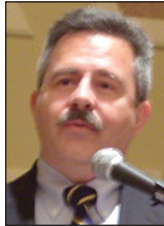


Madrid calls on attendees to preserve and perpetuate faith at Pilgrim Center of Hope fundraiser

BY KATHERINE JASS LOPEZ
FOR TODAY'S CATHOLIC

SAN ANTONIO • Friends gathered Nov. 20 at a prayer brunch at the OMNI Hotel benefiting the Pilgrim Center of Hope. The event featured renowned Catholic evangelist Patrick Madrid and provided an opportunity to help ensure the Pilgrim Center of Hope can continue to serve the Archdiocese of San Antonio and South Texas in its mission of evangelization.



Madrid

"As we look at our ministry of evangelization, we wanted today to be focused on prayer and our Catholic faith. This is our only fundraiser; we have to have funds to support our ministry as we are sustained by private donations and the generosity of so many others. Our friends are our foundation and have made it possible all these years for the center to carry out its mission of evangelization," commented Deacon Tom Fox, who founded the center with his wife Mary Jane.

During the last 17 years, the Pilgrim Center of Hope has offered many ministry and outreach services. Located on eight acres in Northwest San Antonio, the center sponsors presentations and provides resources for the Catholic faithful in the archdiocese and surrounding areas. Some of the more popular events sponsored by the center are the annual women's and men's conferences, pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the Fox's host "Catholicism Live" on Catholic Television of San Antonio, Time Warner Cable Channel 15.

"This is my third year to come and support the Fox's and I am happy to do so. They have a wonderful evangelization ministry that serves in so many areas for our Catholic faith. They are the only ones in the area who do



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Deacon Tom and Mary Jane Fox, founders of the Pilgrim Center of Hope, introduce keynote speaker Patrick Madrid at the prayer brunch on Nov. 20.

what they do and provide additional resources beyond the parish," said Tricia Balcom from St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Canyon Lake.

The mission of "casting the net" to serve as Jesus taught his disciples is what the Fox's base their ministry on. "We are blessed that God has chosen Tom and Mary Jane to serve this ministry and be the example of Christ as he cast out his net and said become fishers of men. With the prayerful and financial support of all of us, this ministry can continue casting out its nets," said master of ceremonies Paul Vance.

In addition to taking advantage of the silent auction, attendee's were treated to the personal experiences of those who work with the ministry, have participated in a pilgrimage or attended a conference. Mark V. Muller, who has attended the men's conference for the last three years shared his personal testimony and invited other men to take advantage of this important ministry.

"In this world of many evils and distractions I have found myself confused or down-trod-

den about my faith. This conference can strengthen you and provide you with the spiritual armor to go into the world and share what God has given you with others. You can gather support and resources to help you on your own spiritual journey."

In his talk, "Why Be Catholic When You Can Be Anything Else," Madrid shared why he is Catholic and the importance of evangelization. "We should never forget how our faith that we have been bought at a very high price by Jesus Christ, but in lesser sense by all of our forefathers and mothers in faith who have come before us who have fought, struggled, suffered and endured for us to have our wonderful Catholic faith. We have to preserve our faith and perpetuate it; we have to spread it and to cast this good gift as wide and as far as we can to reach others."

"The purpose of the Pilgrim Center of Hope is to emphasize the message of evangelization; it is what Pope Benedict XVI has called all lay people to do. I am grateful to Deacon Tom and Mary Jane for what they do and happy to be here as we join

together to do what needs to be done to help support this ministry that helps save so many souls," Madrid said.

Father Carl Maurer, pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Losoya, echoed Madrid's message. "The whole emphasis on evangelization is to introduce our faith to the world and that is exactly what the Pilgrim Center of Hope does. Evangelization is at the very heart of our faith and goes all the way back to the apostles." Father Maurer's belief in this message is so strong that he issued a challenge to those attending the brunch and many responded. "I believe in this ministry so I am going to donate \$1,000 and I ask that everyone here meet this challenge and give whatever they can so this great ministry can continue its vital mission of evangelization of our Catholic faith.

With gratitude for all those who support the Pilgrim Center of Hope, Mary Jane Fox shared how those that answer God's call to serve impact the ministry. "All

of us have gifts and talents that can be used for God's greater glory and we are so grateful for all of our supporters, benefactors and laborers in the vineyard who volunteer their time. Your financial support helps us to provide the tools and resources necessary to continue casting out our net."

Many expressed their gratitude for the work the center does. "Being here at the brunch is like an ongoing conversion. It is so beautiful to be amongst Catholic believers who have been gone on pilgrimages made possible by the center; Jesus is present among us here today," said Vivian Vance. "The resources offered to the archdiocese of San Antonio by the Pilgrim Center of Hope are invaluable. We have received so many blessings from this ministry and what they do is important in today's society; they give a glimmer of hope in so many different ways to so many different people who might otherwise go unseen," commented Ivanna Warnken.

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