On May 13, Pope Francis named Father David Konderla as the fourth bishop of Tulsa, Okla. He will be ordained and installed on June 29 in Tulsa.

Bishop-elect Konderla has served as the pastor of St. Mary Catholic Center at Texas A&M University in College Station since 2005.

Bishop Edward Slattery, the current bishop of Tulsa, is 75, the age at which canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation. He has led the Tulsa Diocese since 1993.

Bishop-elect Konderla said he was shocked when he realized why the apostolic nuncio was calling in early May. He said it took him a few minutes to realize what was going on, but after the conversation concluded and he had accepted the appointment to Tulsa, he prayed.

“I hung up and went into the chapel and tried to understand everything that was about to happen,” he said.

Bishop-elect Konderla looks forward to serving the people of Tulsa, but he admitted “it will be hard to leave my native Texas, especially my family and friends here.”

However, “Tulsa is beautiful!” he smiled. I had never been there, but from what I saw in the few hours I was there on May 13, Tulsa is heavily wooded and very green with lots of lakes and rivers. And the people were wonderful, so I think I am going to enjoy the area very much.”

Bishop Joe Vásquez joyfully welcomed the news of the new appointment and expressed his gratitude to Bishop-elect Konderla “for his service to the Diocese of Austin and for his sincere love of the priesthood.” {continued on page 2}
He said Bishop-elect Konderla is well-loved by his fellow priests and all whom he serves, and he is known for his warm accessibility and a genuine desire to serve the people of God.

“Under his guidance and with the prayers of many, St. Mary Catholic Center in College Station is known across the nation for fostering vocations, not only to the priesthood but also to religious life,” Bishop Vásquez said. “I know he will serve the people of Tulsa well.”

Bishop-elect Konderla was ordained a priest by Bishop John McCarthy on June 3, 1995. He served as associate pastor of St. Louis Parish in Austin, St. Luke Parish in Temple, and St. Mary Catholic Center in College Station where he worked with his longtime friend Father Mike Sis (now bishop of San Angelo). In 2001, Bishop-elect Konderla was appointed the first full-time Vocations Director for the Austin Diocese. He held that position until 2005, when he returned to College Station to serve as the pastor of St. Mary Catholic Center.

The Catholic center ministers to nearly 20,000 students in the Bryan-College Station area and is in the middle of what Bishop Vásquez described as an “ambitious” capital campaign.

“St. Mary’s has an amazing future because of the people who are there, not because of the one who is leaving, but because of the ones who will remain,” Bishop-elect Konderla said. He commended Father Ryan Higdon, who is the associate pastor at St. Mary, the staff, the priests who come from across the state to help with the ministry there, and the Aggie students.

“They are full of faith and the desire to grow in their relationship with the Lord,” he said. “I have no doubt that St. Mary’s will continue to thrive.”

Bishop-elect Konderla was a member of the diocesan priests’ personnel board from 2004-2011; a member of the vocations team since 2006, and of the Presbyteral Council from 2008 to the present. He also is a member of the diocesan college of consultors.

Bishop-elect Konderla is the second of 12 children, and he grew up in Bryan. His dad and several of his siblings still live in the Bryan area. His mother passed away in 2012, and to honor her memory, he said he will use his mother’s wedding band to create his bishop’s ring.

“My brother Chuck is a jeweler, so he will make my ring from mom’s wedding ring, which will make it very special,” he said.

A master woodworker, himself, the new bishop has begun making his own crosier, which will be his fifth to make for a bishop. He has also made crosiers for Bishops Oscar Cantu (of Las Cruces), George Sheltz (of GalvestonHouston), Mike Sis (of San Angelo), and Daniel Garcia (of Austin).

With the announcement of his successor, Bishop Slattery said he prays for the good health and spiritual strength of the new bishop in the transitional weeks to come.

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Bishop Slattery was born Aug. 11, 1940, in Chicago and was ordained a priest of the Chicago Archdiocese April 26, 1966. He was ordained and installed as the third bishop of Tulsa in January 1994.

The Diocese of Tulsa (www.dioceseoftulsa.org) covers 26,417 square miles in the state of Oklahoma. It has a total population of 1,650,000 of which 64,658, or about 4 percent, are Catholic.
Those of a certain age might remember a phenomenon of the late 1960s in which social change swept across the U.S. Inaugurated almost 50 years ago in San Francisco, what later became known as the “Summer of Love” spawned a variety of movements that emphasized a general questioning of traditional institutions and structures. Catch phrases like “free love,” “brotherhood” and “understanding” permeated politics and pop culture.

It’s now the summer of 2016, and we are right in the middle of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Pope Francis has encouraged us to invite change of the sort that can transform hearts, families, communities and even the culture. Unlike the 1960s, however, this is not a social experiment that we can initiate or sustain by our own efforts.

Through the promulgation of the papal bull Misericordiae Vultus, our Holy Father has highlighted the parable of the Forgiving Father (Luke 15) as an affirmation that that “mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us” (par. 9).

So how can we show mercy if we have not first experienced the power of God’s mercy in our own lives? As Americans we often consider self-sufficiency and independence as virtues. Many of us find it difficult to ask for help, or when we accept help, it’s often on our own terms. The Year of Mercy invites us first to consider that we are sinners who stand before a compassionate God who is always waiting to heal and forgive with a tender embrace. Pope Francis has remarked that it is not God who tires of forgiving us — it is us who tire of asking God’s forgiveness! (Angelus address, March 17, 2013). But when we humble ourselves to meet Jesus in the sacrament of reconciliation, we allow the transformation of heart that can then overflow into the concrete, visible and tangible acts of mercy that are shared with others.

Another powerful way of encountering Jesus as the “merciful face of the Father” is in the Scriptures. Misericordiae Vultus states that “in order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle” (13).

The Year of Mercy logo for the Diocese of Austin incorporates the word “receive” to remind us that when it comes to mercy, it is God — not you nor me — who initiates. Whether sacramentally, through Scripture, or through caring engagement with others, the Father’s gift of mercy is only limited by the extent to which we open ourselves to accept it. Happy “summer of mercy!”
There are three ways of life when it comes to managing finances. All too common is the temptation to live above your means. This lifestyle may allow for more material comforts and instant gratification of your desires. But, it will also mean increasing debt and stress, which take away both financial and spiritual freedom.

Another choice is to live within your means. Most of us assume this is the right way to live. It will lead to a steady, balanced cash flow and freedom from the bondage of debt and financial worries.

Yet, there is a third option we often don’t consider — but should: living below your means. This lifestyle, too, will lead to a steady, balanced cash flow and freedom from debt, but it will also lead to much more. It prepares us for additional blessings — the blessings of heaven.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us an excellent outline for the real goal of good stewardship: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroys, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven” (Mt 6:19-20). Why? Because, Jesus says, the wealth of this world doesn’t last, but our treasure in heaven is eternal.

This is the kind of wealth God wants for us — the kind that “neither moth nor decay destroy, nor thieves break in and steal” (Mt 6:20). Jesus also teaches that the only way we can build up our heavenly treasure is by giving up our attachment to earthly treasures — in essence, by becoming free.

Striving for true financial freedom is an exciting and wonderful way to live. As we spend less by adopting a different, more frugal lifestyle, money will be available to take the pain out of unexpected bills. More important, we will be freed from the debt, anxiety, and attachment that keep our spirits tied to this world, and can then give ourselves more fully to God.

Sometimes God blesses us materially and enables us to enjoy our wants and desires. But often He doesn’t. Instead, He desires to teach us wisdom, contentment and frugality to enable us to have the freedom — materially and spiritually — to build up our treasure with Him in heaven.

The Path to Financial Freedom

If you consider all of your money to be under God’s control, then you can seek His help in every decision about material things. What a relief! God is not only the owner of our possessions; He is also our advisor on how to manage them all. Our only challenge is to have the trust and courage to put all our blessings before Him and seek His wisdom in prayer.

11 Ideas for financial freedom & biblical simplicity

$ Plan ahead
$ Budget
$ No credit cards
$ Don’t keep what you don’t need
$ Do without
$ Accept less convenience

$ Fix, don’t replace
$ Keep the old one
$ Less, not more
$ Smaller, not bigger
$ Simple pleasures

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UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS

July 9 Priests Ordination
St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Austin

July 23 Men’s Fellowship Mass
St. Mary Cathedral, Austin

August 27 Women’s Conference — The Face of Mercy
St. Helen Parish, Georgetown

August 31 Assembly of Catholic Professionals
Hyatt Regency Town Lake, Austin

September 1 Pastoral Plan Gathering (Spanish)
For event information, visit www.austindiocese.org
On May 21, Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Garcia ordained five men to the transitional diaconate. Deacons Jared Heath Cooke, Joseph Martin Daheim, Douglas Bryant Jeffers, Jesse Paul Martinez, and Brian Anthony Phillips will serve as deacons for a year as they continue their final year of seminary formation and prepare to be ordained priests in the summer of 2017.

A deacon is ordained for the threefold ministry of the Word, the altar and charity. The readings the ordinands chose for this celebration spoke of the diaconal ministry, tracing its origins in the order of Levites in the Old Covenant and retelling the story of the infant Church’s discernment and call of the first seven deacons. The short Gospel reading contained Jesus’ lesson to his disciples that “WHOEVER WISHES TO BE GREAT AMONG YOU SHALL BE YOUR SERVANT,” FOR “THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY” (MT 20: 26,28).

One of the most memorable and poignant moments of the entire ordination rite is the Litany of the saints, during which the men to be ordained lie prostrate while the church implores God’s help and the intercession of all the saints upon them. This simple gesture, lying prostrate, speaks of everything that ordained ministry is about: laying down one’s life in imitation of Christ. It is a countercultural gesture that contains the whole paradox at the heart of our Christian faith — that we find our purpose in life by giving ourselves away. This is most often the moment that sticks with a man from his own ordination, because it is the moment when we lay everything down before the Lord in complete surrender, trusting that he will receive us, sinful and weak as we are, and use us for his glory.

Just before the men lie prostrate, they make the promises that define their lives. They promise to pray for the church and the world, to perform their diaconal ministry faithfully, and they promise obedience to their bishop and his successors. But it is on this day that they also promise to remain celibate. For this reason, men in formation often speak of their diaconate ordination — not the priestly ordination that follows it a year later — as their “wedding day.” Truly, through embracing joyfully the promise of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, a man consecrates himself to God for the service of the church and becomes a sign of contradiction in a world that so often values only earthly goods. In his homily, Bishop Garcia spoke to the value of celibacy, assuring the men that whatever the world might think of their promise to renounce marriage for the sake of the kingdom, their lives are not a waste!

Following the laying on of hands by the bishop and the Prayer of Ordination, in which the sacrament “happens” and the men actually become deacons, two simple and beautiful rituals speak to the reality of the new life the men are beginning. First, they are vested in the vestments proper to their order — the deacon’s stole and dalmatic. It is always beautiful to see them “dressed the part” for the first time! Then they receive the Book of the Gospels, with the beautiful command from the bishop: “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.” And finally, the men receive the fraternal kiss of peace from their bishop, whose collaborators in ministry they have become, and from their brother deacons.

We give thanks to God for these five new transitional deacons for our diocese, and we pray for them as they make present to us Christ the Servant of all.
St. Bonaventure
Bishop and Doctor
(1217/18-1274)

Memorial – July 15

St. Bonaventure was born in Tuscany and studied philosophy and theology in Paris. He was a Franciscan and a friend and contemporary of St. Thomas Aquinas, but quite different from Aquinas in temperament, urging his readers to seek the answer in God’s grace, not in doctrine; in the longing of the will, not in the understanding…” Called the “Seraphic Doctor,” St. Bonaventure was a gentle preacher and teacher, much loved by all who knew him. Once chronicler described him this way: “A man of eminent learning and eloquence, and of outstanding holiness, he was known for his kindness, approachableness, gentleness and compassion. Full of virtue, he was beloved of God and man.” From 1257 to 1274 he served as Minister General of the Franciscans, revising their Constitutions in 1260 and deftly keeping the peace between differing factions within the order. St. Bonaventure was rich in spiritual gifts and he shared them generously with the Church. May his example inspire us to do the same.

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