Catholic Bishops of England and Wales restored the custom of Catholics abstaining from meat and fasting on every Friday of the year. Older Catholics will remember this was the custom of the Church in the United States. Father Phil Seeton, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Church in Lawton, encourages his parishioners to not just do the minimum required by the Church but to pray and abstain from meat on Fridays during the whole year. This is done in remembrance of the Lord who died on a Friday.

“There are many great reasons to pray, fast and abstain. Fasting reminds us that when we feel hunger we should pray to ‘fill up’ our lives with God. Fasting has to be accompanied by prayer. When we fast, it is not only to condition the body and discipline ourselves (1 Cor 9:27), but it is also to give the soul a chance to be nourished by the spiritual nutrition that is good for us: prayer, spiritual readings, works of mercy and love for others,” Father Seeton said. “For many Christians fasting is essential because we see it happen in the perfect human being, the Word incarnate, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Another reason to fast is to overcome temptation. In the Gospels, we are shown the Lord’s fasting in the desert and his triumph over Satan. Some Christians fast to be able to reconcile with God, others fast to build up their spiritual life and others fast to be able to relate to others.”

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The Women at the Empty Tomb is depicted in this stained-glass window by artist Guido Nincheri at Notre Dame Cathedral in Ottawa, Ontario. Reflecting on the women who come to Jesus’ tomb in the early hours of that very first Easter, Pope Francis said, “Jesus, like a seed buried in the ground, was about to make new life blossom in the world; and these women, by prayer and love, were helping to make that hope flower.”

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Prayers, fasting and abstinence examples by Christ

By Charles Albert
The Sooner Catholic

Catholic Bishops of England and Wales restored the custom of Catholics abstaining from meat and fasting on every Friday of the year. Older Catholics will remember this was the custom of the Church in the United States. Father Phil Seeton, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Church in Lawton, encourages his parishioners to not just do the minimum required by the Church but to pray and abstain from meat on Fridays during the whole year. This is done in remembrance of the Lord who died on a Friday.

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continued on page 5
What does Easter mean?

As the Church enters Holy Week and celebrates the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, what is the significance of Easter for us personally? The Easter proclamation is not merely “for us men and for our salvation,” but shows Christ, the light of the world, has truly exalted the shadow over us in unexpected ways. Can faith still sustain hearts still awaiting the liberating message Jesus Christ is our hope! This is what Easter means! We are not alone in grief and despair. Christ conquers death. He is not here. He has been raised” (Lk. 24:6). This is Good News indeed. The Easter Vigil that reminds us of this. As we pass a year that has been consumed by grief, struggle and fear, this new life is renewed. Hope is the source of this new life and energy. It ignites faith and stimulates love. The theological virtue of hope has as its object the full restoration of and eternal life in Christ. Easter Vigil is at St. Mark’s Evangelist Catholic Church in Norman. Photo provided.

Life will not end for us in emptiness. Jesus conquers death. He reigns victorious and we hope to reign with him. Now, this is Good News indeed. Encountering the Risen Jesus, he gives life a new horizon and offers us unending hope. A person who is losing hope feels life ebbing away. Maybe you or I have been that person at some point. Hope is always restorative. If you or anyone you know are struggling to find hope, please contact us. We are always here waiting to offer you encouragement.

St. Ann Retirement Center reopens to visitors

The last steel beam that was installed on the church of the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine was recently made available for the public to sign. Nearly 1,000 shrine supporters took advantage of the opportunity to sign the beam. People traveled from throughout the region and state, and even from out of state, to write their names on the steel beam. Their names will be forever part of the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine.

Many Sanchez, president of the board of directors of shrine, signs the last steel beam that was placed on the shrine church March 23.

March 28, 2021

Sooner Catholic
Catholic War Veterans recognize Oklahoma veterans

The bizarre story of Father Adam Oraczewski is one of the most intriguing tales of the Church in Oklahoma. He was a man shrouded in mystery and controversy, living as the parish very astutely. Father Adam was assigned to Bartlesville as an assistant until Father Oraczewski’s pontificate was short-lived, and he was not in Poland during the war as he professed to be a seminarian in Michigan who had been expelled twice.

Arriving in Oklahoma in 1919, with the War to End All Wars (World War I) coming to a close in 1918, Father Adam with papers in hand and recommendations from a seminary in Poland convinced Bishop Meerschaert that he should be ordained. The bishop took his paperwork at face value and since Europe was in general disarray verifying said documents was virtually impossible.

During this year, he continued his next project that would give cause to suspend his sanity. Whereas his previous forays could be seen as sinful actions for which he showed little regret, his newest grill had higher aspirations.

Leaving in disgust from Sacred Heart with Bishop Kelley refusing to accept him, Father Adam ended up in Kansas City, Mo., in 1927 with a decidedly odd charlatan that was Father Oraczewski. The Catholic Register reports that he showed little regret, his newest grill had higher aspirations.

In a homily at daily Mass on March 21 at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Archbishop Coakley blessed a pietà at the church. Archbishop Coakley celebrated a confirmation Mass on March 21 at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Guymon.

The Gospel of Life Disciples (GOLD) will have Stations of the Cross Catholic Church in Madill, said Father Oby Zunmas, pastor of Holy Cross Catholic Church in Madill, said "Prayers, fasting and abstinence are key to begin a closer relationship with Christ. This program will take you to a new level in your spiritual life.”

Father Sexton added that it is about "the 'bright sadness' of the Lenten journey and Holy Week. It is the Eastern Christian churches, Lent is a time of 'bright sadness.' It is sad because of my sinfulness and the waste I have made of my life (f. 15-13). It is bright because of God’s continual presence and constant willingness to take me back to him- self. Lent is a time to look at the darkness in our lives and open our lives to Christ, the light that is never overcome by darkness. These lead to the joy of glorifying Christ, risen from the dead.”

Charles Albert is a freelancer writer for the ‘Sooner Catholic.’

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Dallas Catholics, faith-based agencies pitch in to help migrant teens

By Constanza Morales and Michael Graham
Catholic News Service

DALLAS — As federal officials announced that a downtown Dallas facility had been chosen to house up to 3,000 migrant teenagers starting the week of March 15, the Catholic faithful in the Diocese of Dallas sprung into action to help.

The Key Bailey Hutchison Convention Center opened to house unaccompanied migrant teens in U.S. custody, with the first few hundred arriving March 17. The convention center will be used for up to 75 days, according to a memo obtained by The Associated Press that was sent March 15 to members of the Dallas City Council. Federal agencies will use the facility to house any ages 15 to 17, according to the memo.

As the unaccompanied migrant teens began to arrive, Catholic Charities Dallas answered the call to assist with the process.

“Faithful Catholics, we are here to help all in need and there is no question that these kids are in need — and we’re here to help,” said Dave Woodyard, president and CEO of Catholic Charities Dallas.

He said Catholic Charities’ efforts will focus on finding and screening volunteers to assist at the convention center.

“Our service is really to channel volunteers to the site to help give aid, comfort and nurturing to the kids,” Woodyard told Revista Católica Dallas and The Texas Catholic, the Spanish-language magazine of the Diocese of Dallas.

Federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will run operations at the site, he explained. “They do need us to communicate with the kids, help them feel safe and, hopefully, help provide them a little bit of safety and well-being.”

Catholic Charities is hoping to recruit 200 to 300 Spanish-speaking volunteers to be available.

Dallas Bishop Edward J. Burns praised Catholic Charities for its efforts, expressing his gratitude for its role in helping those in need.

“I am so grateful to our Catholic Charities Dallas for their lead role in coordinating all of the volunteers who will comfort and aid these young people who have come in search of a better life,” Bishop Burns said.

“In the Gospel, Christ asks us to welcome the stranger, so we are called to welcome the immigrants we encounter,” he added. “As people of faith, we are compelled to offer comfort, aid and understanding to those who survived a perilous journey to come here.”

Woodyard said that as far as the call for volunteers has been met with tremendous response.

Woodyard said as of March 18 they had about 140 volunteers, but stressed more would be needed.

In addition to Catholic Charities Dallas, other nonprofits, churches and interfaith groups have reached out to offer support, including the U.S. Catholic bishops’ Migration and Refugees Services and Dallas Area Interfaith.

Josephine Lopez-Paul, lead organizer for the interfaith group, said volunteers from several parishes in Dallas who have received training as community leaders from Dallas Area Interfaith, will be essential volunteers, helping interview young people, contacting their families inside the United States and knowing relevant details of each case.

“Parish leaders are vital in this situation,” Lopez-Paul said. “These are people who have followed a prior training process, who speak the native language of the teens arriving and are in order the documentation required by the Diocese of Dallas in relation to safe environment policies.”

Texas parishes such as St. Luke Catholic Church in Irving, Mary Immaculate Catholic Church in Farmers Branch and San Juan Diego Catholic Church in Dallas were among those mentioned by Lopez-Paul as the most helpful volunteer sources at this time.

She said that the coordination process is under way to allow information from parish leaders eligible to volunteer at the convention center to be fed into the Catholic Charities database.

In addition to the Catholic Church, Lopez-Paul said she is working with the Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran, Jewish and Presbyterian churches, whose leaders also have received training from Dallas Area Interfaith in the past.

“This is a coordinated effort for the good of a community that has experienced many difficulties and deserves respect and help,” Lopez-Paul said.

Constanza Morales is managing editor of Revista Católica Dallas, the Spanish-language magazine of the Diocese of Dallas. Michael Graham is interim editor of The Texas Catholic, the diocesan newspaper.

Unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the U.S. await transport in Penitas, Texas, March 12, after crossing the Rio Grande. CNS photo/Adrees Latif, Reuters.
Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine beam signing

March 16, 17 and 20

Photos Avery Holt, Sam Gaglio, Cynthia Aranda, Dana Attocknie/Sooner Catholic and provided.
Book review: “Ceremonies explained for servers”  
By Br. Benezet Eaton, O.S.B.

The author of “Ceremonies explained for servers: a manual for servers, acolytes, and master of ceremonies.” Peter J. Elliott, is a former professor of liturgy at the Australian Catholic University and author of various books on liturgy and other items pertinent to liturgical settings and other items involved in the liturgy, and master of ceremonies. Bishop Elliott presents what the servers do to point by point.

Ch. 1 is an overview of what a server does. This server says what serving involves reverence, respect, and attention to detail. In Ch. 2, the bishop gives an overview of what liturgy is and how ceremonies are discussed. Several things that are liturgical symbols, such as the cross, doves, candles, and incense, are included. Christ the King, and the sacrifice of Christ, are mentioned in Ch. 3. He discusses the various services that the server does during the Mass or at other liturgies, like how the server is to walk, kneel, and serve holy and how he also discusses how the server should be presentable and when to do this, and how to use the thurible to incense the altar. The bishop presents the three “kinds” of servers a server can be: a deacon, who is present with one priest at a congregation, a consecrated Mass where there are several priests in attendance and a Mass and a server and a Mass without servers.

In Ch. 5, Bishop Elliott discusses how to serve for the “Traditional Latin Mass” or the Extraordinary Form of the Mass. He presents what the levels of this kind of Mass are: Low Mass, Low Mass with two servers, and a Solemn High Mass. In Ch. 6, he informs the readers on how to administer the Eucharist for various Sacraments during Holy Week or outside Mass. In Ch. 7, he explains how the servers do at different services: a Mass, a funeral Mass, a blessing, and a Vespers of Evening Prayer. In Ch. 8, Bishop Elliott discusses how the servers dress at the Liturgy of the Hours, which includes the studies and outer garments worn by friends in Candlemas. Ch. 9 is about other ceremonies that servers attend besides those in Candlemas, like for the Mass of Holy Wednesday. The bishop discusses when and how some things are done differently from country to country and from parish to parish.

Father Tad Pachucki  
National Catholic Bioethics Center

Making Sense of Bioethics
Should we take whatever vaccine is offered?

On March 1, Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker told residents in the town of Manton that every person in Massachusetts should get a COVID-19 vaccine. “There are all very effective,” people don’t need to pick one from another. People should get any one of the COVID-19 vaccines. “You should take it, whatever it is,” the governor said. The purpose of this is to imply, first, that everybody should get a COVID-19 vaccine. A second reason that it is necessary to distinguish among the different vaccines currently on the market, like Moderna, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and eventually others. Such a perspective fails to acknowledge the important factors that are part of deciding whether a person should get any one vaccine over another. Which vaccinations beyond regular treatments be home available, including novel vaccines, and we have limited knowledge of their side effects, adverse events, efficacy and long-term consequences. It’s important to realize that real treatments are not morally obligatory for an individual, nor for a whole population. Achieving herd immunity, while clearly an important goal, in no way demands that everyone must be immunized.

For those individuals who are young and in good health, for example, and with no comorbidities, a Vaxxer who is also considering being vaccinated may reason that they’re not at high risk to a surgical operation. These considerations show that it is no different from making decisions about abortion, for instance, to consider the potentially safer and more effective decision to receive the COVID-19 vaccine – because not everyone faces an equal risk of dying from COVID-19.

For example, a compound called polyeth- 
ylene glycol (PEG) has been identified as a candidate trigger for rare allergic or anaphylactic reactions in some vaccine recipients, even in trace amounts. According to FDA documents, both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines contain PEG, while the Johnson & Johnson vaccine does not. But while the clinical testing of PEG has effectively have only a single choice among these three vaccines, the ordinary decision to receive the COVID-19 vaccine for a third vaccine – which has never been approved for the common cold – et the vaccines currently on the market, like Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson in their cell lines that were used in the production of certain vaccines. All three vaccine manufacturers, however, have

were that we are permitted to, under protest, any of the currently available vaccines, even those most directly connected with cell lines from abortions, if we discern in con-
¿Qué significa la Pascua?

A medida que la Iglesia comienza la Semana Santa y celebra otro Triduo Pasqual, es posible que nos preguntemos qué significa realmente la Pascua para nosotros. Hemos pasado por mucho este año. Ha sido un año de pandemia, malestar y agitación. La muerte ha pasado por mucho este año. Ha sido un año de desesperanza. La muerte acabó por destruir el horizonte y nos ofrece una esperanza inquestionable.

Pero ¿qué es la Pascua? ¿Cómo la experiencia de Jesús, el Hijo de Dios, se hizo carne en ella, en nuestra carne humana, tenemos la esperanza de ver a Jesús, el Resucitado! ¡Realmente ha resucitado! Asistimos a la bendición de vida nueva y eterna en Cristo. Jesucristo nos ofrece la esperanza para que trabajemos juntos para promulgar el proyecto de la vida humana. Del ibidem a Jesucristo ha vencido la muerte en nuestra carne humana, tenemos la esperanza de compartir su victoria a través de la fe. El bautismo nos da una participación en esa nueva vida. Ya estamos viviendo esa nueva vida de gracia que llegará a su perfección en la gloria del cielo y en la compañía de los santos. Mientras que en la Pascua se celebra la victoria de la vida, también esto es verdaderamente el cumplimiento de la esperanza.

En el pasado oscurecido a nuestras miradas, Jesús, el Hijo de Dios, se hizo carne en el cuerpo y la carne de este mundo, la humanidad ha estado atrapada en una espiral de muerte y resurrección. La muerte siempre ha consumido todas las esperanzas y los sueños. Pero Cristo ha trazado el vía crucis de la muerte y la desesperanza. Después de todo, la muerte no tiene por nosotros en el pecado, pero la vida no terminará para nosotros en el pecado. No solo para sus compatriotas, sino para nosotros como sacerdotes.

Incluso si nada parece haber cambiado, la esperanza persiste en un corazón humano, en un matrimonio o en una familia. La vida se remarca. La esperanza es la fuerza que supera la tristeza y el canibalismo. Vigorizan la fe y estimulan el amor. La fe y la esperanza de la Iglesia tienen el poder de la resurrección, de rejuvenecer nuestras esperanzas después de la muerte. La resurrección de la muerte en el último día, pero nuestra esperanza más inmediata es rescatada y sostenida por la percepción de la resurrección esperanzada en pequeñas victorias sobre el pasado, el desenlace y el miedo en nuestra vida diaria.

Nuestra misión es dar testimonio de esperanza en el mundo. Tenemos un hermoso gesto litúrgico durante la Vigilia Pascual que nos lo recuerda. Al pasarnos la cruz en la frente, estamos recordando la cruz de Jesús, la cruz y la esperanza del mundo, a los hombres y mujeres de nuestro tiempo que no han experimentado una esperanza inesperada. Una persona que está perdiendo la esperanza no tiene la última palabra. La muerte no tiene la última palabra. La esperanza no tiene la última palabra.

Por esa razón, instamos al Senado para que acepte de manera completa de la carta de la Presidenta de las Cámaras de Representantes, Nancy Pelosi, al Senador Robert Menendez. "Celebramos la aprobación de la Ley de Recolección de Jeans para la recolección de Jeans, una forma de asistir a las personas que han pasado por un dolor similar. Envíe un correo electrónico a nancy Pelosi en su oficina para registrar su nombre a la campaña de recolleción de Jeans." Su trabajo y su sacrificio nos inspira a todos los seres humanos en la misma situación.

Por esa razón, instamos al Senado para que adopte y apruebe estas medidas con debido rigor, una vez más hacemos un llamado a los legisladores de ambas cámaras del Congreso para que trabajen juntos para promulgar reformas más amplias y vitalmente necesarias para corregir nuestro sistema de inmigración. Nos comprometemos a trabajar con el Congreso en la promulgación de reformas que creemos es un tema urgente para defender la vida y la dignidad humanas.

El Vídeo de Raquel (Español) 

Un récord de fines de semana en el Vaticano, el Vídeo de Raquel se llevara al cabo del 19 al 31 de octubre en el Centro Pastoral Católico, 7501 Northwest Expressway en Oklahoma City. Esta representación de las vocaciones de mujeres es un mundo para donde vienen personas que han pasado por un dolor similar. Envíe un correo electrónico a raquelccok.org para formar parte del video. Un corazón humano, en un matrimonio, en una ciudad, en un estado, en un país, en el mundo entero.


Las vocaciones responden al llamado de Dios para hacer realidad los sueños, dice el Papa Francisco. "Rezo para que experimenten esta misma alegría, queridos padres y madres, coroínas alentadoras de grandes iniciativas, generosas en la entrega, comprensivas en su condición, resueltas en sus borradores, decididas en su propia vida, en la esperanza del mundo, a los lugares oscuros, en el lugar de su deber, en el lugar de su misión, nos lo recuerda. Al pasarnos la cruz en la frente, estamos recordando la cruz de Jesús, la cruz y la esperanza del mundo, a los hombres y mujeres de nuestro tiempo que no han experimentado una esperanza inesperada. Una persona que está perdiendo la esperanza no tiene la última palabra. La muerte no tiene la última palabra. La esperanza no tiene la última palabra.

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El 15 de marzo de 2021, el obispo Doreson ville envió una carta a todas las somitas de la Oficina de Vocaciones de la Iglesia, la cual fue recibida por todas las somitas de la Oficina de Vocaciones de la Iglesia. "Es la alegría de la sencillez, la alegría que experimentan a diario los que se preocupan por lo que verdaderamente importa: la esperanza, la esperanza, la esperanza, la esperanza, la esperanza, la esperanza, la esperanza.

En tal sentido, arzobispo José H. Gomez de Los Angeles, presidente de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB), el obispo Marco E. Dorsenneville, obispo auxiliar de Washington y presidente del Comité de Migración de la USCCB, emitieron la siguiente declaración:

"Celebramos la aprobación de la Ley de Promesa y Sueño Americano y la Ley de Mediaciación de la Fuerza Laboral Agrícola por parte de la Cámara de Representantes, que ayudaría a muchos inmigrantes trabajadores a alcanzar el paraiso de la legalidad. La Fuerza Laboral Agrícola proporcionan un camino hacia la ciudadanía a más de tres millones de inmigrantes, a los portadores del Estatuto de Protección Temporal, y a los beneficiarios de Salida Forzada Diferida (DED) y a los trabajadores agrícolas temporales que no pueden quedarse en el país.

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Are you listening?  

By Sally Crowe Nash

I love it when the Bradford Pear trees flex with white blossoms, followed by the redbud display of violet hues, announcements of the Religious Sisters of Mercy invite ladies to a retreat at a discrimination retreat 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. April 24 in Tulsa. Join them for a day of discussions, prayer, talks, Holy Hour and an experience of communal life. Transportation and lunch provided. E-mail Venessa at vepaque@catholic.org.

Rachael’s Vineyard
A Rachael’s Viewyard Retreat is April 30 - May 1 at the Oklahoma Catholic Pastoral Center, 7511 Northwest Expressway, Oklahoma City. This healing retreat is for post-abortive women and men and is a place where other people have been through similar pain. E-mail rachael@crop.org or call 918-512-1525 for more information.

Golf Tournament
Knights of Columbus #2386 at St. Francis Xavier Catholi
c Church in Stillwater is hosting the 2021 Oklahoma Knights of Columbus annual golf tourna-
mint May 22 at the Golf Course at Cimarron Trail in Perkins. Pro-
ceds benefit the St. Francis Center for Community Love. Open to all golfers; 4 player scrambles with a shotgun start at 1:30 p.m. $75 per player covers the green fee, cart, lunch, good bag and two drink tickets. Multiple sponsorship opportunities available.

mask requirement in place
There are three easy steps for partners to sign up for FORMED. 1) Visit sign-up form online. 2) Enter parish zip or zip code. 3) Enter name and e-mail. Parish
d蝶 should discontinue listing their parish in the parish directory since the new system is based on searching for the parish subscription on the FORMED sign-in screen. The new system does not require the subscribe

Shrine webinar
Watch construction of the Ill. St. Anthony Shrine on a live webinar at archokc.org/shrineswebinar.

March
28 Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
29 Holy Week of the Lord
30 Holy Day of Obligation
31 Holy Saturday
1 Holy Sunday
9 Friday of the Octave of Easter
10 Saturday within the Octave of Easter
11 Thursday of the Octave of Easter
12 Saturday of the Third Week of Easter
13 Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter
14 Sixth Sunday of Easter
15 Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter
16 Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter
17 Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter
18 Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter
19 Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter
20 Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter
21 Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter
22 Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter
23 Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter
24 Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter
25 Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter
26 Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter
27 Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter
28 Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter
29 Thursday of the Eighth Week of Easter
30 Easter Sunday
OKLAHOMA CITY – Construction crews on Tuesday lifted the final steel beam onto the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine in south Oklahoma City. The beam, which was signed by hundreds of Oklahomans, is the latest construction milestone for the shrine, which is expected to be completed in late summer 2022.

“We are well on our way to completing this magnificent shrine in Oklahoma City. Lifting the final steel beam into place is an exciting step in construction of the shrine that will be a place of welcome to serve all people,” said Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley, Archbishop of Oklahoma City. “The shrine will be a place of pilgrimage where the faithful will come from near and far to glorify God and honor Blessed Stanley at his final resting place, seeking his intercession for their many needs. I am grateful for everyone who has played a part in this project.”

The shrine is named for Blessed Stanley Rother (ROW-THER), an Okarche farmer who became a priest and served as a missionary in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala. In 1981, Father Rother was murdered in his rectory during a violent civil war. In 2016, Pope Francis declared him a martyr for the faith – the first Catholic martyr from the United States. Blessed Stanley Rother was beatified in 2017 in Oklahoma City, making him the first priest born in the United States to be beatified.

“Heartfelt congratulations to everyone who has organized and is executing the construction of this magnificent building and to those who brought us to this important milestone,” Shrine Executive Director Leif Arvidson said. “We are well underway in building a fitting house of worship, pilgrimage and prayer. Thank you to everyone who has made this possible.”

The tradition of holding a ceremony for the installation of the highest beam of a construction project has been a tradition for hundreds of years. The “topping out” tradition can be traced to as far back as 2,700 B.C. where builders of the Step Pyramid in Egypt placed live plants on the top of the pyramid in remembrance of those who had lost their lives during construction.

In 8th century Scandinavia, builders would signal the “start of a completion party” by “hoisting an evergreen tree atop the ridgepole” and it is a cherished custom of ironworkers at the completion of the skeleton of a bridge or building.

“Topping out” ceremonies have been important milestones for construction projects for generations. They are significant because they mark the completion of a major phase of construction and the conclusion of the work on the structure. The final beam is often signed by the construction workers and is placed on top of the building as a symbol of the completion of the project.

Along with the 2,000-seat church, a chapel where Blessed Stanley will be entombed, an education building, an event space and several areas designated for shrines and devotion, the shrine will be completed over time. The site will include the Spanish colonial-style church – which will be the largest Catholic Church in Oklahoma – an additional $5 million museum and pilgrim center, which will be an additional $5 million. The center will welcome thousands of visitors each year to an experience that leads them through the life, witness and martyrdom of Blessed Stanley.

The church will host many large diocesan events and will help accommodate the growing Hispanic population whose parishes are significantly overcrowded.

The design architect for the project is Franck & Lohsen Architects in Washington D.C. They are supported by local architectural firm ADG. The general contractor is The Boldt Company in Oklahoma City with Cooper Project Advisors serving as the owner’s representative.

To sign up for updates on the shrine, view a video tour or to give a gift to the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma’s Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine Endowment Fund, go online to archokc.org/shrinesupport or call (405) 709-2745.

Learn more about Blessed Stanley Rother at stanleyrother.org or rothershrine.org.

Watch a live webcam of shrine construction at archokc.org/shrinewebcam.