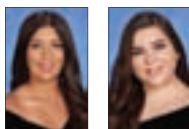


FLORIDA Catholic

Congratulations Class of 2021

ST. BRENDAN



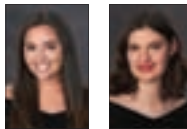
Valedictorian
Sophia Linale
Salutatorian
Olivia Fernandez

ARCHBISHOP MCCARTHY



Valedictorian
Adriana Garcia
Salutatorian
Cali Hinesley

CARDINAL GIBBONS



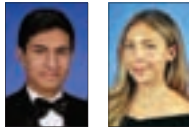
Valedictorian
Jessica Squadrito
Salutatorian
Rachel Kamphaus

OUR LADY OF LOURDES



Valedictorian
Nicole Calderon
Salutatorian
Erica Hengartner

IMMACULATA-LASALLE



Valedictorian
Andres Marquez
Santacruz
Salutatorian
Mariana
Bujall

ARCHBISHOP COLEMAN CARROLL



Valedictorian
Elizabeth
Fitzgerald
Salutatorian
Camila
Gloria

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS



Valedictorian
Victoria
Szymkiewicz
Salutatorian
Kamila
Trigueros

God speed class of 2021

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO
of the Florida Catholic staff

MIAMI | The phrase "new normal" has certainly applied to the 2020-21 school year. Traditional, in-person school, canceled abruptly by the pandemic, turned into hybrid classrooms from October to June, with many students returning to schools while others continued learning from home. Mask-wearing, hand-sanitizing and daily wellness checks became the norm at all archdiocesan schools. iPads, laptops, Zoom and other virtual technologies joined smartboards and desks as classroom fixtures — not to mention plexiglass dividers between desks and in cafeterias.

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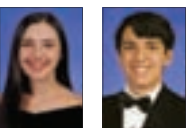
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We pray the lessons learned during these difficult months will fortify graduates as they embark on their journey to adulthood. God speed! ■

MONSIGNOR EDWARD PACE



Valedictorian
Cecilia Rodriguez
Salutatorian
Nicolas Macias

CARROLLTON SCHOOL OF THE SACRED HEART



Valedictorian
Jacqueline Reed
Co-Salutatorian
Paulina Boudet
Co-Salutatorian
Mia Quintana

BELEN JESUIT



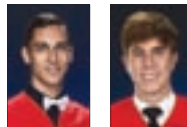
Valedictorian
Nicolas
Alarcon
Salutatorian
Diego L.
Garmendia

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS



Valedictorian
Lukas
Bleichner
Salutatorian
Christopher
de la Viesca

CHAMINADE-MADONNA



Valedictorian
Luke David
Riahifar
Salutatorian
Benjamin
Harding
Schlichte

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LA VOZ CATÓLICA

Junio de 2021

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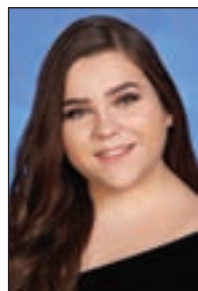
MIAMI ARCHDIOCESE

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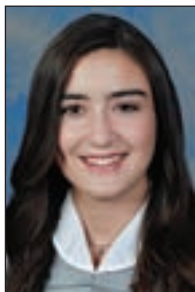


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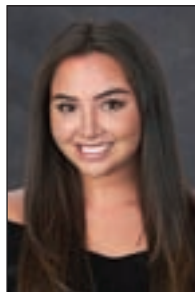


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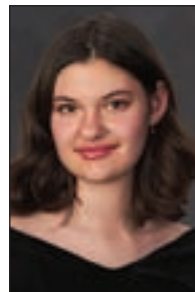


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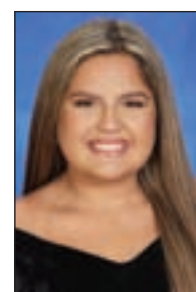


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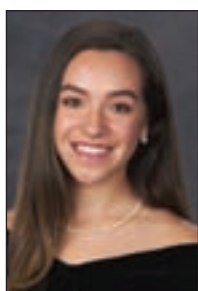


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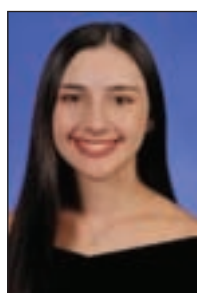
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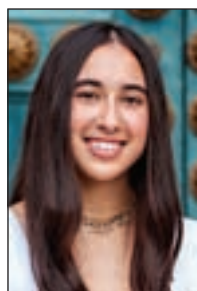


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On the road for vocations

Archbishop joins Knights on Bikes for awareness, fundraising ride from Weston to Kissimmee

TOM TRACY

Florida Catholic correspondent

WESTON | More than 20 Knights on Bikes, motorcycle riders from the dioceses of Miami, Venice, Orlando, St. Augustine and St. Petersburg, convened at the end of May in Weston for their first-ever Ride for Vocations.

Florida's U.S. Route 27 — which begins in Miami and continues north well into the Midwest — offered a rural route for the vocations awareness fundraiser organized by the Knights of Columbus and led by Archbishop Thomas Wenski.

The day began with Mass and a kick-off event at St. Katharine Drexel Parish in far western Broward County, and concluded in Kissimmee, south of Orlando, in time for the start of the Knights of Columbus Florida State Council's annual convention, where Archbishop Wenski presided at the opening Mass the morning of May 28, 2021. After leaving St. Katharine Drexel, the riders first stopped for lunch and refreshments at the Alligator Alley Harley-Davidson dealership near Weston.

The ride raised money for the Mary Beth O'Connor Holy Angels Memorial Fund for Vocations, which was set up by the Knights' state deputy, Scott O'Connor, in honor of his wife, who died in January 2020.

"We believe vocations is the best cause there is for the future of the Church, and for young people — for making sure we have enough



Knights on Bikes pray before the start of the first Knights of Columbus-affiliated Ride for Vocations conducted in Florida and held May 27, 2021 starting at St. Katharine Drexel in Weston. Archbishop Thomas Wenski celebrated a Mass and led the ride all the way to the Knights of Columbus Kissimmee Council Hall No. 6624 south of Orlando. (PHOTOS BY TOM TRACY | FC)



At left, customized biker wear was on display during the first Knights of Columbus-affiliated Ride for Vocations. Above, Knights on Bikes pray before the start of the first Knights of Columbus-affiliated Ride for Vocations conducted in Florida and held May 27, 2021. At right, Archbishop Thomas Wenski checks his personal motorcycle before going on the road with more than 20 participants for the ride.



priests that we need," said George Gutierrez, a resident of Miramar and Miami archdiocesan chairman of the Knights on Bikes. "All the proceeds from the ride goes to

vocations efforts of the Knights of Columbus. It's all about service."

Some of the Knights on Bikes had recently traveled to a Knights of Columbus national rally in New Orleans, with 250 motorcycles total participating and one rider coming some 3,000 miles by motorcycle to attend, according to Gutierrez.

"We actually did 33 events during the pandemic year, from doing things like helping to serve food, food deliveries, helping out at parishes and helping direct traffic," Gutierrez added. "It is a blessing that we have an archbishop who rides with us — and he is a true rider, and when he is with us he becomes one of us, a true brother."

To don the Knights on Bikes vest, patches and motorcycle "colors," riders must be members of the Knights of Columbus. The program has been a tool for evangelization among riders who have needed a little encouragement in their Catholic faith, according to Gutierrez.

"We are reaching out to the guy who needs it the most, because among riders there are people who have not been living their faith or who have maybe forgotten about the Church. By seeing us, we are reaching out to them and bringing them back to church," he said. "People can see us Catholics having fun."

Ed Sleyzak, communication chairman for the Knights' Florida State Council and a member of Mary Help of Christians Parish in Tampa, said the May 27 event was originally planned for last year but with the pandemic it had to be postponed.

"Almost every council has a seminarian we sponsor, and we definitely support the priests," said Sleyzak, who rode in the poker run chase car.

Before stepping onto his own black Harley-Davidson Street Glide, Archbishop Wenski, in his homily, suggested that the riders adopt the

faith example of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar cured by Jesus in the Gospels.

"Do we pray like Bartimaeus for sight — to see with faith what God is calling us to? Or do we pray just to win the lottery?" Archbishop Wenski asked. "Lots of people do look for such tangible results for their having put their faith in Jesus. We see this often in the attitude of the adherents of the 'prosperity gospel' preached by some of the TV evangelists."

To build one's faith in Jesus on the promise of prosperity is to build on sand, the archbishop said, for faith in Jesus must be a faith in Jesus crucified: You cannot remove the cross from his message, he added.

"Bartimaeus remains for us a model of true discipleship. First, because he is not put off by those who tell him to shut up. He kept the door open to faith, even when others wanted to close it for him," the archbishop said. ■

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Florida Knights honor Miamians

STAFF REPORT

ORLANDO | A Miami Knight and a Miami Beach Council were honored by the Florida State Council of the Knights of Columbus during the group's annual convention, held in Orlando May 28-30, 2021.

Carlos D. Coton of San Marcelino Champagnat Council in Miami was named Florida's Knight of the Year, and San Patricio Council 13654 of Miami Beach was named Council of the Year in Division 2. The San Patricio Council is based at St. Patrick Church, Miami Beach, and was founded in 2004.

Coton, a member of St. Brendan's Catholic Church in Miami, is very active in parish life, serving as the trainer and scheduler for church lectors and extraordinary ministers of Communion. He is a certified catechist instructor and a certified facilitator for the archdiocesan Safe Environment Program.

He currently serves as his council's Grand Knight, leading the council to exceed previous levels of support in many charitable and faith activities, including food for the needy and toys to unfortunate children.

Coton also is an active member

of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the National Kidney Foundation of Florida and La Liga Contra el Cancer, among his many philanthropic activities. He has served as a referee for high school basketball and football games for nearly three decades, instructs new referees and teaches at several local colleges.

He spearheaded the effort to assist his church's pastor to successfully reopen the church to regular weekday and weekend Masses by marking usable pews, planning parishioner flow and helping to enforce the Center for Disease Control's COVID-19 guidelines.

He also has a strong commitment to financially and spiritually supporting seminarians studying for the priesthood in Florida and in Venezuela, the home country of his Council's chaplain.

Because of his leadership of the council, he was unanimously nominated by his council members and past grand knights to the Florida State Council for this honor.

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic men's fraternal organization of nearly two million members worldwide. The principles of the Order are charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. The



Carlos Coton, Grand Knight of the San Marcelino Champagnat Council based at St. Brendan Parish in Miami, was named Florida's Knight of the Year by the Florida State Council of the Knights of Columbus at the annual convention, May 29, 2021. (COURTESY)

Florida State Council is one of the largest jurisdictions of the Knights with more than 55,000 members and over 300 councils throughout the state. ■

OBITUARY: ONDINA MENOCA, 82

'God's warrior' dedicated herself to the Church and to her native Cuba

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO
of the Florida Catholic staff

MIAMI | Upon learning of the passing of Ondina Menocal, those who knew her were quick to say: A great woman, a "warrior of God," has died.

The sentiment was expressed both in Miami and in Cuba, because Menocal was as passionately Cuban as she was Catholic. In fact, she dedicated the last years of her life to serving as a bridge between the Church on the island and the Church in the diaspora.

Born in Havana, Cuba, on Oct. 5, 1938, Menocal died at her home on May 15, 2021. She was suffering from cancer and had been under hospice care since the end of April. Nevertheless, she worked for the Church until her last moment.



Ondina Menocal

"Ondina was a dynamic person, open to all cultures and always eager to serve," said Father Mario Vizcaino, founder and longtime director of SEPI (Southeast Pastoral Institute), where Menocal worked for several years as a School of Ministry professor, visiting and training Hispanic leaders in Catholic communities throughout the southeastern U.S.

Even after leaving that paid job, Menocal was always present at SEPI's activities. "She didn't mind fatigue, she was tireless. She was always ready to work. Jesus Christ and the Gospel were her priority," said Father Vizcaino.

In addition to SEPI, Menocal coordinated for years, as a volunteer, the work and meetings of the Hispanic apostolic movements of the Archdiocese of Miami. She participated in most

of the national Encuentros of Hispanic ministry in the U.S., as well as in the two archdiocesan synods. She also belonged to one of the Jesuit Christian life communities, and never missed activities at the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity, from which she received in 2018 the Jubileum Pin, an honor presented for the 60th anniversary of the archdiocese.

Menocal also worked tirelessly in CRECED (Communities of Ecclesial Reflection of Cubans in the Diaspora), a project of Miami's late auxiliary bishop, Agustín Román, who urged exiled Cubans to reflect on their history, their spirituality, and their relationship with their brothers and sisters on the island.

Archbishop Thomas Wenski celebrated Menocal's funeral Mass May 20, 2021 at her parish, Our Lady of Divine Providence, in Miami.

To read the complete obituary, also in Spanish, go here: http://bit.ly/miami_menocal. ■

More than 200 'formed' for service

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO
of the staff of the Florida Catholic

MIAMI | John Stone converted to Catholicism in 2017. He has spent every minute since then learning more about his faith.

A parishioner at St. John XXIII in Miramar, he joined the Knights of Columbus and their Knights on Bikes motorcycle group. He also just became one of the graduates of the archdiocesan School of Lay Formation, a two-year program aimed at forming lay men and women "who desire to grow in their understanding of the Catholic faith and in their ability to serve the Church."

"As a Knight and (member of) Knights on Bikes, we want to be able to minister to our brothers and give them a deeper understanding of our faith," said Stone, who also expressed an interest in the permanent diaconate.

He and fellow St. John XXIII parishioner and Knights on Bikes member George Gutierrez were among the 228 graduates of the two-year program who received their completion certificates from Archbishop Thomas Wenski during a Mass celebrated June 5, 2021, at St. Mary Cathedral.

The graduates encompassed two classes. Those who started in 2018 and finished in 2020, and whose graduation ceremony was

disrupted by COVID-19; and those who started in 2019 and finished in 2021. Also due to the pandemic, the 2021 class received their last year of formation online, even though most of them registered for the in-person courses at centrally located parishes: St. Bartholomew in Miramar, St. Brendan in Miami and St. Andrew in Coral Springs. The weekly courses were held in English and Spanish at all three locations as well as online.

Of the 107 members of the class of 2020, 28 took the online courses in English and 12 took them in Spanish; 35 took the in-person courses in Spanish at St. Bartholomew and 32 at St. Brendan. Of the 121 members of the class of 2021, six took the online courses in English and 13 did so in Spanish; the rest took them in person in Spanish: 34 at St. Andrew, 26 at St. Bartholomew, and 42 at St. Brendan.

Jose Cruz and Anabel Ascencio from St. Stephen Parish in Miramar were among the 2020 graduates who took the courses in Spanish at St. Bartholomew. Both already serve as extraordinary ministers of holy Communion and coordinate a group called Salvador del Mundo (Savior of the World) which meets monthly for prayer and to support parish projects.

"We want to better serve our parish," said Cruz, a roofer by trade



Members of the 2021 Spanish Lay Formation class that met at St. Brendan Parish pose for a photo after the graduation Mass. (ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO | FC)

who also helps keep the parish buildings free of leaks. "We want to learn about our Catholic faith and be better servants."

Ginelle Dysha Ferrol, a member of Christ the King Parish in Perrine, is a 2021 graduate of the English online class. "It was very convenient," she said, as classes were not held at a specific time. The local facilitator who taught the class posted assignments which participants had one week to complete. Then the group met with the facilitator online for more reading and discussion.

Ferrol, who was already involved in the choir at her parish, said because of the classes, "I grew in my

faith, and it also will give me the opportunity, with what I learned, to contribute where it's needed."

"This is actually something that will personally help me for the job that I do," said Susana Yllanes, religious education coordinator at Epiphany Parish in South Miami and a graduate of the 2021 in-person class in Spanish at St. Brendan.

"Certainly, we never stop learning," Yllanes added. "It's a journey that we're on until the end of our life."

In 1977, the Archdiocese of Miami became the first in the nation to establish an Office of Lay Ministry. Its goal was to form, and com-

mission lay people to answer their baptismal call to service in their churches and communities.

The School of Lay Ministry, renamed School of Lay Formation a couple of years ago, now counts nearly 5,000 graduates, some of whom have gone on to earn master's degrees in pastoral ministry or religious studies from Miami's Catholic universities, Barry and St. Thomas. Many of those degreed graduates have returned to offer their services as professors and facilitators in the program, which helps keep the tuition within reach of most of the Catholics in the archdiocese. ■

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Catholic Scouts honored for faith and service

MARLENE QUARONI
Florida Catholic correspondent

DORAL | The annual Mass honoring Catholic Scouts was celebrated May 1, 2021, and honored the good works of youngsters, such as sixth-grader Nathaniel Rojas, 13, who fed the hungry at Camillus House.

“I worked very hard to make two large containers of beef casserole and chili,” said the Boy Scout from St. Bartholomew Parish in Miramar. “It felt very good to help others in need.”

Nathaniel received a My Faith and Promise award at the annual Mass held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Doral. His sister, Caroline Rojas, 10, and her friend Alahna Griffith, 10, received I Live My Faith awards for giving a portion of their Girl Scout cookie profits to the Broward Humane Society. They raised \$300 for the pet rescue facility.

Sixty-four Scouts from nine churches in the Archdiocese of Miami received various awards according to their age. They included God Is Love, Mother Mary, I Live My Faith, Mary the First Disciple-The Marian Medal, and Family of God for girls; Brother Francis Adan and *Parvuli Dei* for boys; and Light of Christ and My Faith and Promise for both boys and girls. Spiritual exercises, faith journeys, and service projects lead to the awards.

Jessica Cook, member of the archdiocese’s Catholic Committee on Scouting, said that despite the changes which the pandemic caused, the Catholic Scouting program had a very successful virtual day of recollection and retreat.

“Jesus, the Healer was our theme for this,” she said. “The committee chose the theme about a year ago as we prayed for physical and spiritual healing in these unusual times.”

To receive awards, Scouts had to accomplish several tasks. They had to make a formal commitment to completing the award, obtain a counselor or coordinator to work with them, complete a workbook, attend either a day of recollection for younger Scouts or a Scout retreat for older ones, and present themselves and their completed work before a review board.

“Above all, this is about growing closer to Jesus each and every day,” Cook said. “We are all on our own unique faith journey, and I hope you will consider keeping Catholic activities a part of that journey.”

This year, the Archdiocese of Miami received the National Catholic Committee on Scouting Quality Diocese Award. It’s an opportunity for the national committee to salute dioceses that truly deliver



Cathy Seacrest, left, Brownie Isabella Seacrest, Scout Daisy Donati, Molly Donati and Scout Peyton Seacrest recite the Our Father at the annual awards Mass for Catholic Scouts, May 1, 2021.



Scout Nathaniel Rojas, 13, who received the My Faith and Promise award, and Scouts Alahna Griffith, 10, and Caroline Rojas, 10, who received the I Live My Faith awards, pose after Mass. All are from St. Bartholomew Church Parish in Miramar.

exceptional programs to young people at all levels of Scouting.

Archbishop Thomas Wenski, who celebrated the Mass, noted the significance of honoring Scouts on the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, May 1. He said St. Joseph modeled the traditional values of Scouting which are integrity, respect, care, belief and cooperation.

“Joseph was the carpenter from

Nazareth who God entrusted to raise Mary’s son, Jesus Christ. We need to be reliable and trustworthy like Joseph. We must cultivate those habits, skills and talents that will help us to be the best possible collaborators of God,” the archbishop said. ■

For more information about Catholic Scouting, visit <https://catholic-scoutsonline.com/>.



Daniel Biggs IV, 10, from Little Flower Church in Coral Gables, who received the Parvuli Dei award, receives Communion from Archbishop Thomas Wenski. (PHOTOS BY MARLENE QUARONI | FC)



Daniel Rangel pins the Parvuli Dei award on his son, Alejandro Rangel, 10, from Little Flower Church in Coral Gables.

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Butterflies from Boys Town

Archbishop receives Easter gifts from unaccompanied immigrant minors staying in Children's Village

CRISTINA CABRERA JARRO
Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMI | This Easter, Archbishop Thomas Wenski received a kaleidoscope of colorful butterfly drawings, a yellow paper origami tulip, and thank you notes. The gifts were made by children and teens staying at Catholic Charities' Msgr. Bryan Walsh Children's Village, a home for unaccompanied, undocumented immigrant minors. It was their way of thanking the archbishop for celebrating Mass with them on Easter Sunday.

During his homily (published as a column in the April edition of the *Florida Catholic* and *La Voz Católica*), Archbishop Wenski shared the story of Pancho the worm. Pancho admired the beauty and freedom of butterflies and dreamt of becoming one himself. Many of his friends ridiculed him for his ambitions, and one even suggested he glue on plastic wings. But Pancho knew that the plastic wings only worked in terms of looks and would neither help him fly nor escape from life in the mud. One day, someone told Pancho his

dream was possible, but only if he would die to the life of a worm so that he could be reborn as a butterfly.

"We are more than worms. We are butterflies," Archbishop Wenski told the boys and girls at the Children's Village. "But we must accept dying to life as a worm: That is, we must die from selfishness so that we can live for others. We must die to sin, which is like mud that makes us dirty... Today (Easter) is a feast that renews our hope. Do not be afraid. Like Pancho, you know that God has created you for more than misery, more than violence, more than greed. God has created you to live in dignity, to live in freedom."

The minors currently staying at the Children's Village (formerly known as Boys Town) come mostly from Central America, sent by parents or family hoping they might live in freedom and have a better future in the U.S. They are much like the Cuban children of Operation Pedro Pan who also occupied the Children's Village 60 years ago.

The center is licensed to serve 81

unaccompanied minors from birth to 17 years of age. Due to COVID-19 health and safety measures, it is now functioning at a significantly reduced capacity. Nevertheless, the center is providing the children a place to live, learn and play operated by a staff who care for their physical, social, psychological, educational and health needs.

Even though the center is run by Catholic Charities, a child can request a religious service from any denomination. Welcoming the archbishop for Easter was a special treat.

"The Easter Mass celebrated by Archbishop Wenski was a beautiful and touching service," said Peter Routsis Arroyo, CEO of Catholic Charities. "As you can see by the gifts they made for him afterwards, they were very appreciative and could identify themselves with his homily."

To protect the identity of the minors, all butterfly drawings were signed only with initials, but their message of gratitude was clear.

"The story of the butterfly was very good and I really liked it. I had



Collage of some of the thank you notes sent to Archbishop Thomas Wenski by unaccompanied minors being cared for at Catholic Charities' Msgr. Bryan Walsh Children's Village after his Easter Sunday visit.

never heard such a beautiful story," said G.M.

"Well, the reality is I really enjoyed the story. It's true because we

start our lives like those of the butterflies and we notice everything," said N.G.

"I loved it," said S.C. ■

Foster families needed for refugee children

Catholic Charities seeks families willing to open their homes to unaccompanied minors

ROCÍO GRANADOS
of the La Voz Católica staff

MIAMI | Have you ever wondered where the unaccompanied children who are arriving at the country's southern border go? Or what happens to them once they are admitted into the United States?

According to the latest report from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, in April 2021 the Border Patrol recorded the entry of 13,962 unaccompanied minors through the southern border, mostly from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Although there has been a reduction in the number of arrivals in comparison to March of this year (15,918), it is still one of the highest numbers recorded in recent years.

Official data indicate that about 90% of these unaccompanied minors are reunited with a family member or sponsor in the United States, while the remaining 10% enter the care of the Department of Health and Human Services.

There are nearly 23,000 children in out-of-home foster care in Florida, according to data from

the Department of Children and Families. "Of those, about 4,000 are ready to be placed in fulltime foster care," said Erik Dellenback, a member of the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Council, while speaking on the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Catholics Across the Aisle" podcast.

The podcast, which also featured Shevaun Harris, DCF secretary, was the first of two done to mark May as national Foster Care Awareness Month.

Florida is one of the top five states with the highest number of children in foster care, so DCF and Catholic Charities agencies in the state are promoting foster care and encouraging more families to consider providing loving homes for children separated from their parents.

"It's a month of recognition, celebration and awareness to educate the community, to remind others that already know and to get people excited about becoming foster parents. In our case, to become foster parents to refugee (minors)," said Monica Farias, director of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami.

Farias pointed out that this program is similar to Operation Pedro Pan, which Msgr. Bryan Walsh, an archdiocesan priest, developed 60 years ago to resettle Cuban minors who left the island unaccompanied, fleeing the communist regime that was in place. Operation Pedro Pan benefited more than 14,000 minors, providing them with safe places until they were reunited with their families.

Catholic Charities can assist 37 minors, but currently assists 28 children and young adults with refugee, asylee or trafficked immigration status who are in the country without a parent or guardian. Some come from refugee camps in the Middle East or from African countries, but most are minors who came across the southern border. "The vast majority are from Guatemala and Honduras," said Farias.

With the increase in child crossings, "a lot more foster parents are going to be needed," Farias said. She explained that the minors coming to Catholic Charities are referred by the U.S. Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program, which has been in operation since 1980.

Currently, 23 URM programs operate in 15 states. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service are the two national resettlement agencies authorized by the State Department to place migrant minors in temporary foster care. The Office of Refugee Resettlement refers the minors to the different programs nationwide.

"In order for us to incorporate a child into our program, we must have foster parents who are ready and willing to receive unaccompanied children," Farias said.

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

Foster parents must meet requirements set by the State of Florida, including taking a training and passing a criminal background check, and demonstrating they have sufficient income to support themselves as well as adequate space to house a child, among other things.

Many families don't consider foster care because of their work schedules, because they don't have the space to take in another family member or because they are raising their own children.

FIND OUT MORE

- For more information about the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program, contact Monica Farias, program director, at 786-280-1072, or email her at mfarias@ccadm.org.

- Or visit the program's website at: <https://www.ccadm.org/our-ministries/refugee-services/unaccompanied-refugee-minors>.

- You can also listen to the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Catholics Across the Aisle" podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts and Stitcher.

But "what is perhaps more restrictive and influences the decision is that it is a long-term commitment that requires a whole family accommodation to receive a person who is not part of your family, but who will undoubtedly become part of your family," explained Farias.

The program offers ongoing support. "It's a collaborative team effort," Farias noted, adding that Catholic Charities maintains legal guardianship of the child, and works at all times with the foster parents to acculturate the child and prepare him or her for an in-

PLEASE SEE **FOSTER, 7**

HAVANA NIGHTS



"Salud!" says Edmund Mazzei of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Miami, who took part in Havana Nights with his wife, Janeth, right, and friend Rita Fernandez of Little Flower Church in Coral Gables.



Archbishop Thomas Wenski enjoys a cigar at Havana Nights with Father Elvis Gonzalez, pastor of St. Michael Church in Miami. (PHOTOS BY ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO | FC)

Mojitos, dominos and cigars: All for charity

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO
of the Florida Catholic staff

MIAMI | The rooftop of the American Museum of the Cuban Diaspora proved a fitting spot for the 2021 edition of Havana Nights.

The annual fundraiser, canceled last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, benefits Catholic Charities' Unaccompanied Minors program. Not only is the rooftop outdoors — a must in pandemic times — the exhibit below depicted the story of the 1960s Pedro Pan exodus, which gave rise to the Unaccompanied Minors program.

"The exhibit went hand-in-hand with the program that we're supporting," said Martha Velasquez, senior director of Special Events for the archdiocesan Office of Development. "And (museum staff) were so supportive and so helpful. They really made it easy for us and it allowed us to grow."

The May 12, 2021 event attracted nearly 140 people, about three times as many as in years past. They played dominos, drank mojitos, and ate such Cuban delicacies as ham croquettes, ceviche with

passion fruit and crispy *mariquitas*, mini *pan con lechon* sandwiches, and *tostones* topped with shrimp. And, of course, there were cigars.

"We smoke the cigars every once in a while," said Deacon Ernesto Rodriguez, seated at a domino table with other members of St. Michael Parish in Miami, all first-time attendees at Havana Nights.

Although he's been in the U.S. 41 years, Deacon Rodriguez said, "I never forget my roots and all things Cuban. I feel very proud of that."

Seated on a couch nearby were also first-time attendees Stella Maris Parra, a native of Uruguay and member of St. Dominic Parish, and Julia and Ernesto Castillo of St. Agatha Parish, both in Miami. Parra and Julia Castillo met during an archdiocesan sponsored trip to Cuba in 2012 for the visit of Pope Benedict XVI. "We've become sisters since then," Castillo said.

She noted that two of her husband's cousins came to the U.S. via the Pedro Pan exodus, which between 1960 and 1962 brought around 14,000 Cuban children to Miami and other parts of the U.S., where they were cared for by the

Catholic Church until they could be reunited with their parents.

"That image moved me," said Castillo, referring to an image at the entrance to the exhibit: a boy and girl holding hands, each carrying a duffel bag. She recalled how her husband's cousin "always told us, 'I didn't let go of my brother for anything.'"

Catholic Charities still cares for unaccompanied minors at its Msgr. Bryan O. Walsh Children's Village in southern Miami-Dade County, named for the Miami priest who launched, organized, and supervised the Pedro Pan exodus.

Today, the children are mostly from Central America, and they come not on planes but by walking across the southern border. Once processed at Border Patrol facilities, they fall under the protection of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, which places them in licensed shelters such as Catholic Charities' Children's Village. There they remain until staff locate — and vet — a parent, relative or sponsor who is willing and able to house and care for them while their immigration cases make their way through



Enjoying Havana Nights are, from left, Firelei Silva, Carmen Valdivia, Maria Amoroso, Carmencita Romanach and Dina Mitjan. Valdivia and Romanach are former Pedro Pans. Valdivia serves as executive director of the American Museum of the Cuban Diaspora, which hosted the event on its rooftop and is also hosting a Pedro Pan exhibit.

the system.

While at the Children's Village, they attend classes taught by teachers from Miami-Dade County Public Schools, receive health care and psychological counseling, and enjoy playtime and outings. The goal, as with the Pedro Pan children, is to nurture them in a home-like atmosphere until they can be reunited with family.

"Unaccompanied Minors Program is one of the things I know that's close to his heart," said Davika Austin, chief administrative officer for Catholic Charities.

She was referring to Archbishop Thomas Wenski, who decided Havana Nights would raise funds for the Unaccompanied Minors Program when the event began in 2013. Back then it was called the Man Cave and open only to men.

When women were admitted, the name changed. Until this year, Havana Nights had been held at Cuban Crafters Cigars in Miami, where space was limited to about 40 participants.

The pandemic forced a change in location and added creativity on the part of organizers. This year, sponsors who paid \$500 for a table of four domino players got to take the wooden table home. Along with those who paid the single ticket price of \$50, they got to drink and eat as much as they wanted, see the Pedro Pan exhibit, and enjoy a cigar.

"We were able to raise more money than in the past because the place was bigger and allowed us to have more people," said Velasquez, who added that the event raised close to \$10,000. ■

FOSTER: Refugee children in need of foster families in Florida

FROM 6

dependent life in this country.

Children may remain in foster care until the age of 18, depending on their immigration status and other circumstances. For youths between the ages of 18 and 23, the program offers transitional homes to independent living. They continue to be provided with educa-

tion, employment readiness and financial education.

If interested adults are unable to become foster parents, the program also needs mentors and volunteers to coordinate events and collect donations.

"I think the Catholic Church has done a great job with this program," Farias noted, adding that the program "gives the youths all the tools they need so that they can

thrive when they reach that age of maturity."

But the most significant thing is "the importance of having families to welcome these refugees. We insist that we need families to help us make these kids feel comfortable and that the sacrifice of leaving their families and their countries behind is worth it. That this sacrifice has value," Farias added. ■



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ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI

Vo. 82, No. 8

9401 Biscayne Blvd.
Miami, FL 33138
305-762-1131 Fax 305-762-1132

PUBLISHER

Archbishop Thomas Wenski

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Mary Ross Agosta

ARCHDIOCESAN EDITOR

Ana Rodriguez-Soto
arsoto@theadom.org
305-762-1131

• **ADVERTISING:** Contact Valerie Casco at
407-373-0075 or
vcasko@thefloridacatholic.org

State Offices: 50 E. Robinson St., Suite
G, Orlando, FL 32801-1619; P.O. Box 4993;
Orlando, FL 32802-4993; 407-373-0075; Toll-
free 1-888-275-9953; Fax 407-373-0087

EXECUTIVE & EDITORIAL STAFF:

Associate Publisher: Ann Borowski Slade
Editorial/Online Director: Jean Gonzalez
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Going to Mass: the central act of our faith

As the summer progresses, we hope to put the pandemic in our rear-view mirror. We believe currently that prudence mandates that we continue our policy of wearing face masks and social distancing at Mass. However, we are reviewing our protocols weekly. Some may feel this as an unnecessary imposition, but compliance is surely an act of charity towards our neighbor.

The global health emergency has demonstrated that “no one can face life in isolation.” We are social beings — we can only become fully human in relationship to others. We long to belong — to a family, to a community, to a nation. Virtual relationships — even with loved ones through ZOOM or facetime — are no substitute for face-to-face encounters. And, as a family of faith, a community of the baptized, virtual Masses cannot long substitute for “full, conscious and active participation” at Mass in our parish churches.

As more people are vaccinated, many are returning to worship in person at their parish churches. However, in most cases, the parishes are still able to accommodate those returning even with the reduced capacity of social distancing.

Some pundits suggest that the pandemic, which had people isolating themselves at home, accelerated the falloff in Mass attendance that was already evident before the pandemic and so, they say, many people will not be back.

And it is true, the ascendant secularism of our times has weakened many Americans’ religious identities. Mainline Protestant denominations are most affected — but it has not spared us Catholics. If “former Catholic” were a religious denomination, it would be second largest religious group in America. (The Catholic Church continues to be the largest — with about 20% of the American population.)

The strong individualism of our American culture does undermine the sense of a collective identity in which Catholicism is experienced as a distinctive way of life. Thus, those who call themselves spiritual but not religious usually associate faith with private rather than public spheres of life (the private involving personal experience, the public having to do more with institutions, creeds and ritual). We find people who say they believe but do not belong; and, as we see sometimes in many Catholics in public life (but

not exclusively among them), we find those who say that they belong but who apparently do not believe.

Churches are seen as merely voluntary organizations and affiliation or non-affiliation a matter of personal taste or choice. Americans have become individual consumers of religion, picking their religious identity a la carte as it were. And so, where many people define themselves as spiritual but not religious, they may construct for themselves made-to-order creeds in which they profess to believe in Jesus (expressed sometimes very vaguely) but at the same time they do not believe in the Church.

If spirituality describes our struggle with issues of how our lives fit into the greater cosmic scheme of things, then for Catholics the personal act of faith (what the theologian calls the *fides quae creditor*) cannot be divorced from the content of faith itself (*the fides quae creditor*). Or as one of the ancient Fathers of the Church said: One could not claim God as Father without at the same time acknowledging the Church as Mother. The living out of our Catholic faith then is spirituality; but it is also necessarily a living out of that faith religiously.

Going to Mass “religiously” — on all Sundays and holy days — is what we Catholics do. It is the most obvi-



Archbishop
Thomas
Wenski

APPOINTMENTS

Archbishop Thomas Wenski has made the following appointments:

Effective June 1, 2021:

Father Oscar Pérez Dudamel to parochial vicar, St. Augustine, Coral Gables.

Effective June 14, 2021:

Father Yamil Miranda to administrator, All Saints, Sunrise.

Effective July 1, 2021:

Father Esney Muñoz Díaz, parochial vicar, St. Michael the Archangel, Miami.

Corrections

Father Jose Enrique López to higher studies in Pamplona, Spain, effective Aug. 1, 2021 (not June 14, 2021).

ous “marker” of a Catholic identity. The central act of our faith and the highest manifestation therefore of Catholic spirituality is participation in the Holy Eucharist seen as the source and summit of the Christian life. The recovery of Eucharistic practice — with renewed coherence and wonder — must be the path forward as we emerge from this pandemic, for the Eucharist — the Body and Blood of Christ — is the source of our healing and hope. ■

La Misa: El centro de nuestra fe

A medida que avanza el verano, esperamos poner la pandemia en nuestro espejo retrovisor. Creemos actualmente que la prudencia exige que continuemos con nuestra política de usar máscaras faciales y distanciamiento social en Misa. Sin embargo, estamos revisando nuestros protocolos semanalmente. Algunos pueden sentir esto como una imposición innecesaria, pero el cumplimiento es sin duda un acto de caridad hacia nuestro prójimo.

La emergencia sanitaria mundial ha demostrado que “nadie puede afrontar la vida aislado”. Somos seres sociales, solo podemos volvernos completamente humanos en relación con los demás. Anhelamos pertenecer a una familia, a una comunidad, a una nación. Las relaciones virtuales, incluso con seres queridos a través de ZOOM o facetime, no sustituyen a los encuentros cara a cara. Y, como familia de fe, una comunidad de bautizados, las Misas virtuales no pueden sustituir durante mucho tiempo a la “participación plena, consciente y activa” en la Misa en nuestras iglesias parroquiales.

A medida que se vacuna a más personas, muchas están regresan-

do para asistir personalmente al culto en sus iglesias parroquiales. Sin embargo, en la mayoría de los casos, las parroquias aún pueden acoger a quienes regresan incluso con la reducida capacidad de distanciamiento social. Algunos expertos sugieren que la pandemia, que hizo que la gente se aislara en casa, aceleró la caída en la asistencia a Misa que ya era evidente antes de la pandemia y, por lo tanto, dicen, mucha gente no volverá.

Y es cierto, el laicismo ascendente de nuestro tiempo ha debilitado las identidades religiosas de muchos estadounidenses. Las principales denominaciones protestantes son las más afectadas, pero no nos ha librado a los católicos. Si “ex católico” fuera una denominación religiosa, sería el segundo grupo religioso más grande de Estados Unidos. (La Iglesia Católica sigue siendo la más grande, con aproximadamente el 20% de la población estadounidense.)

El fuerte individualismo de nuestra cultura estadounidense socava el sentido de una identidad colectiva en la que el catolicismo se experimenta como una forma de vida distintiva. Así, quienes se lla-

man a sí mismos espirituales pero no religiosos suelen asociar la fe con esferas de la vida privadas más que públicas (lo privado implica la experiencia personal, el público tiene que ver más con instituciones, credos y rituales). Encontramos personas que dicen creer pero no pertenecen; y, como vemos a veces en muchos católicos en la vida pública (pero no exclusivamente entre ellos), encontramos a quienes dicen que pertenecen pero que aparentemente no creen.

Las iglesias son vistas como organizaciones meramente voluntarias y la afiliación o no afiliación es una cuestión de gusto o elección personal. Los estadounidenses se han convertido en consumidores individuales de religión, eligiendo su identidad religiosa a la carta, por así decirlo. Y así, cuando muchas personas se definen a sí mismas como espirituales pero no religiosas, pueden construirse credos hechos a medida en los que profesan creer en Jesús (expresado a veces de manera muy vaga), pero al mismo tiempo no creen en la Iglesia.

Si la espiritualidad describe nuestra lucha con cuestiones de cómo nuestras vidas encajan en

el gran esquema cósmico de las cosas, entonces, para los católicos, el acto personal de fe (lo que el teólogo llama *fides quae creditor*) no puede divorciarse del contenido de la fe misma (*the fides quae creditor*). O como dijo uno de los antiguos Padres de la Iglesia: No se puede reclamar a Dios como Padre sin reconocer al mismo tiempo a la Iglesia como Madre. Vivir nuestra fe católica es, entonces, espiritualidad; pero también es necesariamente vivir de esa fe religiosamente.

Ir a Misa “religiosamente” — todos los domingos y días santos — es lo que hacemos los católicos. Es el “marcador” más obvio de una identidad católica. El acto central de nuestra fe y, por tanto, la máxima manifestación de la espiritualidad católica es la participación en la Sagrada Eucaristía vista como fuente y cumbre de la vida cristiana. La recuperación de la práctica eucarística, con coherencia y asombro renovados, debe ser el camino a seguir al salir de esta pandemia, porque la Eucaristía, el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo, es la fuente de nuestra curación y esperanza. ■

'We accomplished everything we set out to do'

Her job done, schools superintendent looks forward to retirement

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO
of the Florida Catholic staff

MIAMI | After 10 years as Miami's superintendent and a total of 40 in the Catholic school system, Kim Pryzbylski is ready to retire.

"I think it's time," she said, noting that both her sons and two grandchildren live in Indiana. "It's time for me to spend time with them."

Pryzbylski announced her retirement in February. Her last day is June 30, after which her successor, Jim Rigg, from the Archdiocese of Chicago, will take over the dual role of secretary of education and superintendent of schools. The job entails overseeing more than 2,700 professionals who educate just over 30,000 students in archdiocesan schools: 48 elementary, 12 high schools, 1 virtual school and 1 special needs school; plus the Office of Catechesis, which teaches the faith to an equal number of students enrolled in public schools.

Looking back on her decade here, Pryzbylski, who came to Miami after serving as superintendent in Gary, Indiana and Monterey, California, is confident that "we accomplished everything we set out to do." She noted the priorities she set when she took the job: boosting professional development for staff and integrating technology into classrooms.

"We knew that was going to become part of education," Pryzbylski said of devices such as iPads and laptops. "I didn't want our schools

not to be prepared. We need to stay current."

When COVID hit, it accelerated the process. High school students already relied on individual laptops or iPads for learning, so the transition was easier for them. Most elementary schools were moving in that direction, especially in the upper grades, while students in lower grades and in less affluent schools often shared devices. When the pandemic hit, Pryzbylski made sure no one fell behind.

Oscar Cedeño, principal of Cardinal Gibbons High School in Fort Lauderdale, remembers her asking the high schools to donate any leftover or unused technology to the elementary schools. Gibbons gave its old Dell laptops to St. Jerome and St. Helen "so kids could at least sign into class because they didn't have anything at home."

Lisa Dodge, principal of St. Ambrose School, credits Pryzbylski with "being right on it" when the pandemic hit. "She had all the supplies ready for us. We had everything we needed."

"Were there glitches? Yes," Pryzbylski said. But overall, given the circumstances, "we were fairly successful."

"The teachers were superstars," she added. "They came up with ideas and different things to do with their students, to keep them engaged. They really did a heroic job."

For professional development, Pryzbylski made full use of federal Title II funds to develop training

programs for teachers in a multitude of areas. Schools could also develop targeted programs for their faculty, such as training in a specific technology. She similarly tapped Title I funds aimed at helping low-income students with learning needs.

"Title I greatly benefits our students because they get that extra time in reading and math, and Title II has been great for our faculty," Pryzbylski said.

Pryzbylski also urged schools to accept, and to encourage parents to apply for, Florida Tax Credit Scholarships such as Step Up, AAA, Gardiner and McKay, to help set them on a firmer financial footing.

She focused on "making sure that we can continue and that we can grow," said Eduardo Flor, principal of St. Mary's Cathedral School in Miami.

Dodge said an academy Pryzbylski developed for first-year principals "was one of the most beneficial things" when she went from third grade teacher to principal eight years ago.

She said Pryzbylski also began a mentoring program aimed at identifying, retaining and promoting talented staff. "Little schools sometimes need people that can be groomed. We're hiring from within as opposed to going out and finding principals," Dodge said.

"I feel that Dr. Kim did a very good job of trying to put a system together for the diocese. She tried to make it more unified," said Clara Cabrera, principal of Good Shep-



Kim Pryzbylski is retiring at the end of June 2021 after 10 years as schools superintendent in the Archdiocese of Miami and 40 years in the Catholic school system. (ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO | FC)

herd School in Miami, who previously worked for the public school system. But at the same time, "she gave the principals a lot of ownership of the schools."

"They give us a baseline. Here's the goal we need to keep in mind, or the law or the policy or the rule, but here's where you can customize it and fit it to the needs of your community," Flor said. "She knows that the 40-something or 50-something schools are so, so different, so she gives us that room to make it work."

Cedeño also praised Pryzbylski's collaborative leadership style. "Whenever there's an issue, she likes to bring it up to the whole principal group and say, 'This is the situation. Give me some feedback.' She likes making sure that we at least are heard as principals." Pryzbylski cites that buy-in from principals as the key to her success. "I definitely think it was the people. Everyone really came together very well. We worked together. We shared ideas."

For their part, the principals

gave her top marks for her willingness to advise, mentor and accompany them.

"Kim is incredibly supportive and will stand by administrators in their decisions," said Cedeño, noting that she gave out her cell phone number and made herself available at all hours.

"I just love that every time I've needed support or guidance, whether it be a difficult situation, to share good news, or establish a new program, she's always accessible," Flor said.

"I knew that I could always count on her," Cabrera said.

Dodge echoed the sentiment. "She was always there for me with every single problem I had."

"I really feel that we are in a much better place now than we were when we started," Pryzbylski said in her self-effacing way. "I credit the teachers and the principals for working hard to get the students the technology and the new learning programs. They really did a great job." ■

NEWSbriefs

St. Brendan principal authors a book

Jose Rodelgo-Bueno, principal of St. Brendan School in Miami, has just published his second book, "Green and White: My School, My Life," based on his nearly nine years as principal at the Miami high school. "I believe it can be a help for principals, teachers, students, and parents," said Rodelgo-Bueno, who is currently on medical leave, receiving treatment for cancer in his native Spain. The book is available on Amazon at this link: <https://amzn.to/3pHMDpA>.

St. Patrick coach retires after 39 years

St. Patrick School's longtime coach Art Fernandez, who is retir-

ing effective June 30, 2021, got a memorable sendoff from faculty and students when Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber presented him with the Key to the City June 7, 2021. Fernandez has worked at St. Patrick for 39 years. As a parting gift, he requested the creation of the "Art Fernandez Endowment Fund" to provide scholarship assistance to low-income families who wish to give their children a Catholic education. "Nothing would give me more joy than knowing that in a small way I am giving some children the opportunity to attend SPS," Fernandez said. The complete story on Fernandez and his contributions to the school is posted on the archdiocesan website, www.miamiarch.org.

Summer Institute for catechists

The Office of Catechesis is once again offering summer courses for catechetical leaders and catechists.

Classes meet daily for the week and participants can complete two courses in just one week. The courses will take place: in Miami-Dade June 14-18, from 8:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m., at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish School, 11291 S.W. 142 Ave., Miami. Register at: <https://forms.office.com/r/yd8ViP6S8Y>; in Broward: June 21-25, from 8:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at St. Gregory the Great School, 200 North University Drive, Plantation. Register at: <https://forms.office.com/r/wnw18v5YZ3>.

Correction

The article in the May 2021 edition, on the 60th anniversary of Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory, listed incorrect percentages of its "intentionally diverse" student body, which did not add up to 100. The correct percentage of Hispanic students is 40 (not 20 as noted in the original article), plus 40% Caucasian and 20% African American.



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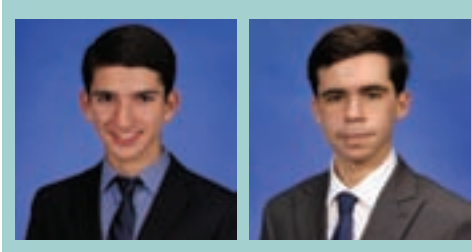
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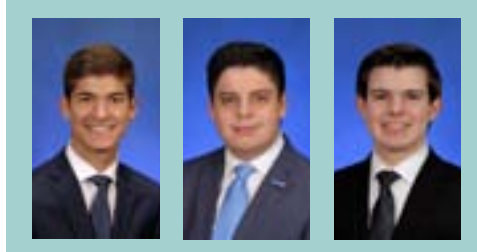
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A day in the life of 'hybrid' schooling

Editor's note: In September 2020, schools in the Archdiocese of Miami reopened after closing in mid-March due to COVID-19. The 2020-21 school year began with all students learning online, but in October, archdiocesan schools gave parents the option to send their youngsters back to campus for in-person learning or to keep their kids at home, learning online. For archdiocesan teachers, that meant providing simultaneous instruction to in-person learners while also teaching students who were visible only on computer screens.

Much has been written about the "heroism" this past year of front-line workers in hospitals, grocery stores and other service industries: Those who did not have the luxury of working from home during the pandemic. We think archdiocesan educators also belong in that "heroic" category for the way they accepted the teaching challenges posed by the pandemic and adapted to the "new normal."

To give our readers a taste of that "new normal," we sent reporters to a Broward high school and a Miami-Dade elementary school, to spend a day with a teacher in a hybrid classroom. Here's what that was like.

An eighth grader at Our Lady of the Lakes School jots down new vocabulary words on her iPad from behind her desk shield as her middle school language arts teacher, Rose Cabrera, writes on the smartboard. The class was combined with students learning in-person and virtually via another iPad that was logged in via Zoom. (CRISTINA CABRERA JARRO | FC)



A year of 'faith over fear' at Our Lady of the Lakes

CRISTINA CABRERA JARRO
Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMILAKES | A school bell rings in the early afternoon at Our Lady of the Lakes in Miami Lakes. Doors open, and students pour into the hallways with the excitement that comes when less than an hour remains before dismissal. Some children laugh as their class lines move across campus. Compared to last May, when schools were quiet, empty and closed due to COVID-19, this sounds, looks, and feels like a blessedly normal school atmosphere — even with everyone wearing masks.

A second-grade class walks by with their teacher, Jalenni Cruz. If a group of second graders wasn't a handful before, Cruz now literally has her hands full, carrying a tripod and an iPad. On the device, logged in via Zoom, are three students attending their school day virtually. As other groups walk by, the scene is repeated, with either teachers or student volunteers carrying the devices across campus, or using them in the classrooms.

This is how Our Lady of the Lakes School accomplished hybrid — in-person and virtual — learning in the 2020-2021 academic year. They finished the year with 450 students attending in-person, and 13 virtually.

Like many schools, they adapted to the technical challenges, as well as health and safety measures brought on by the pandemic. They also adopted a new motto for the year: "Faith over fear." Teachers posted it on bulletin boards all over the school, had them

printed on face masks and T-shirts, and shared it on the school's social media pages.

"Knowing the way we ended the 2019-2020 school year, and not knowing what to expect for the 2020-2021 school year, we decided the best thing to do was put our trust in God and work together to stamp out any fear that crept up from the pandemic and its effects," said Principal Barbara Picazo. "We knew, above all, God was in control and would help us serve our students and families to the best of our abilities."

GETTING TECHNICAL

The 2020-2021 academic year began in August at archdiocesan schools, with PreK students being the first to return in-person. At OLL, they were greeted on that first day by cheering masked teachers and welcome signs, temperature checks, and plenty of hand sanitizer. Even Father Luis Flores, parochial vicar, came by to sprinkle students with holy water as they arrived.

Older students returned only virtually at first.

Originally, only sixth through eighth graders at OLL had their own iPads. The rest of the students accessed the devices through traveling tech carts. Once the school confirmed that virtual learning would be the norm, at least to start the year, iPads were given to third through fifth graders.

"Our team programmed approximately 300 iPads manually," said Nicole Peña, instructional technology resource coordina-

PLEASE SEE **OUR LADY, 13**



Nelson Araque multitasks and stays constantly busy during his theology class at Cardinal Gibbons High School as he teaches his online and in-person students and tries to keep them engaged and interested. (LINDA REEVES | FC)

Silent hallways, gadgets, glitches and gloves

LINDA REEVES
Florida Catholic correspondent

FORT LAUDERDALE | Nelson Araque spent years in college preparing for the teaching vocation to which he felt called. But his ample schooling and nearly 25 years of teaching experience never prepared him for the challenges he faced this school year.

"We have a teacher's guide, but in the pandemic, it didn't work," said Araque, a teacher at Cardinal Gibbons High School in Fort Lauderdale for the past 15 years.

Since COVID-19, Araque's life as a teacher has changed considerably. Nearly everything, from what he did and when and how he did it, is different than it was pre-pandemic. But he said he still loves his job, and it is never dull.

"I like to be around students and share with them what I know," said Araque, a 10th and 11th grade theology teacher who is married to another Catholic school teacher. He and his wife have one child. "I like to see the students understanding what I am teaching them, and I like to see them developing," he said.

The Florida Catholic spent time on the Gibbons campus at the end of May to experience a day in the life of an educator and to observe the "new normal" teaching practices used to educate students during this abnormal time. For now, everything is different.

After stepping onto Cardinal Gibbons' campus, we noticed an unusual silence. None of the chatter that used to fill the walkways and halls. No students hanging out,

fooling around, laughing. Due to the pandemic, youngsters have not been allowed to congregate. Distancing signs are posted here and there. Everyone on campus sported a facemask and colored wristbands, issued after they checked in using a mobile safety app that basically asks them if they are feeling well.

Teachers arrived 30 minutes to an hour early to their hybrid classrooms to prepare for their lessons and get all the electronic devices, gadgets and gizmos fired up. They made any last-minute adjustments to their teaching plans but had no way to prepare for sudden glitches. Most importantly, they slipped on latex gloves and sprayed the desks with disinfectant before students arrived, made sure the desks were spaced apart and secured their own masks.

"Good morning," said Araque as he greeted his 10th grade students. Wearing masks, they strolled into the classroom with laptops and cellphones in hand. They nodded, placed their cellphones on a table near the door — a classroom procedure — and took a seat at a desk.

Four boys and a girl showed up for in-person sessions during our May visit. Araque clicked on the meeting link for his online class and faces of students learning at home began to pop up on his computer screen. "I just had one student at home say she is out of power," said Araque, shaking his head and showing his concern. "What do I do with her?"

PLEASE SEE **GIBBONS, 13**

OUR LADY

FROM 12

tor at the school. Her team added all the apps and virtual platforms, such as Zoom, Showbie and Socrative, as well as virtual versions of textbooks.

Teachers, who were already set up to teach virtually from desktop computers in their classrooms, received an iPad on a tripod. It allowed them to move away from their desks and walk back and forth at the front of the classroom. On the floors in front of the smart boards, an area boxed off with tape served as a visual reference, reminding the teachers of how wide a radius they could travel before they were out of camera view.

Rose Cabrera, religion coordinator and middle school language arts teacher, said every school found their unique method to teaching virtually. "You have to find what works, and you really have to know your faculty, too, and know their strengths and weaknesses with technology," said Cabrera.

She said the real challenge came in March 2020, when schools had to transition quickly from in-person to virtual teaching for the first time ever. By August, they were prepared.

"We had a lot of support from the administration and from our tech people when there was an issue," Cabrera said. "We all rose up to the

challenge. It's almost like we didn't skip a beat."

HYBRID LEARNING

At the end of September 2020, Archbishop Thomas Wenski and the archdiocesan Office of Schools approved in-person learning while giving parents the option of keeping their children at home, learning virtually. Either way, classrooms would fill with students for the first time in months.

"As someone who considers herself to be a veteran teacher, I felt the new school year would be different and challenging. Yet seeing the students return, and bringing back normalcy and consistency to my students' lives, was satisfying," said Cabrera.

Some students, like OLL eighth grader Kamila Pimentel, felt relieved to be back. "I don't really concentrate at home with all of the noise and distractions," she said.

But don't think that students attending class at home had it easy. In real time through Zoom, they followed class schedules, took tests with their classmates, read parts aloud during plays, answered math problems written on the smart boards, and more.

"It's very engaging because they make it so that both in-person and virtual are actively participating in the class," said eighth grader Addison Lucas.

The virtual option also allowed students who were absent, due to COVID exposure or other reasons, not to miss school entirely. Virtual

also worked out for teachers, who taught from home when the need arose while a substitute teacher was physically present to supervise the classroom.

EXTRAS FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR

But what is a school year without a little fun? All students took part in the extras that make an academic year memorable, regardless of whether they were attending in-person or virtually.

Via Zoom, they went on virtual field trips and tours, such as the one of the NBC6 studio given by news anchor Roxy Vargas. Firefighter Hector Gonzalez showed the students Palm Beach County Fire Station 23 and took them on a virtual ride-along on a fire truck. The students also held virtual meet-and-greets with guests such as Miami Lakes Mayor Manny Cid, among others.

Janelle Jay, mission coordinator for the lay missionary group Amor en Accion, who would normally visit the school in person, was invited to speak via Zoom about the Archdiocese of Miami's missionary efforts in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

"I was pleasantly surprised and impressed as I was presenting to the elementary school students. They were an attentive audience. They asked great follow-up questions and showed great care and concern for their sister school (in Haiti)," Jay said.

The tripod-mounted iPads were



Second grade teacher Jalenni Cruz carries the iPad where three of her Our Lady of the Lakes students were logged in, via Zoom, and participating in the day virtually. (CRISTINA CABRERA JARRO | FC)

used not just in the classroom but to capture outside activities in real time. Eucharistic processions, Masses and other events were livestreamed, including living rosaries — with student volunteers carrying the devices though which classmates participated virtually. For Good Friday, eighth graders, participating both in-person and virtually, produced their traditional Stations of the Cross with a virtual twist.

"We've tried to do as much as possible so that the kids don't miss out," said Cabrera.

OLL's yearbook captures the highlights of this unique pandemic

year. In some pages, students can be seen in traditional school photos, showing off smiles that, for a moment, were not covered by a mask. But the other pages, where everyone is masked, are just as memorable.

Students attending virtually were not left out. Peña, who apart from IT also helps with the school yearbook, asked the parents of students learning virtually to contribute photos of their children's academic year at home, along with them having fun with hobbies, pets and holidays.

"This is a work of heart," said Peña. ■

GIBBONS

FROM 12

He began an attendance check. "Please type your name in the box," he told his 20 online students. "Show me your faces," he said as he carefully made a head count.

Faces continued to appear. He projected the unmasked students on a big screen erected in front of the classroom. Some of the students waved and smiled. One boy joined yawning and stretching. Another teen was playing with his dog.

WARNING: 'I CAN SEE YOU'

"Juan, what are you doing? Whatever you are doing, remember I have a camera. I can see you there," warned Araque.

Once everyone was accounted for, classes began with a prayer and then, lessons. "We are going to study about the nature of the Church," said Araque. "The Church is apostolic. What does that mean?"

He moved around the room constantly, full of energy, gazing at his students in the classroom and then shifting his focus to his online students on the computer he held in his hand. He challenged the youngsters with questions and nudged them to

explain their answers more fully. He was constantly in a multitasking mode, going at top speed.

"It is all about motivation with hybrid teaching," Araque said. "It's two classes. I need to be there, and I need to be here at the same time. You have to constantly think about the people in the screen and also the people sitting in the classroom. You have to motivate your students. You have to be creative. It is a lot of work."

Hybrid classes are tough from what we observed. Both teachers and students had to adjust. No one knows what a day will bring. It is not unusual for a student to have problems getting online or experience some type of computer glitches. They hesitate to answer questions. They don't fully participate. Then, there is Zoom fatigue, a common term these days referring to the tiredness felt from staring at a computer for long periods of time. Classes these days include short breaks.

'BETTER TO BE IN CLASS'

"I will be happy when things are back to normal," said Cortney Reiss, an 11th grader who came back to campus because online classes were not for her. "I miss my classmates who are not coming to school. It is more fun when everyone is in the classroom. There is

more participation and more conversation."

"I came back in October," said Noalani Valle, also in 11th grade. "I didn't like being at home online because I get distracted easily. For me, it is better to be in class. I like being with friends. I like being with my teachers."

Cardinal Gibbons' enrollment was 1,100 this year although the number of students on campus varied from day to day. Students had to isolate after coming in contact with someone with the virus, or of course if they felt sick.

"We have about 600 online," said Erin Herbert, Gibbons' marketing and communications specialist. "The number of students on campus varies day to day. We have 400 to 500 coming to the campus."

Brian Dunne, a history and government teacher at Gibbons, has been an educator for 10 years, teaching at all levels. He also coaches soccer and teaches evening classes at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. "You have to love kids," he said when asked about being a teacher.

He and his brother, Father Martin Dunne, parochial vicar at St. Joan of Arc Parish in Boca Raton, both graduated from Cardinal Gibbons. Brian married his high school sweetheart. They have child num-

ber two on the way.

Dunne was in his classroom preparing for the day when we arrived on campus a little after 7 a.m. He said he will never forget this school year. "I have tried to establish a sense of normalcy in my classes."

He had up to 10 students on campus for classes, while 15, most of the time, participated online. He had to reinvent his teaching plan for his hybrid classroom. "Hybrid teaching is a different animal," he explained. "I give quick lectures. Then I allow them to work on an assignment."

Dunne used all sorts of new educational technology including Blooket, Zoom and Kahoot to keep students interested and engaged. "I had to learn all of the applications to be able to teach during COVID," he said.

TEACHER, MENTOR, ROLE MODEL

He confessed that teaching in the hybrid classroom requires a great deal of time, and the instructional pace tends to be slower. But he added that students still got the best in Catholic education. "It is about quality of education over quantity."

Teaching methods may have changed and books, pencils and paper have been replaced by iPads and laptops, but as we saw at Gibbons, major aspects of Catholic

FYI

For the 2021-2022 academic year, hybrid schooling will not be an option. Students who wish to attend classes virtually will have to enroll in ADOM Virtual, the virtual Catholic school of the Archdiocese of Miami. For more information, visit www.adomvirtual.com.

teaching remain constant: dedication, compassion, caring and excellence.

"You have to be a teacher, a mentor and a role model," said Dunne. "The kids have to know that you are there for them. They have to know you are on their side. We are there to help them on their path of life."

With the pandemic apparently winding down, hybrid education won't take place next year in archdiocesan schools. Parents who want their children to continue learning from home will have to enroll them in the ADOM Virtual School.

"Next year, we hope that our classes will be full," said Araque, who is praying for the day he will truly be with all his students again. For now, he remained in touch at a distance. In a special corner in his classroom, he displayed the notes and thank you cards his students sent him, showing their appreciation for being there to help them get through these tough times. ■



The Community at Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory Congratulates the Class of 2021

A Catholic School in the Marianist Tradition



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Valedictorian
Pinnacle Award Recipient



Benjamin Schlichte
Salutatorian
CMCP Male Scholar Athlete
Pinnacle Award Recipient



Katelyn Kossov
Pinnacle Award Recipient



Dylan Bailey
National Merit
Commended Scholar



Andrew Aurelien
Blessed Chaminade Award



Isabella Garagozzo
Blessed Chaminade Award



Penny Garza
Science Award



Maya Hazley
English Award



Juan Garcia
Spanish Award
Campus Ministry Award
Mathematics Award



Anne LaMont
Drama Award



Roger Smith, Jr.
Instrumental Music Award



Valentina Arango
Art Award



Fabiana Gehami
Community Service Award
Vocal Music Award



Luna Madia
Student Activities Award



Jenica Jenkins
CMCP Female
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Juan-Tino Hernandez
French Award



Kaiel Aguilar
Theology Award

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- Flagler College-St Augustine
- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
- Florida Atlantic University
- Florida Institute of Technology
- Florida State University
- Fordham University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- High Point University
- Hofstra University
- Howard University
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- Seton Hall University
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BACCALAUREATE MASS

Class of '21 praised for 'faith, excellence and service'

MARLENE QUARONI
Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMI | For the second pandemic-marked year, Archbishop Thomas Wenski celebrated a single "remote" baccalaureate Mass for all the graduates of Catholic high schools in the archdiocese, which was livestreamed on the archdiocesan website May 24, 2021.

In normal times, each school celebrates its own baccalaureate Mass, but the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted that tradition. Unlike last year, however, when the archbishop celebrated in a nearly empty St. Mary Cathedral, this year he was joined by three representatives of each high school class, their principal, and parents. The student representatives were the class valedictorians, salutatorians, and recipients of the Archbishop's Catholic Leadership Award.

According to the archbishop, the 27 students, from nine of the 12 Catholic high schools in the archdiocese, exemplified the theme of Catholic Schools Week, "Faith, Excellence and Service."

Sebastian Reeder, 17, from Cardinal Gibbons High School in Fort Lauderdale, was one of the seniors to receive a leadership award. He will study business at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. Sebastian and his family have participated in a Christmas toy drive and other charitable activities at their church, St. John the Baptist, for many years. Sebastian started helping when he

was 7 years old.

"I feel like I'm doing God's work," he said.

Sebastian has helped collect toys for the Jackson Memorial Hospital burn unit, Covenant House, St. Philip Parish in Belle Glade, Kids in Distress and several other groups, including the children of migrant workers in Immokalee. Many of the workers live in rundown trailers and work in the fields to support their families, so they don't have the money for Christmas presents.

The other Leadership award winners included Daniel Valdez, Archbishop Coleman Carroll High; Maria Mercedes Soto, Archbishop Edward McCarthy High; Jose Acosta, Christopher Columbus High; Meghan Madonna Swan, Immaculate-LaSalle High; Sebastian Bak, Msgr. Edward Pace High; Adriana Gonzalez, Our Lady of Lourdes Academy; Olga Rodriguez, St. Brendan High; and Kensia Saint-Hilaire, St. Thomas Aquinas High.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald, 18, with a grade point average of 5.27 at Archbishop Carroll High, was among the valedictorians at the Mass. She said her father has influenced her choice of career and university. As a member of the Air Force, he came to south Florida to serve at Homestead Air Force Base, and as an F-15 crew chief he oversaw the plane's operations. His parents emigrated from Ireland. Elizabeth is on her way to Notre Dame University, where she plans to study aerospace engineering.



Jose Acosta, the Archbishop's Catholic Leadership Award winner from Christopher Columbus High School, prays during the baccalaureate Mass.

"The sisters at Carroll High School have been very helpful in guiding me," she said. "They are wonderful, and my science teacher, Mr. Juan Rodriguez, was great. He makes us think outside the box."

Kamila Trigueros, 18, St. Thomas Aquinas' salutatorian, will study biological science at the University of Florida with a view toward studying medicine. She said that the class of 2021 made the best of its "new normal" circumstances, which since the first week of October 2020, included classes where some students attended online and others in person.

"We proved our resilience, motivation, determination and



Offering greetings from their school in a loop that ran before the start of the baccalaureate Mass are Archbishop Coleman Carroll High's Elizabeth Fitzgerald, 18, valedictorian, left, Daniel Valdez, 19, Archbishop's Leadership Award winner, and Camila Gloria, 18, salutatorian, and the school's bulldog mascot, Archie. (PHOTOS BY MARLENE QUARONI | FC)

optimism in times of confusion, concern and uncertainty," Kamila said.

Archbishop Wenski told the students that one chapter in their life's story was coming to an end but a new one was beginning.

"As Americans, even in this time of global pandemic, social unrest and a troubling economic uncertainty, you have many opportunities to develop your talents and you have been raised with a great sense

of generosity, service and fairness," he said.

He told the students that they have received an education based on Catholic values, an education that presents a world view that God matters.

"A solid Catholic education is not just meant to prepare you to make a good living, to do well," he said. "A Catholic education is to help you learn the ways of being good and living well." ■

Graduation honors

The class of 2021:
by the numbers

- **13:** Catholic high schools in the archdiocese, including one virtual school.
- **2,976:** Total number of graduates
- **470:** largest graduating class, St. Thomas Aquinas, Fort Lauderdale.
- **12:** smallest graduating class, ADOM Virtual School.
- **982:** attended Catholic schools for 12 years, representing 33% of the graduates of eight schools that obtained those statistics.
- **99%:** college-bound.
- **60%:** earned college scholarships.
- **5%:** recognized as national merit finalists, semifinalists, commended or Hispanic scholars.
- **2%:** graduated from programs for exceptional learners (disability or impairments).
- **58%:** enrolled in AP classes.
- **12%:** completed dual enrollment courses in college.
- **\$204.5 million:** amount earned in college scholarships.
- **568,986:** number of community service hours completed.
- **Silver Knights:** 5 winners, 11 honorable mentions.

12 Grads honored for
Catholic leadership

MIAMI | Every year, Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of Miami select one student to receive the Archbishop's Catholic Leadership Award.

The recognition, started by Archbishop Emeritus John C. Favalora, recognizes members of the graduating class who "demonstrate their commitment to the Catholic faith and personal excellence through continuous practice of the values of faith, virtue, service, and scholarship."

Here are this year's award recipients, who were recognized at the baccalaureate Mass celebrated by Archbishop Thomas Wenski on May 24, 2021. (See story above)

- **Daniel A. Valdez**, Archbishop Coleman Carroll High
- **Maria Mercedes Soto**, Archbishop Edward McCarthy High
- **Manuel Andres Rodriguez Lapido**, Belen Jesuit Prep
- **Sebastian Reeder**, Cardinal Gibbons High
- **Mairead Elizabeth Gatcliffe**, Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart
- **Isabella Marie Garagozzo**, Chaminade Madonna College Prep
- **Jose Acosta**, Christopher Columbus High
- **Meghan Madonna Swan**, Immaculate-La Salle High
- **Sebastian Bak**, Msgr. Edward Pace High
- **Adriana Isabel Gonzalez**, Our Lady of Lourdes Academy
- **Olga M. Rodriguez**, St. Brendan High
- **Kensia Saint-Hilaire**, St. Thomas Aquinas High.

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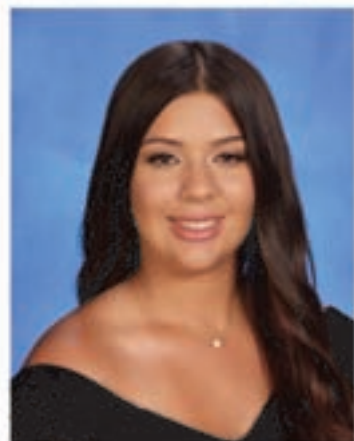
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- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
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| BOSTON COLLEGE* | GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY | PENNSYLVANIA STA |
| BOSTON UNIVERSITY* | INDIANA UNIVERSITY | PURDUE UNIVERSITY |
| CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY* | LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY | RUTGERS UNIVERSIT |
| CLEMSON UNIVERSITY | MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | SYRACUSE UNIVER |
| DUKE UNIVERSITY* | NEW YORK UNIVERSITY* | TEXAS A&M UNIVER |
| FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY | NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY* | TULANE UNIVERSITY |
| FORDHAM UNIVERSITY | NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY* | UNIVERSITY OF ARIZ |



Sophia Linale
VALEDICTORIAN
Attending the University of Florida

SAINT B HIGH S

COLLEGE of 2021



Colleges of the Class of 2021:

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| UNIVERSITY* | UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT | VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY* |
| STATE UNIVERSITY | UNIVERSITY OF DENVER | VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY* |
| UNIVERSITY* | UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA* | VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY |
| UNIVERSITY | UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI* | WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY* |
| UNIVERSITY | UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN | WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS |
| UNIVERSITY | UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO | |
| UNIVERSITY* | UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA* | |
| UNIVERSITY | UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON | |

All universities listed are Top 100 in the nation. Universities marked with an asterisk () are Top 50 in the nation.*



SAINT BRENDAN HIGH SCHOOL



Olivia Fernandez
SALUTATORIAN

Attending the University of Florida



Valedictorian:

ANDRES MARQUEZ SANTACRUZ



Salutatorian:

MARIANA BUJALIL

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UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



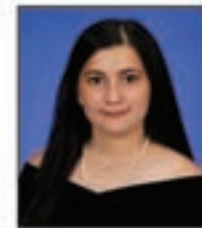
NICOLAS MACIAS
5.35 GPA
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



SAM DOWNS JR.
5.31 GPA
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY



JOSHUA SALAZAR
5.24 GPA



SOPHIA ESQUIVEL
5.24 GPA
FU HONORS



ISABELLA CARDOSO
5.18 GPA
HAMILTON COLLEGE



JENEEN PENATE
5.12 GPA
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY



ALYSSA BARCELO
5.11 GPA
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY



MARIA PROCTOR
5.05 GPA
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA



SEBASTIAN BAK
5.05 GPA
BOSTON UNIVERSITY



ERICA SANTOS
5.02 GPA
FUJ



ELIUSSA GUERRIER
5.01 GPA
FUJ



MAXIMUS GANEM
4.96 GPA
HAMILTON COLLEGE



AGATHA ZAPATA
4.89 GPA
FUJ



VANESSA ROSA
4.85 GPA
BOSTON UNIVERSITY



ISABELLA CABRERA
4.81 GPA
FUJ



EMILY MEDINA
4.78 GPA
LOUISIANA STATE UNIV.



SILVA BARROSO
4.77 GPA
MIAMI DADE COLLEGE



CHRISTINA PEREZ
4.76 GPA
FUJ



BRENDA ROBILARD
4.75 GPA
HOWARD UNIVERSITY

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St. Thomas Aquinas student wins FPL scholarship

LINDA REEVES

Florida Catholic correspondent

FORT LAUDERDALE | Megan Cowart, a senior at St. Thomas Aquinas High School, was competing in a robotics match on campus when visitors unexpectedly showed up toting a bouquet of colorful balloons, a banner and a \$20,000 Florida Power & Light scholarship award with her name on it.

"This is the first time a student at our school has won this award, and it is a first for the Archdiocese of Miami," said an excited Erin Williams, science teacher at St. Thomas and coordinator of its Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, or STEM, program. "This is a huge deal for Megan and for our program at St. Thomas Aquinas. We are definitely becoming one of the powerhouse robotics programs in the state of Florida."

Megan and her teammates were called from the cafeteria, where the school's robotics competition was taking place May 1, 2021, to the courtyard where FPL representatives waited. Maureen Wilt, senior education program manager in

external affairs for FPL, greeted her and presented her with the scholarship.

"It is a pleasure supporting education on behalf of Florida Power & Light," Wilt told the Florida Catholic. "We have one award every year. This is our sixth year."

The scholarship is through the company's charitable arm. NextEra Energy Foundation is dedicated to assisting seniors who plan to pursue college degrees in engineering or information management or take up studies in other STEM-related disciplines.

As part of the award, Megan will receive \$5,000 annually for the next four years to help her with college tuition at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, where she will study mechanical engineering beginning this fall. She is required to maintain a 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale.

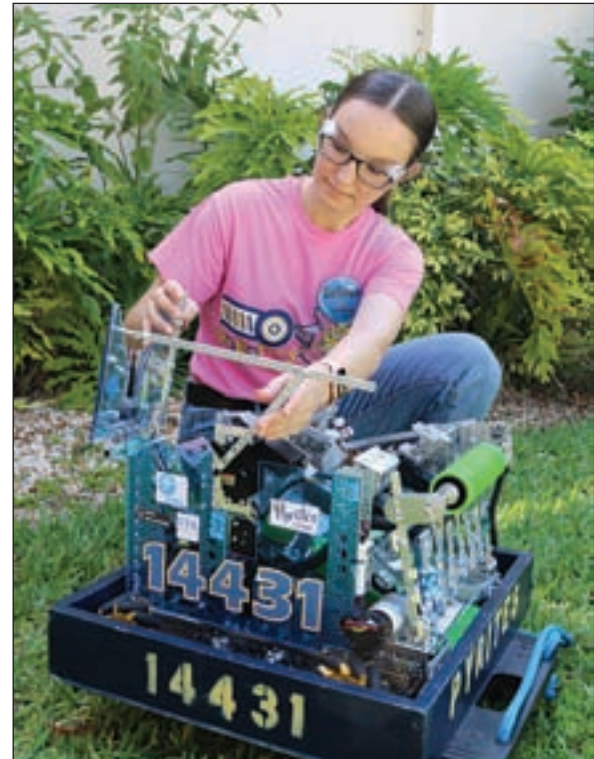
"It was crazy," said Megan, 18, who graduated May 15, 2021, during ceremonies at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens with her fellow classmates. "I was so surprised."

A total of 30 students applied for the scholarship. To be eligible, ap-

plicants must be enrolled in public, private and charter schools located in one of the 28 school districts in the FPL service areas throughout the state. Applicants also must be participating in a "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology" or FIRST program aimed at developing science, engineering and technology skills. FIRST programs are powerful not only for helping youngsters develop various abilities for jobs, but also skills for life including self-confidence, leadership and communications.

FIRST TECH CHALLENGE

St. Thomas Aquinas offers two FIRST programs. FIRST Tech Challenge gives students a hands-on experience in the art of designing, building and programming a robot. FIRST Robotics Competition encourages students to focus on one area including design, programming or team branding. Both programs involve all aspects of STEM and encourage teams to compete with their robots to make things a little more interesting and stimulating.



Megan Cowart shows off her school team's robot during a competition May 1, 2021 at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale. Megan, a senior, was presented a scholarship during the competition by Florida Power & Light. (LINDA REEVES | FC)

Most importantly, awardees of the NextEra Energy Foundation scholarship are chosen based on their academic, leadership and school and community service record. Applicants are also required to submit a short article on their overall experiences as a FIRST student.

"I wrote my essay from the heart," said Megan. "The program teaches so many values. It has not only affected the way I do robot-

ics but other aspects of my life. You learn ideas that you take with you through life."

Megan has participated in FIRST programs at St. Thomas since she was a freshman. She started as a FIRST participant in sixth grade when she was enrolled at Parkway Middle School of the Arts, a public school in Lauderhill. "I love building stuff," she said.

PLEASE SEE **ROBOT, 21**

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ROBOT

FROM 20

According to her parents, when Megan was a child, she enjoyed playing with building blocks, puzzles and Lego construction toys. “She loved the marble track that we got her,” said Megan’s mother, Karen, about the building-block racetrack designed to roll marbles

around a winding track. “When she was a kid, she loved that thing.”

PEPPA THE ROBOT

This year, Megan is the co-captain of the robotics team, 14431, Pyrites. During the May 1 competition that matched the six teams of the school, Megan held a hand control and guided her team’s robot, Peppa, named after a little pig portrayed in an animated television series. She drove Peppa

back and forth and around a field throwing rings and herding balls. “We hope to go to the state playoffs,” she said.

Megan’s mother, a homemaker, and father, Greg, who works in technology, were on hand for the award ceremony. “We are happy for her and so proud of her,” said Greg.

The Cowarts are residents of Plantation and call St. Gregory Parish their spiritual home. Megan, an only child, serves as a volunteer at

The Friendship Circle, a program dedicated to serving children with special needs. Besides designing, building and racing robots, Megan enjoys ballet, tap and hip-hop dancing. She is a nationally recognized competitor.

What does Megan want to do with her life and her God-given talents? This young woman has it all planned.

“I want to be a Disney Imagineer,” she said. Walt Disney Imagineering Research and Development

is the research and development arm of the Walt Disney Company responsible for creation, design and construction of Disney theme parks and attractions worldwide.

Megan and her family are frequent visitors to Disney in Orlando. “I want to work on creating the rides. Disney World has always been important to me. I want to be able to create magic for kids.” ■

St. Michael the Archangel students win at art shows

MIAMI | Three students at St. Michael the Archangel School have won awards for their artwork in south Florida contests. Eighth-grader Kyana Gonzalez won first place in the City of Miami Student Art Competition in celebration of the city’s 125th anniversary, winning \$250. Sixth-grader Julieta Infante won third place, landing a \$75 prize.

Both students painted beach scenes — Kyana’s “Summertime Miami” with watercolor and ink, Julieta’s “Miami Sunset” with oils and pastels — highlighting the city’s subtropical appeal. Yeny Camacho, their teacher, said they designed the pictures themselves.

“I just told them the theme of competition: ‘What Miami means to me,’” she said. “I told them to think of the culture of the place they live in, and the music.”

The other winner was fifth-grader Ricardo Gonzalez, in the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department’s “Every Drop Counts” poster contest. The contest was aimed at instilling in students the value of saving water resources. Ricardo’s piece, “Be a Hero, Waste Zero,” won among the 16 elementary schools in District 5. The conservation-themed picture shows an anime-style heroine standing amid ocean waters, with a garden scene reflected in a raindrop. His art joined other district winners on display in Miami’s city hall. ■



Artwork by Kyana Gonzalez



Artwork by Julieta Infante

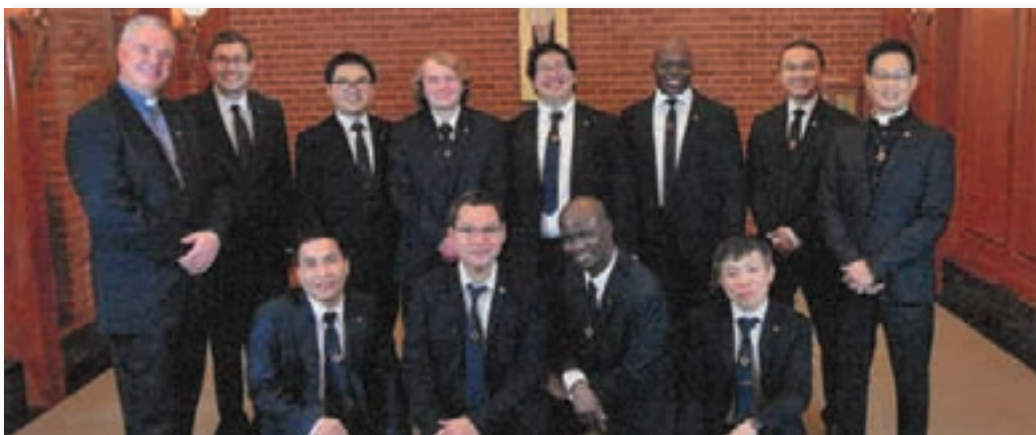


Artwork by Ricardo Gonzalez

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Brigadier



NICOLÁS ALARCÓN
Valedictorian



DIEGO LUIS GARMENDÍA
Salutatorian

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SCHOLARSHIP FINALISTS**
Nicolás Alarcón
Adriano Alejandro Arias
Eduardo Ignacio Francia
Diego Luis Garmendía
Ricardo Rafael Silveira
Matthew Wade Torres

**NATIONAL MERIT
SCHOLARSHIP COMMENDED**
Daniel Eduardo Campuzano
Julián Castro
Santiago Pedro Cortabarría
Carlos Andrés Monge
Augusto Andre Moreno
Aidan Bravo Pevida
Julián Javier Riera
Jack Anthony Sampedro
Austin Pedro San Juan
Alec Joseph Vizoso

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PROGRAM SCHOLARS**
Nicolás Alarcón
Adriano Alejandro Arias
Daniel Eduardo Campuzano
Julián Castro
Víctor Miguel Cobas
Antonio Juan Cortabarría
Santiago Pedro Cortabarría
Julian Ralph DeCollibus
Eduardo Ignacio Francia
Diego Luis Garmendía
Nicholas Anthony Gómez-Bello
Luis Alejandro Halvorssen
Julián Rodolfo Hernández
Daniel Alejandro Jiménez
Carlos Andrés Monge
Gian-Marco Montero

Gabriel Euclides Nguyen
Matthew Darío Pancorbo
Wadih Antonio Pazos
Aidan Bravo Pevida
Julián Javier Riera
Jesse Daniel Rodríguez
Jack Anthony Sampedro
Austin Pedro San Juan
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Michael Jesús Sánchez
Ricardo Rafael Silveira
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Juan Ignacio Tejera
Matthew Wade Torres
Alec Joseph Vizoso

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NOMINEES**

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Nickolas Edward Choquette
Athletics
Rajiv Suresh Khemlani
Vocational Technical
Michael Alexander Mestre
Science
Collin James Pallissery
Mathematics
Wadih Antonio Pazos
English & Literature
Manuel Rincón
Digital & Interactive Media
Manuel Andrés Rodríguez-Lapido
Journalism
Juan Ignacio Tejera
Social Science
Alec Joseph Vizoso

Andrés Antonio Abilahoud
Alejandro Acosta
Mark Patrick Adams
David Alarcón
Nicolás Alarcón
Alexandro Ampudia
Felipe Andrés Arenas
Adriano Alejandro Arias
Sebastián Arriola-Alberti
Sebastián Andrés Arrizurieta
Ahríel Artaza Roca
Carlos Andrés Barquín
Andrés Alejandro Bello
Ryan Henri Bertran
Ricardo Blanco
Mariano Jorge Brito
John Augusto Broe
Lucas Andrés Broucek
Ángel Luis Caballero
Miguel Camacho
Daniel Eduardo Campuzano
Nicholas Breton Canino
Fernando Javier Cantens
Diego Fernando Canto
Adrián Carbajales
Lucas José Cardona
Pablo Andrés Carreño
Carlos José Carta
Daniel Alexis Casariego
Andrés Eduardo Castillo
Sebastián Javier Castillo
Julián Castro
Martin Jaime Chang
Nickolas Edward Choquette
Adrián Miguel Cícero
Samuel Austin Clark
Víctor Miguel Cobas
Lucas Alejandro Consuegra
Antonio Juan Cortabarría
Santiago Pedro Cortabarría
Francis Anthony Cruz
Felipe Guillermo Cueto
Giovanny Cueto

Jorge Louis De Goti
Lucas de la Guardia
Javier de la Lama Guzmán
Julian Ralph DeCollibus
Brandon Luis Deeb
Lucas Erick Deeb
Daniel Jesús Del Riesgo
Daniel Eduardo Delgado
Edward Alexander Delgado
Andrés Felipe Diago
Matthew Robert Díaz
Rafael Manuel Esparragoza
Roberto Alejandro Espín
Daniel Feal
Alexander José Fernández
Christian Alexander Fernández
Oscar Francisco Fernández
Richard Alejandro Fernández
Roberto Ariel Fernández
Thiago Esparza Ferraz
Alexander Ferreiro
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Aiden Robert Villasuso
Alec Joseph Vizoso
George Matthew Wiltz

Quadruple amputee aims high in present, future goals

TOM TRACY
Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMI | When asked how many surgeries he has had since contracting a deadly bacterial infection more than a decade ago, 21-year-old Franklin Mejias Castellano must pause and think for a moment.

“Twenty-five,” answered the young man, who recently completed his first year at St. Thomas University, where he is studying business. He easily navigates both virtual learning and the physical college campus despite being a quadruple amputee, after a 2011 brush with meningitis that left him hospitalized for nearly a year.

A week into his first-ever trip to the U.S. from his native Venezuela, which was to include stops in Miami and Disney World, the youngster complained to his father that he wasn’t feeling well. At the time, he was enjoying Miami Beach. In short order, he couldn’t walk and he couldn’t open his eyes. His father and sister brought him to a hospital in Aventura, where the doctors realized Castellano had a serious infection that required specialized intervention. He was transferred to Joe DiMaggio Children’s Hospital in Hollywood.

“I don’t remember anything after that for a number of days because I was in an induced coma and woke up at the Joe DiMaggio Hospital,” he said. “I didn’t understand what was happening to me. My hands and my feet were completely black.”

Due to complications from the infection, on Nov. 11, 2011, a team of doctors amputated Franklin’s hands and feet in a bid to save the then-12-year-old’s life. Where the bacterial infection came from remains a mystery.

“The only thing we know is the bacteria caused meningitis,” said Castellano, who now lives with his older sister, Franny, in order to commute to St. Thomas University.

After recovering from surgeries, the hard work of acquiring and adjusting to fitted prosthetics began — but not before doctors required yet more surgeries on his limbs to pave the way for prosthetics for his feet. (He prefers to do without prosthetics for his hands.)

“After that, my life changed physically and mentally and now I see life completely differently — and I have the opportunity to show people that anything is possible,” he said, noting that he has written not one but two books dealing with his life hurdles and lessons learned.

“I don’t have any physical limits: I drive a car, I run, I swim, I can do anything. That is the message that

I am giving everyone who follows me or sees me and is something I want to take to another level.”

Castellano also speaks to high school groups about personal motivation and overcoming obstacles.

He credits his adopted country of America for providing him with healthcare and professional opportunities probably not available in his native South America. With the support of his father and sister, he completed middle school and high school in the Hollywood area.

“Starting here from scratch was difficult, but the most important thing was that we were together (as a family). We focused on one day at a time and here we are as part of this society, and we feel very happy about that,” he said.

Unsure what to do after high school, Castellano took some time to work and write his books, but a chance encounter with an admissions professional resulted in an application to St. Thomas University, which he said was a good fit in terms of its mission and vision statements.

“I really identified with the university,” he said, noting that he hopes to graduate with a business degree in 2025.

Meanwhile, he and his father own and operate a food truck business based in Hollywood. In his free time, he competes in marathons and other athletic events.

His first book, written in Spanish and titled “Beyond My Hands,” tells the story of his illness and recovery. He is now putting the finishing touches on a book with a broader focus on his outlook on life.

“I see myself in five years traveling to different states, telling my history and motivating everyone,” Castellano said. “I love business and all of that. I know that the business field is not easy but offers things that I like, and I want to be a motivational speaker for everyone who needs it.”

Castellano almost fails to mention the pandemic year, and the fact that he and his immediate family all had a bout with COVID-19. In his case it was serious enough to put him in the hospital for a week, but he has made a full recovery.

“Franklin has the best attitude on campus and it’s wonderful,” said St. Thomas University President David A. Armstrong. “He is an example for all of our students. We all have tough days and obstacles to overcome. Yet, when you see Franklin bounding across campus, carrying all of his books, doing all of the things he has to do to succeed with a huge smile on his face, it completely changes your day.” ■



Above, St. Thomas University student Franklin Mejias Castellano, who was left handicapped by an infection acquired during a trip to Florida from his native Venezuela when he was 12, walks through the university campus in May 2021. Above left is his prosthetic decorated with the Venezuelan flag. Bottom left, the student holds up a copy of his book, “Más allá de mis manos.” (PHOTOS BY TOM TRACY | FC)

2021 Graduating Class

CONGRATULATIONS!

May God continue to guide and protect you as you enter a new chapter in your lives. Please know that you will always be a part of the St. Thomas the Apostle Family.

Love, Father Alejandro, Father Luis, Father Raphael, Mrs. Figueredo, Mrs. Ayan-Novo and the faculty and staff at Saint Thomas the Apostle.

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14274-0817

Retiring teacher keeps family's attendance streak intact

LINDA REEVES

Florida Catholic correspondent

HOLLYWOOD | A teacher who is saying goodbye after nearly three decades of Catholic teaching is ending on a record-breaking note, keeping her family's streak of consistency going.

"I am retiring after teaching for the last 27 years," said Margaret Knowles, a kindergarten teacher at Nativity School in Hollywood. "I have a perfect attendance record. To say I love school is an understatement," added Knowles, who hasn't missed a day of work during her entire teaching career.

Knowles' sons Patrick, William and James began the family's good-attendance-streak when they were at Nativity years ago. The three brothers were the first students to graduate from the school without missing a day. All three Knowles boys went on to graduate from Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory in Hollywood. Patrick, now 33, and William, 31, graduated without being absent or tardy their entire academic careers. James, 30, only missed one day.

William told the *Florida Catholic*, "It was harder being out of school because once you miss, you've got to catch up on your work. I never liked being behind."

The boys' punctuality record had been unmatched until this year. Their mom's record indicates that she has shown up on time for every single school day, class, meeting, activity and workshop over the years.

"It is unusual," said Elena Ortiz, principal of Nativity, about Knowles' perfect attendance. "I have never had that."

One in four teachers miss 10 or more school days in a year, according to a U.S. Department of Education analysis. Every day off can set teachers and their students behind.

A Gallup finding also revealed that teachers who are happy with

their jobs don't miss work. Easy to see, then, that Knowles loves her vocation and being at Nativity.

A native of Florida and parishioner at Nativity, she was born into a Catholic family. Her mother, who died in 2006, was a cradle Catholic. Her father, a U.S. Navy veteran who died in 2013, was a convert to Catholicism.

Knowles herself is a product of Catholic schools, graduating from Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Opa-Locka (now closed), Msgr. Edward Pace High and St. Thomas University (then Biscayne College) in Miami Gardens.

Knowles met her husband, Richard, also a Floridian, 42 years ago at a construction company where they both worked. She worked in accounting. He was a job superintendent. They enjoyed each other's company and began dating. Two years later, they married and began building a life as a couple. Then the children came one after the other.

"We had three boys in four years," Knowles said. "I always wanted to be a mom."

When the kids went off to school, Knowles followed them. "When my kids started to school, I started helping out. That got my foot in the door." She explained that she never felt like she needed to be anywhere else. "I became an aide, and I kept going."

One thing led to another, and Knowles' love for the classroom and teaching blossomed. She earned teaching certificates and began teaching pre-school and then kindergarten at Nativity.

The years passed. The students came and left, moving forward. Now, the longtime teacher reflects on her 4,860 days in the classroom and the 700 children she taught, helping form their foundations of learning as they began their school years.

"I enjoy teaching so many first and new ideas to the young ones," she said. "I am the first one that teaches them religion. It is an hon-



Nativity School kindergarten teacher Margaret Knowles, seen above, poses at right with student, James Sayfie, 6, and his classmates before her last day of school. (PHOTOS BY MARLENE QUARONI)

or. My little scientists love my bugs and bees and lizards that I have. I have more costumes than you can imagine. I have dressed as a bee, a butterfly, Cinderella. Once I surprised the students with a frog on my head."

Knowles holds 27 years of happy memories in her heart. Former students also recall their days in Mrs. Knowles' exciting and always-filled-with-surprises classroom.

"I have been in places where young adults come up to me. I don't recognize them. I taught them when they were so young," she said, recalling one recent incident when a young man spotted her in public. "He asked me if I was a teacher at Nativity, and he told me that he was in college. He said, 'I want you to know that you were my favorite teacher of all times.' That made me feel so good."

Two years ago, a former pre-school student contacted her. He was graduating from high school and being honored for achievements on the sports field during a special football game. "He wanted me to attend and walk him onto the field," said Knowles. "His mother



told me that I have always been a part of his life, and that he kept a memory book I made for him. Needless to say, I attended the game with joy in my heart."

Ortiz used the word "dedicated" when describing Knowles. Joyful, passionate about her work and committed are some of the other words used to define this educator.

Knowles said leaving her job and school family was a difficult decision. In 2011, doctors diagnosed her with oral cancer, a disease that requires urgent and continuous attention. "I am monitored," she explained. "It has come back three times."

She has undergone multiple surgeries, always scheduling them during summer breaks and holidays so as not to miss school. The doctors have removed one third of her tongue and performed an array of reconstruction procedures. She continues to remain hopeful and positive.

"Thank God for new technology," she said. "I have no feeling on one side of my mouth. It is uncomfortable, but I can speak. I am very lucky."

The Nativity community has been there for Knowles throughout her battle for the past 10 years. "My school has been supportive of me the whole way," she said. "They have sent prayers and well wishes. I am on so many prayer lists that I am sure God is listening to them all."

Knowles' last day with her students was June 9, and her last day at school was June 11. "We are having a (socially distant) luncheon for her and three other teachers who are leaving," said Ortiz, who also planned a few other surprises for the educators.

"Nativity is my home away from home, and I definitely think of some of the people as my extended family," said Knowles. "We will be friends forever in spite of me leaving the school."

How will Knowles spend her retirement? "The first thing I want to do is relax," she said, but then began talking about the many items on her to-do-list, including going back to the school for a visit at some point. "I might physically be leaving the building, but my heart and soul will always be there," she said. ■

Another Pace student wins Amazon Future Engineer Scholarship

MIAMI | Nicolas Macias, a student at Msgr. Pace High School, has been named an Amazon Future Engineer Scholar from the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineer and Math) Academy. The \$40,000 award will grant Nicholas \$10,000 per school year at any accredited university. Following his freshman year, the scholarship also provides a paid summer internship at Amazon. Nicholas is the second Pace student to land the Amazon award. The other was Vanessa Perez-Robles, who won in 2018.

Hedda Falcon, moderator for the Robotics, Computing and Future Business Leaders clubs at Pace,

said Nicolas' enthusiasm inspired his fellow classmates during this difficult pandemic.

"Nicolas is a member of every honor society in the school. He is the Key Club representative and president of Computer Club," Falcon said. "And Nicolas played a vital role in getting the other students to participate during the pandemic lockdown."

As a freshman, Nicholas won first place in the FBLA districts and fourth place in states for mobile app development. As a sophomore, he won first place in the FBLA districts and third place in the state competition for computer gaming and

simulation programming. During his junior and senior years, he won first in place in FBLA districts for website development. He was also part of a national gaming competition in which the Pace E-Sports club took part. The Pace team won the tournament, reaping five gaming consoles worth more than \$10,000 for the school and creating the E-Sports lab room.

Landing in the top five percent of his class, Nicholas was accepted to Georgia Tech, respected for its computer science school. Instead, he has chosen the University of Florida, where he plans to major in computer science. ■



Nicolas Macias, a student at Msgr. Pace High School, shows his scholarship award from Amazon, with congratulations from instructor Hedda Falcon. (COURTESY)

Archdiocesan high schools earn five Silver Knights

STAFF REPORT

MIAMI | What can one person do to alleviate the misery in the world? Five Silver Knight winners from archdiocesan high schools proved that much can be done — even by teenagers.

Those touched by the teens' outreach included hurricane survivors, victims of human trafficking, children in the Congo, people with cancer and the elderly separated from their loved ones by the coronavirus.

Eleven other members of the archdiocesan class of 2021 received honorable mentions in this year's edition of the Silver Knights, which has been sponsored by *The Miami Herald* since 1959. The Silver Knights recognize both academic excellence and outstanding service to the community.

This year, Belen Jesuit in Miami had two Silver Knight winners and two honorable mentions. Cardinal Gibbons and St. Thomas Aquinas in Fort Lauderdale had one winner each as did St. Brendan High School in Miami.

St. Thomas and Christopher Columbus High in Miami added three honorable mentions apiece. The other honorees came from Archbishop McCarthy High in Southwest Ranches, Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart in Coconut Grove and Our Lady of Lourdes Academy in Miami.

Also receiving an honorable mention, in the category of athletics, was Felicia Taylor, who did not attend a Catholic high school but is a parishioner at St. Matthew in Hallandale.

In total, 619 students representing 65 Miami-Dade schools and 34 Broward schools, both public and private, were nominated by their schools in 15 academic categories. Winners were selected for both Dade and Broward schools.

Each of the 30 winners received a \$2,000 scholarship from the Knight Foundation, a Silver Knight statue, an AAdvantage 25,000-mile travel certificate and the Silver Knight medallion presented by American Airlines. The 90 seniors who were named honorable mentions received a plaque and \$500.

Following are descriptions of the 2021 winners and the names of the honorable mentions, all taken from the Miami Herald's Silver Knight site, www.miamiherald.com/site-services/miami-herald-events/silver-knight/article251500208.html.

BELEN

JUAN TEJERA

Journalism

Juan was introduced to Be The Match, a nonprofit that matches cancer patients with its bone mar-

row donor registry to improve transplant outcomes, when his



Juan Tejera

mother was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Through the bone marrow registry, she found a match and received life-saving treatment. He was

inspired to join the organization as an advocate and ambassador, recruiting individuals to sign up for the registry and become potential donors. Juan used social media to promote the story of his mom and the bone marrow donor registration drive he would be hosting at Belen's annual spring carnival. The result: 100 people signed up to be potential donors. He has served as vice president of his school's Mu Alpha Theta chapter, the national honor society for mathematics.

DAVID ALARCON

World languages

David took education for granted until he visited Kasai in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a volunteer with Hope for Kasai, a nonprofit that aims to create better living conditions and opportunities for children and adults in Kasai. When the organization built a maternity home, the infant mortality rate dropped from 50%



David Alarcon

to 5%. Through the creation of a clean water source, people started to drink water without being at risk of bacterial disease. After that trip, David launched his "One Brick at a Time" campaign to build a new school. So far, \$45,000 has been raised and the first three classrooms have been completed.

CARDINAL GIBBONS

SOPHIA AGRO

Social science

After learning that Broward County ranks third in the country for human trafficking, Sophia jumped into action. In 2019 she founded her own company, Cein Bleu. The company, through its website, designs, manufactures and sells belts to young girls as a way to raise funds for the Blue Heart Campaign, a global effort to fight human trafficking. Donations to Blue Heart go to the U.N. Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in

Persons. Sophia has devoted over 820 hours to create her company's brand, building a website and using

social media to spread the word about the risks and dangers of human trafficking. She is president of her school's chapter of Mu Alpha Theta, the national math honor society, and president of her school's chapter of the National Honor Society. Sophia also volunteered with Jack and Jill Children's Center and Special Olympics.



Sophia Agro

ST. BRENDAN

JULIANNE RODRIGUEZ

Digital and interactive media



Julianne Rodriguez

hospitals prohibited family visits,

Julianne put her programming and digital media skills to work to reconnect the elderly with their families amid the pandemic. As many senior living facilities and

11 HONORABLE MENTIONS AWARDED

- Michael Bendixen, English and literature, Columbus
- Riley Boerger, speech, St. Thomas
- Carolina Davis, world languages, St. Thomas
- Clara Duthoit, journalism, McCarthy
- Mairead Gatcliffe, music and dance, Carrollton
- Christopher Gomez, journalism, Columbus

- Rajiv Khemlani, athletics, Belen
- Ray Lozano, digital and interactive media, Columbus
- Brooke Merdjane, mathematics, Lourdes
- Manuel Rodriguez-Lapido, digital and interactive media, Belen
- Victoria Szymkiewicz, general scholarship, St. Thomas

many seniors felt isolated, separated from their loved ones. Julianne designed, developed and built Empathy, a robot that could be remotely maneuvered and provide virtual interaction through digital media. Through her programming, high-resolution cameras and microphones, this innovative technology helped families reconnect virtually. Julianne received a 2020 Hispanic Heritage Foundation's Engineering Category Golden Award for her project and was named a Yale Young Global Scholar. (You can read more of her story here: http://bit.ly/miami_student_amiission_robot_st_brendan_school_miami.)

ST. THOMAS

MIKA PETRUSKA

Drama

The 2016 hurricane season devastated thousands living in impoverished countries. To help, Mika founded the nonprofit Soap for Souls, which collects and donates

eco-friendly toiletries and feminine hygiene products to hurricane victims. In 2018, she expanded its mission to spread awareness about

h y g i e n e equity, pollution and public health issues in developing countries, sending over 3,000 items to people in need. Mika



Mika Petruska

has been a member of the Thespian Honor Society and Drama Club since her freshman year, instrumental in the production of several school plays and musicals. She has recruited members from the drama teams to volunteer in her philanthropic work. Despite the pandemic, the drama team won Florida State Cappies for its work in props, hair and makeup, with Mika leading the props crew. She is also a Smithsonian digital volunteer. ■

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2021!

We are so very proud of you for your many accomplishments and goals reached. You made it, and you are officially Graduates of Mother of Our Redeemer Catholic School.

We love you and will miss you dearly!

Love,
Mother of Our Redeemer Catholic School
Administration, Faculty, and Staff

MOTHER OF OUR REDEEMER CATHOLIC SCHOOL
An FCC Accredited School of the Archdiocese of Miami

www.moorsch.org • 305-829-3988 • 8445 N.W. 186th Street • Hialeah, FL 33015

CARDINAL GIBBONS RECOGNIZES OUR 2020-2021 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

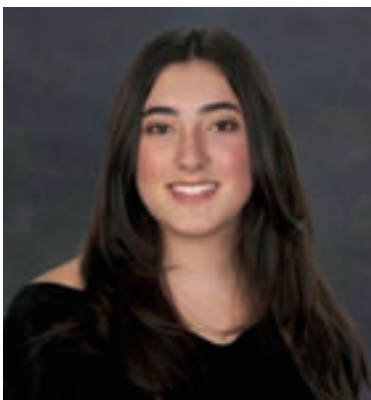
Cardinal Gibbons High School would like to congratulate students that have distinguished themselves in the classroom and on the field.



Girls Track and Field
District and Regional Champions

Speech & Debate

Members of the Speech and Debate qualified for States, NCFL Nationals, NSDA Nationals, and the Tournament of Champions while earning a top ranking in Lincoln-Douglas Debate in the state of Florida.



Music

Sophia Spencer '21 was selected to participate in the Florida Vocal Association's All-State Women's Chorus after a successful audition.



Football
4A State Champions



Girls Soccer
4A State Champions



ESU National Shakespeare Competition

Nicholas Ribas '21 was the 2021 English Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition Fort Lauderdale Branch Winner. He had the opportunity to compete in the National competition via Zoom.



Silver Knight Award

Sophia Agro '21 was a 2021 Silver Knight award recipient in the Social Science category in recognition of her efforts to bring awareness to end human trafficking through her company, Cein Bleu.

Scholastic Art and Writing Awards

Rachel Kamphaus '21 and Heidi Guntert '21 earned numerous Scholastic Keys through the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers' Scholastic Art and Writing Awards competition. Kamphaus earned Scholastic Key awards in Critical Essay (gold), Digital Art (gold), and Poetry (silver) while also receiving Honorable Mention commendations for submissions to the Flash Fiction and Mixed Media categories. Guntert earned her Silver Key award in the Mixed Media category.

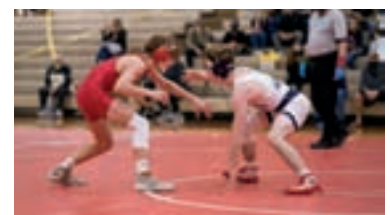


Rugby
Florida Rugby Union U19
State Champions



National Merit Finalists

Rachel Kamphaus '21 and Eleanor Byrd '21 were named National Merit Finalists by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. Kamphaus was also awarded a National Merit \$2500 Scholarship.



Wrestling

1A Individual State Champion
- Nicholas Yancey '23.

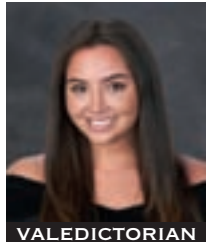


Cardinal
GIBBONS
High School

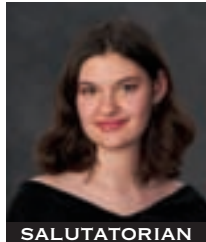
ROMAN CATHOLIC COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL
2900 NORTHEAST 47TH STREET, FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33308
954.491.2900 | WWW.CGHSFL.ORG | [f](#) [t](#) [YouTube](#) [in](#)

CARDINAL GIBBONS HIGH SCHOOL

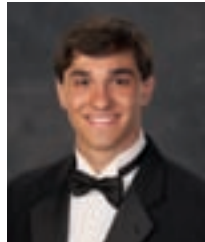
SALUTES THE TOP TEN PERCENT OF THE CLASS OF 2021 AS THEY CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE!



VALEDICTORIAN
Jessica Squadrato
University of Florida



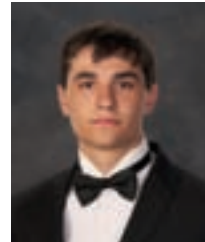
SALUTATORIAN
Rachel Kamphaus
Brown University



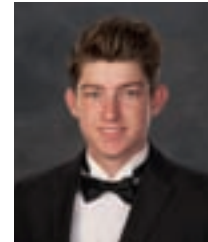
Zachary Dumas
Georgia Institute
of Technology



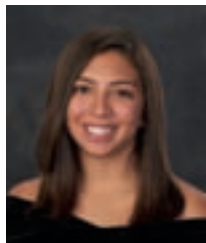
Eleanor Byrd
University of Virginia



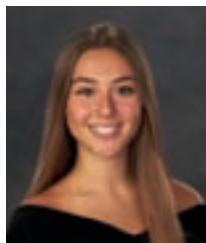
Alexander Dumas
Georgia Institute
of Technology



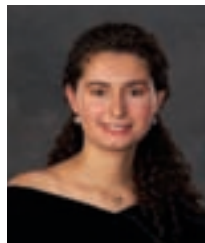
Alex DeMarco
University of Florida



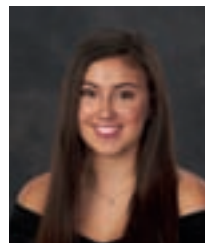
Natalya Escobar
University of Florida



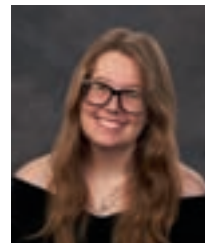
Sophia Aguilar
University of Florida



Heidi Guntert
University of Florida



Mia Imbrigiotta
University of Florida



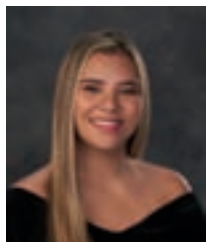
Samantha Curry
University of Florida



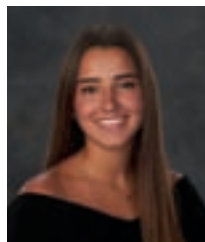
Sophia DeAngelo
University of
Central Florida



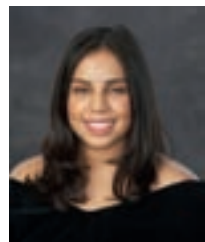
Natalie Goodman
Northeastern
University



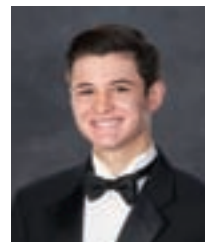
Victoria Osorio
University of Florida



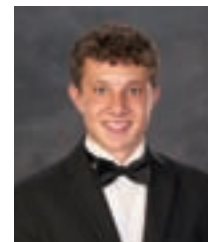
Monica Borges
University of Florida



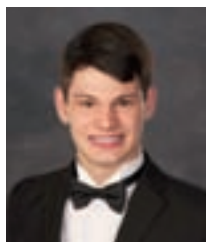
Melanie Corrales
University of Florida



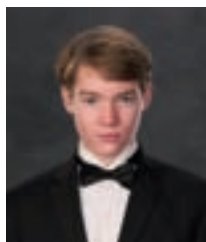
Nicolas Delgado
Purdue University



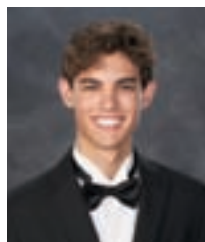
Daniel Kelley
University of Florida



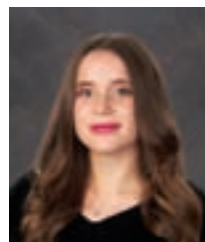
Nicholas Ribas
University of Florida



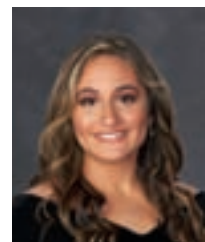
Daniel Jordan
University of
South Florida



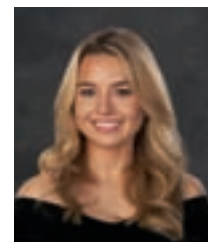
George McCosh
University of
Central Florida



Rebecca Pryor
University of
South Florida



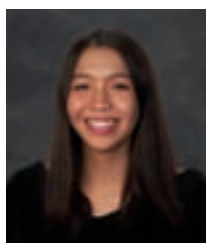
Katheleen Carnivale
University of Florida



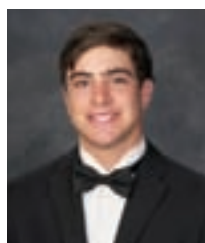
Sara Nunez
New York University



Noah Hart
University of Florida



Hanna Hirano
University of
South Florida



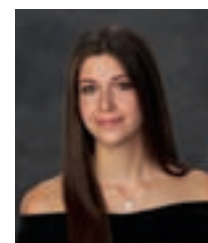
Nicholas Francis
Florida State
University



Olivia Dumornay
Florida State
University



Jessica Kamphaus
Florida State
University



Claire Bedley
Wake Forest



Other college acceptances for the Class of 2021 include: American University, Auburn University, Barry University, Berry College, Boston College, Boston University, Brevard College, Bucknell University, Case Western Reserve University, Clemson University, College of William & Mary, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Eckerd College, Elon University, Emory University, Florida Atlantic University, Florida Atlantic University Honors College, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida International University, Florida State University, Fordham University, George Washington University, Georgetown University, Hamilton College, Illinois Urbana Champaign, Johns Hopkins University, Kennesaw State University, Louisiana State University, Muhlenberg College, Nova Southeastern University, Ohio State University, Penn State University, Pepperdine University, Queens Univ. of Charlotte, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Ringling College of Art and Design, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rollins College, Saint Leo University, Savannah College of Art and Design, Southern Methodist University, St. John's University, St. Thomas University, Honors College, Syracuse University, Texas A&M University, The Catholic University of America, United States Airforce Academy, University of Alabama, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Connecticut, University of Denver, University of Georgia, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Maryland, University of Massachusetts Amherst, University of Massachusetts Lowell, University of Miami, University of Michigan, University of Mississippi, University of Richmond, University of Washington, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Villanova University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University

Around the Archdiocese

To our readers: Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many events are taking place online only. Events taking place in person are subject to CDC guidelines, including restrictions on capacity and requirements for social distancing and mask-wearing. For more information, please contact the event coordinators directly.

COMMUNITY

St. Timothy 60th anniversary. Saturday, Sept. 11, 7 p.m., The Biltmore Hotel, Coral Gables. Cocktails, open bar, dinner and live entertainment featuring Carlos Oliva y Los Sobrinos Del Juez. Tickets \$140/ outdoor, \$150/indoor. <https://bit.ly/25iNtgu>.

FAITH EDUCATION

Summer Institute for catechists, formation courses for catechetical leaders and catechists offered by the Office of Catechesis. Classes meet daily for the week and participants will be able to complete two courses in just one week:

- **In Miami-Dade,** June 14-18, 8:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Our Lady of Lourdes Parish School, 11291 S.W. 142 Ave., Miami. Registration at: <https://forms.office.com/r/yd8ViP6S8Y>.

- **In Broward:** June 21-25, 8:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m., St. Gregory the Great School, 200 North University Drive, Plantation. Registration at: <https://forms.office.com/r/wnw18v5YZ3>.

Planificación familiar natural, 22 de junio, 7:30 p.m., virtual. *Introducción al Modelo Creighton, un método seguro desde el punto de vista médico, aceptable desde la moral, y muy eficaz tanto para posponer como para lograr el embarazo.* Inscripción: <https://conta.cc/3szWVPjV>.

Natural Family Planning, June 24, 7:30 p.m., online. Introduction to Creighton Model, a medically safe, morally acceptable and highly effective method of both postponing and achieving pregnancy. Registration: <https://conta.cc/3gnPL7p>.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Transformed in Love: Official Archdiocesan marriage preparation program. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the class is offered online as a live interactive webinar with real-time lectures. Couples must attend the entire program both days to receive their certificate of completion. 305-762-1127/1236, sdiaz@theadom.org. Upcoming date: Aug. 28-29, <https://conta.cc/35WmUQT>.

Camino, archdiocesan marriage preparation program for couples preparing to receive the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Offered online until further notice due to COVID-19 restrictions. Cost: \$125/couple.

www.caminodelmatrimonio.org, 305-226-4664. Upcoming dates: July 17 and 18, Aug. 21 and 22, Sept. 18 and 19.

Camino del Matrimonio, programa de preparación matrimonial ofrecido por la Arquidiócesis de Miami. Costo: \$125/pareja. El programa se ofrece en línea hasta nuevo aviso debido al COVID-19. 305-226-4664, caminodelmatrimonio@gmail.com, www.caminodelmatrimonio.org. Fecha próxima: 7 y 8 de agosto.

Transformed in Love, programa oficial arquidiocesano de preparación matrimonial. Debido a las restricciones por el COVID-19, las clases se ofrecen en línea como un seminario web interactivo en vivo con conferencias en tiempo real. Las parejas deben participar ambos días al programa completo para recibir su certificado. 305-762-1127/1236, sdiaz@theadom.org. Próxima fecha: 25 y 26 de septiembre, <https://conta.cc/2XIF44R>.

Fully Engaged training, online trainings for new facilitators in this marriage ministry:

- **En español:** sábado, 14 de agosto, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Inscripción: <https://conta.cc/3n1qYrL>.

- **For priests:** Friday, Sept. 20, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Registration: <https://conta.cc/3uXkbBq>.

- **In English:** Saturday, Sept. 11, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Registration: <https://conta.cc/3svUarA>.

RETREATS

Silent retreat for women, Sept. 10-12, Roseaire Conference Center, Delray Beach. Sponsored by Prelature of Opus Dei. \$375, payment plan and transportation available. 305-528-9978, www.roseaire.org.

Retrouvaille, 8-10 de octubre, Casa SEPI, 7700 S.W. 56 St., Miami. *Ofrece las herramientas necesarias para redescubrir una relación matrimonial amorosa. Miles de matrimonios en una relación con dificultades y fría, incluyendo a algunos que se dirigían a un divorcio, han logrado superar sus problemas al participar en el programa.* 305-915-4607, Miami@retrouvaille.org.

Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center, 1300 U.S. Highway 1, North Palm Beach. Retreats, events and days of reflection have limited capacity due to COVID-19 restrictions (registration required). www.ourladyofflorida.org, reservations@cpprovfl.org, 561-626-1300.

SCHOOLS

SEPI: Ofrece cursos en línea con o sin crédito académico para quienes deseen una formación cristiana en su ministerio pastoral, eclesial o personal. También para quienes deseen iniciar su maestría en Ministerio Pastoral Hispano. www.sepi.us, 305-279-2333.

MASSES

Year of St. Joseph monthly Mass and rosary, bilingual, on the 19th of the month at noon. St. Agnes, 100 Harbor Drive, Key Biscayne. stakb.org, 305-361-2351.

SPIRITUAL

Morningstar Renewal Center, 7275 S.W. 124 St., Pinecrest. Offers facilities, resources, and programs that aid the process of spiritual growth, lifelong faith development. Events require a fee, unless otherwise noted. 305-238-4367, info@morningstarrenewal.org, www.morningstarrenewal.org:

- **Elements of a Rule of Life seminar,** June 22 and 29, 7:30-9 p.m. via Zoom. Our Rule of Life is our tangible declaration that we will, to the best of our ability, pursue Christ's passion, which flows out of Christ's love for all humanity in every aspect of life. \$30. Registration: <http://bit.ly/erols-msrc>.

- **Inspire book club,** 9:30-10:30 a.m. or 7:30-8:30 p.m. Read a book, discuss it on Zoom. Upcoming dates and books: June 28, "Just Call Me Lopez"; Aug. 30: "Tattoos On The Heart." Free.

- **33 Days to Merciful Love,** Thursdays, Aug. 26-Oct. 7, 7:30-9 p.m. Journey into the heart of St. Thérèse of Lisieux's Little Way.

- **Cafecito with Jesus,** Monday-Friday at noon, via Zoom. 5 minutes of prayer and an inspirational thought to take into the rest of your day. <http://bit.ly/msrc-Cafecito12pm>.

- **Full Moon Labyrinth Prayer Walk,** join us on full moon evenings at sunset, weather permitting, to pray and reflect under the moonlight while enjoying acoustic music. Donations accepted.

- **2021 Pilgrimage to Lourdes,** for everyone seeking healing of body, mind, or spirit, and those who would like to serve the sick and suffering brothers and sisters at the Sanctuary in Lourdes, France. www.hdmiami.org.

SUPPORT GROUPS

El Arca de Noé, grupo de apoyo matrimonial de la parroquia de Mother of Our Redeemer, Miami, con cursos y talleres virtuales que preparan a las parejas para enfrentar las dificultades en el hogar y en su matrimonio. Gratis. <https://bit.ly/TuArcaDeNoe>, 954 261-0241, 954-812-6020.

VOLUNTEERS

St. John Bosco Clinic, in Miami. As a free clinic, our ability to serve is based on a strong volunteer force. Volunteers should be available for a minimum of 4 hours per week, Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 305-635-1335, berta.cabrera@ssjhealthfoundation.org.

Clínica San Juan Bosco, en Miami, ofrece oportunidades de voluntariado. Como clínica

THRIVING 'SIGNS' AT ST. PHILIP NERI



MARLENE QUARONI
Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMI GARDENS | On Holy Trinity Sunday, three special events highlighted a Mass at St. Philip Neri Church: the feast day of its patron saint, two first Communions, and the dedication of a new digital sign outside the church.

Spiritan Father Fidelis Nwankwo, parish administrator, urged the two girls who were receiving their first Communion, Gabriella Williams, 9, and Emari Miller, 11, to pray for their religious education teachers, their parents, their church community and for himself.

Parishioners also celebrated the feast day of their church's namesake, St. Philip Neri, a 16th-century Christian missionary who lived in Rome and founded the Congregation of the Oratory. He is the patron saint of Rome and of humor and joy. "St. Philip Neri made people smile

a lot," Father Nwankwo said. "You can do more with a joyful heart. That's what he was about. He taught us to do more to help people."

Finally, Father Nwankwo dedicated a new digital sign outside the church, replacing a 67-year-old sign that posted Mass times and other announcements. The new state-of-the-art sign is still a work in progress. It will be connected to the internet and the church plans to plant a decorative two-foot hedge around it.

Thanks to benefactors and fundraising events, the \$30,000 sign became a reality, said Katrenia Reeves Jackman, parishioner, office manager and also the director of the archdiocesan Office of Black Catholic Ministry.

St. Philip Neri, a small church in an area known as Bunche Park, opened in 1953 and was closed in 2009, but reopened in 2011 and is thriving. ■

gratuita, un grupo sólido de voluntarios fortalece nuestra capacidad de servicio. Los voluntarios deben estar disponibles por un mínimo de 4 horas a la semana, de lunes a viernes entre 8:30 a.m. y 4:30 p.m. 305-635-1335, berta.cabrera@ssjhealthfoundation.org.

Respect Life seeks volunteers to serve in different capacities, according to their interests, talents and abilities. respectlifemiami.org/volunteer.

Respeto a la Vida necesita voluntarios para servir en diferentes capacidades según sus intereses, talentos y habilidades. respectlifemiami.org/volunteer.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Book Club, second Wednesdays, 7 p.m., St. David, 3900 S. University Drive, Davie. Alternating between Zoom and in person meetings, outings and conversations via WhatsApp.

Current book: "How to Find Your Soulmate Without Losing Your Soul." mvgargas@saintdavid.org.

Adoration, Praise and Worship last Thursdays, 6:30 p.m., St. David, 3900 S. University Drive, Davie. Rosary, adoration, reflection on monthly theme, praise and worship. Watch livestream at www.saintdavidmedia.com. mvgargas@saintdavid.org.

Catholic Young Professionals: Be inspired by stories of successful professionals from a diverse array of careers and let your faith enrich your own career. Meetings currently held online:

- **Broward,** fourth Mondays, 7:30 p.m. www.facebook.com/CYPbroward.

- **Miami,** first Mondays, 7:30 p.m., www.facebook.com/CYPmiami.



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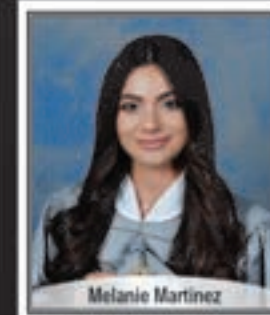
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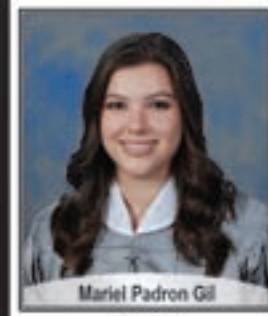
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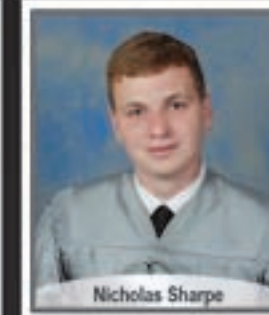
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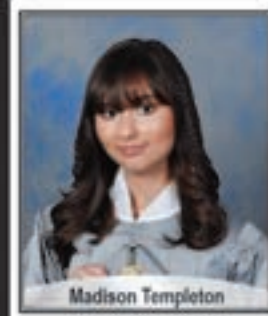
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Justicia para los inmigrantes

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Tom Tracy/FC

La Misa: El centro de nuestra fe



Arzobispo Thomas Wenski

A medida que avanza el verano, esperamos poner la pandemia en nuestro espejo retrovisor. Creemos actualmente que la prudencia exige que continuemos con nuestra política de usar máscaras faciales y distanciamiento social en Misa. Sin embargo, estamos revisando nuestros protocolos semanalmente. Algunos pueden sentir esto como una imposición innecesaria, pero el cumplimiento es sin duda un acto de caridad hacia nuestro prójimo.

La emergencia sanitaria mundial ha demostrado que “nadie puede afrontar la vida aislado”. Somos seres sociales, solo podemos volvernos completamente humanos en relación con los demás. Anhelamos pertenecer a una familia, a una comunidad, a una nación. Las relaciones virtuales, incluso con seres queridos a través de ZOOM o facetime, no sustituyen a los encuentros cara a cara.

Y, como familia de fe, una comunidad de bautizados, las Misas virtuales no pueden sustituir durante mucho tiempo a la “participación plena, consciente y activa” en la Misa en nuestras iglesias parroquiales.

A medida que se vacuna a más personas, muchas están regresando para asistir personalmente al culto en sus iglesias parroquiales. Sin embargo, en la mayoría de los casos, las parroquias aún pueden acoger a quienes regresan incluso con la reducida capacidad de distanciamiento social. Algunos expertos sugieren que la pandemia, que hizo que la gente se aislara en casa, aceleró la caída en la asistencia a Misa que ya era evidente antes de la pandemia y, por lo tanto, dicen, mucha gente no volverá.

Y es cierto, el laicismo ascendente de nuestro tiempo ha debilitado las identidades religiosas de muchos estadounidenses. Las principales denominaciones protestantes son las más afectadas, pero no nos ha librado a los católicos. Si “ex católico” fuera una denominación religiosa, sería el segundo grupo religioso

más grande de Estados Unidos. (La Iglesia Católica sigue siendo la más grande, con aproximadamente el 20% de la población estadounidense).

El fuerte individualismo de nuestra cultura estadounidense socava el sentido de una identidad colectiva en la que el catolicismo se experimenta como una forma de vida distintiva. Así, quienes se llaman a sí mismos espirituales pero no religiosos suelen asociar la fe con esferas de la vida privada más que pública (lo privado implica la experiencia personal, lo público tiene que ver más con instituciones, credos y rituales). Encontramos personas que dicen creer pero no pertenecen; y, como vemos a veces en muchos católicos en la vida pública (pero no exclusivamente entre ellos), encontramos a quienes dicen que pertenecen pero que aparentemente no creen.

Las iglesias son vistas como organizaciones meramente voluntarias y la afiliación o no afiliación es una cuestión de gusto o elección personal. Los estadounidenses se han convertido en consumidores individuales de religión,

eligiendo su identidad religiosa a la carta, por así decirlo. Y así, cuando muchas personas se definen a sí mismas como espirituales pero no religiosas, pueden construirse credos hechos a medida en los que profesan creer en Jesús (expresado a veces de manera muy vaga), pero al mismo tiempo no creen en la Iglesia.

Si la espiritualidad describe nuestra lucha con cuestiones de cómo nuestras vidas encajan en el gran esquema cósmico de las cosas, entonces, para los católicos, el acto personal de fe (lo que el teólogo llama *fides qua creditur*) no puede divorciarse del contenido de la fe misma (la *fides quae creditur*). O como dijo uno de los antiguos Padres de la Iglesia: No se puede reclamar a Dios como Padre sin reconocer al mismo tiempo a la Iglesia como Madre. Vivir nuestra fe católica es, entonces, espiritualidad; pero también es necesariamente vivir de esa fe religiosamente.

Ir a Misa “religiosamente” — todos los domingos y días santos — es lo que hacemos los católicos. Es el “marcador” más obvio de una identidad católica. El acto central de nuestra fe y, por tanto, la máxima manifestación de la espiritualidad católica es la participación en la Sagrada Eucaristía vista como fuente y cumbre de la vida cristiana. La recuperación de la práctica eucarística, con coherencia y asombro renovados, debe ser el camino a seguir al salir de esta pandemia, porque la Eucaristía, el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo, es la fuente de nuestra curación y esperanza.

“No se puede reclamar a Dios como Padre sin reconocer al mismo tiempo a la Iglesia como Madre.”

Caballero de Colón es honrado en La Florida



Carlos D. Coton

ORLANDO | Un Caballero de Miami y un Consejo de Miami Beach fueron honrados por el Consejo Estatal de Caballeros de Colón de La Florida durante la convención anual del grupo, celebrada en Orlando del 28 al 30 de mayo de 2021

Carlos D. Coton, del Consejo San Marcelino Champagnat, en Miami, fue nombrado Caballero del Año de La Florida, y el Consejo San Patricio 13654 de Miami Beach fue nombrado Consejo del Año en la División 2. El Consejo San Patricio tiene su sede en la iglesia St. Patrick, Miami Beach, y fue fundado en 2004.

Coton, miembro de la iglesia Católica St. Brendan en Miami, es muy activo en la vida parroquial, es capacitador y programador para lectores de la iglesia y ministros extraordinarios de la Comunión. Es un instructor catequista certificado y un facilitador certificado del Programa de Ambiente Seguro de la Arquidiócesis.

Actualmente se desempeña como Gran Caballero de su consejo, lo que lleva al consejo a superar los niveles anteriores de apoyo en muchas actividades caritativas y religiosas, incluida la comida para los necesitados y los juguetes para los niños desafortunados.

Encabezó la ayuda al párroco de su iglesia a reabrir con éxito la iglesia a Misas regulares los días de semana y los fines de semana marcando bancas utilizables, planificando el flujo de feligreses y ayudando a hacer cumplir las pautas COVID-19 del Centro para el Control de Enfermedades.

También tiene un fuerte compromiso de apoyar económica y espiritualmente a los seminaristas que estudian para el sacerdocio en La Florida y en Venezuela, el país de origen del capellán de su Consejo.

Los Caballeros de Colón es una organización fraternal de hombres

católicos de casi dos millones de miembros en todo el mundo. Los principios de la Orden son la caridad, la unidad, la fraternidad y el patriotismo. El Consejo de Estado de La Florida es una de las jurisdicciones más grandes de los Caballeros con más de 55,000 miembros y más de 300 consejos en todo el estado.

NUESTRA PORTADA

El estudiante de la Universidad de St. Thomas, Franklin Mejías Castellano, quien quedó discapacitado por una infección adquirida durante un viaje a La Florida desde su natal Venezuela cuando tenía 12 años, sostiene una copia de su libro, que cuenta la historia de su superación después de la pérdida de sus extremidades como consecuencia de la infección.

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Arquidiócesis de Miami

9401 Biscayne Blvd. Miami, FL 33138

Phone: (305) 757-6241 Fax: (305) 751-6227

Publisher: Archbishop Thomas Wenski
Director of Communications: Mary Ross Agosta
Executive Editor: Ana Rodríguez-Soto (305) 762-1131 - arsoto@theadom.org
Managing Editor: Emilio de Armas
Production Manager: Manuel Villaverde
Staff Writer: Rocio Granados (305) 762-1130 FAX: 305-751-6227 - rgranados@theadom.org
Advertisement: Maritza Álvarez (305) 979-9603 - advvozcatolica@yahoo.com
Webmaster: atimo.us

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“No tengo límites físicos”

A pesar de cuatro amputaciones, estudiante de la universidad de St. Thomas aspira a lo más alto en sus objetivos personales y profesionales

Tom Tracy

Corresponsal del Florida Catholic

MIAMI | Cuando se le preguntó cuántas cirugías ha tenido desde que contrajo una infección bacteriana mortal hace más de una década, Franklin Mejías Castellano, de 21 años, se detuvo un momento para pensar.

“Veinticinco”, respondió el joven, que acaba de terminar su primer año en St. Thomas University, donde estudia comercio. A pesar de cuatro amputaciones, tras un roce con la meningitis en 2011 que lo dejó hospitalizado durante casi un año, se desempeña con soltura tanto en el aprendizaje virtual como en el actual recinto universitario.

Una semana después de su primer viaje desde su Venezuela natal a los Estados Unidos, que incluiría visitas a Miami y Disney World, el joven se quejó a su padre de que no se sentía bien. En aquel momento, disfrutaba en Miami Beach. En poco tiempo, no podía caminar ni abrir los ojos. Su padre y su hermana lo llevaron a un hospital en Aventura, donde los médicos se dieron cuenta de que Mejías Castellano tenía una infección grave que requería una intervención especializada, y lo trasladaron al hospital de niños Joe DiMaggio, en Hollywood.

“No recuerdo nada después de eso porque estuve en coma inducido durante varios días y desperté en el hospital Joe DiMaggio”, relató. “No entendía lo que me sucedía. Mis manos y mis pies estaban completamente negros”.

Debido a las complicaciones de la infección, el 11 de noviembre de 2011, un equipo

de médicos amputó las manos y los pies de Franklin en un intento por salvar la vida de aquel niño de 12 años. La procedencia de la infección bacteriana aún es un misterio.

“En realidad, no lo sabemos. Lo único que sabemos es que la bacteria causó la meningitis”, informó Mejías Castellano, que ahora vive con su hermana mayor, Franny, para poder viajar a la universidad St. Thomas.

Tras recuperarse de las cirugías, comenzó la ardua tarea de adquirir y adaptarse a las prótesis ajustadas, pero no

antes de que los médicos necesitaran realizar más operaciones en sus extremidades con el fin de preparar sus pies para las prótesis (prefiere prescindir de prótesis para las manos).

“Después de eso, mi vida cambió a nivel físico y mental; ahora veo la vida de forma completamente diferente, y tengo la oportunidad de hacerle ver a

la gente que todo es posible”, afirmó, y añadió que ha escrito no uno, sino dos libros sobre los obstáculos de su vida y las lecciones aprendidas.

“No tengo límites físicos: conduzco un automóvil, corro, nado, puedo hacer cualquier cosa. Ese es el mensaje que envío a todos los que me siguen o me ven, y es algo que quiero llevar a otro nivel”.

Mejías Castellano también habla a grupos de estudiantes de secundaria sobre la motivación personal y cómo superar los obstáculos.

Atribuye a los Estados Unidos, su país de adopción, el haberle brindado atención médica y oportunidades profesionales que probablemente no estaban disponibles en su Suramérica



Fotos: Tom Tracy/FC



Arriba, izquierda: Retrato del estudiante Franklin Mejías Castellano, de St. Thomas University, que quedó físicamente incapacitado por una infección adquirida durante un viaje a La Florida desde su natal Venezuela cuando tenía 12 años.

Abajo, izquierda: El estudiante Franklin Mejías Castellano, de St. Thomas University, ha decorado sus prótesis con las banderas de Venezuela y los Estados Unidos.

Derecha: El estudiante Franklin Mejías Castellano, de St. Thomas University, camina por el campus de la Universidad en mayo de 2021.



natal. Con el apoyo de su padre y su hermana, completó la escuela intermedia y la secundaria en el área de Hollywood.

“Empezar aquí desde cero fue difícil, pero lo más importante fue que estábamos juntos (como familia). Nos concentramos en un día a la vez, y aquí estamos, como miembros de esta sociedad, y nos sentimos muy felices por ello”, señaló.

Indeciso sobre qué hacer al finalizar la escuela secundaria, Mejías Castellano tomó un tiempo para trabajar y escribir sus libros. Pero un encuentro casual con un reclutador dio paso a una solicitud de ingreso a la universidad St. Thomas, y dijo que era una buena elección por su misión y visión.

“Me sentí muy identificado con la universidad”, afirmó, y dijo que espera obtener una licenciatura en comercio en

2025.

Mientras tanto, él y su padre son propietarios de un negocio de camiones de comida con sede en Hollywood. En su tiempo libre, compite en maratones y otras pruebas atléticas.

Su primer libro, escrito en español y titulado “Más allá de mis manos”, cuenta la historia de su enfermedad y su recuperación. En la actualidad, da los últimos toques a un libro con un enfoque más amplio sobre su visión de la vida.

“Me veo dentro de cinco años recorriendo diferentes estados, para contar mi historia y motivar a todo el mundo”, declaró Mejías Castellano. “Me encantan los negocios y todo eso. Sé que el campo de los negocios no es fácil, pero ofrece cosas que me gustan, y quiero ser un orador motivacional para todo el que lo necesite”.

Mejías Castellano casi no menciona el año de la pandemia, y el hecho de que tanto él como su familia inmediata sufrieron el contagio con COVID-19. Su caso fue lo suficientemente grave como para recluirlo en el hospital durante una semana, pero se ha recuperado por completo.

“Franklin tiene la mejor actitud del campus, y es maravilloso”, declaró David A. Armstrong, presidente de la universidad St. Thomas. “Es un ejemplo para todos nuestros estudiantes. Todos tenemos días difíciles y obstáculos que superar. Sin embargo, cuando ves a Franklin cruzar el recinto universitario con todos sus libros, con una enorme sonrisa en su rostro, haciendo todo lo que tiene que hacer para triunfar, te cambia el día por completo”.

Encuentros Familiares: Un ministerio que cumple 50 años evangelizando a las familias

Rocío Granados
La Voz Católica

A principios de la década de 1970, mientras el P. Florentino Azcoitia S.J. trabaja en el Colegio Jesuita de Belén, descubrió que para ser director espiritual de los jóvenes, debía trabajar con la familia. De allí le vino la idea de fundar un movimiento que ayude a la familia, a los padres y a los hijos.

En mayo de 1971, el P. Azcoitia (fallecido en 2010) fundó el movimiento Encuentros Familiares, ayudado sobre todo por un grupo de laicos que vieron la necesidad de mantener a la familia unida.

La idea de los Encuentros Familiares es unir a padres e hijos a través de dinámicas, conferencias, charlas y una serie de actividades que permitan entender las funciones de ambos, todo esto durante retiros de dos días.

Encuentros Familiares está dirigido a padres de familia y sus hijos, entre las edades de 12 a 21 años. Las charlas y reflexiones están dados por matrimonios voluntarios que ya pasaron retiros anteriores y por jóvenes que también

pasaron retiros con sus padres.

En los retiros los padres y los hijos participan los dos días en dinámicas parecidas pero diferentes y se reúnen el último día para celebrar la Misa y compartir.

A los padres “se les presentan los problemas desde el ángulo de sus hijos. Y los hijos les hablan a los padres y el cambio para mejorar es grande”, dijo el P. Marcelino García, quien fue presidente y director de la escuela Jesuita de Belén de Miami por 25 años, antes de ser director espiritual de los Encuentros Familiares desde agosto de 2010.

“Los problemas no se resuelven totalmente, como cualquier problema en la vida, pero sacan del encuentro un optimismo, un puedo mejorar, un puedo resolver en parte estos problemas”, dijo el P. García y agregó, “no estamos buscando la perfección, estamos buscando un cambio en la pareja y un cambio en la relación padres con hijos, es un mejoramiento”.

Este cambio ha ido sucediendo a lo largo de estos años en los que más de 10 mil parejas y jóvenes han participado en los más de 300 retiros de Encuentros

Familiares que se han realizado.

En este apostolado que cumple ya 50 años evangelizando a las familias, “miles han encontrado el apoyo necesario para reestructurar su vida familiar y para crecer en el amor mutuo, y sobre todo en el amor a Dios, que debe estar siempre en el centro del hogar cristiano”, dijo el Arzobispo Thomas Wenski durante su homilía de la Misa por el 50 aniversario del movimiento, realizada el 16 de mayo, en la Catedral St. Mary.

Señaló también que los cambios culturales y la influencia a veces negativa de las nuevas tecnologías, pueden afectar las relaciones en el seno familiar. “Por eso, trabajar por una mejor comunicación entre padres e hijos, ha sido desde los comienzos hasta el día de hoy un objetivo esencial de este fructífero ministerio”.

Ya en 1987, con motivo de la inauguración de la Casa de Retiros Manresa, sede actual de los Encuentros Familiares, el P. Azcoitia dijo a *La Voz Católica* que “el propósito de Encuentros Familiares ha sido siempre el de unificar a la familia a través de la comunicación

y de una perspectiva cristiana-católica”.

Participar en los Encuentros Familiares “me hizo pensar que había que progresar”, dijo Silvia Correa quien participó del retiro de dos días con su esposo y sus dos hijas hace 15 años.

Correa dijo que aunque no tenía mayores problemas en su familia, el escuchar los testimonios de las personas que ya habían pasado por el encuentro y cómo sus familias habían mejorado, los hizo querer “estar siempre mejor en los dos sentidos: en poder ayudar a las niñas, en el sentido familiar; y también por supuesto, en el sentido espiritual”.

Correa llegó a Encuentros Familiares cuando sus hijas tenían 12 y 14 y se han quedado hasta ahora. “Y es que tú llegas a los Encuentros y aprendes a tener más paciencia, a ser más condescendiente, a dedicarle más tiempo a los hijos, a orar más en familia. Luego, eso mismo le quieres transmitir y enseñar a los que vienen por primera vez”, dijo Correa.

“Nuestro camino en los Encuentros Familiares siempre fue y sigue siendo una experiencia muy linda, muy de familia, de poner todos los aspectos más

Pasa a la página siguiente



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Arraigada bajo el cálido sol de la Florida es una Universidad cuyo nombre indica una llamado vocacional.

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Encuentros Familiares: Un ministerio que cumple 50 años...



Cortesía Encuentros Familiares

Participantes del Encuentro Familiar número 327, entre padres de familia, sus hijos e integrantes del equipo organizador, posan con el P. Marcelino García, director espiritual de Encuentros Familiares. El retiro de dos días se realizó el 21 y 22 de noviembre de 2020, en el Centro de Espiritualidad Ignaciana.

Viene de la página anterior importantes de lo que es una familia”, agregó.

Los primeros retiros de Encuentros Familiares se realizaron en diferentes lugares como la parroquia Sts. Peter and Paul; en la ya cerrada Assumption Academy para niñas, en Brickell Avenue; en el Seminario St. John Vianney; en la escuela secundaria Immaculata-La Salle; y en el Colegio Jesuita de Belén. Hasta que, en 1984 el movimiento adquirió un terreno en Kendall, en la esquina de Miller Drive y la Avenida 122 y construyeron el centro de retiros Casa Manresa. En el mismo lugar se encuentran las oficinas del Centro de Espiritualidad Ignaciana, el sitio de retiros basados en los ejercicios espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola.

Encuentros Familiares comparte sus inicios con el de otros movimientos como Cursillos de Cristiandad, Camino al Matrimonio, Encuentros Juveniles, entre otros, que se iniciaron con los inmigrantes cubanos que salieron de la Isla en los años 60 y 70. Pero con el transcurso de los años otras comunidades de habla hispana se han integrado ampliamente.

Con el tiempo, los manuales, las dinámicas y las charlas de los encuentros, creados por el P. Azcoitia, se han revisado y mejorado, pero no se ha hecho un cambio radical. “Hemos permanecido con la idea del fundador”, dijo el P. García ya que “los problemas familiares de hace 50 años, cuando se fundó el movimiento, fundamentalmente son los mismos. La falta de comunicación sigue siendo el gran problema de los

matrimonios y el desconocimiento de cómo educar ha permanecido”.

Los retiros siempre se han realizado en español. En el 2014 se introdujo Family Encounters, el retiro en inglés, para lo cual se tradujeron los manuales, pero no tuvo mucha aceptación, dijo el P. García. Duraron alrededor de dos años hasta que dejaron de ofrecerlo.

Pero lo que sí ha tenido éxito son los Encuentros Uniparentales dirigidos a padres y madres solteros o separados con sus hijos. Las separaciones y divorcios tienen un impacto psicológico muy grande, tanto en los padres como en los hijos. El programa del Encuentro Uniparental está diseñado para ayudar a manejar esa separación y sus implicaciones psicológicas. Al igual que los Encuentros Familiares las charlas y las dinámicas son dirigidas por voluntarios que han pasado retiros anteriores. Su director espiritual es el P. Pedro González Llorente S.J.

Ambos Encuentros, Familiares y Uniparentales, ofrecen retiros tres veces al año y reuniones semanales los miércoles por la noche.

Al finalizar la Misa de aniversario, el Arzobispo Wenski agradeció “la labor de tantas familias y voluntarios involucrados en este importante apostolado de nuestra Arquidiócesis, así como también a los Padres Jesuitas que por tantos años lo han sabido guiar. Demos gracias a Dios, especialmente en este día, por la vocación y el ministerio del P. Azcoitia, así como por la entrega y generosidad de los coordinadores y de tantos colaboradores de Encuentros que gozan de la presencia de Dios”.

PARA SABER MÁS

Si desea saber más sobre el movimiento de Encuentros Familiares y Uniparentales puede entrar a la página web del Centro de Espiritualidad Ignaciana de Miami: <https://ceimiami.org/casa-manresa>.

Próximos encuentros:

Encuentro Familiar # 329 se realizará el 17 y 18 de julio

Encuentro Uniparental # 56 se realizará el 18 y 19 de septiembre

Informes e inscripciones en el 305-596-0001.

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Un día en la vida escolar “híbrida”

Cristina Cabrera Jarro

Corresponsal del Florida Catholic

MIAMI LAKES | En comparación con el mes de mayo del año pasado, cuando las escuelas estaban silenciosas, vacías y cerradas debido al COVID-19, este mayo, a primeras horas de la tarde suena el timbre de la escuela Our Lady of the Lakes, en Miami Lakes. Las puertas se abren y los estudiantes salen a los pasillos con la emoción de saber que falta menos de una hora para la salida. Algunos niños se ríen mientras las filas de sus clases se desplazan por el campus. Esto suena, parece y se siente como un ambiente escolar benditamente normal, incluso cuando todos están usando cubre bocas.

La clase de segundo grado pasa con su maestra, Jalenni Cruz. Si un grupo de alumnos de segundo grado no era ya bastante, ahora Cruz tiene literalmente las manos llenas, llevando un trípode y un iPad. En el dispositivo conectado a través de Zoom, hay tres estudiantes que asisten virtualmente a su jornada escolar. Cuando pasan otros grupos, la escena se repite, con profesores o estudiantes voluntarios que llevan los dispositivos por el campus o los utilizan en las aulas.

Así es como la escuela Our Lady of the Lakes (OLL), y todas las demás escuelas arquidiocesanas, lograron la enseñanza híbrida —presencial y virtual— en el año escolar 2020-2021. En OLL, terminaron el año con 450 alumnos presenciales y 13 virtuales.

Al igual que muchas escuelas, OLL se adaptó a los desafíos técnicos, así como a las medidas sanitarias y de seguridad ocasionadas por la pandemia. También adoptaron un nuevo lema para el año: “La



Foto de Cortesía

Rose Cabrera, profesora de artes y religión de 8° grado de la escuela Our Lady of the Lakes, dirige la clase con estudiantes que la atienden vía Zoom. Al comienzo del año escolar 2020-2021, no era posible realizar clases presenciales. Cuando fue posible, los profesores enseñaban simultáneamente por ambas alternativas: clases virtuales y clases presenciales.

fe sobre el miedo”. Los profesores hicieron anuncios y los colgaron por toda la escuela, lo imprimieron en mascarillas y camisetas, y lo compartieron en las redes sociales de la escuela.

“Sabíamos que, sabiendo la forma en que terminamos el año escolar 2019-2020, y sin saber qué esperar para el año escolar 2020-2021, decidimos que lo mejor era poner nuestra confianza en Dios y trabajar juntos para erradicar cualquier temor que se arrastrara por la pandemia y sus efectos”, dijo la directora Bárbara Picazo. “Sabíamos que,

por encima de todo, Dios tenía el control y nos ayudaría a servir a nuestros alumnos y familias lo mejor posible”.

Tecnificándonos

El año académico 2020-2021 comenzó en agosto en las escuelas arquidiocesanas. Los estudiantes de PreK fueron los primeros en regresar en persona. Ese primer día fueron recibidos por entusiastas profesores enmascarados y con carteles de bienvenida, controles de temperatura, y un montón de desinfectante para las manos. Incluso el P. Luis Flores, el vicario parroquial, roció a los alumnos con agua bendita a su llegada.

Los alumnos de mayor grado regresaron sólo virtualmente al principio.

Inicialmente, sólo los alumnos de sexto a octavo grado de OLL tenían sus propios iPads. El resto accedía a los dispositivos a través de carritos tecnológicos móviles. Una vez que la escuela confirmó que el aprendizaje virtual sería la norma, al menos para comenzar el año, se entregaron iPads a los alumnos de tercero a quinto grado.

“Nuestro equipo programó manualmen-

te unos 300 iPads”, explica Nicole Peña, coordinadora de recursos tecnológicos de la escuela. Su equipo añadió todas las aplicaciones y plataformas virtuales como: Zoom, Showbie y Socrative, así como versiones virtuales de los textos escolares.

Los maestros, que ya estaban preparados para enseñar virtualmente con computadoras en sus aulas de clases, recibieron un iPad sobre un trípode. Esto les permitía alejarse de sus escritorios y caminar de un lado a otro en la parte delantera del aula. En el suelo, frente a las pizarras inteligentes, una zona delimitada con cinta adhesiva servía de referencia visual, recordando a los profesores el espacio que podían recorrer antes de quedar fuera de la vista de la cámara.

Rose Cabrera, coordinadora de religión y profesora de lengua y literatura, dijo que cada escuela encontró su método único para enseñar virtualmente. “Tienes que encontrar lo que funciona, y también tienes que conocer a tu profesorado, y saber sus puntos fuertes y débiles con la tecnología”.

Pero el verdadero reto llegó en marzo de 2020, cuando las escuelas tuvieron que hacer una rápida transición de la enseñanza presencial a la virtual por primera vez. En agosto, ya estaban preparados.

“Tuvimos mucho apoyo de la administración y de nuestro equipo de tecnología cuando hubo problemas”, dijo Cabrera.

Para saber más

Para el año escolar 2021-2022, la escolarización híbrida no será una opción. Los estudiantes que deseen asistir a clases de forma virtual tendrán que inscribirse en ADOM Virtual, la escuela católica virtual de la Arquidiócesis de Miami. Para más información visite:

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Las clases de 2020 y 2021 se gradúan juntas en la Escuela de Formación Laical

Ana Rodríguez-Soto
Florida Catholic / LVC

MIAMI | John Stone se convirtió al catolicismo en 2017. Desde entonces, ha pasado cada minuto aprendiendo más sobre su fe.

Feligres de St. John XXIII en Miramar, se unió a los Caballeros de Colón y a su grupo de motociclistas, Knights on Bikes. También acaba de convertirse en uno de los graduados de la Escuela Arquidiocesana de Formación Laical, un programa de dos años destinado a preparar a hombres y mujeres laicos “que desean crecer en su comprensión de la fe católica y en su habilidad de servir a la Iglesia”.

“Como Caballero y (miembro de) Knights on Bikes, queremos ser capaces de servir a nuestros hermanos y ofrecerles una comprensión más profunda de nuestra fe”, explicó Stone, quien también expresó su interés por el diaconado permanente.

Él y George Gutiérrez, también feligrés de St. John XXIII y miembro de Knights on Bikes, estaban entre los 228 graduados del programa de dos años que recibieron sus certificados de manos del Arzobispo Thomas Wenski durante una Misa celebrada el 5 de junio de 2021, en la Catedral de St. Mary.

Los graduados eran de dos clases. Los que empezaron en 2018 y terminaron en 2020, y cuya ceremonia de graduación fue interrumpida por el COVID-19; y los que empezaron en 2019 y terminaron en 2021. También debido a la pandemia, la clase de 2021 recibió su formación en línea durante el último año, aunque la mayoría se inscribió en los cursos presenciales en parroquias céntricas: St. Bartholomew en Miramar, St. Brendan en Miami y St. Andrew en Coral Springs. Los cursos semanales se impartieron en inglés y español en las tres localidades, así como en línea.

De los 107 miembros de la clase de 2020, 28 tomaron los cursos en línea en inglés y 12 los tomaron en español; 35 tomaron los cursos presenciales en

español en St. Bartholomew y 32 en St. Brendan. De los 121 miembros de la clase de 2021, seis tomaron los cursos en línea en inglés y 13 lo hicieron en español; el resto los tomaron de forma presencial en español: 34 en St. Andrew, 26 en St. Bartholomew, y 42 en St. Brendan.

José Cruz y Anabel Ascencio, de la parroquia de St. Stephen en Miramar, fueron algunos de los graduados de 2020 que tomaron los cursos en español en St. Bartholomew. Ambos ya sirven como ministros extraordinarios de la Sagrada Comunión y coordinan un grupo llamado Salvador del Mundo, que se reúne todos los meses para orar y apoyar los proyectos de la parroquia.

“Queremos servir mejor a nuestra parroquia”, aseguró Cruz, techador de profesión que también ayuda a mantener los edificios de la parroquia libres de goteras. “Queremos aprender sobre nuestra fe católica y ser mejores servidores”.

Ginelle Dysha Ferrol, miembro de la parroquia de Christ the King en Perrine, se graduó del curso en línea en inglés de 2021. “Fue muy conveniente”, afirmó, ya que las clases no se impartían en un horario específico. El instructor que impartía la clase publicaba las tareas que los participantes tenían que completar durante una semana. Después, el grupo se reunía con el instructor en línea para continuar con la lectura y la discusión.

Ferrol, que ya participaba en el coro de su parroquia, expresó que gracias a las clases “crecí en mi fe, y con lo que aprendí también tendré la oportunidad de contribuir donde se necesite”.

“Esto es realmente algo que me ayudará en lo personal para el trabajo que hago”, dijo Susana Yllanes, coordinadora de educación religiosa en la parroquia de Epiphany, en el sur de Miami, y graduada de la clase presencial en español de 2021 en St. Brendan.

“Sin duda, nunca dejamos de aprender”, añadió Yllanes. “Es un viaje en el que estamos hasta el final de nuestra vida”.

En 1977, la Arquidiócesis de Miami fue la primera en la nación en establecer una Oficina de Ministerio Laico. Su objetivo era preparar y comisionar a los laicos para



Fotos: Ana Rodríguez-Soto/FC

Arriba: Miembros de la clase de Ministerios Laicos en español de 2021 que se reunieron en la parroquia St. Brendan posan para una foto después de la Misa de graduación.

Derecha: Fior Ramírez, asistente durante largo tiempo de la Oficina de Formación Laica, habla después de recibir un reconocimiento de Kim Pryzbylski, superintendente arquidiocesana de escuelas.



que respondieran a su llamado bautismal a servir en sus iglesias y comunidades.

La Escuela de Ministerio Laico, rebautizada hace un par de años como Escuela de Formación Laical, cuenta ahora con casi 5,000 graduados, algunos de los cuales han pasado a obtener maestrías en el ministerio pastoral o en

estudios religiosos en las universidades católicas de Miami, Barry y St. Thomas. Muchos de esos graduados han regresado para ofrecer sus servicios como profesores e instructores del programa, lo que ayuda a mantener la matrícula al alcance de la mayoría de los católicos de la Arquidiócesis.

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En ruta hacia

El Arzobispo Wenski se une a los Knights on Bikes en un viaje de concienciación y recaudación de fondos desde Weston a Kissimmee

Tom Tracy

Corresponsal del Florida Catholic

WESTON | Más de 20 miembros de los Knights on Bikes —motociclistas de las diócesis de Miami, Venice, Orlando, St. Augustine y St. Petersburg— se reunieron a finales de mayo en Weston para su primer Recorrido por las Vocaciones (Ride for Vocations).

La carretera U.S. 27 de La Florida, que comienza en Miami y continúa hacia el norte hasta el Medio Oeste, ofreció una ruta campestre para el evento de recaudación de fondos organizado por los Caballeros de Colón y dirigido por el Arzobispo Thomas Wenski con el propósito de crear conciencia sobre las vocaciones.

El día comenzó con una Misa y un evento en la parroquia de St. Katharine Drexel, en el extremo occidental del condado de Broward, y concluyó en Kissimmee, al sur de Orlando, a tiempo para el inicio de la convención anual del Consejo Estatal de los Caballeros de Colón de La Florida, donde el Arzobispo Wenski presidió la Misa de apertura en la mañana del 28 de mayo de 2021.

El recorrido recaudó dinero para el fondo vocacional Mary Beth O'Connor Holy Angels Memorial Fund, que fue establecido por el diputado estatal de los Caballeros, Scott O'Connor, en honor a su esposa, quien murió en enero de 2020.

Tras salir de St. Katharine Drexel, los motociclistas se detuvieron primero para almuerzo y refrigerio en el concesionario de Alligator Alley Harley-Davidson, cerca de Weston.

“Creemos que la causa de las vocaciones es la mejor que existe para el futuro de la Iglesia y para los jóvenes, para asegurarnos de que tendremos los sacerdotes suficientes que necesitamos”, comentó George Gutiérrez, residente de Miramar y director arquidiocesano de los Knights on Bikes de Miami. “Todo lo que se recauda del recorrido se destina a los esfuerzos vocacionales de los Caballeros de Colón. Se trata de servir”.

Algunos de los Knights on Bikes habían viajado recientemente a una concentración nacional de los Caballeros de Colón en Nueva Orleans, con la participación de 250 motocicletas en total y un motociclista que recorrió unos 3,000 kilómetros para asistir, según Gutiérrez.

“Durante el año de la pandemia efectuamos 33 eventos, desde ayudar a servir comida, repartir alimentos, ayudar en las parroquias y dirigir el tráfico”, añadió Gutiérrez. “Es una bendición que tengamos un Arzobispo que viaja con nosotros, y es un verdadero motociclista; cuando participa, se convierte en uno de nosotros, un verdadero hermano”.

Para poder vestir el chaleco, los parches y los “colores” de los Knights on Bikes, los motociclistas deben ser miembros de los Caballeros de Colón. Según Gutiérrez, el programa ha sido una herramienta de evangelización entre los motociclistas que han necesitado un poco de motivación en su fe católica.

“Estamos llegando al que más lo necesita, porque entre los motociclistas hay personas que no han vivido su fe o que tal vez se han olvidado de la Iglesia. Al vernos, llegamos a ellos y los traemos de vuelta”, indicó. “La gente puede ver cómo nos divertimos los católicos”.

Ed Sleyzak, director de comunicaciones del Consejo Estatal de los Caballeros de Colón de La Florida y miembro de la parroquia de Mary Help of Christians, en Tampa, dijo que el evento del 27 de mayo estaba originalmente previsto para el año pasado, pero se tuvo que posponer debido a la pandemia.

“Casi todos los concilios apadrinamos un seminarista y, por supuesto, apoyamos a los sacerdotes”, afirmó Sleyzak, que participó en el vehículo de seguimiento.

Antes de montar en su propia Harley-Davidson Street Glide negra, el Arzobispo Wenski sugirió a los motociclistas en su homilía que adoptaran el ejemplo de fe de Bartimeo, el mendigo ciego curado por Jesús en los Evangelios.

“¿Oramos para ver, como Bartimeo, para ver con fe a lo que Dios nos llama? ¿O rezamos sólo para que nos toque la lotería?” preguntó el Arzobispo Wenski. “Mucha gente busca resultados tangibles por haber puesto su fe en Jesús. Lo vemos a menudo en la actitud de los seguidores del ‘evangelio de la prosperidad’ que predicán algunos evangelistas de la televisión”.

Construir la fe en Jesús sobre la promesa de prosperidad es construir sobre arena, advirtió el arzobispo, porque la fe en Jesús debe ser una fe en Jesús crucificado: no se puede eliminar la cruz de su mensaje, añadió.

“Bartimeo es para nosotros un modelo de verdadero discipulado porque no se deja amedrentar por quienes le mandan a callar. Mantuvo la puerta abierta a la fe, incluso cuando otros se la querían cerrar”, dijo el arzobispo.

“Durante el año de la pandemia efectuamos

33 eventos, desde

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dirigir el tráfico”.



las vocaciones



Fotos: Tom Tracy/FC



Izquierda, arriba y abajo: Acompañado por el P. Matthew Gómez, director arquidiocesano de vocaciones, el 27 de mayo el Arzobispo Thomas Wenski celebra la Misa con que da inicio al primer “Recorrido por las Vocaciones”, afiliado a los Caballeros de Colón, organizado por los Knights on Bikes, organización de La Florida. El recorrido, liderado por el Arzobispo Wenski, cubrió la ruta entre St. Katharine Drexel en Weston, hasta el Salón del Consejo de los Caballeros de Colón en Kissimmee, al sur de Orlando. Debajo, una vista de los Knights on Bikes participantes, orando en la parroquia St. Katharine Drexel, justo antes del comienzo del recorrido. Todas las donaciones beneficiaron a los seminaristas de La Florida.

Arriba: Las motocicletas ya están listas en la línea de partida.

Derecha: El Arzobispo Thomas Wenski no olvida ni un detalle en el chequeo de su motocicleta, justo antes de iniciar el recorrido.



“Hago algo especial”

Marlene Quaroni

Corresponsal del Florida Catholic

MIAMI | Melanie Morejón, de 18 años, siempre ha sido una monaguilla muy dedicada.

“Me ha encantado servir a la comunidad de mi iglesia. Siento que hago algo especial”.

Morejón dijo que no se ha perdido una Misa dominical en su iglesia de Immaculate Conception, en Hialeah, incluso durante el COVID-19. “Tengo muchas responsabilidades por ser una servidora mayor”, dijo.

El P. Rolando Cabrera, párroco de Immaculate Conception, reconoció la dedicación de Morejón y la nominó para un premio del Serra Club de Miami como monaguilla en 2021. Ella fue una de los 46 monaguillos de 19 parroquias arquidiocesanas que recibieron un premio en la Misa, que se celebró el 15 de mayo de 2021 en el Seminario de St. John Vianney, en Miami.

“Algunos monaguillos dicen que la Misa es repetitiva, pero yo siento que cada Misa es diferente”, afirmó Morejón. “No tomo a la ligera servir en la misa. Hay que ser muy organizados. Preparo el cáliz con las hostias sagradas. Abro las páginas para que los lectores lean, y abro la página del Evangelio para el sacerdote”.

Morejón dijo que a veces, cuando se siente deprimida, le pide un abrazo a la Virgen María y siente su presencia. Debido a los problemas familiares, dijo que le gustaría ser una oradora motivacional católica y ofrecer su testimonio sobre el poder de Dios y la oración. Es miembro de Soldados de la Misericordia, un ministerio juvenil de la iglesia de Santa Bárbara, en Hialeah. Tiene planes de ir a la Universidad de Barry para estudiar Administración de



Marlene Quaroni/FC

El P. Matthew Gómez y los 46 monaguillos que recibieron los reconocimientos Serra Club por su dedicación, posan para una foto en la capilla St. Raphael del Seminario St. John Vianney. El P. Gómez, capellán de Serra Club y director arquidiocesano de Vocaciones, celebró la Misa el 15 de mayo de 2021.

Empresas y Relaciones Públicas, con un enfoque en la publicidad.

Peter T. Jude, presidente del Serra Club de Miami, agradeció a los monaguillos su participación en las Misas de sus parroquias.

“Dios nos llama de muchas maneras”, observó. “Debemos estar abiertos al llamado de Dios y, sobre todo, ser buenos católicos”.

El Serra Club USA fue creado en 1935 en Seattle, Washington, para promover y fomentar las vocaciones al sacerdocio y a la vida religiosa consagrada. Los fundadores eligieron como patrón a Junípero Serra, un gran misionero. La misión del Serra Club era apoyar a los sacerdotes y religiosos consagrados y reunir a laicos católicos informados que entendieran y vivieran su propia vocación cristiana de servicio.

El Arzobispo Coleman Carroll ayudó a traer el Serra Club a Miami al mismo tiempo que estableció el seminario de St. John Vianney en 1959. Los miembros del Serra Club local apoyan a los seminaristas

de Miami y asisten a reuniones centradas en temas de importancia para los católicos y las vocaciones. Cada año, piden a los párrocos de las iglesias que nombren a monaguillos dedicados para que reciban un certificado especial de reconocimiento.

“Estos monaguillos han ido más allá en el servicio a su parroquia”, afirmó Jude. “Tal vez algunos opten por las vocaciones al sacerdocio o a la vida consagrada, o elijan la vida matrimonial y la paternidad”.

Dijo que el año pasado, el Serra Club envió los certificados por correo debido al COVID. “Este año, pudimos tener la Misa y los premios en persona”.

Servir en el altar es un ritual para algunas familias. Los cuatro hijos de la familia Cacchione —Maximiliano, de 7 años; Gabriel, de 11; Sebastián, de 13; y Santiago, de 14, todos ellos premiados— son monaguillos de la iglesia de St. Augustine, en Coral Gables. Sirven todos los días excepto los sábados. Comienzan el día asistiendo a la Misa con sus padres y son educados en el hogar. Uno de ellos

considera la posibilidad de una vocación.

“Me gustaría ser sacerdote”, informó Gabriel. “Servir en el altar es un buen aprendizaje. Siempre he querido ser sacerdote o santo”.

En la recepción que siguió a la Misa compartieron una mesa con la familia Vargas. Las dos familias asisten a la iglesia de St. Robert Bellarmine una vez al mes para participar en la forma extraordinaria de la Misa, celebrada en latín. Allí, un profesor instruye a los jóvenes para que sirvan en esa tradición.

El P. Matthew Gómez, capellán del Serra Club y director arquidiocesano de Vocaciones, expresó su agradecimiento a los monaguillos.

“Este año ha sido interesante”, comentó. “Han hecho una labor estelar. Alabado sea Dios porque ustedes sirven en el altar. Es una oportunidad de estar tan cerca de Jesús. ¿Por qué sacrificarían dormir un domingo en la mañana? Porque Dios los ama y ustedes responden a su amor. Que su ministerio jubiloso sirva de inspiración para otros”.

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Fallece Ondina Menocal, la “Guerrera de Dios”

Ana Rodríguez-Soto
Florida Catholic / LVC

MIAMI | Al enterarse del fallecimiento de Ondina Menocal, los que la conocieron no dudan en decir: Ha muerto una gran mujer, una “guerrera de Dios”.

El sentimiento se verbalizó tanto en Miami como en Cuba, ya que Menocal era tan apasionadamente cubana como católica. De hecho, dedicó los últimos años de su vida a ser puente entre la Iglesia en la Isla y la Iglesia en la diáspora.

A pocas horas de su fallecimiento, la Diócesis de Santa Clara lo anunció en su página de Facebook, describiéndola así: “Catequista, comunicadora, cercana a la Iglesia cubana y a nuestros obispos... Llevó a la radio su amor a nuestra tierra, a la Iglesia y a la Virgen de la Caridad”.

La referencia era a dos programas que Menocal condujo por muchos años en la emisora arquidiocesana, Radio Paz 830 AM/96.1 FM: “Raíces cubanas” y “El cubano y su fe”. Este último lo hacía con el ya fallecido P. Francisco Santana.

Nacida en La Habana, Cuba, el 5 de octubre de 1938, Menocal falleció en su casa el 15 de mayo de 2021. Padecía de cáncer y desde finales de abril estuvo bajo el cuidado de hospicio. Pero hasta el último momento trabajó por la Iglesia.

“Ondina era una persona dinámica, abierta a todas las culturas y deseosa siempre de servir”, dijo el P. Mario Vizcaíno, fundador y director por muchos años del SEPI (Instituto Pastoral del Sureste), donde Menocal trabajó varios años como profesora de la Escuela de Ministerios, visitando y capacitando a líderes hispanos en comunidades católicas por todo el sureste de los EE. UU.

Aún después de dejar el trabajo pagado, Menocal siempre estaba presente en las actividades del Instituto. “No reparaba en el cansancio, era incansable. Estaba siempre dispuesta a trabajar. Jesucristo y el evangelio eran su prioridad,” dijo el P. Vizcaíno.

Además del SEPI, Menocal coordinó por años, como voluntaria, el trabajo y las reuniones de los movimientos apostólicos hispanos de la Arquidiócesis de Miami. Participó en la mayoría de los Encuentros Nacionales de la pastoral hispana en los EE. UU., así como en los dos sínodos arquidiocesanos. También pertenecía a una de las comunidades de vida cristiana de los jesuitas, y nunca faltaba a las actividades de la Ermita de la Caridad, de la cual recibió en 2018 el *Jubileum Pin*, un honor dado por el 60 aniversario de la Arquidiócesis.

Menocal también trabajó incansablemente en CRECED (Comunidades de Reflexión Eclesiales de Cubanos en la Diáspora), el proyecto del fallecido Obispo Auxiliar de Miami, Agustín Román, que instó a los cubanos exiliados a reflexionar sobre su historia, su espiritualidad, y su relación con sus hermanos en la Isla.

“Recuerdo a Ondina Menocal como mujer apasionada por Cuba y por la pastoral hispana, viajando mientras pudo



Arriba, izquierda: Los héroes desconocidos de las parroquias del Sur de La Florida —dos de cada iglesia— fueron reconocidos en el 60 aniversario de la Arquidiócesis de Miami, durante un servicio de vísperas el 7 de octubre de 2018, en la Catedral St. Mary. Cerca de 900 personas asistieron al evento, presidido por el Arzobispo Thomas Wenski. Arriba, derecha: Ondina Menocal, que dedicó la mayor parte de su vida a la Iglesia, los niños y su Cuba natal, murió el 15 de mayo de 2021, a la edad de 82 años. Derecha: Ondina Menocal, cuando era coordinadora de los movimientos apostólicos hispanos de la Arquidiócesis, bromea con una imagen del Papa Francisco.

y participando en múltiples encuentros de la diócesis, a nivel nacional y también en Cuba”, dijo Araceli Cantero, periodista que por décadas narró la historia de la pastoral hispana en el Sur de La Florida en las páginas de *La Voz Católica*. “Aunque su voz era bien reconocida en las ondas de Radio Paz, ella fue mucho más que una voz. Ella vivió comprometida a estas dos realidades y siempre tendiendo puentes”, añadió Cantero.

Menocal participó en las reuniones entre los representantes de la Iglesia en Miami y la Iglesia en Cuba, un diálogo que surgió del proceso de CRECED. Durante la década de los 90, comenzó a viajar a Cuba para conocer por vía propia la situación de la Iglesia en la Isla y crear lazos de amistad y cooperación entre los laicos y sacerdotes dentro y fuera de Cuba.

“Uno de sus objetivos (de CRECED) era la unidad de las dos orillas. Y ese objetivo se logró. Fuimos un puente”, dijo Silvia Rodríguez, que compartió amistad, casa y negocio con Menocal durante casi 45 años.

Aunque las dos eran frutos de la Acción Católica cubana, se conocieron en el exilio, precisamente en New Jersey, en la década de los 70. Menocal había llegado allá después de vivir unos años en Atlanta. Su mamá asistía a unas clases de Biblia que daba Rodríguez, entonces directora de catequesis en la parroquia St. Joseph of The Palisades en West New York, New Jersey.

“Un día se me apareció en la clase”, recordó Rodríguez, y se quedó a escuchar. Poco después le dijo: “Tu sabes, yo tengo las manos vacías”. Lo cual significaba:

“Yo gano mucho dinero y todo, pero ese trabajo a mí no me dice nada”.

Menocal, que había estudiado administración de empresas, trabajaba para Blue Cross Blue Shield de Nueva York. “Era un puesto de categoría y económicamente alto”, dijo Rodríguez, quien puso a Menocal a dar catequesis. “Se volvió loca de alegría. Se sintió realizada. Siempre tenía un party en su clase”.

Cuando Menocal se enteró que Rodríguez planeaba mudarse a Miami, decidió venir con ella, anotando que su única familia vivía aquí: su tía, Yolanda Ochoa, que fue como su hermana, ya que solo se llevan cinco años y se criaron juntas. Al llegar a Miami en 1979, compraron casa y obtuvieron licencia para convertirla en una guardería infantil, donde cuidaban a 29 niños de preescolar. Le dieron por nombre Emaús, porque “fue ahí donde Jesús se lució como maestro”.

“Ella, loca de contenta porque a ella, como a mí, le fascinan los niños”, dijo Rodríguez. Añadió que Menocal le decía, “Si los padres se enteran, no nos pagarán. Les tuviéramos que pagar nosotros”.

María del Carmen “Nini” Fernández creció con Menocal en La Habana, las dos alumnas del Colegio Teresiano — otra de sus pasiones. “Ondina y yo somos compañeras y amigas desde prekindergarten”, dijo Fernández. “Seguimos juntas, compartiendo de todo hasta que nos graduamos. Aunque entonces cada una cogió su camino, no dejamos de comunicarnos”.

Se volvieron a encontrar en Miami en 1983. “Yo estaba buscando trabajo mientras estudiaba para poder sacar la licencia de psicóloga”, dijo Fernández. “Ondina tenía el pre-school y siempre le agradece-



Ana Rodríguez-Soto/FC/LVC

ré que tuvo a mi hija Susana, de tres años, gratis, por varios meses, hasta que conseguí trabajo. Fue un gesto que me ayudó mucho en aquellos tiempos difíciles”.

“Recibieron no solo cuidado, sino cuidado pastoral y primeros pasos en la fe”, dijo Juan José Rodríguez, coordinador de pastoral juvenil en el SEPI, refiriéndose a la guardería Emaús. Añadió que “las personas la recuerdan por cómo los ayudó en su fe y su discernimiento cristiano”.

Uno de esos estudiantes, que entró en la guardería a los tres años, se acaba de ordenar sacerdote: el P. Nicholas Toledo fue a visitar a su antigua maestra poco antes de su muerte. “Le puso los óleos y rezó precioso al lado de Ondina”, dijo Silvia Rodríguez.

También fue a verla el Arzobispo Thomas Wenski, quien celebró su Misa fúnebre el jueves 20 de mayo en su parroquia, Our Lady of Divine Providence, en Miami.

“Se puede decir, sin exagerar, que Ondina encontró la perla y lo dejó todo porque había encontrado un gran tesoro”, dijo Rodríguez. “Encontró la felicidad, un proyecto de vida, un llamado”.

Aparte de Rodríguez, la sobreviven Ochoa y sus seis hijos y 10 nietos.

Fotos derecha e izquierda: Tom Tracy/FC

El catequista del siglo XXI: Un ministerio estable en la Iglesia

José Antonio Varela Vidal
Especial para La Voz Católica

Con una referencia a la antigüedad del ministerio del catequista en la Iglesia, que se remonta a los escritos de San Pablo a los Corintios, el Papa Francisco ha querido enseñar y determinar mediante el *motu proprio Antiquum ministerium*, publicado en mayo último, que aquellos que tienen las tareas de animar a las comunidades y formarlas para los sacramentos y su compromiso progresivo en la comunidad cristiana, deben ser confirmados en dicho carisma como tales.

Junto a la mencionada referencia, que se encuentra en 1 Co. 12,28-31, el Santo Padre destaca también lo dicho por San Lucas a su discípulo Teófilo al empezar su evangelio. En dicho pasaje (Lc. 1, 3-4), el Papa encuentra que el evangelista es muy consciente de que con sus escritos está “proporcionando una forma específica de enseñanza, que permite dar solidez y fuerza a cuantos ya han recibido el Bautismo”. Y lo reitera al citar nuevamente a Pablo, que en la Carta a los Gálatas vuelve a referirse al tema de modo más directo: “El que recibe instrucción en la Palabra, comparta todos los bienes con su catequista” (6,6). El texto, constatada Francisco, “añade una peculiaridad fundamental: la comunión de vida como una característica de la fecundidad de la verdadera catequesis recibida”.

Un antiguo servicio

Es por eso que, antes de dar instrucciones sobre la elevación del catequista al rango de ministro (no ordenado), quiere evitar que se crea que esta concesión es un derecho o una compensación. Por el contrario, hace hincapié en que, esta forma de ministerialidad se ha concretado

“en el servicio de hombres y mujeres que, obedientes a la acción del Espíritu Santo, han dedicado su vida a la edificación de la Iglesia”.

Ante tal realidad, cita también el escrito del “Apóstol de los Gentiles” a los corintios, en el que les recuerda que “existen diversos carismas, pero el Espíritu es el mismo. Existen diversos servicios, pero el Señor es el mismo”. La cita, que puede encontrarse completa en 1 Co. 12,4-11, se refuerza con la enseñanza paulina, que aún hoy mantiene a la Iglesia en movimiento creativo: “A cada uno, Dios le concede la manifestación del Espíritu en beneficio de todos (...) Esto lo realiza el mismo y único Espíritu, quien distribuye a cada uno sus dones como él quiere”.

El documento afirma, por ello: “Dentro de la gran tradición carismática del Nuevo Testamento, es posible reconocer la presencia activa de bautizados que ejercieron el ministerio de transmitir (...) la enseñanza de los apóstoles y los evangelistas”.

Frente a dicha certeza, se comprende el por qué la Iglesia “ha querido reconocer este servicio como una expresión concreta del carisma personal, que ha favorecido grandemente el ejercicio de su misión evangelizadora”. Esto es algo que, dos milenios después, confirma que el trabajo de los catequistas ha sido eficaz, lo que ha logrado que la enseñanza catequética y la fe por esta recibida, “fuese un apoyo válido para la existencia personal de cada ser humano”.

Un ministerio laical

En esto, el amplio trabajo de laicos y laicas que han participado directamente en la difusión del Evangelio a través de la enseñanza catequística —incluso con la entrega cruenta de sus vidas—, “desem-

peñan una misión insustituible en la transmisión y profundización de la fe”, cuyas historias constituyen “una fuente fecunda no solo para la catequesis, sino para toda la historia de la espiritualidad cristiana”.

Sumado a la mención del Concilio Ecuménico Vaticano II, que percibió la importancia del compromiso del laicado en la obra de la evangelización, el Papa se refiere al constante interés de los Sumos Pontífices, del Sínodo de los Obispos y de las conferencias episcopales, para conseguir una “notable renovación de la catequesis”. También resalta “el valor central de la obra catequística”, que está contenida en el Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica, en la exhortación apostólica *Catechesi Tradendae*, en el Directorio Catequístico General, así como tantos catecismos nacionales, regionales y diocesanos, cuya selección “pone en primer plano la instrucción y la formación permanente de los creyentes”.

Francisco ha querido reconocer que, juntos a los pastores de la Iglesia, hay una fuerte presencia de laicos y laicas que, “en virtud del propio bautismo, se sienten llamados a colaborar en el servicio de la catequesis”, siendo este compromiso en nuestros días “aún más urgente debido a la renovada conciencia de la evangelización en el mundo contemporáneo y a la imposición de una cultura globalizada”.

Por ello invita a “despertar el entusiasmo personal de cada bautizado y reavivar la conciencia de estar llamado a realizar la propia misión en la comunidad”, escuchando la voz del Espíritu Santo, “que llama también hoy a hombres y mujeres para que salgan al encuentro de todos los que esperan conocer la belleza, la bondad y la verdad de la fe cristiana”.

Incorporados a la misión

Ante esta dinámica de recambio y de permanencia también de los catequistas en la comunidad cristiana, invita a los pastores a otorgar un “reconocimiento de ministerios laicales capaces de contribuir a la transformación de la sociedad mediante «la penetración de los valores cristianos en el mundo social, político y económico»” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 102).

Haciéndose eco del Vaticano II, que en la *Lumen Gentium* 33, declaró que los laicos también “pueden ser llamados

de diversos modos a una colaboración más inmediata con el apostolado de la Jerarquía”, el Sumo Pontífice destaca que el catequista “es al mismo tiempo testigo de la fe, maestro y mistagogo, acompañante y pedagogo que enseña en nombre de la Iglesia”.

Esta identidad fue perfilada por el Papa San Pablo VI, en la exhortación apostólica *Evangelii Nuntiandi* cuando la reconoció como un ministerio “precioso para la implantación, la vida y el crecimiento de la Iglesia”.

El Papa Francisco deduce así “que recibir un ministerio laical como el de catequista da mayor énfasis al compromiso misionero propio de cada bautizado (...) (como) un servicio estable que se presta a la Iglesia local según las necesidades pastorales identificadas por el Ordinario del lugar, pero realizado de manera laical como lo exige la naturaleza misma del ministerio”.

Por ello, prosigue el documento, es conveniente que al ministerio instituido de catequista “sean llamados hombres y mujeres de profunda fe y madurez humana, que participen activamente en la vida de la comunidad cristiana, que puedan ser acogedores, generosos y vivan en comunión fraterna”. Unido a esto, pide “que reciban la debida formación bíblica, teológica, pastoral y pedagógica para ser comunicadores atentos de la verdad de la fe, y que hayan adquirido ya una experiencia previa de catequesis (...) dispuestos a ejercer el ministerio donde sea necesario, y animados por un verdadero entusiasmo apostólico”.

Al haber instituido el ministerio laical de catequista, con vigencia firme y estable, el Santo Padre ha encargado a la Congregación para el Culto Divino y la Disciplina de los Sacramentos, que publique en breve el respectivo “Rito de Institución” del nuevo ministerio.

Finaliza el documento con una invitación de Francisco para que las conferencias episcopales, los sínodos y las asambleas de las Iglesias Orientales “hagan efectivo” el ministerio de catequista, y le brinden la formación necesaria.

A esto debe sumarse “una explicación clara, acerca de los criterios normativos para acceder a él”. Esto evitará que el catequista se eche para atrás, en medio del largo camino...



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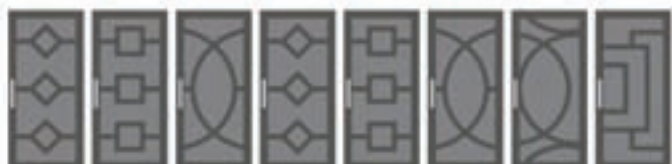
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REFLEXIONES CATÓLICAS SOBRE LA BIBLIA

XIII Domingo Ordinario, 27 de junio de 2021

Evangelio según San Marcos (5, 21-43). En aquel tiempo, cuando Jesús regresó en la barca al otro lado del lago, se quedó en la orilla y ahí se le reunió mucha gente. Entonces se acercó uno de los jefes de la sinagoga, llamado Jairo. Al ver a Jesús, se echó a sus pies y le suplicaba con insistencia: *Mi hija está agonizando. Ven a imponerle las manos para que se cure y viva. Jesús se fue con él y mucha gente lo seguía y lo apretujaba. Entre la gente había una mujer que padecía flujo de sangre desde hacía doce años. Había sufrido mucho a manos de los médicos y se había gastado en eso toda su fortuna, pero en vez de mejorar había empeorado. Oyó hablar de Jesús, vino y se le acercó por detrás entre la gente y le tocó el manto pensando que, con sólo tocarle el vestido, se curaría. Inmediatamente se le secó la fuente de su hemorragia y sintió en su cuerpo que estaba curada. Jesús notó al instante que una fuerza curativa había salido de él, se volvió hacia la gente y les preguntó: ¿Quién ha tocado mi manto? Sus*



discípulos le contestaron: *Estás viendo cómo te apretuja la gente y todavía preguntas: ¿Quién me ha tocado? Pero él seguía mirando alrededor, para descubrir quién había sido. Entonces se acercó la mujer, asustada y temblorosa, al comprender lo que había pasado; se postró a sus pies y le confesó la verdad. Jesús la tranquilizó, diciendo: Hija, tu fe te ha curado. Vete en paz y queda sana de tu enfermedad. Todavía estaba hablando Jesús, cuando unos criados llegaron de casa del jefe de la sinagoga para decirle a éste: Ya se murió tu hija. ¿Para qué sigues molestando al maestro? Jesús alcanzó a oír lo que hablaban y le dijo al jefe de la sinagoga: No temas, basta que tengas fe. No permitió que lo acompañaran más que Pedro, Santiago y Juan, el hermano de Santiago. Al llegar a*

la casa del jefe de la sinagoga vio Jesús el alboroto de la gente y oyó los llantos y alaridos que daban. Entró y les dijo: ¿Qué significa tanto llanto y alboroto? La niña no está muerta, está dormida. Y se reían de él. Entonces Jesús echó fuera a la gente, y con los padres de la niña y sus acompañantes entró a donde estaba la niña, la tomó de la mano y le dijo: ¡Talitá kum!, lo que significa: "¡Oyeme, niña, levántate!" La niña, que tenía doce años, se levantó inmediatamente y se puso a caminar. Todos quedaron asombrados. Jesús les ordenó severamente que no lo dijeran a nadie y les mandó que le dieran de comer a la niña.

Reflexión:

Marcos ha combinado dos historias, una la de una mujer impura, con flujos de sangre y por tanto excluida de la comunidad, y el otro el de una jovencita, que es vuelta a la vida, cuando parece que toda esperanza se ha perdido. Por su fe, Jairo y una mujer anónima alcanzan la misericordia de Jesús. En aquellos tiempos la muerte de una niña de 12 años era algo normal. En el siglo I casi más

de la mitad de los nacidos vivos fallecía hacia los diez años de vida.

Para pensar:

La acción de la mujer enferma está llena de fe y de valentía. Para una mujer, tocar a un hombre en público era una grave ofensa y una violación de reglas y costumbres. Temerosa y temblando, ella confiesa haber tocado la punta del manto, pero no recibe ni rechazos ni reprimendas, sino una alabanza a su fe y junto con ella la curación de su mal.

Para profundizar:

El nexa común de las dos historias es la fe. Por la fe, Jesús devuelve la salud a una mujer que ha gastado todos sus recursos buscando una sanación que ahora encuentra gratis en Jesús. Lo mismo que a la hija de Jairo, el Señor la devuelve a la familia y la vida de la comunidad.

XIV Domingo Ordinario, 4 de julio de 2021

Evangelio según San Marcos (6, 1-6). En aquel tiempo, Jesús fue a su tierra en compañía de sus discípulos. Cuando llegó el sábado, se puso a enseñar en la sinagoga, y la multitud que lo escuchaba se preguntaba con asombro: *¿Dónde aprendió este hombre tantas cosas? ¿De dónde le viene esa sabiduría y ese poder de hacer milagros? ¿Qué, no es éste el carpintero, el hijo de María, el hermano de Santiago, José, Judas y Simón? ¿No viven aquí, entre nosotros, sus hermanas? Y estaban desconcertados. Pero Jesús les dijo: Todos honran a un profeta, menos*

los de su tierra, sus parientes y los de su casa Y no pudo hacer allí ningún milagro, sólo curó a algunos enfermos imponiéndoles las manos. Y estaba extrañado de la incredulidad de aquella gente. Luego se fue a enseñar a los pueblos vecinos.

Reflexión:

Ahora el marco geográfico es la tierra natal de Jesús, donde la gente conoce muy bien sus orígenes y sus lazos familiares. Admirados por sus palabras, no entienden cómo su origen, hijo de un artesano manual, le permite hablar con tanta y tan

sorprendente sabiduría.

Para pensar:

La historia nos muestra el enorme fracaso de Jesús ante su propia gente y sus parientes cercanos. El texto parece anticipar el destino del enviado del Dios de Israel, que sufrió el escarnio y el rechazo de su pueblo hasta morir como un



criminal y un blasfemo.
Para profundizar:

En Nazaret se pone a prueba la capacidad de Jesús para obrar milagros; él esperaba de los suyos fidelidad y lealtad, pero no logra despertar en ellos la fe; una fe que implica la adhesión a su persona, a su Palabra y a su proyecto de vida.

XV Domingo del Tiempo Ordinario, 11 de julio de 2021

Evangelio según San Marcos (6, 7-13). En aquel tiempo, llamó Jesús a los Doce, y los envió de dos en dos y les dio poder sobre los espíritus inmundos. Les mandó que no llevaran nada para el camino: *ni pan, ni mochila, ni dinero en el cinto, sino únicamente un bastón, sandalias y una sola túnica. Y les dijo: Cuando entren en una casa, quédense en ella hasta que se vayan de ese lugar. Si en alguna parte no los reciben ni los escuchan, al abandonar ese lugar, desmenucen el polvo de los pies, como una advertencia*



Al cuidado de Rogelio Zelada

para ellos. Los discípulos se fueron a predicar el arrepentimiento. Expulsaban a los demonios, unguían con aceite a los enfermos y los curaban.

Reflexión:

Los doce reciben de Jesús la misma tarea con la que él dio inicio a la

proclamación del Reino, y de esta manera los hace ascender, dándoles poder sobre los espíritus malignos.

Para pensar:

Los apóstoles son advertidos sobre cómo deben preparar su viaje, y también sobre la forma en que deben aceptar la hospitalidad que recibían. Jesús los quiere ligeros de equipaje y sin más preocupación y ocupación que el anuncio del Evangelio. Se trata ante todo de misioneros itinerantes, ágiles y con una especial predilección por los pobres y los enfermos.

Para profundizar:

Era tradición en Israel que al regresar de un viaje por pueblos paganos se sacudieran el polvo de los pies, lo que indica un completo rechazo de las tradiciones y costumbres de los lugares por los que habían tenido que pasar

XVI Domingo del Tiempo Ordinario, 18 de julio de 2021

Evangelio según San Marcos (6:30-34). En aquel tiempo, los apóstoles volvieron a reunirse con Jesús y le contaron todo lo que habían hecho y enseñado. Él les dijo: *Vengan ustedes solos a un sitio tranquilo a descansar un poco. Porque eran tantos los que iban y venían que no encontraban tiempo ni para comer. Se fueron en barca a un sitio tranquilo y apartado. Muchos los vieron marcharse y los reconocieron; entonces de todas las aldeas fueron corriendo por tierra a aquel sitio y se les adelantaron. Al desembarcar, Jesús vio una multitud y le dio lástima de ellos, porque andaban como ovejas sin pastor; y se puso a enseñarles con calma.*



En el trabajo por el Reino de Dios no vale llenarnos de actividades y de prisas nerviosas. Es necesario encontrar

tiempo para orar y reflexionar, para cargar nuevas fuerzas y renovar las energías apostólicas.

Para pensar:

El auténtico liderazgo cristiano debe cargar sus fuerzas en el descubrimiento de las necesidades del pueblo de Dios,

que demasiadas veces permanece abandonado a su suerte y padece verdadera hambre de Dios y su justicia.

Para profundizar:

La misión del auténtico pastor está por encima de su comodidad o de sus deseos. Todos los que El envíe en su nombre deberán seguir su estilo, reproducir su manera de actuar.

Estimados lectores: Debido a la crisis del COVID-19, muchos eventos se realizan sólo en línea. Los que tienen lugar en persona están sujetos a las directrices de los CDC, que incluyen restricciones de capacidad, requisitos de distanciamiento social y uso de máscaras. Para más información, comuníquense directamente con los coordinadores de las actividades.

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Clases bíblicas virtuales, viernes, 7-9 p.m. iglesia de Our Lady of the Holy Rosary-St. Richard, Palmetto Bay. 305-233-8711, 305-799-1626.

Grupo bíblico virtual, martes,

7 p.m., iglesia de Our Lady of the Lakes, Miami Lakes. ollgru-pobiblico@gmail.com.

ESCUELAS

Escuela superior de Archbishop Coleman Carroll, 10300 S.W. 167 Avenue, Miami. Para coordinar una visita: 305-388-6700 ext. 1292, admissions@colemancarroll.org.

SEPI, el Instituto Pastoral del Sureste, ofrece cursos en línea con o sin crédito para quienes deseen una formación cristiana en su ministerio pastoral, eclesial o personal. También ofrece maestría en Ministerio Pastoral Hispano. www.sepi.us, 305-279-2333.

ESPIRITUALIDAD

Agrupación Católica Universitaria (ACU) estableció una comisión para la canonización del Padre Amando Llorente, S.J., director de esta organización en Cuba y en el exilio hasta su fallecimiento. Solicita a los Agrupados información, fotos, testimonios de su época en la ACU. <http://bit.ly/ACU-CC-TFS>, <http://bit.ly/ACU-PASJ>.

Misterios Gozosos del Rosario, sábados, 9 a.m., Ermita de la Caridad, se rezan por teléfono debido a las restricciones por COVID-19 hasta nuevo aviso. Número a llamar: 408-418-9388, código de acceso: 629 724 874.

Ministerio de Sanación de la Iglesia de Holy Rosary-St. Richard, en Palmetto Bay, se reúne todos los jueves a las 6:45 p.m. por Zoom para rezar por las intenciones de sus feligreses y de cualquier persona necesitada que necesite oración. Para acceso: evelynvar@hotmail.com, sblanco@hrsrgcs.org.

Peregrinación a Lourdes 2021, para quienes buscan la sanación física, mental o espiritual, y los que quieren servir a los hermanos enfermos y sufrientes en el Santuario de Lourdes, Francia. www.hdmiami.org.

Adoremus, adoración del Santísimo Sacramento todas las noches a las 9 p.m. con música católica de la Arquidiócesis de Miami. <https://www.facebook.com/adoremusMIA>.

Escuela de Evangelización, iglesia católica de San Isidro, Pompano Beach. 954-695-9673 o 954-391-0165.

JÓVENES Y JÓVENES ADULTOS

Voceros de Cristo, grupo de jóvenes adultos de la iglesia de St. Agatha, Miami. Reuniones los miércoles a las 8 p.m. por Zoom. www.facebook.com/vdcmiami.

Apóstoles de Ágape, jóvenes adultos de la iglesia de St. John Neumann, Miami se reúnen los jueves a las 8 p.m. vía Zoom.

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Planificación familiar natural, Modelo Creighton, un método seguro desde el punto de vista médico, aceptable desde la moral y muy eficaz tanto para posponer como para lograr el embarazo. sdiaz@theadom.org

Transformed in Love, programa oficial arquidiocesano de preparación matrimonial. Debido a las restricciones por el COVID-19, las clases se ofrecen en línea como un seminario web interactivo en vivo con conferencias en tiempo real.

Las parejas deben participar ambos días al programa completo para recibir su certificado. 305-762-1127/1236, sdiaz@theadom.org.

El Arca de Noé, grupo de apoyo matrimonial de la parroquia de Mother of Our Redeemer, Miami, con cursos y talleres virtuales gratuitos que preparan a las parejas para enfrentar las dificultades en el hogar y en su matrimonio. <https://bit.ly/TuArcaDeNoe>, 954 261-0241, 954-812-6020.

Retrouvaille, programa que ofrece las herramientas necesarias para redescubrir una relación matrimonial amorosa y ayudar a reencontrar el propósito de su matrimonio. Miles de matrimonios en una relación con dificultades, incluyendo algunos a punto del divorcio, han logrado superar sus problemas al participar en el programa. www.helpourmarriage.org/es, Miami@retrouvaille.org.

RETIROS

Comunidad Siervos de Cristo Vivo ofrece talleres de enriquecimiento, sanación y transformación espiritual para damas y caballeros, además de la Escuela de Evangelización Pablo VI en respuesta al llamado de San Juan Pablo II a una Nueva Evangelización. <http://www.cscvmiami.org>, 305-338-5652, 305-599-1343.

Un día en la vida escolar “híbrida”

Viene de la página 6
reto. Es casi como si no nos hubiéramos saltado nada”.

Aprendizaje híbrido

A finales de septiembre de 2020, el Arzobispo Thomas Wenski y la Oficina arquidiocesana de Escuelas aprobaron el aprendizaje presencial, al tiempo que daban a los padres la opción de mantener a sus hijos en casa, aprendiendo virtualmente.

“Como alguien que se considera una maestra veterana, sentí que el nuevo año escolar sería diferente y desafiante. Sin embargo, ver el regreso de los estudiantes y devolver la normalidad y la coherencia a la vida de mis alumnos me dio mucha satisfacción”, dijo Cabrera.

Algunos estudiantes, como Kamila Pimentel, alumna de octavo grado de OLL, se sintieron aliviados de volver

“Realmente no me concentro en casa con todo el ruido y las distracciones”, dijo.

Pero no crean que los alumnos que asistían a clase en sus casas lo tenían fácil. En tiempo real, a través de Zoom, siguieron los horarios de clase, hicieron los exámenes con sus compañeros, en voz alta leyeron partes durante las obras de teatro, respondieron a problemas de matemáticas escritos en las pizarras inteligentes, y mucho más.

“Es muy envolvente porque hacen que tanto los presenciales como los virtuales participen activamente en la clase”, dijo Addison Lucas, alumna de octavo curso.

La opción virtual también permitió que los estudiantes que se ausentaron, debido a la exposición al COVID u otras razones, no perdieran la escuela por completo. También funcionó para los profesores que dictaban

clases desde casa cuando surgía la necesidad mientras un profesor sustituto estaba presente físicamente para supervisar el aula.

Un año extraordinario

¿Pero qué es un año escolar sin un poco de diversión? Todos los alumnos participaron en las actividades extraordinarias que hacen que un año académico sea memorable, independientemente de si asistían en persona o virtualmente.

A través de Zoom, realizaron excursiones y visitas virtuales, como al estudio de la NBC6 con la presentadora de noticias Roxy Vargas. El bombero Héctor González mostró a los estudiantes la Estación de Bomberos 23 del condado de Palm Beach y los llevó a dar un paseo virtual en un camión de bomberos.

Janelle Jay, coordinadora de misiones del grupo misionero

laico Amor en Acción, que normalmente visitaba la escuela en persona, fue invitada vía Zoom a hablar sobre los esfuerzos misioneros de la Arquidiócesis de Miami en Haití y la República Dominicana.

“Quedé gratamente sorprendida e impresionada con los estudiantes de la escuela primaria. Era un público atento. Hicieron buenas preguntas y mostraron gran interés y preocupación por su escuela hermana (en Haití)”, dijo Jay.

Los iPads montados en trípodes se utilizaron no sólo en el aula, sino también para captar las actividades exteriores en tiempo real. Se retransmitieron en directo procesiones Eucarísticas, Misas y otros actos, incluidos rosarios vivientes. Para el Viernes Santo, los alumnos de octavo grado, que participaron tanto en persona como virtualmente, realizaron

su tradicional Vía Crucis con un toque virtual.

“Hemos intentado hacer todo lo posible para que los niños no se pierdan nada”, dijo Cabrera.

El anuario de OLL recoge los momentos más destacados de este singular año pandémico. En algunas páginas se puede ver a los alumnos en las fotos tradicionales del colegio, sonriendo. En otras están todos enmascarados, pero son igualmente memorables.

Los estudiantes que asisten virtualmente no se quedaron fuera. Peña, que además de informática colabora con el anuario escolar, les pidió a los padres de los alumnos que aprenden virtualmente fotografías del año académico en casa junto con fotografías en sus pasatiempos favoritos, jugando con sus mascotas y en días festivos.

“Esto es un trabajo de corazón”, dijo Peña.

La espiritualidad de la alimentación



P. Eduardo Barrios, S.J.

La alimentación pertenece a los derechos humanos fundamentales. El derecho a comer prevalece sobre el derecho a la propiedad. En muchos países la legislación protege el llamado “hurto famélico”: el hambriento tiene derecho a hurtar para comer. Recuérdese que hurtar no implica violencia, como robar.

El reverso de la moneda corresponde al deber de comer. Quien se abstiene de ingerir alimento por largo tiempo transgrede el quinto mandamiento de la ley de Dios: “No matarás”. Quien se niegue rotundamente a comer, incurre en el pecado de suicidio. Hay huelgas de hambre prolongadas que despiertan simpatías por su motivación política o de otra índole, pero carecen de justificación moral.

Naturalmente, la mayoría de las personas procuran comer bien y lo hacen muy a gusto. El apetito estomacal y las papilas gustativas cooperan con el instinto de conservación. Quede claro que el placer de comer es en sí un don de Dios. De ahí la práctica de los creyentes de no comenzar a comer sin rezar una oración de bendición y acción de gracias. Lo que se debe evitar es ese vicio en torno al comer y beber que se conoce como gula. Se cae en la gula tanto por la cantidad como por la calidad de lo que se come y bebe. Hay que practicar celosa vigilancia sobre los deseos.

La gastronomía ha experimentado un impresionante desarrollo en los últimos tiempos. La calidad y el sabor de los alimentos han llegado a ese refinamiento y exquisitez que se designan con palabras como “gourmet” o “délicatesse”.

La espiritualidad alimentaria procura frenar la propensión al sibaritismo

desmedido. Quien dé riendas sueltas a su afición desordenada por las comidas opíparas y exquisitas debilita su vida espiritual.

Ayuda recordar que hay mucha hambre en el mundo. Si decidiéramos comer menos y aprovechar las sobras, quizás los alimentos se abaratarían y estarían más al alcance del bolsillo de los pobres.

En su manual para retiros, “Ejercicios Espirituales”, San Ignacio de Loyola trae unas orientaciones conocidas como Reglas para Ordenarse en el Comer. La séptima regla exhorta a “ser señor de sí mismo”, y no esclavo del apetito. Se ejerce ese señorío comiendo despacio y en cantidades moderadas.

La persona espiritual debe mantenerse alerta al mecanismo de la saciedad. Antes de que el hipotálamo le avise que ha comido lo suficiente, el comensal debe dejar de comer. Nunca coma hasta la saciedad máxima. Eso daña la salud espiritual, y por supuesto, la salud corporal. En los países desarrollados hay epidemia de obesidad por sobrealimentación. Se tenga en cuenta que no todo obeso come excesivamente; hay desórdenes hormonales o de metabolismo que contribuyen al sobrepeso.

A quien necesite comer más abundantemente debido a su complexión y a los trabajos fuertes que realiza, se le recomienda comer más de los alimentos corrientes y comer menos de los alimentos finos, los que San Ignacio llama “manjares”.

Enseña el santo que el control en el comer hasta el punto de practicar el ayuno fomenta la devoción o consolación espiritual. También aconseja que cuando uno coma no deje que el buen sabor de los alimentos le acapare o absorba toda la atención; se deben procurar pensamientos elevados y, si hay compañía, conversaciones sobre temas de provecho para no dejarse envolver completamente por el placer gustativo.

ebarriosj@gmail.com

Mi Iglesia Católica de Miami



Víctor Martell

Llevo con mi Iglesia 80 años, de los cuales algunas veces he sentido tristeza por errores cometidos por hombres como yo, que trabajamos para ella, y otras, las más de las veces, como hoy, me siento feliz de llamarme católico. Permítaseme

felicitar a dos personas que cuando hablo de mi Iglesia, tengo que hacerlo: la primera, mi abuela, que me llevó cargado, siendo un bebé, y otras, ya más joven, a empujones, a conocerla y allí amar a los pobres como mis amos, porque esta es la Iglesia de los pobres porque la fundó Jesús, el más pobre de todos los pobres. La otra persona es quien dirige la Iglesia, mi pastor en este caso, Mons. Thomas Wenski, actual Arzobispo de Miami. No, no crean que esto sea “guataquería” cubana. ¿Saben por qué lo hago? Por haber tenido el valor, mostrando responsabilidad y sobre todo transparencia —esa frase que, últimamente, como que se hace rara para mucha gente y sobre todo para los que dirigen— de presentar, para que todos puedan estudiarlo, el Informe Financiero del Año fiscal 2020.

Qué lástima que sea yo, un feligrés de mi Iglesia, quien tenga que felicitarlo: esto lo deben hacer las distintas instituciones no católicas, la prensa, la televisión, porque quizás sea él, uno de los pocos que lo han hecho; es que solamente tenemos ojos y comentarios para los errores,

y viramos la cara cuando estamos ante un hecho sin precedentes. El periodismo no existe solamente para traer noticias de errores, también existe para orientar y enseñar al pueblo quiénes son sus dirigentes.

También quiero dirigirme a ti, lector, como feligrés de las tantas iglesias que tenemos en esta Arquidiócesis, para que cuando pasen la canasta frente a ti no levantes los ojos al cielo y te pongas a rezar, para que crean que no viste la canasta, y para aquellos que parecen descendientes de Washington, porque de su cartera solo sale la foto de él. Por favor, acuérdate de Lincoln y deja tranquilo a Washington. Como has podido comprobar, lo poquito que tú le devuelves al Señor de todo lo que te da diariamente, está muy bien administrado y son muchos los niños, ancianos y pobres que se benefician con ello; de cada dólar que tú donas, solo 14 centavos van para la administración; el resto regresa a los necesitados.

Quiero hacer notar que los dos periódicos de la Arquidiócesis de Miami se han hecho eco de esta información, publicando el resumen de los estados financieros, además de las distintas funciones que se realizan con estos fondos. Es hora de que tú, comerciante católico o cristiano, te anuncies en estos periódicos, que prácticamente se producen con las uñas de sus dirigentes: debiéramos hacer una campaña para que los católicos usemos los productos y visitemos las tiendas de los católicos, para que nos ayudemos mutuamente. Y, como es natural, todos deben anunciarse en las páginas de estos periódicos, para que sean reconocidos.



Publique sus horarios en La Voz Católica

305-979-9603

maritzaalvarez@att.net

Fundamentalmente iguales



Mario J. Paredes

La situación de millones de hombres y mujeres, de ancianos, jóvenes y niños que, en el mundo de hoy, se ven obligados o son forzados a dejar sus lugares de origen, sus pueblos o naciones, por muchas y muy variadas causas (conflictos, violencia, corrupción administrativa, desempleo, desastres naturales, persecución política, etc.) para

migrar y refugiarse en otros lugares de la tierra, en busca de mejores condiciones de vida, es un signo de nuestros tiempos que clama al cielo y que se convierte en una vergüenza para la humanidad, porque — en la inmensa mayoría de los casos— los gobiernos de las naciones tanto de origen como de destino de las oleadas migratorias no han encontrado ni dado soluciones dignas, humanas y definitivas al grave problema humanitario que el fenómeno representa.

Diríamos que éste es, si no el mayor, uno de los mayores y peores dramas que la humanidad enfrenta hoy en muchos rincones del planeta. Estados Unidos no escapa a este fenómeno. Muy por el contrario, esta nación —durante toda su historia— es uno de los principales puntos de atracción para grandes oleadas migratorias.

El Papa Francisco, quien desde el primer día de su pontificado ha mostrado gran sensibilidad humana, enorme preocupación e interés por el tema y por la grave situación de los migrantes en el mundo, nos ha enseñado, con una enorme cantidad de mensajes e intervenciones al respecto, que para enfrentar y darle humana y adecuada solución al problema, hemos de solucionar, primero, nuestros miedos y prejuicios, nuestras intolerancias y muros interiores, para —entonces sí— abrírnos en compasión y amor a todos, para ser capaces de sentir empatía con nuestros semejantes, para ser capaces de tener respeto, justicia y misericordia con todos los seres humanos, con los fundamentalmente iguales en todo a nosotros, para ser capaces de no excluir y no discriminar a nadie y de poner de primeros a los últimos, de crear espacios de dignidad para los “descartados” y los que más sufren en nuestras sociedades, para ser capaces de construir el mundo como una gran mesa y la tierra como nuestra casa, la casa de todos.

Son ya más de tres décadas el tiempo que llevamos en esta nación propugnando una solución radical y definitiva al tema de la inmigración indocumentada, compuesta por millones de hombres y de mujeres que, por ese mismo tiempo y más décadas, arriban a este país, buscando mejores condiciones de vida para su presente, su futuro y el de los suyos, aquí y en sus lugares de origen, aportando con



Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Activistas y ciudadanos con estatus de protección temporal (TPS) se reúnen cerca de Capitol Hill pidiendo que el Congreso apruebe la Ley de Ambiente Seguro para países bajo represión y en emergencia (SECURE) el 14 de abril de 2021 en Washington, DC. La Ley SECURE permitiría a los beneficiarios calificados de TPS solicitar la residencia legal permanente.

su trabajo al desarrollo y progreso de esta gran nación.

Pero, a falta de regulación y documentación que les permita vivir y ejercer como ciudadanos, con todos sus derechos humanos y civiles amparados por la Ley y la Constitución, se ven forzados a vivir en la sombra, como en un submundo, en una subcultura en la que millones de hombres, mujeres y familias enteras de migrantes indocumentados viven sometidos a la incertidumbre, a abusos, persecuciones, discriminaciones, explotación laboral, marginación social, faltas de oportunidades y de libre acceso a los beneficios sociales, a toda clase de injusticias y violencias.

Estados Unidos ha sido — al mismo tiempo y por décadas, para el mundo— ejemplo de democracia, por el respeto a la ley y a los derechos humanos. El panorama antes descrito, sobre la situación en que viven millones de indocumentados en este país, a todas luces inhumana, desigual e injusta, es hipócrita, riñe y contradice los principios fundantes de esta nación y de la Constitución que nos rige. Por ello urge —sin más treguas ni dilaciones— una solución humana, digna, razonable, concertada, integral, definitiva y pronta. Continuar sin solucionar este tema político-social de tanta envergadura, significa postergar una situación insostenible por inhumana, aplazar condiciones de vida digna para millones y diferir la vergüenza nacional que tal situación

significa para esta nación y ante los ojos del mundo.

Todos los partidos y gobiernos que en las últimas décadas han dirigido la vida de esta nación han hablado del tema migratorio como un asunto prioritario en el plano electoral, económico, cultural, político y social. Pero la solución no ha llegado. No llega. Es verdad que se trata de un tema de enorme complejidad por las muchas aristas y dimensiones que contiene e implica: porque —de parte de los políticos— se convirtió en un tema popular y de oportunismo y conveniencia electorera que hay que mantener vigente.

Justicia para los inmigrantes.

De parte de los empleadores, no les convienen soluciones legales que les obligarían a pagar más y lo justo a sus empleados. De parte del pueblo norteamericano, son muchos los miedos y prejuicios (complejos de superioridad o de inferioridad, prejuicios raciales y culturales, temores laborales) que posibilitan rechazo y discriminación en vez de aceptación y acogida. De parte de los inmigrantes indocumentados, porque olvidan lo importante por solucionar lo urgente: por dar solución inmediata a sus necesidades económicas abandonan luchas más importantes para sus mejores condiciones de vida a largo plazo y convierten su estancia en el país en un aprovechamiento económico en vez de una integración con la nueva nación que los acoge. De parte de los gobernantes de las naciones-origen de la migración: una

solución definitiva en Estados Unidos para sus poblaciones migrantes que les solucionaría o al menos les aliviaría su negligencia y corrupción administrativa.

Pero, precisamente, esta complejidad del tema en cuestión desafía nuestra grandeza como nación para que, entre todos, mediante un dialogo franco, abierto y un consenso nacional, seamos capaces de encontrar una solución humana, digna e integral. Solución para todo y para todos. Solución para la totalidad de las dimensiones humanas de cada persona migrante indocumentada (vivienda, educación, empleo, integración política social y cultural a la sociedad norteamericana, etc.) de sus familias y de todos los migrantes provenientes de las más diversas naciones, presentes en este país.

La inmensa mayoría de los migrantes indocumentados en los que aquí pienso son mujeres y hombres nobles y buenos, trabajadores abnegados, merecedores de mejor vida, que pasaron la frontera o se quedaron a vivir en este país, desde hace muchos años, sin la documentación requerida; hombres y mujeres que pagan impuestos, pero no ven retribuidos sus esfuerzos y aportes al progreso de la nación con leyes y beneficios sociales. Con todo, prefieren soportar los nuevos abusos a los que los somete nuestro país antes que volver a las peores condiciones de vida que abandonaron. Y como en toda sociedad y comunidad humana hay también —cómo negarlo— una inmensa minoría entre ellos que a su situación de indocumentados suman la situación de ilegales por infracciones a las leyes o crímenes que cometen.

Urge pues, lo repito, atención real de toda la nación a este grave problema. Urge legalizar la situación de millones de indocumentados en los Estados Unidos. Todo abuso, inequidad e injusticia que a este respecto continúe ocurriendo en nuestro suelo nos recordará que no hemos sido capaces, que no lo hemos hecho bien y que nuestros líderes, políticos y gobernantes no estuvieron ni están a la altura de las circunstancias y de las exigencias de nuestra vida como nación. Urgen menos protestas y más propuestas.

Urge el concurso de todos para superar —de una vez por toda— esta mancha y vergüenza de nuestro ser y quehacer como pueblo norteamericano. Estados Unidos no puede continuar siendo una nación con habitantes de primera, quinta y última categoría. Urge que todos los habitantes de los Estados Unidos, fundamentalmente iguales, vivamos en equidad y justicia, por la igualdad de condiciones de vida para todos y de acceso a los mismos beneficios y oportunidades sociales.

Mario J. Paredes, presidente ejecutivo de SOMOS Community Care: una red de 2,500 médicos independientes —en su mayoría, de atención primaria— que atienden a cerca de un millón de los pacientes más vulnerables del Medicaid de la Ciudad de Nueva York.