

October 2018

Dear Friends,

This is an exciting time for the church in Austin, as *Encountering Christ* unites our parishes and draws us all together to make the diocese a better place for future generations — just as generations before us have done.

God calls us into communion with each other, and this campaign is a wonderful opportunity for us to be one. For me, *Encountering Christ* is as much spiritual as practical. Of course, we need the practical components the campaign supports. But more importantly, the unity this initiative creates with Bishop Vásquez advances the mission we are each given at Baptism, to go out and make disciples.

At times, we easily fall into our “silos,” where each parish is independent of the other. Our rural parishes, in particular, may feel this isolation. But *Encountering Christ* is an opportunity for our entire diocese to come together for a common purpose and realize we are one church, one Body of Christ, with one mission.

May God bless our generosity,

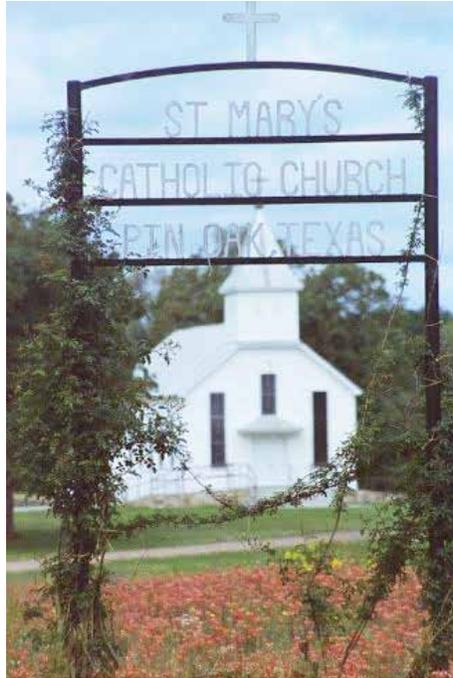


Rev. James Misko, Pastor
St. Louis King of France Parish, Austin
Chair, Pastor Advisory Committee



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Campaign helps connect rural parishes



The Diocese of Austin’s rural parishes not only face unique challenges — they often feel isolated from other parishes in the diocese. *Encountering Christ* is helping to address these issues, according to two Wave 1 pastors.

“Parishioners are beginning to feel more connected to the diocese through the capital campaign and recognize the challenges we face as the Austin diocese continues to grow exponentially,” said Father Darrell Kostiha, who became pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Cyclone and St. Cyril and Methodius Mission in Marak in June — around the same time Wave 1 parishes were preparing to launch their campaigns.

He saw firsthand how parishioners at both churches “pitch in and work hard to get things done for

the greater good” as they held their annual picnics. They have applied that attitude to *Encountering Christ* as well. “They recognized the need and benefit of the capital campaign not only for the diocese but also for their particular parish,” Father Kostiha said. “Even though it has been a difficult year for the farmers and ranchers it shows their capacity and heart to see beyond themselves to help others.”

St. Joseph has raised 117 percent of its campaign goal and Sts. Cyril and Methodius is at 75 percent. Both parishes will make facility repairs and improvements with their share of campaign funds.

Encountering Christ provided a “good opportunity to explain how this relationship between the parish and diocese works, and especially for a parish our size,” said Father Uche Andeh, pastor of St. Mary Mission in Pin Oak and St. Margaret Parish in Giddings. “They are there to help serve us, and they make us better. They make my work easier, they make our ministries here flow a lot better.”

Parishioners were especially excited to learned about the diocesan funds to be directed to struggling rural parishes. St. Margaret is at 106 percent of goal and is preparing for a new parish hall, while St. Mary has raised 181 percent of its goal and plans to use campaign gifts to build a reserve fund.

“People were pumped about this,” Father Andeh said. “They see this as an opportunity for them to contribute to the wellbeing of the diocese.”

Encountering Christ supports our rural parishes



Our parishes are the heart of our diocese. It is where Catholics celebrate the sacraments, learn about and grow in the faith, pass on and model their beliefs and come together to serve their community. Each parish is rooted in the church but has its own identity and unique charism through its members.

Our diocese benefits from the diversity of our 123 parishes and missions, which are urban and rural, small and large, multilingual, with schools and without. Together, these parishes serve more than half a million Catholics. Given the critical role of parishes, ensuring their strength and sustainability is of the utmost importance as the Central Texas population continues to grow.

There are 57 parishes with less than 500 families.



Our 80 parishes and missions in rural areas are crucial to the Catholic community in Central Texas. These rural churches may have less than a thousand families and may be the only parish for miles within their county. For these parishes, emergency costs may be too great to bear on their own. Sometimes, these costs threaten their solvency. But our rural parishes must remain open.

Through *Encountering Christ*, the diocese will create a \$3 million endowment to provide additional operational and emergency support for our rural parishes.

For an in depth look at one of our rural parishes, visit encounteringchristcampaign.org videos and watch the “Parish Life — Rural Parishes” video.

DONOR PROFILE | Dorothy Bielski

When Dorothy Bielski was 17 and about to marry, she decided to convert to Catholicism.

“I always felt that it was the best thing that ever happened to me,” she said. “I feel strong about my faith.”

When her pastor, Salvatorian Father Jozef Musiol, approached her about making a gift to *Encountering Christ*, she reflected on her many years in the faith and, over the course of a week and a half, prayed for guidance. She reviewed the campaign case statement and saw how her parish, St. Stanislaus in Chappell Hill, would benefit, as well as the Diocese of Austin as a whole. With 15 grandchildren, she has personally witnessed the difference campus ministry can make in the lives of young adults and liked that *Encountering Christ* will support this “important part” of college life.

She also thought about the church’s current challenges regarding clergy abuse, and how God promised her the church would always be there for her. “I believe that,” she said. “Regardless of what’s going on, our church will be stronger and will always exist.”

Ultimately, “I decided God had been good to me,” said Dorothy, who is a member of her parish’s finance council. “I certainly have more than I need.”

Dorothy hopes others will similarly reflect on what God has given them and respond generously with their own talents.

“We’re a united church, all of us together,” she said. “All of us give in a different way, but we’re all capable of giving something.”



Dorothy Bielski