

Week Behind/ Week Ahead

To the Parishioners of Saint Joseph Parish in Kennewick

From V. Rev. Felipe Pulido

Date: September 10, 2022

Week behind

Father Tomas Vazquez Tellez- by now you have seen some press coverage about Father Tomas Vazquez a former pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Kennewick who has been arrested on suspicion of third-degree rape. This is the full statement made by the diocese of Yakima on this matter. Let us pray for healing.

“The Rev. Tomás Vázquez Téllez, 49, a priest of the Diocese of Yakima, was arrested Wednesday, September 7 on suspicion of third-degree rape with an aggravating factor of being a person of trust. He is in the Benton County Jail awaiting possible charges in Benton County Superior Court. The arrest follows an investigation by the Kennewick Police Department of an incident that occurred August 19-20 at a home the priest owns in the city.

During the investigation, Yakima Diocese Bishop Joseph J. Tyson had ordered Vázquez to cease all public ministry and prohibited him from leaving the country, as well as to have no contact with the woman who reported the alleged rape. The woman contacted another priest of the diocese within hours of the incident to report it. After a brief interview with a diocesan official, the diocese supported the woman in having a medical exam, and in her decision to report the matter to police.

“We are shocked and saddened by these developments,” Bishop Tyson said. “I am grateful that the woman came forward immediately and trusted another of our priests well enough to confide in him and to bring this matter to light.” Vázquez, who resigned as pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Kennewick in April 2020 to begin a sabbatical to study Biblical languages, had been serving at Pasco’s St. Patrick Catholic Church, in the Diocese of Spokane, and was preparing to leave for a three-month study program in Jerusalem,.

The complainant, a woman in her 30s, told diocesan officials she had been invited to the home for dinner about two weeks prior to the trip. She reported that the two had developed a friendship over the course of the past few years, including lunches and dinners together, but that the priest had never made romantic overtures before. She said she viewed him as a friend in whom she could confide. The alleged rape occurred following the dinner. She said she left the home of her own accord after waking up the morning of August 20.

Bishop Tyson noted that in both civil and church law, Vázquez is entitled to a presumption of innocence, and will receive salary and benefits from the diocese while he awaits a resolution of any criminal charges in court. The Church will not pay for his legal defenses. While awaiting the

outcome of the investigation, he also was required to cooperate with the process and check in daily with another priest of the diocese. He complied with those directives.

The COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted earlier plans by the priest to travel to Israel in the fall of 2021. Since the Yakima Diocese did not have an assignment available for him at the time, he was granted permission to minister in the Spokane Diocese, beginning September 1, 2021. That permission has been withdrawn, and the only ministry the priest was allowed to have was to celebrate a private Mass by himself in his home”.

Religious Education – on Saturday, September 10, the Religious Education program (Spanish) received more than 327 children. In addition, our Wednesday Religious Education Program (English) received 180 children. We are so happy to welcome more than 500 students in our Religious Education Programs. We will have about 148 students receiving First Confession and First Communion and about 131 students receiving Confirmation this coming year. I am grateful to Maria Rodriguez and Doris Rosenow and all the volunteers who help pass our Catholic faith to the next generation.

Knights of Columbus Monthly Sunday Breakfast- the Knights of Columbus started their monthly breakfast on September 11. The breakfast will take place on the 2nd Sunday of each month. Starting right after the 9:00am Mass and ending at 12:30pm. The breakfast will consist of sausage, bacon, eggs, hashed browned potatoes, pancakes, orange juice, regular and decaf coffee and the cost is a donation. Please join us for a fun time while helping support our local charities. Served at Dillon Hall. It is a great social place to dine.

Collection for the retirement fund for Religious—on the weekend of September 10-11 the diocese will have their annual collection for the retirement fund for Religious. Just so, you know the collection will largely help retired nuns, religious brothers, and religious priests with their health care costs and retirement expenses. Thank you for your generosity.

Week ahead

Please keep these dates in mind:

Yard Sale—September 16 and 17

Serra club dinner- September 19

Saint Joseph Catholic School Alumni friends and Family dinner—October 1

Priests convocation October 4-7

Called and Gifted- October 8

Mission Congress- October 8

Anointing of the Sick service October 13 @ 11:00 followed by light lunch