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Discerning the call to marriage

Every Christian has a vocation. Your vocation is your calling in life. All of us are called to bring the world to Christ, and to bring Christ to the world. Each one of us has a particular way to share that task, according to our own personality, talents, and history.

St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.”

One of the most precious gifts that God has given to his human race is the sacrament of marriage. Marriage is a sacred vocation—a calling from God to live with heroic holiness and sacrificial love.

When two baptized Christians marry validly, it is a sacrament. It is one of the seven sacred signs through which God communicates his love to us. In many places in the Scriptures, marriage appears as an expression of the relationship between God and human beings. The Old Testament prophets describe the relationship between God and Israel as a marriage. St. Paul, in the fifth chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, describes marriage as mirroring the union between Christ and his church. For those who have never been married, they should consider the tremendous privilege of sharing in this sacred vocation.

When Catholics are living in a civil marriage that is not sacramental, they should prayerfully discern whether to seek convalidation of their civil marriage by getting it blessed through the church. They can speak with their local priest or deacon about this process.

As a sacrament, marriage helps people to learn something about God. A sacramental marriage is called to be an icon of the love of God. An icon is a type of religious painting. It shows us something about God. A sacramental marriage is called to be an icon of the love of God. In a healthy sacramental marriage, the way the husband and wife love one another is a holy icon showing the world how God loves the human race.

How does God love the human race? With a love that is permanent, forgiving, life-giving, and self-sacrificing. Let’s explore those qualities of God’s love:

**Permanent**

St. Paul says, “Love does not come to an end” (1 Cor 13:8). The permanence of married love is symbolized by the wedding rings. If we trace the line of a ring, it goes on and on in an endless line. When we look at someone’s wedding ring, we should remember the permanent nature of married love. When we encounter a couple committed to one another for life, that reminds us of the fact that God’s love for humanity is a permanent love.

**Forgiving**

Unfortunately, we tend to hurt most deeply the ones with whom we are closest. Marriage and family life sometimes involve hurt. In a sacramental marriage between baptized Christians, Jesus Christ gives them the grace they need to be able to forgive one another even when they don’t feel like forgiving, to heal after being hurt, and to bear patiently with one another’s burdens. When the world sees the active forgiveness at work in a sacramental marriage, it helps to show that God’s love is a forgiving love.

**Life-giving**

God’s love leads him to create living things. In the love of a husband and wife, they share in the life-giving action of God by bringing new life into existence. Welcoming children in a marriage demonstrates that God expresses his love for his creatures by giving new life.

**Self-sacrificing**

Jesus Christ has revealed to the world a special form of love that is captured by the Greek word agape. This is a self-sacrificial kind of love that pours itself out for the good of others. The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is the ultimate expression of agape love. When a husband or wife freely accepts inconvenience and sacrifice for the sake of the other, they help the world to see the nature of God’s agape love.

As Christian spouses in a sacramental marriage, the love between husband and wife is called to be a reflection for all of us to see, so that we can catch a glimpse of what the love of God is all about. They are to let the love of God shine into the world through their love.

**A school of love**

No one is born knowing all there is to know about love. Learning to love is a lifelong process. Marriage is a school of love. God gives the vocation of marriage as a laboratory for learning how to love. Living out the vocation of marriage is not a matter of putting things on autopilot. It takes lots of hard work, constant communication, a daily decision to love, and lots of God’s grace.

**The decision to marry**

No couple is 100 percent compatible or perfect for each other. At some point you choose to commit to this one person. The decision to marry is a decision to love. It’s not magic. It’s hard work. Each day, you wake up and say again, “Today I decide to love my spouse.”

The decision to marry is not merely a matter of feelings. Feelings do not make decisions. The decision to marry is based on a free act of the will that says, “This marriage is going to last because we intend to make it permanent and forever.” Not everyone is called to the vocation of marriage. It takes prayerful discernment and careful preparation.

**Questions to ask before engagement**

For those who are seriously dating and are wondering whether or not their current relationship ought to lead to marriage, there are some important things to ponder even before deciding to get engaged. For the sake of simplicity, I write them here from the perspective of the woman, but they could just as easily be written from the perspective of the man. Here are some questions to ask before getting engaged:

1. Is he my good friend? Can I freely share with him my personal thoughts and feelings?
2. Does he show by word and action that he respects me?
3. Does he tell me the truth?
4. How well does he communicate his feelings? How does he deal with conflict and anger? Is he able to ask for forgiveness?
5. Does he have any active addictions (alcohol, drugs, work, etc.)? Do I mistakenly think that I can change or fix him?
6. What were the patterns of life in his family of origin? How different was that from my own?
7. Does he intend marriage to be permanent or just temporary? Has he demonstrated an ability to remain committed to jobs, projects and people? What does he think is a good reason for divorce?
8. Does he intend to be faithful in marriage? Does he have enough self-discipline to be capable of maintaining fidelity?
9. How many children does he want to have? When would he like to begin having children? Do our expectations in regard to family planning coincide? How does he talk about children in general?
10. What is his religion? What are his expectations about religious practice and involvement in a local congregation? If our religious affiliations are different, does he expect to convert me to his faith? Do I expect to convert him to mine? How important is my faith to me?
11. What does he expect in the religious upbringing of children? Will he give good example to the children in matters of faith, manners and morals?
12. Can we as a couple pray together in ways that we both find meaningful?
13. What are our career expectations? Whom does he consider to be responsible for earning a living—just the husband, or both husband and wife?
14. Whom does he consider to be responsible for taking care of the house and the children—just the wife, or both husband and wife?
15. What are his attitudes about money, saving and spending? How did his parents handle money?
16. Does he intend on regularly paying his bills, obeying the law and living as a responsible citizen?
17. Can he rejoice in my successes, or does he compete with me for attention?
18. What are his attitudes about work, leisure time, and socializing?
19. Where does he want to live? Would I want to live there?
20. If we were to get married and later experience difficulties, would he be willing to go see a marriage counselor?

Taking the step from dating to engagement is an extremely important decision. It takes plenty of time, prayer and careful scrutiny. Asking questions like those above will be very helpful in choosing well for a healthy marriage.

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**Priest assignments**

For the benefit of the people of God, the Diocese of San Angelo announces the following changes of assignment for priests, effective July 1, 2021:

- Rev. Joe Barbieri as parochial administrator of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Odessa
- Rev. Josh Gray as parochial administrator of St. Margaret, San Angelo, and St. Therese, Carlbad
- Rev. Lorenzo Hatch as rector of Sacred Heart Cathedral
- Deacon Kevin Lenius as parochial vicar of St. Stephen, Midland
- Rev. Balachandra Nagipogu as parochial administrator of St. Margaret, Big Lake, St. Francis of Assisi, Iraan, and St. Thomas, Rankin
- Rev. Msgr. Fred Nawarskas will retire from his position as pastor at Holy Family, Abilene
- Rev. Francis Njoku as pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fort Stockton, St. James, San derson
- Rev. Reginald Odima as parochial vicar of Holy Angels, San Angelo
- Rev. Freddy Perez as parochial vicar of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland
- Very Rev. Santiago Udayar as pastor of Holy Family, Abilene, in addition to his continued duties as vicar general of the diocese
- Rev. Mark Woodruff will retire from his position as pastor at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Odessa
Discernir la llamada al matrimonio

Obispo Michael J. Sis
Diócesis de San Ángelo

Todo cristiano tiene una vocación. Tu vocación es tu llamada en la vida. Todos estamos llamados a llevar el mundo a Cristo y a traer a Cristo al mundo. Cada uno de nosotros tiene una forma particular de participar en esa tarea, de acuerdo con nuestra propia personalidad, talentos, e historia.

San Pablo dice en 1 Corintios 12:4-7, “Hay diferentes dones espirituales, pero el Espíritu es el mismo. Hay diversos ministerios, pero el Señor es el mismo. Hay diversidad de obras, pero es el mismo Dios quien obra todo en todos. En cada uno el Espíritu revela su presencia con un don que es también un servicio.”

Uno de los dones más preciosos que Dios le ha dado a la raza humana es el sacramento del matrimonio. El matrimonio es una vocación sagrada, una llamada de Dios a vivir con santidad heroica y amor sacrificatorio.

Cuando dos cristianos bautizados se casan válidamente, es un sacramento. Es uno de los siete signos sagrados a través de los cuales Dios nos comunica su amor. En muchos lugares de las Escrituras, el matrimonio aparece como una expresión de la relación entre Dios y los seres humanos. Los profetas del Antiguo Testamento describen la relación entre Dios e Israel como un matrimonio. San Pablo, en el quinto capítulo de su carta a los Efesios, describe el matrimonio como un reflejo de la unión entre Cristo y su iglesia. Para aquellos que nunca se han casado, deben considerar el tremendo privilegio de compartir esta sagrada vocación.

Cuando los católicos viven en un matrimonio civil, no es un sacrament. Deben discernir en oración y comunicación con la iglesia. Pueden hablar con su párroco o diácono local sobre el matrimonio si van a buscar la convalidación de su matrimonio civil obteniendo la bendición de la iglesia.

Discernir la llamada al matrimonio requiere discernimiento en oración y una preparación extenuante. Se necesita dar el paso del cortejo al compromiso. No todo el mundo va a durar porque tenemos la intención de hacerlo permanente. Cada día, te despiertas y vuelves a decir: “Hoy decido amar a mi cónyuge.”

Si alguien pregunta si su relación actual debería conducir al matrimonio o no, hay algunas cosas importantes que considerar incluso antes de decidir comprometerse. Por el bien de la simplicidad, las escribir aquí desde la perspectiva de la mujer, pero podrían escribirse fácilmente desde la perspectiva del hombre. Aquí hay algunas preguntas que deben hacerse antes de comprometerse:

1. ¿Es mi buen amigo? ¿Puedo compartir libremente con él mis pensamientos y sentimientos personales?
2. ¿Demuesra con palabras y acciones que me respeta?
3. ¿Me dice la verdad?
4. ¿Qué tan bien comunican sus sentimientos?
5. ¿Tenía alguna adicción activa (alcohol, drogas, trabajo, etc.)? ¿Pienso erróneamente que puedo cambiarlo o arregarlo?
6. ¿Cuáles fueron los patrones de vida en su familia de origen? ¿Qué tan diferente fue eso del mío?
7. ¿Tiene la intención de que el matrimonio sea permanente o solo temporal? ¿Ha demostrado capacidad para mantenerse comprometido con los trabajjos, los proyectos, y las personas? ¿Qué cree que sería una buena razón para divorciarse?
8. ¿Tiene intención de ser fiel en el matrimonio? ¿Tiene suficiente autodisciplina para ser capaz de mantener la fidelidad?
9. ¿Cuántos hijos quiere tener? ¿Cuánto le gustaría comenzar a tener hijos? ¿Coinciden nuestras expectativas con respecto a la planificación familiar? ¿Cómo habla de los niños en general?
10. ¿Cuál es su religión? ¿Cuáles son sus expectativas sobre la práctica religiosa y la participación en una congregación local? Si nuestras afiliaciones religiosas son diferentes, ¿espera él convertirme a su fe? ¿Espero convertirme al mío? ¿Qué tan importante es mi fe para mí?
11. ¿Qué espera de la educación religiosa de los niños? ¿Daré buen ejemplo a los niños en materia de fe, modales, y morales?
12. ¿Podemos, como pareja, orar juntos de una manera que ambos encontremos significativa?
13. ¿Cuáles son nuestras expectativas de carreras profesionales? ¿Quién, en la pareja, debe ser el responsable de ganarse la vida – solo el esposo, o ambos, esposo y esposa?
14. ¿Quién considera responsable del cuidado de la casa y de los hijos – solo la esposa, o ambos, marido y mujer?
15. ¿Cuáles son sus actitudes sobre el dinero, el ahorro, y el gasto? ¿Cómo manejan sus patrones de vida?
16. ¿Tiene la intención de pagar sus cuentas con regularidad, obedecer la ley, y vivir como un ciudadano responsable?
17. ¿Puede alegarse de mis éxitos, o compite conmigo por la atención?
18. ¿Cuáles son sus actitudes sobre el trabajo, el tiempo libre, y la socialización?
19. ¿Dónde quiere vivir? ¿Quería yo vivir allí?
20. Si nos casáramos y luego tuviéramos dificultades, ¿estarías dispuesto él a ir a ver a un consejero matrimonial?

Dar el paso del cortejo al compromiso es una decisión extremadamente importante. Se necesita mucho tiempo, oración, y un escrutinio cuidadoso. Hacer preguntas como las anteriores será muy útil para elegir bien para un matrimonio saludable.

Vivificante

El amor de Dios lo lleva a crear seres vivos. En el amor de un esposo y una esposa, comparten la acción vivificante de Dios al traer nueva vida a la existencia. Dar la bienvenida a los hijos en el matrimonio demuestra que Dios expresa su amor por sus criaturas dando nueva vida.

Dios nos muestra algo sobre Dios. En un matrimonio sacralizado, la forma en que el amor de Dios es el sacramento del matrimonio. Cuando un esposo o esposa acepta libremente la inconveniencia y el sacrificio por el bien del otro, esto ayuda al mundo a ver la naturaleza del amor ágape de Dios.

Un matrimonio es un reflejo para que todos lo veamos, de modo que podamos echar un vistazo de qué se trata el amor de Dios. Deben dejar que el amor de Dios brille en el mundo a través de su amor.

Una escuela de amor

Nadie nace sabiendo todo lo que hay que saber sobre el amor. Aprender a amar es un proceso que dura toda la vida. El matrimonio es una escuela de amor. Dios da la vocación del matrimonio como laboratorio para aprender a amar. Vivir la vocación del matrimonio no es cuestión de poner las cosas en piloto automático. Se necesita mucho trabajo duro, comunicación constante, y una decisión diaria de amar, y mucha gracia de Dios.

La decisión de casarse

Ninguna pareja es 100% compatible o perfecta el uno para el otro. En algún momento, elige comprometerse con esta persona. La decisión de casarse es una decisión de amor. No es magia. Es un trabajo duro. Cada día, te despiertas y vuelves a decir: “Hoy he decidido amar a mi cónyuge.”

La decisión de casarse no es simplemente una cuestión de sentimientos. Los sentimientos no toman decisiones. La decisión de casarse se basa en un acto libre de la voluntad que dice: “Este matrimonio va a durar porque tenemos la intención de hacerlo permanente y para siempre.” No todo el mundo está llamado a la vocación del matrimonio. Requiere discernimiento en oración y una preparación cuidadosa.

Preguntas de hacerse antes del compromiso

Para aquellos que están en un cortejo serio y se preguntan si su relación actual debería conducir al matrimonio o no, hay algunas cosas importantes que considerar incluso antes de decidir comprometerse. Por el bien de la simplicidad, las escribir aquí desde la perspectiva de la mujer, pero podrían escribirse fácilmente desde la perspectiva del hombre. Aquí hay algunas preguntas que deben hacerse antes de comprometerse:

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May 2021

1 HOUSTON, Knights of Columbus State Convention
2 OLNEY, St. Boniface, Confirmation Mass at 11:00 a.m.
3 SAN ANGELO, Virtual Diocesan Awards event at 6:00 p.m.
4 MIDLAND, St. Ann, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.
5 MIDLAND, St. Stephen, Midland-Odessa Deanery meeting at 12:00 p.m.
6 ODESSA, St. Anthony, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
7 ODESSA, St. Anthony, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
8 MIDLAND, Scharbauer Sports Complex, Celebrate Life event at 10:00 a.m.
9 ABILENE, St. Francis of Assisi, Confirmation Mass at 9:00 a.m.
10 SAN ANGELO, St. Margaret of Scotland, San Angelo Deanery meeting at 10:00 a.m.
11 MILES, Adolfo Tapia Dairy, Rural Life Mass at 6:00 p.m.
12 SAN ANGELO, Holy Angels, Spiritual Directors’ Graduation Mass at 11:00 a.m.
13 ODESSA, The Way Retreat Center, Holy Cross Hearing Mass at 6:00 p.m.
14 ODESSA, Holy Angels, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
15 ODESSA, The Way Retreat Center, Holy Cross Black and Gold Ball at 6:00 p.m.
16 ANDREWS, Our Lady of Lourdes, Confirmation Mass at 10:30 a.m.
17 ODESSA, The Way Retreat Center, Mass for Holy Cross Catholic High School at 8:00 a.m.
18 ODESSA, Holy Redeemer, Confirmation Mass and Candidacy of Mauricio Moreno at 7:00 p.m.
19 SAN ANGELO, Holy Angels, Angelo Catholic School Mass at 8:30 a.m.
20 ABILENE, Sacred Heart, Confirmation Mass at 7:00 p.m.
21 ABILENE, Holy Family, Abilene Deanery meeting at 11:00 a.m.
22 SAN ANGELO, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Priestly Ordination Mass of Kevin Leinu at 6:00 p.m.
23 SAN ANGELO, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Priestly Ordination Mass of Kevin Leinu at 10:30 a.m.
24 BROWNSWOOD, St. Mary Queen of Peace, Confirmation Mass at 5:30 p.m.
25 MIDLAND, San Miguel, Candidacy of David Garcia at 10:30 a.m.
26 ABILENE, St. Vincent Pallotti, Candidacy of Humberto Diaz at 7:00 p.m.
27 BIG SPRING, Holy Trinity, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.
28 MIDLAND, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
29 ODESSA, The Way Retreat Center, Closing Mass for Holy Cross Catholic High School at 6:00 p.m.
30 ODESSA, St. Ann, Youth Ministry Center, Many Paths of Discipleship event at 9:00 a.m.
31 SAN ANGELO, St. Margaret of Scotland, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
32 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 10:30 a.m.

June 2021

1 SONORA, St. Ann, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
2 COLORADO CITY, St. Ann, Confirmation Mass at 10:30 a.m.
3 SAN ANGELO, Holy Angels, Confirmation and Communion Mass at 4:00 p.m.
4 ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Confirmation Mass at 11:00 a.m.
5 MIDLAND, St. Stephen, Confirmation Mass at 5:00 p.m.
6 BALLINGER, St. Mary, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.
7 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Diocesan Pastoral Center meeting at 11:00 a.m.
8 MENDADO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Confirmation Mass at 9:00 a.m.
9 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 6:00 p.m.

Christ the King Retreat Center

May 2021

1-2 Engaged Encounter (Virtual)
7-9 Deacon Formation
15 ACTS Core Team
19–21 Confirmation Retreat (Virtual)
23 Confirmation Retreat (Virtual)
31 CKRC Offices Closed in Observance of Memorial Day

June 2021

11–13 Deacon Formation

Necrology of Priests and Deacons

Please pray for our departed clergy

May

7 Rev. Clifford Blackburn, OMI (2005)
7 Rev. Msgr. Kevin Heyburn (2001)
9 Deacon Juan Arguello (2019)
9 Rev. Tom Diab (2007)
9 Rev. Leo Diarsing (1999)
14 Deacon Manuel Luevano (2019)
15 Deacon Wayne Rock (2006)

June

8 Rev. Felix Cabell (2007)
17 Rev. Barry McLean (2012)
28 Bishop Stephen Leven (1983)

Reporting Sexual Abuse

The Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is firmly committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for our children and vulnerable adults. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by anyone who serves the Church, and you need a place to talk with someone about your feelings of betrayal or hurt by the Church, we are here to help you. To report incidents, call Lori Hines, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 325-374-7609 (cell), or write Diocese of San Angelo, Victim Assistance Ministry, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. If the incident occurred outside this diocese, our Victim Assistance Coordinator will assist in bringing your concern to the attention of the appropriate diocese. Please keep in mind that one always has the right to report abuse to civil authorities, and civil law requires that any abuse of a minor must be reported.

Reportar Abuso Sexual

La Diócesis Católica de San Ángelo está firmemente comprometida a crear y mantener el ambiente más seguro posible para nuestros niños y adultos vulnerables. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce ha sido víctima de abuso sexual por cualquier persona que sirve a la Iglesia, y necesita un lugar para hablar con alguien sobre sus sentimientos de trastorción o hecho por la Iglesia, estamos aquí para ayudarlo. Para reportar incidentes, llame a Lori Hines, Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas, 325-374-7609 (celular), o escriba a la Diócesis de San Ángelo, Ministerio de Asistencia a Víctimas, PO Box 1829, San Ángelo, TX 76902. Un intérprete de español está disponible. Si el incidente ocurrió fuera de esta diócesis, nuestra Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas le ayudará a traer su preocupación a la atención de la diócesis correspondiente. Por favor, tenga en cuenta que uno siempre tiene el derecho de reportar el abuso a las autoridades civiles, y la ley civil requiere que cualquier abuso de un menor de edad debe ser reportado.
Coming soon to a parish near you

If you are curious about deacons and wish to know more...

Suppose you are an active man in your parish between the ages of 31 and 60 who has a strong desire to serve the Lord by assisting others. You may wish to find out just what a deacon is in the Catholic Church and what is the process of becoming one; then, you should attend one of the following Come & Sees.

1. Tuesday, April 27, 2021 - 7:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria at the Parish Ministry Center of the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart, San Angelo
2. Saturday, May 1, 2021 - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at St. Stephen’s Catholic Church, Midland, in the Parlor.
3. Monday, May 3, 2021 - 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton Catholic Church, Odessa, in the Hall.
4. Monday, May 10, 2021 - 6:00 p.m. at St. Patrick Catholic Church, Brady.
5. Friday, May 14, 2021 - 6:00 p.m. at St. Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church, Brownwood.
6. Tuesday, May 25, 2021 - 7:00 p.m. at St. Joseph Catholic Church, Rowena.
7. Saturday, June 5, 2021 - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at St. Ann Catholic Church, Midland, in the Youth Activity Center.
8. Saturday, June 12, 2021 - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church, Ozona, in the Parish Hall.
9. Monday, June 14, 2021 - 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, Odessa, in the Marian Center.

For more information:
Deacon Freddy Medina
Director of the Office of Diaconal Ministry
325.651.7500
decaconoffice@sanangelodiocese.org

My body, my choice

By JoAnn Turner

A few weeks ago, I saw a statement made by a woman who felt that no one had the right to tell her whether she could have an abortion or not. It was her body, so she got to choose.

It started me thinking of all the things I do and where my choice is made.

Growing up, my mom chose what church I went to and what school I went to. She monitored my friends, she chaperoned play times and trips, and she paid a friend to watch over me as she worked three jobs. She chose my menus, what I could drink, what snacks I could have. When I needed something, my mother chose what to get me. She taught me how to bathe and brush my teeth, the importance of good hygiene, and taking care of my body. She taught me about sex, what it was and the consequences of having sex.

I am told by the government that if I own a car, I must have insurance and if I get in a car, I must wear a seatbelt, have my car inspected, be sure I have safe tires, and make sure that my car meets emission standards. If I have a child in that car, I must use approved seats for the age of the child.

I must pay taxes. If I want to buy a home or a car, the bank tells me what I can afford, and if I finance, they tell me I must have insurance and how much.

If I believe in God — and I DO — I read in his word the things I must do to live a good life. I must follow his laws, his word, feed the hungry, cloth the naked, be a good neighbor and friend. I must worship him and him alone while offering prayers and petitions for those who ask, or I see need his help. I must teach his word and I must care for the environment. And most of all I must take care of the least of my brothers and sisters and help them as I can, because when I do, I am taking care of Christ.

That statement led me to ponder — what do I get to choose in my life? When my mother made my choices, she made them out of love for me. The government makes those choices to protect the life and property of myself and others. And God our creator makes those choices out of love for himself and all his creation.

If I go out in a vehicle, I must obey the laws of the road; when I go somewhere, I must obey the rules they have established. At home I must be respectful of my neighbors and when I go to my church, I am asked to follow the traditions we have and act a certain way.

I am free to choose what clothes I will wear, unless I work for a company that requires a uniform. I get to choose where and what I will eat unless I have diet restrictions. When I have free time, I get to choose how to spend it, but my choices are usually based on prior choices made for me; volunteering my time I get to choose where, but usually that choice is based on the need I see from what I have been taught.

I really have little control over my life. Why? Because I choose to live my life based on what was taught, what rules I cannot change and what my God teaches. Everything I do in my life has consequences and what I decide has an effect on someone.

If I choose not to bathe, people will not want to be around me! If I choose the wrong food, I can get sick and not fulfill a commitment I made to someone. If I choose not to have insurance and have an accident, I will not be able to fulfill my obligation to replace what is lost or damaged.

Deacon Freddy Medina
Director of the Office of Diaconal Ministry
325.651.7500
decaconoffice@sanangelodiocese.org
Auxiliary Bishop Gary Janak ordained as auxiliary bishop of San Antonio

At a solemn Mass of installation and reception celebrated at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in San Antonio on April 20, Auxiliary Bishop Gary Janak was ordained as an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of San Antonio by Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS. Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the pope’s delegate to the United States, read an Apostolic Letter, or Papal Bull, confirming the appointment of the 59-year-old Bishop Janak.

The new auxiliary bishop was presented several symbols of his pastoral ministry. These included a pectoral cross, an episcopal ring worn on his right hand, a miter, and crosier, or shepherd’s staff.

Bishop Janak’s mother, Rose Marie Janak, was in attendance, along with his siblings, their spouses, his nieces and nephews, and other family members. Readers at the Mass included the bishop’s sister, Sharon Janak Folty; and Sister Elizabeth Ann Vasquez, SSCJ, director of the archdiocesan Office of Consecrated Life. Co-consecrators at the liturgy included San Antonio Auxiliary Bishop Michael Boullette — Bishop Janak’s former spiritual director when he was a seminarian at Assumption Seminary — and Diocese of Victoria Bishop Brendan Cahill. Chamberlains to Bishop Janak were Father Carlos Velasquez, pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in New Braunfels, and Father Greg Korenek, a priest of the Victoria Diocese.

Twenty-four archbishops and bishops attended the ceremony, along with Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. In addition to the hierarchy present, the Mass was con-celebrated by about 200 priests of the archdiocese and visiting clerics.

Bishop Janak’s appointment to San Antonio by Pope Francis was announced on February 15, 2021. He was serving as vicar general and chancellor of the Diocese of Victoria as well as rector of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory there. He was ordained to the priesthood May 14, 1988. He holds a degree in canon law, a master’s degree in counseling, and is licensed by the state of Texas as a professional counselor supervisor.

The Archdiocese of San Antonio comprises 19 counties, including Val Verde, Edwards, Kinney, Real, Uvalde, Gillespie, Kerr, Bandera, Medina, Frio, Kinney, Uvalde, McMullen, Upton, Atascosa, Wilson, Gonzales, and Karnes. This area has a population of more than three million people, with about 800,000 Catholics.

joyfully forming disciples through small group Bible/book study

By Anita Montez

In the past year, in which we have lived in a world with COVID-19 present among us, many areas of the practice of our faith and spiritual life have changed dramatically. I was blessed to participate with a group of women friends in a Bible/book study. With COVID-19, our weekly gatherings for sharing together and growing in faith were put on hold. Like many, we soon sought to communicate via social media and different apps. As time went on, we began to realize how isolated and lonely life became when separated from support of friends and extended community in social gatherings. At one point, we were able to begin gathering anew in a small group; however, sadly, we had to leave off with a new outbreak of COVID-19 in the community.

Gratefully, we are now back to our small group Bible study gathering and maintaining protocols for safety. After seeing the joyful fruits of graces and blessings from our gatherings and hearing of them in other small groups, we hope that you might also share in this.

One of the reflections from the group is that his sheep can rest peacefully in his bosom. Our Father’s hands are trustworthy and compassionate. In the midst of these dark days, our Blessed Mother Mary, that intercessor of the Church, is at times our guiding light and comforter through the unknown. For herself I found it encouraging as to what Jesus did and prayed during his suffering, our Blessed Mother Mary, that the hope is to open the study back to the small group of 5-6 women and maintained social distance. We were able to return to No Greater Love by Dr. Edward Sri. We had about 50+ women. That stopped due to COVID restrictions.

“The following Lent, we went back to the small group of 5-6 women and maintained social distance. We were able to return to No Greater Love by Dr. Edward Sri. We had about 50+ women. That stopped due to COVID restrictions.”

On one of those days, one of the participants shared, “For myself I found it encouraging and necessary to continue to study the Word and have the bond with Sisters in Christ especially during the pandemic.”

A participant in this study shared: “No Greater Love by Dr. Sri helped me to read and study passages of Scripture in the Old Testament that pointed to the sufferings of Jesus. We also were able to see the places where Jesus walked during his last days through videos for each chapter. What a desire it gave all of us to visit the Holy Land! This study also gave me light as to what Jesus did and prayed during his suffering and death. I also was touched by the chapters on the Seven Last Words. They were short and packed with life lessons from Jesus of forgiveness, trust in our Heavenly Father during suffering, our Blessed Mother Mary, that our Father’s hands are trustworthy and that his sheep can rest peacefully in his hands, and many others. During Holy Week, these lessons came to life for me.”

A second small group also shared their experiences. One member shared: “During this time, I felt such a
In September 2020, the Diocese of San Angelo’s Office of Evangelization and Catechesis began Year One of the two-year Basic Formation Program utilizing a new format. Basic Formation consists of 120 clock hours. Each year consists of 60 clock hours. This new format utilizes VLCFF (Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation) through the University of Dayton and our own Zoom classes through the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis (OEC). The complete Basic Formation Program is offered in English and Spanish.

Year Two begins in August 2021. Classes will include New Testament, Ecclesiology, Sacraments and Closing Reflection (see schedule below right). These classes will include a combination of VLCFF online courses and OEC classes via Zoom. (Note: These courses are not college credit courses but rather continuing education units.) Like Year One, Year Two will consist of 60 clock hours. The cost for Year Two is $150.00.

Information sessions will be offered in English via Zoom on Tuesday, June 15, 2021, and Tuesday, June 29, 2021, from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. to offer more details about the format used and to answer any question. Information sessions in Spanish will be held Wednesday, June 16, 2021 and Wednesday, June 30, 2021 from 7:00pm - 8:30pm.

One may register for Year Two without having to participate in Year One Basic Formation classes. However, the Basic Formation Certificate of Completion will not be given until Year One and Year Two are complete. The OEC recommends that participants beginning in Year Two take the Scripture class via Zoom offered by the OEC prior to beginning the New Testament Class through VLCFF (this Scripture class will offer basics in Scripture to better understand the New Testament class offered through VLCFF). This class will be Saturday, July 24, 2021, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in English. This class will be offered in Spanish on Saturday, August 14, 2021, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

For any questions, contact Sister Hilda Marotta at hmarotta@sanangelodioce.se.org or 325-651-7500.

### RURAL LIFE MASS

**THURSDAY, MAY 13, 2021 ~ 6:00 P.M.**

**~ ADOLFO TAPIA DAIRY ~**

13153 N. KLATTENHOFF RD.

MILES, TEXAS

Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Michael J. Sis

*A meal will be available after the MASS for the attendees at the St. Thomas Catholic Church Hall in Miles ~ 404 W 7th Street

**This event will be following the current COVID-19 health protocols and guidelines of the Diocese of San Angelo. Facemasks are recommended but not required.

***This Mass will be held outdoors. Your lawn chairs and/or umbrellas are most welcome. If there is inclement weather the Mass will be moved to St. Thomas Catholic Church, Miles

For more information contact:

Deacon Floyd Schwartz

432 270 0569 OR 432 397 2268 schwartz.floyd@gmail.com
Aromas arouse memories — happy memories like freshly baked cookies when we were growing up, or perhaps our mother’s favorite perfume, or the incense used at our confirmation. The olfactory sense carries sentiments captured by our memory. In the history of the church, we associate a number of saints with the fragrant scent of roses. It has been described as the odor of sanctity. In the month of May when we honor Mary, Mystical Rose, and crown her statue with a wreath of flowers, it is appropriate to explore the fragrance of holiness.

Incense has been used in worship since ancient times, both in pagan worship and by the Hebrew people, as recorded in Scripture. In the book of Exodus we read that God instructed Moses to build an altar of incense in front of the veil before the ark of the Testimony, the Holy of Holies, where God would meet with them. He instructed Aaron to burn sweet incense on it every morning. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to put blood on the horns of the altar of incense to cleanse it — a sweet fragrance rising to God symbolizing the prayers of his people. The altar is described as "most holy to the Lord" (Ex 30:1–20). The Psalmist sings, "Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice!" (Ps 141:2).

In the Revelation to John, we read, "And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Rv 5:8).

St. Augustine writes in his Commentary on the Psalms: "Prayer offered in holiness from a faithful heart rises like incense from a holy altar. Nothing is more fragrant than the fragrance of the Lord. May all who believe share in this fragrance." Writing to the Ephesians, St. Paul tells the Ephesians to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:1–2).

The fragrance of holiness was bestowed by God through his Holy Trinity on his faithful people from the beginning of his revelation. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have united themselves with us through the sacraments to live their fragrance of holiness through us! As St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ" (2 Cor 2:14–17).

Our Beloved Mother Mary's fragrance of holiness through her Immaculate Conception is expressed in her fiat, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). St. Luke tells us, Mary "entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!' " (Lk 1:40–42). Joseph also said "yes" to God, and his holiness, united with that of Mary and Jesus, permeated their home in Nazareth and all their relationships with family and neighbors.

Likewise, we are to "spread the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere." How could we possibly contain the joy of our salvation through the One Year Book of Saints, Joan wore white armor and bore a flag denoting Christian protection when she and her troops entered the besieged town of Orléans. Within ten days, Joan's army captured the English forts surrounding Orléans, and the siege was lifted. After a further victory at Troyes, Joan escorted the Dauphin to Rheims, where he was crowned King Charles VII in July 1429.

But just nine months later, misfortune befell Joan and her forces. During an attempt to capture Paris, she was wounded. The attack failed mainly for lack of Charles's promised support and presence. The Duke of Burgundy, who led a group of French nobles allied with the English, captured Joan soon after near Compiegne. He sold her to the English in the fall of 1430. Thus began more than a year of imprisonment and a period of trials led by the Inquisition.

Michael Walsh writes in Butler's Lives of the Saints that Joan appeared before a tribunal presided over by Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais. During 15 public and private sessions, she was repeatedly cross-examined as her accusers sought to establish her evil by attacking her visions. Joan never wavered in her assertion that the messages were from God. The court tried her for heresy, witchcraft and violation of divine law, and ultimately charged her with heresy.

Several months later, Joan signed a document recanting her previous testimony in exchange for a stay of execution. In the Dictionary of Saints, John Delaney writes that Joan despaired when she discovered what she had signed. She removed her dress and donned her male clothing. When Bishop Cauchon learned of this, he condemned her as a relapsed heretic and sentenced her to burn at the stake at Rouen on May 30, 1431. Joan was just 19 years old.

Why did Charles VII forsake Joan? Some propose that after her capture, Charles was profoundly embarrassed by his champion, suspected of heresy. The only person who spoke on her behalf was the Archbishop of Embrun.

In 1456, a court appointed by Pope Callistus III found her innocent of the charges brought against her and declared her a martyr. In 1920, Napoleon Bonaparte proclaimed her a national symbol of France and erected a statue in her honor. Joan was canonized in 1920 and is the second patron saint of France. Also known as the Maid of Orléans, her feast day is May 30.

Mary Lou Gibson writes about the saints for the West Texas Angelus from her home in Austin.
Why woman? Why Mary?

In Genesis 2:7 we are told “then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.” That is all we are told — the reason for the creation of man is God’s alone. Indeed, many exasperated wives have occasionally asked the rhetorical rather than theological, question “What on earth was God thinking?” regarding man’s creation. That is not the case with the creation of the first female, however.

The reason for woman’s creation is made crystal clear just a few passages later: “The Lord God said: It is not right for Man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him” (Gen 2:18). God knew that man needed a helper! But a helper for what?

There was no need for someone to make clothing. If there was, God could easily have taken care of it. By extension, man did not need help doing the laundry. Food preparation was not an issue because man’s dietary concerns had already been addressed by God with “every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food” (Gen 2:9). It wouldn’t seem like man needed help building a house, when a paradise created by God was his home. The question of “Why a helper?” can only be answered by the answer to another question … “A helper for what?” Again, “God only knows” for sure but it is easy to make a guess.

Of all the things that man could possibly need help with, none can be more important than learning how to be in relationship to God, to feel as “one” ... in short, to learn to love. In most cases that I have seen, if a man has learned anything at all about love, they have learned it from a woman. Hopefully, it starts with his mother. Sometimes it is a sister, grandmother, aunt, wife, daughter, or even granddaughter but almost always it is from a woman or girl. Thank God he chose to have a Son or many men would never know how love could be personified in a male.

To answer the question of what was the unifier of God and man, the bridge by which man could cross from a self-centered existence into the world of sacrifice, service, and oneness … the world of love. Is it any wonder why Satan went after Eve? What better way to separate man from God than to destroy that bridge.

For thousands of years, men have been very good at echoing Adam’s response to God as to why he defied God’s warning: “The woman whom you put here with me — she gave me fruit from the tree so I ate it.” (Gen 2:12).

Regardless of who or what may have influenced us, we are all singularly responsible for what we do and say. And, that Eve as the cause of man’s downfall should be given further consideration.

It is easy to adopt the nearly universal perspective that it was because of Eve’s weakness that the fall of man began, the domino effect of which becomes more visible each day. That reasoning assumes that had Evil gone after Adam, it would have met with the strength of a man and quickly rebuked. I don’t think so. In fact, I think it is quite the opposite.

Evil recognized that woman was critical to man’s unification with God. If it could take her down, man would go down with her. I have often thought of making a t-shirt that had this written on the front: “It took Satan and all his deceptions, all his superior ‘intelligence’ to trick a woman …. And then on the back of the shirt, “but any woman can trick a man.” I have imagined what it might have been like if Adam had gone to Eve and asked her to partake of the “forbidden fruit.” It might have been something like “Are you absolutely out of your mind?! Don’t you know what God said not to do?! YOU can break your relationship with him but not me!” But all Eve had to do to get an affirmative response from a man was to ask if he wanted something to eat, something women have found to be often true to this very day.

And so, the bridge was broken and the abyss between man and God was untraversable, not unlike what we hear in Luke 16:26 regarding the distance separating the rich man from God and Lazarus: “Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to your side or from your side to our side.” The hopelessness of man reached new lows after sin entered the world. Such was the state of man until God, in his love and mercy, gave us one last chance to restore our relationship with him ... and created Mary!

While Eve severed our relationship with God, Mary LITERALLY brought him back to us and became the hallmark through which we might pass to reach the doorway to eternal life. Like a good mother, she teaches us through her actions so that we might model her behavior. Like a good mother, she teaches us by her words that are short, of the greatest importance, and easy to remember: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).

Mary, then, is man’s most perfect “helper” because she assists all mankind in learning to love God, the only thing that matters in life. Because of this, Satan hates her more than all the rest of God’s creations put together. And what makes it worse is that Evil is powerless against her and powerless against any of her children who unite with her and her Son. We need help in finding our way through the countless distractions in life that create misdirection for us. Like lost children who are frightened and feel alone, we must listen carefully for our mother’s voice. She is calling us home.

And while we often hear about how men are the spiritual leaders of the family, unless I have defined probability throughout my personal and professional life, I have seen far more women leading their husbands and children to God than the other way around. Far more women as religious educators. Far more women spending hours in relationship with Jesus in the adoration chapels. Far more women attending Mass, especially weddings. The argument that “men have to work” is a poor one. I have been a daily communicant since 1990 and have work and other obligations that take up 50–70 hours each week.

Thank God for the women who teach us the importance of sacrifice. Thank God for the women who teach us that there is nothing more important in life than relationships. And thank God for giving us the woman who brought Jesus to us and all that she does to bring us home. The woman who teaches us that one relationship reigns supreme … thank God for Mary!

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Dr. James Sulliman, a graduate of Rutgers University and Florida State University, has 50 years’ experience in individual, marriage, and family therapy. He is also the Abilene-area pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of San Angelo.

Pentecost: Breathe, forgive, renew

What could be more essential to life than breathing — or forgiving?

Breathing and forgiving: One follows the other. Forgiveness, as Jesus makes clear throughout his earthly ministry, is part of the deal for all who call themselves his disciples.

Such as in the Gospel reading for Pentecost Sunday, when Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (Jn 20:22-23).


"It’s interesting," Father Rohr continues, "that Jesus identifies forgiveness with breathing, the one thing that we have done constantly since we were born and will do until we die. He says God’s forgiveness is like breathing. Forgiveness is not apparently something God does; it is who God is. God can do no other.”

Forgiveness is something we seek and offer, as is clear at each Sunday Mass.

In the penitential rite, we confess our sins, we beseech the prayers of Mary and we hear the presider ask, "May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life."
Father Udegbunam to celebrate anniversary

Father Michael Udegbunam will celebrate the 40th anniversary of his priestly ordination with a Mass at St. Ann Church in Colorado City, Sunday, July 11, 2021, at 10:30 a.m. Father Udegbunam’s true anniversary date is July 12.

Masses to admit seminarians as candidates for the priesthood

As Francisco Camacho, Mauricio Romero, David Garcia, and Humberto Diaz, the 4th-year philosophy seminarians, graduate from Conception Seminary College, they will be moving on to different theology schools. As a result, Mauricio, David, and Humberto will be admitted to Candidacy for Ordination in May in their home parishes and all are invited to go to the Masses. Francisco will be admitted in his second semester in theological seminary. Admission to Candidacy for Ordination takes place during Mass and is a major step towards priesthood. As the title suggests, it shows that the seminarian "has reached a maturity of purpose" and is "shown to have the necessary qualifications" to become candidates for the priesthood (quoted from the Introduction to the Admission to Candidacy). This will be a special event for our diocese's seminarians, and we hope that you can join them in their next step toward the priesthood. Please keep them in your prayers. Below are more details about when and where the Masses will take place for each of the seminarians.

Mauricio Romero
Holy Redeemer Catholic Church
Odessa, TX
May 17 at 7:00 p.m.

David Garcia
San Miguel Arcángel Catholic Church
Midland, TX
May 23 at 10:30 a.m.

Humberto Diaz
St. Vincent Pallotti Catholic Church
Abilene, TX
May 24 at 7:00 p.m.

The annual Diocese of San Angelo Catholic Charismatic Conference "Be Aglow with the Spirit, Serve the Lord"
Romans 12:11, will be held June 18 & 19, 2021, at Sacred Heart Cathedral Gym in San Angelo, Texas. Our conference speaker this year is Dr. Mary Healy who is a professor of Scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit. She is a bestselling author and international speaker. She is a general editor of the Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture and author of two of its volumes, The Gospel of Mark and Hebrews. Her other books include The Spiritual Gifts Handbook and Healing: Bringing the Gift of God’s Mercy to the World. Dr. Healy serves as chair of the Doctrinal Commission of CHARIS in Rome. She was appointed by Pope Francis as one of the first three women ever to serve on the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

Because of Covid restrictions, seating will be limited. Sign up now! Registration fee is $40 per person. Go to www.CatholicCharismatic.com to learn more as new information is posted.
Catholic Charitable Foundation awards $88,339 in grants to parishes, schools, ministries

By Mercede Rassi

Installing security cameras, upgrading a water heater, updating technology in classrooms, providing services to the poor of our community — parishes, schools, and ministries throughout our diocese often have important needs that require outside funding. The Catholic Charitable Foundation for the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo seeks to address some of these needs by providing annual grants to parishes, schools, and ministries seeking funds. Since January, Catholic entities in the Diocese of San Angelo have submitted applications to the foundation for consideration.

On April 19, the trustees of the foundation met to consider each grant application with prayer and care. In total, the trustees awarded $88,339 worth of grants to 23 different parishes, schools, and ministries in our diocese. The Board of Trustees and the Chairman of the Foundation, Bishop Michael J. Sis, extend their thanks to all of those who applied for grants from the foundation.

These grants are made possible by generous donors who have given gifts to the foundation’s unrestricted endowment funds. These endowment funds are invested and a portion of the annual income from the investment is used to provide these grants for the Catholic parishes, schools, and ministries in our diocese.

Anyone can create an endowment fund with the Catholic Charitable Foundation through donations, life insurance policies, non-cash gifts, or a bequest in a will. If you are interested in making more grants available for our diocese or in providing long-term stability for a specific parish, school, or ministry, please visit the foundation’s website at www.catholicfoundationsanangelo.org or call Mercede Rassi, Executive Director, at 325-651-7500.

2012 Grant Recipients

Sacred Heart Parish in Menard: $4,000
St. Charles Parish in Eden: $5,000
St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Abilene: $5,000
St. Thomas Mission in Rankin: $5,000
St. James Parish in Sanderson: $2,000
St. Margaret of Cortona Parish in Big Lake: $5,000
St. Patrick Parish in Brady: $4,000
St. Francis Xavier Mission in Melvin: $5,000
Holy Spirit Parish in Sweetwater: $5,000
St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish in Junction: $5,000
Holy Redeemer Parish in Odessa: $2,500
Sacred Heart Parish in Abilene: $3,000
San Miguel Arcángel Parish in Midland: $1,800
St. Joseph Parish in Stanton: $4,500
Diocesan Hispanic Ministry in San Angelo: $5,000
Holy Trinity Parish in Big Spring: $4,000
Catholic Outreach Services in San Angelo: $5,000
St. Mary Parish in San Angelo: $3,000
Holy Cross Catholic High School in Midland: $3,539
Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo: $4,000
St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in Abilene: $1,000
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Hermitage in Christoval: $3,000
Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and Shrine in Midland: $3,000

For a personalized proposal, contact:
Mercede Rassi
(325) 651-7500
mrassi@sanangelodiocese.org
catholicgiftannuity.org

Convent Curious?
Meet the Sisters of Divine Providence
San Antonio, TX

Save the dates:
- Sun. Jan 17 3PM
- Thurs. Feb 25 7:30PM
- Sat. Mar 20 10AM
- Sun. Apr 18 3PM
- Tues. May 18 7:30PM

Contact:
vocationministry@cdptexas.org

Register here:
Holy Week 2021

Easter Vigil at Holy Redeemer Church in Odessa, April 3, 2021.

Among several Holy Week activities, St. Joseph Parish in San Angelo held a live Stations of the Cross that began on Holy Thursday and continued with reenactment at Kirby Park on Good Friday. Hundreds attended the outdoor event, which was open to the public.

The paschal candle was lit outside Holy Redeemer Church in Odessa before the Easter Vigil Mass, April 3, 2021.

Newly baptized at the Easter Vigil at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo, April 3, 2021.

The kindergarteners from Mrs. Maria Bustillos’ class at St. Mary’s Central Catholic School in Odessa performed a reenactment of the Last Supper via Zoom for the school.
Catholic Outreach offers services, 'Surviving Divorce'

Catholic Outreach Services is now open and offering new expanded services for the financially disadvantaged including sack lunch/hot meal ministry (formerly St. Francis Sack Lunch Ministry at Sacred Heart Cathedral), food pantry, seasonal clothing, small household items, shelter and transportation support, emergency disaster relief, immigration services, pro-life ministry, agency referrals, and educational programs. For more information on how you can help serve the needy in our community and support Catholic Outreach Services please call 325-617-7292.

Surviving Divorce is a series of 13 educational sessions presented to help bring hope and healing to Catholics who have experienced separation and divorce. Meetings will begin May 20 at Catholic Outreach Services. For more information and to register, please contact Wanda Gully at 325-234-2038.

Many Paths to Discipleship

Diocesan Day of Reflection
Saturday, May 29, 2021

ST ANN PARISH--YOUTH ACTIVITY CENTER
1906 W. TEXAS AVE
MIDLAND TEXAS 79701-6564
9:00AM--5:00PM
REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 8:30AM
HIGH SCHOOL, YOUNG ADULTS, AND ADULTS WELCOME

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: SR. STELLA MARIS HAMMAN
DISCIPLES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
SEMINARY BURSE MATCHING GRANT CHALLENGE

This year, the Diocese of San Angelo is participating in a Seminarian Endowment Challenge through Catholic Extension to raise $300,000 for the Diocese of San Angelo Seminarian Burse. Throughout 2021, Catholic Extension Society will match donations made to the Seminarian Burse at $0.20 for every $1.00 donated up to $50,000 (maximum individual donation of $25,000). The diocese’s goal is to raise $250,000 so as to receive a matching grant from Catholic Extension for $50,000, raising a total of $300,000 for our Seminarian Burse in 2021.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Set up a recurring donation to the Seminarian Burse online at sanangelodiocese.org/donations or by scanning the QR code below
- You can also use the same page to make a one-time donation to the Seminarian Burse
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GOAL: $300,000

$250,000 RAISED IN 2021

$50,000 MATCHING GRANT FROM CATHOLIC EXTENSION

$300,000 FOR OUR SEMINARIAN BURSE

As of March 26

$42,250

17%

Confirmation at San Miguel Arcángel Parish in Midland.

ALAN TORRE | APTORRE PHOTOGRAPHY
Taking tension out of the community

Father Ron Rolheiser

Premier Christian Radio in the UK just sponsored a survey that investigated how the COVID crisis has affected religious beliefs and attitudes. There were three major findings — namely, that 67% of those who characterize themselves as "religious" found their belief in God challenged, that almost a quarter of all those questioned said that the pandemic had made them more fearful of death, and that around a third of those surveyed said that their prayer life had been affected by the crisis. Jürgen Brierley, who hosts the popular program Unbelievable!, commented that he was especially impressed by the substantial number of those who, due to COVID, have experienced difficulty believing in a loving God. I should like to focus on this finding as well.

Of course, in one sense, I understand the problem. An altogether standard objection to belief in God is human suffering, especially when it is visited upon the innocent. The apologists for atheism or naturalism quite readily ask the believer, "How can you possibly assert the existence of a loving God given the Holocaust, school shootings, tsunamis that kill hundreds of thousands of people, pandemics, etc.?" But I must confess that, in another sense, I find this argument from evil utterly unconvincing, and I say this precisely as a Catholic bishop — as someone who holds and teaches the doctrine of God that comes from the Bible. For I don't think that anyone who reads the Scriptures carefully could ever conclude that belief in a loving God is somehow incompatible with the existence of a loving God. To be sure, they lamented and complained, but the recipient of the lamentation and complaint was none other than the God who, they firmly believed, loved them. I don't for a moment doubt that many feel today that suffering poses an insurmountable obstacle to belief in God, but I remain convinced that this feeling is a function of the fact that religious leaders have been rather inept at teaching the biblical doctrine of God. For if human suffering undermines your belief in God, then, quite simply, you were not believing in the God presented by the Bible.

I want to be clear that none of the above is meant to make light of the awful experience of suffering or cavalierly to dismiss the intellectual tensions that it produces. But it is indeed my intention to invite people into a deeper encounter with the mystery of God. Like Jacob who wrestled all night with the angel, we must not give up on God but rather struggle to understand how we need to help take tension out of our families, communities, churches, and societies.

Broken Signposts

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author: He can be contacted through his website: www.ronrolheiser.com. Now on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Word on Fire Ministries

Bishop Robert Barron

Should suffering shake our faith?

There is no question that God loves Noah, and yet he puts Noah through the unspeakably trying ordeal of a flood that wipes out almost all of life on the earth. It is without doubt that God loves Abraham, and yet he asks that patriarch to sacrifice, with his own hand, his beloved son Isaac. More than almost anyone else in the biblical tradition, God loves Moses, and yet he prevents the great liberator from entering into the Promised Land. David is a man after the Lord's own heart, the sweet singer of the house of Israel, and yet God punishes David for his adultery and his conspiracy to murder. Jeremiah is specially chosen by God to speak the divine word, and yet the prophet ends up rejected and sent into exile. The people Israel is God's uniquely chosen race, his royal priesthood, and yet God permits his temple to be enslaved, exiled, and brutalized by her enemies. And bringing this dynamic to full expression, God delivers his only-begotten Son to be tortured to death on a cross.

Once again, the point, anomalous indeed to both believers and nonbelievers today, is that the biblical authors saw no contradiction whatsoever between affirming the existence of a loving God and the fact of human suffering, even unmerited human suffering. Rather, they appreciated it as, mysteriously enough, a spiritual purification in his people. Still other times, it might be the only way that, given the conditions of a finite universe, God could bring about certain goods. But they also acknowledged that, more often than not, we just don’t know how suffering fits into God’s designs, and this is precisely because our finite and historically conditioned minds could not, even in principle, comprehend the intentions and purposes of an infinite mind, which is concerned with the whole of space and time. Practically the entire book of Job is to show this. When Job protests against what he takes to be the massive injustice of his sufferings, God responds with a lengthy speech, in fact his longest oration in the Bible, reminding Job of how much of God’s purposes his humble human servant does not know: “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth...?”

Once again, whether they half-understood the purpose of human suffering or understood it not at all, no biblical author was tempted to say that said evil is murder and gave back forgiveness. Indeed, he took in all the things that are the source of tension within a community (our sins), held them within and gave back only peace. Thus, he took away our sins, not through divine magic, but by absorbing them, by eating them, by being our scapegoat, our lamb. We laid our pain and sin on him and drove him out of our community to die. Our sin left with him.

It is easy to see how they could easily transfer this image to Jesus after his death. Looking at the love that Jesus showed in his suffering and death, the first generation of Christians made this identification. Jesus is our scapegoat, our lamb. We laid our pain and sin on him and drove him out of our community to die. Our sin left with him.

Except, except, they did not understand this as some magical act where God forgave us because Jesus died. No. Their sins were not taken away because Jesus somehow appeased his Father. They were taken away because Jesus absorbed and transformed them, akin to the way a water purifier takes the dirt, toxins, and poisons out of the water by absorbing them.

A water purifier works this way. It takes in water contaminated with dirt, impurities, and poisons, but it holds those toxins inside itself and gives out only the purified water. So too with Jesus. He took in hatred, held it inside, transformed it, and gave back only love. He took in bitterness and gave back graciousness; curses and gave back blessing; jealousy and gave back affirmation.

Whatever we don’t transform, we will transmit. There’s a profound truth here regarding how we need to help take tension out of our families, communities, churches, and societies.
Levántense, reciban la vacuna, salven vidas

Hosffman Ospino Catholic News Service
Caminando Juntos

La salud de Dios por medio de Jesucristo es un don misterio que recibir. Dios quiere que hagamos nuestro ese don. Lo que mueve la acción evangelizadora de la Iglesia en la historia es la convicción de que queremos que las personas tengan una experiencia profunda de Cristo resucitado y hagan suyo el don de la salvación. Podemos aplicar esto de manera análoga al don de las vacunas que protegen nuestras vidas, las vidas de quienes queremos y la vida de todos los seres humanos.

Están disponibles, pero hay que recibirlas. Después de más de un año en medio la pandemia actual, sabemos que la muerte es una posibilidad real por causa del virus. No se trata de un juego o de un ejercicio en el que pretendemos que algo puede ocurrir. El recibir o no la vacuna del COVID-19 puede hacer la diferencia entre vivir y morir; entre ver a otros vivir o morir.

Discúlpame si sueno un poco dramático. Sin embargo, me preocupa que muchas personas en nuestra sociedad, y en particular en nuestras comunidades católicas, parecen minimizar la importancia de vacunarse durante la pandemia actual. Muchos rechazan del todo la idea de vacunarse.

Existe mucha desinformación. Muchas teorías de conspiración. Muchos miedos arbitrarios. El antídoto a todo esto es informarse bien y un buen cuidado pastoral. El Vaticano, la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos, y prácticamente toda organización católica con credibilidad han determinado que la vacunación asociada con el COVID-19 es moralmente aceptable y una prioridad para proteger la vida y promover el bien común.

Si nos preocupa la vida, tenemos la responsabilidad de hacer todo lo posible por protegerla. Nuestro discernimiento tiene que ir más allá de nuestras opiniones personales. En el espíritu de esta Pascua, mientras que contemplamos al Señor resucitado, permitanme hacer una invitación sencilla: levántense, reciban la vacuna, salven vidas.

Hosffman Ospino es profesor de teología y educación religiosa en Boston College.

¿Debe el sufrimiento sacudir nuestra fe?

La Radio Cristiana Premier del Reino Unido acaba de patrocinar una encuesta en la que se investiga cómo ha afectado el COVID a las creencias y actitudes religiosas. Hubo tres hallazgos principales: que el 67% de los que se caracterizan como “religiosos” vieron cuestionada su fe en Dios, que casi una cuarta parte de todos los encuestados dijeron que la pandemia les hizo tener más a la muerte, y que alrededor de un tercio de los encuestados dijeron que su vida de oración se había visto afectada por la crisis. Justin Brierley, presentador del popular programa ¿Incredible? comentó que estaba especialmente impresionado por el importante número de personas que, debido a la COVID, han tenido dificultades para creer en un Dios de amor. Me gustaría centrarme también en este hallazgo.

Por supuesto, en cierto sentido, entiendo el problema. Una objeción totalmente habitual en la creencia en Dios es el sufrimiento humano, sobre todo cuando recae sobre los inocentes. El apologista del ateísmo o del naturalismo pregunta fácilmente al creyente: “¿Cómo puedes afirmar la existencia de un Dios amoroso teniendo en cuenta el Holocausto, los tiroteos en las escuelas, los tsunamis que matan a cientos de miles de personas, las pandemias, etc.?”. Pero debo confesar que, en otro sentido, este argumento del mal me parece totalmente poco convincente, y lo digo precisamente como obispo católico, es decir, como alguien que sostiene y enseña la doctrina de Dios que proviene de la Biblia. Porque no creo que nadie que lea atentamente las Escrituras pueda llegar a la conclusión de que la creencia en un Dios de amor sea de algún modo incompatible con el sufrimiento.

¿Cómo somos salvados por medio de los sufrimientos de Jesús? Obviamente, esto es una metafóra. Jesús no es un carnero, así que necesitamos desentrañar la realidad que hay detrás de la metafóra. ¿Qué inspiró a la primera generación de cristianos a usar la imagen de un cordero que sufre para explicar lo que Jesús hizo por nosotros y cómo el sufrimiento de Jesús es la base de la salvación de los pecados? ¿Había una forma de transacción divina y privada entre Dios y Jesús?

Estas preguntas no tienen una respuesta fácil, pero esto debe decirse más y más, aun cuando algo de este misterio, nada de ello es mágico. Se admite que hay misterio aquí, algo que se sitúa más allá de lo que podemos explicar adecuadamente por pensamiento racional, pero no hay nada de magia aquí. Las profundas verdades que se sitúan algo más allá de nuestras capacidades racionales no niegan nuestra racionalidad; sólo la reemplazan de modo análogo a como la teoría de la relatividad de Einstein enmascaró las matemáticas de la escuela primaria.

Así, concediendo algún misterio, ¿qué podemos desentrañar de la metafóra que presenta a Cristo como el cordero de Dios que quita los pecados del mundo? Además, ¿cuál es el desafío para nosotros?

Aquí está el origen histórico de esta imagen: En tiempos de Jesús, en el judaísmo, había algunas prácticas rituales de expiación (reconciliación) en relación a los corderos. Algunos corderos eran sacrificados en el templo como ofrenda a Dios por nuestros pecados, mientras otros eran empleados como “chivos expiatorios”. El ritual de los chivos expiatorios funcionaba así: Una comunidad se juntaba con la intención de participar en un ritual para mitigar las tensiones que existían entre ellos a causa de sus debilidades y pecados. Imponían simbólicamente sus tensiones, sus pecados, sobre el cordero (que iba a convertirse en su chivo...
Countering Catholic misinformation about vaccines

A priest recently mentioned to me that he was not planning to get the COVID-19 vaccine. He told me he was concerned that RNA vaccines could alter our DNA and he heard there were also risks to fertility. I replied that those particular concerns were unsubstantiated, and not scientifically correct, and encouraged him to be vigilant about various forms of misinformation, including “Catholic” misinformation that can spread rapidly on social media.

In a January 2021 article in Crisis Magazine, for example, AnnaMaria Cardinali repeats several errors regarding a cell line widely used in vaccine production and research. Her comments appear to be based on a problematic LifeSite News interview by John Henry Westen with former graduate student Pamela Acker.

“Acker speaks about her research into the HEK-293 cell line specifically, and talks about the number that’s at the end of that cell line name. ‘HEK stands for Human Embryonic Kidney and the ‘293 actually refers to how many experiments that a specific researcher did to develop that cell line. ‘It doesn’t mean there were two hundred and ninety-three abortions, but for two hundred and ninety-three experiments, you would certainly need far more than one abortion. We’re talking probably hundreds of abortions,’ Acker says.”

The reality is that the HEK-293 cell line was obtained from a single fetus, and only one abortion occurred, not hundreds. Cells were removed from the kidney, modified, and grown subsequently for many years in the laboratory of Alex van der Eb in Leiden, the Netherlands. This cell line, generated in 1972 or 1973, underwent many “passages” and adaptation steps, leading to the number “293.”

Whether there were hundreds of abortions or just one is not the key issue, since harvesting cells from even a single abortion is still unethical. However, in Acker’s interview, the sense of outrage for the audience is ramped up in proportion to the overstated claims about the number of abortions. This phenomenon is understandable, since there are some Catholics who do not seem to grasp the problem with abortion-derived cell lines at all, or minimize it, which can create frustration among others who may be tempted to overtaste their case.

When Catholics disseminate incorrect medical, scientific or factual information in their discussions, or subscribe to urban legends and conspiracy theories, it raises serious concerns. Some of these false medical news comes from those who are generally opposed to vaccinations and perhaps more gullible when it comes to false scientific claims. We face a particular obligation to get our facts straight because “the establishment” will fact-check us very strictly as it allows certain liberal distortions of truth to pass unchallenged, particularly when it serves the narrative that the church is “anti-science.” In terms of COVID-19 vaccines, we spend a fair amount of time at the National Catholic Bioethics Center countering “Catholic” misinformation and/or disinformation about cell line usage from abortions, whether from those who believe one can never get vaccinated, or from those at the other end of the spectrum who believe there is no moral problem at all with the continued use of these cell lines in research.

Cardinali also offers the claim that the HEK-293 cell line was obtained from a living baby because once a child dies, the cells are basically no longer useful: “HEK stands for human embryonic kidney. To harvest a viable embryonic kidney for this purpose, sufficiently healthy children old enough to have adequately-developed kidneys must be removed from the womb, alive, typically by cesarean section, and have their kidneys cut out. This must take place without anesthesia for the child, which would lessen the viability of the organs.”

These claims are not correct, and there is no historical evidence that a C-section was ever done to obtain the HEK-293 cell line. Rather, procurement of the kidneys relied on standard abortion techniques. It is also noteworthy that extracted kidneys can survive and even function for many minutes following the death of an individual — that is how cadaveric kidney transplantation between adults originally took place — and cells can be successfully derived from kidneys quite some time after their removal from the body.

The best response to these forms of misinformation from well-intentioned Catholics is to provide accurate guidance and scientific explanations to our Catholic faithful, hoping they will have ears to hear and hearts open to dialogue and reflection when presented with factually correct information. None of this is to reduce the obligation we have to object strongly to the continued use of abortion-derived cells in vaccine work and other forms of research, as I have emphasized in several recent essays available at ncbcenter.org and fatherad.com. But Catholics have to be on guard against anti-science prophets, no matter how well meaning, and the false witness they bear. We should give witness to the truth in all its forms, including in the important and highly influential worlds of science and medicine.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D, earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org and www.fatherad.com.

The trouble of the world

Over the years, I have come to rely on the great musical traditions of Black Christians to serve as a talisman when I am confronted with the brutal realities of U.S. society, especially the never-ending storm of anti-Black racism and white supremacist violence.

Any time a video of a Black woman, man or child being harassed, assaulted or murdered in the name of white supremacy begins circulating on social media to raise awareness and demand justice, I usually need to log off for a few hours and listen to my special playlist of African American spirituals and gospel music. If I have time, I also like to re-read James Baldwin's 1962 essay, "Letter to My Nephew.”

In the masterpiece's final lines, Baldwin is his nephew, then struggling to maintain his way, that white society has never truly known or cared to understand Black people, even those who live, labor and love in close proximity to white people.

None the less, Baldwin reminds his namesake that they descend from the people who actually built the nation "and in the teeth of the most terrifying odds, achieved an unassailable and monumental dignity.”

Baldwin also tells his nephew that he comes from "some of the greatest poets since Homer," one of whom said, "The very time of the world fast fades, my heart shook and my chains fell off," a verse from the African American spiritual, "I Am Free.”

Like many African Americans, I grew up in a family that had a deep love and appreciation for the spirituals and Black gospel music — even though those songs were never acknowledged or performed in the predominantly white Catholic parishes that I attended in my youth.

Before I began studying African American Catholic history, I had believed that the spirituals were a Protestant tradition that were incorporated into the Masses at predominantly Black Catholic parishes after the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and the Black Catholic movement of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Yet the historical record reveals that the spirituals, which were born of the experience of African enslavement in the United States, are also a Catholic tradition.

In Slave Songs of the United States, the first collection of the spirituals published in 1867, a song called "Hail, Mary" sung by African Americans in parts of the South, including St. Augustine, Florida — where the Catholic Church in the 16th century inaugurated African slavery in what became the United States — is included.

According to the first published biography of Father Augustus Tolton, the nation’s first self-identified Black priest grew up singing the spirituals, which he learned from his devout mother, Martha Jane Chisley Tolton, who had been exploited under Catholic slavery in Kentucky and Missouri.

Surveys of the Negro History Week programs led by the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the nation’s oldest African American order of women religious, reveal that Black Catholic nuns also taught and championed the spirituals and the African American National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” in the schools and parishes they staffed.

Even as White Catholics, including those who ministered to African Americans, actively frowned upon and degraded Black traditions, including the spirituals, as un-Catholic, Black sisters fought to equip their pupils with the great intellectual and cultural gifts of the African American community — tools they understood as essential in the fight to defeat white supremacy.

This explains why Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, during her famous 1989 address, implored the nation’s bishops to welcome and embrace Black intellectual and cultural traditions, including the spirituals, “as gifts to the church.”

It might also explain why the Biden administration invited the gospel choir of Washington’s historically Black St. Augustine Catholic Church to perform “Lift Every Voice and Sing” at the White House this past March — not only to showcase to the world the beauty, power and genius of the African American spiritual tradition, but also to affirm the work of the nation’s Black Catholics who long fought to preserve these traditions in the faith.

As the nation confronts yet another police murder of an unarmed Black citizen, I wonder how many Catholics working to defeat the sin of white supremacy but who worship in non-Black parishes or are simply unaware of the spirituals would benefit from the practice of regularly listening to and performing these sacred Black songs.

Black Catholics have always known that the spirituals embody and preserve a noble history and tradition of survival and resistance to white supremacy.

These songs also teach us that remembering the brutal horrors of white Christian slavery, segregation and exclusion is another essential practice of resistance.

Shannen Dee Williams is the Albert Lepage assistant professor of history at Villanova University. She is the author of Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle, which will published by Duke University Press in 2022. Follow her on Twitter @BlkNunHistorian.
Pandemic reminds us we are made for loving relationship

The Lord is risen! As we celebrate the resurrection, the Lord’s words to his disciples in the upper room resound with particular poignancy this year: “I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be” (Jn 14:3).

These words take on a greater significance in the context of the ongoing global pandemic and the difficult experience of separation and distancing from friends and family, co-workers and loved ones. The pain of loneliness and isolation has increased our awareness of our need for community and challenges Sartre’s — and modernity’s — provocative proposal that “hell is other people.”

Separation from others has drained the life and joy from our lives, and Easter is a reminder, each year, that we are made for others. Each Easter, we are presented with an opportunity to celebrate the gift of life while contemplating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "The Lord is risen," we proclaim. In contemplating his resurrection, we look forward to our own.

This particular year we find ourselves into the second year of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This is the second Easter when the celebration of life happens amid the conditions created by a virus that has affected everyone on our planet.

Millions of people have died worldwide because of the virus. Millions more mourn our loved ones who died and miss them dearly. Countless people of all ages will live the rest of their existences with the wounds of an illness that caught our world by surprise.

This year, however, things are different. A miracle has happened. Not as powerful and decisive as the miracle of the resurrection, yet a miracle. The scientific community has developed a cadre of vaccines that have the ability to bring the COVID-19 virus under some control.

Science placed at the service of life and the common good can prevent people from dying prematurely. When modern medicine mesmerizes us in addressing a major threat to human existence, we are given the assurance of being infinitely loved and poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we fulfill the fulfillment and meaning of each of our lives -- and is receiving love through a sincere gift of self, is the authentic love, both the giving and receiving love through a sincere gift of self, is the fulfillment and meaning of each of our lives -- and is possible with Christ.

Filled with the love of God, which has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we are given the assurance of being infinitely loved and capable of loving without limits.

Mother Agnes Mary Donovan is superior general of the Sisters of Life and a corresponding member of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Catholic Voices

Arise, receive the vaccine, save lives

“The Lord is risen!” This is our cry during the 50 days of Easter. We celebrate life with joy: our present historical life and life eternal.

As we celebrate like Easter people, we know with confidence that death does not have the last word. In rising Jesus from the dead, God conquers death. Indeed, death does not define us; life does!

Every year during Easter, Catholics have a new opportunity to celebrate the gift of life while contemplating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "The Lord is risen," we proclaim. In contemplating his resurrection, we look forward to our own.

This particular year we find ourselves into the second year of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This is the second Easter when the celebration of life happens amid the conditions created by a virus that has affected everyone on our planet.

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Filled with the love of God, which has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we are given the assurance of being infinitely loved and capable of loving without limits.

Sharing abundantly

Every morning, as we wait in the drop-off line at school, my daughter Rose and I share a pack of Belvita breakfast cookies.

It’s usually my breakfast, half of it siphoned off by an already fed (but quickly growing) 3-year-old who is about to have quite a full day in her pre-K classroom. I usually don’t mind sharing.

But lately, Rose began asking if we could bring two packs with us in the morning.

At first, I assumed it was so she could have her own, so I said no. But she kept asking, and then one day, she cleverly sneak ed an extra pack into her backpack.

Right as I launched into a lecture about honesty and not sneaking things out of the pantry, Sister Mary Hannah (a Religious Sister of Mercy who teaches at the school) walked past our car and Rose hastily rolled down her window and thrust the extra pack of breakfast bars toward the startled nun.

Sister chuckled, thanked Rose, and took the cookies, walking off with a big smile across her face.

Beaming, Rose turned to me and said, “See, Mom! I just wanted to share with Sister! Because I love her!”

Catholic News Service

Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV

Catholic News Service

Hosoffman

Ospino

Catholic News Service

Journeying Together

Katie Prejean McGrady

Catholic News Service

Window Seat Wisdom

She just wanted to share. Because generosity, at least in the hearts and minds of little children, is the priority. Especially when you love someone.

With all her gumption and strength, Rose was determined to offer something she enjoyed to a religious sister she sees every day and adores.

We are often told many stories about Sister Mary Hannah at dinner. Funny enough, Sister teaches the middle schoolers, and yet Rose only seems to have eyes for her.

She tells us about her fun outfit (her habit), how she’s really good at playing on the monkey bars (I’d pay big money to see a nun running around the

Cartoon Corner

If we're going to get any serious damage, we need to see the worst bridges first.

Mother Agnes Mary Donovan is superior general of the Sisters of Life and a corresponding member of the Pontifical Academy for Life.
COVID-19: Diocese of San Angelo enters Phase Two

Dear friends in Christ,

As you know, the current conditions of the coronavirus pandemic in West Texas include lower rates of active cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Therefore, public liturgies in the Diocese of San Angelo will move to the more relaxed Phase Two Protocols on May 8, 2021.

In our new Phase Two Protocols for Public Liturgies, the changes can be summarized as follows:

- Facemasks for attendees are not mandated but are strongly encouraged.
- Every pew may now be used.
- The social distance requirement of six feet is now reduced to three feet.

Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation:
The general dispensation from attending Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation expires on the weekend of Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021. Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo are dispensed from the obligation ONLY if they:

- a. are age 65 or over, or
- b. are caring for the sick, or
- c. are sick, including those who have tested positive for the coronavirus and those who have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus, regardless of how well they feel, or
- d. have underlying health conditions, or
- e. are truly and sincerely fearful that they may contract the coronavirus. A true and sincere fear is one that has prevented a person from attending non-required activities, such as eating at a restaurant, gatherings with family and friends, attending a movie theater, etc.

Bishop Michael J. Sis
Diocese of San Angelo

Those who do not meet any of the above criteria are obligated to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. This obligation is not satisfied by watching a virtual or livestreamed Mass.

Accommodations for Maintaining Phase One Protocols:
While the Diocese of San Angelo will utilize the more relaxed Phase Two Protocols for Public Liturgies, each parish or mission cluster is encouraged to offer at least one opportunity for people to attend Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation with adherence to Phase One Protocols. This will accommodate those who are uncomfortable with or leery of the more relaxed Phase Two Protocols.

Phase One Protocols include 6-foot social distance between non-family groups, skipping every other pew, and wearing facemasks.

Options for Phase One Protocol accommodations:
- a. Celebrate a separate liturgy that has full Phase One Protocols in place.
- b. Reserve an appropriate section within the church or parish facilities that will practice Phase One Protocols.

COVID-19: Diócesis de San Ángelo entra en la Fase Dos

Queridos amigos en Cristo,

Como saben, las condiciones actuales de la pandemia del coronavirus en el oeste de Texas incluyen números más bajos de casos activos, hospitalizaciones, y muertes. Por lo tanto, las liturgias públicas en la Diócesis de San Ángelo pasarán a los Protocolos de la Fase Dos más relajados el 8 de mayo de 2021.

En nuestra nueva Carta a los Asistentes del 18 de diciembre, los cambios se pueden resumir de la siguiente manera:

- Las mascarillas para los participantes no son obligatorias, pero son muy recomendables.
- Ahora se pueden usar todos los bancos.
- El requisito de distancia social de seis pies ahora se reduce a tres pies.

Domingos y Días de Precepto:
La dispensa general de asistir a Misa los domingos y días de precepto expira el fin de semana del Domingo de Pentecostés, 23 de mayo de 2021. Los católicos en la Diócesis de San Ángelo están dispensados de la obligación SOLO si:

- a. tienen 65 años o más, o
- b. están cuidando a los enfermos, o
- c. están enfermos, incluidos aquellos que han dado positivo por el coronavirus y aquellos que han tenido contacto cercano con alguien que ha dado positivo por el coronavirus, independientemente de lo bien que se sientan, o
- d. tienen condiciones de salud subyacentes, o
- e. temen verdadera y sinceramente que puedan contraer el coronavirus. Un miedo verdadero y sincero es aquel que ha impedido que una persona asista a actividades no obligatorias, como comer en un restaurante, reuniones con familiares y amigos, asistir a una sala de cine, etc.

Obispo Michael J. Sis
Diócesis de San Ángelo

Aquellos que no cumplan con ninguno de los criterios anteriores están obligados a asistir a Misa los Domingos y días de precepto. Esta obligación no se satisfice viendo una Misa virtual o transmitida en vivo.

Acomodaciones para Mantener los Protocolos de la Fase Uno:
Mientras la Diócesis de San Ángelo utilizará los Protocolos de la Fase Dos para las Liturgias Públicas más relajados, se anima a cada parroquia o grupo de misiones a ofrecer al menos una oportunidad para que las personas puedan asistir a Misa los Domingos o días de precepto con la práctica de los Protocolos de la Fase Uno. Esto acomodará a aquellos que se sienten incómodos o aprensivos de los protocolos más relajados de la Fase Dos.

Los Protocolos de la Fase Uno incluyen una distancia social de 6 pies entre personas que no son parte de la misma familia, saltarse cada dos bancas, y usar mascarillas.

Options para las acomodaciones del Protocolo de la Fase Uno:
- a. Celebrar una liturgia separada con todos los Protocolos de la Fase Uno.
- b. Reservar una sección apropiada dentro de la iglesia o de las instalaciones de la parroquia donde se observarán los Protocolos de la Fase Uno.
- c. Designar una de las iglesias o misiones en un grupo para utilizar los Protocolos completos de la Fase Uno mientras que las otras tienen protocolos relajados.
- d. Utilizar cualquier otra forma apropiada para acomodar a aquellas personas que no se sienten cómodas con los Protocolos de la Fase Dos.

El párroco decidirá cómo ofrecer estas liturgias de la manera que funcione mejor para su comunidad.

Aún considerando las condiciones mejoradas actuales del coronavirus, todos los Protocolos de la Fase Uno todavía se pueden usar como sea necesario según el parecer del párroco. Además, en cualquier parroquia o área, si ocurre un nuevo brote del coronavirus, entonces la parroquia debería regresar a una opción más restrictiva de los Protocolos de la Fase Uno del 18 de diciembre de 2020.

Los nuevos Protocolos de la Fase Dos se pueden encontrar en la sección del Coronavirus de nuestro sitio web diocesano en www.sanangelodiocese.org.

Animó a los mayores de 16 años a recibir la vacuna COVID-19 por el bien de la salud pública en vista del bien común de la sociedad.

Que el Espíritu Santo nos ayude a resucitar nuestra participación en los sacramentos y envolver a las personas nuevamente en la vida activa de la parroquia. Estoy sinceramente agradecido a todos los que han estado ayudando en la implementación de nuestros protocolos del coronavirus, especialmente a nuestros sacerdotes, diáconos, y otros líderes parroquiales.

En el gozo del servicio de Cristo,
Monsenor Michael J. Sis
Obispo de San Angelo
Church must help counter resistance to vaccines, health care expert says

ROME (CNS) — Members of the Catholic Church, especially religious working in health care and schools, have an important opportunity and duty to educate people about COVID-19 and to counter resistance to vaccinations, said an expert on the Vatican's COVID-19 commission. Women religious and Catholic organizations who serve others every day and have people's trust are "our best hope for safe and fair distribution of vaccines as well as the best tool for convincing people of the safety and importance of taking the vaccines," said Sister Carol Keenan, a nurse and Daughter of Charity. The church also has clear teachings about the need for more ethical ways to produce and test vaccines, but it has said that receiving vaccines is not participating or cooperating with the evil of abortion, she said during an online meeting April 27 sponsored by the Rome-based International Union of Superiors General. The event, dedicated to how women religious can be leaders in bringing Gospel values to new models of the economy and health care, was part of a series of meetings looking at ways sisters can empower other women and accompany and support those most affected and marginalized by the pandemic. Sister Keenan is the chair of the Vatican COVID-19 Commission's health task force. She gave the more than 300 participants an overview of the two main goals of the taskforce: an equitable distribution of vaccines and treatments, and reducing the resistance to taking the vaccine.
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playground), and Rose has more than once told us that Sister Mary Hannah is "the best prayer person I've ever seen!"

It's a pure love for this nun that my daughter has, and one that I deeply admire. A love so great, in fact, that she wanted to share some breakfast cookies with her.

And isn't that what love asks of us? Love asks that we share.

If we truly care for another, valuing them and honoring who they are, acknowledging their dignity and worth, then we must give to them. Give of our time, give of our treasure. Seek to serve them, in whatever small or big way that is needed.

And it took the persistence, and sneakiness, of my daughter wanting to give cookies to a nun that reminded me that I am not called to be stingy or hardhearted to those I love.

In fact, it reminded me that the love I am called to have for every single person is meant to be a generous love, a self-giving love, a love that responds and acts for their good.

It's a love that doesn't just ask, "what's the bare minimum required of me in this moment?" But instead, a love that pours out: to build up, aid and care for others.

We often limit the love we give. We are not abundantly generous. We barely give. We offer leftovers, scraps or what we think we don't need. On more than one occasion, I've thought, "I couldn't possibly give this or that... I don't have enough of it myself."

And yet, Jesus tells us to give of our first fruits, not the mere leftovers. The widow, who offers her only two coins is more faithful -- loves the Lord more! -- than the wealthy man who drops in his spare change.

Rose didn't want to give Sister Mary Hannah an entire pack of cookies. She wanted to offer her an entire pack, all for herself. Sister was worth that to her. A whole pack.

And I was the one keeping her from giving her that.

How often have I done that? How often have I held back, from pouring out and pouring into those in need, those with less than me? Even those who perhaps just want a chance to be seen, heard and cared for by me?

As we celebrate the Easter season, perhaps we take intentional time to look for ways we can give, even if it means sneaking an extra pack of cookies out of the pantry.

Katie Prejean McGrady is an award-winning author and host of The Katie McGrady Show on Sirius XM. She lives in Louisiana with her husband and daughters.

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No, we can't control how others respond. But we can choose to move forward and not "retain," as Jesus said, the anger, bitterness and hurt.

Think of the responsorial psalm for Pentecost Sunday: "Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth." Exactly how does the Spirit renew the face of the earth? Through us, it would seem. Pentecost Sunday's first reading reminds us that the descent of the "tongues of fire" upon the disciples of Jesus so filled them with the Holy Spirit that they began chattering in different languages "of the mighty acts of God." Soon those disciples "moved forward" to spread the good news — to breathe new life into a world that needed renewal. Sound familiar?

Indeed, in these times, when so much vitriol and vilification is in our midst, what could happen if each of us took time to really reflect upon the hurts we've been dealt and made a serious effort to "breathe some forgiveness" into this world?

I know one thing: When I am allowed to forgive or I am forgiven something very powerful and wonderful takes place inside me. I feel like I can breathe, as if a great weight has been lifted off my chest.

Letting go of anger and bitterness and hurt is an amazing gift to myself. When I forgive, I have let God into my life in a way that heals and renews.

The Pentecost sequence phrases it nicely: "You, of comforters the best; You, the soul's most welcome guest; sweet refreshment here in our labor, rest most sweet; grateful coolness in the heat; solace in the midst of woe."

Yes, come, Holy Spirit. come — Mike Nelson writes from Southern California.

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Israel es la raza elegida por Dios, su sagrada realidad. Y embargado Dios precisa que Israel sea esclavizado, exiliado y maltratado por sus enemigos. Y llevando esta dinámica a su máxima expresión, Dios entrega a su Hijo unigénito para que sea torturado hasta la muerte en una cruz.

Una vez más, la cuestión, cier- tamente, es que la experiencia de Dios en los no creyentes no vean contradicción alguna entre la afirmación de la existencia de un Dios que ama y el hecho del sufrimiento humano, incluso del sufrimiento humano inmerecido. Más bien, lo apreciaron como, misteriosamente, ingrediente del plan de Dios, y propusieron varios nombres que los misterios inome- ridos no podrían, ni siquiera en principio, comprender las intenciones y propósitos de una mente infinita, que se ocupa de todo el espacio y el tiempo. Prácticamente todo el peso del libro de Job consiste en mostrar esto. Cuando Job protesta contra lo que considera la enorme injusticia de sus sufrimientos, Dios responde con un largo discurso, de hecho su discurso más largo en la Biblia, recordando a Job cuánto de los propósitos de Dios desconoce su humilde siervo humano: “¿Dónde estás tú cuando yo fundaba la tierra?”.

Una vez más, ya sea que compren- dieran a medias el propósito del sufrimiento humano o que no lo entendieran en absoluto, ningún autor bíblico se sintió tentado a decir que dicho mal es incompatible con la existencia de un Dios amoroso. Ciertamente, se lamentaban y se quejaban, pero el destinatario de la lamentación y la queja no era otro que el Dios que, creían firmemente, los amaba.

BARRON

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Yes, come, Holy Spirit.

Mike Nelson writes from Southern California.

There is far too much misinformation. Too many conspiracy theories. Too much fearmongering. The antidote to all of this is good information and good pastoral outreach. The Vatican, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and nearly all credible Catholic organizations have endorsed COVID-19 vaccination as morally acceptable and a priority to protect life and the common good.

Catholic care about life, we have a responsibility to do what is possible to protect it. Our discernment must involve more than our personal views. In the spirit of Easter, as we contemplate the risen Lord, allow me a simple invitation: Arise, receive the vaccine, save lives.

Hostfman Osipno is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.
KNICKERBOCKERS

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his cross, resurrection, and the promised Holy Spirit? The Catholic term “Mass,” from the Latin word missa, means to be sent. Indeed, the Holy Spirit sends us out from every Mass to be his fragrance, the holy presence of Jesus Christ. We pray we will be faithful in spreading the good news of what he has done for us, in intention, word, and deed, “among those who are being saved … a fragrance from life to life.”

However, we are also “the aroma of Christ to God … among those who are perishing … a fragrance from death to death” (2 Cor 2:15–16). St. Paul warns us not to be naive about the reaction of Satan and the secular world to the fragrance of Jesus Christ. Many have rejected the beauty of holiness in favor of the allure of material goods, self, and sin — degradation — “from death to death.” Satan is ever ready to dishonest and try to destroy our fragrant witness in Christ with his stench of lies, leading to deception, confusion, and division. We do well to remember that the word “martyr” is from the Greek for “witness.” “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:57).

Christ’s aroma of holiness is evident in the lives of a number of saints who are associated with flowers and their fragrance, especially roses. We are reminded of St. Rita of Cascia (1381–1457), from whose incorrupt body emanates the sweet aroma of roses. To that we can attest when we knelt near her incorrupt body enclosed in glass in the Basilica of St. Rita. In his remarks on the centenary of her canonization in 2000, Pope St. John Paul II said, “It is hoped that the life of everyone devoted to her will be like the rose picked in the garden of Roccaporena the winter before the saint’s death. That is, let it be a life sustained by passionate love for the Lord Jesus; a life capable of responding to suffering and to thorns with forgiveness and the total gift of self, in order to spread everywhere the good odor of Christ through a consistently lived proclamation of the Gospel.”

Among others, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Elizabeth of Portugal, St. Rose of Lima, and The Little Flower/St. Therese of Lisieux, often are imaged with roses and all exhibit the self-giving love of Christ as his gift of sanctity. It was told that there was a strong scent of roses when the Little Flower died, and it was present for days after her death. The Virgin Mary, Queen of all saints, has been given the title Rosa Mystica. We are familiar with the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the miracle of roses in the middle of winter as a sign of God’s presence. The fourth time she appeared to Juan Diego with a message for the bishop, who required proof of the Blessed Mother’s appearance and request, she had him pick roses and placed them in his cloak. When Juan Diego opened his cloak in the presence of the bishop, not only did the roses fall out, but an image of Our Lady appeared on his cloak. Preeminently, Our Blessed Mother Mary exudes the odor of sanctity.

Oh, Lord, please admonish us when we do not live what we profess and our lives give off a bad odor. Through our love, devotion, and consecration to our Blessed Mother and to you, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, help us grow in holiness of heart and life. In your mercy, Lord, forgive our sins and receive our prayers of repentance, praise, and thanksgiving and our works, joys, sorrows, and suffering as a pleasing aroma, rising up to you as incense, a fragrance “from life to life.” Amen.

Mystic Rose

Our Lady Guadalupe, Mystic Rose,
Whose light reflects the light of Savior Son,
Bring light to us in darkness with our load
Of sin that was from Adam, Eve begun.

Bring Second Adam to our fallen state
To rescue Image by our Father sown;
We’re tarnished by the fruit First Adam ate
Which caused our fallen state in which we groan.

Christ saves us by his life in womb you bear,
Who wipes away our darkness with his cross,
And raises us to breathe pure heaven’s air —
Gives holiness to us, removes sin’s dross.

His fragrance enters us that lives in you,
As you our Mother with him make us new.

Father Knick Knickerbocker is a retired priest of the Diocese of San Angelo, ordained under the Pastoral Provision which allows for the reception of married former Episcopal priests into the Catholic Church. He and his wife, Sandie, write a monthly column for the West Texas Angelus.

ROLHEISER

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expiatorio) con dos símbolos: una corona de espinas clavada en la cabeza del cordero (haciendo que sienta su dolor) y una colgadura púrpura sobre el lomo del cordero (simbolizando su responsabilidad corporativa de cargar él esto en vez de todos ellos). Después echaban al cordero fuera del templo y fuera de la ciudad, desterrándolo para que muriera en el yermo. La idea era que al invertir al cordero con su dolor y pecado, y estúpido para siempre de su comunidad, su dolor y pecado también eran quitados, desterrados para morir con este cordero.

No cuesta ver cómo pudieron transferir fácilmente esta imagen a Jesús después de su muerte. Mirando el amor que Jesús mostró en su sofrimiento y muerte, la primera generación de cristianos hicieron esta identificación. Jesús es nuestra víctima expiatoria, nuestro cordero. Cargamos nuestro dolor y pecado sobre él y lo empujamos fuera de nuestra comunidad para morir. Nuestro pecado se marchó con él.

Pero, pero… ellos no entendieron esto como un acto mágico con el que Dios nos perdonara porque Jesús murió. No. Sus pecados no fueron quitados porque Jesús aplacara de algún modo a su Padre. Fueron quitados porque Jesús los absorbió y devolviéndolos a la manera como un purificador de agua aparta del agua la suciedad, las toxinas y los venenos al absorberlos.

Un purificador de agua funciona así: Recibe agua contaminada con suciedad, impurezas y venenos, pero se guarda las toxinas en un mismo y emite sólo el agua purificada. Así también con Jesús. Recibió odio, lo mantuvo dentro, lo transformó y lo devolvió hecho única y amor. Recibió amargura y devolvió dulzura; maldiciones, y devolvió bendiciones; celos, y devolvió afirmación; asesinato, y devolvió perdón. En verdad, recibió todas las cosas que son la causa de tensión en una comunidad (nuestros pecados), las mantuvo en sí y devolvió sólo paz. Así, quitaron nuestros pecados, no por medio de magia divina, sino al absorberlos, al comerlos, al ser nuestra víctima expiatoria.

Además, lo que hizo Jesús, como dice Kierkegaard tan maravillosamente, no es algo que nosotros deberíamos admirar; es algo que necesitamos imitar. N.T. Wright, en su reciente libro Broken Signposts, compendia el desafío de esta manera: “Tanto si lo entendemos como si no –si nos gusta o no, lo que la mayoría de nosotros no hace ni hará- lo que el amor tiene que hacer es no sólo afrontar el malentendido, la hostilidad, la suspicacia, la conspiración y finalmente la violencia y el asesinato, sino de alguna manera, a través de todo ese horrible asunto, atraer sobre sí mismo el fuego del mal supremo y agotar su poder. … Porque es el amor el que toma lo peor que el mal puede hacer y, absorbiéndolo, lo derrota”. Energía que no transformamos, energía que transmitimos. Existe una profunda verdad aquí sobre cómo necesitamos ayudar a retirar la tensión de nuestras familias, comunidades, iglesias y sociedades.
Celebrating the sacraments

Confirmation at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo.

First Holy Communion at St. Mary Parish in Odessa.

The newly initiated at Holy Redeemer Parish in Odessa.

First Holy Communion at St. Joseph Parish in Odessa.

First Holy Communion at St. Anthony Parish in Odessa.