

International Edition

THE CATHOLIC ACCENT+

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HONORING SS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS IN SLOVAKIA

BISHOP LARRY J. KULICK

I made my first trip to Slovakia as a newly ordained priest 30 years ago in 1993. I remember arriving in Slovakia on July 5, only to find that every business was closed. The nation, recently emerging from communism, was celebrating the state holiday honoring Ss. Cyril and Methodius. I was amazed by the liturgical celebrations, the musical and dance celebrations, and the many vendors.

Fast forward 30 years, and who would have imagined that in 2023 I would return to Slovakia as an American bishop, privileged to celebrate and be the homilist for a nationally televised Mass celebrating this historic holiday. I would never have dreamed that I would meet the Slovakian president, Zuzana Caputova, and have a front seat for the state holiday events that have such a religious, cultural and historical significance to Slovakia and surrounding Eastern European nations.

July 5th marks the arrival of the two Slavic missionaries Cyril and Methodius more than 1,160 years ago. The brothers began spreading Christianity, helped people resist the powerful surrounding empires and created their own alphabet that enabled locals to translate religious texts. This was critical in their mission to spread Christianity.

Planning for my trip this summer to Slovakia began a year ago while I was in Rome with brother bishops from around the world. It was there that I met and got to know Auxiliary Bishop Peter Beňo from the Diocese of Nitra. Bishop Beňo and I were invited to the Institute of Ss. Cyril and Methodius for the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, which is a patronal feast of Slovakia. Spontaneously, I was invited to be the main celebrant of that Mass to be celebrated in Slovak.

A few months after the Mass, Father Viliam Zemancik, the Vice Rector of the Institute, called to invite me for the July celebration in Nitra at the invitation of the Diocesan Bishop, Viliam Judák. Needless to say, I was incredibly humbled and considered it a great privilege and honor.

In my homily, I shared with the thousands in attendance my own experiences. I told them about growing up in a Slovak parish in Western Pennsylvania. This history and culture I learned as a child and young adult factored into my formation and my identity. It was a significant part of my own vocational discernment, as my background provided me with many examples of self-sacrifice and faith.

I shared with them my gratitude for their great inheritance to the United States through those who immigrated, worked hard, sacrificed to build churches, drove the economy and educated their children.

One of the things that I realized in traveling back after three decades was that many at the Mass, unlike the generation or two ahead of them, have only lived in freedom. Their parents and grandparents lived under communism. I assured them that in our country, we were very aware of the political and religious restrictions that many lived under during that time. We prayed for them; we remembered them with the intention that they would be able to live in a time of freedom.



Slovakian president, Zuzana Caputova, shakes hands with Bishop Larry J. Kulick



TOP: Visited Spis Castle, the largest castle in Slovakia.

LEFT: The Norbertine Sisters are an important part of the staff in the Diocese of Nitra. Together we celebrated "Christmas in July." They made me two different types of Bolbalky which is served on Christmas Eve. We sang traditional Slovak Christmas songs as well. Here, the Sisters are showing off their Catholic Accent aprons. These Sisters are fantastic and work so hard and unselfishly.



In Nitra, I attended, spoke and participated in a seminar on Ss. Cyril and Methodius which included seeing artifacts and relics.



I was honored to celebrate Mass in the village of Nova Bystrica, our ancestral town. Present is the Bishop of the Diocese of Zilina, Bishop Tomas Galis, the mayor of Nova Bystrica and other parishioners of St. John the Baptist Parish, civil and members of the community.

... continued from page 4

While our prayers were answered, I reminded them that freedom is not free and not to take this gift of newfound abundance from God for granted. While the majority of people in Slovakia believe in Christ, the number has slipped a bit over the years because of many of the pitfalls of freedom that our society faces. Secularism and materialism are always a global threat. The family unit remains very strong in Slovakia, but I reminded those in attendance to be wary and to steer clear of interferences that impact culture, tradition and family. That is very evident here when a recent Gallup poll released in late July revealed that those in the United States who believe in God has dipped to a new low.

Ss. Cyril and Methodius were progressive in their desire to bring that faith to the people. In a beautiful way, they were able to enhance the culture and the Christian faith. Their evangelization mission, while historical fact, is still living and moving. We are called to join the movement. When we answer that call, especially in bringing people to the Eucharist, we carry on that Cyrillic and Methodian legacy whose roots began in Slovakia.

In prayer, especially in this time of Eucharistic Renewal, let us ask Ss. Cyril and Methodius to intercede so that no matter the obstacle, the message of Christ, our source of unity, calls us into one body through the spiritual nourishment of His precious body and blood.

I hope you enjoy some of the pictures from my trip.

+ Larry J. Kulick

The Most Reverend Larry J. Kulick, J.C.L.
Bishop of Greensburg



Had a great gathering with my family in Slovakia ... three generations!

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Pictured above left to right: Father Tyler J. Bandura, Deacon Craig Alexander, Seminarian Mario Porreca, Deacon David Slusarick, Seminarian Matteo Arcara, Deacon John Torres, Seminarian Kevin Richardson, Seminarian Dale Hyland, Seminarian Tyler Randolph. Seated: Seminarians Thomas Oldenberg and Ryan Scavnicky.

BY CLIFF GORSKI

It's often said that there must be something in the water in Ford City: In the last decade, three parishioners of Christ, Prince of Peace Parish have been ordained to the priesthood in the Diocese of Greensburg.

Father Tyler J. Bandura, ordained in 2013, is currently Pastor of St. James Parish, New Alexandria, and Administrator Pro-tem at St. Rose Parish, Latrobe, as well as Director of Priestly Vocations for the Diocese.

Father Eric J. Dinga was ordained in 2015. He is now Pastor of his home parish and St. Lawrence Parish, Cadogan.

This June, Father Andrew J. Hamilton was ordained by Bishop Larry J. Kulick and is now serving as Parochial Vicar of St. Joseph Parish, St. John the Evangelist Parish, St. Therese, Little Flower of Jesus Parish, and St. Mary (Nativity) Parish, all in Uniontown.

"A divine calling must come through the work of the Divine, which I must say was my experience growing up. I think of the many people in my home parish who loved their Catholic faith, lived it faithfully each day and cherished their relationship with the Church," Father Bandura said, adding that he has wonderful, joy-filled memories of the priests he encountered during his youth.

Father Dinga noted, "Just as we say that it takes a village to raise a child, so, too, does it take a parish to raise and foster a spiritual child. The small-town nature of the Ford City community lends itself to taking 'ownership' – in a positive way – of the vocations who have been raised up from among them, and they take pride in that, in the best sense of the word."

This year, Bishop Kulick accepted three men into the priestly formation program for the Diocese of Greensburg. Matteo Arcara, a parishioner of St. Paul Parish, Greensburg, Thomas Oldenburg, a parishioner of Holy Family Parish, Latrobe, and Ryan Scavnicky, a parishioner of Immaculate Conception Parish, Irwin, are all attending St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Wynnewood.

They are in the propaedeutic stage of the priestly formation program. In the newly added propaedeutic stage, Arcara,

Oldenberg and Scavnicky live in community with a team of priest formators. While introductory in nature, the propaedeutic stage is a time for men to grow in prayer, trust in God, and gain knowledge of the Catholic Church and its teachings. This time helps seminarians lay a foundation for a new way of life centered in Christ and in communion with their Bishop, presbyterate and local Church.

Deacons Craig Alexander, David Slusarick and John Torres were ordained to the Transitional Diaconate in May by Bishop Kulick and have received their pastoral appointments.

Deacon Alexander, whose home parish is St. Agnes Parish, North Huntingdon, is serving St. Barbara Parish, Harrison City. Deacon Slusarick, whose home parish is St. Therese, Little Flower of Jesus, is serving Mother of Sorrows Parish, Murrysburg. Deacon Torres, whose home parish is St. Rita Parish, Connellsville, is serving the Catholic Community of Connellsville and Dunbar. They continue in their formation and are scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Kulick in 2024.

Bishop Kulick also made academic assignments for seminarians Mario Porreca and Kevin Richardson. Porreca, a parishioner of St. Anne Parish, Rostraver, will continue his theological studies at Saint Vincent Seminary, Latrobe. Richardson will also continue his theological studies at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Wynnewood. Both are entering the configuration stage, year I, in the fall. This summer Porreca and Tyler Randolph, a parishioner of Immaculate Conception Parish, Irwin, will experience parish life during a 10-week summer appointment to Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Coral and Lucernemines. Randolph attends Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary. Richardson will have the same opportunity in ministering at Church of the Resurrection Parish, Northern Indiana County.

Seminarian Dale Hyland, a parishioner of St. Margaret Mary Parish, Lower Burrell, will return to his studies at St. Mark Seminary in Erie in the fall while continuing his education at Gannon University, Erie.

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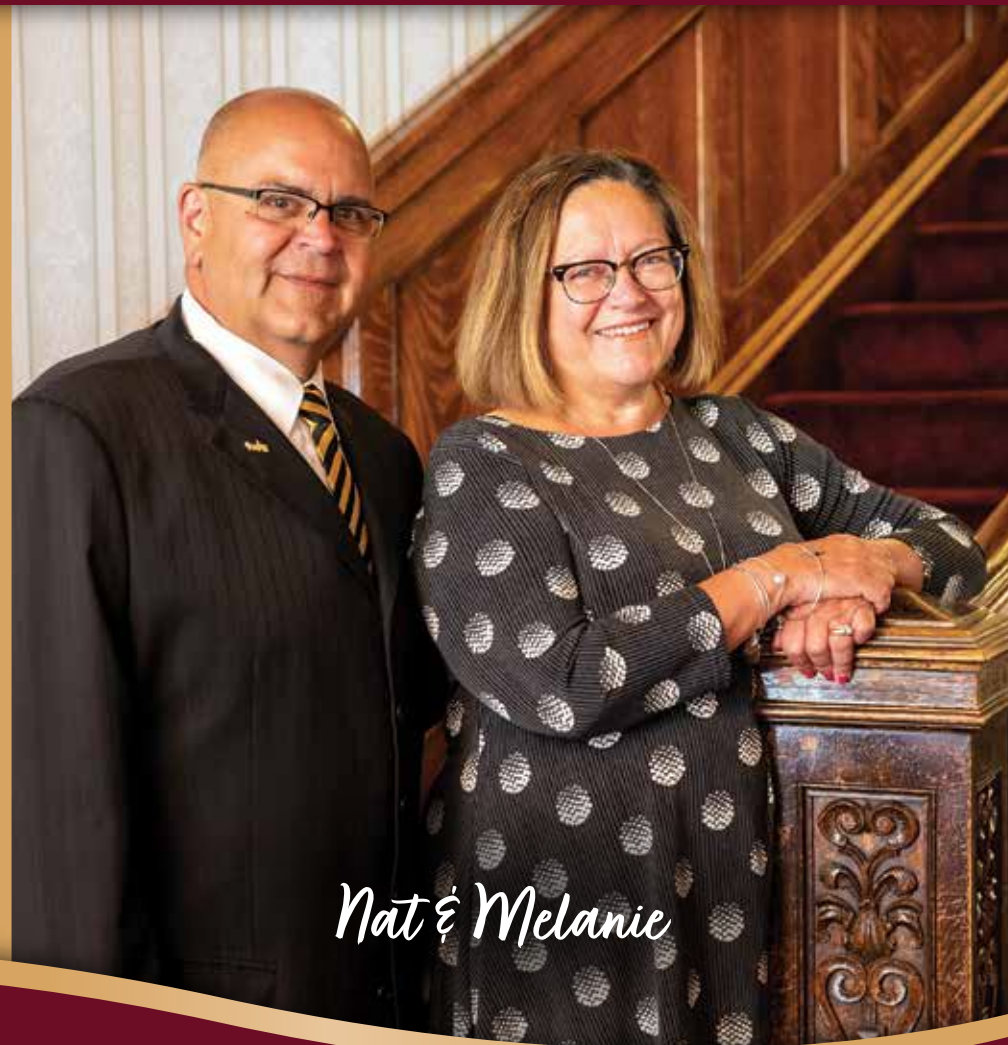
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HOPE & HELP FOR UKRAINE

BY CLIFF GORSKI

Before summer ends, a group of children at an orphanage in western Ukraine will receive a special package, the contents of which express the love, hope and prayers of faith formation students living more than 5,000 miles away in the Diocese of Greensburg.

Helen Carroll, a fourth-grade faith formation teacher for St. Anne Parish, Rostraver, and Holy Family Parish, West Newton, wanted her students to connect with children suffering the ravages of war in Ukraine. She developed a project she felt was age-appropriate and would demonstrate the love and mercy of Christ.

Her students went to work to create a banner

featuring the blue and yellow flag of Ukraine as its backdrop and a message of love and support.

"We took a picture of all of the children in grades four through eight, and then they put their handprints around the picture in the shape of a heart," Carroll said. "We are the hands and hearts of Christ in the world."

Students from other grades created cards to be sent along with the banner. Alicia Mahalko's seventh-grade students researched and translated personal messages into Ukrainian. Mahalko, who served 24 years in the military, wanted her students to understand that even if the translation was off, their messages of love are universal, just like the Church.

"It brought me great comfort that the Eucharist, the sacraments and progression of the Mass is always the same regardless if I was in Kuwait, Rome or Korea," said Mahalko, a parishioner of Holy Family Parish.

The completed banner was displayed for parishioners in late April. Father David J. Nazimek, Pastor of both parishes, said he hopes this project is something the children

remember for the rest of their lives.

"We hear about this in the news and on social media and places where the kids are connected," Father Nazimek said. "But it's a situation that is far away until they are able to touch it with their hands, which is what they did."

Emma Smith, a Holy Family parishioner who will be in eighth grade this fall, said she worries about the children in Ukraine.

"Everybody should live a happy life," she said. "I hope this gives them a glimmer of hope to get through it all and know that there are other people that care for them."

Carroll asked Father Oleh Seremchuk, Pastor of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, Perryopolis, who is from Ukraine and has family still living in the war-torn nation, to get the banner and cards to Ukraine.

Before the end of summer, he will send them to children living in an orphanage in western Ukraine who had to be moved from eastern Ukraine because of the war.

"The orphanage is operated by Catholic nuns, and Father knows the priest who oversees the facility," Carroll said. "Other donations that are being sent with the banner will help with some of the immediate needs of the children."



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Caprese Salad with Pesto Vinaigrette

Recipe from Monsignor Raymond E. Riffle

Caprese Salad

INGREDIENTS

- 4 large tomatoes – sliced
- 12 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese – sliced
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves

Pesto Vinaigrette

(yields 2/3 cup of dressing – 4 servings)

INGREDIENTS

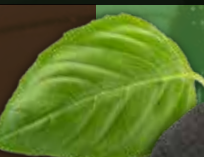
- 1½ cups fresh basil leaves, loosely packed
- ⅓ cup pine nuts
- 3 cloves fresh garlic (minced)
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons parmesan cheese
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

In food processor place everything in the bowl with blade and rough chop 4-5 times on pulse.

Scrape down.

Turn the processor on and slowly pour in olive oil. Stop and scrape down. Then continue processing until smooth and creamy. Season with salt and pepper. Pulse again and serve.



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“Lucecitas”

shines bright for youngest kids at St. John the Baptist Parish, Perryopolis

BY ELIZABETH SMITH

Julianna Mendez Baluch grew up attending many churches across the country as the daughter of a Navyman. As she married and started a family, Mendez Baluch joined St. John the Baptist Parish in Perryopolis—and quickly felt something was missing.

“At all of the Navy churches there was something for the younger families,” Mendez Baluch said. “Not having a birth-through-age-5 program here was very lonely, as a mom. It was something I always expected for my kids, to make those friends and connections within the church that are so critical.”

This is how Lucecitas – a bilingual, early childhood program that means “little lights”—was born at St. John Parish. With the blessing of Father Rodolfo P. Mejia Jr., Mendez Baluch launched the program last year, which offers lessons and socialization in both Spanish and English for infants and young children, along with their parents.

Father Mejia said he immediately realized Lucecitas would offer



Father Rodolfo P. Mejia Jr.



Mass for the Spanish-speaking community of Western Pa is held every Sunday evening at 6 p.m. at Ascension Parish, Jeannette, and celebrated by Benedictine Father Job Foote, Parochial Vicar. There are many young families in attendance and children participating in the various lay ministries of the Mass. Parishioner Bernadette Dixon attends each Sunday as a representative from the parish. “Mass is very special, and afterward is important as well. We meet in Mersinger Hall and share in a meal and fellowship,” Dixon said.



Bernadette Dixon

vital programming to the St. John Parish community and “gave her the green light.”

“(Lucecitas) It is widening human development with the idea that we should not be restricted to our very own language,” he said. “It also fills a need to better understand the faith, which was originally spoken in Greek, Arameic, Hebrew and then handed down to us in our modern language. So now, we bring the children to that: when the faith was spoken first.”

The inaugural session of Lucecitas included activities and lessons like songs, crafts, dancing, Bible stories tailored to each age level, Spanish vocabulary and speech, and science experiments. Mendez Baluch, who is a homeschool teacher to her three children, said exposing children early to both Spanish and the Catholic faith is key.

“Learning a language at a young age teaches children a different way of thinking,” she said. “The younger you learn, the better you learn. Even if there is a gap, children will understand (foreign language) better when they are in high school because they have heard those sounds and can better process it.”

She added that she chose to call the program “Lucecitas” because “we all need to shine a light in the world.”

“Making positive connections and memories in the church helps people, even if they are not Catholic,” Mendez Baluch explains. “If we shine that light, people see that we are doing good and will think ‘your God is good.’ Then, if families join the church or children get baptized, hopefully that starts here with them feeling like this is a safe, nice place.”

As Lucecitas returns this fall, Mendez Baluch has a goal to ultimately create preschool for ages 4-6 with a more structured Spanish curriculum; a homeschool class for children in first through fifth-grade, also with set curriculum; and, a playgroup class for birth through 6 that allows parents to relax, talk and let their kids play.

Lucecitas is free and open to the entire community, which Mendez Baluch said is critical.

“Everyone should have access to preschool socialization and a bilingual program,” she said. “I don’t want cost to be a barrier for families who might need it but can’t afford it.”



PHOTOS: JENNIFER MIELE
MARY SEAMANS
JORDAN WHITEKO
BERNADETTE DIXON



Julianna Mendez Baluch



CHRIST BEARERS UNITE

Retreat at Our Lady of Grace Church

Empowering Special Needs Individuals

Christ Bearers Unite will present a retreat **Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023**, at Our Lady of Grace Church, 1011 Mt. Pleasant Road, Greensburg. The theme, One Bread One Body, will be discussed and experienced by participants.

The schedule includes registration at 1:30 p.m. in **Albanese Hall**; Eucharistic Adoration at 1:45 p.m.; and Mass at 2 p.m. in the church with lively worship music, followed by appetizers and welcome in Albanese Hall. The afternoon will include talks by Monsignor Kiniry on the Body of Christ made up of our many-faceted talents, gifts, and personalities. The day also includes a craft to take home.

In support of Our Lady of Grace's mission to the underserved area of Frenchville, PA, retreat participants are asked to donate smoke detectors, flashlights including batteries, night lights with replacement bulbs and/or batteries of various sizes. These safety items will be used for homes in Frenchville.

The **registration fee is \$15**, which includes a full-course dinner at 5 p.m. from LL Kuhn Catering. For registration, please call **Carla Colello** at **412-915-4146**. Registration fee may be paid the day of the retreat.



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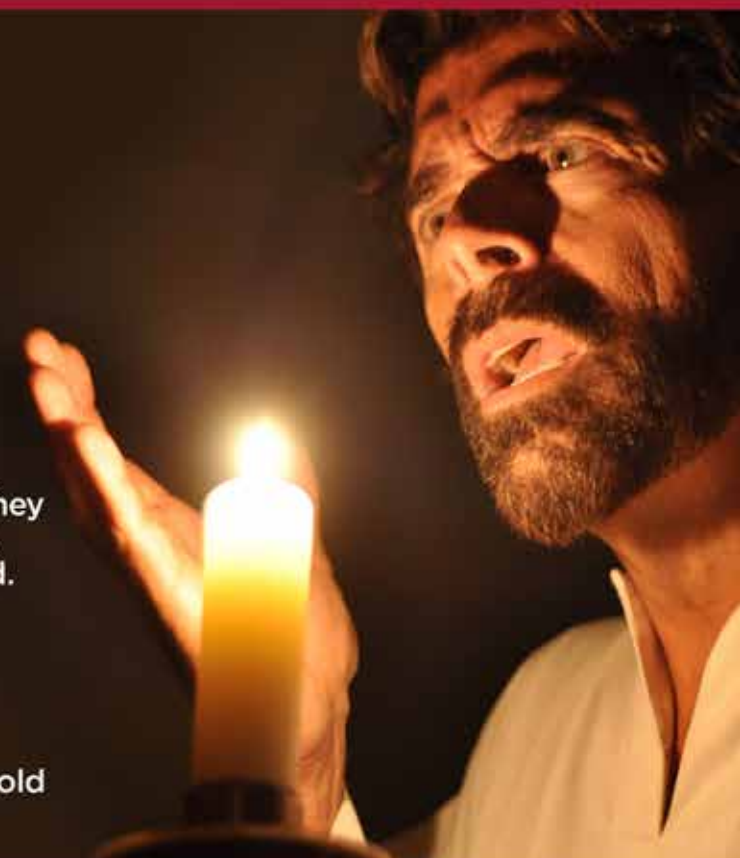
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2:00 PM & 6:00 PM Sessions

Saturday, December 16, 2023

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4:00 PM - Mass with Bishop Kulick

5:00 PM - 8:00 PM - Christmas Night Market



Saint Nicholas the Gift Giver Registration opens November 1

ONE BODY IN CHRIST



Pictured left to right:
Standing, Oluchi and Austin Adesina.
Seated, Oluwatobi "Toby"
and Oluwaseyi "Seyi" Adesina

Nigerian Catholics call Greensburg Home

BY JORDAN WHITEKO and ROBIN MULL

A "home away from home" is how the Adesina family describes their faith community at Our Lady of Grace Parish, Greensburg. The family of four traveled nearly 6,000 miles to relocate from Nigeria to the area around the Diocese of Greensburg and are now active members of the parish choir and its community.

An educational opportunity in January 2017 brought Oluchi Jennifer Austin-Adesina to the United States to study nursing at New Jersey City University. She loved the diversity she saw in the United States and the opportunities that surrounded her new home. That is why she had the rest of her family join her in August of that year.

After Oluchi completed her studies, she wanted to stay in the United States. However, she wanted a place for her family that was removed from the hustle and bustle of city life. Her prayers were answered when she received a job offer to be a nurse supervisor at Excelsa Health, now Independence Health System, in Greensburg.

The new job and relocation were exciting, but equally important to the family was finding a new church community. In 2020, they found Our Lady of Grace Parish, where they were welcomed and able to celebrate Mass and sing in His glory.

"There's just something about this parish that feels welcoming. I love Father Dan's sermons and Father Dan sings very well, too," said Oluchi. And her husband, Austin, agrees: "God wanted us to be here at this time."

Austin and Oluchi are involved in parish life on multiple levels, serving as Eucharistic ministers, Mass cantors, and organists. "It's always a joy to celebrate Mass whenever the Adesinas share their gifts in liturgical ministry," said Pastor Father Daniel J. Blout.

Their sons, Oluwatobi "Toby" and Oluwaseyi "Seyi," participate in Mass as altar servers and spend their free time volunteering for parish events, such as Vacation Bible School and fish fries. They are also following in their parents' footsteps for their love of music.

Music is the heart of what inspires Austin and Oluchi, especially spiritual music. It provides them with strength and encouragement through their daily lives. In Nigeria, in 2000, Austin moved to Abuja and attended Mass at Our Lady Queen of Nigeria Pro-Cathedral, Garki-Abuja (Federal Capital Territory). He felt compelled to join the choir, and it was there he met fellow choir member and his future wife.

Their love of music and worship doesn't go unnoticed. Director of Music and Liturgy, Marisa Cazden says the Adesinas are a family truly led by the Holy Spirit.



"The way they participate in the liturgy turns their performance into a prayer, leading our worship more fully in praise of God," said Cazden.

In Nigeria, music is a big part of the offertory procession that involves singing and dancing. The liturgical aspect of the Roman Catholic faith remains the same wherever you attend Mass. "For instance, when you take out the priest and the singing, everything about the Mass is the same; that's the beauty of Catholicism," said Austin.

Oluchi said that we are all children of God and united to celebrate the liturgy of Mass as one body of Christ. "Evangelism is not just about preaching the word but doing it. People see you, and your actions before you speak." Oluchi calls us to do the work of God. "That is what our faith is calling us to do."



Toby (right) and Seyi help with Vacation Bible School.



PHOTOS: ROBIN MULL,
JORDAN WHITEKO,
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Tomato Tomahto



BY JORDAN WHITEKO

PHOTOS: JORDAN WHITEKO AND MARY SEAMANS

Father Julius Capongpongan is one of more than 20 international priests serving in the Diocese of Greensburg. He is beloved by the parishioners in the Yough Catholic Community of Connellsville and Dunbar and meets weekly with Ed Thomas, who is a parishioner of St. Aloysius Parish, Dunbar.

Together they share in fellowship and tomato sandwiches. Father Julius visits Thomas every Friday and spends the holidays with him and his family as well. Thomas describes himself as Father Julius's "United States dad" and teaches him some history from the surrounding area.

Father Julius is looking forward to the International Food Festival and the visit from his home Bishop of Tagum, Bishop Medil Aseo.

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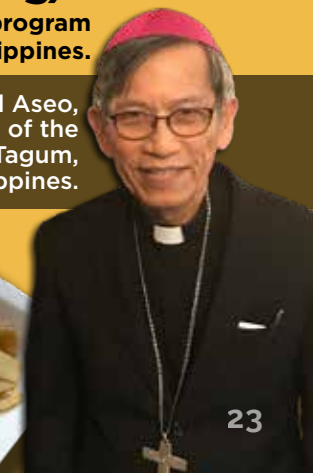
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The Plight of Christians in the Holy Land



BY MARY SEAMANS

Roni Salsa, a Palestinian Christian from Bethlehem, came to the United States more than 20 years ago with one mission in mind.

Working through the nonprofit Land of Peace, Salsa spends his time educating Americans about the struggles Christians in the Holy Land face on a daily basis.

His home parish is Our Lady of Fatima Parish, located a mile away from the Nativity Church where Jesus was born and the Shepherd's Field where the angels came to announce the birth of Jesus.

Salsa's parents, siblings and in-laws still live in the Holy Land. They are part of the 1% of the entire Christian population in Isreal. Bethlehem once had a Christian population of 85%. That number has dropped drastically to just 17%.

Salsa says the biggest reason for the exodus of Christians is the pursuit of freedom and a less restrictive life.

Daily life for Palestinian Christians living in Bethlehem is difficult. This Palestinian city, like much of the West Bank, is surrounded by a 26-foot-tall cement wall topped with razor wire and watch towers.

"The wall isolates these communities and makes them like a prison," Salsa said. "The Israeli government began construction of this wall in 2002 and destroyed many Palestinian homes, farms and businesses along its route. The wall impedes businesses, restricts farmers from their land, and cuts off residents from previously accessible family members, education and medical services."

There are a series of gates along the wall controlled by the Israeli military. If Palestinians living in Bethlehem want to travel to Jerusalem, which is only six miles away, they have to obtain a special visa. First, they must apply for a magnet card, which shows they have a clean record, and then they can apply for the visa to visit, study or work. There are more than 140 Israeli checkpoints in the Palestinian territories.

Each day, more than 80,000 workers go from Palestinian territories into Israel. The gates are crowded, and there are a lot of procedures and required documents.

Our Lady of Fatima Parish



West Bank



Check Point



"Sometimes soldiers just don't like you and will send you back, and there are always long delays. It is easy to see why many Christians have left the country," Salsa said.

Visiting the Holy Land is an ordeal for Salsa. As a Palestinian, he is not allowed to fly directly to Tel Aviv. He must fly to Amman, Jordan, a 12-hour flight. It takes another seven to eight hours to arrive in Bethlehem, if he is lucky. Then, he must pass through the Jordanian checkpoints, then the Israeli checkpoints and then the Palestinian checkpoints. Each has its own procedures and documentation. Sometimes the Israeli checkpoints close early, so he has to return to Amman and start over again the next day.

Through Land of Peace, Salsa has been visiting churches since 2004, including parishes in the Diocese of Greensburg. In educating parishioners about the plight of Christians in the Holy Land, he asks for what he calls "The 3 Ps":

- **Prayer:** He asks the faithful to pray for peace in the Holy Land and for the Christians in Bethlehem and Jerusalem.
- **Pilgrimage:** He encourages people to visit the Holy Land. Catholics believe the Holy Land is the Fifth Gospel; those who read the four Gospels need to see where it all happened. Salsa promises anyone who visits the Holy Land will have a life-changing experience.
- **Projects:** One of the projects is wood carvings from blessed olive trees in Bethlehem; Jesus prayed under the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. "They do not cut the trees down, they only trim some of the branches. Some of the carvings they sell are made from branches more than 1,000 years old. They receive work from over 400 carvers and their families, and he tries to sell them here to raise money for them," Salsa said.

Salsa said he is extremely grateful to the many faithful in the Diocese of Greensburg who have supported his mission and pray for peace, and for those who continue to live as Christians in the Holy Land.



PHOTOS: MARY SEAMANS, GETTYIMAGES

EXPERIENTIAL EVANGELIZATION

Roni Salsa can bring experiential evangelization to your parish, discussing the plight of Christians in the Holy Land today. During his presentation, he provides samples of olives, olive oil and other foods from the Holy Land, and explains their origins. He also has olive wood carvings and religious items for sale. This immersive experience is available for \$300 for up to 75 people. Proceeds benefit Christian families in the Holy Land.

He is available Wednesdays and Fridays from October 2023 through June 2024.

For information, email ronibanayot@yahoo.com or call 412-478-0588.

He will also be a presenter at the Sept. 21 KNOW HIM event: "Stunned Disciples."

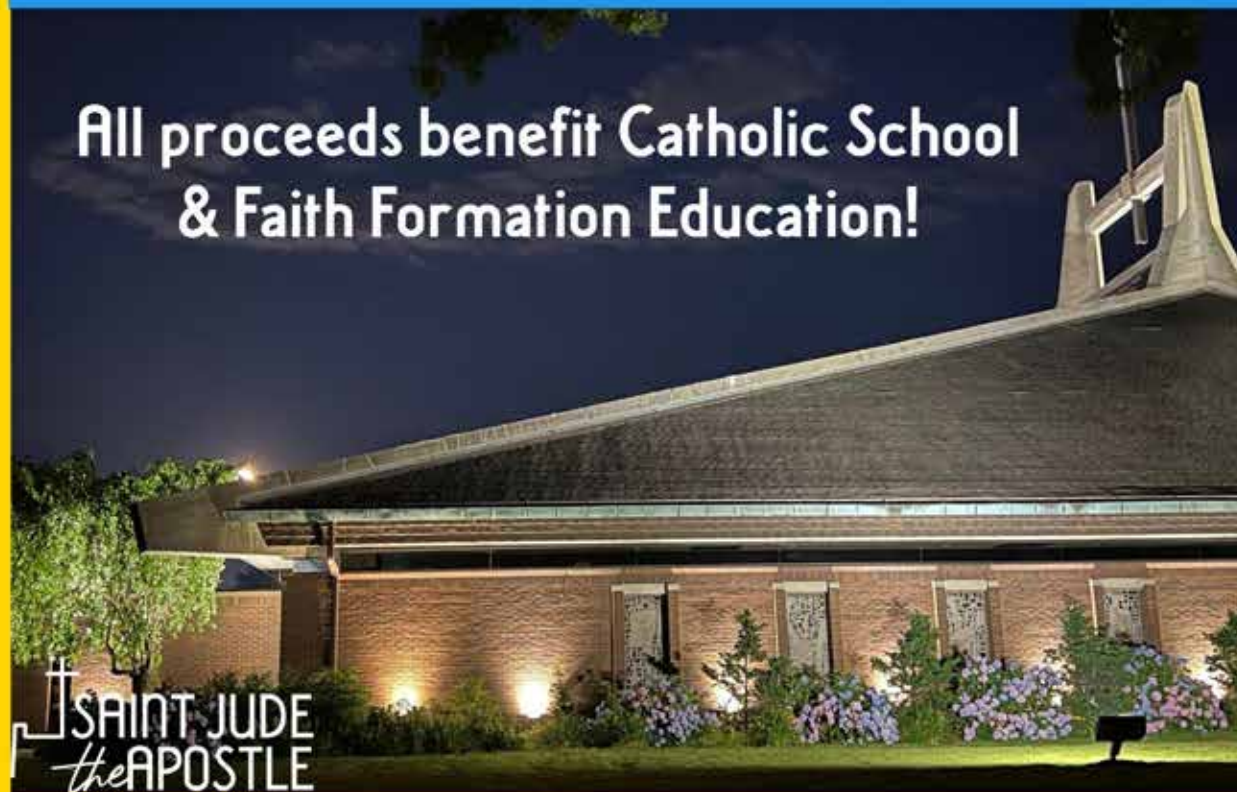


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