

THE MUSTARD SEED

A NEWSLETTER FROM ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CHURCH

September 2023

Letter From Our Pastor

This summer of 2023 we will remember many wonderful events. In early July, our parish was blessed with the ordination of Fr. Oscar Marquina and the gift of his first mass here at St. Thomas. Also, the celebration of the Eucharistic Revival brought together more than 8,000 Catholics from our Diocese to celebrate the Mass together. And nine young adults from our parish made a pilgrimage to Lisbon, Portugal to celebrate World Youth Day with Pope Francis. And as a final point, we were able to witness the organization of our Parish Pastoral Council.

All these events have a practical application or connection to the Diocesan Pastoral Plan which has a focus on vocation, youth ministry, Eucharist and parish ministry. We have heard in the Gospel of Mt



**Stephany Cortez and
Virginia Hernandez
enjoying World Youth Day
in Lisbon, Portugal.**

13,3 how the sower went out to sow and when he was sowing the seed...this is how the text begins to speak of the seed that falls in different places and conditions. God granted us abundant vocations through the testimony of Father Oscar and the ordination of new priests in what was his first Mass. I thank all those who collaborated in the organization of this great event, especially Mrs. Mariana Cerón for her leadership.



Many people spoke of how hard our youth worked to achieve their fundraising goal for World Youth Day. But let us not forget others who also worked very hard to make this happen: Kathy Chudoba, our Hispanic community, the English-speaking community, the priests and many benefactors all with a common objective "that our young people find Christ". I think that now our task is to take advantage of this experience and reactivate our Parish Youth Group. I want to make a special mention of Kathy Chudoba, who was discreetly present in all these activities; for this she devised a program where she invited priests and laity to collaborate to share experiences to better prepare our young people. We can say that it was Kathy who organized and put all her skills at the service of youth ministry.

Last but not least is the re-formation of our Parish Pastoral Council. This effort was accomplished thanks to the leadership of Adrienne Akers and the joint work of a work group of parishioners called the Parish Council Formation Group. I appreciate everyone's good will and above all, I thank God our Father who sent his Holy Spirit so that our parish continues to be active and alive.

Father Rogelio Felix-Rosas

Spotlight on Fr. Oscar Marquina

by Linda Bradak

When one of our own sons enters the priesthood, it calls for great celebration. On June 30, St. Thomas Aquinas parishioner Oscar Marquina was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Solis in Salt Lake City. Following many years of discernment and formation, on Sunday July 1, the newly ordained Fr. Oscar celebrated his first Mass in our parish. A recent article in the July 7, 2023 issue of The Intermountain Catholic which can be found online.

As a cradle Catholic, most of us came to know Fr. Oscar as a faithful participant in programs at The Newman Center where he says his faith began to deepen. LDS students' queries on Catholicism stimulated his research on the early Church. Graduation from USU was followed by work in Chicago punctuated by many hours in church there – upon which his local pastor one day wondered aloud, “When can we send you to the seminary?” Fr. Oscar reports, “It was the first time I thought about the seminary, but it was completely clear to me: God wanted me to be a priest. Though I found God’s presence important in my life as a layperson, it took me two more years of working and discerning to recognize that the call to the priestly vocation would not leave my heart.” The next step was two years of pre-theology studies at Mt. Angel Seminary in Oregon. In Fall 2018 he entered the Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy, where his fluency in Spanish helped him in learning Italian.

It is a long path to become a Catholic priest. The next step was installation as an acolyte in 2020. Fr. Oscar recalls, “After I processed into Mass wearing an alb and cincture, I knelt before Archbishop Augustine Di Noia who urged ‘Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of his Church.’ My eyes fixed on the golden ciborium as I said ‘Amen.’ This step called me to take an active, primary role in the life of the liturgy.”

Next was ordination to the diaconate in 2022. As Deacon Marquina, he served parishes in Draper and Cedar City as well as at the Cathedral of the Madeleine, where he worked with Fr. Silva, diocesan judicial vicar. This service led him to an interest in Canon Law pertaining to valid marriage, which he terms “A much-needed area to provide specific counsel to couples.” Fr. Oscar has now completed the first of a three-year studies in Canon Law. He hopes one day to serve in the diocesan tribunal “to help the diocese, faithful Catholics, couples, and my brother priests. I trust in God to help me mature as a priest and to accompany people on the road to Heaven.”



Father Oscar greets Jose Santana at the Spanish Mass on Sunday August 7.

Fr. Oscar maintains that the path to priesthood is one of “ripening and timing.” He urges us to speak up to young people if we see something which makes us think they might be open to a Church vocation. “When I was 10, someone suggested that one day I might become a priest,” he adds. “That was the very first seed planted in me.” He reminds that Christ instituted the priesthood as a sacrament of his loving and saving presence in the world, entrusting priests with the power of the Holy Spirit as humble instruments of God’s blessings.

At the end of Fr. Oscar’s ordination, all present faced the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and sang the Salve Regina. “I saw Mary’s face shining and her joy, just radiating from her, to see her two new priests,” Fr. Oscar recounted. And at the first Mass he celebrated, right here at St. Thomas, Fr. Oscar thanked the congregation for its support, urging all children who might hear the vocational call to pray to the Blessed Mother for guidance and discernment. “This is my home parish and is special to me,” he said. In conclusion, in arranging my interview with Fr. Oscar, I asked if he was used to his new title. He heartily replied, “Yes, it must be a sign that I did the right thing.” Our parish responds with a resounding “Amen.”



STA Parishioner Shares Her Experience at World Youth Day

by Linda Bradak

Nine young people from our parish were among the 1.7 million from many countries who journeyed to Lisbon, Portugal for World Youth Day 2023. This important Catholic youth convocation occurs every three or four years and likely serves as a life-changing gift of grace for all who attend. It was surely so for parishioner Marcela Gallart, who raved about her transformative experience when attending a previous World Youth Day with her family which she shared in an earlier story in **The Mustard Seed**.

Now it's been the turn of our 23-year old Annakarenina Reyes, as one of 29 young Utahns and 8 others from our parish to take part in the 2023 World Youth Day. Anna has worked for the last two years in our parish as Office Administrator, where her fluency in Spanish and English is invaluable.

If a picture is worth 1,000 words, and given the space constraints of our newsletter, we're just hitting a highlight or two here. Anna's succinct reply: "I accomplished many 'firsts'! I had never been across the Atlantic Ocean before. Probably the most amazing thing for me was to see the Pope. We had stood for 3 hours waiting for him. I wept when I saw him.

Tears of joy, tears of peace, and tears of enlightenment ran down my face." Her glow is palpable as she remembers.

Anna continued about the Pope's message to the throng. "He told us to **Be not afraid** -- that we are not alone. It was like looking at Jesus. I felt like I was with my second family, all of us pilgrims together, all of us Catholic young people, so many of us, from different countries, wearing different clothes, and all together as one in our faith."

When I asked Anna how the experience has changed her, she said that she has wanted to start a Youth Ministry here but had become discouraged by the challenge of low turnout. "The Pope's words about our not being alone got me," she said. "I really want to do this. I want other kids to realize that Confirmation is not the end of their faith life. It's a beginning."

The next World Youth Day will occur in 2027 in South Korea. Let's support Anna's goal to send another cohort of young pilgrims. Let's also support her vision to inspire other young people with the Light of Christ.



Our Youth Find Ways to Serve Our Lord

by Carol Foht

Good stewardship at church can start at a young age. Being an altar server is one way to help our youth understand the importance of participating in the Mass and in the life of our parish. This also provides a golden opportunity to



Audriana Garcia assists Fr. Rogelio for the first time.

build a sense of pride in being an active member of the church community and it helps build confidence and commitment in young parishioners. During the Covid epidemic, we lost many of our altar servers and clearly need more to volunteer.

Audriana Garcia now assists Father Rogelio as an altar server. And 10-year-old Jesus Nava Olague helps greet parishioners at the 10:00 Mass and takes up the collection as well as being an altar server.



Nava Olague holds the lectionary for Fr. Rogelio.

Parents and other parishioners also encourage our young people to take an active role in the life of our parish by participating in other forms of service, such as helping as greeters, being a Eucharistic minister, or taking up the collection. Setting these responsibilities as an example helps to "grow our youth into the next phase of stewardship", such as becoming an altar server.



We Celebrate! RCIA 2023-24

by Amy Gomez

Adults and older youth can find their way into full communion with the Catholic faith through a process referred to as RCIA, namely the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. At our parish, we offer several possibilities with new classes beginning shortly. Those who are preparing for Baptism will meet at 4:30 PM on Sunday nights this year at our parish, starting on Sept 10, 2023. RCIA Initial Inquiry for people who have questions about the Catholic faith will begin meeting on Monday nights at 6:00 PM at church, beginning on September 11. You can contact the Parish Office at 435-752-1478, and you will be connected with the RCIA team.

RCIA is designed for unbaptized adults and older youth with questions about the Catholic faith and also for adults and their children over 7 years of age seeking the Sacrament of Baptism into the Catholic faith. Seekers

who choose to move forward are referred to as catechumens. RCIA Director, Scott Danielson says, "We are happy to say that we helped 19 people that were baptized and confirmed during this year's Easter Vigil and 7 others who were confirmed! Clara Cook and Jacob Ladner who were recently baptized and confirmed, both of whom attended USU, will help with RCIA at the Newman Center this year."

In my preparation for writing this article, I was able to observe that initial inquiry discussions and the preparation, referred to as the catechumenate, for the Sacraments of Baptism and adult Confirmation which are designed to meet the needs of the individual. The RCIA team arranges meetings for individuals and groups for: people who have some questions about Catholic belief; the unbaptized who are seeking preparation for Baptism; and those who have been previously baptized in other Christian denominations

who are seeking preparation for Catholic Baptism. The RCIA team, includes our pastor, also arranges preparation meetings for adult Confirmation and the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.



Ashley Maxwell is baptized by Fr. Rogelio after completing the RCIA program at St. Thomas Aquinas Church.

Ashley Maxwell, a USU geology undergraduate who received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation during the Easter Vigil this year, now engaged to be married says, "I enjoyed the RCIA process. I enjoyed working with our teacher, Scott Danielson and my sponsor, Amy Gomez. I loved being able to freely ask questions you don't normally ask people, and I loved learning about the mysteries of Christianity and about the importance of accepting them as mysteries. My Catholic Baptism was truly a blessing!" Ashley adds, "I love that Catholicism is the original source of Christianity whose bishopric traces back to Saint Peter, the Apostle!" While these realities continue to capture the interest and awe of every one of us, in Ashley's case, they would lead her to further explore our beautiful faith, culminating in her Baptism and Confirmation through our RCIA program. Ashley and her Catholic fiancé, Leo Hasselbauer whom she met at USU, plan to marry in Vienna, Austria at St. Rupert's Church, a beautiful Romanesque church thought to be the oldest church in Vienna. What a beautiful beginning to a lifelong journey together in faith!

Adult converts who embark the RCIA process are often able to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, the Eucharist, Confirmation and perhaps also Marriage - all in the space of one year - a year of grace, peace, indescribable joy and a new beginning together in Christ. If you or someone you know are interested in RCIA initial inquiry or sacrament preparation, please contact the Parish Office at 435-752-1478 to be connected to the RCIA team.



Our Senior Ministry Celebrates Its 1st Birthday

by Linda Bradak

Replete with cake, soup and chocolate mousse, we celebrated the first year of our parish's Senior Ministry on August 14th. Entering guests were met by a display of balloons, small golden bags, and a notice urging each to choose: "Seniors are the rock of the church," read the sign, and inside we found polished stones engraved with inspirational phrases like, "Nothing is Impossible with God," and "Jesus Saves."

Our Senior Ministry was started in 2022 by parishioner Jamie Morley with the intent of bringing the parish more readily to elder parishioners who might have difficulty coming to it. On the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month, the Senior Ministry holds a soup luncheon and an activity in our social hall.

Coincidentally, on August 14th, 14 parishioners gathered to watch the film *Full of Grace* following cake-cutting.



An animal lover, Jamie Morley has always liked moose, hence that was the theme of the party. Jamie's friend Jackie Rodriguez chose moose-themed decorations, making chocolate mousse for dessert. We in attendance marveled at a

beautiful framed painting made by Cesar Rodriguez as a gift for Jamie – an efficient woman indeed – of a moose in a grey 3-piece business suit, entitled "Business Moose", honoring Jamie's ability to get things done. If the idea of reaching out to or connecting with seniors speaks to you, you will find a welcoming and useful place in this Ministry! You can reach Jamie Morley through the Parish Office.

Bishop Mel Visits Us

by Adrienne Akers

Our parish was fortunate to host Bishop Mel Rey Uy, who is our own Fr. Robin's bishop from the Diocese of Lucena, Philippines. His visit to Utah and our parish in August coincided with Fr. Robin's 48th birthday and to concelebrate Mass with him on August 10th and to greet our parishioners. Bishop Mel also hopes to raise awareness and donations in support of the upcoming National Association of Filipino Priests-USA for the 4th National Assembly from October 24-27 in the Archdiocese of Newark, NJ.

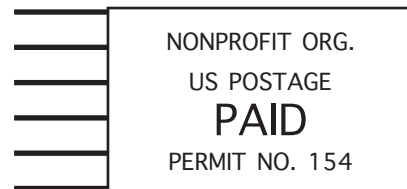
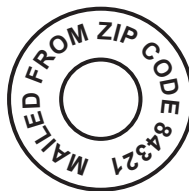


Currently, there are approximately 800 + Filipino priests serving in the U.S. in various arch/dioceses and Catholic institutions. There are also 3 Filipino bishops in the U.S.: Bishop Oscar Solis of the Diocese of Salt Lake City; Bishop Alejandro Aclan, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles; and Bishop Anthony Celino as the new Auxiliary Bishop of El Paso Texas. Donations are very much appreciated to support the conference as well as clergy's travel expenses. You can send or bring your donation to our parish office under the label "NAFP-US (National Association of Filipino Priest in US)".





St. Thomas Aquinas Parish
725 South 250 East
Hyde Park, UT 84318



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

2023 Vacation Bible School:

Shine

Jesus' Light!

This year VBS had an astronomical theme that had the teachers, aides and children sparkling like stars.

The team did a spectacular job creating an outer space theme with fun, engaging Bible-based activities to help the young students learn how the light of Jesus always shines for us, not just in the good times.



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www.stthomaslogan.org