

The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY



"Feed the Hungry." See page 26.

WINTER 2022-2023

The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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Donna, Texas.

Back Cover: Grandchildren from the
Baldy Family.

Provincial Perspective

Dear Family,

Listening to the local and world news, we find that we are living in difficult and trying times! All of this affects the world around us. We long to find a little peace to refresh and renew our wearied minds and hearts.

The New Year brings us the story of Mary, Joseph, and the Child Jesus, living out their lives and submitting to God's will. They questioned and feared what they could not understand, but their strong faith and trust in God helped them thrive nonetheless.

Reflecting on our own life experiences, no doubt we share some of what they did. They are our example to keep a close relationship with God, by praying daily and loving and serving one another.

In this Year of Our Lord 2023, making Jesus Christ the foundation of our lives will bring us the gift of true peace to our families. By focusing our lives on the teachings of Jesus, and by a genuine desire to respect, protect, and love one another, we can make a difference in the world. May you find your life filled with grace, truth, and holiness. Thank you for everything, and God bless you and your Family!

Sincerely in the Holy Family, I am

Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F.

Very Reverend Philip Sosa, M.S.F.
Provincial Superior



Very Rev. Philip Sosa, M.S.F.

Apostolate Board

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Mr. Leon Frigillana, RN
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Mr. Stephen Lukaszek
Mr. Guy Parasch (emeritus)
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PROFILE OF SERVICE

Take Up Your Cross



Reverend Camillo Botello, Jr., M.S.F.
November 16, 1960 – August 26, 2022

In Luke 9:23, Jesus looks at His disciples and tells them, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”

Fortified with the Sacraments of Holy Mother Church, Father Camillo entered eternal life on Friday, August 26, 2022, at the age of 61. He was born November 16, 1960 in Beeville, Texas, to the late Camillo Botello, Sr. and Sophia Yzaguirre Botello.

He was the oldest boy and the second of seven children; siblings

Pablo, Nieves, Mary, Gilbert, Jose, and Sylvia. Father Camillo is preceded in death by his father, mother, and three siblings. He is survived by two sisters, Mary Cuellar and Sylvia Garcia, and one brother, Gilberto Botello.

Father Camillo graduated from A.C. Jones High School in Beeville, San Antonio College, the University of the Incarnate Word, and Oblate School of Theology. He served in several parishes in the Archdiocese of San Antonio and the Diocese of Brownsville, and he was a postulant with the Missionaries of the Holy Family from 1995 - 1997. Father entered the novitiate on August

14, 1997, and he made his first profession of vows. He was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on October 17, 2003, at Saint James Parish in Beeville.

In 2012, Father Camillo was initially appointed administrator of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish (OLPH) in New Braunfels, Texas, and its mission church of Saint

John in Hunter. He previously served as associate pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Seguin, and he was a member of the Knights of Columbus.

Those who heard Father Camillo preach his homilies know that he spoke from the heart. After reading the Gospel, Father would step away from the pulpit and speak to the congregation with powerful words that reminded us to repent of our sins and turn to our merciful God who is ready to receive us with open arms. He enlightened his parishioners with his life experiences, and he understood many of the tribulations we face in today's world.

Father Camillo loved his vocation,

he loved OLPH, and he loved his parishioners. Especially during his last years, we often saw him ill and struggling to continue to celebrate Mass, but he was adamant that he



Father Camillo and the Society of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

would pick up his cross and keep going. His dedication is to be truly admired. May we all follow in his example and commitment to our faith and the

teachings of the Catholic Church.

In regards to Father's passing, Dan Benavidez commented, "Father Camillo was so inspirational. He would rush between Saint John's in Hunter and then to New Braunfels every Sunday. His homilies were like no other. We are going to miss him, but we know he is in God's glory, and we look forward to meeting him again when our time comes. Blessed be God!"

Rick & Yvette Castañeda, parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, stated what so many feel when they said, "We still can't believe that Father Camillo is gone, but we know that he wouldn't want us to be sad, but rather to rejoice in knowing

that he isn't feeling any pain or suffering, and that he is in God's heavenly kingdom. Well done, Father Camillo! Well done, His good and faithful son! We miss you, but know you have shown us the way. God bless you and may you rest in peace. Amen."

We will forever miss your presence at the doors of the church where you always greeted your parishioners. Thank you, Father Camillo, for giving your life to God and to us!

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



Funeral Mass for Father Camillo.

"Death is a continuation of life. This is the meaning of eternal life: it is where our soul goes to God, to speak to God, to continue loving Him with greater love because in Heaven we shall be able to love Him with

our whole heart and our soul." – Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Thanks to Celia Barragan and others

for contributing to this article.

Contributions in memory of Father Camillo should be mailed to the Missionaries of the Holy Family at 3014 Oregon Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63118-1412. Gifts can also be received through the website at www.msf-america.org. 

Around The Province...



Father Andre, M.S.F.



Father Josselin, M.S.F.

Escape from Madagascar!

We have two more international priests.

Men of God: Religious Forever



Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F.
55 years



Br. Rolland Kapsner, M.S.F.
50 years



Fr. Andrea Spatafora, M.S.F.
40 years



Fr. Andre Bemora, M.S.F.
20 years



Fr. Angelot Galson, M.S.F.
5 years

In this Year of Our Lord 2023, four priests and one brother of the Missionaries of the Holy Family are celebrating anniversaries of their ordination and perpetual vows. We thank God for our priests and brothers, and we beseech Him to send us many more.

If you would like to send a Tribute Gift in honor of one or more of these Men of God, please send it to 3014 Oregon Ave., Saint Louis, MO 63118.

Thank you and God bless your family!

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WISDOM FROM THE BALD GUY

Bald Guy's Fishing School 2022 by Brother Knight Baldy Bluett

Okay, if you are a reader of *The Messenger*, you have seen articles about the Bald Guy's Fishing School. It's all about family.

The most recent Bald Guy's Fishing School was in August 2022. There were 30 of us attending, even a wonderful girl from Germany. Side note: She is 19 years old and had never been on a plane. She had to take buses and trains to get to the Frankfort Airport, and then to the USA.

The fishing school was at "the lodge" near Eagle River, Wisconsin. I won't get into details about the lodge, but it is great: pontoon, ski boat, kayak,



beach, and toys galore. You name it! I have no clue about how much money was spent for all 30 people to get together. They all wanted to attend. Hey, if you have a family reunion with only two people, it's



worth it. Keep in touch with your family and friends.

I have a lot of grandkids, and they were there. One of the highlights for them was what they called "The



Dark Party." It was a bonfire in the dark, with all kinds of stuff: lighted goggles, light sticks, and marshmallow burning. The kids, from the age of 21 down to 3, went wild with the dark party. They sure had a good time.

Most of us will be together again on Thanksgiving.

It's easy to stay in touch: text messages, email, Zoom, Marco Polo, etc. What's even better? Just pick up your phone and call family members and friends. Whoever you call will love to hear your voice, and you will love to hear their voices too. God bless your family. 

Pieta Votive Candles



This beautiful Pieta statue is in Saint Wenceslaus Church in Saint Louis, Missouri, and in the rectory are the offices of the North American Province of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. If you would like a 6-day votive candle lit for your family and your intentions, contact us at 1-888-484-9945 or mprater@msf-america.org. Candles burn in a rack to the right of the statue. (The suggested donation is \$7.00.) Thank you and may God bless you.



PROTECTING CHILDREN

Roe v. Wade Fell! Will a Culture of Life Arise?

by J. P. Richardson

“A baby is God’s opinion that life should go on.”
– Carl Sandburg, beloved American writer, 1948

Roe versus Wade was an infamous ruling by the United States Supreme Court in 1973. For almost a half-century, it was the legal excuse used to stop human beings from growing in their mothers’ wombs, to deny their right to life. Countless little lives were conceived, but then snuffed-out, like lighted candles.

Dobbs versus Jackson Women’s Health Organization is a ruling by the Court that overturned *Roe* on June 24, 2022, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. June 24 is also the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, who leaped for joy in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth, in

the presence of his cousin, Baby Jesus, in the womb of Holy Mother Mary. (Luke 1:41-44)



Roe did grave damage to American society. It let many people think they own

and have a right to cancel (abort) another human being. But, *Dobbs* has also given many people the misconception that the Court took away the right to take a life. Not really.

Why did the Court flip? The makeup of the Supreme Court shifted when three pro-life justices were nominated by President Trump and confirmed by the Senate within a short span of three years and six

months: Neil Gorsuch in April 2017, Brett Kavanaugh in October 2018, and Amy Coney Barrett in October 2020.

Do you remember the bridge that collapsed into the Mississippi River in 2007? It wasn't designed with increasing future weights in mind. *Roe*, too, collapsed from weakness.



Many people realized that *Roe's* reasoning was fatally faulty.

Roe wasn't reasoned with God in mind, either. It wasn't designed with the Light of the World – Jesus Christ – to illuminate it. It was made of shadows – “penumbras” was the word used by the men who wrote it – in darkness. *Roe* was shady. Defying God's Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” *Roe* lacked staying-power. After 49 years, it failed the test of time and fell. “Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build.” (**Psalm 127:1**)

Yet the Court did not abolish abortion in 2022. A majority merely

ruled that the U.S. Constitution does not grant anyone a right to abortion. Individual states must make their own decisions.

Pope Saint John Paul II taught about the Culture of Life versus the Culture of Death. The Culture of Death could be called the Culture of Killing. Everyone dies. We must die to go to Heaven, the Culture of Eternal Life. But abortion and euthanasia are killing (murder).

How can we build a Culture of Life? We don't need to build from scratch. We could re-build one. Can you imagine calling birth “a blessed event” – and every baby a gift from God? There was such a time in America. There could be again.

Let's overcome the debased mentality that one person can own another – as in slavery and abortion. Let's revive noble principles: “Care for each other.” “Watch out for the little guy.” “The strong defend and protect the weak.”

The mentality of the Culture of Killing is: “Me first! Get out of my way!” In a Culture of Life, people say: “You first. We're in this together. May I help you?” We can choose selfishness or self-sacrifice.

A Culture of Life is a Culture of the Common Good – nobody gets hurt because the good we share in

common is Life. The first principle of Natural Law is “Do good, and avoid evil.” What if we all tried to live by “the law written on our hearts?”
(Romans 2:15)

Many people seem unaware of right versus wrong, sin, God’s punishment, conscience, and repentance. We tell ourselves, “Anything goes,” and God will bless our choices. But God tells us what to choose:



“I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live.”
(Deuteronomy 30:19)

If we want a Culture of Love and Life, we must pray for it. God is the Creator, and human beings are His creatures. We must pray to the Author and Giver of Life and also

pray as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane:

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” **(John 14:6)**

“God is love.” **(1 John 4:16)**

“Not My will, but Thine be done.”
(Luke 22:42)

We need heroes and heroines. Why not look up to holy people? Do you know about Blessed Carlo Acutis, a teen computer-whiz? Amazing! Blessed Karl of Austria and Hungary, an emperor and king, lived a holy life with his holy wife, Servant of God Zita. Inspiring!

Saint Gianna, a doctor, sacrificed her life for her baby’s life. Astonishing! Saint Maria Goretti, 11 years old, gave up her life rather than give in to evil. She might dazzle you with her brilliant holiness!

The Church offers countless stories of mind-boggling, goose-bumpling goodness – and great ideas for a

Culture of Life. We should live by the teachings of saints and imitate them. We should imitate Jesus Christ, most of all. *The Imitation of Christ* – a book written six centuries ago by Thomas à Kempis – once was almost as widely read as the Bible.

It's time to flip the labels we use – “conservative” versus “liberal” or “progressive.” Conservatives want to conserve, or preserve, things as they are. Abortion was legal across the U.S. for a long time. People who want to conserve legal abortion call themselves progressives, but they are really conservatives now.

Liberals want liberty and equal rights. Progressives want progress. People who protect the sacred right

to life are now the true liberals, the true progressives.

Saint Mother Teresa, in 1994 in Washington, D.C., said: “If we remember that God loves us, and that we can love others as He loves us, then America can become a sign of peace for the world. From here, a sign of care for the weakest of the weak — the unborn child — must go out to the world. If you become a burning light of justice and peace in the world, then, really, you will be true to what the founders of this country stood for. God bless you!”

Will – *can* – Americans do it? Do we have what it takes to create a Culture of Love and Life? We can't say yet, but it is up to YOU. **+JM+**

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

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HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Saint Thomas Aquinas House of Studies

by Weldon Ticken

In the summer of 1932, Father Ernest Braun of the Missionaries of the Holy Family (MSF) took the place of the pastor of Saint Joseph Church, Father Francis Skaer, in Farmington, Missouri.

It was at this time that Father Braun (photo above) became acquainted with John, Marie, and Genevieve Huss. They corresponded and visited each other for about a year.

In 1946, John Huss passed away. Father Braun went to Farmington for the funeral and delivered the homily. After this, Marie and Genevieve Huss spoke about their desire to leave 110 acres of their farm to the Missionaries of the Holy Family.

On May 3, 1959, Father Braun visited the Huss sisters and their first words to him were, *"When will you come and take over the farm?"*



On May 17, 1959, Father Joseph Pelley the provincial superior, Father Herman Berg, and Father Joseph Mathey went with Father Braun to Farmington to look at the property. It

was decided to take over part of the property as soon as possible. A building would be erected for a School of Philosophy called the Saint

Thomas Aquinas House of Studies.

On May 18, 1959, Father Pelley appealed to Archbishop Joseph Ritter of Saint Louis for permission to found a house of studies in Farmington. Permission was orally given the same day and was confirmed in a letter that was received on May 19, 1959.

On May 21, 1959, Father Braun contacted Bill Lamping, a contractor, with a plan for the building. On

May 25, approval was requested from Rome. The next day, a site was chosen for the building. Plans for the building were received on June 3, and work was started on June 27. The building was completed at the end of October, and Father Braun resided there.

The first group of scholastics

transferred to Farmington on January 19, 1967.

With more candidates entering the novitiate, a decision was made to add on to the building in the summer of 1967. The new addition included a new chapel and sacristy, dining room and kitchen, library and classrooms, novice master's quarters,



arrived in Farmington from Holy Family Seminary in Saint Louis on November 10, 1959. At this time, a second priest, Father George Schroer, arrived to make up the teaching staff.

Saint Thomas Aquinas would close as a House of Philosophy in August of 1964 and move to the provincial house in Saint Louis. However, in the same month, it would open as a Vocation & College Department, and Father Edward Matthews was appointed as an instructor.

In January 1967, a change was made again. Saint Thomas Aquinas was assigned to become the Novitiate House for the congregation, and Father Matthews would remain and become the novice master. The novitiate at the time was in Hillman, Minnesota, and the novices were

and a parlor and visitor's area.

However, in August 1971, the novitiate was moved to Holy Family Seminary in Saint Louis. Father Matthews stayed in Farmington since he was chaplain at Farmington State Hospital until 1987. From 1988 to 1989, Father Matthews was assigned to the Correction Training Center for mentally ill inmates.

Also, from 1966 to about 1986, Brother Eugene Dames took care of the farm that was associated with the seminary. He had been a farmer and father of a family, and entered the order after his wife passed away. He was considered a belated vocation because of his age at 62. Unfortunately, the property was sold in 1986 since vocations to the religious life declined. +jMj+

Vocation Boom in Madagascar

Vocations to the priesthood are flourishing in Madagascar, thanks be to God!, and the Missionaries of the Holy Family recently celebrated the opening of their new Scholastics House.



Vocation Boom in Madagascar





WHAT IS THE APOSTOLATE BOARD?

MSF Lay Apostolate Board 2003 - 2023

by Walter Lukaszek

The Lay Apostolate Board of the Missionaries of the Holy Family (MSF) was formed by the provincial government in 2003, and the late

was to provide strategic planning, recommendations, guidance, and support to the provincial government on mission, works, staff, leadership,



+Father Joe Roelke



+Father Jim Wuerth

Father Joe Roelke was the provincial superior. Other members of the provincial government were Father Phil Sosa, Father Andrea Spatafora, and the late Father Jim Wuerth.

Father Joe said that the purpose of the Board was to further enable and support the North American Province of the Missionaries of the Holy Family (MSF) in fulfilling its mission. The Board

and financials for the key MSF Apostolates.

The initial members of the Board included Martie Aboussie (president), Robert Mirabal (vice president), Gracie Mirabal (secretary), the late Harry Fabick, John Harper, James Grouchy, and Walter Lukaszek.

Qualities sought in the board members included:

- Passion for living out the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.
- Passion for the MSF apostolates.
- Willing to support the overall interests of MSF, not just local communities.
- Willing and able to commit time, expertise, and resources.
- Team player with a positive, can-do attitude and a desire to lead.
- Good listener who appreciates the ideas of others.



+Harry Fabick

Following are historical biographies of the board members, in alphabetical order by last name, a snapshot from 2003:

Martie Aboussie – Martie and his wife of 26 years, LeEllen, have 2 children, Jay and Amy. Martie is executive director of Father Dempsey Charities for the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, which serves the less fortunate. Martie was the alderman for the 9th ward in the city of Saint Louis, Missouri, for 27 years and also the director of public safety for Saint Louis.

Harry Fabick – Harry and his wife of 40 years, Judy, have two sons, David and Douglas. They are also blessed to be grandparents of four grandchildren. Harry Fabick is president and chairman of the board for Fabick Companies. He is an avid supporter of the Church, including

Legatus, an organization of Catholic business executives, and he was a founding member of the Legatus chapter in Saint Louis, Missouri. He is also a director of US Bank, director of the Archdiocese Annual Appeal, and a member of the board of governors of Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital.

Jim Grouchy – Jim and his wife of 18 years, Irma, live in New Braunfels, Texas. Jim is a former religious brother of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. He is a licensed childcare administrator for the State of Texas and monitors child care facilities for compliance to state regulations. He is an active member of his parish as president of the finance council, leads the children’s choir, and is a guitar player for Masses at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in New Braunfels.

Lt. John Harper – John and his wife of 22 years, Janice, have two children, Andrea and Michael. John is a 27-year veteran of the Saint Louis Police Department, and he currently holds the position of lieutenant and commander of the Sex Crimes & Family Violence Units. He has been a lifelong parishioner of Saint Wenceslaus Parish in Saint Louis, Missouri, and he has been an organist and the music coordinator for over 30 years.

Walter Lukaszek – Walter and Tina, his wife of 31 years, have one child, Stephen. Walter is the director

of Catholic Social Services for the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas, and he is a contract specialist for the University of Texas Pan-American. He is an active member of his parish in Donna, Texas, with involvement in CCD, adult education, Eucharistic ministry, and lector.

Gracie Mirabal – Gracie and her husband of over 15 years, Bobby, have four children: David, Rebeka, Jacob, and Joseph. Gracie is the office manager for Printers

Unlimited, Inc. in Corpus Christi, Texas. She is an active member of her parish, serves on the finance committee and parish advisory board, and she has been a member of the parish school board.

Robert (Bobby) Mirabal – Bobby and his wife of over 15 years, Gracie, have four children: David, Rebeka, Jacob, and Joseph. Bobby is the vice president and production manager

for Printers Unlimited, Inc. in Corpus Christi, Texas. He is an active member of his parish, serves on the finance committee and parish

advisory board, and he is a member of the Knights of Columbus where he has served as the Grand Knight.

The Lay Apostolate Board has worked in support of the Friends of the Holy Family Prayer Association, supported vocation awareness in the local MSF houses in Texas, encouraged the goal of inviting two international priests each year to serve within the North American Province, and participated in mission outreach projects, including a library



MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY
Office of the Provincial

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Apostolate Board Annual Meeting

Date: October 22, 2004 - Saturday
Location: St. Wenceslaus Church 3014 Oregon Ave. Saint Louis, MO 63118

Attendees:

Provincial Government Fr. Joe Roelke, MSF Fr. Phil Sosa, MSF Fr. Andrea Spatafora, MSF Fr. Jim Wuerth, MSF	Saint Louis House Mr. Martie Aboussie Open Mr. John Harper Paul Mahabir	San Antonio House Mr. James Grouchy Mr. Walter Lukaszek Mrs. Gracie Mirabal Mr. Robert Mirabal
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Agenda:

Time	Topic	
8:30 am	30 min	Gathering, Coffee & Pastries
9:00	30 min	Prayer
	20 min	Provincial Update
	25 min	Apostolate Board Business Officers - Director Seats & Nominations Terms: John Harper, Jim Grouchy, Bobby Mirabal Vacant Seat : Opening (Harry Fabick)
10:15	15 min	BREAK

in Ghana and medical supplies to be sent to Honduras.

In 2022, John Harper reflected on his long term relationship and service to the Lay Apostolate Board: "I feel the Board has been extremely helpful to MSF over the years. Our annual meetings were well attended by board members and filled with ideas, suggestions, and recommendations to help advance the MSF mission. I feel the board was a supportive mechanism for the provincial superior and other members of MSF to discuss and get feedback on pertinent matters and situations.

"This was a good opportunity to learn from supportive parishioners and benefactors on ways to improve and enhance the MSF operation and legacy. I thoroughly enjoyed our annual meetings and the opportunity to talk and reacquaint with former pastors and priests, exchange ideas, pray together, and show unending support and appreciation for the MSF priests, brothers, and staff. I am proud and appreciative of my time on the board. I also commend and send thanks and added recognition to the other members of the board for their commitment, support, and friendship!"

In 2022, Bobby and Gracie Mirabal added their thoughts: "Father Joe

Roelke wanted to establish a Lay Apostolate Board to assist MSF with spreading the charism of their order. The **family** was always foremost in the mission and activity. The strategy to spread the mission consisted of raising the awareness of MSF, working on the promotion of vocations, and emphasizing the pastoral care of families with the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as the example and standard of holiness for all families.

"There was also an internal concern shared by the Board for MSF to maintain a physical presence in North America. Each board member, since we were from different geographical areas, would attempt to direct and implement activities aimed at these objectives."

Now, 20 years later, these are the current members of the Board serving MSF, along with the first year in which they joined:

Lt. John Harper (2003), Walter Lukaszek (2003), Ed Koeninger, Jr. (2006), Dr. Mark Hickman (2008), Leon Frigillana (2014), Dr. Andrea Harper (2014), Mary Wisniewski (2014), Ricardo Castañeda (2016), Stephen Lukaszek (2017), and Weldon Tieken (2017). Guy Parasch (2011) is an emeritus board member.

We look forward to the next 20 years! 

20 Years as a Missionary Priest

In July 2022, Father Eka Yuantoro, M.S.F., pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Donna, Texas, celebrated his 20th anniversary of ordination as a missionary priest.





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Saint Louis, MO 63118-1412*

Your gift to the Missionaries of the Holy Family is tax deductible.

God bless your family! +JMJ+



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

You are God's Masterpiece

by Celia Barragan

In the first full week of June 2022, the activity center of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in New Braunfels, Texas was filled with children attending Vacation Bible School (VBS). The theme for their VBS was *You are God's Masterpiece*, and indeed the children are! Yvette Castañeda and Angelica Britton also created a masterpiece for the children to learn about the *Book of Genesis*, the account of the creation of the world.

The activity center was filled with color as enthusiastic volunteers welcomed the children each day. Ladders with paint cans and streamers of different colors greeted the children as they entered the hall. Colorful banners, tables



covered in blue, pink, orange, purple, and other colors made the hall vibrant and exciting.

The children moved about from station to station with the help of youth volunteers. They learned from the Bible about the seven days of God's

creation along with the American Sign Language that reinforced the concept taught each day. A Creation



Station followed the daily theme in which they assembled lanterns and decorated light switches to demonstrate God's creation of light. Cloud binoculars, an earth seed

bomb, pasta necklaces, and splatter-spray sleep masks were just a few of the crafts created to remind the students of all the other beautiful aspects of our world that God made. Another station enhanced their



learning when they designed their own tie dye tee-shirts. Self-portraits reflected how each and every one of them is unique and beautiful in God's eyes. Sand-painted crosses allowed each participant to individualize the beauty of the cross which represents God's love for us.

The children showed up every day with anticipation of what each day of VBS would offer. The mornings began with awesome, upbeat Christian music. Daily outdoor games, such as the noodle relay (in which the children carried a cup of water atop a water noodle and tried to keep it from spilling as they ran from one side to the other), kept the children active.

Not to be outdone, the snack

volunteers provided the most amazing snacks. Chocolate pudding with cool whip represented day and night, while a blue parfait represented the sky and water. Children were served a rice crispy bar on a Popsicle stick with frosting on the side so they could paint/create their own masterpiece.

Graham crackers with blue frosting and goldfish with small, frosted pebbles reinforced the water, fish, and land God created. Each day closed with more

Christian music and a parachute activity which fostered unity, representing that we are God's creation and work as one body for the Church.

None of this would have been possible had it not been for the long hours of planning by Yvette and Angelica. The volunteers brought to fruition the VBS ideas. Each volunteer added their personal touch with a lot of love for the children and the Church.

The youth volunteers were the icing on the cake. As teens, they could have been in so many other places, including just sleeping late, but they chose to be at Vacation Bible School. They were



tremendously appreciated and are to be commended for helping the adult volunteers. More importantly, they served as role models for the younger children, and the teenagers gave us great hope in seeing that the future of the Catholic Church is in good hands. We are truly grateful for their dedication to the community, the Church, and to God.

The last day of VBS culminated with a lunch of hotdogs, chips, and snow cones of all flavors. An exhibit of the children's works of art was on display for parents to enjoy. Each child went home with a bag of their Creation Station masterpieces. The

children collectively reviewed the creation of the world using their American Sign Language to show their parents what they had learned. It was an awesome week! Then, as the Book of Genesis reads: "... on the last day, God rested."

To observe how this week of Vacation Bible School came to be, from start to finish, was truly God's creation, His masterpiece. Thanks to Yvette Castañeda, Angelica Britton, and all the volunteers who made this week possible. You are God's creation, God's masterpiece. "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." (**Genesis 1:31**) +JMJ+

Around The Province...



Guardian Angel Consecration in Saint Louis, Missouri.



THE POETRY CORNER



Elimination of Prayer in School: An Apology to God

by Anne Marnic

They threw You out of school today.
They claim You don't belong.
And all who tried to save You
Were ridiculed as wrong.

It's tragic that such dull minds
Rule with such command,
And won't be satisfied until Your name
Is eliminated throughout our land.

Yes, You, the source of knowledge,
No longer have a place.
The stealthy serpent slithers by,
A smile upon its evil face.



TURKEY TIME

Joy of Thanksgiving

by Father F.A. Eka Yuantoro, M.S.F.

When we celebrate Mass on Thanksgiving Day, we hear from the first chapter of the *Gospel of Luke* when Mary, mother of Our Savior, visited her relative Elizabeth. The two women were full of joy, filled with the Holy Spirit, and worshipped God. Mary proclaimed the Glory of God with a canticle we call the *Magnificat of Mary*. With Mary, we praise God because of His many blessings.

Sharing is a big part of Thanksgiving.

Many people are eager for this celebration because it is a time to get together with extended family and friends. Sometimes, a new member of the family is introduced with joy, and people pray and give thanks to God. Happiness abounds.

Sharing the Gift

Sharing a meal or basket of food is a good tradition for children to learn how to care for the needy, poor, and elderly. Many organizations have this type of program. I was once invited to a party in honor of veterans and to thank them for

servicing our country. It was a touching moment to see a child serve food to a Vietnam War Veteran who bowed in thanksgiving to the child who gave him his plate of food.



We have a program of sharing food baskets with the needy at our parish in Donna, Texas, Saint Joseph Catholic Church. We work with the city police and fire departments to deliver the baskets, mainly to families living in the

colonias (slums), but also to families in the apartments near our church.

For Thanksgiving 2022, it was cool and raining when we delivered baskets to families in the colonias. The families had big smiles on their faces because many had nothing to celebrate Thanksgiving, and this brought joy to their hearts.

Items for the baskets were collected from many generous people: our parishioners and parish council members, the Lions Club, Catholic Charities, and businesses in or near the City of Donna. Many of the volunteers were young children who wanted to help.

However, we do not share baskets only for Thanksgiving, every month! People are hungry every day. Plus, it is hot in Donna during the summer, and many families in the colonias do not have air conditioning to cool their trailer or mobile home. Saint Joseph Parish and the Food Bank of Rio Grande Valley work together to get food to the hungry every month.



Our parishioners and others in the community are faithful, and they know that God calls us to be generous and to serve each other from the heart.

We are One Family

Pope Francis wrote an apostolic letter, *Desiderio Desideravi*: “Hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum antequam patiar.” Or, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” (Gospel of Luke 22:15)



Pope Francis explains that Jesus invited His disciples to have supper with Him before He suffered, died on the cross, and rose from the dead – the Paschal Mystery. The meal was one of love and thanksgiving to God the Father, and Jesus gives us freedom from the slavery of sin. The

Eucharistic Celebration is what gives meaning to our liturgy.

The Eucharist is based on the Jewish tradition called Birkat Hamazon, known in English as prayer or giving grace after our meals. From the *Book of Deuteronomy 8:10*: “When you have eaten and are satisfied, you must bless the Lord, your God, for the good land he has given to you.” This commandment became

a tradition for the Jewish people, and it is similar to our thanksgiving (and Eucharistic) celebrations. We are blessed because God has done great things for us (*Luke 1:49*).

The invitation to a party or meal is a part of our Thanksgiving Day tradition. Before we eat the meal, the father or another member of the household says grace to thank God for the blessings He has bestowed on us and our land. But, more than this, we simply thank God for His **goodness**, as the Jewish people do

during their Birkat Hamazon. It is an expression similar to our Mother Mary from her canticle, the *Magnificat of Mary*. It is a personal experience of feeling God’s goodness in every moment of our lives and praising Him.

In our world today, many people think that God is far from us because of our violent culture and the complications of Covid-19. Pope Saint John Paul II referred to modern society as a Culture



of mind, body, and soul. Joy affects are health. We can imagine the expression of Elizabeth when she heard the greeting of Mary, how she was enthusiastic to welcome her! Likewise, with enthusiasm, we welcome everyone who comes to the party and visits our family. It is a blessing when someone wants to visit us, on Thanksgiving Day or any day of the year.

Celebrate God's goodness every day and to everyone. We must be grateful, because like Our Blessed Mother, God has done great things for us. May joy, peace, and love abound in your life! [+JM+](#)

of Death, and Pope Francis has called it a Culture of Wasting. People are searching for meaning in their lives. It could be said that they are searching for celebrations of thanksgiving. But God is still with us, and we must learn to count our blessings.

Thanksgiving Day is a celebration of joy, and we must express this joy to others every day. Health is an important part of life; health



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Family Time! See page 6.

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