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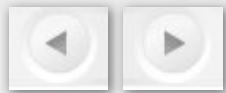
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May/June 2008

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LaFe

THE MAGAZINE

OF LAREDO



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our hope

POPE BENEDICT XVI'S
APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO
THE UNITED STATES 2008

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LaFe

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With little or no money, seminarian José De Leon takes a leap of faith to see the pope.

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A year later homes are being rebuilt, but the psychological trauma lingers for the survivors of the Eagle Pass tornado.

– Goyo López

A little more than a year ago, natural disaster struck our diocese.

On April 24, 2007, a tornado touched down in the outlying communities of Eagle Pass, wreaking havoc and causing chaos among the many residents of the Loma Linda neighborhood.

This natural catastrophe may have only lasted only a few hours, but it has left a lifetime of residual impact.

In this commemorative issue of *La Fe* highlighting the historic visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States, we mark the first anniversary of the many lives affected by what has been dubbed the Eagle Pass tornado.

In the following pages, you'll read the personal accounts of three families whose lives have changed as a result of last year's event.

I vividly recall my shock at the sight of the destruction wrought by this rare tornado. Piles of twisted metal, uprooted trees, crushed vehicles and scattered personal belongings engulfed the entire area for as far as the eye could see.

In addition to the physical impact of the tornado, I also witnessed the emotional and psychological torment the devastation had on the residents of this community. The bewilderment, despair and hopelessness that initially filled the air on that day was eventually replaced by the symbol of the rainbow that appeared in the sky following the disaster.

The rainbow served as a sign that God was present to his people in their time of need. It reminded everyone not to lose hope because he always responds to our needs.

And so did many of you.

As you'll recall, the Diocese of Laredo coordinated a special second collection at every parish in the seven-county area to help our brothers and sisters in need.

In this follow-up story to the Eagle Pass tornado, you'll read what I was able to see first-hand – the rebuilding of a community.

I listened to personal accounts of how your financial contributions assisted those in need with the most fundamental of necessities, such as food, water and medicine.

However, there is still more to do.

Like the majority of the Loma Linda residents, all three families interviewed are still rebuilding their homes, one step at a time.

What I also discovered is that, regardless of the material assistance provided, what they now need more than ever is counseling necessary to heal emotionally and psychologically.

At least they have hope and they definitely have faith.

– Gregorio "Goyo" López is editor of *La Fe*, the magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Laredo.



Hace poco más de un año ocurrió un desastre natural devastador en nuestra diócesis.

El 24 de abril de 2007, un tornado pegó en las comunidades adyacentes de Eagle Pass provocando estragos y causando caos entre los muchos residentes de la vecindad de Loma Linda.

Esta catástrofe natural puede haber durado solo unas cuantas horas pero dejó una vida entera de impacto residual.

En esta edición conmemorativa de *La Fe*, destacando la histórica visita del Papa Benedicto XVI a los Estados Unidos, marcamos el primer aniversario de las muchas vidas afectadas por lo que ha sido designado el Tornado de Eagle Pass.

En las siguientes páginas ustedes van a leer las historias personales de tres familias cuyas vidas han cambiado como resultado del evento del año pasado.

Yo puedo recordar vividamente el sobresalto que senti al ver la destrucción masiva causada por este raro tornado. Montones de metales torcidos, árboles caídos, vehículos aplastados y pertenencias personales regadas por toda un área desvalida hasta donde alcanzaba la vista humana.

Además del impacto físico del tornado, también fui testigo de la tormenta emocional y psicológica que este evento devastador tuvo sobre los residentes de esta comunidad. El asombro, la desesperación y la desesperanza que inicialmente llenaba el aire en ese día, eventualmente fueron reemplazadas por el símbolo del arco iris que apareció en el cielo después del desastre natural.

El arco iris sirvió como una señal de que Dios estaba presente con su gente en los momentos de su problema. Y recordó a todos que no perdieran la esperanza, porque Él siempre responde a nuestras necesidades.

Y muchos de ustedes también respondieron.

Como recordarán, la Diócesis de Laredo, coordinó una nueva colecta especial en cada parroquia en los siete condados para ayudar a nuestros hermanos y hermanas con sus necesidades.

En este subsecuente relato del Tornado de Eagle Pass, leerán lo que yo pude ver a primera mano – la reconstrucción de una comunidad.

Escuché los relatos personales de cómo las contribuciones financieras de ustedes ayudaron a los necesitados con las cosas fundamentales como alimentos, agua y medicinas.

Pero, aún hay mucho más que hacer.

Como la mayoría de los residentes de Loma Linda, las tres familias entrevistadas aún están reconstruyendo sus casas a paso por paso.

Lo que también descubrí, es que no obstante la ayuda material proporcionada, lo que ellos necesitan, ahora más que nunca, es la consolución necesaria para el alivio emocional y psicológico.

Cuando menos ellos tienen esperanza, y definitivamente tienen fe.



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Q: Do people go right to heaven or wait until the end of time?

A: Well, assuming they “make the cut ...” In a nutshell, we believe that immediately upon death, a person stands before God in what we call “particular judgment.” At that point, his or her soul will go to purgatory, heaven or hell, while the natural processes begin to occur in the body. Then, when Jesus returns, there will be another judgment and, wherever we are, our bodies will join our souls there, though in a different form than they are now.

Where do we get all this? From our two best sources: sacred Scripture and sacred tradition.

In Hebrews 9:27, it says, “And it is appointed that each man die once, but after this comes the judgement.” At the moment of death, each of us will look at God face to face and we will be judged. I think it’s easiest to think of it this way: Our whole lives are a process of coming to know Jesus better or not and when we see Jesus, if we have a relationship with him, we will, to paraphrase the words of Jesus, “know each other.”

This is a key idea. I think, too often, we pretend that if we are “good” or “nice,” then we will be instantly “saved.” That’s not at all how Jesus presents it. I think it was Father Rohr who pointed out that Jesus never once used the word “nice.” Instead, each of us needs to commit to following Jesus daily and allowing him to guide us. We need to spend time with Jesus in prayer every day and grow in our knowledge of who Jesus is and what that means. If our ideas of love and wisdom aren’t growing and changing daily, we can take that as a sign that we are not growing in our relationship with Jesus. All along the way, the sacraments are there to help, guide and strengthen us in this relationship so that we can be who we are called to be.

If we’ve nourished this relationship with Jesus, then when we see him, we will know him, and, at that point, enter into what we call purgatory.

I know there are a lot of bad ideas out there about purgatory, but I have a way to explain it that might help. Don’t think of purgatory as a separate place from heaven, but as a part of heaven. (People who go to purgatory are definitely going to heaven.) Think of it like this: If you come into a crowded room and I’m on the other side, then it will take you a bit to get to me. That process of you drawing closer to me is like the experience of purgatory. (Notice that in this model I’m God? That may very well be why I like this model so much.) Either way, as we draw close to God, all the ways that we’ve damaged our souls are slowly healed by the fire of God’s presence. All that is impure and distorted in us is burned away by the fire of God’s love. It hurts, but it’s a good hurt – a weight room burn, as it were.

I digress.

When Jesus returns, we “wrap up” the whole thing. Those who are in heaven or hell stay there at the second coming of Christ. Those in purgatory enter heaven. At this point, all those who are alive during this time experience their particular judgment, as well as general or “final judgment.” At this point, we will see our lives and the lives of every person in the light of God’s mercy, love and justice; in other words, it will all make sense at that moment.

Enjoy another day in God’s presence! – Father Joseph Krupp

Dear Fr. Joe

Do people go right to heaven or wait until the end of time?

Estimado Padre Joe:
¿Van directamente al cielo las personas o tienen que esperar hasta el fin del mundo?

Bueno, suponiendo que “pasaron la audición...”

En resumen, creemos que inmediatamente después de la muerte, una persona se presenta ante Dios en lo que llamamos un “juicio particular”. En ese momento, su alma irá al purgatorio, cielo o infierno, mientras los procesos naturales comienzan a ocurrir en el cuerpo. Luego, cuando Jesús regrese, habrá otro juicio y, donde quiera que estemos, nuestros cuerpos se unirán a nuestras almas allí, aunque de forma distinta a la que tienen ahora.

¿De dónde sacamos esto? De nuestras dos mejores fuentes: la Sagrada Escritura y la tradición sagrada. Hebreo 9:27 dice: “Y queda establecido que cada persona muere una vez, pero después de esto viene el juicio”. Al momento de la muerte, cada uno de nosotros mirará a Dios cara a cara y seremos juzgados. Creo que es más fácil pensar en esto de la siguiente manera: Toda nuestra vida es un proceso para conocer mejor a Jesús o no, y cuando veamos a Jesús, si tenemos una relación con él, parafraseando a Jesús, “nos conoceremos”.

Esto es una idea clave. Creo que con demasiada frecuencia nos hacemos de la idea de que si somos “buenos” o “buena gente” entonces nos “salvaremos” instantáneamente. Eso no de modo alguno como Jesús lo presenta. Creo que fue el Padre Rohr quien indicó que Jesús nunca utilizó la palabra “buena gente”. En su lugar, cada uno de nosotros tiene que comprometerse con

seguir a Jesús diariamente y permitir que nos guíe. Necesitamos pasar tiempo con Jesús en oración todos los días y crecer en nuestro conocimiento de quién es Jesús y lo que significa. Si nuestras ideas sobre el amor y la sabiduría no están creciendo y diariamente, podemos tomar eso como

señal de que no estamos creciendo en nuestra relación con Jesús. Durante todo el camino, los sacramentos están ahí para ayudarnos, guiarnos y fortalecernos en esta relación para que podamos cumplir con nuestro llamado.

Si hemos nutrido esta relación con Jesús, entonces lo veremos, lo conoceremos y, en ese momento, entraremos a lo que llamamos purgatorio.

Sé que hay muchas ideas malas ahí afuera sobre el purgatorio, pero tengo una manera de explicarlo que pudiera aclararlo. No piense en el purgatorio como un lugar aparte del cielo, sino como parte del cielo. (Las personas que van al purgatorio definitivamente irán al cielo.) Piénselo así: Si entra a un cuarto lleno de gente y estoy en el otro lado, le tomará un poco más de tiempo llegar a donde estoy. ese proceso de usted acercarse a mí es como la experiencia del purgatorio.

(Note que en este modelo soy Dios. Es por eso que me gusta tanto este modelo.) De cualquier forma, mientras nos acercamos a Dios, todos los medios por los cuales dañamos nuestras almas se sanan lentamente por el fuego de la presencia de Dios. Todo lo que es impuro en nosotros y está distorsionado es quemado por el fuego del amor de Dios. Si duele, pero es un dolor bueno, una quemazón como cuando alzamos pesas.

Me desvío.

Cuando Jesús regresa, “finalizamos” todo. Los que están en el cielo o el infierno se quedan ahí para la segunda venida de Cristo. Los que están en el purgatorio entran al cielo. En este punto, todos los que estén vivos durante este tiempo experimentan su juicio particular así como el juicio general o “juicio final”. En este momento veremos nuestras vidas y las vidas de cada persona a la luz de la piedad, amor y justicia de Dios. En otras palabras, todo tendrá sentido en ese momento.

¡Disfrute otro día en la presencia de Dios!

– Padre Joseph Krupp

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A little less than three years ago, I was blessed with the opportunity to travel to Cologne, Germany for the 2005 World Youth Day.

This nearly two-week pilgrimage to see Pope Benedict XVI was physically and emotionally challenging, yet extremely fulfilling and healing.

It's an experience as unique as the individual and, therefore, difficult to explain.

I never thought I would experience such excitement again over seeing our Holy Father until I witnessed last month's historic visit to the United States.

I was fortunate to be there in person, representing the Diocese of Laredo.

And I surprised myself at my reaction to his arrival and subsequent gatherings. I found myself glued to the incredible presence of our Holy Father, reflecting on every gesture and every word.

Then came the Mass at Nationals Ballpark in Washington, D.C., where an estimated 47,000 people of faith worshipped together.

Not knowing what to expect, I was genuinely moved by this Mass, in particular. This liturgical celebration showed me the many races and ethnicities the universal church comprises. I saw the Mass as a mirror for the world to see how diverse our Catholic Church is in the United States.

The first reading grabbed my attention when the lector began reading in Spanish!

"Whoa!," I thought to myself.

And the reading was befittingly about how the apostles began speaking in tongues foreign to them during the first Pentecost.

Then came the prayer of the faithful in six languages: English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Igbo. The response was sung in the languages of English, Latin and Spanish.

The multicultural theme resonated throughout the remainder of the celebration via the offertory gifts and the mix of traditional and new musical selections in a variety of genres.

Finally, to hear the pope's homily in English, followed by an abbreviated Spanish language statement, culminated a mesmerizing Mass.

The actions of the day showed the world that there is a place at the table for everyone. It was an inclusive event where the artists painted a rich, colorful and vibrant tapestry representative of the universal mother church.

And, in me, it rekindled the light of our Lord.

- Most Rev. James A. Tamayo is bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Laredo.

A Hace poco menos de tres años fui bendecido con la oportunidad de viajar a Cologne, Alemania, para asistir al Día Mundial de la Juventud 2005.

Esta peregrinación de casi dos semanas, para ver al Papa Benedicto XVI, fue un reto emocional, pero de extrema satisfacción y alivio, toda a la vez.

Es una experiencia personal que es tan única como el individuo y, por tanto, muy difícil de explicar.

Y nunca pensé que yo experimentaría tal excitación otra vez al ver al Santo Padre.

Hasta que fui testigo el mes pasado de la histórica visita a los Estados Unidos.

Fui muy afortunado de que me brindaron la oportunidad y la bendición de estar allí en persona representando cada uno de ustedes en la diócesis de Laredo.

Y me sorprendi por mi reacción a su llegada y las subsecuentes reuniones. Me encontré verdaderamente impresionado con la presencia del Santo Padre, reflexionando sobre cada gesto y cada palabra.

Luego vino la Misa en el Parque de Beisbol Nacional en Washington, D.C., donde se estima que 47,000 personas de fe veneraron conjuntamente.

Sin saber lo que habría de pasar, fue genuinamente conmovido por esta Misa en particular. Esta celebración litúrgica me mostró las muchas razas y los grupos étnicos que componen la iglesia universal. Fue como si la Misa fuera un espejo para el mundo observara la diversidad de la Iglesia Católica en Estados Unidos.

La primera lectura me llamó la atención, icuando el lector comenzó a leer en español!

"¡Válgame!" Pensé dentro de mí.

Y la lectura fue, atinadamente, acerca de cómo los apóstoles comenzaron a hablar en lenguas extrañas a ellos, durante la primera Pentecostés.

Luego vino la oración de los fieles en seis lenguas, incluyendo inglés, español, coreano, vietnames, tagalog e igbo. El responsorial fue cantado en los lenguajes de inglés, latín y español.

El tema multicultural resonaba durante todo el resto de la celebración, mediante el ofertorio y la mezcla de selecciones musicales tradicionales y nuevas en una variedad de géneros.

Finalmente, para escuchar la homilía del Papa en inglés, seguida por una abreviada declaración en el lenguaje español, culminó en una Misa hipnotizadora.

Las acciones del día le mostraron al mundo que hay un lugar en la mesa para todos. Fue un evento inclusivo, en el que los artistas pintaron un tapiz rico, de colores y vibrante, en representación de la madre iglesia universal.

Y en mí, volvió a encender la luz de Nuestro Señor.



TR Esquivel

The “other” Apostle Matthias the Apostle

Matías el Apóstol

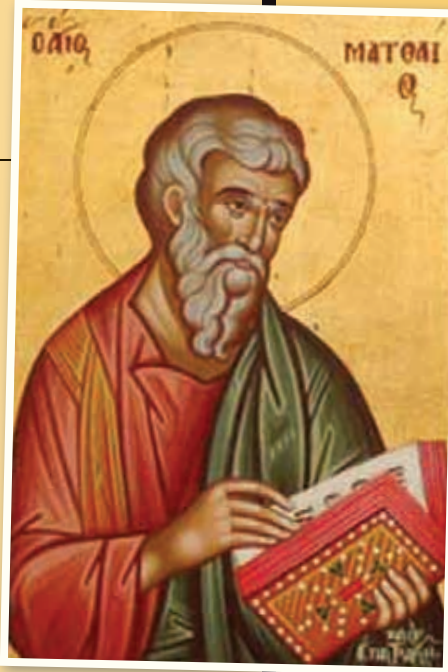
Feast day: May 14
Patron saint of alcoholism and carpenters
Meaning of name: Gift of the Lord

►► **Claim to fame:** After Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, the Apostles felt they needed to replace him. They chose two men, one of them Matthias, and cast lots to see who God would choose. Matthias won, and became one of the Twelve. He had been a follower of Jesus from the time of Jesus' baptism. Beyond this, not much is known about Matthias, although he is briefly mentioned in Scriptures as going to Ethiopia to spread the Gospel to barbarians and cannibals. Many stories about Matthias exist, although none of them are authenticated. His life is often confused with the lives of other disciples, including Matthias, bishop of Jerusalem, and Matthew, the Gospel writer.

►► **Why he is a saint:** Matthias stayed loyal to Jesus, even while others abandoned him at the end of his life. Unlike many, he was not scared off when Jesus told his disciples to eat his body as the Eucharist. The apostles saw this, and chose him as a candidate to replace Judas because they felt his heart was strong enough to witness to the resurrection and face the persecution that would come.

►► **Best quote:** Matthias often preached about how the body could lead to sin. A quote attributed him is, “We must combat our flesh, set no value upon it, and concede to it nothing that can flatter it, but rather increase the growth of our soul by faith and knowledge.”

►► **How he died:** There are two variations of the story about Matthias' death. One legend says he was crucified in Ethiopia. Another says Matthias was stoned to death in Judea, and that St. Helena brought his relics to Rome. Neither story is known to be true, although the second is more widely accepted.



Día festivo: 14 de mayo
Santo patrono del alcoholismo y de los carpinteros
No ha sido canonizado
Significado del nombre: Don de Dios

►► **Hechos que lo hicieron famoso:** Luego que Judas Iscariote traicionó a Jesús, los apóstoles pensaron que necesitaban sustituirlo. Escogieron a dos hombres, uno de ellos Matías y echaron a suertes para ver a quién escogería Dios. Matías ganó y se hizo uno de los Doce. Fue un seguidor de Jesús desde el tiempo del bautizo de Jesús. Más allá de esto, no se sabe mucho acerca de Matías después de esto, aunque brevemente se menciona su marcha a Etiopía a difundir el Evangelio a los bárbaros y canibales. Existen muchas historias acerca de Matías, aunque ninguna de ellas tiene una base histórica y su vida a menudo se confunde con la vida de otros discípulos, Matías, obispo de Jerusalén, y Mateo, el escritor del Evangelio inclusive.

►► **Por qué es un santo:** Matías permaneció fiel a Jesús, aún cuando otros le abandonaron al final de su vida. A diferencia de muchos, él no se atemorizó cuando Jesús les dijo a sus discípulos que comieran su cuerpo. Los apóstoles vieron esto, y lo escogieron como un candidato a sustituir a Judas, porque pensaron que su corazón era lo suficientemente fuerte como para atestiguar la Resurrección de Cristo y enfrentar la persecución que vendría.

►► **Mejor cita:** Matías a menudo predicaba acerca de cómo el cuerpo podría llevar al pecado. Hay una cita sobre esta materia que se le atribuye. «Debemos combatir nuestra carne, no poner ningún valor en ella, ni concederle nada que pueda halagarla, sino más bien aumentar el crecimiento de nuestra alma por medio de la fe y la sabiduría».

►► **Cómo murió:** Hay dos versiones de la muerte de Matías. Una leyenda dice que fue crucificado en Etiopía. Otra dice que Matías fue apedreado a muerte en Judea, y que Santa Helena llevó sus reliquias a Roma. Ninguna de las dos historias se conoce como cierta, aunque la segunda generalmente es la más ampliamente aceptada.

CHRIST *our hope*

POPE BENEDICT XVI'S APOSTOLIC
JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES 2008







This special commemorative edition of *La Fe* will forever hold a special place in my heart because these pages capture a historic visit to the United States by Pope Benedict XVI.

As you saw in the media reports, there was a massive outpouring of affection and respect for our Holy Father.

And there was a genuine excitement, as well.

People from all walks of life lined streets, filled stadiums and gathered outside places of worship just to get a fleeting glimpse of the successor to St. Peter.

Undoubtedly, this historic seven-day visit to Washington, D.C., and to New York City has re-energized the Catholic Church in the United States. Christ Our Hope, the theme for his visit, embodies the emotion and optimism reverberating throughout every parish in America as a result of his visit.

Listening to Pope Benedict XVI speak reminded all of us that he is a voice of conscience for the world and an apostle for the church. In these roles, he has demonstrated his philosopher's intellect and a pilgrim's spiritual intensity. Pope Benedict spoke eloquently and uncompromisingly on moral and doctrinal issues facing the world.

And I give thanks for the wonderful opportunity to represent each and every one of you in the Diocese of Laredo.

The historic visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States of



America also presented a particularly special moment for me to present your petitions and prayers to the successor of St. Peter.

The build-up to our Holy Father's arrival lived up to every ounce of publicity. From the moment he arrived at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, D.C., and was welcomed by President George W. Bush, his visit generated an excitement not seen in our country for many years. I heard some people describe the reaction of the faithful to that of fans of the legendary music group the Beatles.

Although Pope Benedict's stature in the world is on a higher plane, the reaction was similar. Indeed, it was incredible to witness the genuine admiration, respect and love for Pope Benedict XVI.

It is an experience that I will never forget and that I am so grateful to have partaken in such an event of this magnitude and importance and to have represented the Diocese of Laredo throughout the visit.

Dearest brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Laredo, I, as your bishop, have been blessed to be so close to the Holy Father. But I didn't see it as a privilege for me. I saw it as a privilege and a blessing for those whom I represent — each one of you, our priests, our sisters, our deacons, our brothers, our youth, our laity and all people of goodwill in the seven counties within the Diocese of Laredo.

The following is a personal account of my experiences during the visit.



Washington, D.C.

During the historic papal trip to America, I spent those days in Washington, D.C. and New York City representing each one of you in greeting and welcoming Pope Benedict XVI to the United States.

He came to America as the shepherd of the universal Catholic Church, and with the message *Christ Is Our Hope*. This wonderful message inspires each one of us to better understand and embrace the word of Christ.

That's why the pope came to the United States, because he is the vicar of Christ on earth and he wanted to bring this message in a special way to us right here on our land.

The White House

Our Holy Father was able to experience the welcoming spirit of Christ present in our church through the many faithful who greeted him upon his arrival.

I was present when President George W. Bush welcomed Pope Benedict on the South Lawn of the White House and described the Catholic Church as one where its community unites itself with all the people and leaders of goodwill. The Holy Father heard the president speak about how our church is one that serves the masses. President Bush also recognized the generosity of the Catholic Church to the many needs of the people.

Washington, D.C.

Durante el histórico viaje papal a América, yo pasé esos días en Washington, D.C. y en la ciudad de Nueva York, representando a cada uno de ustedes en saludar y dar la bienvenida al Papa Benedicto XVI a los Estados Unidos.

El vino a los Estados Unidos como el Pastor de la Iglesia Católica universal, saludando al espíritu de Cristo presente en nuestra iglesia.

El vino con el mensaje Cristo Es Nuestra Esperanza. Que maravilloso mensaje es este al inspirar a cada uno de nosotros para conocer la palabra de Cristo,

Este hermoso mensaje también implica que cada uno de nosotros quede unidos a Cristo aquí en la tierra.

Por eso el Papa vino a Estados Unidos, porque es el Vicario de Dios en la tierra, y quería traer este mensaje de una manera especial a nosotros aquí en nuestra tierra.

La Casa Blanca

Yo estuve presente cuando el Presidente George W. Bush, dio la bienvenida a Papa Benedicto en el Jardín Sur de la Casa Blanca y describió a la Iglesia Católica como una donde la comunidad se une con toda la gente y líderes de buena voluntad. El Santo Padre escuchó al Presidente hablar sobre como nuestra iglesia es una iglesia servidora. Como es generosa, de tantas distintas maneras, a las necesidades del pueblo y alrededor de sus feligreses.

El Papa Benedicto nos habló a nosotros, los Católicos, y a toda la gente de buena voluntad, para decirnos que su viaje a los Estados Unidos



Pope Benedict spoke to us Catholics, and to all people of goodwill, that his trip to the United States was to come and to say let us work together. Let us build together a country and a world where justice and peace are known and are provided for every person God has created. How wonderful that he was able to make this statement about church at the White House. That's what God wants for all of us to do at our workplace, in our homes, in our schools and in our conversations. Let them know who you are as a person of faith. Let your beliefs and values bring good to our community. Be people of faith in your professions. Be people of faith in our homes sharing with our children the values that Christ has imparted to us all.

And that is how we will be a people of hope because Christ is that hope in our lives.

Christ is that love in our life.

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

Later in the day, when he spoke all the bishops at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, our Holy Father reminded us that prayer is the center of our life and that prayer unites us. As such, he also told us to let prayer be the center of our lives. In this way, we can come to an encounter with God. This is how we can grow in hope, in faith and in love.

How can you do this?

You can start your day with a prayer. Try praying before every meal and be sure to pray at the end of a day, giving thanks for all the blessings and to ask God

fue para decirnos que trabajemos juntos y construyamos juntos un país y un mundo donde la justicia y la paz son conocidas y son proveídas para cada persona que Dios ha creado. Que maravilloso que pudo hacer esta declaración acerca de nuestra iglesia en la Casa Blanca. Eso es lo que Dios quiera que todos hagamos, en nuestro lugar de trabajo, en nuestros hogares, en nuestras escuelas y en nuestras conversaciones. Permite que la gente te conozca como una persona de fe. Permite que tus creencias y valores traigan bienestar a nuestra comunidad. Sean gente de fe en sus profesiones. Sean gente de fe en sus hogares, compartiendo con nuestros hijos los valores que Cristo ha impartido a todos. Es lo que el Papa Benedicto hizo durante su viaje y en sus mensajes, sabiendo que por tomar estas acciones, nosotros nos uniremos con Cristo.

Y así es como seremos un pueblo de esperanza porque Cristo es la esperanza en nuestras vidas. Cristo es ese amor en nuestra vida.

La Basílica Nacional de la Inmaculada Concepción

Más tarde, cuando habló a todos los obispos en la Basílica Nacional de la Inmaculada Concepción, nuestro Santo Padre nos recordó que la oración es el centro de nuestra vida. También nos dijo que dejáramos que la oración fuera el centro de la vida de nuestra gente. De esa manera se puede llegar al encuentro con Dios. Así es como pueden crecer en esperanza, en fe y en amor. La oración nos une y así es que en cada familia la oración sea el corazón de la familia para mantenernos unidos con Dios. ¿Cómo podemos hacer esto? Pueden iniciar su día con una oración. Traten de orar antes de cada alimento y asegúrense de orar al final del día, dando gracias por todas las bendiciones y de pedirle a Dios que continúe vigilando a cada uno de nosotros.

El Papa también nos pidió que oráremos por los sacerdotes para que sean pastores y un ejemplo para toda su gente. Estamos bendecidos con maravillosos sacerdotes y que continuemos apoyándoles



to continue watching over each one of us. These small steps will lead you down the path to making prayer the heart of the family and to remain united with God.

And while speaking on the importance of prayer, the pope also asked us to pray for our priests so that they may be shepherds and examples for all their people. As I pondered on his words, I realized that this diocese is blessed with wonderful priests. We all need to continue supporting them in their vocation and in their ministry.

Our Holy Father then went on to answer questions from the bishops. One of the questions dealt with vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life. In his response, Pope Benedict reminded us that this country was founded on religious freedom and that it must continue to exercise that religious freedom. He added that maintaining that freedom relied upon having enough priests, sisters, deacons and brothers to share the Good News with others.

Our Holy Father then proceeded to lead us in prayer. As I prayed in that chapel, I was so grateful that our diocese is making the effort to foster vocations through Casa Guadalupe and our vocations programs. And I ask you to please continue praying for more vocations for our young diocese.

Nationals Park Outdoor Mass

On April 17, I joined 47,000 people for Mass with our Holy Father in Nationals Park in Washington, D.C. I was so blessed to be in the front row of the bishops' section,

en su vocación y en su ministerio.

Nuestro Santo Padre continuó contestando las preguntas de los obispos. Tres obispos fueron seleccionados para traer las preguntas a la sesión. Una de las preguntas tuvo que ver con las vocaciones al sacerdocio y a la vida religiosa. Al Papa Benedicto le encantó escuchar esa pregunta acerca de las vocaciones porque él dijo que este país fue fundado sobre la libertad de religión, y deberá continuar ejerciendo esa libertad de religión.

Al estar orando yo por vocaciones en la capilla con nuestro Santo Padre, estaba tan agradecido que nuestra diócesis está haciendo ese esfuerzo mediante Casa Guadalupe y nuestro programa de vocación. Por favor sigan orando por más vocaciones para nuestra joven diócesis.

Misa a Intemperie en el Parque Nacional

El 17 de abril me uní con 47,000 personas con nuestro Santo Padre, en el Parque Nacional en Washington, D.C. Me sentí tan bendecido de estar en la fila frente de la sección de obispos, precisamente frente al altar de Santo Padre. Cada vez que pasaba frente a mí y cuando mi ojo se encontraba con el suyo, yo dije: "lo amamos a usted Santo Padre, oramos por usted, ore por nosotros en la Diócesis de Laredo."

El nos bendijo, pronuncio palabra a nosotros, y quiero decirles a todos mis hermanos y hermanas en nuestra Diócesis bilingüe y bicultural, que al final de su homilía, nos habló en español. Él está muy consciente de la familia inmigrante aquí en los Estados Unidos de América.

Y dije que quería que los inmigrantes supieran que la iglesia es



close to our Holy Father's altar. When he passed by and my eye caught his, I said, "We love you Holy Father, we pray for you and please pray for us in the Diocese of Laredo."

He blessed us, he shared words with us and I want to say to all our brothers and sisters in our bilingual, bicultural diocese that at the end of his homily he spoke in Spanish to us. He is very conscious of the immigrant family that is here in the United States of America and he expressed to them that the church is their home. In that spirit, I ask every parish and every Catholic to be very respectful and welcoming of every visitor and newcomer.

New York City

The Holy Father spoke to the United Nations in New York City about the right of every person to exercise their faith and to live their faith. When he addressed the general assembly of the United Nations, he spoke as the shepherd of all Catholics throughout the world. He spoke for you and me as he defended our right to celebrate Mass. He was defending our right to witness to Christ's teachings in the workplace. He was defending our right to let Christ encounter us where we are and in what condition we find ourselves. The Holy Father came as a messenger of hope to the whole world. He spoke about how God created the world with a purpose for unity, for harmony, for justice and for peace.

Brothers and sisters, let us live these words in our own lives. Let us witness to it, especially in our United States, where the standards are

su casa. Que toda parróquia, y cada Católico, sea muy respetuoso con cada visitante y con cada nuevo vecino, porque nosotros también fuimos visitantes de una tierra a donde vino Cristo. Y nos llamó a cada uno de nosotros como su hermano y ofreció su vida por cada uno de nosotros.

Ciudad de Nueva York

Que maravillosa bendición ha recibido la Diócesis de Laredo mediante mi presencia aquí. Cada uno de ustedes estuvo presente ante nuestro Santo Padre. Sus oraciones, sus palabras, todo, espero que lo hayan sentido.

El Santo Padre habló ante las Naciones Unidas en la ciudad de Nueva York. Habló sobre los derechos de cada persona para ejercer su fe y de vivir su fe. Habló ante la asamblea general de las Naciones Unidas como el pastor de todos los Católicos en todo en mundo. Estaba hablando para ti y para mí. Estaba defendiendo nuestro derecho de celebrar la Misa. Estaba defendiendo nuestro derecho de ser testigos de las enseñanzas de Cristo en los lugares de trabajo. Estaba defendiendo el derecho de permitir a Cristo encontrarnos en donde



contrary to the values Christ has taught us and that the church upholds.

Ecumenical outreach

How wonderful then, in that same theme he left at the United Nations, the Holy Father went to a synagogue and engaged our Jewish brothers and sisters in dialogue. In the Diocese of Laredo, we are blessed also to have in our midst our Jewish brothers and sisters. I greet them fondly. What a wonderful encounter the Holy Father had with those leaders in that synagogue in New York City. I am blessed to have experienced similar encounters in the Diocese of Laredo with the local congregation of our Jewish brothers and sisters.

I pray this fellowship continues and may our faith in God continue to enrich our society. It is also my desire that we continue working together for a community that respects one another, that permits the exercise of religion while acknowledging the distinctions and recognizing the good each religion has to contribute to the community.

Following the visit to the synagogue, our Holy Father visited with Christian leaders of all denominations. Our Holy Father spoke of common ground by believing that Christ is our savior and in the

estemos y en que condición nos encontramos. El vino como un mensajero de esperanza. El trajo la esperanza a todo el mundo. El habló de cómo Dios, al crear al mundo con un propósito de unidad, para armonía, para justicia y para la paz.

Hermanos y hermanas vivámos estas palabras en nuestras propias vidas. Que las vivámos en nuestros propios hogares, con nuestra esposa y con nuestros hijos. Que seamos testigos de esto, especialmente en los Estados Unidos, donde a veces las normas son contrarias a los valores que Cristo nos ha enseñado y que respalda la iglesia.

Alcance Ecuménico

Que maravilloso entonces, bajo ese mismo tema, partiendo de las Naciones Unidas, el Santo Padre fue a una sinagoga y habló a nuestros hermanos y hermanas Judíos. En la Diócesis de Laredo estamos bendecidos también, por tener en nuestro medio a nuestros hermanos y hermanas Judíos. Yo los saludo cariñosamente, y que encuentro tan maravilloso tuvo el Santo Padre con esos líderes en esa sinagoga en la ciudad de Nueva York. Yo he sido bendecido al tener encuentros similares en la Diócesis de Laredo, en nuestra congregación local de nuestros hermanos y hermanas Judíos. Que este compañerismo continúe y que la fe en Dios continúe enriqueciendo nuestra sociedad. Que continuemos trabajando conjuntamente para una comunidad que respete el uno al otro y que permita el ejercicio de la religión, reconociendo las distinciones y reconociendo el bien que cada religión tiene para contribuir a la comunidad.

Después de esa visita a la sinagoga, nuestro Santo Padre fue y tuvo



teachings he left us.

Pope Benedict asked for us to live side by side in harmony. The Diocese of Laredo celebrates this wonderful opportunity of a ministerial alliance with our Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and other evangelical leaders.

Together, the leaders of each congregation encourage the faithful to encounter the living risen Christ and to listen to his voice so that there can be that one whole harmonious mutual respect of one another.

Catholic Youth

After these wonderful visits, our Holy Father also met with the youth of the United States. He met with seminarians from different institutions throughout the United States. At the encounter in New York City, the Holy Father spoke to youth and said to them that in this journey he sees them as hope for the United States of America and for the world. I echo those words to

una visita con líderes Cristianos de todas las dominaciones. Fue una maravillosa oportunidad allí cuando el Santo Padre estaba diciendo que somos uno con ustedes. Creemos en Cristo como salvador. También creemos en todas las enseñanzas que él nos dejó. Que vivamos en ellas en armonía, juntos lado a lado, para que el mundo pueda ver que hay un pastor y que busca un solo rebaño.

Que maravillosa oportunidad de continuar la alianza ministerial que la Diócesis de Laredo celebra con nuestros Episcopales, con nuestros Metodistas, con nuestros Bautistas, con nuestros Presbiterianos y con nuestros líderes evangélicos, que juntos, cada uno de nosotros podemos urgir a nuestras congregaciones a encontrar la vivencia elevada por Cristo, y de escuchar su voz, para que pueda ser esa una, y sea la armonía con cada uno y sea el respeto mutuo para cada uno.

Juventud Católica

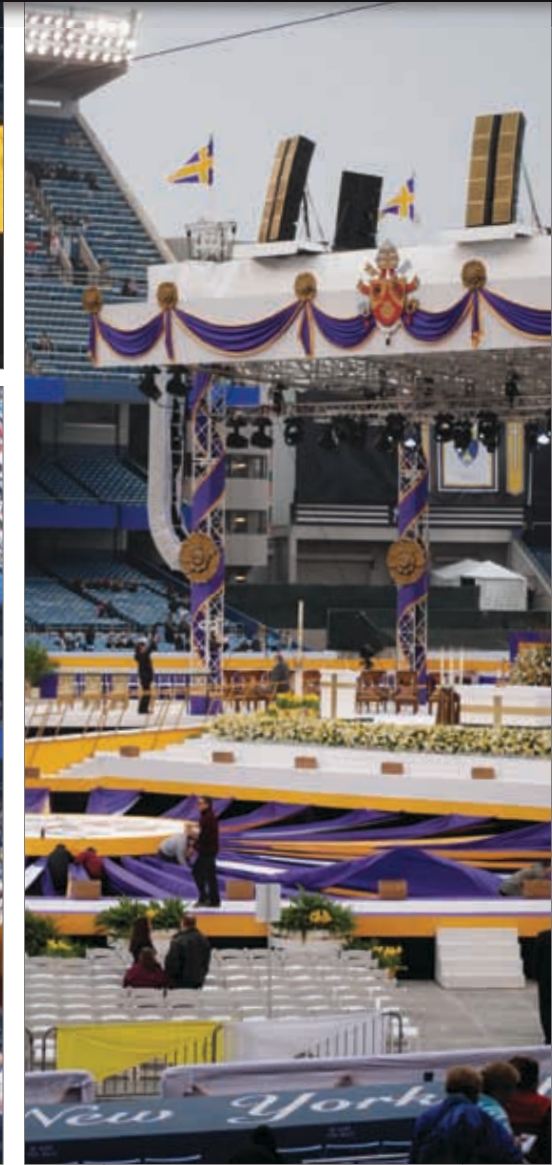
Después de estas maravillosas visitas, nuestro Santo Padre también se juntó con la juventud de los Estados Unidos. Se encontró con seminarios de distintos seminarios por todos los Estados Unidos. Y que maravillosa oportunidad para los obispos al estar presentes con él y le



all our youth in the Diocese of Laredo. You are hope and we look to you as an integral part of our diocese, of our parishes and of our church. His message to the youth was to continue praying and to ask the Lord to guide you along your way so that he truly may be the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6) for you. Amid the contrary teachings and misguided values we face on a daily basis, I pray you never lose the true and lasting values Christ brings forth in our lives.

He is the only hope that will sustain you. His values give you life. The Holy Father spoke to all the youth in the United States – telling them to share the joy and live the faith in such a way that people will be excited to meet Christ and follow his values. You will be the best son, daughter, husband, wife, priest, sister, deacon or brother you can be because you've done it in union with Christ and in union with his church.

escuchamos hablar con la juventud al recordarles: “Los veré otra vez en Sydney, Australia, para el Día Mundial de la Juventud.” Jóvenes de la Diócesis de Laredo estarán asistiendo a ese encuentro. Pero en el encuentro en la ciudad de Nueva York, el Santo Padre habló a la juventud y les dijo, que en su jornada de la esperanza, el los ve como la esperanza para estos Estados Unidos de América y para todo el mundo. Yo hago eco de esas palabras a toda la juventud de la Diócesis de Laredo. Ustedes son la esperanza y los miramos como una parte integral de nuestra Diócesis, de nuestras parroquias y de nuestra iglesia. Su mensaje a la juventud fue de continuar orando y de pedirle al Señor que los guíe por su camino, para que El realmente pueda ser el camino, la verdad y la vida (Juan 14:6) para ti. Que encuentren, en el conjunto de enseñanzas y valores contrarias, que nunca pierdan los verdaderos y sempiternos valores que Cristo trae, ya que en sus vidas esto será la esperanza que los sostendrá. Esto será el valor que les dará vida. Y mientras que el Santo Padre hablaba con la juventud en los Estados Unidos les dijo que compatieran el placer y vivieran sus vidas de tal manera que la gente se excite y desee encontrar a Cristo y seguir sus valores, porque a ti te quieren y tu encontrarás plenitud. Serás el mejor esposo, esposa, sacerdote, hermana, diácono, hermano que puedas ser, porque lo haz hecho en unión con Cristo y en unión con su iglesia.





Yankee Stadium send-off Mass

Then, as many of you saw, more than 70,000 were gathered at Yankee Stadium to be with the Holy Father for the celebration of the closing Mass for his trip to America. He brought Christ's hope and love to each one of us. He also told us not to find glory in this moment, but that his visit was a challenge for all of us to go forward and tell one other person about God; to share with one other person the hope that God has for them even in their moments of despair and difficulty. He asked us to be a witness to Christ.

Finally, he asked us to go forward, share the Good News and to do so *Todo Con Amor*. ☺

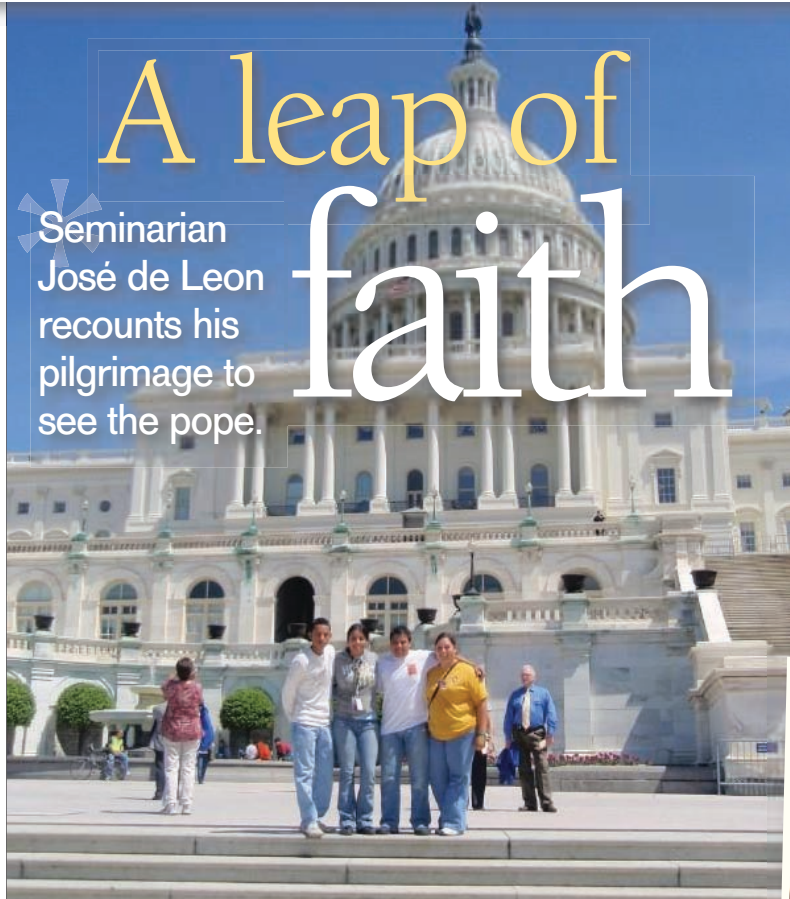


Estadio de los Yankees - Misa de Despedida

Entonces, como muchos de ustedes vieron, más de 70,000 personas se unieron en el Estadio Yankee para estar con el Santo Padre para la celebración de la Misa de Despedida de su viaje a América. El hizo eco de su palabra a cada uno de nosotros, de que había venido aquí para traer la esperanza y el amor de Cristo a cada uno de nosotros.

También nos dijo que no enontrarámos gloria en este momento, pero que este viaje es un reto para todos nosotros, de ir para adelante y de hablarle a otra person acerca de Dios. Para compartir con otra persona la esperanza que Dios tiene para ellos aún en los momentos de desesperación y de dificultades. Que nosotros llevamos el testimonio de Cristo, solicitado de nosotros después de su resurrección, y que cada uno deberá ir y contar las Buenas Nuevas al mundo entero.

Ha sido una bendición para estos Estados Unidos de América, por esta histórica presencia de nuestro Santo Padre. ☺



When my brothers and sisters from my community of the Neocatechumenal Way would ask me if I wanted to go on the pilgrimage to see the pope, I always replied with a “no.” But there was always a “yes” that wanted to come out. The announcement of the pilgrimage was given weekly after Mass at San Agustin Cathedral. Every time I got motivated to go on the pilgrimage, I would also come up with excuses. I told myself that it wasn’t going to be possible to miss school, buy a ticket or travel without money.

Basically, I had very little faith.

Well, a few weeks before the pilgrimage, one of the catechists asked me if I had thought about going to the pilgrimage. I decided to say “yes” for the first time just to see what would happen. I mentioned to her that, as I discerned on this trip, I saw it more and more difficult to go.

She replied, “Don’t worry. God will provide.”

After she said this, I asked myself, “Will he provide?” “How can it happen?” “It’s not going to happen to me because it’s too late!”

Even though I doubted Divine Providence, God was good to me. Before I knew it, I had a ticket and was already in a plane ready to leave.

I was shocked! I never thought I would be able to go on the pilgrimage, but thanks to the Neocatechumenal Way of our diocese, it was made possible for me. I really experienced God’s love for me and I learned to always abandon myself in his hands.

I knew everything was coming from God since the moment I received the call that said, “Jose, we have the money for your ticket.” I asked myself, “Why?” “Why are they paying a ticket for me to go see the pope and not someone else?” I kept questioning God. I knew the purpose of the pilgrimage was to support the pope and give

“I firmly believe God put me on the path to this pilgrimage to re-affirm my vocation. It was a life-touching experience that I will never forget.”

testimony to others of the risen Christ.

However, I had yet to discover the purpose of my personal encounter with Christ in this pilgrimage. As I traveled, I realized that I was on a mission. God was working and answering my questions all throughout the trip. I remembered




that I was traveling not by myself, but with everyone who couldn't go and who had given me their intentions and petitions.

It was an incredible experience I cannot explain. Certainly, it was not a vacation, but a pilgrimage. For one, there was no comfort or luxury nor egoism. Instead, there was only trust, sacrifice and community. It was a week of waking up at 5 a.m. to leave the house and be at the next site by 6 a.m. so that we could be in the front row of the sidewalk, hoping to catch a glimpse of the pope's motorcade that wouldn't pass until 1:30 p.m. or 2:15 p.m.

As we waited for the pope every morning, I took it upon myself to continue asking God about my vocation to the priesthood and what it is that he wants for me. As the days went by and the experiences were more intense, I felt things that I had never felt before. I felt as if I was where I was for a particular reason. I was there to re-affirm my vocation. Seeing Pope Benedict XVI up close more than five different times was touching and inspirational.

I firmly believe God put me on the path to this pilgrimage to re-affirm my vocation. It was a life-touching experience that I will never forget. It was unbelievable to see the families with which we stayed, sacrificing their jobs, time and the little they had to give us shelter and food while we were there. They welcomed into their home the stranger among us. I learned much from this experience and I feel that it is a mission that continues to be a part of my life as I continue the call to humbly serving others. ☩





The Eagle Pass tornado:

Their hands begin trembling at the mere thought of it. Their voices quiver in trying to recount their experiences.

Their eyes, welled with tears, gaze into another time and another place.

“Uncomfortable” cannot accurately describe their feelings.

“Traumatic,” even though overused, better describes their situation.

It’s been more than a year since the Eagle Pass tornado left hundreds, if not thousands, of lives shattered and altered forever.

Many became homeless, school-less, car-less and distraught within a few hours after the rare, yet powerful, storm moved through the Texas-Mexico border region of Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras.

On the Texas side, none were hit harder than the residents of Loma Linda Colonia.

Despite what must have seemed like a scene torn out of the *Wizard of Oz*, with the noise howling from the powerful gusts and with the wind lifting everything in its path, the faith of the people never wavered.

However, they haven’t forgotten. They are haunted

Sus manos comienzan a temblar por el simple recuerdo de aquello. Sus voces titubean al tratar de volver a contar sus recuerdos personales.

Sus ojos, llenos de lagrimas, contemplan un tiempo y un lugar del pasado.

Muy incómodos, no pueden describir sus sentimientos con exactitud.

En trauma, aun cuando sea sobre expresado, describe mejor su situación.

Ha pasado más de un año desde que el Tornado de Eagle Pass, dejó a cientos, si no es que a miles, de vidas lesionadas y alteradas para siempre.

La mayoría de ellos se quedaron sin hogar, sin escuelas, sin carros y desorientados dentro de una cuantas horas después de que la rara, pero poderosa tormenta atravesó por la entera región fronteriza de Texas y México de Eagle Pass y Piedras Negras.

En el lado de Texas, nadie fue pegado con más dureza que los residentes de la Colonia Loma Linda.

No obstante que debe haber parecido una escena arrancada del *Wizard de Oz*, con el enorme ruido de los poderosos ventarrones y con los vientos levantando a todo en su camino, la fe de la gente nunca se estremeció.

Sin embargo, no se han olvidado que fueron espantados por lo que ocurrió esa tarde.

► **"I remember that I couldn't stop crying that day. And I haven't stopped.** I still cry now, every time I think of it. We are never going to forget what it felt like that day.



See how your donations have helped those in need

by what transpired on that afternoon.

A year later, despite their attempts to bury these horrible images in the deepest recesses of their minds, there are constant reminders of what transpired in April 2007.

Every time it gets windy, they tremble.

Every time it starts to rain or there is lightning and thunder, they begin to pray.

As they have slowly begun to rebuild their homes and community, the real challenge is moving past the psychological torment of the devastation caused by the tornado.

The following is an interview with three matriarchs of different families whose lives were changed that fateful day.

Maria Estela Perez

Maria Estela and Juan Manuel are parents to Marissa, Alejandra and Juan. According to them, the last 14 months have been extremely difficult for the entire family.

"I remember that I couldn't stop crying that day," Maria Estela said, with tears rolling down her cheek. "And I haven't stopped. I still cry now, every time I think of it. We are never going to forget what it felt like that day. We had never been through anything like this. We didn't have any idea of what it was."

Gripped by fear and despair, Maria Estela vividly recalls the tragedy.

Un año más tarde, a pesar de sus intentos de enterrar esas horribles imágenes en los más profundos recónditos de sus mentes, sigue habiendo constantes recuerdos de lo que ocurrió en abril del 2007.

Cada vez que hay ventarrones, ellos tiemblan.

Cada vez que comienza a llover o cuando hay relámpagos y estruendos, ellos comienzan a rezar.

Al ir reconstruyendo lentamente sus hogares y su comunidad, el reto real es de sobrepasar la tormenta psicológica de la devastación causada por el tornado.

Lo que sigue son unas entrevistas con tres matriarcas de distintas familias, cuyas vidas fueron cambiadas en ese fatal día.

María Estela Pérez

Maria Estela y Juan Manuel son los padres de Marissa, Alejandra y Juan, y según ellos, los últimos catorce meses han sido extremadamente difíciles para la familia entera. Yo recuerdo que no podía dejar de llorar ese día," dijo María Estela, con lágrimas rodando por sus mejillas. "Y no he dejado de llorar. Aún lloro cada vez que lo recuerdo. Nunca nos vamos a olvidar como nos sentimos aquel día. Nunca habíamos pasado por algo semejante. No teníamos ni idea de lo que era."

Envuelta en el temor y la desesperación, María Estela vividamente recuerda la tragedia.

"El tornado arrancó nuestro techo y entonces la lluvia mojó todas nuestras paredes. Y las paredes eventualmente se fueron rompiendo debido a la humedad y todos nuestros muebles quedaron deshechos," dijo María Estela. "Me seguía preguntando ¿qué cómo íbamos construir nuestra casa otra vez?"





“The tornado blew our roof off and then the rain got all our walls wet. The walls eventually cracked because of all the moisture and all our furniture was ruined,” said Maria Estela. “I kept asking, ‘How are we going to build the home again?’”

On that first night, the Perez family slept at Memorial School and spent the following day there while awaiting instruction from the government.

“After that, we stayed with my sister-in-law for about four weeks. We were very lucky that she let us stay in her home that long,” said Maria Estela. “Then the federal government provided us with a mobile home as a temporary shelter.”

The initial aid came from agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Red Cross. But the long-term help came from people like you and me through the benevolent work of Catholic Social Services from the Diocese of Laredo.

“I didn’t think anyone else was going to help us after the Red Cross and FEMA,” explained Maria Estela. “But then deacon (Leandro Contreras) called and told me there was more help. And it helped us a lot.”

Maria Estela also emphasized that the financial assistance was spent on necessary items.

“We didn’t have anything after the storm. This money helped us by basic things like food, water and pots and pans to cook in,” Maria Estela added. “I thank everyone for their help and there’s just no way we can ever pay back everything that’s been done for us.”

Cinderblock by cinderblock, the Perez family has begun to rebuild their home and hope to finish by the end of this summer.



La primera noche, la familia Pérez durmió en la Escuela Memorial y allí pasaron el día siguiente, esperando instrucciones del gobierno.

“Después de eso, nos quedamos con mi cuñada por casi cuatro semanas. Tuvimos mucha suerte de que nos dejara quedar en su casa

por tanto tiempo,” Maria Estela.

“Entonces el gobierno federal nos dio una casa móvil como albergue temporal.”

La ayuda inicial vino de agencias como la Federal de Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) y la Cruz Roja Americana. Pero la ayuda de largo plazo llegó de gente como ustedes y yo, mediante el trabajo benevolente de los Servicios Sociales Católicos de la Diócesis de Laredo.

“Yo no pensaba que nadie más nos iba a ayudar después de la Cruz Roja y FEMA.” Explicó Maria Estela. “Pero entonces el diácono (Leonardo Contreras) me llamó y dijo había más ayuda. Y nos ayudó mucho.”

Maria Estela también enfatizó que la ayuda financiera fue usada para compra cosas necesarias.

“No teníamos nada después de la tormenta. El dinero nos ayudó para las cosas básicas, como alimentos, agua, y utensilios para cocinar,” agregó Maria Estela. “Les doy las gracias a todos por su ayuda, y simplemente no existe manera alguna para que podamos regresar todo lo que se ha hecho por nosotros.”

Tabique por tabique, la familia Pérez ha comenzado a reconstruir su hogar y esperan terminar la construcción al final de este verano.

Isabel Vazquez

For Homero and Isabel, along with their children, Homero IV, Sergio and Denisse, the tornado was just as horrifying.

But with a twist.

Just like the Perez', the Vazquez roof was ripped from its house, allowing water to penetrate and ruin the floor, walls, and furniture of their home.

"And all these scorpions came into our home and I was terrified because my children are allergic to scorpion stings," said Isabel. But there was even more at stake.



"After the storm passed and I saw the destruction, I told my kids that God took care of us."

"I was three months pregnant at the time and I was so afraid I would lose the baby," sobbed Isabel. "It was one of my biggest preoccupations to take care of everyone and the unborn baby."

And as Isabel began to panic, overwhelmed with grief, she looked for consolation.

"I was thinking the worst, like what would I do if one my kids flew away," she said. "Then I found my Book of Prayers. Some of the pages tore and flew away, but we all gathered around, including the kids, my mother-in-law and the neighbors, and we began to pray."

To this day, she credits her faith for her family being protected.

"After the storm passed and I saw the destruction, I told my kids that God took care of us," said Isabel.

Then came the help from your donations through Catholic Social Services.

"There were so many things that we needed. We lost all our food in the refrigerator and freezer. So with the aid

Isabel Vazquez

Para Homero e Isabel, junto con sus hijos, Homero IV, Sergio y Denisse, el tornado fue igual de horroroso.

Pero con una torcidita.

Así como los Pérez, el techo de los Vazquez también fue arrancado desde su base, permitiendo que el agua penetrara y echara a perder el piso, las paredes y los muebles de su hogar.

"Y todos esos alacranes que entraron a nuestra casa y yo estaba aterrizada porque mis hijos tiene alergia a los piquetes de alacrán," dijo Isabel.

Pero había aún más en peligro.

"Yo tenía tres meses de estar embarazada en ese tiempo y tenía miedo de perder el bebé." Lloraba Isabel. "Fue una de mis mayores preocupaciones el cuidar a todos y al bebé no nacido."

Y cuando Isabel comenzó a sentir pánico y desesperada por su temor, ella buscó consuelo.

"Yo estaba pensando lo peor. Como ¿qué haría yo si a uno de mis hijos se lo llevara el viento?" decía ella. "Entonces encontré mi Libro de Oraciones. Algunas de las páginas se rompieron y volaron con el viento, pero nos juntamos todos, incluyendo los niños, mi suegra y los vecinos y comenzamos a rezar."

Hasta esta fecha ella le da crédito a su fe por la protección de su familia.

"Después de que pasó la tormenta y vi la destrucción, les dije a mis hijos que Dios nos había cuidado." Dijo Isabel.

Y entonces llegó la ayuda de los donativos de ustedes mediante los, Servicios Sociales Católicos.

"Había tantas cosas que necesitábamos. Perdimos nuestros alimentos en el refrigerador y en congelador, así que con la ayuda que recibimos, compramos las cosas básicas como alimentos y agua," dijo Isabel.

"Hasta esta fecha, seguimos rezando para todas esas familias que perdieron a sus seres queridos en la tormenta y también oramos para dar gracias por toda la ayuda que hemos recibido."

La familia Vazquez, incluyendo su última edición, Vanessa de



Rosita Valley Elementary remains under construction after last year's devastating tornado ripped the school apart.

we received, we bought basic things like food and water,” said Isabel.

“To this day, we still pray for all those families that lost loved ones in the storm and we also pray to give thanks for all the help that we have received.”

The Vazquez family, and their latest addition, 8-month-old Vanessa, have almost completed rebuilding their home. Some sheetrock and texture are all that is lacking.

Maribel Solis

Maribel and Jesus Solis are parents to three children and they suffered the least amount of material damage to the three families interviewed.

“I always tell my husband that we were the lucky ones because only our roof and windows were damaged by the tornado,” began Maribel.

“It was something horrible. We may be poor, but we are blessed. God was always with us

And Jesus had an interesting perspective on the storm. He was out on another property, cutting grass, when the storm barreled into town. He drove as fast as he could, but by the time he got home, the wind was so strong he could not open the front door to his home.

“Jesus saw everything from the van,” said Maribel. “I thought it was just another storm, but when the windows started breaking, my son, Jesus Ernesto, told me this was a tornado. We got under the table quickly and I got hysterical.”

“It was something horrible. We may be poor, but we are blessed. God was always with us and God is still with us.”

Like the Perezes, the Solises stayed with a relative, sister Norma, for about one month before they could get back onto their property.

“The HEB gift cards really helped a lot by putting food on the table,” added Maribel. “My husband stopped working for a while so that he could rebuild our home. There was a lot of work to be done.”

And just as the other families have become more appreciative of life, so too have the Solises learned a lesson.

“We are very grateful for all the help we have received,” said Maribel. “Because of everyone’s help, we have learned that we also need to help others. One has to always be ready to help. If we got help, then we must help others.” ☺



ocho meses de edad, han casi terminado la reconstrucción de su hogar. Todo lo que les falta son algunas laminas y pequeños detalles.

Maribel Solis

Maribel y Jesús Solis son los padres de tres hijos y sufrieron la menor cantidad de daños materiales a su hogar de las tres personas entrevistadas.

“Yo siempre le digo a mi esposo que nosotros fuimos los afortunados, porque sólo nuestra azotea y ventanas fueron dañadas por el tornado,” comenzó Maribel.

Y Jesús tenía una perspectiva interesante sobre la tormenta. Él estaba afuera y en otra propiedad cortando el pasto cuando el tornado brutalmente entró al pueblo.

El manejó lo, más rápido que pudo, pero cuando llegó a su casa, el viento estaba tan violento que no podía abrir la puerta de enfrente de su casa.

“Jesús vio todo desde su camioneta”, dijo Maribel. Yo pensé que era solamente otra tormenta, pero cuando comenzaron a romperse las ventanas, mi hijo Jesús Ernesto me dijo que esto era un tornado.

Nos metimos debajo de la mesa y yo me puse histérica.”

“Era algo horrible. Nosotros quizá somos pobres, pero estamos bendecidos. Dios siempre estuvo con nosotros y Dios sigue estando con nosotros.”

Como los Pérez, los Solis se quedaron con la hermana de Maribel, Norma, por casi un mes, antes de que pudieran regresar a su propiedad.

“Las tarjetas de regalos de HEB realmente nos ayudaron mucho al poner alimento sobre la mesa,” agregó Maribel. “Mi esposo dejó de trabajar por un tiempo, para que pudiera reconstruir nuestra casa. Había mucho trabajo por hacer.”

Y tal como las otras familias han llegado a ser más agradecidos a la vida, los Solis también han aprendido una lección.

“Estamos muy agradecidos por la ayuda que hemos recibido,” comenzó Maribel “Porque debido a la ayuda de todos, hemos aprendido también que nosotros necesitamos ayudar a los demás. Uno tiene que estar siempre listo para ayudar. Si nosotros recibimos ayuda, entonces debemos ayudar a otros.” ☺



Being Catholic in the 21st century

▶▶ About 500 people gathered at St. Augustine High School on March 8 for the annual diocesan ministries conference.

This year's event, *Being Catholic in the 21st Century*, united the different ministries active in our diocese and featured a keynote speaker as well as multiple breakout sessions.

Additionally, there was an exhibit area of local and out-of-town ministries and merchants. If you are interested in the 2009 conference, please call 956.727.2140.



Lamar Bruni Vergara Mass

▶▶ Rev. Msgr. Stanley Sliwiak, pastor of Blessed Sacrament and vicar general of the Diocese of Laredo, celebrated a special Mass on April 16 at St. Augustine High School commemorating the anniversary of the death of one of Laredo's most philanthropic women – Lamar Bruni Vergara.



Judge Solomon Casseb, Jr., co-founding trustee, and JC Martin, III, trustee of the Lamar Bruni Vergara Trust, were in attendance for this commemoration. In addition, numerous beneficiaries of the trust's generosity were in attendance for the Mass.



2008 Chrism Mass

▶▶ The Diocese of Laredo joined millions of Catholics worldwide in Holy Week activities that included the annual Chrism Mass. During this Mass, held annually at San Agustin Cathedral, Bishop James Tamayo blesses the different oils used throughout the diocese in the celebration of the sacraments. In addition, Bishop Tamayo invites his presbyters to publicly renew their priestly promises. An estimated 55 priests and deacons were on hand for the Chrism Mass.



7th Annual Blue Mass

Bishop James Tamayo celebrated the seventh annual Blue Mass at San Agustin Cathedral on May 11 as part of the National Police Week festivities. Those attending included the Laredo Police Department, the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, and Texas A&M International Police and Constables from Precinct 1.



2008 Youth Spectacular

►► About 800 high school students from the Diocese of Laredo united for the 2008 Youth Spectacular. The event, organized by the Office of Youth Ministry, attracted teenagers from Laredo, Zapata, Carrizo Springs, Crystal City, Eagle Pass and Cotulla. The Youth Spectacular featured two keynote speakers, numerous workshops, the sacrament of reconciliation, a live band and a closing Mass by Bishop James Tamayo. If you are interested in becoming involved with youth activities in our diocese, please call Araceli Vallarta at 956.727.2140.



Salesian Sisters Jubilee

►► More than a dozen Salesian Sisters who have served Mary Help of Christians School gathered on April 12 at Divine Mercy Parish in Laredo to celebrate their jubilee. The religious women celebrating their jubilee included:

- Sister Ida Chagin (65 years).
- Sister Ofelia Lozano (60 years).
- Sister Jane Sanchez (60 years).
- Sister Olga Muños (60 years).
- Sister Julia Anguiano (60 years).
- Sister Mary Becerril (60 years).
- Sister Esther López (50 years).
- Sister Mary Refuge Gomes (50 years).
- Sister Mary Link (40 years).
- Sister Barbara Campbell (40 years).
- Sister Cecilia Henry (40 years).
- Sister Carmen Palacios (40 years).
- Sister Emma Stefanoni (40 years).
- Sister Irene Tapia.

The Mass, celebrated by Rev. Felipe de Jesus Fernandez, SDB, was followed by a reception at the school.



My golden ticket

The United States visit by Pope Benedict XVI was a time of grace for everyone, but especially for all those who experienced the pilgrimage to Washington D.C., and New York City in support of our Holy Father and his message of *Christ Our Hope*.

The first thing I'd like to share with you regarding my pilgrimage to see the pope is my arrival to the famed 5th Avenue in Manhattan. As I arrived with my group around 5:30 a.m. on April 19, a priest approached me and asked if I was going to enter St. Patrick Cathedral in New York City.

I replied, "Yes."

He then told me, "I'm glad you also acquired a Golden Ticket."

I thought to myself, "What?"

Then I remembered the Willy Wonka movie! It was then that I truly realized how fortunate I was to be there and to have access to the cathedral. What a blessing it was to represent my diocese and my beloved brother priests, deacons, religious brothers and religious sisters, all of whom I appreciate and admire so much. I definitely felt unworthy.

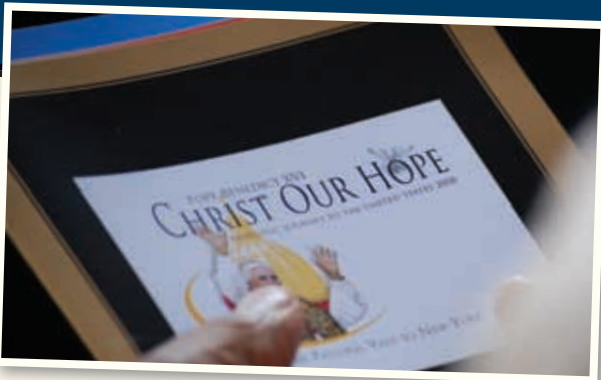
An estimated 3,000 priests, a notable number of deacons and numerous women religious congregated at this beautiful cathedral to hear, see and know the pope.

I remember being in bench 108, at the very back of the church, and thinking, "Why didn't I get to sit in the front?" I surely thought I would never get to meet the pope.

Never!

After a sublime Mass, the pope spoke, and his message lifted us all. I swelled with joy upon seeing the emotional response of my brother priests and everyone present to the words of our Holy Father. It was exciting and moving to see so many priests from different dioceses throughout the United States gather before the successor to St. Peter. I was also moved by his efforts to speak in English and Spanish to the audience.

However, the most surprising moment came at the end. At the conclusion of Mass, our Holy



Father walked right in front of us. It was then that Pope Benedict stretched out his hand toward me and I was able to greet him with a handshake. I was even able to kiss his ring.

At that moment, my heart was pounding! And as I felt this incredible energy radiating from this elderly man, as well as the presence of the Holy Spirit, I began to cry tears of joy.

At that moment, I remembered an excerpt from Matthew's Gospel: "But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (19:30).

After snapping a photo of the pope with my cell phone, I received a text message from my mother and sister, who live in Venezuela, saying that they had seen me on television greeting the pope. They were more emotional than I.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank the Holy Trinity for this blessing, Bishop Tamayo for his support and the 11 brothers and sisters who accompanied on this pilgrimage to see the pope. I also extend my gratitude to all the members of the Neocatechumenal Way in New York City who welcomed us into their homes.

May God repay you in abundance.

— Rev. Iden Bello
is the parochial vicar
at Nuestra Señora del
Rosario Church and the
vice chancellor for the
Diocese of Laredo.



La visita del Santo Padre Benedicto XVI a los Estados Unidos fue realmente un tiempo de gracia para todos, especialmente para aquellos que pudimos tener la experiencia de peregrinar a New York, para apoyar al Santo Padre y escuchar su mensaje que nos recuerda que "Cristo es nuestra esperanza".

De la visita del Papa primeramente quisiera contarles algo que me causó mucha gracia. Llegando a los alrededores de la quinta avenida de Manhattan, a eso de las 5:30 AM del 19 de abril, un sacerdote se me acercó y me dijo: ¿Vas a entrar a la Catedral? Le dije: sí. Me dijo muy graciosamente: "que bueno, tu también obtuviste un Golden Ticket." Pensé que? Y recordé a Willy Wonka! Y me di cuenta de lo afortunado que fui al poder estar ahí. Que bendición para mi hacer presente a mi diócesis y a mis queridos hermanos sacerdotes, religiosos y religiosas a quienes tanto aprecio y admiro. Definitivamente me sentía indigno.

Alrededor de más de tres mil sacerdotes y un número notable de diáconos y religiosas estaban congregados en esta hermosa catedral para escuchar, ver, y conocer al Papa. Recuerdo que estaba en la banca numero 108....hasta mero atrás...pensé... ¿porque no me tocó en frente? Aquí no saludaré al Papa nunca! Todo inició, la liturgia fue algo sublime. El mensaje del Papa nos animó a todos. Me causó gran alegría ver la emoción de los sacerdotes y la gente afuera de la catedral. También me conmovió que muchas cosas eran bilingües, en inglés y español. Que emoción ver a tantos hermanos sacerdotes de diferentes diócesis de los Estados Unidos congregados en torno a Pedro.

Lo más sorprendente para mi fue el final. Al culminar la misa, el Santo Padre caminó justo frente a nosotros. Allí el Santo Padre estrechó su mano hacia mí, le saludé y pude hasta besar su anillo. En ese momento mi corazón latía fuerte. ¡Que energía y fuerza del Espíritu presente en este humilde anciano!...solo salieron lagrimas de felicidad. En ese momento me recordé una frase del evangelio de San Mateo (sin querer sacarlo de su contexto) que dice: "los que ahora son los últimos serán los primeros". Lo único que pude llevar fue mi celular y con el le tomé una foto al papa muy cerca de mí...Al rato recibí un mensaje de texto de mi mamá y mi hermana....decían "te vimos cuando saludaste al papa" Ellas estaban emocionadas y hasta más que yo.

Para finalizar, quiero agradecer: a la Trinidad por esta bendición; a Monseñor Jaime Antonio Tamayo por su apoyo; y a los once hermanos que me acompañaron durante la visita del Papa. También les agradezco a todos los miembros del Camino Neocatecumenal en New York que nos hicieron sentir como en casa. Dios les pague.

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