

The Mustard Seed



Fr. Rogelio, Moses Mora & Bill Grewe

Letter from Our Pastor

by Father Rogelio Rosas

To all the readers of The Mustard Seed, I thank you for following this newsletter that helps to keep us informed and connected. It reaches us in our homes and is shared among our families, neighbors and community. During the pandemic, this written form of communication has become even more important to us.

Thank you to the Mustard Seed staff and contributors whose mission is to gather, inform, celebrate and share our Parish news. May the peace of Christ and the presence of Mary help us all in this time when the “new normal” seems to be becoming more like a new reality. God willing, and as we are willing to do what we can to contribute to taking care of the most vulnerable among us, we welcome the Fall 2021 with our memories of summer vacations, projects and accomplishments. With God’s grace and love, we await the new challenges that Fall will bring. We look forward with great anticipation for those who will begin and continue their religious education to receive their most holy sacraments beginning in September.

As a Parish we experienced many events over the summer. With love and hope for great things to come, we said farewell to our beloved Fr. Joshua Santos who has left us for his new assignment as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Ogden. Through grants and donations, we have completed the installation of solar panels on the roof of our church — a project that from its inception was a labor of love that has already begun to pay for itself while reducing our parish’s carbon footprint.

In August, we commissioned the creation and installation of the beautiful marble statue of St. Thomas Aquinas that now stands to greet all before they enter our church. His likeness is recognized to be the one that many of us have envisioned when we pray for his intercession. Then in early August, we heartfully welcomed the arrival of Fr. Joseph Minuth, our new Parochial Vicar who last served at St. Joseph Parish in Ogden and who is trilingual in English, Spanish and German.

While Covid-19 laid bare our institutional and personal vulnerabilities, it also revealed many of our strengths! There are many beautiful hearts and minds among us whose kindness and mercy is at work in our families and in our community to prevent, ease suffering and protect the vulnerable in our parish and community.

Our example continues to be Jesus whose divine and human nature graces all of God’s creation, and is distinct from all social, religious, and political context. He was dedicated to His 12 apostles, but without ceasing to attend to the crowds that followed Him He focused on those who would not only build His church, but at the same time travel among the cities. Again and again, the Gospels tell us that entering or arriving in a city, Jesus was not static and sitting in His office giving counseling or attending to things that His disciples could carry forward. Instead, He was present. He sought to go where few dared going — among the poor, the hungry, the widowed, the children, the needy, the lepers, the sick, the sinners, the tax collectors and the demonized. In short, Jesus became incarnated and He dwelt among us. His purpose was and still is to make our salvation possible. Praise be to God!

Brothers and sisters, I pray that the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ fills your hearts to make us persevere in the face of adversity and in the special challenges that this Fall, 2021 will bring.

Your friend and brother, Fr. Rogelio

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Farewell for Fr. Joshua & Hello to Our Patron Saint

by Adrienne Akers

Our parish recently wished Fr. Joshua Santos a fond farewell on Sunday, July 25th when we also dedicated our new statue of our parish patron saint — St. Thomas Aquinas. Fr. Joshua served as our parochial vicar for barely two years but I think that all will agree that he left a strong and indelible imprint on the lives of our parish, our Newman Center, and the Cache Valley community.

While our parishioners were saddened to hear of his reassignment to St. Joseph's Parish in Ogden, Fr. Joshua was instrumental in assisting our pastor, Fr. Rogelio Felix-Rosas, to make the new statue a reality for our parish. Because we were also anxiously awaiting the arrival of our statue's safe passage from Asia — across the sea to California, through U.S. Customs, and transport by truck to Salt Lake City where it had to go through further inspections — it only seemed fitting to connect Fr. Joshua's farewell as we welcomed the statue of our patron saint. Mary Garrett, our parish finance administrator, commented on how making the base for the statue was a "labor of love" for parishioner Moses Mora. His employer, Ed Christensen Construction, as well as Intermountain Concrete Specialties donated both time and materials to construct a solid base for our statue, creating a focal point in front of our church. Now St. Thomas Aquinas is there to greet one and all as they enter into our church, our sacred space.

Long-time parishioner JaDene Denniston explained how she got to know Fr. Joshua, "He called me up one day and said that he had heard that I could sew and asked me if I could help him to make new drapes for the Newman Center. He was so enthusiastic that I couldn't turn him down." JaDene said that Fr. Josh had already purchased the fabric and when he brought it to her home, he insisted that she also teach him how to measure and cut the fabric and even how to sew. JaDene smiled and said "...he even went out and bought himself a sewing machine so he could sew and repair other needed items in the future.



Warm Hugs from Fr. Joshua



Dedicating our Status

In speaking with some of our parish office staff, both Mary Garrett and Lorena Haro said that it was pure joy to work with Fr. Joshua. They quipped that they gave him a nickname — Speedy Gonzales — because he was always on the move, doing or learning something new and always ready to pitch in on any project. Mary said that he was always a great listener and likewise offered helpful advice. Lorena mentioned his devotion to our Blessed Mother whom he often referred to as Mama Mary, showing his personal and deep connection with her. They chuckled when they explained how frugal Fr. Joshua is. After he bought his sewing machine, he started to make the stiff white collar stays using empty Clorox bottles and he also sewed down the collars on his polo shirts so that he could thread in a stiff clerical collar stay.

Fr. Joshua's impact on the Newman Center and the USU students was also evident in many ways. He loved taking on projects to enhance the Newman Center. An example is his efforts to create a grotto behind the Newman Center to Our Lady of Lourdes. The grotto provides a lovely place for quiet reflection and meditation. It's almost hidden away — it feels like you stumble across a hidden treasure that you didn't know was there.

One of the many Newman students, Matt Seas, explained his experience with Fr. Joshua as follows "Fr. Joshua truly lived out his vocation in persona Christi (in the person of Christ) at the Newman Center and at St. Thomas Aquinas. No matter who he was with, he radiated joy and was very forgiving. Further, it was easy to see he genuinely cared about each and every one of his parishioners as children of God. I always saw Fr. Joshua as a man of sacrifice who gave the Newman students his best, despite the students not always doing the same."

Farewell, Fr. Joshua. You have made countless friends in Cache County. We wish you good health as you go with the peace of Christ.



Fr. Joseph Minuth

Introducing Fr. Joseph Minuth

by Linda K Bradak

I am honored to write this introduction to our parish's new priest, Fr. Joseph Minuth. Tall, direct, friendly, and filled with the Holy Spirit, Fr. Joseph's twin responsibilities are as chaplain to the USU Newman Center and also serving as parochial vicar to St. Thomas Aquinas Church.

The July 9 issue of Intermountain Catholic offers a fine overview of Fr. Joseph's personal history. Ordained to the priesthood in 2011, he served four parishes before being posted to us. Fr. Joseph feels particularly drawn to campus ministry and youth, and his open, engaging style of relating to people will no doubt earn him swift respect and affection here from our parishioners of all ages.

What follows are some highlights of our conversation. Fr. Joseph, who is fluent in English, Spanish, and German, spoke readily about himself. "I love being a priest," he told me. "I particularly love developing relationships with people, hearing their stories, being a part of their coming closer to God."

Fr. Joseph describes himself as an extrovert and an "idea person." When he served in the Purdue Diocese in Lafayette IN, he was introduced to a personality and teamwork leadership model called DISC that includes 4 types: **D** for

Doers, **I** for Imaginatives, **S** for Servers, and **C** for Computationals. He said. "ALL are vital to any collaborative effort like the building of Jesus' church." Being an idea person himself or Imaginative, Fr. Joseph recognizes the importance of those who Do, those who Serve, and the orderly systems-oriented minds of the Computationals to keep things on track. "In effective teamwork and ministry, ALL styles are welcome and represented," he says. "My work with students focuses on making time for them, getting to know them, and opening doors to various opportunities. Everyone has an inner desire for truth, beauty, and goodness."

Fr. Joseph's hope is to make our Newman Center an open, welcoming and beautiful space. He's exploring how to achieve this in its entirety – more than keeping the Chapel open during the day. He would like to see the Newman Center offer coffee and become a place where students could drop in at any time to: do homework, gather informally and talk freely with him and one another. Fr. Joseph may be turning to some of us parishioners to help update the Newman Center's living space, to clear out and to hang new works of art. "I love art and how it has developed over centuries," he continues.

Fr. Joseph explains further: "There is a science of art, a set of rules which the artist internalizes and masters. Every great work which inspires us expresses the artist's mastery of boundaries, within which freedom, creativity, and mastery can be found. It's a little like our Catholic faith. The rules we follow shape us. God knows and calls us each by name to become our own truest selves as His own."

Fr. Joseph concluded our interview by pointing out a few more things. Having been a Dominican friar for 17 years, he wants us to know that there are more opportunities in our Church and faith than we may realize, particularly here in this state where Catholics are in the minority. For example, the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) will sponsor SEEK22, a gathering of some 20,000 students in Salt Lake City from December 30-January 3, 2022. "We are the Body of Christ with a personal ownership of our faith," he says. "It will be a joy to introduce such faith-enriching activities to this Parish. Faith is more than 'a Sunday thing.' Our faith challenges us to ask 'What does it mean to love?' and to carry that forward through how we live day by day. None of us is the TOTAL. We work together; we need every one of us." Thank you, Fr. Joseph! We are glad that you are here. We welcome you and pray for you, indeed, we pray together.

Spotlight on the Nava-Olague Family

by Christina Ledesma

Many of our Saint Thomas Aquinas (STA) parish families suffered greatly due to COVID-19 in 2020. Particularly hit hard were our Latinx parishioners, many of whom were considered front-line workers. In this issue of *The Mustard Seed*, we would like to highlight one of our families who was especially hit hard by COVID-19 and how their faith pulled them through uncertainty brought on by the pandemic.

In June of 2020, when the first waves of the coronavirus began to wash over JBS beef packing plant in Hyrum, UT, Jesús Nava began to feel ill. Shortly afterward, he tested positive for COVID-19. Speaking in Spanish, Jesús recalls, "I felt exhausted. After two weeks and not feeling any better, I met with my doctor again through telehealth and asked for another week off from work because I was not getting better. I was very tired and scared. It was very difficult for me."

Jesús added, "Faith helped me a lot when I was alone. I'd ask God to help me and to heal me." While Jesús was quarantining in his bedroom, completely cut off from his family and unable to work or earn a livable income, it was his wife, María Olague, who stepped in to take care of their family. Yet in March of 2020, María was laid off from her job, and with two people out of work, bills piling up, and an uncertain future, life was looking grim. "I was afraid my children would get sick," María said.

With four school-age children, Natalya (12), Milagros (11), Victoria (9), and Jesús Ángel Nava (8), learning from home at the end of March 2020, María became a stay-at-home mom/caregiver/teacher.

Their oldest daughter, Sophia (21), stopped working as well. But it was due to their 11-year-old, Milagros, who is immunocompromised, that their children learned remotely through the 2020-2021 school year. María says, "I chose my family and stayed home with them rather than put Miley through the risk of getting sick and ending up at Primary Children's Hospital."

When Jesús had COVID-19, missing three weeks of work and cooped up in the bedroom, daughter Miley became sad because she couldn't see or be with her dad. It wasn't until María saw a TikTok post that she got the brilliant idea of pulling off her clear vinyl table covering and securely velcroing it around the door that Miley's joy returned. Now she could finally see her dad! While Jesús was isolating in his bedroom, his sister, who belongs to Opus Dei and lives in Rome, would phone him nearly every day at 11:00 AM to pray the Rosary together. Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, Auxiliary Vicar of Opus Dei, prayed daily for Jesús at Mass.



The Nava-Olague Family

As if this wasn't hard enough, María and Sophia later tested positive for COVID. Then María's father suffered a heart attack, María's mom is a cancer survivor, and a beloved aunt has cancer. María felt lost, "What do I do?" So, in July 2020, staring down at the remaining \$70 in their bank account, María reached out again for help. God was listening and help came flooding in; help from Feed Our Friends, STA office staff, parishioners, friends, co-workers, and people they didn't even know helped cover the mortgage, auto, and utility payments. Boxes of food showed up on their front doorstep; hot and frozen meals were delivered; cleaning and disinfecting supplies stocked up; cookies and treats for the children appeared. Jesús thought, "I haven't done anything for no one, and now all of these people do this for us. It made me feel loved, that I matter, and that other people care. If someone needs help and I find out, I can help."

Without realizing it, Jesús and María have been helping! For the past four years, they have been involved with STA Religious Education, helping our youth prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. They both agree they make a good team. In November, they will celebrate 22 years of marriage. "We met on January 3rd, 1999, after Mass in the Social Hall (St. Jerome Newman Center). My mom was the youth group leader, and we went to a Boys and Girls Club presentation." María said it was love at first sight, although Jesús admits with a big grin on his face that he thought she was married already. Also, for the last several years, María, a fantastic chef, has had a food booth at the Cache Valley Gardeners' Market called J&M Tamales (Jesús and María). And her parents, Jose and Esther Olague, also have a booth called Olague Grill. If you've never tried the delicious food at these booths, you're missing out on a real treat!

For Jesús and María and their family, it is evident that our Heavenly Father was watching over for them. Their experience is a testament to the power of prayer, perseverance, faith, love, and community. María says, "It was amazing — everybody willing to help. We're very thankful to all."

Vacation Bible School — TREASURED

by Nicole Held

VBS (Vacation Bible School) at St. Thomas was started in 2006. 2020 was the only year we didn't hold it due to the pandemic. So that makes it 13 years! This year 40 children ages 4-12 participated and 25 teens and 8 adults prepared lessons, materials and taught the students. Nicole Held, Kathy Serafini and Cindy Hill have been involved from the beginning. This year there were four new station leaders - Meghan Koopman, Janae Vanleeuwen, Perla Diaz, Carolyn Koskan.

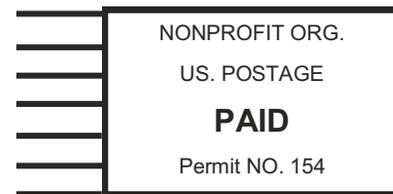
This year the theme was Treasured. Each day a new bible point was learned and every time they heard the bible point, they would all shout "You are treasured!"

- Day 1 - God knows you..."You are treasured!"
- Day 2 - God hears you.
- Day 3 - God comforts you.
- Day 4 - God forgives you.
- Day 5 - God chooses you.



The closing quest brought everyone together in our social hall for singing and some fun like a Mystery Bottle Experiment where a bottle was filled with liquid and poked with tacks. When the tacks were removed, the liquid did not leak out! Only when the lid was untightened did the liquid leak out of the tack holes. This was to help the kids understand that even though we keep feelings and hurts bottled up inside God knows them and God wants us to pour out our hearts and life to

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



Many thanks to our contributors for this issue:

Editors: Adrienne Akers

Layout: David Welch

Writers: Father Rogelio Rosas, Adrienne Akers, Linda Bradak, Christina Ledesma and Nicole Held

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Mustard Seed is published three times a year. We invite your feedback and are always looking for volunteers.

We're on the Web!

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