On a Monday morning in August, Genevieve Schmitt walked onto a military base in Virginia with a bag of peanut butter crackers, water, protein drinks and wet wipes, not sure what she was about to get into. Three days earlier she had been sitting in her office in Tulsa where she works with refugee resettlement for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. She had been asked if she could help the U.S. military process families arriving in the United States from Afghanistan after the dramatic fall of Kabul City.

“I told them on Thursday the 12 of August I would be willing to volunteer in the efforts. On Friday, The Benedictine monks of Saint Gregory’s Abbey welcomed a new member to their community on Sept. 14, the Feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross. Brother John Michael (Ford) Nguyen, O.S.B., made his profession of temporary vows as a monk of Saint Gregory’s Abbey. Rt. Rev. Lawrence Stasyszen, O.S.B., abbot of Saint Gregory’s, said, “We as a community are grateful to God for leading Brother John Michael

continued on page 12

Br. John Michael (Ford) Nguyen, O.S.B., makes profession of temporary vows


continued on page 13

Catholic Charities’ refugee leader works to settle Afghan families

By Diane Clay
The Sooner Catholic

On a Monday morning in August, Genevieve Schmitt walked onto a military base in Virginia with a bag of peanut butter crackers, water, protein drinks and wet wipes, not sure what she was about to get into. Three days earlier she had been sitting in her office in Tulsa where she works with refugee resettlement for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. She had been asked if she could help the U.S. military process families arriving in the United States from Afghanistan after the dramatic fall of Kabul City.

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Disciples of the Way

Discipleship is a way of life! Like life itself, it is a journey filled with rich blessings and difficult challenges. Bearing good fruit over the course of this lifelong journey is our goal. The fruit we bear glorifies God.

As we grow closer to Jesus Christ throughout our lives, we experience the full breadth of this journey with all its texture and depth. The journey, or the way, is an ancient image for discipleship and the Christian life. In fact, it was an early way of describing the Church when disciples were referred to as members of “The Way” (Acts 9:27–28).

Over the course of the past few years, I have developed a sermonic style of walking the way of Saint James, the Camino de Santiago. The Camino is a network of ancient pilgrim routes reaching across Europe and culminating at the tomb of Saint James the Great in Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. Pilgrims have walked “The Way” for centuries. It was during a pilgrimage along the Camino that I began to conceive my latest pastoral letter.

Each time I make this journey, it affects me profoundly. As I walk my camino, I pray for the grace and wisdom to persevere faithfully in the way the Lord has chosen for me as I lead the archdiocese as its successor to the apostles. We all are pilgrims on a journey, a camino, to heaven. We navigate a path marked with hills and valleys, over smooth and rocky terrain. We find strength for the journey through prayer, the sacraments, the Scriptures, and the company of believers that encourages us and centers us in Christ’s love. As Catholics, we journey together through our faith. We all have good soil as well, and we are invited to cooperate with grace to expand our capacity to bear fruit for the Kingdom. Bearing fruit is the primary work of a spiritual life.

Discipleship is a way of life, a journey through prayer, the sacraments, the Scriptures, and the community of believers that encourages us and centers us in Christ’s love.

We see Jesus in the Gospels inviting others to follow his footsteps. Faith springs from a deep desire to do so. For early Christians, the Way (the Camino) was more than a physical path or place on a map. It describes the path of discipleship and a way of life. Still today, it is a path given to us by Jesus Christ along which he leads and accompanies us. As always, our goal is to follow Jesus in faith and love, and to center our hearts in Christ’s love. As Catholics, we journey together through our faith.

Jesus explains that the seed is the Word of the kingdom, the Word of faith. Our task is to prepare good soil to receive the seed of faith. Even good soil needs to be cultivated and cared for, nourished and watered. How well does one dispose oneself not only to the seed of faith, but to all else that God provides to help with the growth – spiritual nourishment, support from friends, the fellowship of other believers?

This is a relatable parable for us in the red dirt country of Oklahoma since many of us are familiar with farming, gardening, and planting working with various types of soil. Jesus explains that the seed is kicked out roots and dies. Some seed falls among thorns, and since there is little soil, the seed cannot put down roots. The plants sprout up quickly, but with little roots they die. Some seed falls among thorns. The thorns grow alongside the plants and choke them off. Finally, some seed falls on good soil and brings forth grain – some a hundredfold, some a sixtyfold and some thirtyfold.


Jubilarian Dinner 2021

The following events are part of Archbishop Coakley’s official calendar.

- Sept. 26 – Young Adult Mass and cookout, 3 p.m., Catholic Pastoral Center
- Sept. 28 – Fall Clergy Days, 9 a.m., CPC
- Sept. 29 – Mass of Columbus for Priests, Fr. Emil Kapuss, 10:30 a.m., Hartman Area, Park City, Kan.
- Sept. 29 – Blue Mass for law enforcement and first responders, 6 p.m., St. Joseph Old Cathedral, OKC
- Sept. 30 – Senior Staff meeting, 10 a.m., CPC
- Sept. 30 – Catholic Charities Board meeting, 1:30 p.m., Catholic Charities, OKC
- Oct. 2 – CCRCW Woman of Achievement luncheon, 11 a.m., St. John the Baptist, Edmond
- Oct. 5 – USCCB Domestic Justice Committee meeting, Washington, D.C.
- Oct. 6 – USCCB International Justice and Peace Committee meeting, Washington, D.C.
- Oct. 7 – Senior Staff meeting, 10 a.m., CPC
- Oct. 7 – Blue Stanley Rother Shrine Building Committee meeting, 2 p.m., CPC
- Oct. 7 – Rod Mass for legal professionals, 6 p.m., The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, OKC
- Oct. 8 – School Mass, 8:15 a.m., Sacred Heart, OKC
- Oct. 10 – Mass and feast day celebration, 10 a.m., St. Teresa of Avila, Harrah
- Oct. 10 – Anniversary Mass, 3 p.m., The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, OKC
Men’s fellowship craft beer, food pairing
Author R. Jared Staudt will be giving a presentation on his book “The Beer Option: Brewing a Catholic Culture Yesterday and Today” at 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 2 in the Great Room at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Edmond. Food and beer will be provided. Ask code to register online.

From the Archives …

Saint Joseph Catholic Church in Hennessey’s early history involved critical players in the life of the Church in America and in Oklahoma. In 1890, the stipend missionary Father Felix de Grasse came to celebrate Mass at the new township twice monthly at the Rock Island Railroad section house. The summer of 1891 saw the coming of Father Joseph Beck, who rented a room at the section house and continued the work of Father De Grasse.

The following year on Nov. 13, Bishop Meerechaert dedicated the new church under the patronage of Saint Joseph. At this juncture, the town had become the launching point for the newest land openings such as the Cherokee outlet in 1893. Consequently, the population grew, but it also became home to a group of African Americans who had arrived from Kentucky who happened to be Catholic.

So then, the church was built with funds from the invalid Mother (later Saint) Katherine Drexel. Mother Katherine was the daughter of a princely sum of $1,000. Drexel. Mother Katherine was the daughter of a wealthy Philadelphia banker, and she used her inheritance to serve American Africans and American Indians. Since the community was primarily African American, she gave the land’s share of the funds to make the church a reality for the then primarily sum of $1,000.

The archive of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is privileged to house a substantial amount of correspondence between Bishop Meerechaert and Saint Katherine. One of the most intriguing letters is dated 1894 and involves Hennessey.

She is not pleased to learn that the black parishioners are being shifted to the back of the church, a common practice that had no place in the church. Her distress is evident and states very clearly that “if this situation is not rectified, I want my $1,000 returned.” The ultimatum was not lost on Bishop Meerechaert and the practice ceased at least for a time.

This unique arrangement surprisingly worked, but certainly was not without tension. In 1902, Holy Rosary Catholic Church was built for the African American community and operated until 1941 when attendance evaporated. The building’s usefulness did not end as it was moved in 1946 to Enid to become Saint Elizabeth’s Chapel for Black Catholics.

Saint Katherine’s influence is keenly felt in Oklahoma as she was responsible for funding several American Indian schools as well as providing for the erection of parishes for African Americans. Oklahoma’s first bishop worked closely with this holy and remarkable woman and partnered with her in her quest for justice and disseminating the Gospel to all people.

“St. Gregory in Enid celebrates 50 years

St. Gregory the Great Church (members at the 50th anniversary celebration Sept. 5 in Enid: Front Row: Dee Corzineh, Jean Shae McPhie, Cheryl Cummings Fenton, Keny Suttmiller, Tim DeClerk, Judy Byrne. Back Row: Kyle Cunningham, Kara Cunningham, Hopkins, Keith Cunningham, Doug Brazer, Mary Briner Nofire. Photo provided.)

“St. Gregory the Great Church, the church that was expanded to include the parish hall with a large kitchen, basilica classrooms and a nursery. Much needed square footage was added to the original structure, which enabled parishioners to hold religious education classes in the newly created basement. In 2009, the church sanctuary and classrooms were remodeled. The current sanctuary was updated with the altar being centered and the marble backdrop placed in 2018. On April 28, 2021, Archbishop Cable blessed the new perpetual adoration chapel in the north-east corner of the church building.

Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, the event is aimed at evangelizing spouses with Ryan and Mary Rose Verret, who reside in the Parish Hall and have the focus as a couple.

The featured presenters are Dr. Mary Briner Nofire and Dr. Andrew Melnick, who will conduct presentations on their book “The Beer Option: Brewing a Catholic Culture Yesterday and Today.”

The event will kick off with a Men’s fellowship craft beer, food pairing at 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 12 in the Great Room at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Edmond. Food and beer will be provided. Ask code to register online.

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The Men’s fellowship craft beer, food pairing event is open to men and women of all ages. It will feature a variety of craft beers and of higher-quality food. The event will also include a raffle and a silent auction.

“Men’s fellowship craft beer, food pairing”
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The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has asked the Church throughout the United States to take up a special collection supporting the USCCB Disaster Relief Fund. These funds support disaster relief for hurricane, the Haiti earthquake, the Mexico earthquake and other emergencies. This recently has become common across the country and around the world. The newspaper is not responsible for unintended use of this QR code.

You can make a gift online at soonercatholic.org by scanning this QR code.

The Sooner Catholic newspaper is supported through the Annual Catholic Appeal and Sooner Catholic Communications Appeal.

The Sooner Catholic is published bimonthly except for once in the months of February and August. The newspaper is not responsible for any errors or omissions in advertising. The newspaper is not responsible for any errors or omissions in advertising.

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Catholic Charities OKC, Catholic Charities USA, X2AI provide mental health support through “Hope”

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City has joined forces with Catholic Charities USA and X2AI to provide easy and immediate access to mental health support through a chatbot named “Hope.”

“X2AI’s unique technology will help individuals build resilience through tough times,” said Sister Donna Markham, O.P., Ph.D., president and CEO of CCUSA.

“Catholic Charities serves thousands of people in the communities it serves, and we are glad our agencies can provide this added benefit to their clients,” she added. Built by clinical psychologist, the chatbot connects clients through AI-driven text conversations that are available in both English and Spanish 24-hours-a-day, seven-days a week. According to X2AI, research studies found that using the chatbot led to significantly reduced symptoms on average by 28 percent for depression and 18 percent for anxiety. If warranted, the bot can make a connection with a licensed therapist. If someone’s response suggests they are contemplating suicide or are at immediate risk of domestic violence, they will receive an immediate call from a crisis counselor.

“In the past year at X2AI, we provided mental health support to hundreds of thousands of people, and de-escalated thousands of suicidal crisis situations,” said Michiel Rauws, CEO and founder of X2AI. This program is available to five pilot agencies – including CCAOKC – with the goal of expanding the program to Catholic Charities agencies across the country.

Hope is a free chat service providing encouragement and strategies on how to manage everyday stress and anxiety using chatbot technology.

Text “HE” to (202) 949-7249
Start code CCAOKC
Anonymous
Available 24/7

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, contact the Suicide Hotline:
(800) 273-8255

119-year-old organ plays beautiful music for Duncan church

By Jolene Schonchin
The Sooner Catholic

When Father Peter Jandaczek, pastor of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Duncan, received word of an antique pipe organ for sale, he said he couldn’t pass it up. “When we got the opportunity, it was an incredible deal, in comparison to other prices of instruments today,” Father Jandaczek said.

The pipe organ, which was shipped to the Duncan church from Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Juvenile, Penn., has a unique history. The 1902 model organ was in Massachusetts awaiting destruction when the Pennsylvania parish bought it, according to an archived newspaper article.

The organ was built by Emory W. Lane, Waltham, Mass., for the United Congregational Church of Lawrence, Mass. It was built with two manuals and 14 ranks of pipes. Lane had trained with the famous organ building firms of Hook & Hastings and Geo. S. Hutchings before starting his own business in 1890.

The organ has found its home in Duncan and, even though it is more than 100 years old, it plays just as boldly and beautifully as it did in 1909, Father Jandaczek said.

Before Jandaczek invited parishioners to visit Duncan to hear the pipe organ in its fullness, he couldn’t pass it up. The organ is an example of the work done by a craftsman in the old trade, in doing everything by hand and being very careful with the pieces. An instrument like this did not come off an assembly line,” said Father Thomas Smith of Saint Paul the Apostle, in a newspaper article.

The organ has its home in Duncan and, even though it is more than 100 years old, it plays just as boldly and beautifully as it did in 1909. Father Jandaczek said. Father Jandaczek said shipping the organ and assembling the antique was a worthy task.

“We had to pay for the transportation. They had to bring two huge trucks that had to unload everything to our school across the street. Then, the School of Music at the University of Oklahoma came and were literally working on it piece by piece. We had to check to make sure the floor has enough strength. The sound is just incredible. I asked people for donations, and they responded wonderfully. They were very excited because I think we are only the third church in Duncan that has an organ.”

He said the church organizes concerts from time-to-time, and it is open to everybody. We try to do them on Tuesday nights or Thursday nights or sometimes during high celebrations because the music is incredible,” Father Jan- daczek said. Father Jandaczek invited parishioners to visit Duncan to hear the pipe organ in its fullness.

Jolene Schonchin is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.
Papal Foundation’s new executive director hopes to expand philanthropic giving

By Autumn Jones
Catholic West Agency

PHILADELPHIA - The Papal Foundation recently named David Savage to the role of executive director. Savage, who has a background in marketing and nonprofit leadership, will be responsible for advocating Pope Francis’ priorities for relief, education and services for vulnerable and underserved people, whether they are Catholic or not, and whether they are next door, or half-way around the world.

“As Catholics we’re called to love our neighbor, and that means all people, whether they are Catholic or not, and whether they are next door, or halfway around the world,” said Savage, who has 25 years of executive experience in direct-to-consumer marketing.

“What I love about our Church is that we are universal. And what I love about The Papal Foundation is that its reach is global. So, we are united with those on every continent.”

The Papal Foundation, founded in 1976, awards grants and scholarships for initiatives such as shelter for homeless adults and children; support for hospitals and health facilities; seminaries and scholarships to prepare future leaders; relief for victims of natural disasters; services for refugees and immigrants; provide programs and education; and care for aging priests and religious. Since its inception more than 30 years ago, the organization has awarded more than $650 million in 121 countries.

Savage’s previous experience will “greatly benefit our organization,” said Sean Cardinal O’Malley of Boston, chairman of The Papal Foundation Board of Trustees.

Cardinal O’Malley also said he is happy to have Savage at the helm to “build the resources that the Foundation deploys to care for the needy in developing nations around the globe.”

Donors to The Papal Foundation become Stewards to Saint Peter.

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St. Thomas More TALKS

St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Norman will host its last summer “St. Thomas More TALKS,” at 7 p.m. Sept. 30 in the parish hall, 1335 Jenkins Ave. The speaker is Nolan Rieley, music director, who will talk about the role of music and liturgy in the formation of faith. Another round of TALKS will be held during Advent.

Gifts advance mission of the Church

By Owen Canfield

PHILADELPHIA - The Papal Foundation works with grateful and faith-filled individuals to bolster the work of the Church in central and western Oklahoma.

The Catholic Foundation also has designated-endowment funds, which allow for focused giving to a specific parish, school or ministry; donor advised funds, which give donors significant flexibility for charitable giving; and custodial funds, which are managed by the foundation in support of parishes, schools or affiliated organizations.

Legacy gifts with the Catholic Foundation can take other forms, too, such as charitable gift annuities, which provide fixed income payments for life. After death, the remainder of the annuity benefits the ongoing work of the Catholic Foundation.

Qualified Charitable Distributions from traditional individual retirement accounts are another option. Annual distributions from IRAs to the foundation, up to $100,000 annually, can be made tax free. The ultimate act of Christian stewardship is a gift of one’s life. To help facilitate this, the Catholic Foundation has partnered with FreeWill.com, a website where users can complete a simple, legally binding will in about 20 minutes (freewill.com/benedict).

The Catholic Foundation’s mission is simple: To inspire generosity leading to endowments and charitable gifts supporting parishes, schools and other ministries of the Catholic Church in central and western Oklahoma.

To make a gift to benefit a parish, school or favorite Catholic ministry, call the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma at (405) 721-4115 or e-mail ccanfield@cfook.org.

Owen Canfield is associate director for gift planning for the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma.

Catholic Cross Bearers

The Catholic Cross Bearers is an international organization of men and women formed in Cleveland, Ohio, in 2008, with members in more than 30 states, Canada, Costa Rica and the United Kingdom. They believe in bringing the love of Jesus to anyone they meet on the streets and those imprisoned.

The Oklahoma chapter, named the Blessed Stanley Rother Chapter, has spent much of the past 18 months answering God’s call to build strong relationships with their protestant brothers and sisters in other Christian motorcycling groups.

The Blessed Stanley Rother Chapter leads an annual pilgrimage to the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Groom, Texas, every Palm Sunday weekend, to pray the Way of the Cross. Additionally, the chapter host the annual Blessed Stanley Rother Rosary Run where they travel to five different locations to do charity.

For more information about the Catholic Cross Bearers or the Blessed Stanley Rother Chapter, visit catholiccrossbearers.com or contact crhmeloddalmah@gmail.com or catholiccrossbearersmcc@gmail.com.

Below is a lineup of scheduled broadcasts on “Make Straight the Way” hosted by Dcn. Larry Scanos.

Oct. 5 and 6: Miriam Daily, coordinator of adoration, Christ the King Catholic Church, OKC.


Oct. 19 and 20: Diane Clay, archdiocesan director of communications.


“Make Straight the Way” broadcasts Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m.
Archdiocesan clergy, religious celebrate their pets for the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi

He feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, known for his love of animals, is Oct. 4. The feast day often is an opportunity for pet owners to have their pets blessed and to reflect on the special role pets play.

Sooner Catholic
Pastoral Center campus since April 2019.

Bella – Golden Doodle
Archbishop Paul Coakley talked about their beloved pets.

Born at Assisi in Umbria, in 1181. He died on Oct. 4, 1226, at

Sat calmly and quietly at the foot of Brother Andrew’s bed. I’m not only was surrounded by the brothers of the abbey, Copper is a constant source of comfort and companionship. He was a constant reminder of God’s goodness present in all his creation. From his morning walk to his nightly treat, Copper is always happy to see the brothers. When Brother Andrew neared the end of his life, Copper is a constant companion, and may be the first dog permitted inside the monastery.

“The dogs are therapeutic for the residents,” said Sister Maria, who tries to keep one dog at each G.O.L.D. house, when possible.

Deacon Cliff Fitzmorris, Saint John Nepomuk Catholic Church, Yukon
Sherman - Schnoodle
Deacon Fitzmorris said dogs have been an important part of his family’s life. Their current pet, Sherman, was a rescue dog.

“People don’t realize when people lose a dog or a pet that has been part of their life, especially someone living on their own or if they are a child, that is a grief experience. For a child, this might be their first significant grief experience.”

“Saint Francis is my favorite saint,” she said. She recalled saying the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis many times and sharing countless pet stories during her more than 15 years of ministry as chaplain at Mercy Health Center.

“Pets are so special, and you form a relationship with them, there’s always something to laugh about, always something to share, even as a chaplain, if people told me they have a pet, it creates a relaxing atmosphere and a bond that people can relate to.”

Sister Maria of the Trinity
Rosie - German Shepherd
On a cold, wet day in October, a pretty German Shepherd puppy began begging to come inside to get out of the pouring rain. “She just showed up,” Sister Maria said. At the same time, Sister Maria said they had a resident living with them, Sandy, who was from Germany.

“She always had German Shepherds,” Sister Maria said. “She had lost her husband and her dogs and showed up on a street corner with only a stuffed German Shepherd.”

Sister Maria, who oversees the Gospel of Life Dwelling, a ministry that provides a home and care for the elderly poor, said the vet was called to see if there was a chip or someone to claim the dog. When neither a chip nor owner were identified, she allowed the dog. When neither a chip nor owner were identified, she agreed they could keep her.

“You form a relationship with the people and pets you have helped. Mainly watching dogs and cats, Sister Mary Ann said the animals as if they were her own.

“’It’s a wonderful ministry,’ she said. ‘I love what I do.’

Sister O’Kane, who also tries to get Rescue when she can, said it’s not just about pet sitting, “It is pet care.”

Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Oklahoma City
Bullet – French Bulldog
At almost two years old, Father Novak said his French Bulldog, Bullet, is friendly and would go home with anyone.

“He snores at night but rarely barks,” Father Novak said.

Bullet loves going on walks and playing with other dogs. Father Novak said he has to keep an eye on him because he doesn’t know when to stop and he gets overheated.”

Father Novak said Bullet is a wonderful companion.

Brother George Huhl speaks of his dog, Rosie.

“He makes me laugh and I enjoy taking care of him.”

Brother George Huhl, O.S.B., Saint Gregory’s Abbey
Salama Favorovici chickens
Brother George said there are four different varieties of chicken roaming around Saint Gregory’s Abbey, but one breed in particular stands out in a special way: the Salama Favorovici chickens.

He said they are a symbolic breed that came out of France in the 1870s much like the monks who came to the monastery in 1876.

“They are a docile breed,” said Brother George, who helps oversee the care of the chickens.

Brother George said the monks and employees enjoy watching them outside their windows. He said the chickens not only offer a source of entertainment, but help people with depression and boredom.

“They give me exercise,” he said. Brother George helps put up the chickens at night and lets them out in the morning in addition to helping lift hundreds of pounds of feed.

Eliana Tedrow is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

By Eliana Tedrow
The Sooner Catholic

Archbishop Paul Coakley
Bella – Golden Doodle
Visitors to Archbishop Coakley’s residence are met by a bounding energetic pup, who has been a part of the Catholic Pastoral Center campus since April 2019.

“Bella is a wonderful companion and keeps me busy!” Archdiocesan clergy, religious celebrate their pets for the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi.

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At the recommendation of his pastor, Father Gregory Nguyen, Nguyen attended a “Come and See Weekend” at Saint Gregory’s Abbey in 2019. During the visit, he said something resonated with what he was seeking in life. Eventually, he applied for admission and entered the novitiate on Sept. 13, 2020. During the year-long novice, he experienced the life first-hand and participated in courses in the teachings of the Church, sacred scripture, liturgy, spiritualities, human development, the Rule of Saint Benedict and the history of the abbey. On Sept. 14, he professed the Benedictine vows of obedience, stability and conversion of life. Even though the vows are valid for only three years, he is a Benedictine monk and will receive work assignments within the monastery as well as continue in a period of initial formation. At the end of three years, Brother John Michael will be able to apply for a lifetime commitment through solemn vows.

continued from page 1

to this important day in his life, in the life of our monastery and in the lives of those whom we serve. We are enriched by Brother John Michael’s sincere desire to become more closely united to Jesus Christ and the Church. We also are enriched by the great Vietnamese heritage of faith and culture that he brings to the monastery.”

He is a Benedictine monk and will

continued from page 1

the 13, they called and said, “Pack your bags – you need to be here by Sunday,” Schmitt said. “They had been receiving flights after flight after flight. We got them to safety and then we tried to fill in the blanks to help them be successful.”

Fort Lee was Schmitt’s first stop before being transferred to the much larger Fort Dix in New Jersey. At Fort Dix, Afghan families were housed in a processing center where Schmitt assisted with everything from verifying documentation to paperwork to helping moms and their children find restaurants.

“We got ready to assist 10,000 people. There was a pantry with snacks, water and baby items; a system to organize luggage and they handed out wristbands with numbers to keep families together and to ID who was who,” she said.

“I helped them fill out forms; made sure kids were staying nearby; made sure people didn’t need immediate medical attention,” Schmitt said.

Each Afghan family was escorted by military personnel to find outfits for each member and assigned a room in the barracks. The overall mood was that most people were still very much in shock. I thought this was probably the most overwhelming experience of their lives and how well they were handling it. There was overwhelming gratitude that they were safe with their families,” Schmitt said.

For people who evacuated after evacuation centers had closed or ‘Hello’ to everyone who came through that hallway. It was really sweet to see.”

Schmitt’s experience from previous work in Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan and Israel helped her relate to the Afghan families, and it will continue to serve well the refugee families and Catholic Charities, which serves as Oklahoma’s only government-approved resettlement agency. Oklahoma is expected to help about 1,800 Afghans. The most immediate need will be financial assistance to help families get settled.

“Those families would much rather be in Afghanistan with a stable, secure, peaceful place,” said Patrick Ragone, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

“As we strive to do with all our clients, we want to make sure these families have a dignified life. They’re going to add greatly and richly to our communities.”

Diane Clay is editor of the Sooner Catholic.

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**How to Help**

Online at: catholiccharitiesok.org - Click on Refugee Assistance at the top right.

Or mail a check to: Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement

1232 N. Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73106

Diane Clay is editor of the **Sooner Catholic**.

Jim Beckman, author of “The Secretariat for Young Adults, Theology and Catechesis at the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City,“ shares his thoughts on a new book that focuses on a spiritual journey through the teachings of St. Therese of Lisieux.

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As the month of October begins, many Catholic parishes are gearing up to celebrate the Month of the Rosary. The Month of the Rosary is a time for Catholics to explore the Rosary more, and to read this little book would definitely help you. I would also like to recommend this book to anyone who is interested in learning more about the Rosary and its significance in the Catholic faith.

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St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Lawton is seeking a full-time director of evangelization and catechetical leadership. Preferred candidates will have a master’s degree in pastoral theology or a related field, and several years of experience in catechetical ministry. For more information, contact John Paul Lewis at frjohnpaul@archokc.org.

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The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is seeking a candidate for the position of coordinator for the Catholic Job Services program. This position is responsible for the development and implementation of programs that support the employment needs of Catholics in the Archdiocese. For more information, contact Mark Mason at Mark.Mason@archokc.org.

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St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Tulsa is seeking a temporary social services case manager. Responsibilities include providing case management services, coordinating resources, and maintaining client records. Contact Brian Buettner at frbrian@sjocokc.org for more information.

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St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church in Lawton is seeking a full-time director of evangelization and catechetical leader. The position is responsible for leading the parish in evangelization and catechetical formation to lead and organize efforts in evangelization, especially among children and youth. Experience in evangelization and catechetical leadership is preferred. Send resume to Fr. Joan Paul Lewin at jplewin@sacredheartelreno.com.

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Sooner Catholic in Oklahoma City has two education coordinator positions available. One position is for a director of education and the other is for a coordinator of education. Both positions require a bachelor’s degree in education or a related field and at least five years of experience in teaching. Contact Laffey at (580) 242-4449, wlaffey@archokc.org for more information.

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St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Lawton is seeking a full-time coordinator for the operational tasks of 19 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Responsibilities include budgeting, accounting duties, and supervising a plan for the maintenance of Catholic schools by developing, executing, and maintaining facilities. Contact Brian Buettner at frbrian@sjocokc.org for more information.

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St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church in Lawton is seeking a full-time coordinator for Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Youth Camp. The coordinator will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the camp and will work closely with thecamp director to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all campers. Contact Brian Buettner at frbrian@sjocokc.org for more information.

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St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Tulsa is seeking a maintenance worker to perform upkeep tasks such as repairs, by applying basic fixes to equipment and building, and performing upkeep tasks such as repairs and cleaning. Responsibilities include troubleshooting, repairing equipment, and maintaining facilities. Contact Dan Mullin at dmullin@sacredheartelreno.com for more information.

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Discípulos en el camino

Por Ceci Gáitá
Catequista Nivel Service

El Vaticano publica guía para que diócesis comiencen camino sínodal

El Papa Francisco, en el mes de septiembre, invita a las diócesis a comenzar un “camino sínodal” que es “un proceso de reflexión, discusión y escucha” para “promover cambios en la vida y pastorala de la iglesia local”. El documento “Lánzate a lo más Profundo” ha sido aprobado por el cardenal Jean-Louis Brugues, secretario del Sínodo de los Obispos. En el documento, el Papa invita a los obispos a realizar una “autocrítica” de sus diócesis para “reconocer las fortalezas, pero también los debilidades y limitaciones”.

El documento se divide en dos partes: la primera, titulada “El viaje”, que se centra en la “dimensiones sobre el tema de la iglesia sínodal y la importancia de la cooperación”, y la segunda, titulada “El camino”, que se centra en la “necesidad de reflexión y escucha”.

En el documento, el Papa invita a los obispos a reflexionar sobre su diócesis y a escuchar a los fieles. “Jesucristo mismo nos ha llamado a ser espacios de escucha y diálogo, espacios de diálogo y escucha”, dice el Papa.

El documento también invita a los obispos a reflexionar sobre su propia vida pastoral y a escuchar a los fieles sobre su vida y pastoral. “Jesucristo mismo nos ha llamado a ser espacios de escucha y diálogo, espacios de diálogo y escucha”, dice el Papa.

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The Ladder of Ascent

Marriage and Family Life office.

way, in Oklahoma City. Exposition
7 p.m. at the Catholic Pastoral
Center. The schedule is:

First Friday Adoration

will have a Scriptural Rosary for
of every month Noon – 3 p.m. for
First Friday Adoration, Noon -
3 p.m. Catholic Pastoral,
Center, 7501 Northwest Expreesway.

October

First Feast of St. Vincent de Paul.

First Feast of St. Lawrence Ruiz
and Companions.

First Feast of St. Wenceslaus.

First Mass for law enforce-
ment, first responders, 6 a.m., St.
Joseph Old Cathedral, OKC.

First Mass for law enforce-
ment, 6:30 p.m., 2453 Wilcox Dr.,
Norman. Contact Connie Lang,
(405) 249-1041, potenls.lang@gmail.com.

First Pray the Rosary for Life, 6:30
p.m., 2453 Wilcox Dr., Norman.
Contact Connie Lang, (405) 249-
1041, potenls.lang@gmail.com.

Serra Club of Oklahoma City

Join the staff of the Catholic
Women, Central Region
monthly first Friday Mass
at 3 p.m. Oct. 10 at The
Catholic Church, 632 N.
Grady.

40 Days for Life

The 40 Days for Life Fall cam-
paign is Sept. 22 – Oct. 31.
Pre 40Daysforlife.com to sign up to
pray in Oklahoma City, Edmond or
Norman.

Mass, cookout

Catholic Young Adults will have a Mass and cookout with Arch-
bishop Coakley at 3 p.m. Sept. 26
at the Catholic Pastoral Center,
7501 Northwest Expressway in
Oklahoma City. RSVP at archchc.
group/eyeservice.

Blue Mass

Archbishop Coakley invites
everyone to the Blue Mass for law
professionals at 6 p.m Oct. 7 at
St. Joseph Old Cathedral, OKC.

Mass for Medical Professionals

Archbishop Coakley invites
everyone to the Mass for Medical
Professionals at 10 a.m. Oct. 23
at The Cathedral. Admire the
perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave.
in Oklahoma City. Guest speaker is
Ashley K. Fernandez, M.D., Ph.D.,
FPAP.

KOC retreat

The Knights of Columbus annual
Mass is Saturday, September 26
at 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Oct. 23 at
The Cathedral. Admire the
perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave.
in Oklahoma City. Guest speaker is
Sister Diane Keeney, R.S.M., winner of the Spirit of the
Cardinal Dwyer Award.

Day of Reflection

Day of Reflection, “Heaven Con-
mencing: A Primer on Discernment
go of God's Will” by Alex
Schimpf, is 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Nov. 20 at St. Gregory’s Abbey, 1900 W.
MacArthur St., Shawnee. Limited
seating. Masks are recommended,
but not required. Attendees must pre-register by e-mailing ret@kofc.org or call (405) 878-
5656. Cost $30 pre-paid or $35 at
the door. Lunch included.

Rachael’s Vineyard

A Rachael’s Vineyard Retreat
will be held Fri.-Sun., Nov. 4-6 at
St. Benedict’s Catholic Church,
632 N. Grady.

Sooner Catholic Councils: 1104,
4721, 6606, (405) 721-8944.

Church, 632 N.
Grady.

First Day of Fall

The monthly first Mass in
honor of the Sacred Heart is
11:30 a.m. daily Mass; and Noon –
10:45 a.m. - Scriptural Rosary;
Pastoral Center. The schedule is:

General Agent

kevin.pierce@kofc.org

(Books)

Admin.

918-550-0886

405-534-0397

9201 S. Walker Ave. Pfizer and
MacArthur St., Shawnee. Limited
seating. Masks are recommended,
but not required. Attendees must pre-register by e-mailing ret@kofc.org or call (405) 878-
5656. Cost $30 pre-paid or $35 at
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Our Lady of La Vang
Mass and celebration

Archbishop Coakley celebrated Mass for the feast day of Our Lady of La Vang on Sept. 12 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Oklahoma City. Photos Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.