Father Kevin Lenius spoke at his ordination Mass at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo, May 22, 2021.

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By Brian Bodiford
West Texas Angelus

On May 22, 2021, Bishop Michael Sis ordained the newest priest for the Diocese of San Angelo, Father Kevin Lenius.

Born to James and Denee Lenius in Abilene, Kevin and his sister Andrea were raised as Catholics from birth. Kevin was baptized at Sacred Heart Parish in Abilene; shortly thereafter the family moved to Holy Family Parish. “Holy Family in Abilene has been my home parish since I can remember,” Lenius said.

Sunday school and religious education classes complemented Lenius’ public education in Abilene. “I really enjoyed school. I really loved getting to know my family and making new friends at school. I found that I loved learning,” he said. In middle school, he began playing the violin, a skill he continued to pursue, playing in a symphony orchestra and Revolution Strings, a fiddle group, in high school. His love of music kept him playing through the seminary.

Hearing the Call

As a cradle Catholic, Lenius was exposed to the faith and the priesthood from an early age, and this exposure quickly left an impression. “I always talked about church when we would come home on Sundays after Mass,” he said. “I just loved going. He would even “play priest” at home as a child. “I would make my own little Mass and even preach to my parents,” he said.

“God bless ‘em!”

“There was always something from very early on in me about the church, about my relationship with God. There were even some early moments of prayer that I remember,” Lenius said. He related one such moment in kindergarten or first grade, swinging on a swing set and feeling the closeness of God. “I recognize now that was God introducing himself to me and calling me to himself,” he said.

Though he enjoyed Mass and religious education, it wasn’t until the end of junior high, as he was preparing to transition to high school, that he fully learned about the Eucharist, a lesson he credits to his 8th grade

‘Falling in love with love itself’

Father Kevin Lenius ordained a priest of the Diocese of San Angelo

By Brian Bodiford
West Texas Angelus

‘Falling in love with love itself’

Father Kevin Lenius spoke at his ordination Mass at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo, May 22, 2021.
Diocese of San Angelo to begin a new class of permanent deacons

Men considering the permanent diaconate from the Diocese of San Angelo can participate in the new inquiry class beginning this year. The opportunity to join a new class comes around only once every four or five years.

God gives every human being a mission in this world. He has created each one of us for a unique purpose. By virtue of our Christian baptism, every member of the church has received a missionary calling to evangelize the world around us. Each of us evangelizes in our own unique way.

For example, parents share the faith with their children. Catechists pass on the gift of faith to others in the parish. At school and work, all of us are called to shine with the light of Christ by the way we live our lives. In this article, I will explore the vocation of the permanent diaconate.

Our deacons touch thousands of people’s lives. They help win souls for Christ. They build up the community of the church. They make a tremendous positive difference, and I am very grateful for their ministry.

The ministry of deacons is found in several places in the New Testament. In Acts 6:1-6, the disciples selected seven men of good reputation and ordained them for ministry. Those seven men are traditionally known as the first deacons. One of them was St. Stephen, who became the first person to die a martyr’s death for the Christian faith. Deacons held a special place in the ministry of the early church, along with bishops and priests.

Some well-known deacon saints include St. Lawrence of Rome and St. Ephrem the Syrian. A deacon is a member of the clergy. He is no longer a layperson. He is set aside for service to God, consecrated to the Lord in the sacrament of holy orders.

Deacons help equip fellow members of the church to reach out in service to the poor, the sick, the grieving, and especially to coach future generations of young men to be faithful husbands and dedicated fathers. A deacon’s wife and children are directly impacted by his vocation. The ministry of a deacon brings joys and pains, with plenty of crosses to bear, and our God of surprises brings countless unforeseen blessings. Through it all, God’s grace is always available to assist.

The ministry of the church, which is shared by both the Catholics and the Orthodox, is that we can sometimes ordain a married man, but we don’t marry an ordained man. For example, in the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church, there are some married priests, such as in the Maronite, Melkite, Byzantine, or Coptic Churches. If they want to live their life as a married priest or deacon, they must get married before their ordination. If they get ordained as a single man, then they can never marry.

Similarly, we also have some married priests in the Roman Catholic Church, such as Father Knick Knickerbocker (married to Sandie) of our diocese. These are men who were married priests or ministers in the Episcopal or Anglican or Lutheran Church, and later they came into full communion with the Catholic faith. After approval from the Holy See, a Catholic bishop can ordain them as married Catholic priests, and they continue to live as married persons. However, after that priest gets ordained, if his wife later dies or separates from him, the priest cannot remarried. The same is true if he gets ordained as a Catholic priest as a single man. He must remain single.

This same logic of the relationship between holy orders and marriage also applies to permanent deacons. We can ordain a married man, but we cannot marry an ordained man. It is the same ancient practice. Thus, if a married man becomes a permanent deacon, and later he loses his wife, then he is expected to remain single.

Individuals contemplating the permanent diaconate should find themselves highly involved and active in their parish. They should have a fundamental understanding of the Roman Catholic faith. In order to be allowed to join the formation class, they need the endorsement of their local pastor.

A man becomes a deacon not out of personal desire, ambition, or interest, but rather for the common good of the church as determined by the bishop. When a man enters the diaconal formation process, it is not certain that he will become a deacon. The discernment process in the formation program is a two-way street; that is, the candidate himself must discern God’s call, and the church must also discern whether or not this man is called to become a permanent deacon.

In some Protestant churches, the role of a deacon is a temporary one, similar to a member of a parish council. However, in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the diaconate is a ministry of lifelong commitment. The

From the Bishop’s Desk

Bishop Michael J. Sis
Diocese of San Angelo

The Prayer Square
Prayer for Pandemic Recovery
Diocese of San Angelo

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

Almighty and ever-living God, we turn to you in this critical moment in the history of our Church. Help us to bring our people back to the active practice of the faith. Transform our hearts from fear to deeper faith, from division to unity, from selfishness to generosity, from apathy to action, from isolation to a new missionary spirit. Through your divine power, bring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. For all who have died from the coronavirus, have mercy on their souls. Bring new life and renewed energy to our parishes and missions. Give us a future full of hope. We ask you this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Deacon Freddy Medina
Director of Diaconal Ministry
Diocese of San Angelo
325-651-7500
deaconoffice@sanangelodiocese.org

in the formation program is a two-way street; that is, the candidate himself must discern God’s call, and the church must also discern whether or not this man is called to become a permanent deacon.

In some Protestant churches, the role of a deacon is a temporary one, similar to a member of a parish council. However, in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the diaconate is a ministry of lifelong commitment. The
Los hombres que estén considerando el diaconado permanente de la Diócesis de San Ángelo pueden participar en la nueva clase de consultas que comienza este año. La oportunidad de unirse a una nueva clase se presenta solo una vez cada cuatro o cinco años.

Dios le da a cada ser humano una misión en este mundo. Él nos ha creado a cada uno de nosotros con un propósito único. Por virtud de nuestro bautismo cristiano, cada miembro de la iglesia ha recibido un llamado misionero para evangelizar el mundo que nos rodea. Cada uno de nosotros evangeliza a su manera.

Por ejemplo, los padres comparten la fe con sus hijos. Los catequistas transmiten el don de la fe a otros en la parroquia. En la escuela y el trabajo, todos estamos llamados a brillar con la luz de Cristo por la forma en que vivimos nuestras vidas. En este artículo exploraré la vocación del diaconado permanente.

Nuestros diáconos tocan la vida de miles de personas. Ayudan a ganar almas para Cristo. Construyen la comunidad de la iglesia. Hacen una tremenda diferencia positiva, y estoy muy agradecido por su ministerio.

El ministerio de los diáconos se encuentra en varios lugares del Nuevo Testamento. En Hechos 6:1-6, los discípulos seleccionaron a siete hombres de buena reputación y los ordenaron para el ministerio. A esos siete hombres se los conoce tradicionalmente como los primeros diáconos. Uno de ellos fue San Esteban, quien fue la primera persona que murió como mártir por la fe cristiana. Los diáconos ocuparon un lugar especial en el ministerio de la iglesia primitiva, junto con los obispos y sacerdotes. Algunos santos diáconos conocidos incluyen a San Lorenzo de Roma y San Efrén de Siria.

Un diácono es un miembro del clero. Ya no es un laico. Está destinado al servicio de Dios, consagrado al Señor en el sacramento del orden sagrado. Los diáconos ayudan al obispo y a sus sacerdotes en el triple ministerio de la palabra, del altar y de la caridad.

• El ministerio de la palabra incluye la predicación y la enseñanza,
• El ministerio del altar incluye liturgia, adoración y oración por las bendiciones de Dios sobre las personas y las cosas,
• El ministerio de la caridad incluye extender la mano para servir a los pobres y marginados.

El ministerio de caridad de un diácono incluye muchas cosas:

• servicio directo a los necesitados,
• reclutar a otros y empoderarlos para este servicio, y
• predicar y enseñar de una manera que ayude a toda la comunidad parroquial a reflexionar sobre las necesidades de los pobres.

Los diáconos ayudan a equipar a los miembros de la iglesia para ayudar a los pobres, los enfermos, los afligidos, los encarcelados, los inmigrantes, los olvidados y los abandonados.

Como ministros del altar, los diáconos proclaman el Evangelio, preparan las ofrendas y distribuyen el Cuerpo y la Sangre del Señor a los fieles en la Sagrada Celebración. Presiden las oraciones, traen el vino y el pan, llevan el vino y el pan a los moribundos, y presiden algunos ritos funerarios. En una parroquia, el diácono es supervisado por el párroco local, y el párroco determina hasta qué punto un diácono predicará en la liturgia.

Los diáconos permanentes generalmente tienen un trabajo regular de tiempo completo en el mundo secular. Su servicio en la iglesia es típicamente a tiempo parcial, voluntario. Los diáconos no deben buscar remuneración por sus funciones. Deben ayudar a aliviar la carga de trabajo en una parroquia y llegar a personas a las que de otro modo no se podría llegar. Tal como el Señor le dijo al profeta Jeremías, también le dice al diácono: “Irás a dondequiera que te envíe, y proclamarás todo lo que yo te mande” (Jer 1:7-8). Un diácono siempre debe abrirte al crecimiento personal y a la conversión continua. “El lidera sirviendo a los demás. El diácono está destinado a ser un ministerio de servicio humilde, tranquilo y en segundo plano. Como aquellos que una vez fueron elegidos por los Apóstoles para el ministerio de la caridad, los diáconos de hoy deben ser hombres de buena reputación, llenos de sabiduría y del Espíritu Santo.

Los diáconos permanentes tienen el potencial de servir como constructores de puentes esenciales en la comunidad, construyendo puentes entre culturas, entre diferentes grupos en una parroquia, entre católicos y no católicos. Debido a su posición única como diáconos permanentes, también pueden ayudar a construir puentes entre el mundo secular y el mundo religioso, entre el mercado y el reino de Dios, entre las antiguas verdades de la fe católica y los desafíos contemporáneos de nuestra sociedad.

La mayoría de los diáconos permanentes están casados. Como clérigos casados, viven tanto el sacramento del orden sagrado como el sacramento del matrimonio. Esto los coloca en una posición especial para ayudar a construir matrimonios y familias, y especialmente para entrenar a las futuras generaciones de hombres jóvenes a ser esposos fieles y padres dedicados. La esposa y los hijos de un diácono se ven afectados directamente por su vocación. El ministerio de un diácono trae alegría y dolores, con muchas cruces para llevar, y nuestro Dios de sorpresas traer innumerables bendiciones imprevistos. A pesar de todo, la gracia de Dios siempre está disponible para ayudar.

La antigua práctica de la iglesia, que comparten tanto los católicos como los ortodoxos, es que a veces podemos ordenar a un hombre casado, pero no se puede casar un hombre ordenado. Por ejemplo, en los ritos orientales de la iglesia católica, hay algunos sacerdotes casados, como en las iglesias maronita, melquita, bizantina, o copta. Si quieren vivir su vida como sacerdote o diácono casado, deben casarse antes de su ordenación. Si son ordenados como solteros, nunca podrán casarse.

De manera similar, también tenemos algunos sacerdotes casados en la iglesia católica romana, como el Padre Knick. Knickerbocker (ordenado con Sande) de nuestra diócesis. Estos son hombres que fueron sacerdotes casados o ministros en la iglesia episcopal, anglicana o luterana, y luego entraron en plena comunión con la fe católica. Después de la aprobación de la Santa Sede, un obispo católico puede ordenarlos como sacerdotes católicos casados y continuar viviendo como personas casadas. Sin embargo, después de la ordenación del sacerdote, si su esposa muere o se separa de él, el sacerdote no puede volver a casarse. Es lo mismo si es ordenado sacerdote católico como hombre soltero. Debe permanecer soltero.

Esta misma lógica de la relación entre las órdenes sagradas y el matrimonio también se aplica a los diáconos permanentes. Podemos ordenar a un hombre casado, pero un hombre ordenado no se puede casar. Es la misma práctica antigua. Por lo tanto, si un hombre casado se convierte en diácono permanente y luego pierde su parroquia, se espera que permanezca soltero.

Las personas que contemplan el diaconado permanente deben encontrarse muy envueltas y activas en su parroquia. Deben tener un conocimiento fundamental de la fe católica romana. Para poder unirse a la clase de formación, necesitan el respaldo de su párroco local.

Un hombre se convierte en diácono no por deseo, ambición o interés personal, sino por el bien común de la iglesia según lo determine el obispo. Cuando un hombre entra en el proceso de formación diaconal, no es seguro...
## Bishop’s Calendar

### June 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SONORA, St. Ann, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>COLORADO CITY, St. Ann, Confirmation Mass at 10:30 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Holy Angels, Confirmation and Communion Mass at 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Confirmation Mass at 11:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>MIDLAND, St. Stephen, Confirmation Mass at 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, USCCB Virtual Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>BALLINGER, St. Mary, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Diocesan Charismatic Conference Opening Talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, St. Mary, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral/Finance Council joint meeting at 11:00 a.m., Presbyteral Council meeting at 2:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>MENARD, Sacred Heart, Confirmation Mass at 9:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 6:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Angelo State University, Race Relations Forum at 5:30 p.m.</td>
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### July 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Mass for 25th Anniversary of Rev. Mark Woodruff</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>HOUSTON, Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral, Ordination of Auxiliary Bishop Italo dell’Oro at 2:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Carmelite Hermitage 30th Anniversary Mass at 10:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Pastoral Plan Implementation Committee meeting at 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Diocesan Cursillo leadership meeting at 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Institution of Acolytes at 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>COLORADO CITY, St. Ann, Mass for 40th Anniversary of Ordination of Rev. Michael Udederation at 10:30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>FORT STOCKTON, Installation of Rev. Francis Njoku as pastor</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Parish Staff Development Day</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Pension Plan committee meeting at 2:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Marriage Enrichment Retreat Mass at 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>ABILENE, Holy Family, Installation of Rev. Santiago Udayan as pastor at 12:00 noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral Council meeting at 11:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>SAN ANGELO, Vocation Discernment Retreat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Necrology of Priests and Deacons

**June**

- 17 Rev. Barry McLean (2012)
- 28 Bishop Stephen Leven (1983)

**July**

- 2 Rev. Bernard Degan, CM (2001)
- 2 Deacon Floyd Franklin (1992)
- 4 Rev. Msgr. Charles Dvorak (1963)
- 10 Rev. Emil J. Gerlich (1969)
- 17 Rev. George Varakukala (2020)
- 22 Most Rev. Thomas J. Drury (1992)
- 25 Deacon Abel Campos (2002)
- 26 Deacon José Rosales (2000)

### 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 Angelo 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 traición o herido por la Iglesia, estamos aquí para ayudarle. Para reportar incidentes, llame a Lori Hines, Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas, 325-374-7609 (celular), o escriba a la Diócesis de San Angelo, Ministerio de Asistencia a Víctimas, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, 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.
Bishop Michael Sis prayed over a prostrate Kevin Lenius during the ordination Mass.

LENIUS

Continued from Page 1

religious education teacher. “She loved the Lord, and it was really evident,” he said. “It inspired me that this was somebody who really took their faith seriously.”

The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist was something that spoke to Lenius. “This is a radical belief!” he remembered thinking. “It seems like nobody else believes this. None of my other Protestant friends have this at their church.” The idea that Christ would give himself to us in this way “blew me away,” Lenius said, and motivated him to learn more about the Catholic faith. “I had this love for the church and a love for God, and I was intrigued by his church, by the Catholic Church.”

This love prompted Lenius to start visiting the adoration chapel close to his house. “Sometimes I would ride my bike over to the adoration chapel, before I had a car, and I would just spend time with Jesus,” he said. “It just floored me that we really believe that that’s him, you know? His body, blood, soul, and divinity, and I have the opportunity just to go and literally sit at his feet and be with him.”

It was at the adoration chapel in Abilene that Kevin Lenius first began to hear the call to the priesthood. “There was this tug at my heart,” he said. “This quiet tug that I couldn’t ignore.”

“I started to hear in my heart: ‘Kevin, be my priest. I want you to be my priest.’”

For the first couple of years of high school, Lenius sat on this feeling and began to become even more involved in the church, through the youth group at Holy Family, the church choir, and the SEARCH retreat program. “That’s really what began to crystallize my vocation and this call that was planted in me through prayer,” he said. During this time, adults and even Catholic and Protestant peers began to suggest to Lenius that he should consider the priesthood.

Though initially afraid to talk about these feelings with people, “this tug at my heart wouldn’t leave me alone,” Lenius said. He reached out to Father Barry McLean, then the vocation director for the Diocese of San Angelo, who explained the process and invited Lenius to a visit of Conception Seminary College. “I actually went there a couple of times my junior and my senior year of high school, and I fell in love with the place. I saw that there were other young men who were serious about their faith, who wanted to grow in holiness, who were thinking about becoming priests.” During his second trip, he felt peace, prayer, and an invitation from Jesus. He applied and was accepted as a seminarian for the Diocese of San Angelo after his graduation from high school in 2012.

SEMINARY FORMATION

“I was in seminary for nine years,” Lenius said. “The best way to describe it was an adventure and a journey!” Lenius attended three seminaries during his studies: Conception Seminary College in Conception, Missouri, St. Mary’s Seminary in Houston, and Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis.

“My first four years at Conception in Missouri was a lot of just learning what it means to be a Catholic man, just to grow in discipleship, grow in prayer, grow in being a virtuous man,” Lenius said. “Those were some of the best years of my life. I made such beautiful friends and really came to understand more deeply God’s love for me and his presence in my life.”

After graduating from college, Lenius continued on to graduate work at St. Mary’s Seminary in Houston. “That was a very difficult year for me,” he said, because of both the transition and personal questioning about his vocation. “Is this really what God wants me to do?” he wondered, noting that the idea of marriage also appealed to him for a time. “It was that year at St. Mary’s in Houston that God drew me back to see how much I love my diocese, and how much I love other people, the love I have for community,” he said. “Yes, I can go and get married and love another woman for the rest of my life, and God would be okay with that, but it seems that my heart was made to love a community and to be totally dedicated to God.”

A pastoral year at San Miguel Arcángel Parish in Midland and further studies at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis cemented for Lenius what was happening over the course of his formation: “I recognized that I was falling in love with love itself. That was a huge moment for me.”

“I’m falling in love with God and with his people,” he said, which makes his new role as a priest more than just work. “Jesus was inviting me to love.”

“This call to celibacy began to make so much more sense. I found that my heart was just longing to be in the diocese, longing to be with the people of West Texas, with all these people that I grew up with who have been journeying with me,” he said. The few months prior to his ordination in 2020 as a transitional deacon, he was “feeling so much peace that, yes, this is what God has called me to do, and I’m excited to love and sacrifice in this vocation that he’s chosen for me.”

FIRST ASSIGNMENT

Now that he is ordained, Father Kevin Lenius will take a few weeks of well-earned rest before beginning his first assignment as parochial vicar at St. Stephen Parish in Midland. Having spent time in Midland during his pastoral year and summer work between school years, Lenius is excited about returning and entering a new parish community.

“Of course, St. Stephen’s is a parish that I don’t know very well yet,” Lenius said. “That’s exciting because I get to meet a lot of new people.” He is eager to get started at what he sees as a vibrant parish. “I’m excited to be a part of that. I’m excited to live my life 24/7 for those people,” he said. He looks forward to “working with Father Rodney (White), the pastor, working with the deacons, and to get in the routine of just being a parish priest: just saying Mass every day, hearing confessions, walking with people, going to different meetings, getting to know people and help them. I’m very excited to get there.”

For those who may feel a call to follow in Father Kevin’s footsteps, or are discerning their own vocations, the diocese’s newest priest has some advice. “Don’t be afraid to give more and more to God,” he said. “God will never be outdone in generosity.” Also: “get moving.”

Spend time in prayer discerning what God wants. “God works with our own human nature, and that means being a human being and figuring life out.”

Father Kevin Lenius begins his first assignment at St. Stephen Parish in Midland on July 1.
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. 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.

2. Monday, June 14, 2021 - 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, Odessa, in the Marian Center.

3. Saturday, June 19, 2021 - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the St. Francis Hall at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo.

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

Basic Formation program begins year two

DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO
2020-2022

LEVEL 2 – BASIC FORMATION
Location: OEC Zoom and VLFF

OEC: Office of Evangelization & Catechesis
VLFF: Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation

YEAR ONE 2020-2021 (60 Clock Hrs) Complete
July 19, 2020 via Zoom – Complete
OEC Ministry (5 Clock Hrs) Complete
VLFF Faith & Human Development (5 Clock Hrs) Complete

YEAR TWO 2021-2022 (60 Clock Hrs) Complete
July 17, 2021 via Zoom (5 Clock Hrs)
OEC Scripture (for new Year-Two participants)

AUG 22 – SEP 25, 2021
VLFF New Testament (5 Clock Hrs)
Nov 13, 2021 via Zoom
OEC Pastoral Letters & Ecclesiology 1 (5 Clock Hrs)
Feb 12, 2022 via Zoom
OEC Ecclesiology 2 (5 Clock Hrs)
Mar 6 – Apr 9, 2022
VLFF Sacraments (5 Clock Hrs)
Apr 30, 2022 via Zoom
OEC Closing Reflection/Celebration

The past year we began a new format for the two-year Basic Formation program which includes the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLFF) through the University of Dayton and our own Zoom virtual classes through the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis (OEC). The Basic Formation program consists of 120 clock hours. Each year consists of 60 clock hours. This 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. These classes will include a combination of VLFF 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.

We will have Information Sessions via Zoom in English and Spanish to offer more details about the format used and to answer any question. Information sessions are scheduled as follows:

- June 15, 2021 (Tuesday), 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. English
- June 16, 2021 (Wednesday), 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Spanish
- June 29, 2021 (Tuesday), 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. English
- June 30, 2021 (Wednesday), 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Spanish

To register for the Information Session, contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis at evangelizationcatechesis@sanangelodiocese.org. A Zoom link will be sent to you upon request.

One may register for Year Two without having already participated 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. In addition, we recommend that participants beginning in Year Two take the Scripture class via Zoom offered by the OEC prior to beginning the New Testament Class through VLFF. (This Scripture class will offer basics in Scripture to better understand the New Testament class offered through VLFF.) This class will be July 17 (Saturday), 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. in English. This class will be offered in Spanish on Aug. 14 (Saturday) from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

If you have any questions, contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis at evangelizationcatechesis@sanangelodiocese.org or 325-651-7500.
Programa Formación Básica comienza año dos

El año pasado comenzamos un nuevo formato para el programa de formación básica de dos años cuál incluye la Comunidad de Aprendizaje Virtual para la formación de La Fe (VLCCF) a través de la Universidad de Dayton y nuestras propias clases virtuales zoom a través de la oficina de Evangelización y Catequesis (OEC). El programa de Formación Básica consta de 120 horas de reloj. Cada año consta de 60 horas de reloj. Este completo programa de Formación Básica se ofrece en inglés y español.

El segundo año comienza en agosto de 2021. Las clases incluirán Nuevo Testamento, Eclesiología, Sacramentos y Reflexión de Clausura. Estas clases incluirán una combinación de cursos en línea de VLCCF y clases OEC a través de Zoom. (Nota: Estos cursos no son cursos de crédito universitario, sino unidades de educación continua.) Al igual que el primer año, el segundo año consta de 60 horas de reloj. El costo para el segundo año es de $150.00.

Tendremos sesiones de información a través de Zoom en inglés y español para ofrecer más detalles sobre el formato utilizado y para responder a cualquier pregunta. Las sesiones de información se programan de la siguiente manera:

- Junio 15, 2021 (martes), 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Inglés
- Junio 16, 2021 (miércoles), 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm Español
- Junio 29, 2021 (miércoles), 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Inglés
- Junio 30, 2021 (miércoles), 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm Español

Para inscribirse en la sesión informativa, pongase en contacto con la oficina de Evangelización y Catequesis en evangelizationcatechesis@sanangelodiocese.org Se le enviará un enlace de Zoom bajo petición.

Uno puede inscribirse para el segundo año sin haber participado ya en las clases de Formación Básica de Primer Año. Sin embargo, el Certificado Básico de Formación de Finalización no se entregará hasta que el primer año y el segundo año estén completos. Además, recomendamos que los participantes que comiencen en el segundo año tomen la clase Escritura a través de Zoom ofrecida por la OEC antes de comenzar la Clase del Nuevo Testamento a través de VLCCF. (Esta clase de las Escrituras ofrecerá conceptos básicos en las Escrituras para comprender mejor la clase del Nuevo Testamento ofrecida a través de VLCCF.) su clase será el 24 de julio (sábado), de 9:00 a.m. a 3:00 p.m. en inglés. Esta clase se ofrecerá en español el 14 de agosto (sábado) de 9:00am a 3:00pm.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, comuníquese con el Oficina de Evangelización y Catequesis al evangelizationcatechesis@sanangelodiocese.org 325-651-7500.

Safe environment training goes online

By Mike Wyse

The Diocese of San Angelo has recently developed an online version of its Safe Environment training program, which includes The Diocese of San Angelo Policies on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry. This program has been in use for many years and has been attended by well over 10,000 people. The development of this new format is the result of two important factors. First, it is recommended by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the independent auditors who audit our Safe Environment program. While the diocese has always passed the audit with flying colors, the USCCB and auditors have recommended for the past few years that the diocese have refresher Safe Environment training for all of its ministers. Secondly, we have been wanting to make it easier for people to attend the diocesan Safe Environment training.

The new online version of our program meets both of these requirements. Under the first recommendation, everyone who has taken the training in the past will now be required to take the refresher training once every five years. This is consistent with our background checks being updated at five year intervals. Accessing this training is both convenient and easy. The training can be done at the individual’s convenience through any computer, iPad, or smart phone. The new training is also shorter, approximately two hours compared to the two-and-a-half hour classroom version (not counting the possible 30-60 minutes driving time to and from the place of the workshop). Also, if someone is not able to dedicate a block of two hours to complete the training, they can save their work and come back and complete the training at a later time. This online training is for those who are doing refresher training as well as those who are taking it for the first time. If there is anyone who is unable to do the online training, they can still make arrangements through their parish office to attend one of the classroom sessions. We anticipate that the majority of people will want to avail themselves of this newer, easier way of attending the training.

Everyone whose ethics workshop date is over five years ago must take this new training in order to continue working in ministry. If you are not sure if your workshop is over five years ago, please check with your parish office or call Mike Wyse or Deborah Thompson at the diocese (325-651-7500). To access the training go to https://sanangelo.cmconnect.org/. Register to open your own training account and begin your training. In order to complete the training everyone must have a copy of the revised ethics policy booklet (June 1, 2020) when you begin the training. You may obtain a copy from your parish office or download and print one from either our diocesan webpage or the online training site. You will also find there are videos available on many other useful topics on the Catholic Mutual website.

We are in the process of producing this program in Spanish and updating the Spanish policy booklet. We anticipate that this will be available within the next 60-90 days.

Msgr. Z celebrates 63 years a priest

Msgr. Benedict J. Zientek was born on Dec. 28, 1952, on a farm two miles east of Brenham, Texas, between Old Chappell Hill Road and Mustang Road.

He attended first grade through eighth grade at St. Mary’s School in Brenham. He went to high school at St. John’s Minor Seminary in San Antonio, Texas, before attending St. Mary’s Seminary in La Porte, Texas, and the new St. Mary’s Seminary on Memorial Drive in Houston.

Father Zientek was ordained a priest on May 24, 1978, at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Austin, Texas, by Bishop Louis J. Reicher, the first Bishop of Austin.

Father Zientek’s first assignment was as assistant pastor at St. Mary’s in Brownwood, Texas. When the Diocese of San Angelo was formed in 1961, four of the northwest counties of the Diocese of Austin became part of the Diocese of San Angelo, including Brown County, home of St. Mary Church.

In May 1962, “Father Z,” as he became known, was named pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Rotan, Texas, 65 miles west of Abilene, by Bishop Thomas Drury, the first Bishop of San Angelo. This assignment also included two mission churches: St. Mary’s in Aspermont and Sacred Heart near Hamlin.

From 1965 to 1967, Father Zientek was pastor of St. Mary’s in Odessa, Texas. He served as rector of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo from 1967 to 1977. In June 1977, he was named pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Rowe, Texas.

In 1987, Father Z was named pastor of St. Mary Parish in Brownwood, returning to the site of his first assignment.

Zientek, along with six other priests of the Diocese of San Angelo, was named a monsignor by Pope John Paul II on Jan. 23, 2003.

In May 2003, Msgr. Zientek retired at the age of 70 and returned to his hometown of Brenham, where he lived on his 20-acre ranch. Though just a fraction of the original land divided among the family’s seven children, Msgr. Zientek still refers to it as a ranch after an Irish priest said, “Oh my Lord, you live on a ranch?”

“In Ireland, 20 acres might be a ranch,” mused Msgr. Zientek.

In January 2017, Msgr. Zientek moved to Kruse Village, an assisted living facility, at the suggestion of his doctor. Though living alone is no longer feasible, “at age 87, I can say ‘Thank you Lord for another day’ each morning” Msgr. Zientek said. “When I first retired, I was able to substitute on weekends for priests in different parishes. I can no longer do that since I am not allowed to drive. On the second Sunday of each month, I have Mass at Sacred Heart Church in Latium, Texas. Someone always picks me up, I say Mass, and someone brings me back in time for lunch at Kruse Village.”

In his 63 years as a priest, Msgr. Zientek has served seven bishops.
Families are forever

In 1910 G.K. Chesterton published a book titled What’s Wrong with the World. The guide for his judgment about the world was the family. For Chesterton, the worth of any human institution was measured by whether or not it was good for the family. In his book, Chesterton identified human institutions that are not good for the family and, therefore, are what is wrong with the world.

Chesterton identified big government and big business as the two things that are wrong with the world. Usually, we think big government means socialism and big business means capitalism, so the two should be opposed to each other. But, in fact, Chesterton says they cooperate with each other. Each will claim that what it does is good for the family, but it is not. Together they cooperate, or, one might say collude, to undermine the basic human family of father, mother, and children and their extended family.

How does Chesterton’s supposition help us understand what we are experiencing in America today? Big government wants all human institutions, including the family, to be subservient to the political state. The political state in our time has assumed increasing authority over marriage, the family, and human sexuality. No fault divorce has substituted for death. Big pharmaceutical companies benefit from government financial support as they not only develop vaccines to deal with the pandemic but also advertise them, with the help of big media, as the only proper way to deal with the pandemic, even though the Food and Drug Administration labels them as experimental and approves them for emergency use only.

All of this reaches into the life of the average American family every day. Picture a family living through a typical day. The alarm rings at 6:00 a.m. Does the family do their ablutions, gather around the breakfast table to read the Bible, pray, and have breakfast together, talking about the activities each will be engaged in during the day? Or do they turn on the TV, check their social media, grab breakfast individually, and go their separate ways for the day? And what happens when they come home in the evening? Is there a family meal, conversation about the day, and prayer before bed? Or does each member come home at a different time, eat the fast food he or she has picked up, watch his or her own TV and social media, play video games, and go about their individual activities with no effort to take an interest in what each one has done during the day? Is the world portrayed on TV, video games, and social media regarded as the real world, a world preferred to the world of the family?

Our American culture, by its surrender to big companies are doing the same thing. The entertainment industry, another big business, panders to these views that attack the family. The professional sports organizations, another big business, do the same. Big pharmaceutical companies benefit from government financial support as they not only develop vaccines to deal with the pandemic but also advertise them, with the help of big media, as the only proper way to deal with the pandemic, even though the Food and Drug Administration labels them as experimental and approves them for emergency use only.

Childhood illness and post delivery error all part of the plan for St. Francis Caracciolo

Ascanio Caracciolo was living the typical sporting life of children of nobility in 16th century Italy when he was stricken with an ugly skin disease resembling leprosy. People were frightened of him and he was ostracized and shunned.

Editor Bernard Bangley writes in Butler’s Lives of the Saints that during these difficult days as a social outcast, Ascanio vowed that if he recovered, he would dedicate his life to God. He completely recovered from his “leprosy,” which may have been shingles, and took steps to fulfill his promise.

Ascanio traveled to Naples to prepare for the priesthood and was ordained in 1587. He joined the Bianchi della Giustizia, a confraternity that visited prisons and prepared condemned criminals for death.

After a few years, his life took a turn in another direction when he received a letter from Giovanni Adorno, a Genoese patriarch, inviting him to join in the founding of a new religious order that would combine both the active and contemplative life. The letter was not intended for Ascanio, but for a distant relative with the same name.

Ascanio felt that the mis-delivered letter was a sign from heaven and he took steps to meet Adorno. The two of them made a 40-day retreat after which they prepared a set of rules for the new order. Bangley writes that with ten others, they formally began the order of the Minor Clerks Regular and Ascanio took the name of Francis in honor of St. Francis of Assisi at his solemn profession.

John Delaney writes in the Dictionary of Saints that the new order was devoted to missionary work and to ministering to sick in hospitals and to prisoners. They also had places called hermitages for those who felt called to a contemplative life. Pope Sixtus V approved the foundation in 1588 and Adorno was named superior.

They established a house in Naples and then went to Spain where they were refused permission to found a house. When they returned to Italy, the foundation flourished and their numbers increased. When Adorno died at age 40, Francis was asked to become superior. This was against his better judgment and contrary to his desire to lead a simple, humble life, but he relented and accepted the assignment.

Francis did not want others to treat him as a superior and his behavior became an example of selflessness. He took his turn at menial tasks, heard confessions every morning, begged in the streets on behalf of the poor, and gave away what little he owned. He was known to cure sick people by a sign of the cross. Because of his luminous preaching, he was called the “Preacher of the Love of God.”

Francis made a second and third visit to Spain in 1595 and 1598 and founded houses in Madrid, Valladolid, and Alcala. After seven years, Francis resigned as superior general to become novice master to the new recruits.

He died at Agnone on June 4, 1608, where he had gone to help set up a new novitiate. Suffering from a high fever, he shouted from his deathbed, “Let us go! Let us go!” A companion asked, “Where?” Francis replied, “To Heaven! To Heaven!” He was 44 years old. He was a relative of Thomas Aquinas through his mother and to Neapolitan princes through his father.

Francis was canonized in 1807 by Pope Pius VII. He is the patron saint of Naples and his feast day is June 4.
On the average, other wealthy countries spend about half as much per person on healthcare as does the United States, and that gap has continued to widen since 1980. Because our country is so committed to providing the best medical care in the world, it would be a logical assumption that Americans lead the world in longevity … but we don’t.

We are not even second, or third, or fourth, or fifth, or tenth, or twentieth, or thirtieth, or fortieth. Depending on the ranking system, we may not even be in the top 50. How can this possibly be true?

It would be surprising enough for us to fall behind France, Spain, Germany, Canada, Japan, and other well-known countries, being topped by Andorra, Anguilla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Channel Islands, the Faroe Islands, Guernsey, Macao, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Helena, Saint Martin, and San Marino. Wallis and Fortuna residents also live to see one more birthday than do we. How can this be? How can the country that spends so much on “health” not have the healthiest people? Maybe it is because the healthier you are, the less you need to spend on healthcare, and the longevity data suggests this is true. But what are the reasons for this unhealth? I think there are three main ones.

First, our eating habits have contributed to a staggering increase in the average American’s weight. Our obesity rate is over 40% in adults and has nearly tripled over the past 50 years while “severe” obesity has doubled in the last 20. Even more alarming, the number of obese children ages 5-19 is approximately five times greater in 2020 than it was in 1975. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that “Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer that are some of the leading causes of preventable, premature death.” The estimated medical costs related to obesity range from $147 to $210 billion each year.

To compound the problems caused by our eating habits, our lack of exercise is a second contributor to poor health. The CDC estimates that more than 75% of Americans are not getting enough exercise, and “though it’s not the best way to lose weight it is a crucial component to healthy living. We should all try to work out just a little bit more, even if we have to start small.”

Just as weight gain is gradual and, at first, unnoticeable, so too do we slowly become preoccupied with the “here and now.” It is so easy to “feast” on the internet and fill our spirits with the “junk food” that takes us away from God and others as we ingest all forms of self-serving media and practices. But Jesus gave us the healthiest “food” possible when he said “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” (Jn 6:51).

Stress is directly related to fear, and we are told that “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tm 1:7).

Dr. James Sullivan, 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.
Catholic Charitable Foundation grant recipients give thanks

By Mercedez Rassi

On April 19, the Catholic Charitable Foundation for the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo Board of Trustees awarded $88,339 worth of grants to 23 different parishes, schools, and ministries in our diocese. Many of our 2021 grant recipients are already putting their grant awards to good use.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland

Our Lady of Guadalupe in Midland received a $3,000 grant from the Catholic Charitable Foundation to support the purchase of technology used for their outdoor Masses. Father David Herrera, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, wrote to the Board of Trustees, “I truly appreciate your vote of confidence in the ministries that we have established here in the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church.” Father David explains that with the grant funds, Our Lady of Guadalupe was able to “purchase the necessary equipment in order to livestream and broadcast the liturgy to those who are not able to attend the gathering of the worshipping community on church grounds.” The generous grant from the Catholic Charitable Foundation endowment funds has provided “an opportunity for many to participate in the spirit of prayer.”

St. Margaret of Cortona, Big Lake, and St. Thomas, Rankin

St. Margaret of Cortona in Big Lake and St. Thomas in Rankin each received $5,000 grants from the Catholic Charitable Foundation. The grant awarded to St. Margaret of Cortona will go towards labor and materials to build a metal fence around the parish’s new rectory. The grant awarded to St. Thomas will go towards repairs in the parish hall, including upgrading the water heater, kitchen sink, cabinets, and flooring. Julia Flores, Business Manager at St. Margaret of Cortona and St. Thomas, shared that the Foundation grants are vital to their parish and missions: “These Foundation grants help us improve on our capital expenses that otherwise we can’t afford.” Because these churches are in small rural communities, Julie remarks that they have fewer “opportunities to seek out grants or other resources.” Julie emphasizes that the grants received from the Catholic Charitable Foundation endowments help their churches to better leverage their resources as they work to grow, unite as a community, and “continue to do ministry.”

St. Charles, Eden

St. Charles Catholic Church in Eden received a $5,000 grant from the Catholic Charitable Foundation for the addition of a bathroom in the front of the church building. Juan Barba, president of St. Charles’ Parish Council, states that the new bathroom will “be a great addition, especially to help our elderly parishioners who attend our church.” The bathroom addition project will include making the bathroom handicap accessible, making the parish more welcoming and functional to its parishioners. Through this grant, St. Charles Catholic Church will create a more welcoming environment for its parishioners and continue to focus on ministering to their community. Juan and all of St. Charles Catholic Church extend thanks to the donors who make these grants possible through the Catholic Charitable Foundation endowment funds.

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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 grants for Catholic parishes, schools, and ministries in our diocese.

Anyone can create an endowment fund in 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 Mercedez Rassi, Executive Director, at 325-651-7500.

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.

Register now ($40 per person) at www.CatholicCharismatic.com.

Dr. Mary Healy
Spiritual direction: Growing closer to God

By Tim George

Spiritual direction is “help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship” (William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*). This one of many different definitions of spiritual direction; however, it is operationally one of the very best. It is also the definition used in the formation of spiritual directors for the Diocese of San Angelo. It might be good to look at the key points from this definition.

“Enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her” — We are a busy people. Do we stop and spend time to “pay attention,” to listen to God? God speaks to us in many ways, but his voice is always directed to each one of us in a very personal way. Spiritual direction can help us “pay attention” to God’s call.

“Respond to this personally communicating God” — It is not enough for us to hear God. God, who is always drawing us near, is asking us to respond to his call. How do we respond to God’s communication? Spiritual direction can assist us in finding ways to “respond” to even impractical step in living the Christian life. But the Carmelite is a successor of the prophets — radical as they were — as witness to the desert vocation: a reminder that we do not have a lasting city on this earth and that we are pilgrims to the city of God. More specifically, the Carmelite gives witness by his contemplative life in a special way as he leads others into the ways of prayer, contemplation, and solitude. It is an apostolate of interior prayer.

During these past 30 years, the hermitage has grown physically and spiritually under the guidance of Father Fabian to include six hermits in vows, of whom two are priests and four are brothers. The vocation of the Carmelite hermit is a unique one, and it takes a person who wants to be totally dedicated to the service of the Lord in prayer and solitude to be part of it.

With much joy and gratitude to God, the Carmelite hermits of Christoval would like to invite you to celebrate with them God’s many blessings during 30 years with a Solemn Eucharistic Liturgy at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo on Saturday, July 3, 2021, at 10:30 a.m.

For more information call Mount Carmel Hermitage at 325-896-2249.

See DIRECTION, Page 20
2021 Graduation celebrations

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Andrews, May 2, 2021

COURTESY

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Ozona, May 16, 2021

COURTESY

St. Stephen Parish in Midland, the weekend of May 2, 2021.

Above and right: St. Stephen Parish in Midland, the weekend of May 2, 2021.

COURTESY

St. Mary Parish in Odessa, May 30, 2021

COURTESY

Father Ryan Rojo, the diocesan vocation director, graduated from the Villanova University School of Business in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 15, 2021. Father Rojo earned a Master’s of Science in Church Management.

Mauricio Romero, Humberto Diaz, Francisco Canacho, and David Quinn recently graduated from Conception Seminary College in Conception, Missouri. The four will continue their studies as seminarians for the Diocese of San Angelo at different seminaries where they will be engaged in graduate-level theology studies.
By Kathy Hardgrave

On the weekend of Friday, April 30 and Saturday, May 1, St. Ann's Catholic Church in Sonora hosted a two-day Cinco de Mayo Music Fiesta. Father Felix Archibong, pastor, planted the seed for a big event, and the parish came together like never before.

Seven bands and entertainers, some well-known in Texas, the US, and Mexico, performed over the two days for everyone's enjoyment. They were Shaker Hymns, David Lee Garza y Los Musicales, Conjunto Mi Gusto, LA45, Joe Trevino Band, Jaime DeAnda, and Shelly Lares. In addition, two groups of dancers in costumes performed beautifully: Las Matachines de La Virgen de Guadalupe and Grupo Folklorico de Bendiciones.

The threat of rain did not keep a very large crowd from attending on both days. The large, covered pavilion, adjacent to the Sutton County Civic Center, provided a place for friends and families to visit and enjoy the music and dancing.

Booths offering food and drinks from parish families and organizations, as well as from private vendors, gave visitors a wide variety to choose from. Inside the Civic Center, vendors from Sonora and the surrounding area displayed a variety of merchandise for sale. A silent auction, Loteria, and a country store, all provided by parishioners, added to the activities offered.

Several of the youth of the parish, with the help of their families, competed for special honors. Miss Cinco de Mayo: Amaris Jimenez; runner-up: Joselyn Rodriguez; Little Miss St. Ann: Jocelyn Campa; runner-up: Jennifer Arredondo; Little Mr. St. Ann: Tristan Dove.

The people of St. Ann's Church appreciate all who attended and supported the 2021 Music Fiesta!
With 84 candidates confirmed May 17, Holy Redeemer Parish in Odessa had the largest class in the diocese.

Bishop Michael Sis celebrated two Confirmation Masses for the parish cluster of St. Joseph and St. Anthony in Odessa on May 4 and 5, 2021.

PHOTOS BY ALAN TORRE | APTORRE PHOTOGRAPHY

COURTESY

St. Lawrence Church near Garden City was the site May 8 of the Confirmation Mass for the parish cluster of St. Lawrence, St. Thomas in Midkiff, and St. Paschal in Sterling City.

COURTESY

Men’s Conference
Open for Catholic Men ages High School and older.
O.L.P.H. Catholic Hall
June 19th, 2021

Registration $10.00
8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Conference
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Lunch will be provided.

Guest speakers “Rome Boys” from Abilene, Tx.

To Pre-register, mail $10.00 to
Knights of Columbus Council 8572
P.O. Box 3179 Ozona, Texas 76943

Contact Frank Tombrance 325-226-2927 for more information.
Imagine a young couple intoxicated with each other in the early stages of love. Imagine a religious neophyte in love with God, praying ecstatically. Imagine an idealistic young person working tirelessly with the poor, enflamed with a thirst for justice. Are this young couple really in love with each other? Is that religious neophyte really in love with God? Is this young social activist really in love with the poor? Not an easy question.

Whom are we really loving when we have feelings of love? The other? Ourselves? The archetype and energy the other is carrying? Our own fantasy of that person? The feelings this experience is triggering inside us? When we are in love, are we really in love with another person or are we mostly basking in a wonderful feeling which could be just as easily triggered by countless other persons?

There are different answers to that question. John of the Cross would say it is all of these things; we are in fact really loving that other person, loving a fantasy we have created of that person, and basking in the good feeling this has generated inside us. That is why, invariably, at a given point in a relationship the powerful feelings of being in love give way to disillusionment — disillusionment (by definition) implies the dispelling of an illusion, something was unreal. So for John of the Cross, when we are in love, partly the love is real and partly it is an illusion. Moreover, John would say the same thing about our initial feelings of fervor in prayer and in altruistic service. They are a mixture of both, authentic love and an illusion.

Some other analyses are less generous. In their view, all initial falling in love, whether it be with another person, with God in prayer, or with the poor in service, is mainly an illusion. Ultimately, you are in love with being in love, in love with what prayer is doing for you, or in love with how working for justice is making you feel. The other person, God, and the poor are secondary. That is why, so often, when first fervor dies, so too does our love for its original object. When the fantasy dies, so too does the sense of being in love. We fall in love without really knowing the other person and we fall out of love without really knowing the other person. The very phrase “falling in love” is revealing. “Falling” is not something we choose, it happens to us. Marriage Encounter spirituality has a clever slogan around this: marriage is a decision; falling in love is not.

Who is right? When we fall in love, how much is genuine love for another and how much is an illusion? When do we most lovingly ourselves? Steven Levine answers this from very different perspective and throws new light on the question. What is his perspective?

Love, he says, is not a “dualistic emotion.” For him, whenever we are feeling authentic love we are, at that moment, feeling our oneness with God and with all that is. He writes, “The experience of love arises when we surrender our separateness into the universal. It is a feeling of unity. … It is not an emotion, it is a state of being. … It is not so much that ‘two are as one’ so much as it is the ‘One manifested as two.’” He says we are one with our own selves, in that moment, we are one with him or her, not separate, so that even though our fantasies and feelings may be partially wrapped up in self-serving affectivity, something deeper and more real than our feelings and fantasies is occurring. We are one with the other in our being — and in love, we sense it. In this view, authentic love is not so much something we feel; it is something we are. At its root, love is not an affective emotion or a moral virtue (though these are part of it). It is a metaphysical condition, not something that comes and goes like an emotional state, nor something that we can choose or refuse morally. A metaphysical condition is a given, something we stand within, that makes up part of who we are, constitutively, though we can be blissfully unaware. Thus, love, not least falling in love, can help make us more conscious of our non-separateness, our oneness in being with others.

When we feel love deeply or passionately, then perhaps (like Thomas Merton describing a mystical vision he had on a street corner) we can awake more from our dream of separateness and our illusion of difference and see the secret beauty and depth of other people’s hearts. Perhaps too it will enable us to see others at that place in them where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God’s eyes.

And wouldn’t it be wonderful, Merton adds, “if we could see each other that way all the time.”

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.

Stretching out to great things:
A commencement address for the University of St. Thomas

The text for Bishop Robert Barron’s commencement address given at the University of St. Thomas in Houston on May 8, 2021:
I have the very happy responsibility today of congratulating the University of St. Thomas class of 2021! And also to express my pride in becoming today a member of your class. I’m delighted to be in your company. I would also, of course, like to thank and congratulate your parents, your siblings, your friends, and your professors, who have done so much to bring you to this day and who feel a very justifiable pride in your accomplishments.

My fellow graduates, I would like to reflect with you, very briefly, on the meaning of the formation in the Catholic intellectual tradition that you have received here at UST. A standard view today, on display in practically every nook and cranny of our cultural life, is that the individual person has the prerogative of creating his or her own values. Freedom, especially the freedom of self-determination, is practically unassailable. Frankly, I cannot think of anything more boring!

If we define our own values, our own truths, and our own purpose, we effectively lock ourselves into the tiny space of what we can imagine or control. When we follow these prompts of our culture today, we become cramped souls, what the medieval philosophers called pusillae animae. The entire point of a Catholic intellectual formation is to produce magnae animae (great souls). A great soul doesn’t invent her own values; rather, she intuit the marvelous intellectual, moral, and aesthetic values that are found in the objective order — and then she responds to them with her whole heart. She thereby expands in a manner commensurate with the goods that have captivated her.

The basic purpose of the initiation rituals found among primal peoples around the world was to convince a young person that his life is not about him. Typically, he would be wrested away from his comfortable domestic environment, scarified in some way, instructed in the lore of his tribe, and then, equipped with only a few provisions, cast out into jungle or forest or tundra and told to make it on his own. This was not arbitrary cruelty; it was an invitation to move out of his own space and to discover the objective values in his people’s history, in nature, and finally in the spiritual order.

Your time here at the University of St. Thomas has been a kind of ritual of initiation. The point of these last four years has been to break you out of your self-regard and to invite you to an adventurous exploration of new worlds of thought and experience. I am concerned that “safe” and “safety” have become, for the present generation, such conspicuous words. No one would deny, of course, that a modicum of safety is required for any sort of peace of mind or achievement; nevertheless, one would be hard pressed to say that a religion that places at the very center of our attention a man nailed to a cross is concerned primarily with safety. According to the cliché, ships are safe in harbors, but ships are not meant for harbors; rather, they are meant for the open sea. In a similar way, you are safe within the confines of your own desires and expectations, but you are not meant to stop there, and so you must move on, rather in the infinitely wider and more fascinating world of objective value.

Your generation, I would submit, is especially oriented to the realm of value in regard to two areas: the natural sciences and social justice. In the course of my evangelical work, I find that there is, among many young people, a great reverence for the sciences and the technology that they have produced. Even as they demonstrate a certain impatience with other disciplines, they tend to accept physics, chemistry, medicine, and engineering as authoritative. In doing so, they are acknowledging an extraordinarily significant realm of value — namely, objective intelligibility. No scientist — physicist, chemist, astronomer, psychologist, etc. — could get her work off the ground if she believed that the world she investigated was marked by form, pattern, understandability. The responsible researcher is not inventing intelligibility; she’s finding it, following it, rejoicing in it.

And you and your peers are passionate about issues of social justice. You are eager to fight corruption, discrimination, race prejudice, and inequality; you advocate for inclusivity, the acceptance of diversity, and care for those on the margins of society. In so doing, you are acknowledging the existence of certain moral values that you have not invented and that apply in all circumstances. None of you, I wager, would say that racism or sexism or human trafficking are acceptable in some contexts or that opposing these is simply a matter of personal opinion. No, in point of fact, you feel so strongly about these matters precisely because you know that they are moral absolutes that summon your attention and demand your acquiescence. Like the intelligibility of the world, these objective moral truths draw you out of yourself and toward spiritual adventure.

See COMMENCEMENT, Page 22
Un momento propicio para que las parroquias sean comunidades santuario

En este momento de pandemia, cuando están en juego la vida, la salud y el bienestar personal, tenemos que trabajar juntos y de manera común. En estos momentos de pandemia, no hay lugar para el egoísmo. A medida que desvanezcan las restricciones asociadas con la pandemia, podemos pensar que la crisis de salud en la que hemos vivido recientemente se ha terminado y que hemos regresado a la normalidad. No vayamos tan rápido.

Decenas de miles de personas todavía contraen el virus cada día. Miles de fallecimientos se reportan cada semana en nuestro país. Naciones enteras, incluyendo a muchos de nuestros vecinos más inmediatos, están pasando por momentos muy difíciles. Si nuestros vecinos no pueden controlar la pandemia, nadie está seguro.

La solidaridad parece ser la mejor estrategia para asegurarse de que todos estemos bien durante esta pandemia. Más específicamente, la solidaridad cristiana: ver el rostro de Cristo en la otra persona, especialmente en quienes tiene más dificultades, y hacer algo para aliviar su sufrimiento para que vivan con dignidad.

Vivir en solidaridad exige empatía. Tenemos que ser capaces de entender lo que les aflige y qué les impide acceder a aquello que puede hacer que sus vidas sean de mejor calidad.

Aunque nuestra sociedad ha mejorado notablemente en cuanto a su respuesta a la pandemia del COVID-19, desafortunadamente hay grupos que siguen llevando la carga más pesada con fruto notablemente en cuanto a su resiliencia.

"Siempre he experimentado bondad en la gente que he conocido por todo el mundo", dijo. Yo también admiro a todos con esa consciencia, personas que no se rinden al pesimismo cuando los tiempos son difíciles.

"Zhao dedicó su premio a todos con la fe y valentía para sostener lo bueno en su mismo y lo bueno en su humanidad. "Siempre he experimentado bondad en la gente que he conocido por todo el mundo", dijo yo. También admiro a todos con esa consciencia, personas que no se rinden al pesimismo cuando los tiempos son difíciles."

"Sin duda, los tiempos son duros actualmente por muchas razones, primero por la pandemia que sigue en curso, pero además por las divisiones políticas y la violencia policíaca contra personas de color. Pero todo eso no nulifica la gran verdad que Zhao discutió con su padre: que todo ser humano al nacer es intrínsecamente bueno y que todos somos capaces de nutrir y aumentar lo bueno por toda la vida."

Extendiéndose hacia grandes cosas: Discurso de graduación para la Universidad Santo Tomás

El texto del discurso de graduación del obispo Robert Barron pronunciado en la Universidad Santo Tomás en Houston el 8 de mayo de 2021:

Hoy tengo la feliz responsabilidad de felicitar a la promoción 2021 de la Universidad Santo Tomás. Y también de expresar mi orgullo por convertirme hoy en miembro de su clase. Estoy encantado de estar en compañía de ustedes. Por supuesto, también quiero agradecer y felicitar a sus padres, a sus hermanas y hermanas, a sus amigos y a sus profesores, que tanto han hecho para que ustedes lleguen a este día y que sienten un orgullo muy justificado por los logros de ustedes.

Compañeros de promoción, me gustaría reflexionar con ustedes, muy brevemente, sobre el significado de la formación en la tradición intelectual católica que han recibido aquí en la Universidad Santo Tomás. Un punto de vista estándar hoy en día, que se muestra en prácticamente todos los rincones de nuestra vida cultural, es que la persona individual tiene la prerrogativa de crear sus propios valores. La libertad, especialmente la libertad de autodeterminación, es prácticamente inexpugnable. Francamente, no se me ocurre nada más aburrido!

Si definimos nuestros propios valores, nuestra propia verdad, nuestro propio propósito, nos encerramos efectivamente en el pequeño espacio de lo que podemos imaginar o controlar. Cuando seguimos estos impulsos de nuestra cultura actual, nos convertimos en almas grandes. Un alma grande no intuye lo que intuye almas pequeñas, sino que intuye lo que intuye almas grandes.

"Imaginaos a una pareja joven intoxicada mutuamente en las primeras etapas del amor. Imaginaos a un neófito religioso enamorado de Dios, orando en ex tasis. Imaginaos a un joven idealista trabajando incesantemente con los pobres, in flamado y sediento de justicia. ¿Estás en realidad enamorada esta joven pareja? ¿Se encuentra de hecho enamorado de Dios ese neófito religioso? ¿Estás verdaderamente enamorado de los pobres este joven activista social? Cuestión nada fácil.

¿Al otro? ¿A nosotros mismos? ¿El arquetipo y energía que el otro está llevando? ¿Nuestra propia fantasía de esa persona? ¿Los sentimientos que esta experiencia está desencadenando dentro de nosotros? Cuando estamos enamorados, ¿estamos de verdad enamorados de otra persona o estamos mayormente disfrutando en un maravilloso sentimiento que podría estar fácilmente desencadenado por otras incontables personas?"

"Hay diferentes respuestas a esa cuestión. Juan de la Cruz diría que es todas estas cosas; en realidad, estamos amando a esa otra persona, amando una fantasía que hemos creado de esa persona y disfrutando con el buen sentimiento que esto ha generado dentro de nosotros. Por eso, invariablemente, en un determinado momento de una relación, los poderosos sentimientos de estar enamorados ceden el paso a la desilusión; la desilusión (por definición) implica el desvanecimiento de una ilusión; algo era real. Así, para Juan de la Cruz, cuando estamos enamorados, el amor es en parte real y en parte una ilusión. Además, Juan de la Cruz diría lo mismo sobre nuestros sentimientos iniciales de fervor en la oración y en el servicio.

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"Y Zhao dedicó su premio a todos con la fe y valentía para sostener lo bueno en su mismo y lo bueno en su humanidad. "Siempre he experimentado bondad en la gente que he conocido por todo el mundo", dijo yo. También admiro a todos con esa consciencia, personas que no se rinden al pesimismo cuando los tiempos son difíciles."

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Mi madre tenía esa capacidad y generosidad y por eso escribo hoy sobre ella. En el Día de la Madre celebro su fe y firme esperanza durante los tiempos que vivimos, no menos la gran Depresión de 1930.

Ella tenía un gran amor de erudición y, al mismo tiempo, escasa oportunidad de realizarla. En el alto desierto de las estribaciones de la Cordillera de Cristo en una remota parte del norte de Nuevo México, había pocos escuelas cuando ella era joven. Pero mi abuelo Enrique Perea construyó una escuela de una pieza y luego persuadido a las autoridades a enviar una maestra. Su graduación de la secundaria terminó su educación formal.
vaccines, and instead urges people to “form their own judgments.”

“Neither requires nor forbids” the use of vaccines, he added, “We need to offer information and not dictate decisions.”

Vaccine mandates do counter to the wisdom of encouraging individuals to make careful and case-specific determinations regarding their personal health needs. Such mandates bolster the idea that the judgment of a higher authority, a university president or a politician, should be substituted for their own free and informed consent.

In general, when I become sick, I ought to function as the decision-maker regarding my medical treatments, even as I work closely with my health care providers to receive the information I need to make the best decision. Similarly, if I am healthy, but face the risk of exposure to a new disease, I must weigh the benefits and burdens of prophylactic measures like vaccines.

Early in a pandemic, there can be a lot of questions and uncertainty because of shifting sets of medical data or a growing sense of alarm and panic. We may be tempted to think we can or should sideline ethical or prudential concerns.

Yet it is at precisely such a time that our ethics and prudential judgments become paramount, as we seek to temper urgency with due diligence, and to confront our fears with reason and discernment. It is in such a crisis moment that calm, careful, and case-by-case discernment becomes crucial.

Mandating vaccines for everyone involves a flawed assumption that there are only benefits, and no significant burdens, associated with getting vaccinated. The history of vaccine development reminds us how vaccines, which constitute a breakthrough technology and life-saving remedy in the battle to improve public health, are nevertheless not a risk-free endeavor.

Some individuals have allergies to vaccine ingredients. Others have immune systems that cannot tolerate vaccines. Some vaccine recipients encounter unanticipated reactions and side effects, whether it’s headaches, muscle aches, several days of exhaustion or nausea, anaphylaxis, or the rare blood clots seen among those who received the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. When deciding about vaccinations, other considerations besides safety and side effects also come into play.

There are ethical concerns about the way certain COVID-19 vaccines are connected to cell lines derived from abortions.

Certain populations, statistically speaking, will face lower risk from diseases like COVID-19, including otherwise healthy college-age students and children, many thousands of whom have tested positive but most of whom have experienced only mild symptoms or may have been entirely asymptomatic. Those who have been previously exposed to COVID-19 may decide to delay or decline vaccination, since they already have acquired some immunity.

For those, meanwhile, who are more vulnerable to the coronavirus and its potentially damaging effects, like those who are elderly, obese, diabetic, or facing other comorbidities, it makes sense for them to consider the potentially safer path of vaccination, rather than risking a harmful (or deadly) encounter with the virus itself. The same would hold for young people who are obese or diabetic, or have regular contact with vulnerable groups like the elderly.

Finally, mandates can sometimes have an effect opposite to what is intended. People can stubbornly dig in their heels when certain behaviors are compelled. 

Jonah Berger, a marketing professor at the Wharton School has noted that there is some evidence that telling people what to do can backfire, as with “Just Say No” style anti-drug campaigns that may actually increase drug use among certain subgroups of young people.

“People want to feel like they’re in control of their choices,” Berger says.

He notes, however, that once people have described what they care about and believe others have addressed those concerns, it’s much harder for them to push back merely for the sake of resisting: “They’re [now] a participant in the process rather than being forced to do something.”

Especially at Catholic universities and colleges, where we are seeking to form the next generation of society’s leaders and thinkers, instead of imposing the requirement to get vaccinated, leaders would do better to share and explain to students the benefits and risks of vaccinations — scientific and ethical 

— to help them decide.

By offering evidence-based information and moral principles, rather than mandates, college students will be helped to clarify their own processes of intellectual and personal discernment, and acquire the habit of making more prudent and informed choices.

Reverend Tadeusz Pocholczyk, 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.fathered.com.

Start small like God loves to do

How often do you think about how small you are? Not your size or shape, but the fact that you were once tinier than the period at the end of this sentence. Or the truth that you are one of almost 8 billion people on the planet today. Or the mind-boggling statistic that you are among over 100 billion humans who have ever lived.

Each of us — no matter our age or accomplishment — is only a small speck in the span of the universe. Yet we are beloved by our Creator, known and cherished by God who gave us life from the moment of our conception.

What does it mean that we all start small?

For ten years, I had the joy of taking part in a theological seminar on vocation across the lifespan. With an interdisciplinary group of scholars, we studied each phase of human development, from infancy through the elder years, to explore how God calls us at each stage of life.

During our meeting on childhood, I was pregnant and parenting two children. Yet I laughed with the delight of discovery when the theologian seated next to me started the meeting by saying, “This may seem obvious, but children are small! That matters.”

Rekindling care ministry after a pandemic of loneliness

If anyone needs evidence that a weekly, hourly visit from a friendly volunteer makes a big difference in others’ lives, the effect of the pandemic on homebound ministries to seniors is proof.

Before COVID-19, whether because of illness, effects of aging, weakness or other factors, seniors who had to stay at home often relied upon visits from fellow parishioners to bring companionship, Eucharist, news from the faith community or just kind conversation.

If they were present, family caregivers could take a brief break during the visits, go to another room for some quiet or run a quick errand or two without worrying. If family lived far away, they could be assured that someone local and friendly was checking in on their loved one.

But with lockdowns, the visits, respite and peace of mind abruptly stopped and many suffered because of it.

Melissa Kelley, care team manager, says, "During lockdown, the first thing we did was ask all 20 care teams to stop visiting completely and switch to phone calls and sending greeting cards."

The move "helped a little bit, but

Laura Kelly
Fanucci
Catholic News Service
Faith at Home

Laura Kelly Fanucci: Children's small size is the first reason we need families. Despite being a mother of many small children (and a child myself before that), I never pondered this truth until I read Maria Montessori's reflections in her essay "God and the Child":

"Let us imagine for a while that the world consisted only of adults, because man was born already developed and mature; and because of this could dispense with parents.

"The most basic community, the family, which of all natural communities exerts a deeper and more lasting influence on the spirit of man, and which sets itself up both by means of, and because of the child with his many needs, would then have no more reason to exist."

Humans could have been created to start life as full-grown adults:

See PRATT, Page 21

Maureen Pratt
Catholic News Service
Living Well

Maureen Pratt: Kelley says. But it was hard on volunteers, who "went through a lot of guilt" because they could not personally visit.

Also, although people who were confined could still have contact with volunteers, some did not benefit as greatly as they did with personal visits. For example, phone calls were difficult for the hearing impaired, and persons with dementia missed the familiarity of seeing as well as hearing someone.

Another challenge was that, during the pandemic, the number of people home alone increased.

"I got a phone call from one of the big hospitals' geriatric social worker," says Kelley. "She said that the elderly were being discharged and going back to an empty home."

Kelley started a "phone pals"

See PRATT, Page 21
The Angelus

Catholic Voices

Cooperating with evil

The Angelus JUNE 2021 Page 19

Richard Doerflinger Catholic News Service

A More Human Society

The COVID-19 pandemic has killed hundreds of thousands of Americans and isolated us from each other as authorities struggle to prevent infections. As vaccinations increase, we see fewer new cases, and a welcome relaxation of some precautions — especially for those who are vaccinated. That raises its own issues.

Some predict a two-class society: the privileged who are vaccinated and can resume normal activities, and second-class citizens who must still wear masks and distance themselves from others. That is especially troubling to Catholics who refuse vaccines because of their connection with fetal tissue from abortion.

For decades, "immortalized" cell lines developed from the tissue of abortion victims have been used for medical research, including vaccine development. One cell line is HEK-293, apparently grown from "human embryonic kidney" tissue from an abortion performed in the Netherlands almost half a century ago.

The abortion was not done to obtain this tissue, but it was immoral to exploit the innocent and unconsenting victim for medical use.

Rebecca Skloot's award-winning book The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks recounts a similar wrong. Shortly before her death, named Henrietta Lacks died of cervical cancer in 1951, doctors removed some of her cancer cells and, without her knowledge or consent, developed an "immortal" cell line.

These "HeLa" cells revolutionized treatment of cancer and other illnesses and made a fortune for those "immortal" cell line.

Catholics who refuse vaccines because of their connection with fetal tissue from abortion.

No lectures. No scolding for running or denying. No "I told you so." No "what is that racket?" Catholic Voices Catholic News Service

The stories we have heard in the 50 days of Easter were wonderful, but words were used sparingly. We might imagine that the risen Lord would have a lot to talk about, instructions to give, big explanations or reprimands for failure. He did explain the Scriptures to the couple walking to Emmaus. But ultimately, they recognized him in the simple but profound breaking of the bread.

Jesus offers a consoling presence in his postresurrection appearances, the God who has shown up. There's Jesus, by the Lake of Tiberias. What could be more edifying than the sight of Jesus cooking a simple breakfast over a charcoal fire? No scolding for running or denying. No "I told you so." No lectures.

Jesus is with them, his words measured. He tells the fisherman to put their nets out and try again after a failed fishing trip. And the result? A bounty of fish. Always a bounty.

Like the bread on the hillside that fed thousands, always more than enough to feed everyone, no questions asked, no litmus tests.

And forgiveness. Jesus, on the lake, asks Peter if he loves him. He asks him three times, symbolically offering Peter three chances to atone for his denials just days before. Not a time to berate Peter, but a time to love him with great mercy and very few words.

When I read Ó Tuama's story, I wonder what the priest sensed. Was he a deep listener, someone attuned to the Spirit, whose heart was open to sense the needs of another? Was his inner landscape available to the presence of Christ?

As we spend time with Jesus, we ask for the grace to consider the words we use with our family, neighbors, our friends, the casual encounters of our day. We consider social media, where Catholics use increasingly vile words to each other. We consider our political discussions, grown ever more rancorous and untruthful. How can we temper our words with love?

Prayer helps us learn to listen. A nightly review of our day helps us to recall when we failed to listen, when we talked too much or too carelessly. We ask to learn from the risen Jesus, who used words with great sensitivity.

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OBISPO
Continúa de Página 3

que se convierta en diácono. El proceso de discernimiento en el programa de formación es una vía de doble sentido; es decir, el candidato mismo debe discernir el llamado de Dios, y la iglesia también debe discernir si este hombre está llamado o no a convertirse en diácono permanente.


La Diócesis de San Ángelo fue una de las primeras en ordenar diáconos permanentes después de que el Concilio Vaticano II restableció este orden en Italia. Los primeros diáconos ordenados fueron el 3 de junio de 1974. El obispo Stephen A. Leven en agosto de 1976. Planeo ordenar nuestra clase actual el 4 de junio de 2022. Ahora estamos llevando a cabo sesiones informativas para aquellos que puedan ser llamados a formar la siguiente clase, cuya ordenación debería llevarse a cabo en 2026. El periodo de formación suele durar entre 4 y 5 años. Incluye reuniones mensuales de fin de semana en persona, así como clases en línea en el hogar, que generalmente están disponibles en inglés o español.

Aquéllos hombres de la Diócesis de San Ángelo que deseen participar en el próximo proceso de consulta deben enviar la Forma de Registro de Consulta antes del 19 de junio de 2021. Este debe estar firmado por el hombre, su esposa, y su párroco. Para obtener este formulario, comuníquese con la Oficina del Ministerio Diocesano de la Diócesis de San Ángelo en deaconoffice@sanangelodiocese.org.

DIRECION
Continued from Page 11

Our loving God.

“Grow in intimacy with this God” — God’s desire for each one of us is to be in relationship with him. This relationship can remain superficial or exist as the deepest of intimacy. Spiritual direction can assist us in probing and deepening our “intimate” relationship with God.

“Live the consequences of the relationship” — God does not ask us to just “live in” intimacy with him, he asks us to “live out” our intimacy with him. Spiritual direction can assist us, can even challenge us, to find ways to “live out the consequences” of our deepening relationship with God.

Spiritual direction is not answering our prayers, meaning, somehow a way to fix or solve a problem (this is counseling). Nor is it a lesson on church doctrine (this is pastoral care). Both of these are important in our spiritual journey, spiritual direction is all about growing closer to God. Spiritual directors serve as conduits through which the Holy Spirit can work. Together with the Holy Spirit, we can discern our place in this life. In fact, the Holy Spirit is the true spiritual director.

Having a prayer life is essential for anyone in spiritual direction. Prayer, in particular contemplative prayer, is the pathway to our closer relationship with God. St. Teresa of Jesus wrote in her autobiography, The Book of Her Life, “Contemplative prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.” Those who choose to meet regularly in spiritual direction will find that their prayer life will blossom, they will live a more contemplative life, and they will grow in faith, hope, and love.

It is important to understand that the subject matter of spiritual direction is not only our prayer life but life in general. Spiritual direction is about the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. Another definition of spiritual direction reads this way: “The ministry of Spiritual Direction can be understood as the meeting of two or more people whose desire is to prayerfully listen for the movements of the Holy Spirit in all areas of the person’s life (not just in their formal prayer life)” (Tilden Edwards, Spiritual Direction, Spiritual Companion: Guide to Tending the Soul).

While spiritual direction is not new, it has found a resurgence since Vatican II, and more importantly, it has found a place among the laity, so spiritual direction is no longer confined to the clergy. Spiritual direction is for everyone. Many more of the laity and clergy are being formed as spiritual directors to be able to meet the growing need for spiritual direction in the church today.

The Diocese of San Angelo is aware of the very few formed spiritual directors in this diocese. Consequently, the diocese recently sponsored the formation of nine new spiritual directors. These new ministers of spiritual direction completed a three-year formation program through St. Peter Upon the Water, a ministry of the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

By more than doubling the available Catholic spiritual directors for this diocese, many more of the faithful can have access to spiritual direction.

Through a program involving didactic teaching, prayer, and practice, these new spiritual directors have become active listeners with their hearts attuned to the Holy Spirit. They are well-formed to be able to sit with individuals and carry out their call as spiritual directors in a particular way by aiding their directees to recognize God in their lives and then to foster a closer and deeper relationship with God.

Spiritual direction is most often a one-to-one, face-to-face encounter. But with the pandemic, more people have found satisfaction with virtual encounters. The current newly formed spiritual directors have had experience with virtual spiritual direction, so there is now a greater opportunity for the more remote areas of our diocese to participate in spiritual direction. Either way visits take place (face-to-face or virtual), spiritual direction can be an important part of one’s faith journey.

Many times spiritual directors are located in a parish, so by speaking with your pastor you may be able to find a spiritual director with whom you can work. The diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis carries a listing of active formed spiritual directors and may be reached at 325-651-7500. Other resources for locating a Catholic spiritual director are the St. Peter Upon the Water website (www.stpeteuponthewater.org) or the Spiritual Directors International website (www.sdicompanions.org) where many Catholic spiritual directors are listed.
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PRATT

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SANDOVAL

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ROLHEISER

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Staying Connected with the Diocese of San Angelo

DOSA Mail

The official Flocknote of the Diocese of San Angelo. Receive texts or emails with important news, updates, and messages from the diocese.

Two ways to join:
1) Text DOSA to 84576
2) Visit https://app.flocknote.com/dosaemail

Social Media

Diocese of San Angelo on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/DioceseofSanAngelo

Bishop Michael Sis on Twitter: @SABishopMike

On the Web

www.sanangelodiocese.org

The Angelus JUNE 2021
doctrine, the Summa theologica, Thomas discusses the virtue of magnanimitas (magnanimity), the quality of having a great soul. He writes, "Magnanimity by its very name denotes the stretching forth of the soul to great and noble concerns. It is the word I’ve been trying to say in this address. What are these "great things" that Thomas references but the objective values that summon the soul? So the key to a spiritually successful life is to go for them, to stretch out toward them. To stay within the musty confines of the self, or to see the values in question but never to reach out toward them, to settle thereby for a kind of spiritual mediocrity is not the way to go. Here is St. Thomas again: "For just as the magnanimous person tends to great things out of greatness of soul, so the pusillanimous person shrinks from great things out of littleness of soul."

So my young friends, fellow graduates of the class of 2021, identify a value that you have learned here at the University of Santo Tomás. Some goodness or truth or beauty that has sung to your soul, and then give yourself to it with reckless abandon. Stretch out toward it, and it will give you satisfaction and finally lead you to God. The literature of the world is filled with stories of people who have spent their lives satisfying their egos, building up wealth, pleasure, power, and honor, but neglecting the development of their souls. Perhaps you have met such people: glittering on the outside but atrophied on the inside. And perhaps you have encountered the opposite case: those who have very little in the eyes of the world but who are vibrantly alive, spiritually on fire, for they have cultivated their souls.

There is a story told of Thomas Aquinas that I particularly savor. Toward the end of his life, Thomas was laboring over the section of the Summa theologica dealing with the Eucharist. Though it is commonly taken now for a masterpiece, Thomas himself was uneasy with his treatise, convinced that it did not do justice to the mystery he was attempting to describe. And so he placed the text at the foot of the crucifix and asked for God’s help. According to the legend, a voice came from the cross: "Thomas, you have written well of me. What would you have as a reward?" The great man could have asked for anything — for fame, for wealth, for a powerful office. But instead he said, "Non nisi te, Domine" (Nothing except you, Lord). The patron of this university spent his life discarding and seeking objective values, and he knew that all of those goods find their source in the supreme value of God. His soul stretched out to great things and finally to the Creator of those great things.

The purpose of this university is to make you like Thomas Aquinas. So put the ship out to the perils and possibilities of the open sea. Be great souls!

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

**BARRON**

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Después, equipado sólo con unas pocas provisiones, se le arrojaba a la selva o al bosque o a la tundra y se le decía que se las arreglara solo. No se trataba de una crueldad arbitraria; era una invitación a salir de su propio espacio y a descubrir los valores objetivos en la historia de su pueblo, en la naturaleza y, finalmente, en el orden espiritual.

El paso de ustedes por la Universidad Santo Tomás ha sido una especie de rito de iniciación. El objetivo de esos últimos cuatro años ha sido sacarlos de su autoestima e invitarnos a una exploración aventurera de nuevos mundos de pensamiento y experiencia. Me preocupaba que "seguro" y "seguridad" se hayan convertido, para la generación actual, en palabras tan tórridas que la gente sea incapaz de preguntar por los valores objetivos en el mar de confusión de los confines amosados del yo, o ver los valores en cuestión, pero no llegar nunca a ellos, conformarse así con una especie de mediocridad espiritual; esa es la tragedia de ser un alma pequeña. Aquí está de nuevo Santo Tomás: "Porque, así como el magnánimo tiene a las cosas grandes por la grandeza de su alma, el pusilánime se aleja de las cosas grandes por la pequeñez de su alma.

Así que, mis jóvenes amigos, compañeros de la promoción de 2021, identifiquen un valor que hayan aprendido aquí en la UST; una bondad o verdad o belleza que haya cantado a su alma, y luego entreménselu a él con un abandono temerario. Extiéndanse hacia él, y les dará satisfacción y los llevará finalmente a Dios.

La literatura del mundo está llena de hombres grandes que fueron grandes porque han cultivado su alma. Pero, en cambio, dijo: "Non nisi te, Domine" (Nada excepto tú, Señor). Las almas de los que han cultivado su alma. Pero, en cambio, dijo: "Non nisi te, Domine" (Nada excepto tú, Señor). Las almas de los que han cultivado su alma. Pero, en cambio, dijo: "Non nisi te, Domine" (Nada excepto tú, Señor). Las almas de los que han cultivado su alma. Pero, en cambio, dijo: "Non nisi te, Domine" (Nada excepto tú, Señor).

Hay una historia que se cuenta de Tomás de Aquino que me gusta especialmente. Hacia el final de su vida, Tomás se afanaba en la sección de la Suma Teológica que trata de la Eucaristia. Aunque en la actualidad se suele considerar una obra maestra, el propio Tomás se sentía incómodo con su tratamiento, convencido de que no hacía justicia al misterio que intentaba describir. Según la leyenda, una voz salió de la figura de Cristo crucificado: "Tomás, has escrito bien de mí. ¿Qué quieres como recompensa?". El gran hombre podría haber pedido cualquier cosa: fama, riqueza, un cargo poderoso. Pero, en cambio, dijo: "No nisi te, Domine" (Nada excepto tú, Señor). El patrono de esta universidad pasó su vida discerniendo y buscando valores objetivos, y sabía que todos esos bienes encuentran su fuente en el valor supremo de Dios. Su alma se extendía hacia las grandes cosas y finalmente hacia el Creador de esas grandes cosas.

El propósito de esta universidad es hacer que les guste Tomás de Aquino. Así que zarpemos el barco a los peligros y posibilidades del mar abierto. ¡Sean grandes almas!
KNICKERBOCKERS
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government and big business, is surrendering to a make-believe world created by false images, sounds, and words. Big government and big business promote the acceptance of fantasy as reality. We think we can create reality when, in truth, reality is already there for us to discover.

Where is the Catholic Church in all this? As the Catechism teaches, “The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love to each other and to their children as a sign of the love that God has united them on earth, how could he divide them in heaven? Could an entire life spent together end in nothing without betraying the meaning of this present life, which is a preparation for the kingdom, the new heaven and the new earth?” Cantalamessa concludes by saying, “According to this vision, matrimony does not entirely end with death but is transfigured, spiritualized — it loses those limits that mark life on earth — in the same way that the bonds between parents and children or between friends will not be forgotten” (Homily for the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time [C], 2007, www.zenit.org).

When we understand the place of the family in creation and redemption, we see the foolishness of treating as reality the fantasy world proclaimed by big government and big business. We see it to be a world of disorder and confusion, a chimera — an illusory world of smoke and mirrors, a world of darkness and not light. Fortunately, big government and big business are transitory. Unlike the family, they will not last forever.

As Catholics living in America at this time we should support our bishops and encourage them to take the stand taught in the Catechism by emphasizing “the importance of the family for the life and well-being of society [which] entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family. Civil authority should consider it a grave duty to acknowledge the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality, and promote domestic prosperity” (#2210).

When we Catholics do this, we can be assured that we are building our lives and our culture on the rock foundation of the Catholic Church, against which the gates of hell will not prevail (Mt 16:18). When we recognize the place of the family in both creation and redemption, when we know that families are forever, we can thank God and take courage that we have seen through the darkness of this world, a darkness produced by the smoke of Satan, and see the truth and the light that overcome the darkness in that likeness of the Holy Trinity that is restored in the Holy Family of Bethlehem and Nazareth and shines its divine radiance into the life of all our human families.

As Father Raniero Cantalamessa, OFMCap, Preacher for the Papal Household under Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, says, “Is it possible that a husband and wife, after a life that brought them into relation with God through the miracle of creation [of a child], will not have anything more in common, as if all were forgotten, lost? Would not this be contrary to Jesus’ word according to which God has united must not be divided? If God united them on earth, how could he divide them in heaven? Could an entire life spent together end in nothing without betraying the meaning of this present life, which is a preparation for the kingdom, the new heaven and the new earth?”

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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.

OSSIPINO
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sus cuerpos y sus vidas en medio de esta crisis. La pandemia sigue afectando desproporcionadamente a los hispanos, y esto es algo que nos toca de cerca a los católicos pues cerca de la mitad de la población católica estadounidense es hispana.

A pesar de contar con amplias reservas de vacunas y de ser la población que tiene más deseos de ser vacunada, según un reporte de la Fundación de la Familia Kaiser en mayo del 2021, los hispanos tienen una de las tasas más bajas de vacunación contra el COVID-19 en el país.

Hay muchas razones detrás de esta aparente contradicción: falta de información básica acompañada de mucha desinformación (ej., teorías de conspiración), acceso limitado a estructuras y servicios esenciales de cuidado de salud, barreras lingüísticas y todo un conjunto de factores migratorios, entre otros.

Los detalles sencillos son importantes. Muchas personas se han autoproclamado como intérpretes de la moralidad católica confundiendo a los hispanos y a otros católicos con opiniones personales que con frecuencia contradicen las enseñanzas oficiales de la Iglesia. Ver a un policía o a un soldado en la entrada de un hospital, cuando muchos hispanos acuden con frecuencia evoca el esfuerzo de ofrecer espacios seguros a refugiados, en estos días de pandemia debería ser, “¿cómo podemos ayudar?”

Creo que las parroquias católicas se pueden convertir en comunidades santuario de manera creativa. El movimiento santuario con frecuencia evoca el esfuerzo de ofrecer espacios seguros a refugiados e inmigrantes. Es cierto, aunque la motivación más importante del movimiento santuario es salvar vidas.

Muchas parroquias católicas en el país han establecido o recibido clínicas de vacunación contra el COVID-19. Pero lo general estas parroquias están ubicadas en sectores con grandes poblaciones inmigrantes. Estas comunidades ya funcionan de hecho como parroquias santuario.

Tienen más de 16.700 parroquias católicas en el país, las cuales pueden convertirse en comunidades santuario ofreciendo información confiable, estableciendo clínicas de vacunación y siendo espacios seguros en donde la gente pueda dejar sus temores de lado. Pudieramos hacer algo similar en los edificios y estacionamientos de nuestros colegios católicos y universidades católicas.

El movimiento santuario ofrece gran inspiración a nuestras parroquias para responder proféticamente en el nombre de Jesucristo a los desafíos de la pandemia actual. ¡Manos a la obra! - - -

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

Bishop Michael J. Sis
Publisher
Brian Bodiford
Editor
Director of Communications
Odessa parish celebrates 60 years

The parishioners of Holy Redeemer in Odessa celebrated the 60th anniversary of their parish with an outdoor Mass on May 1, 2021. Father Juan Lopez Cortes, MSP, spoke during the Mass.

Diocese of San Angelo Rural Life Mass 2021 — Adolfo Tapia Dairy, Miles, Texas

Bishop Michael Sis celebrated the annual Diocese of San Angelo Rural Life Mass May 13 at the Adolfo Tapia Dairy in Miles, Texas.

Before the Mass, members of the Tapia family took Bishop Sis on a tour of the dairy. Part of the tour included a demonstration of the milking process.