El Reno’s Sacred Heart: Leading by example

By Charles Albert
For the Sooner Catholic

One hundred and twenty-five years on the Oklahoma prairie, like many fellow parishes, El Reno’s Sacred Heart started in family homes. The parish prospered with many close families who were devoted to the parish and its growth. Sacred Heart also overcame much adversity such as disease, Oklahoma weather, discrimination, financial issues, the Great Depression, two World Wars, natural fires, possible arson cases and the closing of the beloved parish school in 1968 due to costs and enrollment.

However, what sets this parish apart is a very strong core of long-time, multi-generational families who are quite proud of their diverse and exciting parish, and school history.

One famous parishioner, who lived in a pauper shack and is now deceased, was Joseph Danne. He didn’t care about worldly possessions, as he was busy inventing a winter wheat called “Triumph,” parishioners said. Although he lived humbly, he died with a rather sizeable estate and left much for Sacred Heart and other Catholic charities. Cecelia Voss, head of the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program at Sacred Heart, visited his home as a child and remembers it is as “very much a shack, not well kept, and had Mason Jars of seeds everywhere.”

In 1997, Sacred Heart’s parish council voted to reopen its closed school. Again, defying nationwide statistics, the school has doubled in enrollment.

According to Holly Eaton, public relations director of the school, “The school offers a great alternative, great support in the community and great support from the parish.” The school could not have succeeded and grown without the support of past pastor Father Phil Donohoe and current pastor, Father Mark Mason.

What also sets this parish apart is the opening of a retirement care center and memory care center administered and financed by a board of directors from Sacred Heart.

Dave Eaton, chairman of the board, said, “It is very rewarding for the board, the employees, the residents, the Church and the community.”

Saint Katharine Drexel Retirement Center is privately funded and has a waiting list for the facility. Members of the church raised $300,000 in cash reserves for the diocese to approve the program in 2005.

Father Mason celebrates Mass once a week at Saint Katharine’s, even though a large portion of the retirement center’s residents are not Catholic. Both the school and the retirement center have contributed to a large number of converts joining Sacred Heart.

Charles Albert is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

Oklahomans lead smudging ceremony at National Shrine

Deacon Roy Callison, coordinator of American Indian Catholic Outreach for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, and his wife, Susan Callison, led a smudging ritual at the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

The ceremony was held Aug. 23 before a Mass by the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and the American Indian community to celebrate the one-month countdown until the arrival of Pope Francis in Washington, D.C., and the September canonization of Blessed Junípero Serra.

The Mass was celebrated in the Upper Church where Fr. Wayne Payase was main celebrant and homilist. Sr. Kateri Mitchell and Fr. Henry Sands were among those participating. After Mass, the congregation moved down to the crypt. There they were able to view the Blessed Junípero Serra exhibit, which included artifacts from the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.

What is a Smudging Ceremony?

A Smudging Ceremony is an ancient North American ceremonial ritual used by American Indians to purify themselves spiritually. Different tribes use different plants such as cedar, sage or sweet grass. To conduct the smudging ritual a small amount of fire coals are placed in a seashell. The cedar is then sprinkled on the coals. The smoke rising from the burning cedar carries the prayers of the people to the Creator. During the smudging ceremony the person conducting the ritual gently fans the cedar smoke toward the people using an eagle feather or an eagle feather fan.

Photo courtesy of Matthew Barrick.
What can we learn from the passing of Mark Costello?

Last week, Oklahoma publicly mourned the death of Mark Costello, who was tragically slain by the hand of his own dear son, Christian. The governor ordered flags at half staff in acknowledgement of his dedicated service to the people of Oklahoma as a state senator, and he had held since his election in 2010. As become apparent in the media coverage throughout the days following his death, Mark was many things to many people.

Mark was a dedicated and loving husband and father. He was a Catholic, passionately devoted to his family, church and state. He was a successful businessman and entrepreneur. He was certainly a committed Bavarian. He was a friend to many Catholic institutions and other causes that he believed in. Mark was a friend to many, including many who were often forgotten and overlooked.

I have known Mark since when undergraduates at the University of Kansas we participated together in a seminar abroad in Ireland. When he married Cathy Cerkey in 1982 (in the parish to which I belong) I was an acolyte for the wedding Mass. The Costelloes were among the handful of people I knew when I arrived in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and they welcomed me warmly. Those are a few of the memories I cherish about Mark. The amazing thing is that so many other people in Oklahoma and throughout the United States and the world have their own stories and memories of Mark, beyond have their own stories and memories of Mark, which have been shared in the course of these days. Mark Costello was a public figure. But, he also was a man, like all men and women who lift his own counsel about some of the things that mattered most.

Among those things that Mark carried in his heart daily was the burden he felt for his son, Christian. Christian’s illness was difficult for him. It is difficult for most of us who suffer from or suffer for those who suffer. I pray that this awareness will lead to effective measures that bring greater understanding and resources to bear on this problem that takes such a toll on families, and suffers.

When Pope Francis challenges the Church and all Christians to go out to the peripheries of society, bringing the light of the Gospel to all those in need, he reminds us of our duty to remember and embrace the forgotten ones, the least of our brothers and sisters. Certainly among those we must count those who suffer the stigma, the isolation and misunderstanding of mental illness.

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley

Andrews

Find more news on the website

Sooner Catholic Staff

By Leo Baldwin

Find more news on the website

Sooner Catholic Staff

Dr. Nora Montalvo-Lieb

World of Families

leaves to address the needs of Latin Americans exposed to domestic violence on Sept. 11 at the CPC. For more information, contact Lisa Larrance at 405-996-7940.

sr. Rosemary Nyirumbe, director of the St. Monica Girls’ Tailoring Centre in Uganda, will speak on the CPC Campus on Sept. 23. More information at okcu.edu/staterosary or rnm@okcu.edu.

All Events

The Birth Choice Life Organization held a Women of Faith/Women of Action luncheon at the Faculty Club on Sept. 8.

Find more news on the website

By Sooner Catholic Staff

Additional coverage of Church and archdiocesan news and events can be found on www.sooneroc.org.

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Please don’t miss daily updates on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Sooner Catholic World’s most-wanted speakers scheduled for World Meeting of Families

The USCCB will provide live coverage and recordings of speakers during the World Meeting. Go online to www.usccb.org/WMF.

Archbishop Coakley and a group from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City will be present at the WMOF. Follow them on their pilgrimage at www.sooneroc.org and the archdiocesan Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts.

To learn more about the World Meeting of Families, including ways your family can participate from home, visit www.worldmeeting2015.org.

World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia

Tickets are still available for the Symposium on Sept. 22 from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., scheduled to be given by Father Robert Barron, the newly ordained cardinal Bishop Barron is best known as the founder of Word on Fire online ministry and as host of the award-winning documentary, “Catholicism.” His topic will be “Living the Image of God: Created for Joy and Love.”

Another keynote speaker will be Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, auxiliary of Manila, and the Vatican’s Secretary of State, the Most Reverend Pietro Parolin.

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Sooner Catholic World’s most-wanted speakers scheduled for World Meeting

By Leo Baldwin

Cardinal Tagle’s talk, which he will deliver in French, Italian, Spanish, Vietnamese and English, will discuss “The Family’s Full Alive,” the official catechism and the theme for the World Meeting of Families 2015, according to Dr. Mary Beth Yount, the director of content and programming for the world meeting.

Yount is an associate professor of theology at Neumann University and an international expert on such topics as ethics, the theology of the family, and pastoral theology. She is married and mother of four children.

Yount was one of the 10 writers contributing to “Love is Our Mission: The Family Full Alive.”

Because the congress program is based on content from speakers chosen by experts who could address specific topics from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., keynote talks, then breakouts sessions to follow.

The world meeting, which runs Sept. 22 from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., is scheduled to be given by Father Robert Barron, the newly ordained cardinal Bishop Barron is best known as the founder of Word on Fire online ministry and as host of the award-winning documentary, “Catholicism.”

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Cultivating empathy through reading

As a child, I consumed stories voraciously: tales of children on the prairie, runaways hidden in a museum, and sisters who find themselves in love with feckless suitors.

Like most children, I was encouraged in this habit and other ways of cultivating my imaginations. It was my realization that others—be it the stories I read, the Christians of the Middle East who were persecuted by radical Muslims. In short, we can envision the point of view of someone who is not us, even of someone who has lived a different life.

By Diane Clay

The Sooner Catholic

The use of such tissues and organs may be morally acceptable if the patient (or the parents of the minor) expresses consent. When the patient is present, the use of cells and tissues from fetuses also can be morally acceptable when consent is obtained from a natural minor or guardian. This consent would be equivalent to that obtained from adult organ donation from their deceased child.

Rev. Benjamin Lwin celebrates 25 years

By Diane Clay

The Sooner Catholic

Each year for the past 30 years, advocates from tribunals in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas and Texas have gathered to discuss the annulment process, its complications and how best to help families facing difficult circumstances. The group met this year at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Oklahoma City.

The workshop included a plenary session on the law of marriage and annulments as it applies to non-Catholics. Participants included a judge from the Argentine Embassy, a representative from a non-Catholic Church in the U.S. and a legal expert from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

The workshop idea was started by Rev. Bill Pruett, president of the Tribunal of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, who raised questions about how the law pertains to different faith groups. The workshop was open to judges, attorneys and pastor of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

The group also discussed the importance of understanding the annulment process and how best to help families facing difficult circumstances. The group also discussed how the law of marriage and annulments as it applies to non-Catholics.
Father Rother’s anniversary, case for sainthood highlighted in Oklahoma

By Brett Dickerson

Editor’s Note: This article originally appeared in the Oklahoma Gazette. It is republished with permission. Special thanks to Fr. M. Price Osuna and Fr. John Metzger, who gave valuable background information for the story.

A former farm boy from Okarche became a Latin American martyr for the Christian faith. Yet, his story and Catholic Church is on the brink of declaring him one.

In June, a special commission will meet at the seat of the Church in Rome to vociferously recommend Father Stanley Rother, a Latin American martyr, to be canonized.

If a larger group of bishops and Cardinals affirms that vote and Pope Francis agrees, he could be declared a saint.

Once a martyr, he will be eligible for sainthood. Events that led to that decision started 34 years ago in Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala.

Death

Rother was killed in the living quarters of the mission to which he was assigned on July 28, 1981. That night, he was simply intent on doing his job. He was an ordinary guy in order to remain a faithful shepherd of his parishioners there. He had barely stepped away from the death squads. But, the Kasper approach, which is reflected in the German and Swiss bishops’ reports to the upcoming Synod, absolves history to the point that it relativizes and ultimately demeans revelation – the “sacred given to us by God” – as a source of theological reflection helped correct that tendency.

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St. Gregory’s University’s new students gather for a photo on the historic steps of Benedictine Hall.

Mary in Guthrie.

Above, boys show off their school ties at St. Philip Neri School, Midwest City.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Edmond.

Students pray at Sts. Peter and Paul in Ponca City.

The principals of the archdioceses receive their school grants from the Catholic Foundation. Photo Brianna Osborne. At left, a student gets to work at St. Mary School, Ponca City.

St. John Nepomuk School in Elk City.

New principals bring faith to classrooms

Christy Harris - Rosary, OKC

What is the best thing about your school? The best thing about Rosary is the sense of family. Everyone works together to make Rosary a wonderful place.

What is your favorite thing to do when not at school? I love to spend time with family and friends. We spend most of our weekends going to my kids’ sporting events. Both of my kids attended Rosary, so I get to spend all weekend with Bulldog families.

How does faith play a role in your work? Faith has grown over the past 17 years at Rosary.

M.J. Mateo - Saints Peter and Paul, Kingfisher

What is the best thing about your school? The best thing about our school is, of course, the community! We have a strong sense of tradition among our families, with generations going through our school and becoming Stingers.

What is your favorite thing to do when not at school? My favorite thing to do is to spend time with my family.

How does faith play a role in your work? My faith plays a main role in my work; all for the Glory of God!

Marilyn Nash - Saint Mary, Ponca City

What is the best thing about your school? Everything! From the commitment by faculty and parents to the growth and development in faith and academics.

What is your favorite thing to do when not at school? My favorite thing to do is spend time with my family (including my dogs) and friends.

How does faith play a role in your work? I believe that God has called me to this position for a specific purpose and he will give me the means to be a successful leader. I have faith that my faculty, students and parents will contribute to that success.

Natalie Johnson - Saint John Nepomuk, Yukon

What is the best thing about your school? The seventh grade science lab at St. John Nepomuk, Yukon.

What is your favorite thing to do when not at school? I like to spend time with family and friends. I also love watching Thunder basketball and Oklahoma football.

How does faith play a role in your work? Faith plays a huge part in my job as principal. I actively model and share my faith with students, staff and families. Being a principal comes with the responsibility to instill a sense of Christ’s mission and service in our school and parish communities.

The principals of the archdioceses receive their school grants from the Catholic Foundation. Photo Brianna Osborne. At left, a student gets to work at St. Mary School, Ponca City.

Above, students at St. James the Greater. At left, Pre-K students at St. James the Greater.

Students at Rosemary School.

A father drops off his daughters at St. James the Greater School.

Saints Peter and Paul, Kingfisher.

Fr. Will McAlister classroom at St. Eugene School.

Christy Harris, Rosary

Jay Luetkemeyer, Saint Eugene, OKC

Alicia Vazquez - Saint James the Greater, OKC

What is the best thing about your school? The best thing about our school is that everyone is working together to reach the same goal – to educate and teach our students their faith.

What is your favorite thing to do when making a decision. Therefore, it’s my responsibility and what helps me to help others succeed and do their best!

Faith is intertwined into every element of our school, and thus every decision I make as an administrator. Our school theme - “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you” - is used by the administration, teachers and students to gauge our daily interactions. I love that, as a community,
Movie Review: “90 Minutes in Heaven”  

By Rebekah Scaperlanda  

The movie stars Hayden Christensen (“Star Wars: Jumper”) as a capturately praying man who embodied a brutal recovery, leaving him bedridden for 13 months. This film gives an incredible persuasion of showing the cruel struggle and anger Piper felt when he was suffering. The film is a beautifully structured story that captures the hero of this incredible story. Kate Bosworth (“Blue Crush,” “Supernova Returns”) gives a powerful performance depicting very difficult, hurt, perseverance and, ultimately, her hope in prayer. In an interview with the Sooner Catholic, Eva Piper said, “I was close to throwing up my hands many times I didn’t want to go back into the hospital room again. He wasn’t talking and didn’t understand the expression. Many times I was shaking my hands at God saying ‘I don’t want to go back there with him.”

Bosworth’s Eva shows the power of uncomprehending love in the midst of adversity and fear, making this movie about much more than Piper’s experiences in Heaven. The message is a reminder of God’s Divine Plan and purpose for each of our lives. It reminds us that we can’t always control our circumstances but we can control how we respond. The Piper responded by clinging to hope. 

“90 Minutes in Heaven,” written and directed by Michael Polish (“The Astronaut Farmer,” “Twin Falls”) is a fast-moving film from Giving Films, which gives 100 percent of the proceeds to charity. Their desire is for this film to create a ripple effect to spread his life. Eva and Don Piper worked closely with Chris Bosworth, Michael J. Malone’s singular songwriter and actor, and the makers of the film to ensure it was an appropriate portrayal of their journey. It was difficult for us to watch this film being made,” Eva Piper said. “In this life there are fulls and valleys, but the reality of Heaven is there to help us get through the struggles.”

Those who already believe in the glory of Heaven will find “90 Minutes” to be an inspiration of the stimulation to come; an inspiration to those who are still to accomplish it. 

Although the movie has a beautiful message, gifted cinematography and a great cast, it also has a patronized film as an evangelic tool. Faced with this, the well-told story of a very cheesy portray, skepticism may remain skepti- cal. That being said, Don Piper’s life resonates with many. If you have any doubt that you will be moved by this movie, take in Don Piper’s own words, “When I died, I didn’t believe I was gone. I just had a sense of knowing I was going back. I never felt my body being transported. It was immediately declared dead by the para- medics and they could do nothing for me.”

The Santa Fe Family Life Center in Oklahoma City has hired a new executive director, James Timbers. “We were delighted to find James through a broad re- cruitment and interview process,” Oklahoma Gov. David Wal- lion, who is president of the board of the Columbus Corporation, which owns and operates the facility on behalf of the Knights of Columbus, said. “We had several very qualified candidates, but James seems suited to the unique charac- teristic and operational role that the Santa Fe Family Life Center performs.”

“90 Minutes in Heaven” is in theaters Sept. 11. For a list of theaters in Oklahoma, go online to www.90minutesinheavenfilm.com.

Matthew Kelly asks us to “Redevious Jesus”  

Little book of big inspiration is highly recommended

By J.E. Helm  

New York Times bestselling author, Matthew Kelly, has produced another book that will be well received and enjoyed by the many people who look for something to help them grow in their relationships with Jesus Christ. “Rediscover Jesus” is a short work, less than 200 pages, but it may well be what Kelly hopes for in his “Opening Thoroughly: The Ten Keys to a Life of Intense Faith,” to be one of those “books [that] change our lives forever.”

Kelly’s website describes him as an interna- tionally acclaimed speaker, author and busi- ness consultant. He is all about “Rediscover Jesus” demonstrating, a man of deep faith who is passionate about helping people to a close, personal relationship with Jesus.

The book has 40 chapters, each one just a few pages, but each chapter has a great deal to say. As Kelly says in his introduction, these are “two ways to experience this book. It can be read straight through from beginning to end or readers can use “this book as a guide to a forty-day spiritual journey, reading a chapter a day.”

Each chapter concludes with a verse of Psalms, a “Verse to Live” from Scripture, a “Quest to Consider,” and a “Prayer.” These four things are a springboard for God’s change, and the book could be used in connec- tion with keeping a journal or as part of a small faith-sharing group.

Kelly is bold and straight- forward in what he says to his readers. He wrote that Jesus’ teachings are simple, but “that simple is not the same as easy.” He says that “Jesus promises us that suffering that ‘God wants to empty your life, your very self, your ‘God wants to empty your ‘me,’ your very self, your life, your very self, your ‘me,’ your very self, your life, your very self, your ‘me,’ “

In his probing “Questions to Consider” that conclude each chapter, he asks such things as “How many times do you really know your name? How many times do you really know your name? How many times do you really know your name?”

Kelly uses the word “radical” frequently in his book. He tells us that “truth is radical” and that “Jesus was a radical.” He was a man who knew that “Jesus will change our lives greatly because Jesus and his teachings changed the entire course of human history.”

Jesus wants us to listen to a king whose power to trans- form us “did not cause them to die.”

Chapter 40 concludes the book by challenging the reader to spend one hour in an empty church in a silent encounter with Christ. “Just be with him in the silence,” Kelly says. “This kind of prayer will help us to ‘live more fully’ and become more spiritual.”

Jesus sends all of us into the world to take the Gospel to those who have never heard it and to those who have not heard it. “Let God inspire you, to fill you with his power, because he wants to send you out to inspire others.”

It would seem that this is exactly what happens in this book, a very good job of leading a complicated mis- sion, and it will be a great help in the Ministry of Jesus.

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El encuentro tendrá una audiencia masiva de hispanos católicos en Estados Unidos

Una invitación para rezar

Baltimore, Maryland (AP) – En un esfuerzo por acompañar a Dios, "El Encuentro" será una de las más importantes actividades de este año. "El Encuentro" será uno de los cuatro encuentros virtuales que se están realizando para ayudar a los hispanos a sentirse más integrados en la iglesia. El encuentro se centrará en la importancia de la oración y el encuentro con Dios. La invitación a rezar es para ofrecer un momento de recogimiento, quietud y paz.

El encuentro tendrá una audiencia masiva de hispanos católicos en Estados Unidos

 esta invitación a orar es para ofrecer un momento de recogimiento, quietud y paz.
Golf tournament
Knights of Columbus #6478 2nd annual golf tournament will be Saturday, Sept. 12, at Crimson Creek Golf Club, 801 Bahamas Dr., Enid. $75 fee per, $300 per non-member. Awards will include brunch. Contact Dick Pfeiffer at (405) 990-1836, or contact Knights of Columbus #6478, 4600 Sky Trail, Yukon 73099.

National Day of Reconciliation For Aborted Children
The National Day of Reconcili- ation for Aborted Children will be commemorated on September, Sept. 12. A local service will be held at St. Gregory’s Abbey in Shawnee. Mass at 10 a.m. in the Abbey church, followed by a procession to the Our Lady of Guadalupe life shrine at St. Gregory’s. Reception to follow. Go online to www.actionforlife.org.

St. Eugene festival
The 10th annual “Feastival of the Americas and the World” will be held Sunday, Sept. 13, from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at St. Eugene, 2400 W. Herot Road, OKC. Admission is free. Activities include pony rides from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The celebration offers a variety of food, music, games, raffles, and sales by local church related businesses.

MediLife golf tournament
Holy Cross, Medill, will host its 2nd annual golf tournament on Saturday, Sept. 3, at Lake Murray Golf Course in Ardmore, starting with 7 a.m. registration, 8 a.m. shotgun start. Tournament includes four-person scramble, contest games, a chance to win a new vehicle with Hole-In-One, free lunch cook-out, and free door prizes drawing give-a-ways. Free golf shirts provided to registered players. Register by Sept. 15. Contact Fr. Oly Zunmas at (580) 795-2065, heccm@dioceseok.org. Sponsorships accepted. Proceeds benefit the Holy Cross building fund.

Catholic Foundation 2015 grant applications available
The Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma awards grants each year in support of education-related projects to parishes, schools, religious education and parish youth programs throughout the archdiocese. Applications for the 2015 grants accepted through Thursday, Sept. 17. Find the grant application form at www.cfok.org or contact Barry Semmert at (405) 721-4115, bsemmert@archok.org.

Solemn High Pontifical Mass
Cardinal Raymond Burke will offer a Solemn High Pontifical Mass with Bishop Edward Slattery at Thursday, Sept. 17, at 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Old Cathedral, OKC. The Mass will be offered in the Extraordinary Form of the Latin Roman Rite. Reception will follow. Contact (405) 235-4565 or go online to www.stjohnshighcathedral.org.

Women of Faith/Women of God
Archbishop Carl Coty will be the luncheon speaker at the Women of Faith/Women of God Fall Luncheon on Saturday, Sept. 19, at the CNC. The archbishop will speak about Catholic Relief Services and the current efforts to connect US dioceses with those in Africa to set up a training facility open at 11:30 a.m. Lunch at Noon. Registration $25, includes buffet lunch with donation made to CRS. The Oklahoma City Archbishop’s Women of God is sponsoring the event. Contact Chris Tomlin at thomcatholicglobal.net, (405) 306-5187.

Bingo fundraiser
The St. Philip Nerij Social Justice Committee will be hosting a Bingo Night fundraiser on Saturday, Sept. 19. Dinner available at 5 p.m. with bingo and door prizes at 7 p.m. Ten bingo games pack $10 each, includes additional blackout game for price of $100. Raffle tickets available. Proceeds benefit Catholic Charities Family Hope Project. Dinner and bingo in St. Philip Nerij School Gym, 1107 Felix Place, Midwest City. Contact Tony Schonomic at (405) 503-9902.

Friends of the Poor Walk
This year’s Friends of the Poor Walk will be Saturday, Sept. 26, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at All Saints Catholic Church, Norman. The walk is sponsored by the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Proceeds benefit those in need.

Carnival and bazaar
St. Benedict’s annual fundraising carnival and bazaar will be Saturday, Sept. 26, 6:32 p.m. at St. Kickapoo, Shawnee. Take exit 165 from I-40, go south three miles. The Garo’s Attic garage sale and pancake breakfast begins at 8 a.m. Silent auction, arts and crafts booth, game booth, inflatables, bake sale, food booths, and entertainment from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Contact St. Benedict (405) 275-0001.

Pray Walk event
St. Philip Nerij sponsors a kickoff event at Regional Park in Midwest City for a 12-month program of praying the Divine Office with Scripture. The event begins at 9:30 a.m. on Sept. 26, with lunch served at 11 a.m. Contact Angel Timlin at (405) 618-9654, angeltimlin@gmail.com.

Blue Mass
The Blue Mass, offered for members of law enforcement, fire service and first responders, will be Saturday, Sept. 26 at 9:30 a.m. at the Cathed- ral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave, OKC. Contact Deacon Charles Allen at chuckj@stjamesokc.com, (405) 990-1899.

Jobx
Human resources director
The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City seeks qualified candidates for a newly created Human Resources Director position at the Catholic Pastoral Center. The successful candidate will have a strong working relationship with church and possesses qualifications that include a bachelor’s degree in human resources management or related business field or equivalent combination of education and ex- perience, plus at least eight years of human resources management experiences that includes three years of man- ageent. Must be familiar with human resources in pertinent federal, state and local employment laws. Human resources experience in a national certificational environment is desirable. Send resume and cover letter to Rev. William L. Novak, V.G., wlnovak@archok.org. Full posting online.

Development and stewardship director
The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is seeking a Director of De- velopment and Stewardship to manage the overall strategies of the Office of the Chancellor, its real estate, and the Church’s pre-natal fund development. This position will direct and coordinate all the revenue streams into the annual appeal (ADF) and other fundraising development initiatives.

Human resources director (ADF) and other fundrais- ing positions
If you hunger for a little fashionable fun, then VIRTUE EN VOGUE fashion show is for you! Tickets are $10 per guest (Max $20 per family), 900 South Littler Avenue, Edmond OK 73034. Contact Jeanne Ford at (405) 498-8418, jford@knightsokc.com. www.teespring.com/oklahoma.

Church Family Newsletter
This calendar only covers the two weeks between issue dates and may not reflect all current calendar items. To see a full calendar, go to www.catholicok.org.
Moments of silence: This is not optional at Mass!

By Pedro A. Moreno, OP, MRE
Director of Hispanic Ministry

To spend some quality time with a loved one, it is essential to eliminate distractions and to concentrate on the person you have in front of you. Especially, if that person has an important place in your life.

I make a special effort to turn off the TV at home when we get unexpected visitors who make a special effort to come and visit us. It also is customary to turn in cell phones and put them in a place where I won’t see them and where they spend some time. All this helps eliminate distractions and promote an atmosphere of contemplation, stillness and peace.

The main reason for going to Mass should be spending time with God. Anything that helps this should be part of the Mass. Sacred silence is an important part of the encounter with God at Mass. This is so important as another element that the General Instruction of the Roman Missal has dedicated paragraph 45 to describing the moments of sacred silence.

It is worth mentioning that this silence is sacred because its main purpose is to create an environment conducive to the encounter with God. In sacred silence we prepare to grow in Christ.

Silence before Mass

The minutes before Mass offer us a great opportunity to prepare quietly for the sacred mysteries we are about to celebrate. We put ourselves in God’s presence and speak with him from our heart of everything we carry in our minds and souls that we need or want to put in his hands. This time also gives us the opportunity to present to him our special intentions or express to God for whom or what we are praying.

Silence in the penitential act

We are preparing to ask for forgiveness and we take a moment to remember our sins and offenses against God, our neighbor and ourselves. Asking God for forgiveness loses its meaning if we believe we are so perfect that we have no imperfections or sins, mortal or venial. We are all sinners, and we cannot grow as missionary disciples if we lose sight of our imperfections and sins.

Silence after the call to prayer: Let us pray

This call to prayer is not an invitation to keep quiet because the celebrant is about to speak. This invitation to pray is our opportunity at Mass to offer to God, in the silence of our hearts, our intentions and requests, worship and thanksgiving, repentance and expressions of penance. All these prayers will be gathered up by the celebrant and joined to his prayers in various parts of the Mass.

Silence in the liturgy of the word

It is of great benefit to have short pauses after the readings and the homily at Mass to reflect on what we’ve just heard. What is God telling us in his word? What change or project is the Lord inviting us to?

Silence after Holy Communion

During communion many interesting things happen. Those who receive the Eucharist are lining up to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. The Eucharist is the pivot of the Mass, and in the intercession, we ask for the grace to receive the Eucharist with love, respect and devotion.

After the Mass, the celebrant is about to conclude the liturgy. We are about to go home and continue our lives. This is the moment when we place our thoughts and feelings on what we have just heard and what went on within us. By remaining silent in this time of transition, we are paying attention to what we’ve just heard. What change or project is the Lord inviting us to?

Iraqi archbishop: Plight of fleeing Christians has challenged his faith

By Sean Gallagher
Catholic News Service

INDIANAPOLIS — Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Bashar Warda of Irbil, Iraq, placed his face in his hands when asked how his faith has been challenged and changed in the crisis he has helped manage over the past year.

He said he has outwardly encouraged the Christians whom he welcomed to Irbil when they fled Islamic State, but within his heart he would frequently “quarrel with God.”

“I don’t understand what he is doing when I look at what has happened in the region,” Archbishop Warda said. “I quarrel with him every day.”

However, the arguments take place within his intimate relationship with God, one that, with the help of grace, withstands even the previously unimaginable challenges to his faith that he has faced over the past year.

“God and the Christian faithful in the midst of suffering know that they are called to bear witness to the reality of the Good News and to come to perfect with their providence that I would never dream about.”

Looking back over the year since more than 100,000 Christians and other minorities sought refuge in Irbil, Archbishop Warda said he sees the care of God coming to suffering believers more effectively than he could have ever devised himself, in part through local lay and religious Catholics and organizations like the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Relief Services, the Catholic Near East Welfare Association and Aid to the Church in Need.

His archdiocese in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq has, with the help of Catholic relief agencies, provided shelter, food, medical care and educational services to the displaced.

“(God) did it in a way that a state could not really offer to its citizens in such a situation,” Archbishop Warda said. “He did it through the church and through the generosity of many people.”

His own faith is bolstered as well when he sees the undaunted faith of displaced Christians.

“People come and tell stories of persecution and how they were really terrified, having to walk eight to 10 hours during the night,” Archbishop Warda said. “In the end, they would tell you, ‘Thank God we are alive!’

We thank God for everything.’ That’s the phrase they end with. That’s strengthening, in a way.”

In contrast to the goodness he sees in the suffering faithful of Irbil, Archbishop Warda recalls when he describes the Islamic State, which he often refers to by its Arabic “criminal” name, “Daesh.”

“Daesh is evil,” he said. “The way they slaughter, the way they rape, the way they treat others is brutal. They have a theology of slaughtering people.”

And he knows that the evil that overtook Mosul could not go to Irbil.

“It’s quite possible, but the coalition, led by the Americans, has stopped Daesh from advancing,” Archbishop Warda said. “This has given some sense of security to the people. But Daesh is just 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Irbil. It’s not far away. Anything could happen.”

An important step that he thinks will help galvanize the international community to help Iraqi Christians is for national leaders to join with Pope Francis and recognize what is happening there as a genocide. He spoke of this in Indianapolis – where he visited his fellow Redemptorist, Archbishop Joseph Tobin – and in Washington.

“It’s genocide. It has all the facts, events, stories and experiences to meet the definition of genocide,” Archbishop Warda told The Catholic Standard, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington.

“No, it’s not.”

“Do not wait another 20 years and look back to what happened and say, ‘Well, I’m sorry that we did not do something really decisive,” he told The Criterion.

Contributing to this story was Mark Zimmerman in Washington.

To learn more about what Catholic Relief Services is doing in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Middle East and northern Africa, go online to www.crs.org/middle-east.