

Leading the FLOCK

BY BISHOP DANIEL E. THOMAS



"I will take the chalice of salvation and call on the name of the Lord" (Psalm 116:13)

These words are taken from the Psalm Response most often chosen for the Ritual Mass with the Ordination of priests. In fact, it was these very words we prayed this year during the ordination of our three new priests! These words express the sentiments of the psalmist who prays in thanksgiving that the Lord has heard his prayers and supplications. He writes: "Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live." In the Ordination Mass, as we pray these words, we thank the Lord for all he has done for us in the gift of new priests, we thank the Lord for all he has done for us in shedding his blood to save us, and we thank the Lord that our priests live to pour themselves out for us as did Jesus himself.

Just two years ago I wrote that the Eucharist and the Priesthood are inseparable and highlighted our great need for diocesan priests in the July 2023 *Leading the Flock* column. At that time, we introduced a new initiative for the Diocese of Toledo which invited everyone in our Diocese to pray one Hail Mary each day for an increase in priestly vocations, and to do some fasting or abstinence for the same intention. There is no doubt that your prayers and intentional fasting and abstinence are bearing fruit. Over a three-year period we've accepted 1, then last year 4, now this year 6 new seminarians! And more are coming!

Two years ago I observed: "While the challenges we face may seem daunting, I ask that you approach your prayer and fasting/penance for priestly vocations with **hope**. Just think, if every parish in our diocese sent just one man to the seminary every ten years, we would have 122 seminarians over a ten-year period. If just half of them were ordained priests, we would be ordaining an average of over 6 men per year! This would be a huge shift from our current 20-year average of less than 2 ordinations per year. Dare we hope?" Now, we find ourselves in this Jubilee Year of Hope, called to

be Pilgrims of Hope, and recognizing signs of hope! Please join with me in renewed prayer and renewed hope for priestly vocations!



As with our Diocesan Prayer, we are committed to praying for all holy vocations, conscious in particular of the need for deacons and consecrated women religious. Pope Saint John Paul II reminds us: "There can be no Eucharist without the priesthood." So in these final days of the month of July, dedicated to the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, I am renewing my call that every person in our diocese continue or begin to offer a daily Hail Mary, along with some weekly Friday observance of fast or abstinence, for the intention of priestly vocations for our diocese. We need men who are ready and willing to take up the chalice of self-sacrifice and call on the name of the Lord, and to offer the Body and Blood of our Lord at Mass. We need men who are ready and willing to make present the Lord's

Paschal Mystery both at the altar and in their very persons. We need more priests who are happy, holy, humble, healthy, and honest. We need more priests, and with God's grace and your prayers, more priestly vocations will come.

With that in mind, this month we are launching a new initiative in sending out, over time, to all our 122 parishes, two traveling "chalices" provided by our Knights of Columbus, for the purpose of inspiring prayers for vocations, in particular priestly vocations. These are actually replicas of chalices, with an artistic representation of the body and blood. One chalice will travel through the northern counties and the other chalice will travel through the southern counties of our 19 county diocese. My intention with this

effort is to till the soil of our diocese with deep prayer asking, or better, begging the Lord to send more priests to serve in our local Church. Each chalice will spend one month on display in a prominent place in the parish church as a visible reminder for the parishioners intentionally to pray for holy vocations, with a particular emphasis on praying for priestly vocations. It may result that parishes and schools may take the initiative of having their own traveling "chalice," which could go from family to family and classroom to classroom, to pray for an increase in priestly vocations. I know some have started this already. May it continue!

It is so encouraging that we have 6 new seminarians for the Diocese of Toledo this year – the largest number of new seminarians in a decade! That raises our total number of seminarians to 14. We are already seeing the fruit of our intentional prayer, fasting and abstinence!

And where do such young men come from you might ask? They come most often from families and parishes that are striving for holiness; from families and parishes that encourage the young to serve the Church. You will find such young men at daily Mass, praying quietly in the church, attending Eucharistic adoration, stopping in for confession, or selflessly serving their neighbors. A daily habit of listening and talking with the Lord after reading from the Gospel of the day allows them to hear the voice of God, to more closely attend to the Will of God for their lives, and to act with courage and conviction.

In the recent 2025 CARA report on newly ordained priests from around our country, we find the following insightful information:

- 89% said they were encouraged by someone to consider the call to the priesthood
- 78% of them spent time in Eucharistic Adoration before entering seminary
- 73% attended Catholic School, either elementary, high school, or college, before entering seminary
- 72% were servers at Mass growing up
- 72% said they pray the rosary
- 66% of the newly ordained priests said it was a priest specifically who encouraged them to consider the priesthood
- 66% of the new priests were in full time employment before entering seminary
- 50% attended public school, either elementary or high school
- 46% said they served as lectors at Mass
- 15% were homeschooled
- 6% were in the military prior to entering seminary

That report also shares that the loudest voice of discouragement for a man considering the call to the priesthood can be a family member. I want to reassure all our families that it is a source of joy and grace to have a priest in the family because the priest son or brother can be,



The Diocese of Toledo's seminarians who are completing their Propaedeutic year pictured here with the traveling chalices.

removed from the Church, a genuine bridge to God. One of the most significant ways a family can support a young man considering the call to the priesthood is to promote the habit of daily prayer and openness to whatever God has in store for him, even if that may be different than what you might expect or desire for him. Openness of family members to welcome a priestly vocation may well be critical in a young man's discerning his vocation. Because God's plan is always the best plan for all our lives.

To any young man reading this column, I want to encourage you and assure you that being a priest is an amazing and rewarding life! It is a full life, a blessed life, and a life deep with meaning and purpose. Yes, you should have a natural desire for marriage and children, but if God is calling you to the priesthood, He will give you the grace to live out joyfully the life of chaste celibacy, obedience, and prayer. Quite simply, priesthood is a heroic adventure of selfless service in the person of Christ Jesus! I am confident more and more men are coming to see it as such! The same qualities that would make for a great husband and father are the same qualities we are looking for in candidates for the priesthood – loving, selfless and self-possessed, kind, prudent and sensitive, strong, faithful, dedicated to the poor and those in need, prayerful, patient, joyful, and courageous! Above all, we need men who are serious about their spiritual lives and about prayer, which brings interior peace and an abiding sense of God's presence.

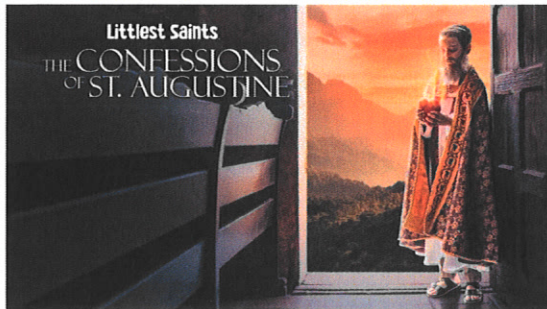
Please join me in welcoming the traveling chalices throughout our diocese. May each parish take in the replica of the chalice of salvation, and may parishioners call on the name of the Lord. I am confident that these chalices will prompt us to pray for more young men who are ready and willing to respond to a priestly vocation, to take the chalice of salvation, and to call on the name of the Lord!

+ Daniel E. Thomas

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop of Toledo
July 25, 2025

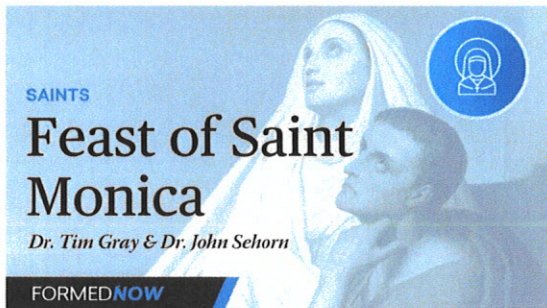
This Week on Formed

Week of August 24, 2025



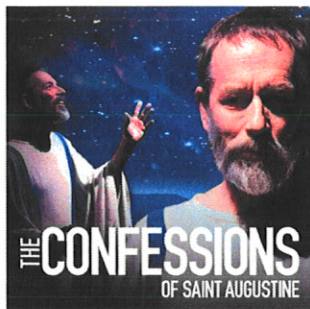
The Confessions of St. Augustine | Littlest Saints

A child, a sinner, a saint. Join us as we share the story of St. Augustine, tailored to our children, as he wrestles with God and comes to the faith.



Feast of Saint Monica | Catholic Saints

Throughout her life, St. Monica constantly prayed for the conversion of Augustine, her beloved son. In a moment of desperation, she even asked for the bishop's help. In response, he said, "the son of those tears surely will not perish." Truly, as this bishop remarked, Monica's tearful prayers helped build her son into the Doctor of Grace. In this video, join Dr. Gray and Dr. Sehorn as they discuss this great Saint.



The Confessions of Saint Augustine

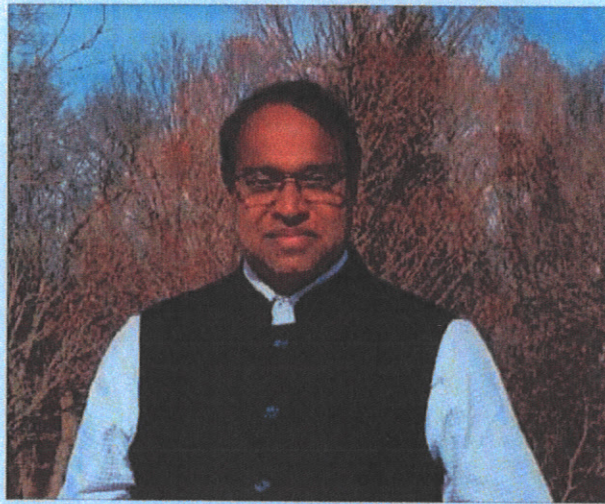
Actor Leonardo Defilippis captures the poetry and passion of Saint Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) in a performance that is accessible and deeply moving. The play is astonishingly relevant for our own times. Augustine struggled with promiscuity, fathered a child out-of-wedlock and dabbled in a "new age" style cult. Be inspired by his relentless pursuit of Truth and encouraged by the prayerful perseverance of his faithful mother, Saint Monica.

Our parish has a Formed subscription.
Visit signup.formed.org and select our parish name.

Christ the King Padre Pio Prayer Group

invites you to

A Pathway to Holiness through Saint Padre Pio and Blessed Solanus Casey



Father Ben Joseph, OFM Cap., Director, Solanus Casey Center, Detroit, Michigan

"Jesus wants to make us holy at all costs..." – St. Padre Pio

*"We must be faithful to the present moment or we will
frustrate the plan of God for our lives."* – Bl. Solanus Casey

**Christ the King Fellowship Hall (Door F1)
4100 Harvest Lane, Toledo, Ohio 43623
Thursday, September 18, 2025
1:00-3:00 and 6:00-8:00 p.m.**

*Free-will donations to the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza,
(Home for the Relief of the Suffering), a private scientific research hospital
in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, founded by St. Padre Pio (1956),
ranked first place by Newsweek 2024.*

Since word of mouth is our best way to promote this event, please invite your friends.

**For more information or to RSVP, call Group Leader Magdalena Skiles
at 419-356-4208, or e-mail her at magdalena@magdalenaskiles.com.**

Shrines of Mexico

Spiritual Director: Rev. Eric Mueller

February 10 - 16, 2026

Day 1 - Feb 10: Depart from DTW for your flight to Mexico City. Transfer to the city of Puebla, one of the most beautiful Mexican colonial cities which was founded by the Spaniards in 1531 to shelter people who traveled from Veracruz to Mexico City. Dinner and overnight in your hotel in Puebla. (L, D)

Day 2 - Feb 11: PUEBLA- OCOTLAN- SAN MIGUEL DE LOS MILAGROS - TLAXCALA

After breakfast we will depart to the State of Tlaxcala. First visit: Basilica of Our Lady of Ocotlán; you will admire the miraculous and perfectly preserved image of Our Lady. The image was found in a burned Ocote tree, after She appeared to the visionary Juan Diego Bernardino in 1541. Mass and time for collecting healing water from the well. We will continue to San Miguel de los Milagros. This is site where St. Michael the Archangel appeared to Diego Lazaro in 1631, directed him to the Grotto and to a well of miraculous healing water. Today the well is pretty dry, but we can get some of the water from the sacristy. (Bring your bottle with you). Time for lunch in Tlaxcala. Tlaxcala is capital of the smallest state in Mexico. Discover the Palace de la Constitution (exterior views) and its colonial buildings: the municipal palace, the courthouse, and the government palace. We will visit the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption where the first three martyrs of America are venerated (Blesseds Cristobal, Antonio, and Juan), whose canonization was approved by Pope Francis in March 2017, and the former convent Franciscan of the Assumption, built in 1537. Return to Puebla for overnight at your hotel. (B, D)



Day 3 - Feb 12: PUEBLA- MEXICO CITY - After breakfast, Mass will be celebrated at the Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Church of Santo Domingo. Continue to sightseeing of historical center, including the magnificent Cathedral and the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, to view the body of Blessed Sebastian de Aparicio whose body remains incorrupt until today. Lunch will be served at a local restaurant, followed by some time to shop at "el Parian", a handcraft market where you can find famous Talavera pottery, a style of majolica pottery recognizable by a milky-white glaze. We will also stroll around the "Candy Street" and select from old-fashioned candies, traditional sweets and cookies. Be sure to try traditional camotes, which is a signature sweet in Puebla made from sweet potato. Departure to Mexico City for overnight in our centrally located hotel. (B, D)

Day 4 - Feb 13: MEXICO CITY- SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE - TEOTIHUACAN. After breakfast, drive to visit the Three Cultures Square, so called because of the different stages of Mexican History that can be clearly appreciated there: an Aztec ruin, the Church of Santiago Tlatelolco with the baptismal font of Juan Diego, modern skyscrapers and a housing unit. Continue to the Shrine of our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas. The Shrine has become one of the most important pilgrimage sites for Catholics, and its history dates back to 1531, when devout, poor Indian man named Juan Diego (an Aztec convert to Christianity) received a vision of the Virgin Mary on Tepeyac Hill near what is now Mexico City. After Mass in one of the Shrine's chapels on site, we will have time to explore the grounds and to kneel in front of the centuries old Tilma where Our Lady's image was miraculously printed. Continue to Teotihuacan one of the most powerful cultural centers in Mesoamerica, a prominent political and religious center with complexes of monumental buildings such as the Citadel and the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, the Calzada de los Muertos and the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon. Lunch at a local restaurant followed by a guided tour which will reveal to you how the Aztecs lived. (B, L, D)

Day 5 - Feb 14: XOCHIMILCO After breakfast, head to Coyoacan, a charming neighborhood known for its traditional and bohemian styles, to visit the Church of St. John the Baptist. Continue south to Xochimilco where Holy Mass will be held in a church built in the XVI century by the Franciscan missionaries. Later on, ride along the flower laden canals while enjoying lunch on board a "trajinera", a Mexican gondola. En-route back to the hotel, a stop will be made at the Museum of Anthropology where an impressive collection of artifacts from Pre-Hispanic civilizations in Mexico is kept. (B, D)

Day 6 - FEB 15: CITY CENTER AND FATHER PRO : After breakfast, visit Holy Family Church, where you will view the tomb of Fr. Miguel Agustín Pro, the Jesuit martyr. In a time of great religious persecutions, Fr. Pro was exiled from Mexico during the Mexican Revolution. However, he returned to Mexico and was aided by a secret ministry who helped him hide from authorities. During his time in Mexico, he assisted many individuals in their spiritual, as well as temporal, needs. He was eventually discovered, arrested and killed by authorities. Pray to this great martyr who remained filled with the joy of serving Our Lord even in the midst of very difficult times. You will also visit the small but very inspiring Museum dedicated in honor of Father Pro. After the celebration of Holy Mass, continue to the Zocalo (main square) of Mexico City to visit the largest cathedral in the Americas, as well as the National Palace (visit from outside). Lunch on your own. We head to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe to bid farewell to the Empress of the Americas. There will be time to pray and explore the grounds on your own. Tonight farewell dinner out with mariachis. (B, D)

Day 7 - Feb 16: After breakfast, transfer to the airport for our return flight home. (B)

CONTACT: Maggie McDaniel 419-290-8782
maggie@catholicfaithjourneys.com

- Over -

Land Only: \$ 2,569.00, check/cash per person, based on a Minimum of 25 participants, & double occupancy.

To participate in the non-stop group air from Detroit add: \$ 990.00, per person, cash / check

Included

- 6 Nights 4* Hotels
- 6 Breakfasts, 2 lunches and 6 Dinners
- English speaking guides
- Private motor coach throughout
- Transfers from international airport
- Entrance fees as noted in itinerary
- Daily Mass, locations pending
- Tips for guide, driver, porters, wait staff at hotels/restaurants etc.
- Taxes and fuel surcharge

(subject to increase 30 days prior to departure)

Not Included

- Round Trip Air fare from **Detroit** to MEX. (option to add listed above).
- Optional Travel insurance: *(strongly recommended)*
- Transportation to/from Domestic Airport
- Meals not mentioned & beverages w/ meals.
- Items of personal nature
- *Any airline imposed baggage fees*
- Any unforeseen requirements / tests that may become necessary in the future.
- *Any items not specifically mentioned*
- Limited Single rooms: Call for availability and cost.

At this printing there are no requirements or restrictions to travel to Mexico.

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NOTES: While no changes are anticipated, there may be occasions when sequence and days of visits may change and certain alterations become necessary due to changes and or closures that are beyond our control.

We are not responsible for any changes to entry/travel requirements put into effect by Governments, Health Organizations, Airlines, transfer countries, arriving countries, return country, museums, Churches, restaurants etc.

We are not responsible for any or all changes / cancellations / interruptions caused by Force majeure.

*Arriving and departing flights may affect the first and last day itinerary.
All Mass locations listed are subject to final confirmation*

*You must be physically fit and capable of walking on uneven terrain
and being on your feet all day.*

Just a FYI - Foreign entities do not have the "American Disabilities Act".

*Everyone is responsible for handling their own luggage and keeping pace
with the group.*

*To register for this pilgrimage please read, complete and sign the registration
form, and the Health release form and return with your deposit.*

*In today's uncertain times all prices are subject to change prior to
departure due to major currency fluctuations, changes in fuel prices and/or
unforeseen economic circumstances beyond our control*

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