

# CATHOLIC HERALD

May/June 2021  
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## 'THEY ARE LIKE MY

*Angels*

**SISTERS' OUTREACH  
DURING PANDEMIC  
PROMOTES MENTAL,  
SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING**

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Joseph's whole life can only be understood as part of the mission of Jesus

### OUR STORY

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### OUR STORY

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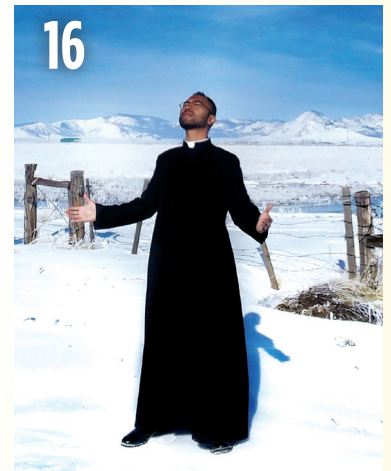


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# Joseph's whole life can only be understood as part of the mission of Jesus

**T**he Holy Father, Pope Francis, has designated a Holy Year in honor of St. Joseph, from Dec. 8, 2020 to Dec. 8, 2021. In making this announcement he is marking the 150th anniversary when one of his predecessors to the Chair of Peter, Pope Pius IX, declared St. Joseph the Patron of the Universal Church.

**FROM THE BISHOP**

While marking this significant anniversary of the silent sentinel of the Holy Family, Pope Francis also noted the timeliness of leaning on the carpenter's stalwart stature during these uncertain times of the pandemic. It has been more than a year since the coronavirus rattled our daily rhythms and clouded our future. No technological innovation, political ambition, or military adventure of recent times has been more globally disruptive than the COVID-19 contagion. Ideas of returning to normal are naively nostalgic as we ponder what a new normal will be. In this light, sitting with the pious figure of St. Joseph from St. Matthew's Gospel (Mt 1:18-25) can help us find our way. He too was lost in the perplexing moments before the angel's dream awakened him about the divine mystery to be born.

Reading the few Gospel accounts citing St. Joseph, we may forget the privileged perspective we enjoy. We know how the wisdom of God unfolded and human folly crumbled through the life, passion, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Joseph knew none of this. His decisions were not the result of any foreknowledge about how God would redeem his people. He only knew what the angel told him: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save his people

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**BISHOP JAIME SOTO** is the ninth bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sacramento.

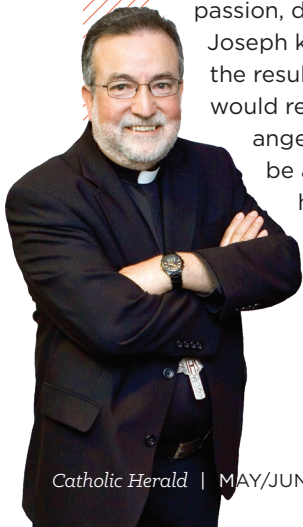
from their sins" (Mt 1:20-21). Reading this Gospel text, we know of what the angel spoke. Joseph simply possessed his Jewish soul stirred by the deep longing for redemption.

Before this revelation came to Joseph in a dream, his heart trembled with turmoil knowing his betrothed, the young Mary of Nazareth, was with child. Two things were asked of Joseph: Do not be afraid; and take Mary your wife into your home. Joseph acted on these divine directions because he believed in God's promise to redeem his people from their sins.

He knew nothing more, but what he believed was enough to embrace with courage and tenderness the unpredictable consecutive calamities that came in the wake of Mary's crossing the threshold of Joseph's home: a Roman census would order them to Bethlehem (Lk 2:1-5); local indifference to Mary's pregnant predicament would force the improvised delivery in a manger (Lk 2:6-7); the curiosity of mangy shepherds (Lk 2:15-20); the astronomical speculations of Magi (Mt 2:1-12) would be imposed on the unexpected family; a maniacal tyrant would drive them to Egypt (Mt 2:13-14); another restless dream would bring them back to Nazareth (Mt 2:19-23); the adolescent Jesus would try their patience with his emerging enthusiastic zeal for the Temple of Jerusalem (Lk 2:41-52). All this and more are what the trusting Joseph welcomed into his heart and home. He welcomed God's redemption from sin, not on his own terms but as God chose to bring it about.

The mysterious providence of God operated in the realm of the unexpected and the surprising. Joseph surrendered his own will and cooperated with the unfathomable wisdom of God. The disposition of Joseph was not one of resignation or passivity. Like his young betrothed, Joseph offered himself to God and became his instrument for bringing about the world's salvation. A graced, merciful harmony existed between the Almighty God and the simple carpenter from Nazareth.

Joseph was not paralyzed by the twists and turns of events. In each moment, he chose to be faithful in





whatever manner God came to him. His fidelity was tethered to his marital bond with Mary. From the moment he accepted Mary into his home, all other scriptural references to Joseph portrayed him at her side caring for the young Jesus.

At no point was there a story just about Joseph. His whole life can only be understood as part of the mission of Jesus. This was not an editorial omission by the evangelists; it was how Joseph chose to live, faithfully serving Mary and her child, Jesus.

To some minds, Joseph disappeared during the public ministry of Jesus, except for the references identifying Jesus as the son of the carpenter (Mt 13:55). With more attentive reflection, we see the echoes of Joseph's caring craft in the manner of Jesus' own ministry. Though He was the Son of God, Jesus learned the ways by which his humanity would reveal his divinity under the tutelage of Mary and Joseph. His Galilean accent, as Jesus spoke of his heavenly Father, sounded like the carpenter's voice.

**“ While marking this significant anniversary of the silent sentinel of the Holy Family, Pope Francis also noted the timeliness of leaning on the carpenter’s stalwart stature during these uncertain times of the pandemic. ... No technological innovation, political ambition, or military adventure of recent times has been more globally disruptive than the COVID-19 contagion.”**

His custom of visiting synagogues was learned from following Joseph's pious habits. His ability to engage fishermen, tax collectors, and others copied the social manners of his protector. On the night

before he died, as Jesus gathered with his disciples for the Passover, he assumed the role that Joseph would have performed as head of the household conducting the ancient Seder meal. In all these subtle ways, we see how much Joseph was essential to the mission of Jesus.

More than all the quiet hints of the legacy of Joseph's handiwork in the life of Jesus, the Lord Jesus was always obedient to the Divine Father's will amidst the many twists and turns of his earthly ministry. This was true of his divine nature; he was also true to the example Joseph humbly and heroically demonstrated while

Jesus was a young boy. Whether we speak of God the Father, or Joseph the foster father of Christ, we can confidently say about Jesus: like Father like Son. †

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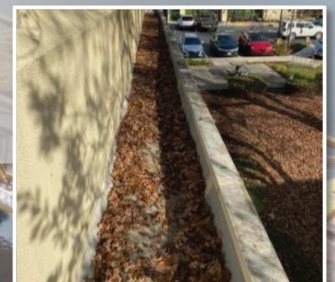
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# Why do bad things happen to good people?

DEAR FATHER JOE:

So many good people I know have suffered horribly in the last months, and I'm really struggling to hold on to my faith. Why do good people suffer? How do I keep my faith in these times?

explanation of why we were hurt, but what will help is knowing how we can carry that hurt.

God's answer to our pain is, in the words of Dr. Kreeft, not a philosophy, but a person and that person is Jesus. His answer to our pain is his presence.

As humans, we tend to avoid other people's pain. When I talk to families who've lost a loved one, they often tell me of feelings of abandonment by friends who wonder when they'll "get over it." People who were extremely supportive during the funeral and for a couple weeks afterward begin to slowly fade away and even avoid them. In his book, "A Grief Observed," C.S. Lewis wrote about this experience after his wife died:

"An odd by-product of my loss is that I'm aware of being an embarrassment to everyone I meet. At work, at the club, in the street, I see people, as they approach me, trying to make up their minds whether they'll 'say something about it' or not. I hate it if they do, and if they don't. Some funk it altogether ... I like best the well brought-up young men, almost boys, who walk up to me as if I were a dentist, turn very red, get it over, and then edge away to the bar as quickly as they decently can. Perhaps the bereaved ought to be isolated in special settlements like lepers."

That is the human response to pain: we avoid it. We avoid our pain, we avoid others' pain. But this is not the divine response, not at all.

The response of God to the inevitable pain of we humans living in a fallen world was and is to immerse himself into it.

We are in the Easter season, when we celebrate Christ's triumph over death, his resurrection.

We remember, too, his passion and death – that he joined with humanity in the experience of fear, suffering and sorrow. He is with us now as we face our fears. There is no longer any human experience outside of sin that is



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I'm sorry that things are so hard for you and your loved ones right now. As a priest, it's not uncommon for me to experience first-hand the great suffering that many people, good and bad, go through. Struggling with our faith at times like these is not something we should shy away from.

the core of the issue, which is, "I hurt and I don't like hurting. If God loves us and is all powerful, why does he let us hurt?"

Dr. Peter Kreeft put it best in his article, "God's Answer to Suffering." In it, he points out that our problem is answered, "not so much by explanations as reassurances and that is what we get: the reassurance of the Father in the person of Jesus."

Think of it this way: Is there really any answer that could be provided that would make us look at the horrors and pains of life and say "Oh! OK! That makes it all better!"?

It seems that we hope there is some answer that will make the hurt stop. I invite you now to purge that concept from your hearts and minds. Even if, for a moment, the heavens were opened and we got a "because" to our "why," would it mitigate the pain? Does knowing how you broke your leg make the leg stop hurting?

Your hurt, my hurt, their hurt – none of it is soothed by an

IN THE  
KNOW WITH  
FATHER JOE



FATHER  
JOE KRUPP  
is a former  
comedy writer  
who is now a  
Catholic priest.  
@Joeinblack

I think too often we look at the sorrow and pain that we and others experience and we try to theologize about it. We get a bit defensive or angry with God and try to defuse our defensiveness or anger with ideas we think might help us cope. We attempt consolation with clichés: "God will never give me what I can't handle," "That which doesn't kill me makes me stronger."

In my experience, all of these attempts at consolation fail for a simple reason: they don't address



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When we recognize God's presence with us in our sorrow, we can also say to God 'I join my suffering to yours' and in that simple surrender, we join Jesus in his suffering and help him save the world."

not a divine experience as well, and this includes our tears. To continue to quote Dr. Kreeft, at Jesus' birth, "human tears became divine tears."

Beyond the overt beauty of God himself joining in our sorrow, we recognize that he also offers to sanctify it – making our suffering not just about the pain of living in a fallen world, but about helping him save it.

When we recognize God's presence with us in our sorrow, we can also say to God, "I join my suffering to yours" and in that simple surrender, we join Jesus in his suffering and help him save the world.

Dear reader, we hurt and, so often, we hurt because we love. There is no love without suffering, and there is no suffering

without love. The question for us is, will we take both realities? Our God did. He loves us, he hurts with us. His invitation to us in our pain is "If you love me, hurt with me."

This is remarkable love. This is relentless love that hell itself cannot stop.

In the end, the battle cry of our God and his answer to our pain is not an explanation – it is an entrance. He lovingly, powerfully and gently enters into our wounds with us. He cries out, "You are not alone!" He takes our suffering and draws it into himself so that our tears and wounds are not just consequences of living in a broken and fallen world, but a divine experience.

Whatever pain, whatever sorrow, whatever loss we experience will be redeemed in heaven. There, when we see love face to face, all that has been separated or lost will be joined and reunited.

Weep and let God weep with you.

You are not alone. †

**YOUR FAITH**

**GROW**

as a disciple of Jesus



# IN PRAYER, offer Jesus your fears

**ANYONE ELSE REMEMBER** the gut-wrenching feeling of watching the polar bears at the zoo, tugging on the pant leg next to you, looking up excitedly to share the moment with Dad, only to see a stranger's face looking down at you? Or walking down an unfamiliar path in the dead of night during a family camping trip and realizing you can't see anything, there are strange noises in the bushes and wondering if anyone would hear you scream? If you can't relate to those, picture in your mind a time when you felt alone, isolated, unseen, unknown and, therefore, probably terrified. We grow fearful when we can't clearly see what's in front of us or understand the challenges we're facing. Sound familiar? Our collective experience during this pandemic has been one long journey of isolation, along a dimly lit path, with potential threats all around us.

Fear is running wild. Thankfully, we can take comfort from Scripture. We know that "perfect love drives out fear." (1 Jn 4:18) We know that Jesus has conquered the power of sin and death and it is "for freedom Christ set us free." (Gal 5:1) We know we have a good Father who sees us and knows well the plans he has in mind for us – "plans for [our] welfare and not for woe." (Jer 29:11) We are not alone, we are not forgotten and we are not neglected. Our ability to declare what I just said, believe it to be true and live out of this conviction is only possible if we pray. We need to pray? Yes, it's no joke, the power we need to live a fully Christian life (free, joyful,

peaceful, fruitful) is tied directly to our time spent with God.

While so many of our normal structures and habits have been stripped away or transformed, even a pandemic can't take away our ability to pray. Our world needs us to actually live like we believe the words in 2 Timothy: "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control." (1:7) So here's the challenge. Over the next month, I'm committing to dedicated time with Jesus every day. I'm going to offer him my fears and struggles, thank and praise him for his gifts and listen to him. Who's with me?

With him we are more than conquerors, so let us pray. †



**PETE BURAK**

is the director of i.d.9:16. He has a master's degree in theology, and is a frequent speaker at events for youth and young adults.

+

**Have faith**  
"I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world." (Jn 16:33)



# 'HOPE IS WHAT WE NEED MORE THAN EVER'

RENOVATION OF HISTORIC ST. JOSEPH CHURCH

IN MARYSVILLE UNITES PARISHIONERS

BY JULIE SLY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE GERMAN



■ Father Michal Olszewski stands outside historic St. Joseph Church in Marysville.



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**ORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO, when Father Michal Olszewski started his ministry as parochial administrator of St. Joseph Parish in Marysville, he never envisioned he would be carrying out a \$1.8 million restoration to the historic church in 2020, while also guiding his parishioners through COVID-19 restrictions on in-person worship.**

St. Joseph Church has been a home for Yuba-Sutter Catholic faithful since it was built more than 165 years ago. Its steeple can be seen for miles, atop the building for which the cornerstone was laid in 1855.

From June through October 2020, the church and parish facilities underwent extensive restoration and renovation. Among other issues, the steeple was in danger of falling down and would eventually pose a safety risk if not corrected, and the interior stained glass windows badly needed to be repaired.

The church “is one of the most beautiful buildings in the city,” Father Michal says. “Our main reason for the project was because of safety issues, but it also allowed us to preserve the church and pass on an improved facility to our future generations.

“There is nothing I found to unite people more than to have them come together on a common goal. So in the midst of the pandemic I chose to push the fundraising effort to renovate our church as well as other parish properties,” he notes. “I seized the opportunity to give people hope in the midst of struggle. The symbol of this hope became the renovation of our steeple and the historic stained glass windows.

“This was a great effort, especially in the midst of economic uncertainty exacerbated by the pandemic and the shutdown. People wanted something to believe in and something to keep their hope aflame. I was amazed at how they rallied around this project.”

The church received structural, safety and cosmetic upgrades. New lights were put up outside and a new roof was put on the church and gym. New fire alarms were installed and the main doors were restored. The interior and exterior of the church were painted and the stained-glass windows were refurbished by Bovard Studio in Iowa. Thanks to an additional donation, the church’s sacristy was also fitted with new stained glass windows and plaques were put up for commemoration.

Over the years, parishioners had collected \$1 million to help with the restoration project. Then they formulated a plan for a fundraising campaign to raise the remaining \$800,000. The campaign commitment weekend was to kick off in mid-March, right as the COVID-19 shelter in place order was announced.

“We postponed it a bit, but people generously contributed, so even in the pandemic it was a pleasant

surprise,” Father Michal says. “It’s been so rewarding to see so many parishioners involved and contributing.”

Jackson Construction of Sacramento was the project manager. The new spire for the church steeple was lifted into place atop the church on Oct. 27, after Father Michal blessed it with holy water. “That was a historic moment for us,” he says.

**YOUR STORIES  
OUR STORY**

“

**THEY ARE PROUD TO BE MEMBERS OF THE PARISH BECAUSE THE CHURCH STANDS, BEAUTIFUL AND GORGEOUS, AS A SYMBOL OF HOPE IN THE MIDST OF SO MUCH DARKNESS. OUR STEEPLE IS BEAMING WITH WHITE COLORS TO GIVE OFF LIGHT THAT SAYS, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS, LIGHT WINS.”**



■ Father Michal Olszewski with his parish staff: Deacon Rafael and Maria Moreno, Deacon Patrick and Liz Kearns, Anita O’Kelleyburchett, Dale Walker, Virginia Uriostegui, Gloria Mooney and Yesenia Castillo.



Father Michal, who was ordained in his native Poland, has been a priest for 18 years, serving in the United States for the past 12 years. He previously was parochial administrator of Sacred Heart Parish in Maxwell and its missions in Williams and Arbuckle. St. Joseph has about 1,700 parishioners. In both parishes, he has enjoyed ministering to the Spanish-speaking community. "I dedicate myself to celebrating Mass in both English and Spanish," he says.

When COVID-19 forced the suspension of in-person Masses, "it was a huge adjustment for me personally and for our community in general," he says. "I am a very adaptable person and quickly came into my new role as an online priest, doing my best to connect with my people virtually. I embarked on ways to communicate with my people, trying to make sure they know I am with them, praying for them, and I didn't forget about them. I looked for ways to communicate particularly with our older people, who aren't as savvy with the Internet or social media, so they too would be included."

Father Michal reflects on parish life in the past year. "Our challenges are having to celebrate together with social distancing protocols, but we have ably adapted to this new reality. The joy comes from being able to gather together and not taking our ability to do that for granted, but seeing the ability to be together as a blessing and a gift. People have more patience with one another...and I have noticed more peace, acceptance and love in our community as a result of the pandemic. Because in the midst of sickness, death and fear, we are able to be together and celebrate our humanity, and not focus on our differences, but on that which binds and

brings us together – our faith.

"In many ways their curiosity of seeing the renovated church building has brought them to the parish," he adds. "They are proud to be members because the church stands, beautiful and gorgeous, as a symbol of hope in the midst of so much darkness. Our steeple is beaming with white colors to give off light that says, even in the midst of darkness, light wins. Our number one goal each week is to keep people socially distanced and safe, but gathered together so as not to feel isolated on the journey we call life.

"The pandemic has changed us for the better. We are closer to one another spiritually and bonded together with more love, forgiveness and acceptance, even though we have to be physically distanced. We long for the time of parish socials, dinners and gatherings, so I thank God that we won't see them simply as the norm in the future, but as gifts not to be taken for granted.

"What our people have accomplished even in the midst of a pandemic has filled our community with hope," Father Michal concludes. "Hope is what we need more than ever when we face fear, worry and uncertainty. I am praying that we will accept the renewal and the future full of hope. The Lord has much in store for us as we move forward in faith." †



#### LEARN MORE

About St. Joseph Parish in Marysville at [www.stjoseph-marysville.org](http://www.stjoseph-marysville.org).



**PEOPLE HAVE MORE PATIENCE WITH ONE ANOTHER...AND I HAVE NOTICED MORE PEACE, ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE IN OUR COMMUNITY AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC."**



■ Father Michal Olszewski inside St. Joseph Church in Marysville.





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■ Father Michael Estaris at the piano inside St. Monica Church in Willows.

# ‘God is good and always will be’

## PARISHIONERS OF ST. MONICA IN WILLOWS BRING ‘JOY AND COMFORT’ DURING THE PANDEMIC

BY JULIE SLY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE GERMAN

**Father Michael Estaris**, parochial administrator of St. Monica Parish in Willows and St. Mary of the Mountain Mission in Stonyford since September 2020, says his main goal as a priest during the pandemic is “to bring the love of Christ and a message of joy and comfort to everyone.”



**YOUR STORIES  
OUR STORY**

To that end, what many parishioners may never forget as a highlight in the past several months is his spontaneous decision to perform a “Christmas serenade” on the evening of Dec. 23 that went viral in the community. He received an overwhelming response for his Facebook live performance of prayer, reflection and music, where he played the piano in the church and sang Christmas carols and other meaningful songs, concluding the concert with “Ave Maria.”

“I meant for it to be inspirational and festive for parishioners to view, but so many people shared the video on Facebook,” he laughs. “About 3,000 people saw the video in 24 hours. I hadn’t played the piano in ages, so it was a bit nerve-racking. I said to myself this is prayer, and I wanted people to be drawn to the Lord.

“I was so surprised when from beginning to end I had played and reflected for an hour. My words were spontaneous, so it was providential. It was my offering to the Lord and God was wonderful. I was very overwhelmed and humbled by people’s response. People left me voicemails telling me how they were touched, found comfort and hope, and

were connected to Christ, which brought tears to my eyes.”

To keep in communication with parishioners, Father Michael uses Facebook, a new website (with videos of weekday and Sunday Masses), myParish App, and livestream Masses. On Facebook, the parish also launched a new page called “Prayer Wall” where parishioners and their families can share their personal, special and specific prayer intentions. Some 90 followers are already participating.

During Advent, he also offered a two-day outdoor retreat at Stonyford on Facebook Live.

Father Michael is a graduate of St. Patrick’s Seminary, was ordained in 2010, and holds a licentiate of canon law from The Catholic University of America. He previously served in the Tribunal and as parochial vicar of St. John Vianney Parish in Rancho Cordova, St. Vincent Ferrer Parish in Vallejo and St. Rose Parish in Roseville.

He credits his parish staff and some 600 parishioners at St. Monica for being “a source of great faith for me during this difficult time. My transition here couldn’t have been more easy, joyful and faith-filled because of these people who surround me with their faith. They’ve shown me how we can work together

for our flock during a time of crisis. It’s their faith through this pandemic that’s helped me to keep moving forward. People are struggling in a lot of ways, but to see how they are enduring and being so dedicated to their ministries is inspiring.”

Elvira Lara, parish secretary, has been on the staff for the past five years. She is married to Deacon Joaquin Lara, who was ordained to the permanent diaconate in 2017, and they have seven children ranging in age from three to 20. Deacon Joaquin is in Jalisco, Mexico presently ministering in a parish after going to Mexico in 2018 to address immigration issues. He has remained there during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We learned in the diaconate program to be open to where the Holy Spirit leads us. So I reflect on that message and my own faith in God during this pandemic,” Elvira says. “My work is a ministry to serve our parish community and their needs, so we make the changes and adjustments we must. I’ve concentrated a lot of my efforts on communicating to the Spanish-speaking community, especially the elderly, by making phone calls and giving information to them in person if needed. Not having our ministries in person or the church being open affected people spiritually – it was so heartbreaking for many.”

Parishioners were joyful when churches opened up at 25 percent of capacity. “People wanted to come back with that joy of being present as the body of Christ,” she notes. “They long to keep growing spiritually, preparing their minds and hearts to continue serving our community. It’s in our darkest moments that we are tested, and if we aren’t prepared spiritually then the journey will be more difficult.”

Maribel Palomino, a member of the parish since age 8, has served in Hispanic ministry, and



■ Elvira Lara, left, with Father Michael Estaris and Maribel Palomino outside St. Monica Church.



is director of religious education for the past seven years. As a single parent, she credits her mother, Teresa, and her daughter, Alexis, 11, for supporting her during the pandemic. "I am so grateful to God for my family and daughter," she says, "and all those amazing persons who have helped me through the years, especially this year."

When in person faith formation classes were cancelled she met with many students by phone and one-on-one (with safety precautions) to finish the year so they could receive their sacraments. She was nervous with all the changes and having to coordinate Mass outside. "But it was a great experience and I learned so many new things about myself and how many people I can rely on when in need," she reflects. "I'm not a person who does well with changes and I tend to withdraw, but I focused on God and asked for his blessing to help me finish this process for the betterment of our children and our parish."

Maribel's faith kept her going by helping her focus on the importance of prayer and trusting in God's will. "Having my church family and friends helped me immensely, but most of all my faith and love for God helped me pull through to continue my mission and continue to serve God. Relying on God's word and knowing he has something better for me gives me hope to persevere in life and grow in my faith."

She prays that "people follow regulations and trust in God and be kind to one another, especially since we don't know what anyone is going through in their personal life. Lending a helping hand or smiling can change someone's life or way of seeing the world. We are called to love one another and to treat others with kindness as God has treated us."

Conway and Marianne Couto, lifelong parishioners of St. Monica

who have been married for 13 years, say the pandemic "changed so many things so quickly." They have four children: Carter, 10, Lane, 9, Emma, 7 and Luke, 2.

They especially missed not being able to attend Mass as a family on Sundays. "Our children missed out on activities such as faith formation classes and volunteering as altar servers," Marianne notes. "It was a big change in routine for our family having to adjust not being able to do these things anymore."

While living through a pandemic is stressful, they find many joys as well. They watched livestream Mass at home and received Communion afterward from Father Michael from their car. They helped organize a drive-through Vacation Bible School and Lane received his first Communion in an outdoor Mass after it was postponed. They found new home activities such as Catholic Family Crate and "The Bible in a Year" with Father

Mike Schmitz. "We had extra family time and conversations we would not have had otherwise," Marianne says. "One of our favorite memories was celebrating Holy Week in 2020 at home and making new family traditions."

Their faith "brought us comfort to remember that despite this being a difficult year, that God is good and always will be," Conway says. "It helped us to look for the good things that come from hard situations and to try and teach that idea to our kids as well."

The Couto family looks forward to "getting back to some normalcy." "We don't know exactly what that will look like," Marianne says. "We appreciate Father Michael and know that despite the limitations, he will continue to work hard to keep our parish community active and connected as he has done so far. Whether virtual or in person, we look forward to more of his musical performances!" †



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# Father Brian produces **'EXPRESSO SHOTS'** for 'quick spiritual bursts' of inspiration

BY JULIE SLY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
FATHER BRIAN SOLIVEN

**C**ould you use a spiritual “expresso shot” today? Want to explore such topics as “Making Sense of the Christian Thing,” “Behold the Lamb of God,” “The Kingdom of God is at Hand,” “Personal Relationships,” “Why God Allows Suffering,” “The Narrow Gate,” “Why We Wait,” “The Trinity,” and “Breaking of the Bread”?

## YOUR STORIES MY STORY

That’s what Father Brian Soliven, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Portola, offers in his three-to-four minute videos on social media (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) and his website at [www.frbriansoliven.com](http://www.frbriansoliven.com).

In response to communication challenges during the pandemic, Father Brian started “Catholic expresso shots” on his website and personal and parish Facebook pages. The inspirational videos are

shot outdoors to take advantage of the mountain and forest scenery not far from the rectory. In some of the videos during the winter, he is among the trees and it is snowing. His “shots” are condensed homilies and reflections on the daily and Sunday Mass readings. His Sunday homilies and podcasts are also available on his website and many podcast apps.

“Preaching the Gospel has always been a real enjoyment for me,” he says. “Helping people to grow closer to Christ and teaching them about their faith, especially young people. It’s always been a real fit for me, and feels natural with the talents the Lord has given me.”

Because Internet strength in Portola, with a population of 2,100, was inconsistent, Holy Family Parish could not livestream Masses. “We had to be more creative, so we started pre-recording homilies and posting videos on Facebook and

YouTube. We separated the homily out from the Mass so it would be more sharable and digestible, and people could view it easily.”

The “expresso shots” filled a gap when he could not celebrate daily Mass in person. “We branded it and wanted to make it sound different – a nice quick spiritual burst,” he notes. He tries to produce a video two times a week.

“It’s ideal to shoot outside to take advantage of our beautiful mountain scenery,” he says. “My rationale was to get something different into people’s social media feeds and we could also email them out. It’s been a great outreach for many people who couldn’t come to church, to help them stay connected to the parish and share with other family members. I know some non-Catholics also watch the content. I also like to wrap in some church history into many of the videos.”

Father Brian, who was ordained





Father Brian prays in the adoration chapel.

in 2011, is a graduate of Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon and the North American College in Rome. He grew up as a member of Good Shepherd Parish in Elk Grove and graduated from UC Davis. He has been serving Holy Family and Holy Rosary Mission in Loyalton since 2016. The parish and mission combined have some 250 parishioners. He previously served as parochial vicar of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Carmichael and St. Joseph Parish in Vacaville.

During summer 2020, he and parishioners remodeled a room in the rectory into an adoration chapel. He livestreams his holy hour from the chapel and encourages parishioners and others tuning in join in prayer at home. “They will tune in and say father is praying now, whether it is late at night or 6 a.m. in the morning,” Father Brian says. “I ask them

to include their prayers in the comment section on Facebook. I knew I needed to pray more during the pandemic so this is a motivator to keep my prayer life strong. Prayer is the rock that will get us through this pandemic, as it will be with us for the foreseeable future.”

He prays the rosary every day and that keeps his mind and heart centered on the Lord. “It’s the lifeblood of my ministry and prayer life,” he says. Among his “Catholic expresso shots,” he dedicated a video on Oct. 7, 2020 to delve deeply into the feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

Recently, the parish started small prayer groups on Zoom and in person “for people longing for connection,” he says. “Even though people are staying away from church, they are thirsting for authentic relationships.”

During the pandemic “it’s definitely

been hard and frustrating, because without in-person worship a lot of people disappeared. People are worried or got out of the habit of going to Mass,” he notes. “We are still missing a large number of people and how to reach out to them is difficult. How we minister safely and be cognizant that everyone has a different opinion along the spectrum about COVID is a challenge.”

“It’s survival at this point,” he says. “How do we engage with those who are scattered, perhaps gone because they are now not in the habit of attending anymore and because many of those people are not coming back? They say you form a new habit after 30 days, so they are forming new habits and God may not be part of that anymore.”

“I can see the need for people to truly make a commitment to Christ – meaning if people have fallen away because of the pandemic maybe we need to strengthen their faith. How do we form disciples no matter what happens? What the pandemic has shown is a need of discipleship among our people. It’s shown us that our roots need to be deepened. How can we increase people’s love and fidelity in order to withstand the trials – not just of a pandemic, but of the challenges of life? How do we deepen people’s faith so they remain strong in the face of the storms, no matter how fierce? This pandemic won’t be the only challenge we face in the coming years.

“We’ve faced many challenges before and the strategy is always the same: we must have fidelity, prayer and fasting,” he concludes. “All of our programs are important, but if we aren’t rooted in prayer and fasting and using the tools the Lord gave us, we won’t be successful. We always have to return to the basic proclamation of the Gospel.” †

“  
What the pandemic has shown is a need of discipleship among our people. It’s shown us that our roots need to be deepened.  
”

— FATHER BRIAN SOLIVEN



Father Brian Soliven with parishioner Emma Bayly, who designed the adoration chapel.



LEARN MORE

About Holy Family Parish in Portola at [www.holyfamilyparishportola.org](http://www.holyfamilyparishportola.org).





■ Sister Zuly Cardenas Carreón, left, Sister Antonia Sanchez Nunez, middle; and Sister Ana Luisa Vasquez López at St. Thomas Parish in Oroville.



“**PROMOTORES IS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SERVICES AND THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY.**”

*Sister Antonia*

As part of the Congregation of the Eucharistic Missionaries of the Infant Jesus and Our Lady of Fatima, the trio of sisters is committed to a five-year cultural exchange program where they are serving, learning, and working primarily in Butte County. Sister Zuly Cardenas Carreón, Sister Ana Luisa Vázquez López, and Sister Antonia Sanchez Nunez are from different parts of Mexico: Cuernavaca, Chiapas, and Guanajuato City, respectively. A significant part of their weekly time commitment

is to the Promotores Program, as coordinated by Northern Valley Catholic Social Services (NVCSS) for outreach in Chico, Oroville and Paradise.

There are many social services available to residents of Butte County and surrounding counties. However, the knowledge of how to access these programs is often missed by those who need the services most; this can be due in part to cultural or language barriers. To connect service providers and potential recipients, the Promotores Program provides education for those in need through one-on-one case management or in a group setting. Early intervention in mental health also allows the program to serve as a bridge to more formal mental health services.

Norma Servin-Lacy, Promotores Program supervisor, oversees the case management and outreach events throughout the county. She shares the need for open communication and discussion around psychological well-being. “Mental health can have a stigma within the Latino community. It’s OK to go to the doctor because you have diabetes, but if you’re suffering from any mental issues, it can be frowned upon.” Promotores seeks to remove the cultural stigma and connect community members to the services they may need.

The sisters have started support groups at St. Thomas More Parish in Paradise and St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Oroville. Attendees include some of the women and children impacted by the Camp Fire, in addition to other members of the community. The topics of discussion include access to health care, mental health services, child care, resiliency, life skills and nutrition.

The sisters also participated in the program’s outreach to larger groups and have assisted with food drives and census outreach. The three food

# They are like my angels

## SISTERS’ OUTREACH DURING PANDEMIC PROMOTES MENTAL, SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY JASON WEINRICH

YOUR STORIES  
COVER STORY

For those displaced over two years ago from the Camp Fire, COVID-19 was yet another hurdle in a series of disruptions. As the pandemic played out across the world, people in the communities in Butte County came together, often centered around the local Catholic parishes. Dispersed to towns such as Chico, Oroville and Gridley, the Latino survivors of the Camp Fire, in addition to other community members, are now receiving emotional support and vital information about locally available social services, thanks in part to the work of three religious sisters from Mexico.

© Getty Images/Alamy





“  
I'M HAPPY TO BE  
ABLE TO LISTEN  
TO PEOPLE AND  
HELP PROVIDE  
THEIR NEEDS.”

*Sister Ana  
Luisa*

drives, which occurred last year, provided more than 550 attendees with food, COVID-related sanitizing supplies, and information on social services. Shared through Spanish-language pamphlets, the social services information provided through the food drive is becoming increasingly more accessible to those in need.

The Promotores Program served more than 300 individuals in 2020 and the need is still growing. Every month new enrollees join the program and more members in the community

have the opportunity to come into contact with the sisters.

As the program is contracted through Butte County Behavioral Health, the spiritual side of the sisters' ministry is not overtly promoted during the program. However, the effect the sisters have on those they come into contact with is long-lasting. Mrs. Gutiérrez, an attendee of the Oroville Women Leaders Group (OWLG), shares her gratitude. “They (the sisters) give me a lot of confidence and security by feeling supported in any area that I need from each of them. We are blessed that we have this program in my community.”

Another program recipient and member of OWLG, Mrs. Gonzalez, shares the impact the sisters had on recent events of her life. “My husband became sick late last year, and the sisters helped us immensely during that difficult time. They looked after us and helped us during his battle against cancer. After my husband passed in October of last year, the sisters stayed by my side and supported me during my loss. I am very grateful for everything they have done for me. They are like my angels because they encourage me to keep pushing forward.”

The effects of the pandemic have not slowed the volume of clients needing services; in fact, the increase during 2020 surpassed expectations. When asked about the effects of the pandemic on their day-to-day work, the sisters shared their gratefulness to continue to connect with individuals through phone call or video chat services such as Zoom. While in-person communication is preferred, the sisters have been adaptable with their communication methods by using technology to maintain relationships. The in-person focus groups are currently limited to 10 individuals, according to the guidelines provided by health authorities.



■ At Northern Valley Catholic Social Service in Chico, clockwise from left, are Sister Zuly Cardenas Carreón, Norma Servin-Lacy, Sister Ana Luisa Vázquez López and Sister Antonia Sanchez Nunez.



■ Sister Zuly delivers sanitizing products to a family.





“  
**MENTAL HEALTH  
 CAN HAVE A  
 STIGMA WITHIN  
 THE LATINO  
 COMMUNITY.  
 IT'S OK TO GO  
 TO THE DOCTOR  
 BECAUSE YOU  
 HAVE DIABETES,  
 BUT IF YOU'RE  
 SUFFERING  
 FROM ANY  
 MENTAL ISSUES,  
 IT CAN BE  
 FROWNED  
 UPON.”**

*Norma  
 Servin-Lacy*  
**NORTHERN VALLEY  
 CATHOLIC SOCIAL  
 SERVICE**

“It has been a joy to be a part of this program, especially during this time of great need,” remarks Sister Zuly, the head of the household for the sisters.

In addition to Promotores, the sisters assist with the work of Catholic Extension, which provides economic resources to the communities in Butte County and surrounding areas. Another project, called the Listening Program, allowed for them to work directly with a pastoral group in Corning and with Father Orlando Gomez, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish. This program consisted of contacting families during the beginning of the pandemic to assess physical needs such as house supplies as well as spiritual needs. The sisters successfully contacted and helped 45 families.

In Yuba City, the sisters direct the Eucharistic holy hour on Thursdays at St. Isidore Parish, in addition to participating in liturgies.

They have been active with family support and leading rosaries for funeral events around the community. The sisters also work with patients from Enloe Hospital who have been referred to Promotores, providing spiritual support to patients and their families.

All of these activities are accomplished concurrently with their ongoing pursuit of postsecondary degrees from St. Mary's University of Minnesota, with Sister Antonia earning her master's degree and Sisters Zuly and Ana Luisa completing their bachelor's degrees. They are also learning English during their time in the United States.

With one year completed of the five-year commitment, the sisters will continue their work with the Promotores Program, and continue to serve in local parishes, making an impact on all by being present to the community during a great time of need. †



■ The sisters work at a food distribution site.



**LEARN MORE**

About Northern Valley Catholic Social Service at [www.nvcss.org](http://www.nvcss.org).

The Diocese of Sacramento has partnered with Catholic Extension to participate in the Latin American Sisters Exchange Program (USLASEP). The exchange program is a five-year commitment with a focus on sisters' work targeted toward human development services within their communities, with emphasis on serving at-risk youth and families, or impoverished people in rural communities.

*What is a promotora?*

▶ A promotora is a Latino community member who receives specialized training to provide basic health education in the community without being a professional health care worker. While most of their work entails educating target audiences about health issues affecting their community, they also provide guidance in accessing community resources associated with health care. They serve as liaisons among their community, health professionals, human and social service organizations. Traditionally they have been Latino women, but with more men entering the field, the term “promotores” is increasingly used to be more inclusive.



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# SERVING the hungry

## CATHEDRAL YOUNG ADULTS ENGAGE ONLINE PLATFORMS TO FEED PANDEMIC-INDUCED HUNGER

BY LYNETTE MAGNINO  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE GERMAN

**Young adult ministry members from the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament have long delivered hot meals on Tuesday nights to Sacramento’s hungry homeless. Pulling a wagon through downtown streets, they stave off hunger pangs reverberating in the bellies of residents of the city’s heart, bonding in their shared mission to serve.**

YOUR STORIES  
OUR STORY

“Our main focus is to feed the homeless,” confirms Victoria Ramos, 25, although openly unsettled by another kind of hunger revealed, if not induced, by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We saw need and hunger among parishioners,” Victoria says from her frontline vantage point as parish secretary and as an active member of the Cathedral young adults group. Her voice is laden

with concern as she tells of the spiritual struggles the faithful endured amid the state’s stay-at-home orders – months of on-again, off-again, indoor, outdoor uncertainty. She and fellow group members sensed it. The emptiness was palpable.

“People were yearning for Christ, yearning for sacraments,” says Ruben Arocan, 34, cantor and long-time altar server/master of ceremonies for Cathedral liturgies.

Recalling the earliest months of the pandemic “when it seemed like the world was coming to an end,” Ruben describes an “organic” digital response to the obvious spiritual

“**People were yearning for Christ, yearning for sacraments.”**

- RUBEN AROCAN



hunger permeating throughout the parish community.

“In the beginning, it was just kind of like, OK, we have this idea and we’ll see how it goes,” Ruben says candidly, admitting the pandemic necessitated an all-out effort to help parishioners “actively participate even though they’re not physically present.” Victoria described the immediate call-to-action as “baptism by fire” to quickly satisfy the spiritually hungry with content-rich online platforms.

To “serve the hungry” now had clear dual meaning as group members rose to new levels of leadership, expanding their routine ministry of Tuesday night food wagon rounds to the *homeless* to include daily digital offerings to the *hopeless* – those wandering in a spiritual desert brought on by COVID-19.

### **SPIRITUAL LIFELINES**

Titi Kila, young adult ministry coordinator for the past nine years, lends insight to the evolution of the Cathedral’s digital footprint.

“We were already on social media,” she explains, listing all the platforms and applications – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube – along with websites. “It wasn’t fed daily, like it’s being fed now,” she concedes. Titi equates the former approach as more of a “hobby,” with content added periodically but not routinely or with as much intention. “It became a daily thing,” she

says, emphasizing how the pandemic fast-tracked their skills. They soon recognized these platforms were essential spiritual lifelines.

All around the world, parishes scrambled to implement livestreamed Masses as the only safe alternative to having people in the pews. Fortunately, Titi had waded the livestream waters years before with nothing but her iPhone.

“I had no idea what I was doing, no background at all,” she acknowledges, just sheer desire to share the Cathedral’s celebration of the Mass and the voices in the choir. Yet, those humble beginnings evolved and by the time the pandemic hit, Titi and the “Stream Team,” comprised of young adult members Victoria, Alex Visitacion, Joseph Visitacion, Victor Amador, Julian Rosario and Ruben, were quite adept with the livestream video equipment and software.

Today, operating a mini studio in the choir loft, she remembers an unusual sense of urgency to invest in and master new equipment back in 2019. In hindsight, she believes the Holy Spirit nudged their progress, allowing a relatively seamless move to livestreamed daily Masses and various other live and recorded events including concerts and rosary hours.

Titi and the Stream Team imagine integrating the livestreaming options and social media carefully,

“**That’s what this pandemic has been doing. For some reason, we’ve been able to extend our ministry.”**

**- TITI KILA**



■ From left, Victor Amador (with Victoria Ramos on iPad), Joseph Visitacion, Father Michael O’Reilly, Titi Kila and Ruben Arocan at the doors of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.





■ Joseph Visitacion, Titi Kila and Alex Visitacion work the control center.

encouraging complementary use and physical presence as safety permits. “It’s weighing heavily on my mind,” she acknowledges, unsure of what “it” may look like but confident a new era will see Catholics engaged digitally and in person, more fully and consciously participating across the spectrum of their lives.

“  
**We saw need and  
 hunger among  
 parishioners.”**

- VICTORIA RAMOS

“We can reach more people this way,” she stresses with confidence and wonderment as she watches young adult members push out a variety of spiritual lifelines. Their creative efforts are met with instant feedback, grateful emails, positive comments and words of encouragement.

She offers the new daily feature, “A Moment of Prayer with Father Michael O’Reilly” as an example. She posts the pastor’s brief video prayer at 5 a.m. “If I’m late, and it’s 5:01 a.m., my phone is buzzing with text messages asking, ‘Did you oversleep?’ or ‘Where’s the moment of prayer?’” she laughs



■ Julian Rosario operates the camera while Joseph Visitacion checks the shot.

genuinely pleased that people long to be spiritually fed in this way as they start their days.

The parish podcast, “Let’s Talk Parish,” presents casual discussion with Cathedral staff members or parishioners to foster community. Notices are pushed out to subscribers, which now number nearly 400, although anyone can access the bi-weekly episodes on the website or podcast apps. The young adults’ ministry also produces a tailored podcast directed toward the real life matters of young adults in English, Spanish and Chinese, to reach the full scope of their demographic.

The group also manages the “Walk With Us” blog, taking turns writing spiritual reflections every week. Titi sees the blog as an opportunity for spiritual expression, beckoning once-timid contributors to share from their hearts, writing words that nourish others.

The semi-annual NightFever fellowship event ventured online, too, although Titi was skeptical whether it could be successful. To her surprise more than 3,000 viewers participated including international viewers.

“That’s what this pandemic has been doing,” Titi says, indicating that talents and leadership skills have surfaced exactly when needed. “For some reason, we’ve been able to extend our ministry,” she adds marveling at the growth and interest among young adults who just know what to do and how to do it despite the pandemic.

Both Victoria and Ruben transition “upstairs” to the choir loft’s Stream Team work when not engaged in blogging or serving other liturgical needs. Victoria assists with various tasks such as live audio mixing and directing the video feed. Ruben prepares digital narratives and bulletin news while also monitoring the video feed to facilitate a meaningful online worship experience.

Just one year ago, the Cathedral young adults group had less than 10 regular and consistent members. In the past year, nearly 30 young adults have found a voice and a calling to help the Cathedral parish feed both bodily and spiritual hunger. The diverse, family-friendly, multi-talented cohort connects young, service-minded individuals between the ages of 21 and 40. They are invigorated by their outreach but more so by the chance to deliver food and hope, nourishing souls. †



**LEARN MORE**

About the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament at [www.cathedralsacramento.org](http://www.cathedralsacramento.org).

About “A Moment of Prayer,” at <https://www.youtube.com/c/CathedraloftheBlessedSacrament>

About “Let’s Talk Parish” at <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/lets-talk-parish/id1542824170>

About “Walk with Us” blog at <https://cathedralyoungadults.wordpress.com/blog-posts/>





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# Strong communications are key at Rocklin parish during COVID-19

BY JULIE SLY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE GERMAN



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Nancy Von Thaden, left, and Darcy Wharton at the outdoor Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Parish.

The parish already posted on Facebook regularly, with various writers providing daily reflections and also ministry announcements. They use Flocknote (with 3,500 emails registered) every Saturday for a weekly email to parishioners. Youth and young adult ministry also post on their own social media platforms.

“Once COVID-19 hit, we used all of our platforms more intentionally and effectively,” Darcy notes. She started a Thursday “parish connection” conversation at 10 a.m. on Facebook Live, where initially she announced times for online Masses, but expanded it with updates about parish ministries and changing schedules. “It’s fun — people can ask questions and make comments and I give them immediate answers or they can view it on Facebook later.”

On Facebook, Father Bony Arackal, pastor, Deacon David Haproff, and seven other contributing writers from the parish share daily reflections. In one reflection, Darcy noted that all ministries were faced with the reality of not meeting in person and many of them began using Zoom. The bereavement group, for instance, switched to online meetings.

“An unexpected blessing is that I have been able to be a quiet participant in their online meetings,” she says. “What I discovered was a true community of deep sharing and camaraderie. Although they would much

## COVID-19 FORCED CHURCHES

of all sizes and locations to adapt to a digital model for some ministries, with impacts that will likely last beyond the pandemic.

### YOUR STORIES OUR STORY

Staff members at SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Rocklin realized early on that they could prepare for parish life during and after the pandemic by ramping up their

communication strategies using multiple platforms.

Like many parishes, they already had virtual footprints

embedded in their community, utilizing online giving, a regularly updated website and social media platforms such as

Facebook and YouTube. Mass emails, livestreaming Mass and social media platforms have all become vital tools to keeping parishioners updated on a continuous basis, says Darcy Wharton, who has been on the parish staff since 1996 and since 2005 is coordinator of adult faith formation.



Like Comment Share

Lawanda Tassinari, parish bookkeeping assistant, hands out weekly bulletins.

“Once COVID-19 hit, we used all of our platforms more intentionally and effectively.”

— DARCY WHARTON





Like Comment Share

© Getty Images/Misha Shufkevych

Father Bony Arackal, parochial administrator, celebrates the outdoor Mass.

prefer to meet in person, their online gatherings have allowed them the opportunity to connect with one another. This helps ease their grief, which has only compounded during the pandemic. Imagine dealing with the loss of a loved one along with the loss of your normal routine and social interaction.”

Darcy led an online retreat via Zoom which had more participants than previous retreats she offered in person. During February and March, an online five-week afternoon series featured Passionist Father Tom Bonacci speaking on Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. During Advent and Lent, the liturgy committee hosted an online program with Scripture reflections from Father Bony, and families from the parish reflecting on how they were applying Scripture to their own lives.

“The benefit is we are reaching people who aren’t comfortable driving at night or don’t want to be away from home during COVID,” she notes. “We also reach people who are outside the typical parish boundaries, or

if they have moved away from the parish they can still stay connected.”

Darcy, who provides spiritual direction to parishioners as 50 percent of her ministry, has continued to meet monthly online with more than 20 persons she is directing. “The Holy Spirit doesn’t seem to have any boundaries,” she laughs. “It’s not the same as seeing someone in person, but we are making it work. You are

still sitting with people in sacred time, which is phenomenal and enriching.

It gives me hope to keep going when I see how God is at work. It’s amazing and energizing.”

Nancy Von Thaden, coordinator of



**The joy for me has been the personal outreach to many more families and youths — that was unexpected fruit.”**

— NANCY VON THADEN



Like Comment Share

Deacon David Haproff addresses candidates and catechumens at the outdoor Mass.



youth and young adult ministry, has been a parishioner for 27 years and on the parish staff since 2016. In the pandemic she pivoted and continued with five small faith sharing groups involving youth, with 10 in each group. She also maintains connection with some 45 young adults. Activities have included film series, movie nights, diocesan events on Zoom and an online blessing and slide show for graduating seniors.

“As we closed, opened and closed, the response of my small group leaders was to meet in our parking lot — even when the weather was terrible — or to switch to Zoom meetings or do both,” she says. “They are flexible. Going forward will be a mixed bag. Some things are conducive to online ministry, but many youths don’t want to come unless

an activity is in person. They deserve to have that relationship with Jesus and their parish family. I make myself available by Zoom, text, email or in person. Change is inevitable. We want to be responsible and also open to the needs of our families.

“The joy for me has been the personal outreach to many more families and youths — that was unexpected fruit,” she notes. “It’s just the Holy Spirit at work. I can’t stress that enough, as well as our staff working as a great team in different, creative and unexpected ways.”

Nancy’s husband, Mark, and parishioner Dan Welz, worked diligently to provide livestream Masses early on, as well as an outdoor Mass, held rain or shine. Some 230 or more cars with people were attending the drive-

in Mass on Sundays in February. Ushers, some from the youth ministry group, guided parishioners to a specific spot so they could see the outdoor altar. Parishioners tuned into 107.9 on their car radios to hear the Mass celebrated by Father Bony.

Darcy believes SS. Peter and Paul will continue to expand on multiple platforms. “Parishioners are so appreciative of all we have done,” she says. “I always wondered if people would come if Mass wasn’t an obligation, and now I know so many will even come outdoors or watch at home. It’s clearly important to people and it warms my heart. We are blessed to have the opportunity to be a holy community to one another in our parish and we praise the Lord for it.” †



**LEARN MORE**

About SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Rocklin at [www.rocklincatholic.org](http://www.rocklincatholic.org).

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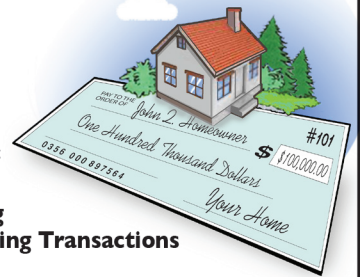
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## NATE AND VANESSA 'LEAVE IT IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD'

*From the front lines to the front of the altar*

BY LYNETTE MAGNINO  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RACHEL SIMA

**KNOWING HOW EASY IT CAN BE FOR WEDDINGS TO CAUSE WORRY AND ANXIETY,** Nate and Vanessa Lozano intended to avoid any hint of undue stress. After their July 2019 engagement, they made most of their plans by December for their Nov. 14, 2020 wedding date.

**YOUR STORIES  
OUR STORY**

“We wanted to stay away from stress,” explains Nate, clearly sensitized to its ill effects. As nurses, both Nate and Vanessa see a fair amount in their work at Sutter Sacramento’s cardiovascular surgery ICU and UC Davis’ emergency department, respectively.

Members of Good Shepherd Parish in Elk Grove, the couple reached out early to ensure they coordinated all the necessary marriage preparation requirements. Growing up in the church, there was

**“ AS NURSES, WE KNEW THE RIGHT THING TO DO. ONE PERSON INFECTED WITH COVID COULD CHANGE THE ENTIRE LANDSCAPE OF SOMEONE’S LIFE.”**

— VANESSA LOZANO







nothing more important to them than a sacramental wedding.

“I have a big family and Vanessa has a lot of relatives and we wanted to have a big party, too,” Nate, 30, recounts of their original reception plans at a beautiful Delta venue for 250 guests.

When news of the coronavirus started to intensify by March 2020, the couple realized the most well-laid plans could not have anticipated the hold the pandemic would have on every facet of life, including their wedding arrangements.

“It was up and down,” Vanessa, 29, interjects with hindsight of a string of months and a perpetual state of unknowing. “A weird, very tumultuous year,” she says, referring not only to the “wait and see” stance they adopted regarding their wedding details, but also in terms of health and safety.

Vanessa contracted COVID-19 by June through exposure in her front-line emergency room role. “I actually had mild symptoms,” she explains, recalling her quarantine at her mother’s home, distanced from her mom and her fiancé.

“Our attention shifted away from our wedding to just making sure everyone was safe,” Nate shares of the surreal time gripping the world. “Especially since we were seeing it firsthand in the hospitals,” Vanessa adds, completing Nate’s thought. She distinguishes the dire seriousness in her emergency room workplace. “It was evident it was going to last the whole year,” she says.

By July and August, Nate and Vanessa decided to forego a big wedding as California counties moved between red and purple tiers, and varying closure mandates associated with the county’s positivity rate. They knew even if they proceeded to make new plans, the very next week, restrictions might be different changing everything again. They considered rescheduling but held fast to their original date with hope. As it drew closer, they would determine what that meant for their ceremony.

### **PRESERVING THE SANCTITY OF THE SACRAMENT, OF LIFE**

“Let’s focus on the church and liturgy,” Nate remembers as their abiding priority mindset in the blur of melding months. Regardless of the color of the tier, Nate and Vanessa wanted to be married inside the church. An intimate, backyard gathering “like fellowship after church” would follow.

Nate confesses initial challenges for him to trim the guest list and forfeit party plans but the couple agreed the ceremony and church comforted them as a steadfast constant, “a blessing in itself.”

“Seeing the worst of the worst,” Vanessa says of COVID-19 and its scourge, “we loved how we could still protect and observe the sanctity of the sacrament we were about to receive and do it in a way that was safe.”

“My dad always says ‘leave it in the hands of the Lord,’”

Nate reflects, his voice tinged with emotion “and he was praying for us every day.”

“As nurses, we knew the right thing to do,” Vanessa offers with eyes of acute understanding. “One person infected with COVID could change the entire landscape of someone’s life,” she cautions, stirring visuals of intubated patients, on oxygen, on high-flow. “It showed me a reality that I would not want for my family and friends,” she concedes, confident their decisions revered the holiness of matrimony and the lives of those around them.

### **IN GOOD TIMES AND IN BAD, IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH**

As Nov. 14 approached, expecting 100 guests in the church, the tiers took a turn just the Tuesday before. They received news that only a handful of family, friends and attendants would be able to attend in person. Others would need to connect online via Zoom to watch the nuptials.

Nate and Vanessa “took a day” to recollect and process before getting to the task of notifying everyone.

“I mean you don’t have to be present to be felt,” Nate poses with a newfound outlook hardly entertained just months before. They draw a parallel to COVID patients alone without visitors.

“It made me feel so happy that we were able to celebrate with our closest friends and family and to see their faces,” Vanessa expresses, further conveying how it “made me feel so much more blessed that there were all the others on Zoom with us.”

“That’s something that always will resonate with us about our marriage,” Nate intimates and continues “we’re able to connect in other ways...check in with family and let them know we’re thinking of them, praying for them.”

The November weather had been warm but changed quickly. Daylight savings time ended, prompting some additional quick thinking for the post-ceremony gathering in the backyard. A few heaters and some stringed lights offered the fix. Everything was as God meant it to be. Nate and Vanessa were married.

Light beamed through the windows of Good Shepherd Church, and light shined in Nate and Vanessa’s hearts. With all that had happened during the past eight months – the ups and downs, the good, the bad, the sickness and renewed health – Nate and Vanessa’s love conquered COVID and they are ready for the rest of their journey, leaving it in the hands of the Lord. †

**“ MY DAD ALWAYS SAYS ‘LEAVE IT IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD,’ AND HE WAS PRAYING FOR US EVERY DAY.”**

— NATE LOZANO



# ROCIO OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF YOLO-SOLANO HELPS OTHERS WITH RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

BY JOHN GONSALVES JR.



■ Rocio and Giovanni Moreno

**IN THE FALL OF 2020**, Catholic Charities of Yolo-Solano (CCYOSO) distributed over \$4.1 million in one-time cash assistance to low-income families residing in Solano County who had lost their jobs or had their wages reduced due to COVID-19. These dollars directly impacted 1,286 households within Solano County communities, helping prevent eviction due to COVID-19 and reducing the risk of families and individuals from becoming homeless.

The Rental Assistance Program, funded by the Federal CARES Act, was implemented by an amazing staff of 20, CCYOSO Board and countless volunteers who helped implement and execute this program within a span of three months.

One person, in particular, was not only one of the temporary case managers assisting with the program but also a client of the program herself. Rocio Moreno, a parishioner of St. Mary Parish in Vacaville, a single mother, lost multiple part-time jobs when the pandemic began. Rocio's

first contact with CCYOSO was seeking legal aid, for help with a child custody battle in which she feared losing her son, Giovanni. At the same time, she was struggling with homelessness and finding work. It was during this difficult time in her life that she looked within and decided that she needed to learn to place her trust in God and be aware of his signs.

Rocio has always tried to be involved in her parish. She is currently in her second year with HAHA (Hearts and Hands Apostolate), her first year with faith formation and as a lector.

In August 2020, she heard of the opportunity to be a volunteer for the Rental Assistance Program with CCYOSO. With little to no experience in case management, Rocio dove in headfirst and was willing to get out of her comfort zone to assist those suffering in her community. There were many long days and nights, very tough and emotional phone calls with individuals and families suffering from fear of losing their homes. Rocio went above and beyond to assist, always willing to help the team any way she could, and was instrumental in the success of the program.

When asked about the experience, Rocio replied: "When I think of CCYOSO I feel blessed! A smile comes to my face and an avalanche of emotions, thoughts and feelings overflows my mind! Some hurtful, some beautiful. But one prevails, the thought of God looking at me, at us, and saying come done my faithful servants, come to the joy of the Lord!" †

## YOUR STORIES OUR STORY



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# OFFICIAL

Bishop Jaime Soto has made the following canonical appointments:

## DEACONS

### Effective Jan. 1, 2021

- **Dcn. Daniel Blanton**, while remaining Deacon of St. Peter Parish, Dixon, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.
- **Dcn. Rommel Declines**, while remaining Deacon of Good Shepherd Parish, Elk Grove, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.
- **Dcn. Raymond Elias**, while remaining Deacon of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Fairfield, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.
- **Dcn. Atonio Latu**, while remaining Deacon of St. Joseph Parish, Sacramento, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.
- **Dcn. Mike Mangas**, while remaining Deacon of St. Joseph Parish, Redding, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.
- **Dcn. Paul Sajben**, while remaining Deacon of St. John the Baptist Parish, Chico, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.
- **Dcn. Richard Soria**, while remaining Deacon of St. Patrick Parish, Grass Valley, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.
- **Dcn. Mike Turner**, while remaining Deacon of St. Rose of Lima Parish, Roseville, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.
- **Dcn. Jack Wilson**, while remaining Deacon of St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carmichael, has been appointed Legislative Visit Coordinator and member of the Deacon Legislative Advocacy Team.

### Effective Feb. 26, 2021

- **Dcn. Ray Helgeson**, previously assigned to Sacred Heart Parish, Gridley, has been granted permission to retire.

## PRIESTS

### Effective Jan. 21, 2021

- **Rev. Charles Kelly**, Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Red Bluff, has been granted a temporary Leave of Absence.
- **Rev. Adam K. Tokashiki, PES**, assigned Parochial Vicar of St. Lawrence Parish, North Highlands, has been appointed to the Presbyteral Council as a Bishop's Appointee.

### Effective Jan. 22, 2021

- **Rev. Kavungal Davy, CMI**, assigned Pastor of St. Mary Parish, Sacramento, has been appointed to the Presbyteral Council as a Bishop's Appointee.
- **Rev. Fredhelito E. Gucor**, while remaining Pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Redding, has been appointed Priest-in-Charge Pro-tem of Sacred Heart Parish, Red Bluff.

### Effective Feb. 1, 2021

- **Rev. John Healy**, currently retired, has been appointed Priest-in-Residence Pro-Tem of Sacred Heart Parish, Red Bluff.

### Effective Feb. 15, 2021

- **Rev. Sean R. O'Leary**, currently retired, has been appointed Priest-in-Charge Pro-Tem of Sacred Heart Parish, Gridley.
- **Rev. Roland B. Ramirez**, Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Gridley, has been granted a Leave of Absence.

Bishop Jaime Soto, in consultation with the Priests' Personnel Board has made the following canonical appointments:

### Effective Jan. 22, 2021

- **Rev. Salvador B. Bringas**, assigned Pastor of St. John Parish, Quincy, formerly a priest of the Diocese of Bangued, has been incardinated into the Diocese of Sacramento.

### Effective Jan. 25, 2021

- **Rev. Jose A. Campos**, a priest of the Diocese of Tula, Mexico, has been appointed Parochial Vicar of St. John the Baptist Parish, Chico.

## In Memoriam

- **Rev. William K. Walsh** died on March 2, 2021. He was born on Sept. 30, 1925 and ordained to the priesthood on June 5, 1949. Father Walsh served the Diocese of Sacramento for almost 72 years.

— **Kathy Conner, Chancellor**

## Clergy and religious serving in diocese celebrate jubilees this year

Congratulations to the following priests and men and women religious celebrating significant jubilees during 2021 and on their longtime service to the people of God:

- 60 years:** Father William J. Dinelli; Father Michael J. Dillon; Brother Charles Jackson, SJ; Father Michael McFadden; Father Sean O'Leary  
**50 years:** Sister Michelle Gorman, RSM; Father Daniel A. Looney  
**40 years:** Father Manuel B. Soria; Father Roy R. Doner  
**25 years:** Father Aldrin G. Basarte; Father Kavungal Davy, CMI; Father Jose Estaniel, MSP; Father Restituto O. Galang, MSP; Father Michael J. Hebda; Father Glenn Jaron, MSP; Father Bernardin Mugabo; Father Eliseo Napiese, MSP; Father Michael O'Reilly; Father Jude C. Okafor; Father Teodorico Tacaisan, MSP

## CATHOLIC HERALD

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# Hiems Transit!

## THE SONG OF SONGS SAYS IT ALL

**WITH MILLIONS NOW VACCINATED AND HERD IMMUNITY GETTING CLOSER BY THE DAY**, the worst of the pandemic is over. Churches are open again, children have returned to the classroom, and there is less fear of the invisible enemy that disrupted every aspect of our lives. We have a lot for which to be thankful. In the poetic words of the Song of Songs, “Winter is past (*Hiems transit* in Latin)...and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.”

Perhaps one doesn't immediately think of the Song of Songs when looking for a Bible quotation to express our thankfulness to God at this time. The name of God is not even mentioned in that book of the Old Testament. The Song of Songs is a lengthy poem about the sexual desire of two lovers for each other, and it uses the kind of erotic language that can surprise someone who has never read it before.

Yet, over the centuries, the Song of Songs has appeared in the theology and spiritual writing of the Catholic Church with surprising frequency. St John of the Cross saw it as an allegory for the love of Christ for his bride, the Church, and St. Edith Stein picked up that same language from reading John's poetry. So did Dorothy Day.

But the Song of Songs can also be used to celebrate the end of an unusual period of trial and tribulation. Irish history has a good example of that. For most of the 18th century, Catholics in Ireland were regulated by penal laws known as the “Popery Code” that were designed to reduce the population to extreme poverty and ignorance. Catholics could not purchase land or own property (such as a horse) worth more than five pounds, for example, and bringing up children in the Catholic faith was against the law. Catholicism was only kept alive by priests

on the run who organized secret open-air Masses and outdoor schools known as “hedge schools.” It was not unlike what happened in Mexico in the 1920s.

This “Popery Code” was gradually abrogated by acts of parliament, one of the most important of which was the Catholic Relief Act of 1782, which finally allowed Catholics to found their own schools (with the consent of the local Protestant bishop, of course). Limited as it was, this act marked the end of a long winter for Irish Catholics and it filled many a heart with joy.

The Diocese of Ossary (Kilkenny) immediately founded a diocesan school, the first of its kind in the country, and named it after St. Kieran. (Later they added a seminary; several priests in our diocese were trained there.) And when looking for a motto, they turned to the Song of Songs. To this day the motto of that school is *Hiems transit* (winter is past) – a poetic reminder of a time of trial that is now a distant memory.

The trials of our pandemic were briefer, of course, and of a different kind. Nonetheless, the sense of relief today is as palpable and the Song of Songs is as relevant. Winter is indeed over and the sound of the turtledove can be heard in our land. †

“  
THE TRIALS OF OUR  
PANDEMIC WERE BRIEFER,  
OF COURSE, AND OF  
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NONETHELESS, THE SENSE  
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### LAST WORD



**MSGR. JAMES MURPHY** is former associate publisher of *Catholic Herald* and rector emeritus of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.





# If someone you loved died today, would you know what to do?

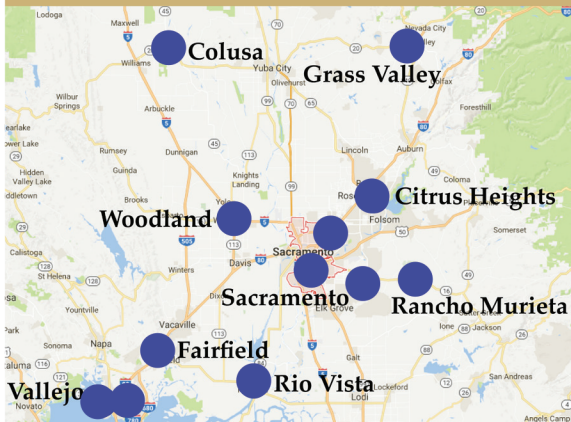
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