A Sister’s Journey ~ Answering the Call to Religious Life

Editor’s Note: During National Vocation Awareness Week, Sister Maria del Rosario decided to write about her vocation journey on an online blog. Each day of the week she shared a little more about her story. I thought it was great and asked if we could turn it into a story for the Lighthouse. She is currently in her second year of Temporary Vows at Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament (IWBS) Convent, in Victoria. The following is her story:

The First Step
I truly believe God was calling me since I was a little girl. I didn’t know anything about religious sisters or nuns but I just thought, “Nothing could be more beautiful than living for Jesus.”

Being that I didn’t grow up knowing any nuns, and I was naïve about religious life; it was easy for me to ignore “the call” for a long time. I still remember my heart aching when I saw the “Carmelitas” once while I was walking with my family, in Mexico.

I was scared of the call. I was scared of religious life. I didn’t know about this vow of obedience because I like to “do my own thing”. And poverty? Well if I work hard for the money, then I want to spend the money!!!

Many people would tell me that I should be a nun. Now looking back, I know that was God reaching out through others. Too bad He doesn’t send text messages!

I have to give the credit to the movie, The Passion of the Christ for finally moving me into action and Monsignor Gerry Cer- noch, my long-time pastor at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Bay City, for encouraging me to look at religious communities. In one of the last scenes of The Passion of the Christ, Mary is holding Jesus after the crucifixion and she looks out at the people. I felt like she was telling me, “Look what He did for you. What will you do for Him?” Knowing that Jesus loved me so much that He suffered and died for me gave me the courage to step out of my comfort zone and begin to look at religious communities. I remember Father Gerry advising me to visit communities that were predominantly Hispanic. I told him that I didn’t need to because the only race I hate is the one I have to run! I’m not going to lie though, I sure did miss tacos, tortillas, rice and beans within two weeks. One time during supper I cried because I mistook spaghetti for fideo. The Sisters learned about fideo and got busy making it. All of us enjoyed fideo two days later. I know it sounds silly, but food is cultural and the IWBS sisters showed me that day that they were willing to embrace my culture.

If I would have known then, what I know now, I wouldn’t have been so afraid to take the first step. Discerning religious life is just that, discerning. You don’t sign a contract for life as soon as you visit a convent or a seminary. Just like you don’t get married to someone on your first date. Discerning is like dating. Initial formation is like an engagement. It’s a time to see where God is truly calling you, and it’s not a test that you can fail.

Hurdles
Many doubts entered my head, and obstacles came from every direction during my first few years of discernment. My family was not a very church-going-religious family. We knew we were Catholic and would stay Catholic until we died, but that was about it. When I told them that I was thinking about becoming a religious sister, and asked them not to tell anyone yet, I really didn’t get much support. The only ones that always “had my back” were my younger sister, my dad, and my paternal family in Mexico. My mom told the whole world. It is hard for someone to discern when everyone is watching your every move and asking every five seconds – Why do you want to be a nun? Why don’t you want to get married? When are you going to leave? I could never be a nun, did someone break your heart and that’s why you’re giving up.

See A Sister’s Journey, pg. 14

Sister Maria del Rosario Resendez prays in the chapel at the Chancery reflecting on her call to religious life.
Mercy for Us and for the Whole World

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On a beautiful day in December, we re-dedicated the Adoration Chapel at St. Mary’s, in Victoria. This Chapel had been closed since Hurricane Harvey – for a year and four months. On the day of the re-dedication, my heart reached out in joy to all those who had helped make that day a possibility. One of the first thoughts was something that came from the life of Father Charles Kram. In one of his reflections, he shared spiritual insights from his personal experience of being dependent on others. I remember reading his observation that most of us like to be doing things for others. We hope that we can be following Jesus by feeding the hungry and visiting the prisoner, or taking care of our family needs and caring for the community. I write and speak often about the inspiring example and witness of so many people who give of themselves in creative ways of service.

It becomes very challenging when physically we seem unable to do as much for others. Father Kram wrote that he learned, with his physical limitations, his service to God may have been in allowing other people to take care of him. He began to realize that the people taking care of him felt they were being made more holy by their service. They probably were becoming holier simply by being in the presence of someone with such spiritual insight!

After the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, I felt we were dependent on the generosity of others. As a people, we are extremely generous throughout the year, but in that time, we couldn’t possibly re-build everything on our own. Donations came from around the country, insurance agents responded to claims, prayers poured in from people we didn’t even know, workers came to our area to fix and build, parishioners drew up plans with pastors - and the re-building has led to re-dedications. I know that in our time of need, each of the people who helped us felt they were serving Jesus and being made more holy – may we have grateful hearts for their kindness.

With thankfulness for all the kind people

See Mercy for Us, pg. 4

Obispo Brendan Cahill
Mensaje del Pastor

Misericordia para Nosotros y para el Mundo Entero

Queridos Hermanos y Hermanas,

En un hermoso día de diciembre, volvimos a dedicar la Capilla de Adoración en St. Mary’s en Victoria. Esta capilla había estado cerrada desde el Huracán Harvey durante un año y cuatro meses. El día de la re-dedicación, mi corazón se extendió con alegría a todos aquellos que ayudaron a hacer este día una posibilidad. Uno de los primeros pensamientos fue algo que vino de la vida del Padre Charles Kram. En una de sus reflexiones compartió ideas espirituales de su experiencia personal de depender de los demás. Recuerdo haber leído su observación de su experiencia personal de depender de los demás. Como personas, somos extremadamente generosos durante todo el año, pero en ese tiempo no podríamos reconstruir todo por nuestra cuenta. Las donaciones vinieron de todo el país, los agentes de seguros respondieron a las reclamaciones, las oraciones nos llegaron de personas que no conocíamos, los trabajadores vinieron a nuestra área para arreglar y construir, los feligreses elaboraron planes con sus pastores, y la reconstrucción ha llevado a re-dedicaciones. Sí que en nuestro momento de necesidad, cada una de las personas que nos ayudaron sintió que estaban sirviendo a Jesús y haciéndose más santas; mantenemos corazones agradecidos por su amabilidad.

Con agradecimiento por todas las personas amables que nos han ayudado, en particular los trabajadores, y las oraciones que provienen de esa Iglesia y Capilla. Comenté que la Misa diaria del miércoles es una “potencia espiritual” para la gente de Victoria. Creo que sabes a lo que me refiero: los fieles que asisten a la Misa son una potencia espiritual cuando se unen a sus oraciones personales y viven para el sacrificio de Jesús. Nuestras vidas unidas a Jesús en la Misa nos traen amor y misericordia a nosotros y al mundo entero.

Hablando sobre el poder, esa Capilla tiene tres hermosas imágenes de María: Nuestra Señora de Fátima, Nuestra Señora de Lourdes y Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Qué hermosa imagen es saber que mientras te sientas en la Capilla en presencia de Jesús, también estás envuelto en los pliegos del manto de María.

Una vez más, les pido que sigamos comprometidos a rezar, especialmente el rosario por el don de la paz en el mundo y por la familia. Cuando San Juan Pablo II nos invitó a rezar esto fielmente, creo que podemos mantener nuestra confianza en el poder de esta oración, ¡más de lo que nunca sabemos! Que Dios te bendiga a ti y a tus familias, mantengámonos unos a otros en oración.

+ Brendan

CHAPEL REDEDICATED—St. Mary’s Adoration Chapel reopened on Thursday, December 13, following the Noon Mass. Closed since Hurricane Harvey, the chapel will be used for weekday 6:30 a.m. Mass and Adoration from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Bishop Brendan Cahill led a formal procession, blessed the restored chapel, and concluded with the Solemn Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with the De Leon Monstrance given to the church in 1850. New additions to the chapel include the Enthronement of Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Lourdes in new devotional insets.

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Bishop Cahill’s Schedule

January
1 10:00 a.m. New Year’s Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, Victoria
2-8 Bishop’s Retreat at Mundelein Seminary, Illinois
9 5:45 p.m. CCD Visit at St. Joseph, Inez
11 8:00 a.m. Mass and Blessing of Pre-K Building at Sts. Cyril & Methodius, Shiner
12 Mass for Carmelites, Meyersville
13 10:00 a.m. Confirmation at St. Anthony, Columbus
14 Noon Mass for Missionary Catechists
2:00 p.m. Communities of Faith meeting
15 6:30 a.m. Relevant Radio Morning Show
16-19 March for Life, Washington D.C.
20 10:00 a.m. Missionary Catechists Benefit Dinner, CWV Hall, Victoria
22 4:30 p.m. Supper with Healthcare Sisters, IWBS Convent, Victoria
23 4:30 p.m. CCD Visit at St. Robert Bellarmine, El Campo
24 6:00 p.m. ACTS Team Mass at Baptist Encampment, Palacios
25 8:30 Mass and School Visit - St. Phillip Catholic School, El Campo
26 Mass for Carmelites, Meyersville
5:00 p.m. Mass at Our Lady of Sorrows, Victoria
27 9:00 a.m. Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, Victoria for opening of Catholic Schools Week.

29 10:00 a.m. Presbyteral Council
30 8:05 a.m. School Mass and Visit - St. Joseph School, Yoakum
6:00 p.m. CCD visit at St. Patrick’s, Bloomington
31 – 2/2 Leadership Roundtable Summit, Washington, D.C.

February
3 10:00 a.m. Mass World Day for Consecrated Life with Missionary Catechists as the hosts at Our Lady of Lourdes, Victoria

In Memoriam

Deacon Milburn Kram

MOULTON—Deacon Milburn Kram, age 80, passed away on Sunday, November 18, 2018. He was born November 21, 1937, to the late Erwin W. Kram and Rosalia (Reindl) Kram and was an only child. He graduated from Moulton High School in 1956 and then graduating from Baldwin College with a business degree in 1958.

Milburn served as Sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserve and was honorably discharged in 1963. On April 12, 1958 he married his high school sweetheart, Marian Joyce Vana. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, his children, Perry Scott (Sharon), Christopher Lynn, and Brian Douglas (Brenda), 6 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

They spent a short time in Houston where Milburn headed the Herder Truck Lines Fleet of trucks, but his love for the country life brought him and his family back to his family farm where he grew up and it was there he spent the rest of his life doing what he loved, farming, and raising cattle.

Milburn realized his calling was to become a deacon, so December 19, 2009, he was ordained a deacon at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory and served as a permanent deacon for St. Joseph Church in Moulton.

Minnie Bochat

Minnie B. Bochat passed away on November 6, 2018, at the age of 87. She was born in Yorktown, Texas, on October 25, 1931, to the late Michael and Leona Weischwill.

In addition to her parents, she is preceded in death by her sister Ethelene Melder and brother Leland Weischwill.

She is survived by her husband of 59 years, Robert H. “Bob” Bochat; daughters Angela Tawney and husband Eddie, Carol Keeney and husband Mike, Jeannie Peters and husband Chris; sons David Bochat and John Bochat; 9 grandchildren; 9 great grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Minnie worked for CP & L for 12 years prior to raising her family. She retired in 2014 from the Diocese of Victoria after 32 years of service. During that time, she was the secretary to Bishop David Fellhauer for 23 years.

Minnie was a loving wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. She enjoyed playing the piano, softball, golf, volleyball, and dominos.

Funeral Mass was held Tuesday, November 13, 2018, at Our Lady Of Lourdes Church with Bishop Emeritus David Fellhauer, officiating. Entombment followed at Resurrection Cemetery.

Eternal rest, grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

Please remember in prayer the priests of the Diocese of Victoria, who were ordained during the month of January:

Rev. Dominic Trung Nguyen 01/04/2003 St. Anthony Church, Palacios
Rev. Donald R. Ruppert 01/20/1978 Holy Cross Church, East Bernard

Lord, I know you love me and have great plans for me.
But sometimes I am overwhelmed by the thought of my future.
Show me how to walk forward one day at a time.
May I take heart while I search openly for what it is you want me to do with my life.
Inspire me with wisdom and understanding to see your vision for my life and respond with openness to whatever you call me to be.
Show me your way Lord!

Please remember in prayer the priests of the Diocese of Victoria, who died during the month of January:

Rev. Wolfgang Minns, O.Ss.T. 01/02/2008
Rev. Jerome Stryk 01/05/1999
Rev. Msgr. Gino Bernasconi 01/31/2006

For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. (Romans 14:8)
Education of Seminarian Fund

The Education of Seminarian Fund is a fund in which all of the monies donated to this fund, as well as the earnings, are available to cover the cost of educating seminarians. The proceeds of the special collection on Holy Thursday are deposited into the Education of Seminarian Fund. Publication of this fund will appear when new contributions are received.

Donation categories:
- Lector – $0.01 - $99.99
- Acolyte – $100 - $499.99
- Candidate – $500 - $1,499.99
- Transitional Deacon – $1,500 - $2,499.99
- Priest – $2,500+.

Lector

Robert and Kathryn Kennedy
in Memory of Vincent & Susie Warzecha
Serra Club of Victoria

To contribute to the Education of Seminarian Fund, send contributions to:
Diocese Of Victoria
Education of Seminarian Fund
P. O. Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903

Seminary Endowment Fund

Seminary Endowment Fund (formerly known as Seminary Burses) is a permanent fund used for the education of future priests for the Diocese of Victoria. The goal of each burse is $15,000. The interest from this amount is applied yearly to the education of seminarians. The burses are in memory of or in honor of an individual priest or layperson, living or deceased. Publication of the burses will appear periodically when new contributions are received.

Donation Categories:
- Lector - $0.01 - $99.99
- Acolyte – $100 - $499.99
- Candidate – $500 - $1,499.99
- Transitional Deacon – $1,500 - $2,499.99
- Priest – $2,500+.

December 13, 2018

- St. John the Baptist Church, St. John
  In Memory of Rev. Brian Crookes
  Seminary Burse #2
  Lector
  In memory of Stazy C. Hajek by Elsie Farek

- Rev. Msgr. Edward C. Bartsch
  Seminary Burse #2
  Lector
  In memory of Stazy C. Hajek by Mathilda Melnar

- CDA Court of St. Ann #369 Seminary Burse #2
  Lector
  In memory of Lucille Araj by
  CDA Court St. Ann #369

- Rev. Wayne Flagg and Rev. Philip Brune Seminary Burse
  The following three entries are being republished under the correct burse.
  Lector
  In memory of Rev. Msgr. Lawrence Matula by
  Lambert and Carol Brune
  In memory of Irene Flagg by:
  Lambert and Carol Brune
  Bill and Carolyn Schuette

- Rev. Msgr. James C. Brunner
  Seminary Burse
  Candidate
  Donation in memory of Rev. Msgr. James Brunner by Leroy Brunner

- Rev. Timothy Kosler Seminary Burse
  Acolyte
  Donation in honor of Rev. Tim Kosler by Harvey Michna

To contribute to an existing Seminary Endowment Fund, send contributions with the appropriate fund designation to:
Diocese Of Victoria
Seminary Endowment Fund
P. O. Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903

Happy Birthday to Our Seminarian

Adam Shimek is in Theology I this year at St. Mary’s Seminary, in Houston. His birthday is January 26. Adam’s home parish is St. Mary in Nada. Write to Adam at: St. Mary’s Seminary, 9845 Memorial Dr., Houston, TX 77024.

“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”
Matthew 4:18-22

The Emmaus Center

The Emmaus Center provides individual, couple, family, adolescent and children’s counseling as well as specialized support groups from a Catholic perspective. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (361) 212-0830.

Mercy for Us and for the Whole World

Continued from pg. 2

who have helped us, I also thought about the prayers that come from that Church and Chapel. I commented that the noon daily Mass is a “spiritual powerhouse” for the people of Victoria. I think you know what I mean – the faithful who attend the Mass are a spiritual powerhouse, as they join their personal prayers and lives to the sacrifice of Jesus. Our lives united to Jesus in the Mass bring love and mercy to us and to the whole world.

Speaking about power, that Chapel has three beautiful images of Mary – Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. What a beautiful image it is to know that while you sit in the Chapel in the presence of Jesus, you are also enveloped in the folds of the mantle of Mary.

Once again, I ask that we remain committed to pray, especially the Rosary for the gift of peace in the world and for the family. As St. John Paul II invited us to pray this faithfully, I believe we can maintain our confidence in the power of this prayer – more than we ever know! May God bless you and your families; let’s keep each other in prayer.

Brendan
The Diocese of Victoria is blessed to have 15 Catholic schools on 13 campuses, with 2,820 enrolled students for the 2018-19 school year.

The next Day of Giving will be January 29-30, 2019, 12:00 p.m. EST - 11:59 a.m. EST. MasterCard, Visa, and Discover will be the only accepted forms of payment (American Express and Diners Club are not eligible). A receipt will be sent directly to the donor’s email, once the gift has been made. Donations may be made to as many schools or dioceses as one would like. Gifts will go only to the diocese or school selected, and donor information will not be shared with any other school or organization. The Office of Catholic Schools has a goal of raising $1,000. Each participating school will set their own goal.

Thank you in advance for supporting Catholic education!

Giving to Others with Grateful Hearts

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

SCHULENBURG—On Thursday, November 15, the students, faculty, and staff of St. Rose of Lima School, Schulentburg, celebrated their annual Thanksgiving Mass. Weekly celebration of the Mass is always centered around the Eucharist and coming together as a family of faith. This celebration was also an extension of the mission of the school to develop “Excellence Through Jesus.” Excellence Through Jesus includes being of service to others, living the Corporal Works of Mercy and bringing the Gospel to life.

A collection of nonperishable food items was taken up during the processional of the Mass. Each class also put together a complete Thanksgiving Meal basket for a family in need. Collectively, 181 pounds of food was donated to the Schulenburg Area Food Pantry, and 11 meal baskets were donated to the Family Crisis Center.

St. Rose of Lima Catholic School is proud to offer Academic Excellence in a Christian environment for over 128 years, giving students the opportunity to grow in knowledge and in faith.

ST. NICHOLAS DAY CELEBRATED—Our Lady of the Gulf, Port Lavaca, students learn about the life of St. Nicholas on December 6, his Feast Day.

CHRISTMAS FUN—St. Joseph High School, Victoria, students display their “ugly sweaters” at school.

ST. NICHOLAS DAY CELEBRATED—Our Lady of the Gulf, Port Lavaca, students learn about the life of St. Nicholas on December 6, his Feast Day.

8th grade students John V., Grant K., Christian S., Kenny S., Kalandra J., Mackenzie K., and Zoe N. are shown with the Thanksgiving collection of food donated to Family Crisis Center.

GIFT OF GIVING—Sacred Heart School, Hallettsville, Seniors Kaden F. and Sadie B., along with their classmates, helped bring canned goods and shoe box gifts to the altar during Mass on Friday, November 16. Students from all grades brought in nonperishable canned goods to be donated to the Manna Food Pantry. Many also contributed to the Samaritan’s Purse Christmas Child event by filling a shoe box with items for needy children in foreign countries. Thank you to all who helped in any way with these projects.

Celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2019

January 27 — February 2
#CSW19
I love the spirit that is so prevalent during the Christmas Season. People seem to be so happy; cheerful greetings are exchanged between complete strangers, acts of kindness abound. Presents are carefully selected for friends and family members. No one is to be forgotten. Members make great efforts to get together as a family for the holidays. Civic and religious groups open their hearts to the less fortunate persons in our midst and encourage the rest of us to support and participate in their activities. The spirit of generosity is evident!

We are so fortunate to have so many groups and individuals who are reaching out to those who may be falling between the cracks in our society or who are facing adverse conditions at this time. Just look at all those who have helped the communities who needed help to put their lives and property together after the hurricane tore those lives apart. Some of these volunteers are still with us.

As you read this, the holidays have passed; however, those without adequate food or clothing are still experiencing hunger. Those without safe shelter or those who continue to suffer from Harvey’s fury are still experiencing homelessness. The elderly, the ill, the homebound may be lonely, feeling that no one cares; it may seem that the needs of the less fortunate are forgotten after the holidays.

That’s where we can come in. We can continue to make efforts to let Christ’s presence be made known to others by being cheerful, by smiling, by joyfully acknowledging them. A phone call, a text message or email, a listening ear, or a short visit can lift the spirits of a lonely shut-in or someone who may think that they are being forgotten. (These actions can lift your spirits, too.) Showing and letting others know that they are loved by God and by us can bring a sense of peace to troubled minds. Offering our time and resources to one of the many charitable organizations can be a sacrifice that will be a benefit to you as well as to those who are served. We know that serving “the least of my brothers and sisters” is serving Christ himself. Caring for the well-being of all our brothers and sisters and for our earth can bring down God’s blessing on all of us. Together we can make 2019 a blessed time indeed! So let’s all have a Blessed New Year!

By Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS

Continuing Our Quest for a Blessed New Year

The Catholic Lighthouse
Page 6 —January 2019

Do you have any plans for this Lent?

We frequently hear the question “Do you have any plans?” What is your answer concerning Lent? Why not join a Disciple on the Journey small group to share faith using the Lenten Sunday Readings? You do not have to be an expert or have any knowledge about Scripture to participate. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a Bible study, but simply sharing faith. All you need is an open heart and a desire to grow in your personal relationship with God. Can you find a little time this Lent to pray and reflect over the Sunday Scriptures and then spend an hour and a half each week sharing your reflections and experiences with a small group?

Msgr. Thomas J. Morgan from Our Sunday Visitor has this to say about how small groups promote conversion and transformation: “Faith sharing in a small group is the key to personal conversion. This is the place where we connect our individual stories with the Bible story just read. Here we connect our faith with our everyday life experiences. Here we connect with our hearts where God abides.”

He goes on to say that the small group experience empowers people to change their way of thinking, their way of believing, their way of acting. The group spiritual energy is what leads to a change in values and behavior. Truly, a unique and special process emerges from listening and sharing. The faith-sharing group is not a discussion group. There are no pros and cons. It is a sacred space where individual stories are shared and reverenced. It is done in the mirror of the great God story as revealed in the Bible. Here in this sharing and in this listening we sow the seeds of conversion.

The Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament invite each of you to join a faith sharing group in your parish or to form your own group this coming Lent using Disciples on the Journey Lent 2019. This may be the best decision you will ever make.

For more information go to www.disciplesonthjourney.org, call (361) 485-0866, toll free 1-866-590-3688.

Presidio LaBahia

El Soldado de Mexico - January 26-27

Reenactors recreate elements of Santa Anna’s Army circa 1836. This event will be held at the Presidio LaBahia, in Goliad, Saturday, January 26, from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, January 27, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Admission is $5 for adults, $4.50 for seniors, $2 for children 6-11, and under 6 are free. For more information, call (361) 645-3752.

Pregnant? Need Help?

Confidential and caring assistance available for the following needs:
• Emotional • Material • Spiritual • Educational • Providing immediate and practical help.
We have a special concern for you and your unborn child.

Victoria Gabriel Project
Toll Free 1-866-MARY AID 1-866-627-9243
www.victoriagabrielproject.org

Our Lady of Victory Catholic School
Champions for Christ
Open House 3K-8th
For Prospective Families
Tuesday, January 15, 2019
6:30 p.m. • School Cafeteria
575-5391 • www.ourladyvictory.org
EVERY LIFE CHERISHED—On November 30, the Sacred Heart High School Teens for Life team put on a retreat for the Sacred Heart 5th-8th graders along with the 7th and 8th grade classes from St. Michael’s Catholic School in Weimar. The theme of the retreat was “Every Life: Cherished, Chosen, Sent.” Two of Sacred Heart’s former students, Kristin Popp, class of 2015, and Luke Harper, class of 2016, visited to deliver the talks. Kristin shared the message that “every life” means that every life from conception to natural death is cherished by God, and why it is so important to know that. Luke talked to the students about how each of them has been chosen for holiness, to be a saint, and that they are not too young to live that out now. He gave them pointers to get started. Finally, the high school team led each of their small groups to discuss what it meant practically in their young lives to be “sent” by God to fulfill and share His message. Through the talks and fun activities, the students dove deeper into the truth that each and every person is a cherished child of God, who has been chosen for a specific purpose and sent to ensure that others know and understand this as well. The day closed in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, praying a Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and reflecting on how they could live out the message of the theme, going forward in their everyday lives.

Encounter Youth Ministry
Held Baby Blessing Shower

SCHULENBURG—Encounter Youth Ministry of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Schulenburg hosted a Baby Blessing Shower during the month of December. The service drive began on December 1 and concluded with a community wide collection drive at the downtown gazebo.

This Christmas community service project benefited the Gabriel Project of the Crossroads. This ministry assists mothers dealing with unplanned pregnancies. Items collected were sorted and placed into diaper bags and care bags for mothers and babies in need. Teens from Encounter Youth Ministry wrapped collection boxes which were placed in three local area churches: St. Rose of Lima, Schulenburg; St. Mary, High Hill, and St. John the Baptist, Ammansville.

Concluding the service project, all were invited to a Christmas carol sing-along, hot chocolate, and Christmas cookies. Core teen members chose this particular service project, due to its pro-life mission, to support women in finding alternatives to abortion.

If you or someone you know is dealing with a crisis pregnancy, please contact 1-866-627-9243 or 1-866-Mary Aid, immediately. You may also visit: http://www.victoriagabrielproject.org

Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry

Wendy Eggert, Director
Shannon Thomas, Associate Director
ym@victoriadiocese.org
(361) 573-0828
www.victoriadiocese.org/youth-young-adult-ministry

Upcoming Events

~ January 13 • Youth Leadership Team Meeting
~ January 16-19 • March for Life in Washington, DC - Full
~ January 24, 29, and 31 • Foundations Training at the Chancery Office for ALL new youth ministers who have not already received the training. Please contact the Youth Office to register.
~ February 3 • Confirmation Retreat at Our Lady of Sorrows - Full
Lessons Learned in Mission Land USA

By Tony Magliano

Many years ago as a young man born and raised in Baltimore, I spent a very different week getting a taste of life in Appalachia. The opportunity to travel from the hustle of big city life to the quiet beautiful mountainous area of eastern Kentucky – to deepen my Catholic faith, experience Christian community with other young adults from around the U.S., and help the rural poor – was an offer this adventurous soul jumped at!

Through a wonderful program which the Glenmary Home Missioners still offer (see: www.glenmary.org/come-and-see), I and about 20 other guys, under the supervision of two skilled Glenmary brothers, worked on improving impoverished homes of several mountain families. Then in the evenings, we participated in wonderful spiritual retreats. Now fast-forward 40 years.

Having recently retired after 17 years as a pastoral associate in Baltimore, I contacted Glenmary to see if I could volunteer once again. Father Vic Subb, pastor of Holy Family parish and Divine Savior mission in Lafayette and Celina, Tenn. respectively, warmly invited me to take up residence at his home and assist him in ministering to the folks in his neck-of-the-woods.

And so I packed my bags and headed south, driving over 700 miles to Holy Family and Divine Savior in Tennessee – which are the only established Catholic congregations within a five county radius.

For nearly six weeks, I took the Eucharist to homebound and nursing home parishioners, assisted with R.C.I.A., gave two social justice and peace presentations, and delivered a weekly Scripture reading and sermon on the local country radio station.

It was all a very enriching experience of sharing and receiving God’s love.

But my most insightful experiences were ministering to prisoners and migrant workers.

Every Friday at the Macon County Jail, Father Subb, along with a few volunteers including myself, celebrated the Eucharist with 20 prisoners. Their prayerful reverence and sincere reflections concerning the proclaimed Scriptures deepen my understanding that active faith in God’s love and mercy is greater than our sins, and as Jesus often taught, is our very salvation (see: Luke 19:1-10).

On several occasions, I traveled to migrant worker camps in Tennessee and Kentucky with Father Subb – who for years has traversed many country back roads to befriend and minister to numerous Mexican and Central American farm workers.

During a visit one evening, I asked them to tell me about their work harvesting tobacco. They explained that for 11 hours a day, six days a week, they work non-stop – except for lunch – cutting, stacking, hanging and stripping this hazardous crop – dangerous to workers and users alike.

These very poor migrant workers labor so hard in dangerous conditions, because at about $11 an hour, they make 11 times what they would earn back home.

While millions of migrant workers pick our fruits and vegetables, these men – migrant women also work the fields – explained that tobacco was the only farm job available to them.

Although all of these men have legal worker visas, millions of other migrant workers throughout the U.S. remain in the undocumented shadows, partly because the federal government refuses to issue enough worker visas each year.

Comprehensive, fair immigration reform legislation is sorely needed and long overdue.

Now back home in Maryland, where my county and all of the neighboring counties have Catholic churches, I realize the final lesson I learned in mission country USA is that in our very secular nation and world, mission country actually starts in our own families, neighborhoods and parish congregations (see: https://bit.ly/1i8E8ro).

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings. Tony can be reached at tmag@zoominternet.net.
January ~ The Blessing of Silence and Rest

Beginning in January 2019, each issue of the Catholic Lighthouse will include a prayer, quote or article featuring Catholic Rural Life. Catholic Rural Life (CRL) is a national, Catholic nonprofit organization dedicated to the vitality of the American countryside. Headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota, CRL is a membership-based organization, that has a rich history spanning 90 years. It is comprised of dedicated bishops, laity, and religious who are joined in a common effort to serve the rural Church, rural people, and their communities. Bishop Brendan Cahill is one of the Board of Directors for CRL. Catholic Rural Life (CRL)-Victoria was officially formed in the Diocese of Victoria on Friday, June 22, 2018. CRL-Victoria is a local chapter of the national organization and is the first chapter established in the State of Texas. Father Stephen Vacek has been appointed Director and Deacon Larry Hoelscher has been appointed Chairperson by Bishop Brendan Cahill.

The start of a new year: a time to renew and get back on track. Before carrying out our resolution for the year, this time of the year serves to remember that rest and silence are also valuable.

Winter’s natural stillness allows a welcomed pause to the frenzied pace of our lives. As the activities of the year come to an end, we may also feel the need to slow down. The boisterous hum of family life and work is now replaced by quietness, if only for a moment.

The month of January is a good time to accustom yourself to silence and rest. Do these appear as strange visitors to us? With practice, silence and rest can become trusted friends that fill us with deeper awareness, recharge us, and provide greater creativity for the tasks that await us in the coming spring.

In the spirit of this month’s blessing, consider fasting or preparing a simple meal on the day of the prayer. Gather with family or friends in the early evening. Light a candle. After a moment of silence, begin this prayer:

**God our Father bless this silence. Teach us to recognize the treasures it gives and to desire it more often.**

Please also bless this time of rest. Help us to trust it with the same faith which we give to work. Strengthened by our participation in holy silence and rest, may we come to see in winter not a death that is a final ending, but rather an opening that leads to a springtime of new life. Amen.

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**Catechist Formation – What’s It All About?**

Saint Pope John Paul II, in Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time) stated, “The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ.” Soon, we learn that this ministry of catechesis involves, first and foremost, an understanding that God desires an intimate relationship with each person and offers His grace for this encounter. Hence, through evangelization and catechesis, we (catechists) “echo” this good news to our faith-learners, their parents, and everyone we meet, in the way in which we live.

Perusing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops webpage on “catechesis” you quickly see these words “Catechesis is the act of handing on the Word of God” set apart from the longer explanation of “catechesis”. So, as catechists, we realize we need to understand the Church’s teachings on Scripture and Tradition.

The National Directory for Catechesis states, “Programs of formation should be designed to help them [catechists] acquire the knowledge and skills they need to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care and assist them in living as disciples of Christ.” (55.A). Therefore, in the spring of 2019, the Office of Catechetical Ministry will offer two courses: Communicating the Faith and Vocation of the Catechist throughout the diocese for catechists, aides, parish catechetical leaders, and others involved in catechetical ministry. All catechists are encouraged to participate in these classes.

Through the catechist formation program, courses and support for all involved in catechetical ministry will be available. Visit the catechist formation page on the diocesan website for updated information, or contact Christella Alvarez at (361) 827-7171 or calvarez@victoriadiocese.org for more information.
The KC 4th Degree also participated in the Veterans Day Services after Mass. Attending Sir Knights were from St. Michael Assembly #1527 of Flatonia, Schulenburg, and Weimar; Bishop Odin Assembly #1095 of Cistern, Fayetteville, Hostyn, and LaGrange; Assembly #3592 of East Bernard, Wallis, and Rosenberg.

PRAHA—The Knights of Columbus, 4th Degree served as Honor Guard for Rev. Gabriel Mason of the Victoria Diocese. All attended Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Praha, Texas to honor all veterans and especially the nine young men from Praha who gave their lives in World War II.

Happy New Year 2019

Bishop Brendan Cahill, of the Diocese of Victoria, was at Queen of the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, in Hostyn, on Sunday, December 16, 2018, at the 8:00 a.m. Mass. He received Richard Barfield into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church and accepted him as the newest seminarian for the Diocese of Victoria. Barfield is a married, ordained minister, in the Church of the Nazarene, USA, and served as a Chaplain in the US Army for 17 years. He has felt the call to the Roman Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Priesthood since 2012.

Bishop Cahill said, “I received the permission from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, to receive Richard Barfield as a seminarian, in September. In their reply, I was instructed to require at least a three-year period of formation for Richard. He and his family will live in Hostyn and assist Rev. Daniel Kahlich, pastor at Holy Rosary, while attending St. Mary’s Seminary, in Houston.”

Married priests are rare in the Roman Catholic Church, but there is a provision in Canon Law that allows married clergy from certain Christian denominations to convert and become priests. How exactly does this work?

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Unceasing Prayer

The following sermon was written by Father Charles Kram for the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Life is full of uncertainty. We attend a party one day and a funeral the next. We smile and then we cry. In the course of a lifetime we must all go through many a storm. Like Peter sinking in the waves, we can often say our best prayers in times of stress; but what a narrow attitude it would be if we were to limit ourselves to pray only when we are in trouble. We must learn to pray every day and in many ways.

A man once asked his Pastor, “Father, is it all right to smoke while praying?” The priest said, “Certainly not,” and scolded the man for his irreverence. So the man asked another priest, but this time he asked, “Father, is it all right to pray while smoking?” This time the answer was, “certainly, we should pray always.”

As a boy I sometimes wondered whether it was permissible to say my night prayers in bed.

When I was a Seminary student, our Dean, who was a priest, said that he sometimes said his daily prayers while soaking in the bathtub.

Prayer is a lifting up of our minds and hearts to God, and does not have to be done in unoccupied moments or on our knees or in dignified surroundings.

So how can we be sure to do it right?

One lady told me that she prays five rosaries every day and another woman showed me a stack of work prayer cards from which she read prayers every day. Can we pray too much? Actually, a better question would be, how many and what kind of prayers would we say well and without neglecting our duties? A housewife and mother, for example, must not neglect the children for the sake of more time to pray.

One way to solve such a prayer problem is to offer our whole day to God in the morning by what is commonly called a “Morning Offering”, such as “Lord, I offer you everything I do today for...” and then mention the things for which you especially want to pray.

Another way many devout persons find useful is to light a candle. On a birthday cake the candles say, “Happy birthday, may you have many more.” In a religious setting, a burning candle says, “Lord, as I go my way, my candle stands in my place, as a symbol of my prayer.”

Or let’s take another example...every now and then, when I come down to the chapel at night, I see an elderly man silently sitting in one of the pews. He does not seem to be saying or doing anything; there is a form of wordless prayer known as contemplative prayer, which consists in simply being in God’s presence-waiting and listening, enjoying God’s company.

Finally, we should put in a word for the Novena, a nine day prayer. Keeping up a prayer for some special favor for nine days is well in keeping with the teaching of the Scriptures to be persistent, and not give up if the answer is delayed. Give it a try sometime. Make up a novena prayer in your own words you are like.

In conclusion, we need to bear in mind what Jesus told Peter when (Jesus) caught him by the hand. He said, “How little faith you have!” “Why did you falter?” Whenever you pray, believe that you are being heard, expect an answer. St. Augustine’s mother prayed for twenty years for his conversion. If receiving an answer to your prayer takes a while, keep trying.

Lord Jesus, thank you for rescuing Peter and showing us the need to believe.

Help us to pray day in and day out in good times and in bad.

Grant that by praying well and not giving up, we may be granted everything we need.

Amen.

Pregnancy Center Receives New Sign

When Hurricane Harvey came to Victoria in August 2017, it destroyed the Crisis Pregnancy Center (CPC) sign.

During an informational visit to the Center in June of this year by members of Weimar Knights of Columbus, they learned about the sign and decided to build and install a new sign at no cost to the CPC.

The day the sign was installed, a pregnant woman contemplating having an abortion, saw the sign and visited the center. After talking with center members and having an ultrasound, she decided to keep the baby, thus proving miracles do happen.

Pictured blessing the sign is Bishop Brendan Cahill with Weimar KC member Martin Luchak; Weimar CDA member Mary Luchak; CPC clinic personnel: Pat Coffey and Connie Strauss; and Weimar KC members: David Wanjura and Frank Janacek.

Put your Faith in Us!

Open House
Tues., Jan. 22
6:30 PM
For prospective students and parents
PK3 – 8th grade
206 W. Convent
361.573.6651
Sunday Readings from January 6 - February 10

January 6 ~ The Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13
Ephesians 3:2-3A, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

January 13 ~ The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalms 29:1-2, 3-4, 3-9-10
Acts 10:34-38

January 20 ~ Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalms 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10
1 Corinthians 12:4-11
John 2:1-11

Christmas
For daily and Sunday readings, as well as a daily reflection video, visit www.usccb.org/bible/readings.
Brought to you by: Catholic Communications Campaign

Join Texas Bishops, other Catholics at the Capitol

Join the Texas bishops and thousands of Catholics at the Texas State Capitol for Texas Catholic Advocacy Day, Tuesday, March 26, 2019. This bi-annual rally is hosted by the Texas bishops to promote the Church’s values of Life, Justice, Charity, and Religious Freedom to members of the Texas Legislature. The Diocese of Victoria will take a one-day trip to Austin. If interested in participating visit: https://www.victoriadiocese.org/advocacy-day.

Benefit Dinner for Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

Sunday, January 20, 2019
CWV Hall – 1007 S. Main Street
Victoria, TX 77901

Brisket and Sausage with Trimmings
$10.00/plate serving 10am – 2pm

Pope Francis Names Auxiliary Bishop to Lead Diocese of Monterey

WASHINGTON—Pope Francis has named the auxiliary bishop of Austin, the Most Reverend Daniel E. Garcia, as the new Bishop of Monterey.

The appointment was publicized in Washington on Tuesday, November 27, 2018, by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States.

Bishop Garcia was born August 30, 1960 in Cameron, Texas. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Saint Mary’s Seminary at the University of St. Thomas in 1984. He completed his Master of Divinity studies at Saint Mary’s in 1988. In 2007, he earned a Master of Arts in Liturgical Studies from the Saint John’s School of Theology.

He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Austin on May 28, 1988. Since then, he has served at the parishes of St. Catherine of Siena, Cristo Rey, St. Louis, and St. Vincent de Paul, all in Austin. He also served three years in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston at St. Mary Magdalene Parish in Humble, Texas. In the Diocese of Austin, he has served as a dean and as a member of the Priests’ Personnel Board, the College of Consultants, and the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, as well as a member and chairman of the Presbytery Council.

On January 21, 2015, Pope Francis appointed him as Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Austin, the first auxiliary bishop in the history of the diocese, as well as Titular Bishop of Capsus. He was ordained a bishop on March 3, 2015.

Bishop Garcia currently serves as Chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee on Worship in Spanish. He is a member of the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship and the USCCB Committee on Communications.

Bishop Daniel Garcia has been named bishop following the death of Bishop Richard Garcia of Monterey on July 11, 2018, due to complications of Alzheimer’s disease. He was diagnosed with the disease in April 2018.

The Diocese of Monterey is comprised of 21,916 square miles in California with a total Catholic population of 209,650.
La Diócesis de Victoria da la Bienvenida a Nuevo Seminarista

El Obispo Brendan Cahill, de la Diócesis de Victoria, estuvo en la Iglesia Católica Queen of the Holy Rosary, en Hostyn, el domingo 16 de diciembre de 2018 en la Misa de las 8 de la mañana. Recibió a Richard Barfield en plena comunión con la Iglesia Católica Romana. El Obispo Cahill lo aceptó como el más nuevo seminarista de la Diócesis de Victoria. Barfield es un ministro ordenado en la Iglesia del Nazareno, USA, y sirvió como Capellán en el Ejército de los Estados Unidos por 17 años. El está casado y ha sentido la llamada del Nazareno, USA, y sirvió como Capellán en la Diócesis de Victoria desde 2012.

El Obispo Cahill dijo, “Recibí el permiso de la Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe en Roma para recibir a Richard Barfield como seminarista, en septiembre. En su respuesta, me ordenaron que requiriera al menos un período de tres años de formación para Richard. Él y su familia vivirán en Hostyn y durante este período de formación para Richard. Él y su familia vivirán en Hostyn y el asistirán al padre Daniel Kahlich, pastor de Holy Rosary, mientras asistiendo al Seminario de St. Mary’s, en Houston.”

Los sacerdotes casados son raros en la Iglesia Católica Romana, pero hay una dis

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El Papa Nombra al Obispo Auxiliar de Austin como el Nuevo Obispo de Monterey

WASHINGTON — El Papa Francisco nombró al Obispo Auxiliar de Austin, TX, el Reverendísimo Daniel E. García, como el nuevo Obispo de Monterey, CA.

El nombramiento fue publicado en Washington hoy martes 27 de noviembre de 2018 por el Arzobispo Christophe Pierre, Nuncio Apostólico en los Estados Unidos.


El Reverendísimo García fue ordenado sacerdote para la Diócesis de Austin el 28 de mayo de 1988. Desde entonces, ha servido en las parroquias de St. Catherine de Siena, Cristo Rey, St. Louis y St. Vincent de Paul, todas en Austin. También sirvió tres años en la Arquidiócesis de Galveston-Houston en la parroquia St. Mary Magdalene en Humble, Texas. En la Diócesis de Austin, se ha desempeñado como decano y miembro de la Junta de Personal de los Sacerdotes, el Colegio de Consultores y la Comisión Litúrgica Diocesana, así como miembro y presidente del Consejo Presbiteral.

El 21 de enero de 2015, el Papa Francisco lo nombró Obispo Auxiliar de la Diócesis de Austin, el primer obispo auxiliar en la historia de esa diócesis, así como Obispo Titular de Capsus. Fue ordenado obispo el 3 de marzo de 2015.

El Obispo García se desempeña actualmente como Presidente del Subcomité de Adoración en Español de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB). También es miembro del Comité de Divina Adoración; del Comité de Comunicaciones.

El Obispo Daniel García ha sido nombrado Obispo de la Diócesis de Monterey luego de la muerte del obispo Richard García el 11 de julio de 2018, debido a complicaciones de la enfermedad de Alzheimer con la que había sido diagnosticado el pasado abril.

La Diócesis de Monterey abarca 21.916 millas cuadradas en California, con una población de 209,650 Católicos.

Reporting Procedures for Suspected or Known Sexual Abuse of a Minor (person under 18 years of age) or Vulnerable Adult by a Member of the Clergy

Contact:
• The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, within 48 hours, at (800) 252-5400, www.txabusehotline.org, or local police department. If person is in immediate danger call 911.
• Vicki Pyatt, LMSW, Coordinator of Pastoral Care and Outreach, Diocese of Victoria, (361) 827-7186, pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org.
• Bishop or Chancellor of the Diocese of Victoria, (361) 573-0828.
Written allegations can be mailed to Office of the Bishop, P.O. Box 4070, Victoria, TX 77903 marked “Personal and Confidential”.

If sexual abuse by a member of clergy has occurred in another diocese, the Diocese of Victoria will help bring your concerns to church officials.

For assistance contact Vicki Pyatt at (361) 827-7186 or pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org.
A Sister’s Journey ~ Answering the Call to Religious Life

Continued from pg. 1

Formation-The Novitiate

The Novitiate is supposedly the hardest step in the whole formation process. It was hard for me too, but maybe not for the same reason that it was for others. Before I entered into the Novitiate, my maternal grandmother passed away. That was a hard blow because she lived with us my whole life and she was the first big loss I felt. This experience is why I can’t watch the Disney movie, Coco, without crying like a baby.

Before the Novitiate, we were to take a week-long silent retreat. Right before the retreat, my mom was put in the hospital. She needed a liver transplant, and here I was about to enter into my Canonical year. I have never been so torn in my life. Should I put my formation on hold and stay home to take care of my mom, or should I enter the Novitiate??

I remember crying that day as I drove to the house, and I prayed asking Jesus for help. I heard Him clearly say, “Chayo, why haven’t you come to me yet?” (Chayo is what my friends and family call me – that’s why some people call me Sister Chayo.)

I knew then, that I wasn’t happy because I wasn’t where I was supposed to be. I had dropped the Sisters like a hot potato; would they even consider having me back? Luckily, I had a friend in formation, who talked to them about me. I approached Sr. Mildred Truchard, the Director of Vocations at IWBS, like a child ready to be scolded, but she didn’t scold me. She just asked me if I was sure. I asked if they would consider me because I was not the same person I was six years ago. The Sisters welcomed me back.

Spiritual Direction

Once I got into formation, the IWBS community recommended that I find a spiritual director, who was not in the same community. I didn’t really know if I wanted a spiritual director, but Father Paul, an 84 year-old Oblate, from Santa, Texas, was recommended to me. I remembered the first time I sat with him. He did most of the talking, because I just sat there looking at him. Before I left, he said, “I hope you come again, but it won’t hurt my feelings if you don’t. We have to connect and I know that not everybody will like me, and I am okay with that.” I went back and we became friends.

I invited him to my First Profession but told him he didn’t have to come, because it was a long drive. He came and I was so happy. When I went to see him again, we had a great session and I went to hug him goodbye. I told him that I didn’t think I’d see him until the New Year, and he said he’d see me in December. Somewhere I knew I wasn’t going to see him. He died in November.

At the time of his death, I was already working at the chancery. I asked Bishop Cahill if I could go to his funeral, which he agreed to right away. Ever since my mom’s death, I can’t hold back tears like I used to. I cried the whole funeral. If it’s true that God gives his toughest battles to His strongest soldiers, then, He must have confused me with Rambo! I wanted to do something special for Father Paul, so I called the cathedral and scheduled a Mass to be said for him. Since I go to daily Mass, I told them to give me the next available date.

It was highly recommended to me by my formation director, that I find a new spiritual director. So, Father Gary Janak recommended someone to me. I was still hesitant because I just didn’t want to do it. I was dissuaded from seeing this person because some people thought he wouldn’t know anything about religious community life or I wouldn’t like him. That’s probably what made me decide to call and make an appointment with him. I thought, the Lord was determined that I continue, and so I entered in 2015.

My mom died during my Novitiate. That was really the most pain I have ever felt in my life. I was so mad. He had told me to trust Him and this happened! I was so broken, but no one could tell because I wore a poker face in front of others. Very few people knew how close I was to leaving religious life that year.

I lost my grandma and my mom one year apart and my paternal grandma in Mexico the month after I made my First Profession. I felt like I just couldn’t recover. It seemed like every time I was getting out of the dark cave, someone else I loved died.

I did have someone who tried to help me through and that was my spiritual director, Father Paul.

Inter-Community

One thing that I have really enjoyed about my formation is the people that I have gotten to know. As a sister, we make friends and form relationships with a lot of people. I have friends in all parts of the diocese that I would never have met had I not become a Sister. Little do people know that I’m a very introverted person. People are surprised to hear that, because I do stretch myself out to be there for others, but most of the time I like to be by myself.

During the Canonical year I couldn’t leave the convent, unless to attend intercommunity formation conferences. Part of our formation is to take classes with different people, who are in the same step of formation. Knowing people who are in formation is very important. There are times that we need to talk to someone who is going through the same things we are going through. These friends helped me during the time I was thinking about leaving formation. Some of us have been together since we started formation. Others have come and gone, but we still keep in touch. I think we have all learned lessons from our time in...
**Pilgrimages**

Victoria—Single Catholic women 18 to 40 years of age are invited to come meet nuns (Sisters) and examine their call to make Jesus, the Incarnate Word, known and loved. Explore your own call to follow Jesus through marriage, single state, or religious life on January 19-20, at Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria. For more information, call (361) 575-7111, email iwbvsvco@yahoo.com, or visit www.iwbvsvictoria.org. The next “Come and See” weekend will be April 27-28.

Victoria–Our Lady of Victory School Open House Tuesday, January 15. See ad on pg. 6.

Victoria–Nazareth Academy Open House Tuesday, January 22. See ad on pg. 11.

Victoria—St. Joseph High School Open House for prospective students and families Sunday, January 27 at 2:00 p.m. in the STJ Flyer Dome. Experience STJ with a campus tour. For more information visit stjvictoria.org/admissions.

Edna—St. Agnes will sponsor a “Celebration of Life” program for all denominations, youth, parents, ministers, and the general public of Jackson and surrounding counties on Wednesday, January 30, 2019. It will be held at the Jackson County Services Building Auditorium (411 N. Wells St.) from 7:00-8:00 p.m. The program will show the need to safeguard the dignity and sanctity of every human person, the need for respect and justice for the unborn and all life, and the value of faith in today’s families. Refreshments will be served and admission is free. For more information, call (361) 782-2933.

**ACTS Retreats**—Anyone needing any information regarding ACTS Retreats in the diocese should email dovacstc@victoriaraciodeo.org.

**Holy Land Pilgrimage** with Very Rev. Charles Otsiwah, pastor of Immaculate Conception, Goliad. Walk the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ on April 22. See ad on pg. 7.

**Catholic Family Life Ministers**—To find Catholic organizations which focus on family, visit the Catholic Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers at www.naclfml.org.

Catholic Family Services—Ministers to persons with same-sex attractions and their loved ones. The ministry also has an outreach, EnCourage, which ministers to relatives, spouses, and friends of persons with same-sex attractions. It is a Roman Catholic Apostolate endorsed by the Pontifical Council for the Family. For more information, visit www.couragernet.net.

**Crisis Pregnancy Center of Victoria**—An organization staffed by volunteers that offers help to girls and women who find themselves in a difficult situation due to an unplanned pregnancy. Office located at 1501 E. Red River, is open 1:00-4:00 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. A free pregnancy test is offered and medical referrals are made for prenatal care. They are a sister organization to the Gabriel Project. New volunteers are welcome. For more information call (361) 575-6171.

**Emmanuel Center**—Offers individual, couple, family, adolescent and children’s counseling as well as specialized support groups. Spiritual direction is also available upon request. Appointments may be made by calling (361) 212-0830. For more information see pg. 3.

**Engaged Encounter**—2019 Dates: Jan. 25-27, April 5-7, May 31-June 2, Sept. 20-22, and Nov. 15-17, registrations are on a first come, first serve basis. Fee must accompany registration form. For more information, call (361) 573-0828 or visit www.victoriaraciodeo.org.

**Gabriel Project**—Helps women experiencing a crisis pregnancy- an alternative to abortion. Victoria: Meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at 101 W. Convent. Light supper included. For angel workshop/training dates, contact Lisa Kainer (361) 676-3264 or lisa_hesquierdo@yahoo.com; Meyersville: Sts. Peter and Paul, meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. (during the school year) at 11220 FM 237 (77974), the coordinators for DeWitt Chapter are Wayne and Margie Smith (361) 564-3742; Lavaca County: Meets 6:00 p.m. (during the school year), contact Julie Kubena Lavaca County Coordinator at (361) 798-3579 for dates and location. See ad on pg. 6.

**Grief Ministry**—An on-going Grief Group meets at Holy Family Church, Victoria in the Conference Room, 7:00 p.m., on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month. Adults who have experienced the death of a loved one, may attend (after three months have passed). Please call Sharon at (361) 578-7572 before attending.

**i.d.9:16 Ministry**—For adults in their 20s-30s, single or married. Held at Holy Family in Victoria every first Thursday of the month. Starts with the 6:00 p.m. daily Mass, dinner, a talk live streamed from the headquarters in Michigan followed by fellowship. Childcare is available to those who RSVP. It is open to all young adults of the diocese. For more information or to RSVP for events, email id916victoria@gmail.com.

**Incarnate Word Prayer Group**—Praise and worship on Mondays 7:30-9:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Incarnate Word Convent, 1101 N.E. Water Street. For more information, contact Sr. Louise Marie Jones at (361) 575-7111 or amormeuss@yahoo.com.

**Mothers of Grace**—A new mothers’ group at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory. For more information contact Jennifer Ruiz at jenniferfchobey.ruiz@yahoo.com.

**Natural Family Planning—NFP** is the only church-approved form of family planning. For the CREIGHTON MODEL Fertility Care System (CrMS) featuring NaPro TECHNOLOGY™ contact Susanne Koch in Wharton at (505) 710-0903 or susannekoch614@gmail.com.

**Raphael’s Refuge—RR’s** mission is to build and maintain a memorial in honor of babies, born and unborn. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Flatonia. Peer counseling and spiritual direction are available for those suffering a loss of a baby due to miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death, or abortion. For more information, contact Midge Elam at (361) 865-3021, (361) 258-1514, or visit www.raphaelsrefuge.org.

**Retrouvaille—Retrovaille**, meaning rediscovery, is a marriage-healing ministry offered in the diocese to couples in difficult marriages. Contact John and Jennifer Vincent at jbjov@sbcglobal.net or (361) 580-2770; call (800) 470-2230; or visit www.helpourmarriage.org or www.retrouvaille.org.

**Meals • Picnics and More**

Victoria—Benefit dinner for Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Jan. 20, at CWV Hall. Serving brisket and sausage dinner at $10 p/p from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. See ad on pg. 12.

East Bernard—Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court St. Bernadette #1108, Chicken Noodle Soup and Sandwich Supper, Raffle, and Silent Auction, Wednesday, Jan. 30, American Legion Hall. Starting at 5:00 p.m. till sold out. Soup is $3 a bowl and a chicken salad sandwich is $3. Eat in or bring your own containers and enjoy at home.

Victoria—Candlelight March will be on Thursday, Jan. 24. They will gather at 6:30 p.m. at DeLeon Plaza and march at 7:00 p.m. to Our Lady of Sorrows, where the featured speaker will be Brooke Jemelka, M.D., FACOG.

**February**

Hallettsville—Sacred Heart Extravaganza, Feb. 2. For ticket information call (361) 798-5888 or (361) 798-4251. See ad on pg. 9.

Victoria—St. Mary Parish Festival, Feb. 10, at the Community Center. A roast beef dinner will be served. For more information see ad on pg. 8.

Victoria—John Michael Talbot in a parish mission concert Feb. 21, 7:00 p.m. at the Cathedral Center, 3102 N. Laurent. For more information see ad on pg. 7.
A Sister’s Journey ~ Answering the Call to Religious Life

Continued from pg. 14

formation that will guide us throughout our lives. What I’m trying to say is if you are looking at religious life, but think you might be alone, you won’t be-plus we have a lot of fun!

God Provides

It may sound cliché but God really does take care of those who trust in Him. The scariest time is right before you start something new. We don’t know what to expect and the unknown does look a bit scary, but once it becomes known, we wonder what we were so scared of to begin with.

During the Apostolic year, the novice is required to have a ministry to learn community life and balance between ministry and prayer. The Sisters and I were a bit concerned, because we needed to have something lined up for me and didn’t. Then, the position for the bishop’s secretary became available. The Sisters told me to apply, so I sent in my resume fully expecting not to get hired. I’ve worked in several different offices including being a manager at The Bay City Tribune. I was knowledgeable when it came to office work, but I had never been a secretary. Besides, it seemed unheard of that a novice could be the bishop’s secretary!

I was surprised when I got called for an interview. I was even more surprised when I got called in for a second interview. That interview was with the bishop and it was held two days after I buried my mom. It was by the grace of God that I kept myself composed two days after I buried my mom. It was by the grace of God that I kept myself composed. The bishop’s secretary became available. The position for me to start. I remember that he just looked at me and said, “I just want to make one thing clear, I love you and all the Sisters, but I did not hire you because you’re a Sister. I hired you because of your skills, and what you had on your resume.” I wanted to ask him if someone told him to tell me that. Nobody knew how I was feeling because of what others were telling me. So yes someone told him, Jesus did!

Promoting Vocations

Even though I felt the call early on, it’s easy to ignore it if we don’t know anything about it. I remember sitting at Mass as a young girl hearing the priest only talk about the need for boys to enter the seminary and for the congregation to pray for priests, but he never mentioned sisters and/or nuns. Being a child, I thought to myself, “There must be no need for women to enter religious life. I guess there are enough women serving the church, because they never talk about the need for women religious.” I believe with all my heart that we need men to discern the priesthood, I also believe it’s not a competition where only one or the other vocation needs to be promoted. I honestly believe is that God is still calling women just like He still calls men.

Before I entered into formation with the IWBS sisters I was asked to visit at least three other religious communities to see other charisms and ministries. I was so sure that I’d be staying at one of the Carmelite groups but that was not the case. I couldn’t understand why I kept getting drawn back to IWBS, then at one of the Come and See gatherings, they explained how their habit centered around the Passion of Christ. The maroon symbolized the blood He spilled, the white is His innocence and purity and the navy blue symbolizes the bruises He received. I knew then God was calling me to IWBS. It all made sense now. I could see why the movie The Passion of the Christ had been such a turning point.

I am now in my second year of Temporary Vows. I will make Final Profession in 2022 “Si Dios Quiere” (If God wills it), like my grandma would always say.

Come and See

Anyone who has been in formation for religious life or the priesthood will tell you that they learned much about themselves during that time and it wasn’t time wasted. We make friends for life. We learn about ourselves. We form a relationship with the Lord. It’s beautiful.

If you’re a woman and you feel that tug in your heart when you hear about religious vocations, don’t wait for an invitation from a person, because that’s Jesus calling you. If you are a parent encourage your daughters to look at religious life. If you are a teacher in school or CCD encourage the students to open their minds to the possibility of religious life.

IWBS Convent always welcomes curious visitors. If you’re thinking about it, attend one of the Come and See events. One thing I know for sure, though it may not be easy, there really is nothing more beautiful than living for the Lord. Don’t keep Jesus waiting.

FORMATION STEPS OF AN IWBS SISTER

• Affiliate - Wear regular clothes, live at home or a mission house. Meet with a sister once a month, read prayer books and other information books, documents. Term is six months to two years.

• Postulant - Move into the convent, follow the schedule of the house, but may still have outside job, car, and pay bills from former life. Term is six months to two years.

• Novice - Term is two years. Fully living in the house and wearing habit with white veil. First year: canonical year, cannot leave the property. Study the history of religious order, theology, learn prayers and service in the house. Second year is Apostolic Year - learn how to live with another community at a mission house and balance prayer and ministry. Can leave the property freely.

• Temporary Professed - Temporary vows, (vows are of obedience, chastity and poverty) white veil to black veil, if the sister chooses to wear a veil at all. She may not. Renew vows for five years.

• Perpetual Profession - Profess vows for life, that’s when sisters are given a wedding band.