



# Behold Your Mother

Newsletter of the Brothers of the Beloved Disciple

**Issue Number 49: Easter 2011**

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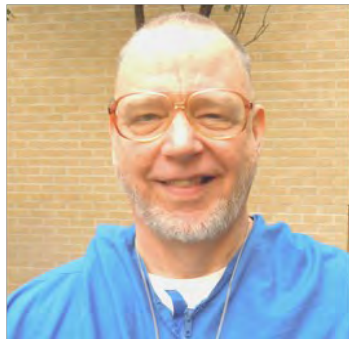
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## He is Risen! A Blessed Easter to All!

As we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord, we wish all our friends, relatives and benefactors the fullest joy that comes with faith in Jesus' conquest of death and the light that this shines also on our present life. Further inside this issue we share with you the witness of three of our very close friends whose recent passing has left a powerful legacy of faith and love, Leon McMichael, sixteen year old Ana Macias and one of our greatest friends and benefactors, Ann Robles.

Our mourning of these friends is gilded with our joy that they have met the risen Lord. One of our greatest blessings has been so many friends and benefactors who have supported the Brothers of the Beloved Disciple. Please accept our deepest thanks. Now that we are growing we especially appreciate the support of your prayers and donations to cover tuition, health care and other costs.



### Kirk Vandeventer Makes First Religious Profession as BBD

On March 30, in a Mass at St. Mary Magdalen church Kirk Vandeventer made his first profession of temporary vows as a Brother of the Beloved Disciple. He embraces the vocation of a religious Brother, bearing witness to the value of the religious state in the Church. Mass was followed by a reception in our home. We welcome Kirk, who will continue his formation as a professed religious and will be ministering in various ways in the parish.



### Fr. Bob Hogan Chairs National Service Committee

Having already served on the National Service Committee for the Charismatic renewal, Fr. Bob Hogan, BBD, was elected chair of the Committee in January of this year. He has been in great demand as a speaker at charismatic conferences and leaders' meetings nationally and in the fall he will be speaking at conferences in Montreal and Toronto, Canada. He serves locally as the Associate Liaison for the Charismatic Renewal in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. And, of course, he is a member of the formation staff in our community.

## Parish Hosts Annual Regional Charismatic Conference



Hundreds from San Antonio and as far away as San Angelo attended the Annual Regional Charismatic Conference hosted March 4 & 5 for the third time by St. Mary Magdalen Parish. The theme of the conference was “Building a House of Prayer.” **Above:** Rafael Tibucio from Houston leads the Spanish track in praise. **Left:** Walter Matthews, Executive Director of the National Service Committee of the Charismatic Renewal in Washington, D.C. challenges the English speaking group to grow in their prayer life and to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## Life in the Spirit Seminar Draws Two Hundred Participants



On February 10, we began the largest Life in the Spirit Seminar we have had yet, with some two hundred participants, English and Spanish. The eight week seminar leads to a renewal of the power of the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit’s charismatic gifts, in the lives of those who participate.

One of the new features of this seminar was the launching of the first night with a dinner in which the facilitators and sponsors served the new participants.

## Parish Leads City-wide Prayer Pro-Life Procession



Auxiliary Bishop Oscar Cantu offered Mass at St. Mary Magdalen and joined the subsequent procession to Planned Parenthood on January 22, anniversary of the Roe-Wade decision legalizing abortion. At the January 22 Pro-Life Mass, participants placed a rose for each of the 38 years since the Roe v. Wade decision by the Supreme Court.



### Great Friend and Benefactor is Called Home to the Lord

Ann Robles, a dear close friend of the Brothers of the Beloved Disciple entered into eternal life on February 22. At her bedside was Fr. Joseph Mary, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen, Fr. Bob Hogan, and aspirant Daniel Dominguez. They were saying the last decade of the Rosary's sorrowful mysteries, the dying of Jesus on the cross, when she breathed her last as he breathed his. Having spent most of her life as a school teacher, Ann lived so simply that she could endow a \$100,000 scholarship to St. Mary's University, give \$50,000 to St. Mary Magdalen Church and give with similar generosity to the Brothers of the Beloved Disciple. Novice Kirk Vandeventer and Aspirants Daniel Dominguez and Sean Stilson were pallbearers. May the Lord, who cannot be outdone in generosity, answer her life-long generosity with His.



### Long-Term Altar Server Applies to Brothers of the Beloved Disciple

Gabriel Ruiz, who will be graduating from Business Careers High School in May, has applied to the Brothers of the Beloved Disciple and hopes during his aspirancy year to begin his college studies at the Mexican American College, where the program of studies is geared to prepare men for the priesthood. Gabriel has been an altar server at St. Mary Magdalen Church since he was in the sixth grade.

**Correction:** Surely readers of our last issue know we meant those twins were born at 27 weeks, not 27 days!

# HEROES OF FAITH

## The Joyful Warrior Called Home



On December 20, 2010, a dear friend, Leon McMichael, was called home at the age of seventy-five. He was one of the most faithful Companions of the Beloved Disciple, the lay associates of our community. A warrior who fought many battles, he lost his mother when he was eight. Because of a speech defect, he was dismissed from grammar school as “unteachable” but he met this challenge by gathering dictionaries and books, teaching himself well enough to pass his high school G.E.D. on the first try.

He served thirty-two years in the air force, in Vietnam as engineer on Chinook helicopters. A selfless man, he insisted he didn’t want military honors at his funeral, only accepting when family told him it should be done for their sake. “I did nothing special, just did what I was told,” he said—with one exception, when he was ordered to use the butt of his rifle to knock off a Vietnamese trying to climb aboard with other escapees at the war’s end.

Retired at home, he would run out with free sodas for the garbage collectors when they came by. His greatest battles were spiritual ones, for which he used the “sword of the Spirit, the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). His Bible was frayed, marked up and highlighted throughout. His delight was to pray with and for others. He welcomed his hospital stays as a chance to pray for everybody else there.

At our weekly prayer meeting, he was on a regular prayer team. Married to Teresa for 51 years and father of eight children, he left more than descendants. The perpetual, infectious smile of this joyful warrior continues to teach the rest of us how to confront the enemies within ourselves—and win.

Three months after Leon’s death, his wife Teresa was driving their eight-year-old granddaughter Kailey. As she made a right turn onto West Avenue, a large truck from the middle lane cut in front of her, narrowly missing a collision on Kailey’s side. Teresa followed the truck to a parking lot, where she got out to speak to the driver. On the ground lay a picture of Christ like the one Leon had kept next to his chair in the living room. Leon’s had never been moved, as the eight year old Kailey had insisted it remain there to remind her of grandpa. Teresa picked up the parking lot picture and placed it on the passenger seat. Three days later she happened to turn it over. It was not a copy *like* that of Leon’s. It was Leon’s own copy, marked with his name in his own handwriting, with “Leon” highlighted.

Those are the facts. Interpret as you wish.

## The Powerful Witness of a Short Life



by Father George

At the age of 16 Ana Macias died of cancer after a long and painful illness. I was privileged to minister regularly to her and her father Eduardo and step-mother Tanya (with one-year old Joseph). She wrote three letters to be opened after her death, from which I quote in my homily, which follows.

### Homily for Ana Macias, January 10, 2011

Four days ago the Church throughout the world was watching the three Wise men offer their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the child king. And on that day another three, Eduardo, Tanya and Joseph offered their precious Ana to the child king—and he opened his arms to receive her. The next day I wrote in my journal: “The mystery of life—why she had only 16 years to live, and here I am at 81. But, as Job said, it is all gift in the first place, and who are we to tell our Maker how much he should give? [We will hear Ana say the same thing in a few moments when I read what she wrote.] And—as the first reading says so beautifully--it is the quality not the quantity of life that matters. Still we hunger for more life, and the Father has answered that hunger with the promise of everlasting life in Jesus.” That is what the second reading is all about. How fitting that line of Paul’s: “I consider the sufferings of this present time (think of Ana’s) as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.”

For both of those reasons—the quality of Ana’s life, and the assurance of eternal life—today through the tears our eyes shine with joy as we join the family in letting Ana go into the arms of Jesus.

The quality of Ana’s life. By way of background, many of you know that Eduardo’s first wife died early of cancer, leaving two daughters, Ana and Maria. Maria died in an automobile accident that also took the life of my niece Regina, whom Eduardo was dating at the time. To those three losses now comes the loss of his other daughter, Ana.

The quality of Ana’s life is revealed in three letters she wrote to be opened after her death. One was to her little brother Joseph to be born of Eduardo’s present wife Tanya. Permit me to read from it and from the other two.

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**Dear Joseph Michael** (Mikey for short)...Guess what? You are going to be born tomorrow! At 7:30 AM, and you weigh about 9.5. So Tanya & Dad are going to leave at 4:30 AM to bring you home. But if you're reading this, then I guess I'm no longer with you guys. Darn that cancer, but don't worry, you're safe; I got my syndrome from my mom, & since we've got different mothers, you get to get excited about driving a car, your first kiss, drinking a beer, getting married & having kids, & you get to know that you're safe too. How awesome is that? I hope dad got you a scapular, they're pretty cool. I'd give you mine, but I think they buried it with me. You know, that scapular was given to me by a man named Alan Ames. He's amazing. You should ask Tanya about him, but basically, he heals people.

I know, "How do you think he's amazing if he couldn't even save you?" Well, two things: He healed me in so many ways both spiritually & emotionally. The first time I saw him, I was so depressed. I just found out I may have cancer. Mikey, I was atheist, too. It was the worst. But I still went to get prayed over just for kicks, & didn't feel a thing. I thought it was a joke and went on my way. That January, I came out of surgery & stayed in the hospital for a month. There, slowly but surely, my faith came back. I prayed the rosary, talked to God & even confessed about all the horrible things I'd done. It wasn't until a year later, when I saw Alan Ames again & he gave me the scapular, that I realized that was my healing. Not only that, but despite the cancer & horrible prognosis, I was happier. Imagine how much happier I could have been with my friends...

God has a plan for us way before we're concerned. His plan for me, I guess, was to die when I did, you can't argue with the Man, right? & besides, I know I touched a lot of people's hearts & that makes me ecstatic.

**Dear Daddy:**

So I guess if you're reading this, I'm no longer with you. Gosh it sounds so cliché but I honestly don't know how else to put it. Oh well... anyways, I'm writing you this so that I can peacefully go knowing that I let you know how awesome you are. No really, you have no idea how much having you there made everything easier. (Oh, and sorry about the handwriting the pulse-ox thing keeps pulling my finger).

Knowing that I could hug you whenever I wanted made me feel like the most loved person in the world. **You're a really good dad.** Don't ever forget that and I'm not just saying that because I'm your daughter and I have to. I'm saying (actually writing...) this because its true and I want you to remember that every time you and that make you cool. It also does not hurt that you have awesome taste in clothes and music. :)

I also want you to promise me you'll be okay. You need to stay strong. I'm not saying "don't cry", no that's the opposite of strong. I'm saying that you don't let this change who you are or the way you look at the world. This happened for a reason. God has a plan and even though I still have a hard time fully believing it, I can't help but look back on my life and get the feeling that everything happens for a reason. But you're strong. I don't even know why I felt the need to write this. I guess I was just worried about how much heartbreak a person could go through. No one should have to bury 4 loved ones, two of which are their children, it's just not right and I'm sorry it has to be you to go through it.

That's another thing I wanted to say. I'm sorry. I'm so so so sorry for just leaving you like this and I know you don't want me to be but even now as I'm writing this, after you've told me

1,000 times its okay, I can't help but cry as I think about all the sadness my death has and will cause you. So again, and for the time I'm sorry.

Another favor I have and I'm not worried about this one, is that Maria and I stay a part of the family. What I mean by that is that you please let Joseph and all your future kids know about us and the kind of people we were. See, the thing is, my biggest fear about dying is being forgotten. I know it sounds selfish, but it terrifies me to think that my life didn't affect anyone. Ok so maybe it did before dying, but I also want to keep changing lives afterwards. I guess that's what a legacy is, right? And even though I didn't discover the cure for cancer or change the way people think about music (I had this crazy idea of a future where everyone appreciated music and they knew that you could always turn to it when it seems you're alone) I'll still be comforted knowing that I changed a future brother or sister's life and I bet Maria would want the same thing too. I want to leave a legacy; I don't want to be forgotten. Someway, somehow, I want to leave a positive influence on those who knew me and maybe some who didn't. I don't necessarily mean to go start a foundation or something (although that would be cool, haha), just use me as an example to inspire people. Because I know there's gotta be something in my life that someone can use to learn from.

**Dear Tanya:**

If you're reading this, it means that I'm no longer with you & I already told Dad it sounds so cliché because it does but oh well—I can't think of any other way to put it (oh and if this makes no sense at all, I may be a little loopy or out of it so, sorry about that).

I'm writing this letter to let you know how awesome of a stepmom you are to me. In fact, you're more than that. These past few months, you've been the best friend I could turn to in my times of hopelessness. When it seemed like no one was there for me, I knew I could count on you to make me feel better. All those talks you have with me about God's mercy and love? I listened, and they really helped me carry through these hard times. Had it not been for you, I would have never had this amazing conversion that you mentioned. I would still be the same lost, lonely child who didn't know the meaning of love, and I thank you for that.

You are so wonderfully strong. Not many people would have stuck with us had they known that marrying Dad would bring on this much pain because of me. I know that when you signed up for match.com you weren't expecting to also be signing onto all this ...But you took on the challenge, and I love you for that. And I'm sorry it took me so long to finally say it, but I do love you. I love you with all my heart.

Joseph is so lucky to have you as a mom., I know he's your first biological kid and you're probably scared about the future, but trust me. If you keep being as awesome as you are right now, he, along with all of his other brothers and sisters are going to turn out just fine. Tanya, don't worry. You got this in the bag.

**Love forever and always,**

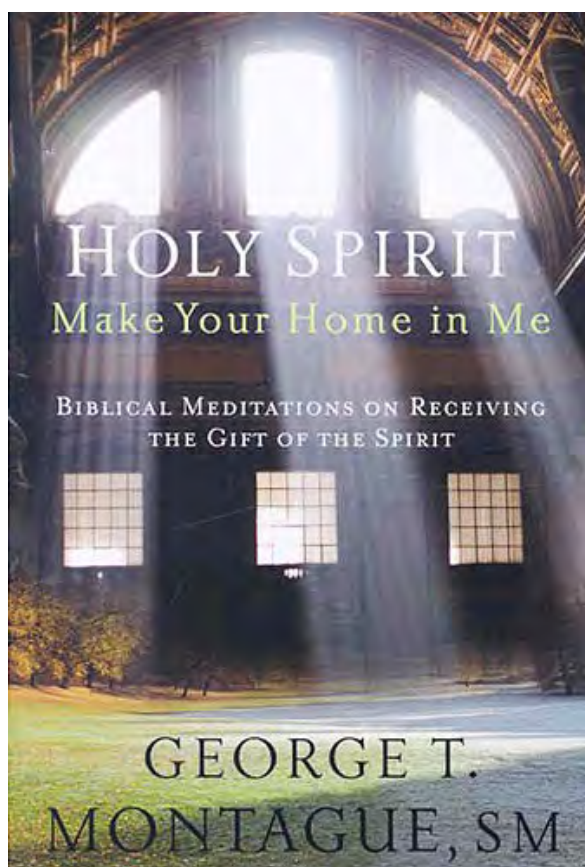
**Ana**

Thank you, Ana, for the witness of your life. You asked that we not forget you. How could we ever? You have asked that we sign our names on your casket. However different this may seem, we will honor your request. We will do so when leaving the church as our promise to remember you. We know that where you are you will not forget us either. We need your prayers to help us make sense—divine sense—of our sufferings, our lives and how long they last, and like you, leave a legacy of love. —Father George

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## **Published in Print & Pixels**

Father George Montague's book, *Holy Spirit, Make Your Home in Me*, has sold over 10,000 copies and is now available on Kindle as an e-book.