Most Rev. Lawrence Michael DeFalco, 5th Bishop of the Diocese of Amarillo

Born August 25, 1915, in McKeesport, Pa. He was the eldest son of Ross and Margaret DeFalco’s family of nine children. His father, Ross, came to the United States at the age of 11 from the rural place of his birth in the mountains east of Naples, Italy.

Ross DeFalco worked as a streetcar company foreman while his son was growing up. In summers the young Lawrence worked for his father there among the laborers maintaining the tracks.

In 1933 Lawrence DeFalco graduated from McKeesport High School, and with the encouragement and financial assistance of Father Peter Rossi, his pastor at St. Perpetuas, he entered the seminary of St. Vincent’s College at Latrobe Pennsylvania in the fall of 1933.

In 1933 Lawrence DeFalco graduated from McKeesport High School, and with the encouragement and financial assistance of Father Peter Rossi, his pastor at St. Perpetuas, he entered the seminary of St. Vincent’s College at Latrobe Pennsylvania in the fall of 1933.

History has some strange twists and it was one of these strange turns of events that brought Lawrence DeFalco to Texas. The Great Depression had caused so much havoc that by 1935 the Diocese of Pittsburgh decided that it could not even support the priests being ordained for its See.

Incredibly, that diocese simply did not need priests. Therefore, the bishop decided to drop half his semi
he was made a Monsignor and sent back to St. Patrick’s in Fort Worth, this time as pastor.

At that time he had no idea that he was being readied to become a bishop and when he was elevated to the episcopacy the following year, it came as a total surprise. Bishop Gorman consecrated his friend and fellow priest on May 30, 1963, and Bishop DeFalco was installed in Amarillo on June 13, 1963.

Those were very active times in the Church. Pope John XXIII had called the great convocation of Vatican II the year before. Bishop DeFalco wasted no time and flew off to the beginning of the second session in September 1963.

“It was a tremendous experience,” he said, as he reflected back on those times. “Bishops came from all over the world and there was a very progressive atmosphere about the proceedings. What they accomplished was fantastic! And these were old men, remember.”

When the council closed in 1965, Bishop DeFalco had attended three out of four sessions. Then the work began. The Council ushered in much optimism at first, but change was difficult. It was doubly difficult for American Catholics because it seemed that everything had been changing since 1965. For Bishop DeFalco there were stormy times and worrisome times. In the late sixties our country was involved in the Viet Nam quagmire, and the Civil Rights movement appeared to have touched off a Black revolution. The whole world was going through a change, and so was the Church. Vatican II had shaken up its roots in order to make it more effective in its divine mission to mankind.

On a practical level however, the bishops, priests, nuns and laity of the Diocese of Amarillo had to rethink their faith, reorganize, and rearrange their priorities. The questioning was painful, the effort was difficult, the loss of priests, nuns, and seminarians was agonizing.

Nevertheless, the Diocese of Amarillo had emerged much better for the experience. Bishop DeFalco believed that the Church was more closely in touch with the world.
During that time of a shortage of priests, lay people had become more involved in the workings of the Church.

The Diocese of Amarillo was one of the first in the United States to have a Diocesan Pastoral Council.

The emergence of the lay diaconate promised to be a wonderful blessing for dioceses in need of dedicated workers.

The diocese has given greater concern to the needs of individual priests by the creation of the Priest’s Senate and the Diocesan Personnel Board. Also the Church had more of a social conscious by expressing greater interest in the needs of the people and willingness to extend a helping hand.

Prejudice, the old nemesis of Catholics in West Texas, had subsided. Though subtle prejudice against the Church still existed, the open antagonism often seen between Catholics and Protestants appeared to have ebbed during the presidency of John F. Kennedy and the benevolent pontificate of John XXIII. The Vatican Council promulgated an open door policy in the document on Religious Liberty which Bishop DeFalco termed “a gem.”

Of all the challenges facing the Bishops since the birth of the Diocese of Amarillo, modernizing the Church in accordance with Vatican II appears to have been the most difficult however, Bishop DeFalco was very pleased with the sacrifice and dedication of the priests and Sisters of the Diocese. Many of them had come from faraway places to serve. The Bishop was happy about the vibrant family life in the diocese in spite of the many conditions and situations that tended to destroy the family at that time.

More on Bishop Lawrence Michael DeFalco
The new Bishop of Amarillo, the Most Reverend Lawrence M. DeFalco, might not have been a priest were it not for a little Italian church in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, and its dedicated pastor. In the midst of preparations for his consecration, Bishop DeFalco recalled with obvious fondness the influence of the small, hometown church and its pastor. He was seated in his office at the rectory of St. Patrick’s Co-Cathedral in Fort Worth, Texas, where he was pastor. The phone rang frequently and people dropped in with dinner invitations and to consult on various details of his approaching consecration. In spite of the 101 things to be done as the solemn ceremony neared, Father DeFalco still was very much a pastor. The responsibilities of that office to which he was so attached remained in the forefront.

It’s not surprising that little St. Perpetua Church in McKeesport, Pennsylvania and the pastor, Father Peter Rossi, who founded the church, would be uppermost in the Bishop’s mind as he reviewed his life at the request of the West Texas Register. He was baptized at St. Perpetual and later served as an altar boy. There, many years later, he offered his first Mass as a newly ordained priest.

And as for the kindly priest who guided his early days, Bishop DeFalco said “If it hadn’t been for Father Rossi, I wouldn’t have gotten through seminary.” Father Rossi helped pay for some of the necessaties of a young man studying for the priesthood in the days of the Depression.

In later years, another priest would play a vital role in the making of this Bishop. He was the late Monsignor Joseph G. O’Donohoe, a former pastor of St. Patrick’s Co-Cathedral whose large color portrait occupied a place of honor on the wall directly in front of Bishop DeFalco’s desk. “He was a very hard-working man who never believed in the status quo, who always upheld progress, and believed in staying very close to his people,” Bishop DeFalco recalled. “There was hardly a Mass said in the church for which he was not present. And anyone could speak with him after a Sunday Mass. He loved to have his fellow priests around. His door was open. It was a great blessing for me to be assigned to this man as an assistant.” Yet, this priest who was to play such a major role in the training of a future Bishop, once told Father DeFalco, who was then a young assistant, “You’ll make the world’s worst pastor!” He uttered the words during a flurry of impatience. But those who knew the Monsignor well said none would have been prouder than he of the later assignment of Father DeFalco to the office once held by Monsignor O’Donohoe as pastor of St. Patrick’s, and the young priest’s subsequent elevation to the Episcopacy.

The slender, scholarly—looking Bishop, assertive and direct in manner at his desk, also had a bearing of openness and
Most Rev. Lawrence DeFalco visiting with His Holiness Pope Paul VI at the opening of the second session of Vatican II.

sincerity that had made him countless friends in his parish and beyond. He wore the attire of the Church with dignity, yet you got the impression he is a man who likes to work with his sleeves rolled up. He was soft-spoken and was not above using a comfortable "ain't" now and then. He smoked cigarettes and sometimes cigars; liked golf and baseball, he enjoyed manual labor, loved children and stamp-collecting, and kept a neat desk. He enjoyed working outdoors immensely and had missed this activity around the concrete-and-pavement turf of St Patrick's Co-Cathedral. "Outdoor work helps lessen the office mess," he said with a slap at his desk.

A writer for a Fort Worth paper, in a recent feature about Bishop DeFalco, wrote in effect, "Don't be surprised if you visit the Panhandle and see a Catholic Bishop throwing hay onto a wagon." Although he doesn't come from a farm background, Amarillo's new Bishop grew up with hard manual labor. He used to dig ditches working with his father as a laborer on street car tracks.

Bishop DeFalco was born August 25, 1915, at McKeesport, one of 9 children of Mr. and Mrs. Ross DeFalco. His father who was track foreman for a street car company had come to the U.S. from Italy when a child of 11 years. Because Bishop DeFalco's grandmother didn't speak anything but Italian, her grandson had difficulty in communicating with her, since English was the language of the household except for occasional visits from friends or relatives who didn't speak English. (Actually Bishop DeFalco didn't learn Italian until years later when, as a priest, he went to North American College in Rome to study.)

Bishop DeFalco chummed with the "usual gang around the corner," attended the 11th ward school for his first four years of schooling, then went to St. Pius V parochial school for the last four years of education. He graduated from McKeesport High School in 1933.

Since he had wanted to be a priest "about as long as I can remember, but actually since about the 5th grade," the youth who one day be a Bishop took Latin all four years of high school. Another favorite subject was History, particularly the history of the Church.
In the fall of 1933 he entered St. Vincent’s College at Latrobe, Pennsylvania, as an ecclesiastical student for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. He enrolled at St. John's Home Mission Seminary at Little Rock, Arkansas in September 1935, where he studied philosophy and theology.

Bishop Albert Fletcher of the Little Rock Diocese, who was Co-Consecrator at Bishop DeFalco's consecration in Fort Worth on May 30th, was a professor at St. John's, teaching canon law and theology. The Little Rock Bishop at that time, the Most Rev. John B. Morris, had founded St. John's Seminary with the idea of training priests for the south and southwest mission fields. The seminary accepted men who wanted to study for mission work, then helped them to be adopted by a diocese.

On June 11, 1942 Bishop DeFalco was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Morris in St. Andrews Cathedral at Little Rock. At that time Bishop Morris was celebrating his own golden jubilee in the priesthood.

Bishop DeFalco had pleasant memories of his years in Arkansas. “I enjoyed the country tremendously. I love hot weather,” he recalls. “I enjoyed walking over the hills. I was impressed by the people who were very hospitable.”

Two days following his ordination Bishop DeFalco returned to St. Perpetua Church in McKeesport, to celebrate his first Mass on June 14, 1942, in the church where he had been baptized and had served as an altar boy. Present was Father Rossi, the pastor who had encouraged him over the years and helped him through seminary.

Father DeFalco's first assignment was to St. Patrick's Church in Fort Worth where he arrived on June 26, 1942, and assumed the duties of assistant to Monsignor O'Donohoe. “I loved the place from the beginning,” the Bishop recalled. “The people were extremely kind to me. I am very grateful for having served under Monsignor O'Donohoe and for the training I received over 10 1/2 years. He loved to encourage young priests, but he gave us plenty to do. He was very ambitious for me, though once when he was angry he told me I would make the world's worst pastor.”

Father DeFalco spoke little Spanish, but for the sake of self-preservation he was forced to learn terms relative to food. (All of Monsignor O’Donohoe’s kitchen help were Spanish speaking.) Father DeFalco was especially fond of Italian food. In no time the cooks at St. Patrick's became quite proficient in the preparation of it.

In January 1953, Father DeFalco was named an assistant at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Dallas, where he remained for 6 months before being sent to Chicago for 6 weeks to “see how the tribunal of the Archdiocese of Chicago operated.” Bishop Thomas K. Gorman, who had come to Dallas in May 1952, planned for Father DeFalco to serve on the Dallas-Fort Worth Tribunal.

With this goal in mind, the Dallas Bishop sent Father DeFalco to Rome in September 1953, to study canon law at the Gregorian University. It reportedly was on the recommenda
First Confirmation

co's father crossed the sea for a visit. He came over on the Andrea Doria, the ship destined for further tragedy.

Meeting his father at Naples where the ship landed, Bishop DeFalco accompanied him on a journey over parts of Italy. It was his father’s first visit of the old country since his childhood departure for America. Their first stop was Ross DeFalco's hometown, the small village of Atena Lucana. There the elder DeFalco saw the house in which he was born, the church in which he was baptized. Mr. DeFalco died in January, 1962; his wife Margaret had preceded him in death in 1948.

Father DeFalco, now with the initials J.C.L. (licentiate of canon law) and D.D. (doctor of divinity) after his name, returned to the Dallas–Fort Worth diocese in the summer of 1955. He was assigned as secretary of the Tribunal on June 4, 1955, with his residence at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Dallas. He held this office along with other assignments until January 19, 1962.

In October 1955 Father DeFalco was named administrator of St. Michael's Parish, McKinney. He commuted from Dallas to carry out his parish administrative duties. In April of 1956 he became the first pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Dallas.

“I loved this parish work,” the Bishop said. “I was delighted with the assignment. I enjoyed working with the people.”

While pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Father DeFalco became a papal chamberlain on February 10, 1961 with the title of Very Reverend Monsignor.

He was named a diocesan consultor on November 22, 1958.

On January 19, 1962 he was assigned as pastor of St. Patrick's Co-Cathedral, and at the same time was named Vice Officialis. He also served on the original commission that founded the Clergy Relief Association as well as the diocesan building commission and the diocesan board of education.

Monsignor DeFalco was appointed Bishop of Amarillo by Pope John XXIII on April 17, 1963. At the time of his appointment, Bishop DeFalco had few acquaintances in his new bishopric. He had known Father George Sallaway (pastor of St. Ann's, Canyon) during his last year at the North American College in Rome. "He was one of the half dozen Texas boys who used to eat together," the Bishop said. "I was present for his ordination and also assisted at one of his first Masses."

Another classmate was Father Matthew Schafle who he knew at St. John's Seminary. He also became acquainted with Father Edward Chrisman who frequently came to Fort Worth to visit relatives.

In his capacity as Vice Officialis he had corresponded often with Monsignor A.M. Bottoms, Amarillo Chancellor, and Monsignor Francis Smyer, former Chancellor. He had visited Amarillo on only one occasion, that being a day canon law conference held here in 1958.

Speaking of his diocese, Bishop DeFalco commented: "My understanding is that it is growing fast and is the fastest growing area in the state. No doubt there are "growing pains," especially with its schools."

Some other observations from the Bishop were:

“I like baseball. Nobody roots harder for the Pittsburgh Pirates than I do. watch them play as often as I can.”

“I like all sports. I play golf, but not a good game.”

About his hobby of stamp collecting: "It isn't enough of a hobby to inflict
Fr. Rex Nicholl, Bishop Lawrence DeFalco and Fr. Ken Keller

Amarillo’s new bishop was installed on Thursday, June 13, 1963, 10 a.m., in Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Bishop John L. Morkovsky, left, former Bishop of Amarillo who will assume duties as coadjutor of the Galveston-Houston diocese, talks with Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco his successor, at a consecration ceremony in Fort Worth.

Thank you for your continued generosity!
Bishop DeFalco: ‘Ballgame’s over’

Doctors told Bishop DeFalco on July 5th that he had inoperable cancer.

The Bishop was at ease in the face of imminent death. He spoke of the doctors’ prognosis laconically when he told close friends simply, “I’m finished. The ballgame is over.”

It was not surprising that he would compare life to a ballgame. Bishop DeFalco was an avid sports fan who had been a loyal backer of the Pittsburgh Pirates ever since his boyhood days in Pennsylvania. He liked the Pittsburgh Steelers, too, but it is the Dallas Cowboys that he pulled for first, that sometimes awesome football power of his adopted state.

Bishop DeFalco, with his piercing eyes and clipped, somewhat rapid speech, had the bearing that sometimes gives a wrong first impression – that here is a man who is all business, a strong-willed leader of the Church who tolerates no foolishness, a strict administrator of rules and regulations.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Bishop DeFalco was indeed a splendid administrator with a canon law scholar’s knowledge of his church and faith. But you couldn’t be around Bishop DeFalco very long before you realized he was a down-to-earth fellow with a high sense of humor, a man of compassion and understanding of the foibles of all us humans, a churchman who doesn’t always go just by the book. He was a man who acknowledged that the people are the Church, and in the Amarillo Diocese, he had made the Catholic laity a vital and fully participating laity.
Archbishop Jean Jadot and Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco at the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of Amarillo

Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco and his good friend Pobrecito

Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco's baseball memorabilia is housed in the new museum. Bishop DeFalco used to throw a baseball against the wall of the Bishop's House and catch it with the pictured glove.

Diocesan Museum Premiere Opening
Wednesday, November 8, 2017, 6 to 8 pm
The Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center

The Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center began as a dream of its namesake, the fifth Bishop of Amarillo, Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco. “He said the Diocese of Amarillo should have a retreat center that would be a jewel, a diamond, in the crown of the Panhandle of Texas,” “He saw the retreat center as a quiet secluded place set apart from the hustle and bustle of the everyday world. He saw a Holy Ground that could calm and soothe the soul and body. It would be a place that could provide an atmosphere conducive to spiritual and personal growth.” Bishop DeFalco passed away on Sept, 22, 1979 and never saw the fruition of his dream. His successor, Bishop Leroy T. Matthiesen, along with a team of two Redemptorist priests, took on the responsibility of seeing Bishop DeFalco’s dream become a reality.

Discussion of plans for the Retreat Center began in October 1980. Ground was broken in September 1981 and the center began operations in November 1982 while construction continued. The Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center was formally dedicated by Bishop Matthiesen on Dec. 12, 1982. The DeFalco Retreat Center has been available to the people of the Diocese of Amarillo for 30 years. It has been a diamond in the crown of Texas. There have been tens of thousands of people who have passed through their doors and been affected in very positive ways in their relationships with God and their fellow man. Many of these people feel that visiting the retreat center is like coming home. WTC

Wise and Otherwise 1963

Nobody thought to mention in what was said about Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco that when he arrived on the Plains of West Texas in 1963 it was in Blue Ford Falcon. The Falcon is still around, though the Bishop is gone, his life chocked off swiftly, sadly.

The Bishop drove the Falcon for a while, but soon learned that it was not big enough to cope with the miles. He kept it, however, a symbol of himself not only because of its similarity in names but because he was comfortable in it.

It fitted him. He was a humble man.

In his home he left a few new suits, apparently never worn. He had a small personal bank account.

Several valuable relics given to him by members of his last parish in Ft. Worth were returned to the church there.

Everything else, including a stamp collection he had inherited from Bishop Laurence J. FiszSimon, and John L. Morkovsky, he left with the church of Amarillo.

Pobrecito, the little dog given to the bishop by the priests of diocese, was left in the care of Sister Carmelita. He is still lonesome, but finally after a ride in the bishop’s car, he consented to go up to the second floor of the house.

Life is slowly picking up again, time is working its magic.

Msgr. L. T. Matthiesen
Administrator sede vacante
Diocese of Amarillo
The Catholic Historical Society
Invites you to the Premiere Opening of
The Diocese of Amarillo Museum

Please come join Bishop Patrick J. Zurek and visit us for our premiere opening on

Wednesday November 8, 2017 at 6:00pm - 8:00pm

Donations were down this quarter because we forgot to include the return envelope. With only 5 donations it tells what a necessary procedure that is.

Equestrian Knights of the Holy Sepulture

The Museum is in search of the full regalia of the Equestrian Knights of the Holy Sepulture. We would be very pleased if anyone has one to donate. It would be displayed on a mannequin and placed with all the other inspiring artifacts in the museum.


table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUILDING FUND CONTRIBUTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amarillo DCCW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Msgr. Norbert Kuehler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellita Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Moylan-Quinto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister Alice OBrien</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HONORARIAUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IN MEMORY of her mother,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita Gonzales by her daughter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mark your Calendars!
The next Catholic Historical Society Program will be “Meet Even More Saints” to be held in the new Diocesan Museum Sunday, November 5, 2017 3 to 5 pm.

We made $1141 at the book sale. We will be having another book sale in the spring. This sale will include books that we already have and those that will come from the closing of the Benedictine Monastery in Canyon. Watch for more details.

This spring the Catholic Historical Society will be auctioning off a valuable religious artifact! Watch for upcoming details.
Meet Even More Saints

Sunday, November 5, 2017
3:00PM to 5:00PM
In the New Diocesan Museum
4512 NE 24th

This is always a popular and well-attended presentation and we hope that you will join us and learn more about our Saints, their way of life and their place in our Catholic Faith.

Saints to be introduced include:
St. Gemma Galgani;
St. John Vianney;
St. Catherine Labouré;
St. Charles Borromeo; and,
St. Joseph

Relics of the Saints will be on display

Sponsored by The Catholic Historical Society
Diocesan Museum Premiere Opening
Wednesday, November 8, 2017, 6 to 8 P.M.