in Harker Heights. “But my dad was always quick to remind all of us that it was God who had blessed us with the success, so it was only right to be a generous steward of what was really God’s gift.”

The two remember their mother, Johnnie Lou, sharing stories of how her family hosted Mass in their home for the Catholics of Elk since, with 10 siblings, theirs was the largest in town. (William “Bill,” her future husband, lived right next door.) Then, when

the community joined together to build St. Joseph Church, she would pick flowers from the garden to decorate the altar every Sunday.

Supporting and participating in the church was “part of your life,” said Sherrie, a member of St. Paul Parish in Austin. “You didn’t think about it.”

When Johnnie Lou and Bill married and moved from Elk to Killeen, they followed in their parents’ footsteps and helped establish the church there. Debbie recalled, “My dad always tells me this story of how one day, he drove the priest in the area at that time, out to a cornfield on the north side of Killeen and he said, ‘Father, I really think you need to look at this land and purchase it, and let’s build a church here.’ And then fast forward, and that’s where St. Joseph’s stands today.”

Debbie and Sherrie are now following in their parents’ footsteps. Both are volunteering on the Campaign Executive Committees for their



parishes’ *Encountering Christ* campaign and, when Bishop Joe Vásquez invited them to make a leadership gift to *Encountering Christ*, they responded generously.

“There was no question that we should support our diocese as the people before us did to give us the structure that we have now,” Sherrie said. “We have to do our share to pay that forward and make sure that the diocese stays strong and can tend to the needs of everyone who’s here.”