

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## Civilize It

*Keeping our conversations civil, clear and compassionate*

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Have you second-guessed posting on your social media account about the political process for fear of being insulted or criticized?

Do you try to avoid politics when gathered together with family or friends to prevent an argument that could threaten relationships?

If so, you're not alone. The U.S. bishops see the divisions and hope to address it in the coming year.

Through a new initiative, Civilize It: Dignity Beyond the Debate 2020, the bishops hope to promote civility, clarity and compassion in this year's election cycle.

The initiative is in concert with a broader call among faith leaders, dubbed Golden Rule 2020, which encourages all people to apply the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you want them to do unto you) to political discussions and activities this year.

Civilize It kicks off in the Des Moines diocese Feb. 1-2. Clergy may include it in their preaching, and churches and parishioners are encouraged to take a pledge at [CivilizeIt.org](http://CivilizeIt.org) to be civil, clear and compassionate during the election process.

"Even in our often secularized culture, many lament the

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## Couple models lifetime commitment

*The Madsens say their faith has helped them through 71 years of married life*

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

It was love at first sight for Willie Madsen.

He was hanging out with friends on Main Street in Audubon when he first laid eyes on 16-year old Gert Bowman in 1946.

"It was a Saturday night and that's where people congregated on Saturday nights years ago," Gert said. "I had a boyfriend and he had just broken up with me and I was kind of blue.

"And then Willie came along and saw me," she continued. "He told his friends that was the girl he was going to marry."

"She was beautiful," Willie said. "I dreamed about her before I saw her."

Luckily for Willie, one of his friends knew Gert.

"She just walked down the street and I told my friend 'I would like to meet her,'" Willie said. "And he stopped her and we started talking."

As small towns go, Gert knew Willie's mother.

"I would see her at church praying for her three boys," Gert said.

Willie and Gert had their first date not long after at the Audubon County Fair.

They both felt fortunate the other was Catholic, as faith was important to them both.

They dated for a couple years before eventually

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**Willie and Gert Madsen got married Nov. 13, 1948 at St. Patrick Parish in Audubon. The couple credits their faith for getting them through the ups and downs of life.**

## ISU head football coach Matt Campbell to keynote Iowa Catholic Men's Conference

*Space limited to 1,000 people for Feb. 22 event*

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Iowa State University head football coach Matt Campbell will be the keynote speaker at the Iowa Catholic Men's Conference on Saturday, Feb. 22.

The event will be held at the Embassy Suites in downtown Des Moines.

Mass will be celebrated by Bishop

William Joensen at 7:30 a.m. Registration is 8-9 a.m. and the speakers are 9 a.m.-noon. Confession will also be offered.

Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at [iowacatholicmensconference.com](http://iowacatholicmensconference.com). Light breakfast is included; space is limited to 1,000 people.

Campbell became the youngest head coach in the Big 12 in 2015 when he was named the head football coach at

ISU. Campbell, his wife and four children reside in Ames.

"Matt Campbell is obviously a man of faith," said Joe Stopulos, conference coordinator and host of Iowa Catholic Radio's show called Man Up. "He is Catholic. I had heard from some of his players he is a really good man and that his faith is really important to him."

Stopulos encourages guys to

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**Head ISU football coach Matt Campbell**



## Wisdom: Be Attentive!

I chuckled when I called Bishop Emeritus Richard Pates to seek his counsel about a pastoral situation, only to find out that it was being announced that very day that he was appointed the interim apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Joliet in the wake of their bishop's leave of absence for health reasons. So much for retirement—a whole three months—especially after serving for over 17 months post-retirement age as administrator of our own Des Moines diocese!

I'm prompted to think of Jesus' words in Luke's Gospel: "Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me when I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'" (17:7-8). In numerous other passages, Jesus commends faithful servants who are entitled to enter into their rest, but here he seems to suggest that there is an enduring nature to our discipleship that carries through every hour, every season of our lives.

Our vocations unfold and take shape in different forms, but never are we entitled to check out or say, "I've done my share; it is enough." Only God in Christ is entitled to declare, "It is accomplished." We are asked to be perpetually at the disposal of the Lord, seeking his face as did Simeon and Anna in the temple, and then poised to render whatever sort of service is asked of us. This service may be as simple as identifying where God is among us, or reflecting his light to others while they care for us; it may involve offering a word of wisdom and a blessing over those whom God has entrusted to our care as grandparents and retired priest pastors are privileged to do. And as many grandparents and retirees know, often they find themselves busier than ever.

From my three years as assisting priest at one of our state's larger care centers, and for nine years ministering to aging BVM sisters (Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary), I came to both reverence and receive so much from the seniors with whom I was privileged to hear their life stories, to anoint them, and to be moved by how they bore their crosses to the end. For all of us, to the extent that we can muster words or let loose sighs and groans from the core of our hearts, we know



By  
Bishop  
William  
Joensen

that we are called to pray constantly, remaining firm in hope God is still at work for us, through us. Our call endures no matter how limited we might feel on account of age, energy level, or infirmity—though, as far as I can tell, in this regard the Energizer Bunny who is Bishop Pates has yet to encounter his limits!

The call to "wear our apron" and serve others when we have already labored long and hard is not a heavy yoke imposed by Christ. It is good news to realize that God has a purpose for us at every moment of our lives. And it is incumbent upon the larger Body of Christ to recognize the reservoir of wisdom represented in those who combine experience, living faith, and graced insights into what matters most in life. Pope Francis, in *Christus Vivit/Christ is Alive!*, speaks specifically to young people: "The Bible never ceases to insist that profound respect be shown to the elderly, since they have a wealth of experience; they have known success and failure, life's joys and afflictions, its dreams and disappointments. In the silence of their heart, they have a store of experiences that can teach us not to make mistakes or be taken in by false promises."

Further, the Holy Father cautions, "It is unhelpful to buy into the cult of youth or foolishly to dismiss others simply because they are older or from another generation. Jesus tells us that the wise are able to bring forth from their store things both new and old (cf. Mt 13:52). A wise young person is open to the future, yet still capable of learning something from the experience of others" (CV n. 16).

Our Eastern friends in the Divine Liturgy enjoin us: "Wisdom: Be attentive!" Our attention to seniors not only accesses wisdom from above and below, but refines our appreciation for people in all walks of life so that we might glimpse beauty in their steadfast fidelity to their vocation. Again, Pope Francis: "Realize that there is beauty in the laborer who returns home grimy and unkempt, but with the joy of having earned food for his family. There is extraordinary beauty in the fellowship of a family at table, generously sharing what food it has. There is beauty in the wife, slightly disheveled and no longer young, who continues to care for her sick husband despite her own failing health. Long after the springtime of their courtship has passed, there is beauty in the fidelity of those couples who still love one another in the autumn of life, those elderly people who still hold hands as they walk" (CV n. 183).

Bishop Pates continues to take up the cup of salvation in serving as interim shepherd of the Diocese of Joliet. May he and all who continue to pour themselves out well past retirement age ultimately experience the beautiful reversal Jesus anticipates—again in Luke's Gospel (12:37-38): "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants."

## Sabiduría: ¡Estén Atentos!

Me causó un poco de gracia cuando llamé al Obispo Emérito Richard Pates para pedirle su consejo sobre una situación pastoral, solamente para darme cuenta de que ese mismo día se anunciaría su nombramiento como administrador apostólico interino de la Diócesis de Joliet, a consecuencia de la licencia temporal de su obispo por motivos de salud. ¡Bastante le duró la jubilación—un total de tres meses—especialmente luego de servir por más de 17 meses luego de alcanzar su edad de jubilación como administrador de nuestra propia diócesis de Des Moines!

Esto me hizo pensar en las palabras de Jesús en el Evangelio de Lucas: "¿Quién de ustedes le diría a su sirviente que acaba de llegar de arar el campo o de cuidar el rebaño, 'ven aquí de inmediato y toma tu lugar en la mesa'? No le dirán más bien, 'Prepárame algo para comer. Ponte el delantal para servirme hasta que yo haya comido y bebido. Tú podrás comer y beber cuando yo haya terminado.'" (17: 7-8). En muchos otros pasajes, Jesús reconoce a los sirvientes fieles que merecen obtener su reposo, pero aquí parece sugerir que hay una naturaleza de rendimiento en nuestro discipulado que nos lleva a cada hora y cada época de nuestras vidas.

Nuestras vocaciones se desenvuelven y adquieren diferentes formas, pero nunca parece que podamos decir, "Ya cumplí con mi parte; ya es suficiente." Solamente Dios en Cristo merece declarar, "Ya se ha logrado." Se nos pide estar en perpetua disposición del Señor, buscando su rostro como lo hicieron Simeón y Ana en el templo, y entonces estar dispuestos a rendir cualquier tipo de servicio que nos solicite. Este servicio puede ser tan sencillo como el de identificar en dónde está Dios en medio de nosotros, o ser el reflejo de su luz para los demás mientras ellos cuidan de nosotros; puede significar el ofrecer una palabra de sabiduría o una bendición sobre alguien a quien Dios ha confiado a nuestro cuidado, así como los abuelos o los sacerdotes párrocos en jubilación tienen ese privilegio. Así como lo saben muchos abuelos y personas en el retiro, por lo general se encuentran más ocupados que nunca.

Desde los tres años que serví como sacerdote asistente en uno de los centros de atención más grandes del estado y los nueve años que ofrecí ministerio a las hermanas BVM (Hermanas de la Caridad de la Santísima Virgen María), he llegado a tener tanto reverencia como agradecimiento por todo lo que recibí de los adultos mayores de quienes tuve el privilegio de escuchar historias de sus vidas, el unguirles, y el sentirme conmovido al ver cómo cargaban con su cruz hasta el final. Para todos nosotros, en la medida que podamos desarrollar palabras o soltar suspiros o gemidos desde el centro de nuestros corazones, sabemos que estamos llamados a orar constantemente, permaneciendo firmes en la esperanza de que Dios sigue tra-

bajando para nosotros, a través de nosotros. Nuestro llamado persiste sin importar qué tan limitados nos sintamos ya sea por nuestra edad, nivel de energía, o estado de salud—sin embargo, según lo puedo entender, el Conejo de Energizer que es el Obispo Pates ¡aún no encuentra sus límites!

El llamado a "ponernos nuestro delantal" y servir a los demás cuando ya hemos trabajado arduamente por mucho tiempo no es un pesado yugo que nos impone Cristo. Es una buena noticia el darnos cuenta de que Dios tiene un propósito para nosotros en cada momento de nuestras vidas. Y es la obligación del Cuerpo de Cristo en general el reconocer la reserva de sabiduría representada en aquellos quienes combinan experiencia, fe viva y la bendición de ver lo que verdaderamente importa en la vida. El Papa Francisco en *¡Christus Vivit! ¡Cristo está Vivo!*, habla específicamente a los jóvenes: "La Biblia nunca deja de insistir que se debe mostrar profundo respeto a los ancianos, ya que cuentan con un enorme tesoro experiencia; ellos han vivido el éxito y el fracaso, los gozos y las aflicciones de la vida, sus sueños y decepciones. En el silencio de su corazón, ellos tienen una acumulación de experiencias que pueden enseñarnos a no cometer errores o a no dejarnos llevar por falsas promesas."

Más aún, el Santo Padre nos advierte, "no sirve el dejarnos llevar por el culto a la juventud o el tontamente ignorar a otros simplemente porque ya son mayores o porque son de otra generación. Jesús nos dice que los sabios pueden sacar de sus armarios cosas nuevas y viejas (cf. Mt 13:52). Una persona joven y sabia, está abierta al futuro, pero al igual es capaz de aprender algo de la experiencia de otros" (CV n. 16).

Nuestros amigos orientales en la Liturgia Divina se nos unen: "Sabiduría: ¡Estén Atentos!" Nuestra atención a los adultos mayores no solamente nos da acceso a la sabiduría de lo alto y lo terrenal, pero refine nuestro aprecio por la gente de todo tipo de vida para que podamos ver la belleza de su consistente fidelidad a su vocación. Nuevamente, el Papa Francisco, "debemos darnos cuenta de la belleza en el trabajador que regresa a casa sucio y desaseado, pero con el gozo de haberse ganado el alimento para su familia. Hay una extraordinaria belleza en la fraternidad de la mesa familiar, generosamente compartiendo la comida que se tiene. Hay belleza en la esposa, un poco desaliñada y ya no tan joven que sigue cuidando de su marido enfermo a pesar de su propia salud en decadencia. Mucho tiempo luego de que ha pasado la primavera de su noviazgo, hay belleza en la fidelidad de esas parejas que aun se aman en el otoño de la vida, aquellos ancianos que se siguen tomando de la mano al caminar" (CV n. 183).

El Obispo Pates sigue tomando el cáliz de la salvación sirviendo como el pastor interino de la Diócesis de Joliet. Que él y todos aquellos que siguen dando de sí mismos ya entrados en su edad de jubilación puedan finalmente vivir el hermoso cambio que anticipa Jesús—nuevamente en el Evangelio de Lucas (12:37-38): "Dichosos aquellos sirvientes a quienes su amo encuentra vigilantes a su llegada. En verdad les digo, que él mismo se pondrá el delantal, los hará sentarse a la mesa y procederá a servirles. Y si llegase al segundo o al tercer turno y les encuentra así, dichosos esos sirvientes."

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# Iowa bishops support pro-life amendment

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

One week before the state's legislative session began, the Iowa bishops said they will support a constitutional amendment that says a right to abortion is not guaranteed by the state's constitution.

The work to establish that amendment will take some time. In order to create an amendment to the Iowa constitution, the proposal must pass both legislative houses two consecutive sessions and then be brought to a vote before Iowans.

The effort is in reaction to a June 2018 Iowa Supreme Court decision, which said there is a fundamental right to abortion in the state's constitution.

"We believe almost no existing or future regulation of abortion can survive a court challenge" without the constitutional amendment, said Tom Chapman, executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Catholic Church in Iowa.



**Archbishop  
Michael Jackels**  
Archdiocese of Dubuque



**Bishop  
R. Walker Nickless**  
Diocese of Sioux City



**Bishop Thomas Zinkula**  
Diocese of Davenport



**Bishop William Joensen**  
Diocese of Des Moines

We support an Iowa constitutional amendment to clarify that a right to abortion is not guaranteed by the state of Iowa Constitution.

The Iowa Supreme Court, in a June 2018 decision, struck down the law requiring a three-day waiting period before an abortion is performed. In pursuit of that decision, the court claimed that the Iowa Constitution provided for a fundamental right to abortion.

Such a claim is groundless, given that for 115 years the same state of Iowa Constitution served as the basis for a legislative ban on abortion except to save the life of a mother.

The dignity of the human person is the foundation of our moral vision for society. We recognize that each person is created in the image and likeness of God. Hence, direct attacks on innocent persons are never acceptable. This is why abortion is such an important issue.

We believe it is important to make this amendment to the Iowa Constitution. This is a question of the common good. We can help pregnant women in need, the men who fathered those children, and families in distress without recourse to the violence of abortion.

## Keeping conversations civil



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rise of a digital 'dystopia' where words are wielded with abandon and human dignity is a drive-by casualty," wrote Bishop William Joensen to clergy of the diocese.

"This presidential election year, whose entrance coincides with the Iowa caucuses and extends through November intensifies the stakes and the passions that can poison the well of civic friendship and mutual respect for our neighbors, regardless of their religious, political or other affiliations.

"As Catholic Christians and persons of good will, we recognize how easily we, too, can be drawn into the contentious climate and fall short of basic charity in our attitudes and our speech," he wrote.

"The hope is to encourage greater civility, compassion and clarity in dialogue and en-

agement that will deepen our appreciation for varied voices grounded in the belief that each of us by nature is inclined toward the true, the good and the beautiful," he said.

Venice Bishop Frank Dwane, chair of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, said the Civilize It campaign is a step toward healing.

"Conversation in the public square is all too often filled with personal attacks and words that assume the worst about those with whom we disagree," he said. "We are in need of healing in our families, communities and country. Civilize It: Dignity Beyond the Debate is a call for Catholics to honor the human dignity of each person they encounter, whether it is online, at the dinner table, or in the pews next to them."

## Retired Des Moines bishop to help Joliet

Pope Francis named Des Moines Bishop Emeritus Richard Pates the apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Joliet on Dec. 27 while granting Bishop R. Daniel Conlon a medical leave of absence.

Bishop Pates, who retired as bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines last July, served as apostolic administrator until Bishop William Joensen was in-

stalled last September.

"I applaud Bishop R. Daniel Conlon for undertaking a program to address his health concerns," Bishop Pates said in a statement. "He is a good bishop and will benefit from his time away."

The Diocese of Joliet has 118 parishes with 192,272 households in a seven-county area southwest of Chicago.

## ISU's Matt Campbell to keynote Catholic men's conference



Iowa State University's head football coach Matt Campbell, pictured in Jack Trice Stadium with his wife and four children, will keynote the Iowa Catholic Men's Conference. This morning-only event will be Saturday, Feb. 22 at the Embassy Suites in downtown Des Moines. Space is limited to 1,000 people. Register at [iowacatholicmensconference.com](http://iowacatholicmensconference.com)

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come out and hear a message of faith and family from a very inspirational person in central Iowa.

Stopulos will also speak at the event about the importance of living out our call

to authentic masculinity. He is a husband, father of four, businessman and was named a Des Moines "40 Under 40" honoree in 2015.

"The message will be applicable to everyone," Stopulos said, whether you're young, old, married, single – all walks

of life. "We really made sure this three hours will benefit all men."

Catholic speaker, author and morning radio host Jon Leonetti will emcee the event. Leonetti is a husband and father of three.



## OPINION

# Was that compliment for me?

Can you imagine having the audacious nerve to ask for a compliment to be repeated so that you can hear it twice?

Vanity will do this.

Or, can you imagine bragging about the compliment received so that others will notice?

Vanity will do this, also.

The desire to be acknowledged and appreciated can run extremely high within all of us. People love compliments. But we must be careful; vanity's satisfaction is not the purpose of a compliment.

In fact, vanity has no satisfaction. Vanity produces a false identity, leaving a person empty and undefined. A compliment builds up and re-enforces a person, adding to how their personhood is defined. Vanity seeking behaviors will ruin a good thing. They will injure the compliment itself and only produce a weakened identity.

"Oh, please tell me how nice I look."

"Sure, you look very nice."

"I don't feel like you meant that."

Wow! Can you hear the trap? We all probably have been on either of these two sides.

Sometimes, we spend our energy trying to be noticed for our professional accomplishments, material accumulations, acumen, intellectual ability, personal appearance, and spiritual positions and postures, i.e. false humility or pious.

We could go through a whole life-

## Let's Get Psyched



By Deacon Randy Kiel

time with these empty pursuits and never hear enough vain compliments to satisfy an unbridled ego. It is our responsibility to keep ourselves in check when it comes to the matter of "ego." We need God's help for this. We humans can be self-destructive ego-maniacally driven creatures without him.

Ego can be defined, for the purpose of this article, as the need we carry inside that tries to control how others perceive us on the outside, thus our false sense of self-importance or even our polarized false sense of unimportance.

Ego would have us going through life looking and longing for words of affirmation and recognition so that we could make others and ourselves see us the way we want to be seen.

So let's think, "What would be the healthiest, greatest, and most unegotistical compliment that one could ever receive? What compliment is the highest acknowledgement and respect that could ever be

given?"

Jesus has given the answer to these questions. He reminds us several times in scripture that the most important words that we can ever receive will not come in this lifetime.

These words do not represent the contaminated desires of egoism but rather the purity of the soul's deep desire. These words would be the compliment that we might hear when we stand before Him in eternity to account for our lives. These words would speak as an affirmation reserved for people who have met certain spiritual requirements in their walk with Jesus. Jesus tells us what He considers to be commendable.

In the parable of the talents from Matthew's Gospel, Jesus speaks out a commendation to the two faithful men when He compliments them saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant." as compared to the third who did not serve his master well.

Could there be a higher compliment?

Let's look specifically at what Jesus complimented. He evaluated what was done by them with their lives, not spoken of, not intended to be done, but actually done.

We cannot expect to hear the words "Well done" unless we have done well. This requires obedient actions and responses from within our own personal motivations. Faith changes our actions from

the serving of self to serving the One who created us. Both of these men understood the highest call of all, the call to serve. Service was not only their motivation; it was also their pleasure.

Perhaps this is what is meant when we also read, "Do everything in love." This is true service. This is to be a deacon, Diakonia!

Jesus also affirmed the two men by saying they were "good and faithful". The Greek word for good is "agathos", which means upright moral virtue, kindness, joyful, and generous. Faithful is the word "pistos", which means reliable, trustworthy, able to be counted on, follows through, and integrous.

So in our personal times of reflection, let's look to see how these two words have applied to our actions, rather than our intentions. These would be actions that are full of agathos and pistos. I trust that all of us would long to hear such a compliment as the two servants heard. So let's live daily with this servant-heart, giving demonstration of our Lord's integrity and loyalty in our daily responsibilities and relationships.

May we all, one day, be so privileged as to hear "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

*Deacon Randy Kiel is the founder of Kardiac Counseling and serves Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. To connect with him, email [randy@kardiaccounseling.com](mailto:randy@kardiaccounseling.com).*

## Celebrating life

Winter is the season for birthdays in my family.

Both Kara and I were born in January and three of our children celebrate their birthdays this time of year.

My wife is an amazing baker, and so my kids' birthdays are particularly special because of their intricate cake requests, such as the "Sound of Music" cake, the "tutu cake" or the famous "football stadium" cake, complete with a goal posts and a sell-out crowd of sprinkles.

Birthday celebrations are big, but another tradition that has developed within our family is celebrating baptismal days.

The child gets to pick his or her favorite meal, invite a friend's family over,

### Marriage & Family Life



By Adam Storey

and we even have found a simple renewal of baptismal promises and blessing that we pray with the kids.

Also, the child gets to hold their lit baptismal candle as we pray, for them an exciting adventure to avoid dripping wax.

These celebrations have been a simple and joyful way to tie our everyday

life and celebrations to the new life that Christians have entered into in baptism, and it's a reminder to us that our everyday life is illuminated by and transformed by the divine life that has taken root in our hearts.

There is no one way, or right way, to do it, but every parent has received the invitation and responsibility to teach their children about the divine life that we receive at baptism.

If I am going to teach my kids about this divine life, I need to know it in my own heart, which means attending to it, fostering it, and asking for grace so it can grow. And when I know that life in my own heart, it becomes easier to pass it on,

as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said, not as moral precepts or a philosophical system, but as an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ "which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (Deus Caritas Est 1).

There are as many ways to do this as there are families, but this month I'd invite all of us to ask God's life to enter our hearts a bit more fully, and to ask how we can celebrate that life in our homes.

*Adam Storey is the diocesan director of Marriage & Family Life. He can be reached at [astorey@dmdiocese.org](mailto:astorey@dmdiocese.org) or 515-237-5056.*

### Letter to the Editor

#### Kick off Lent right

"Get the man, get the family. Get the family, get society. Get society, get the world." These are words a friend of mine uses often to highlight the importance of cultivating virtuous men in the world today. It is almost impossible to overstate the need for having strong Catholic men in our parishes, families, workplaces, politics; frankly, in every aspect of society.

I am inviting all men to join me on Saturday, Feb. 22 for a morning dedicated to helping each of us live out our call as sons, brothers, fathers, as men.

The day will start with 7:30 a.m. Mass with Bishop Joensen presiding. The program will begin at 9 a.m. and will feature our keynote speaker, Iowa State head football coach Matt Campbell. Jon Leonetti will be the emcee for the day, I will deliver a talk on living out our call to authentic masculinity.

We chose the date of Feb. 22 intentionally, as that is the Saturday before Ash Wednesday. I can think of no better way to focus us in on the Lenten season than to re-engage in our mission as men.

I am asking you to give four hours of your time as an investment in your spiritual life. Most of us would spend that much time watching TV, playing golf, or going to a sporting event without even thinking about it. How much more beneficial will these four hours be for your life?

Joe Stopulos

## We welcome Letters to the Editor

Please keep your letter under 200 words, written in a spirit of Catholic charity.

Email letters to [Communications@dmdmdiocese.org](mailto:Communications@dmdmdiocese.org)

**Ask a Priest**

*Q. This year my daughter is going to be confirmed. Her religion teacher is asking what she would like for her confirmation name. Does she have to choose a new name? If so, why?*

A. No. There is nothing in the Rite of Confirmation that speaks of a new name. It's a leftover from an earlier time when it was thought that persons were confirming their baptism and becoming adult Catholics (even in grade school!).

But in fact, confirmation is a sacrament where the bishop or his designate confirms the baptism that took place when those people were babies.

That's why when adults are baptized, they are confirmed at the same ceremony, and there is no mention of a new name. The person's baptismal name is most appropriate for those being confirmed.

Confirmation was once thought to be a "coming of age" ceremony, where young people were accepting their role as "adult" Catholics.

The catechesis for confirmation no longer uses that approach. In the Eastern Church and in some Hispanic countries, children are confirmed at the same time they are baptized.

Clearly the "coming of age" teaching wouldn't work in those cases.

A person can certainly choose a confirmation name if they like, but it certainly isn't necessary.

*Q. I heard in a recent sermon that baptism is the responsibility of the whole parish, not just the parents and sponsors. Can you explain?*

A. The spreading of the Gospel belongs to the whole Church, not just the bishop and the priests.

So living the teachings of Jesus is supported by the faith of all the people, not just the parents and the sponsors.

Of course, the parents and the sponsors play a more intimate role in the formation of their children, but it's everyone's responsibility to contribute to the overall community of faith. Everyone plays a role.

*Q. At a recent funeral I observed that there was a white cloth placed over the casket of the deceased. What is the purpose of that ritual?*

A. The white cloth is called a funeral pall. It represents the baptismal garment that was used when the person was baptized.

The accompanying prayer says: "In the waters of baptism, N. died with Christ and was raised to new life. May N. now share with him eternal glory." The Easter candle is also used as a reminder of the baptismal candle given to parents or sponsors.

Got a question for "Ask a Priest" and its author, Father John Ludwig? Send it to: [communications@dmdiocese.org](mailto:communications@dmdiocese.org).

**New parish hall dedicated**

Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs celebrated the dedication of a new parish hall



Bishop William Joensen was at Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs on Dec. 27 for the blessing and dedication of the new parish center.



The groundbreaking ceremony for Corpus Christi Parish's new parish hall last July was part of Phase 1 of the parish's planned building project. The new parish hall is a 2,500-square-foot addition adjacent to the parish office and rectory. The new addition features a reception and greeting area, two restrooms, and three meeting rooms. In addition to the new building, Phase 1 included upgrades to the existing office and rectory, fresh paint, and upgrades to the building's lighting and HVAC system. The restrooms received a complete makeover with new plumbing, lighting and flooring.

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# Around the Diocese

## Jan. 21 Tuesday

### Catholic Widows and Widowers

DES MOINES -- Lunch at 1 p.m. at Baratta's Restaurant. For reservations or more information contact Judy LaRonde at 515-988-7791.

## Jan. 25 Saturday

### Trivia Night

NORWALK -- St. John the Apostle Parish will host a Trivia Night. Doors open at 6:15 p.m. and the game begins at 6:45 p.m. Maximum 8 per table. Prizes awarded for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place teams and Birthday Survivor game. Soda provided. Bring snacks to share at your table (BYOB - beer and wine only, please). Tickets and information are available at the parish office, 515-981-4855. Tickets are \$10/person. Mulligans will be for sale. Tickets purchased prior to the event will receive a raffle ticket for a prize drawing.

## Jan. 28 Tuesday

### Catholic Widows and Widowers

WEST DES MOINES -- Business meeting at 2 p.m. at Sacred Heart Church. Guest speaker is Dr. Drew, chiropractor. For more information contact Judy LaRonde at 515-988-7791.

## Feb. 2 Sunday

### Burrito Bowl

DES MOINES -- St. Ambrose Knights of Columbus will serve a burrito breakfast at the parish hall from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free-will donations. Proceeds to assist those in need in the cathedral parish area.

## Feb. 7 Friday

### Catholic Widows and Widowers

DES MOINES -- First Friday Mass at noon at the Basilica of St. John. Lunch following at the Drake Diner. For reservations or more information contact Judy LaRonde at 515-988-7791.

## Feb. 7-9 Friday-Sunday

### Christian Experience Weekend for Women

ANKENY -- The Christian Experience Weekend is a renewal weekend for adults, designed to enable them to more deeply "experience" themselves and their relationship to God and the Christian community. A women's CEW will be held at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church. For more information, contact Jenny Wirtz at WomensCEW2020@gmail.com or 515-991-1301. You can also visit olih.org/cew-retreats/

## Feb. 8 Saturday

### Green Gala

ANKENY -- St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic School is hosting the 4th Annual Green Gala. The evening will include dinner, dancing, live auction and silent auction. Visit slte-school.org/greengala to buy tickets and for more information on event sponsorships.

## Feb. 11 Tuesday

### Catholic Widows and Widowers

DES MOINES -- Planning meeting at 12:30 p.m. at Chicago Speakeasy. For reservations or more information contact Judy LaRonde at 515-988-7791.

## Feb. 13 Thursday

### Theology on Tap

WINDSOR HEIGHTS -- Join Bishop William Joensen for a discussion on "Friendship in Faith: A Catholic take on accompaniment and friendship" at Sherwood Forest Event Center. Social starts at 6 p.m., speaker at 7 p.m. and Q&A at 8 p.m. Go to dmdiocese.org/TheologyonTap for details.

## Feb. 14 Friday

### Catholic Widows and Widowers

URBANDALE -- Valen-

tine party at 1 p.m. at The Machine Shed. Bring a Valentine card to share. For reservations or more information contact Judy LaRonde at 515-988-7791.

## Feb. 28-March 1

### Friday-Sunday

### Christian Experience Weekend for Men

ANKENY -- The Christian Experience Weekend is a renewal weekend for adults, designed to enable them to more deeply "experience" themselves and their relationship to God and the Christian community. A men's CEW will be held at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church. For more information, contact Tom Maher at tom.mahercew@gmail.com or 515-314-9666. You can also visit olih.org/cew-retreats/

## March 12 Thursday

### Theology on Tap

WINDSOR HEIGHTS -- Katie Patrizio will discuss "Friendship With God: What is it and why does it matter?" at Sherwood Forest Event Center. Social starts at 6 p.m., speaker at 7 p.m. and Q&A at 8 p.m. Go to dmdiocese.org/TheologyonTap for details.

## March 7 Saturday

### Father Riccardo visit

COUNCIL BLUFFS -- Radio show host Father John Riccardo is coming to the Mid-America Convention Center with Spirit Catholic Radio Network. Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased at spiritcatholicradio.com or call 855-571-0200. RSVP by March 2.

### Latin Mass

DES MOINES -- The Latin Mass at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines is on Sundays at 5 p.m.

## Christ Our Life confirms speaker lineup

Tickets are on sale for the Christ Our Life Catholic Regional Conference, slated for Sept. 26-27, at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines.

With world-class speakers ranging from a former "Deadhead" rock groupie to the "Dynamic Deacon" and "One Groovy Nun," the presenter line-up highlights a priest, a deacon, a nun and four laypersons.

The sixth event, which is held every two years, features seven internationally renowned presenters: Marian Father Don Calloway; Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers; Sister Mariam James Heidland, of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity; Mirjana Soldo of Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Jon Leonetti; Steve Angrisano; and Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow of the internationally acclaimed Mary's Meals.

The conference, expected to attract some 8,000 attendees, will feature the holy Catholic traditions of an adoration chapel, a Saturday evening Eucharistic procession with benediction and adoration as well as Mass and reconciliation both days. Music will fill the arena with a traditional choir as well as contemporary songs of a praise band.

COL co-founder and co-chair Marilyn Lane anticipates a strong appeal with this broad-based panel of presenters.

"We always pray for discernment to bring in highly recognized and respected Catholic speakers who are faithful to sacred Scripture and Catholic doctrine and tradition through the magisterium. We have been blessed over the years by these speakers and believe that COL2020 may be among our strongest line-up yet."

In a first for Christ Our Life, two earlier confirmed speakers have had international Church leadership obligations arise.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of the Archdiocese of Manila in the Philippines can no longer come. As the international president of Caritas (representing 165 national Catholic relief and development agencies working across the world) Cardinal Tagle learned that the Caritas annual meeting will be held the same weekend as COL2020. Also, just announced in December, Pope Francis has designated Cardinal Tagle as head of The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (formerly known as the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith). The congregation oversees the work of the Catholic Church in most of the dioceses in Africa, Asia and Oceania, which is around one-third of the world's 4,000 dioceses.

Father Calloway is stepping in to do an extra presentation in lieu of Cardinal Tagle. Father Calloway will speak on the life of our spiritual father, St. Joseph, the topic of his new book called *Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father*.

Scott Hahn also has encountered an earlier unforeseen, high level commitment. Fortunately, Deacon Burke-Sivers is confirmed as a new speaker in the line-up.

The conference, a nonprofit organization and primarily comprised of laity volunteers, is based in the Diocese of Des Moines.



**Father Don Calloway**



**Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers**



**Sister Mariam-James Heidland**



**Mirjana Soldo**



**Jon Leonetti**



**Steve Angrisano**



**Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow**

## Got a story idea?

Tell us about the people you know living a life of extraordinary faith. We may feature them in an upcoming issue of *The Catholic Mirror*!

Email your thoughts to Kelly at [kcollins@dmdiocese.org](mailto:kcollins@dmdiocese.org).

The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa offers free Catholic guidance on charitable giving, now and for the future.

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## Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese's Victim Assistance Advocate is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps victims of sexual abuse of minors by clergy through a complaint process and in seeking support and counseling services. He can be reached at 515-286-2024 or [Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov).



# Diocese pilots anti-porn program in three parishes

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Addressing the topic of pornography can be scary and daunting.

But when addressed appropriately, there are many reasons for hope, said Adam Storey, director of the diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life.

Statistics about the harms and prevalence of pornography are staggering, whether it be the size of the industry, the addictive qualities, links to human trafficking, or the frequency of violence against women.

Even still, there is hope, Storey said.

“As St. Paul said, ‘Where sin increase[s], grace overflow[s] all the more,’” Storey said.

“This real grace breaks in through healing and freedom, through the advancing resources related to education and prevention of pornography exposure, and through more young people saying yes to a fuller vision of sexuality, instead of the diminishment that pornography offers,” Storey continued.

Because of the importance of this issue, the Diocese of

Des Moines is launching a pilot initiative this year with three test parishes to educate parents about the dangers of pornography and give them tips on protecting their kids, including software recommendations for smartphones, tablets and home computers.

“The overall goal is equipping families to address the issue of pornography both in prevention and then in healing after exposure,” Storey said.

They will train parishes to have “first responders” of sorts, Storey said.

“We need to have people in the parishes who have the love, the confidence and the resources out there to help equip families,” Storey said.

“It’s also helping parishes create safe places where this topic can be talked about,” Storey continued.

The parishes should be able to help with a range of issues, including helping someone who has been trying to quit for 10 years, counseling a wife who discovered her husband has an issue or offering advice on talking to kids about the dangers of pornography.

With the help of Tom Green, a local leader on por-

nography addiction education, Storey has been working with John Gaffney, director of the diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, in training the Des Moines test parishes of St. Theresa, St. Joseph and St. Anthony.

The pastors will provide constructive feedback.

Gaffney has been working with the principals and catechetical leaders at the three test parishes. Their focus is educating parents of children preparing to receive the sacraments of first Holy Communion and confirmation.

“At least two of the three parishes questioned why we are working with parents of first communion-age kids,” Gaffney said. “The issue is that the age of first occurrence [of seeing] pornography keeps getting younger and younger and younger. The average age is 8 or 9 years old.”

“The pornographers have figured out a way to make these first occurrences happen very easily,” Gaffney added.

The discussion with



Adam Storey



John Gaffney



Father Sean Kilcawley

parents will be framed in a hopeful way. They also will use habit-building examples that parents are already using.

“They are already working to help their young person to avoid dangerous situations and build resilience,” Gaffney said. “When they go out biking, they wear helmets and pads. When they are in the car, we spend a lot of money on car seats. When they’re learning how to swim they take lessons and gain those skills. These are tools parents use to help their kids gain confidence.”

While most people recognize pornography is a problem, many do not realize the full gravity of the situation and its long-term negative impacts, Gaffney added.

“Kids have a computer in their pocket and the pornogra-

phers know how to get to young people and get them hooked at a very early age,” Gaffney said.

The diocese’s priests are getting educated on the topic as well. Father Sean Kilcawley of the Diocese of Lincoln, who has been speaking and blogging about porn addiction for many years, presented at the priests’ fall workshop.

“We want parishes to equip their own families to achieve freedom and have responsible protection in their own home,” Storey concluded.

Find Father Kilcawley’s blog at [integrityrestored.com](http://integrityrestored.com). Learn more about Covenant Eyes at [covenanteyes.com](http://covenanteyes.com). Visit Tom Green’s website at [createcleanhearts.org](http://createcleanhearts.org).

## Audubon couple models commitment

Continued from page 1

marrying at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Audubon on Nov. 13, 1948.

Gert stayed home to raise their growing family while Willie worked as a rural mail carrier.

“He would be home in the afternoon [after finishing the mail route] and help with the babies,” Gert said.

“He was a good husband,” she added.

They started out in an apartment and moved a few times before settling down at the house they’re in now. “We’ve lived here 56 years in this house,” Gert said.

Their boys were servers at church growing up. Gert taught the First Communion catechism class to second graders for 25 years and Willie was a trustee at the church for 25 years.

Faith was a cornerstone of their life.

“Willie would go to Mass in the morning before he went to the post office for many years,” Gert said.

All three of their daughters were married in the church, a time of celebration for the family.

The St. Patrick community was also there for the couple during their darkest times. The funeral for their son Mark was held at the church in 2002 after he died of cancer.

“He is buried in Audubon,” Gert said.

Mark left behind a wife and child.

Despite the hardships, they continue to put their trust in God.

“He answered our prayers many times,” Gert said. “We try to go to Mass as often as we can and try to say the rosary every day. Our faith is very im-

portant to us. We couldn’t have made it without him.”

They are also grateful some of their adult children live close-by: Joni lives in Audubon, Jim is in Carroll, Julie is in DeSoto and John is in Nebraska.

Nowadays they spend their leisure time having coffee with friends in Audubon. Willie still likes to play golf, though it’s become more difficult due to hearing loss and limited vision.

There’s no secret to a successful marriage, they said.

“I have a patient husband,” Gert said with a laugh. “He’s very helpful, considerate and a good father.”

“And she’s a wonderful wife,” Willie added.

Willie is now age 94 and Gert is 89. Though their bodies aren’t as strong as they used to be, their love for each other has never been more powerful.

### Holy Land Pilgrimage

Consider joining Reverend Jim Kirby, pastor of St. Elizabeth’s in Carlisle on a 10 day pilgrimage to the Holy Land, August 3rd-12th 2020. Walk where Jesus walked in Nazareth, Mt. Tabor, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, Jericho, Bethany and of course Bethlehem and the Old City of Jerusalem. Rev. Kirby has visited the Holy Land many times and is looking forward to sharing this experience with you.

The cost of the trip is \$3399. per person and includes transportation, hotel accommodations, 2 meals a day, tips, daily sightseeing, liturgies and airport taxes. For more information visit [www.crownofbethlehem.com](http://www.crownofbethlehem.com) or email: [info@crownofbethlehem.com](mailto:info@crownofbethlehem.com).



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# Fiscal year-end statements show use of generous gifts

## REPORT FROM THE FINANCE DIRECTOR



Paul Carlson

An annual independent audit of diocesan finances shows the Diocese of Des Moines is on solid financial footing.

The financial statements of the diocese, dated June 30, 2019, were audited by the independent certified public accounting firm of Brooks Lodden P.C. The audit shows the diocesan financial statements, which can be found on our website, are fair and appropriately presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

The audit process was overseen by the diocesan Audit Committee chaired by Brian Johnson, of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale, and the reports were approved by the diocesan Finance Council chaired by Dan Kinsella, of St. Patrick Parish in Imogene.

### Major Initiatives

Fiscal year 2019 saw the wrap up of the renovation of the Catholic Pastoral Center building and the beginning of the implementation of the School strategic plan approved in the previous year.

Through the guidance of retired Bishop Richard Pates, Chancellor Jason Kurth, and Administrative Director Sister Jude Fitzpatrick, the diocese navigated the steps needed to receive a state tax credit of \$2.1 million. The tax credit will go into a restricted fund held at The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa to provide for ongoing needs of the building.

Another major initiative involved strategic planning processes for diocesan schools, including the Council Bluffs/St. Albert schools and Des Moines metropolitan schools regions. New diocesan Superintendent of Schools, Donna Bishop, oversees and coordinates the respective implementation processes, in conjunction with Deacon

Vernon Dobelmann and Father Charles Kottas of the St. Albert Schools, Dr. Dan Ryan of Dowling Catholic High School, and Dr. Jerry Deegan, retired president of Dowling Catholic.

### Financial Condition

The financial condition of the diocese is solid with cash and investments of \$6.1 million. This includes \$3.2 million received in the spring from the Annual Diocesan Appeal to fund operations in fiscal year 2020 and \$1.8 million for restricted purposes.

The diocese is debt free but has a liability of \$7.9 million related to the unfunded medical and pension needs of our priests as calculated by actuarial reports.

The Priest Medical Endowment at The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa helps to fund this liability. This endowment received funding through the diocesan capital campaign Sharing God's Gifts.

### Operations

The diocese had an operating budget of \$7 million in the fiscal year 2019 and finished with an operating surplus of \$448,000.

The surplus was due primarily to investment income and the discipline of department directors to stay under their budgets.

With the surplus, we were able to fund the expenses related to the transition to a new bishop and the continued implementation of the School strategic plan.

The two major funding sources for the diocese are the Annual Diocesan Appeal and a distribution of 3.75% from the endowments at The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa.

*A full copy of the audit of the Diocese of Des Moines can be found at [dmdioocese.org/resources/finance/fy19-financial-report](http://dmdioocese.org/resources/finance/fy19-financial-report).*

## Diocese of Des Moines Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS	6/30/2019	6/30/2018	Change
Cash	\$481,173	\$746,379	(\$265,206)
Investments - ADA	\$3,225,049	\$3,176,216	\$48,833
Unrestricted Investments	\$666,637	\$495,942	\$170,695
Restricted Investments	\$1,750,776	\$1,978,900	(\$228,124)
Sharing God's Gifts Pledge Receivable	\$241,071	\$1,687,224	(\$1,446,154) (b)
Pastoral Center Campaign Receivable	\$697,390	\$2,113,686	(\$1,416,296)
Property, Plant, & Equipment, Net	\$8,851,504	\$10,656,552	(\$1,805,048) (a)
State Historical Tax Credit Receivable	\$2,110,357	\$0	\$2,110,357
Self-Funded Property Insurance	\$1,164,414	\$1,480,685	(\$316,271)
Other Assets	\$794,880	\$520,588	\$274,292
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$19,983,250</b>	<b>\$22,856,172</b>	<b>(\$2,872,922)</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
Sharing God's Gifts Payable	\$492,263	\$2,234,604	(\$1,742,341) (b)
Current Liabilities	\$607,958	\$1,719,752	(\$1,111,795)
Priest Medical/Pension Liability	\$7,895,039	\$5,354,102	\$2,540,937 (c)
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$8,995,260</b>	<b>\$9,308,458</b>	<b>(\$313,199)</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$10,987,990</b>	<b>\$13,547,714</b>	<b>(\$2,559,724)</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$19,983,250</b>	<b>\$22,856,172</b>	<b>(\$2,872,922)</b>

(a) The cost basis for the Pastoral Center building was reduced by the amount of the State Historical Tax Credit in FY2019.

(b) In FY19, \$1.4 million was collected on SGG pledges and over \$1.7 million was paid out to recipient organizations. The difference of \$300k is due to timing of payments.

(c) Based on the Actuarial reports, the unfunded liability increased in FY2019

## DIOCESE OF DES MOINES Statement of Activities

Year Ended June 30, 2019

Revenues	Actual	Budget	Variance
Annual Diocesan Appeal	\$4,314,659	\$4,314,659	\$0
Endowment Funds	\$1,293,847	\$1,293,847	\$0
Program Service Fees/Reimbursements	\$1,033,494	\$980,958	\$52,536
Contributions	\$445,539	\$306,500	\$139,039
Grants	\$109,058	\$104,000	\$5,058
Investment Income	\$172,969	\$0	\$172,969
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$7,369,567</b>	<b>\$6,999,964</b>	<b>\$369,603</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Pastoral Services	1,069,343	1,233,409	(\$164,066)
Catholic Education	876,400	813,560	62,840
Vocations and Religious Development	1,146,871	1,216,453	(69,582)
Clergy Care	769,683	787,714	(18,031)
Diocesan Administration	1,803,535	1,943,141	(139,606)
Development and Stewardship	167,480	188,167	(20,688)
Building and Grounds	523,097	399,910	123,187
Direct Assistance to Catholic Charities	267,509	267,509	-
Assessments/Contributions	297,218	150,100	147,118
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$6,921,135</b>	<b>\$6,999,964</b>	<b>(\$78,828)</b>
<b>Operations</b>	<b>\$448,431</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$448,431</b>
<b>Non-Operational Funds</b>			
Priest Health and Retirement Liability	(\$2,540,937) (a)		
Sharing God's Gifts	(\$204,502)		
Pastoral Center Building Depreciation Etc.	(\$236,056)		
Other Changes	(\$26,661)		
<b>Total Non-Operational Funds</b>	<b>(\$3,008,155)</b>		
<b>Increase in Net Assets</b>	<b>(\$2,559,724)</b>		

(a) Based on the Actuarial reports, the unfunded liability increased in FY2019



## Programs funded through diocesan operations

### Marriage & Family Life

# Sponsor couples crucial part of formation for engaged

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Offering resources and support for engaged couples and setting them up for a lifelong and happy marriage is extremely important to the Diocese of Des Moines.

One way this is done is through sponsor couples and the marriage preparation they offer, said Adam Storey, diocesan director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life.

“The sponsor couple touches on three vital components: they provide couples with a vision of marriage, skills for marriage and then support leading up to and also within their marriage.”

Preparing couples is an extremely important ministry, Storey added.

“The reason why this is important is because couples approach marriage for all sorts of different reasons, expectations and understandings of marriage. We’re trying to introduce couples to the beauty of a sacramental vision,” Storey said.

Elizabeth and Ben Hecker of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs completed their marriage preparation last year before their wedding on Dec. 7. They enjoyed the experience.

The Heckers already had a good rapport with their sponsor couple, Deacon John and Linda Pfenning. Deacon John lead the RCIA program when Elizabeth was becoming Catholic, and they developed a close bond.

“John is a lot like me and his wife is a lot like Ben, and so it was really nice hearing the things we’re going through are things they faced as well,” Elizabeth said. “It was really helpful. And with Linda being so much like my husband, it really opened my eyes to the things he does. And she was able to explain it in

a way that we could not put into words, as they are so much more mature in their relationships.”

Doug and Mary Kay Moore of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines have been a sponsor couple for eight years.

“It was a way that we could minister together and witness our faith,” Doug said.

The Moores said they wanted to help others along their journey.

“I think a big part of it is that we knew how much we struggled with our marriage,” Doug said. “We were on the verge of divorce until we let Christ into the center of our marriage. So being able to help individuals get to that step in their marriage [is fulfilling]. The fact that we struggled so much was a real motivating factor.”

Doug and Mary Kay help guide couples as they enter into the sacramental bond of marriage.

“You see some couples that haven’t really discussed things that are important to discuss before you get into a marriage,” Doug said. “Because one of the ways we approach it is that we talk about things but we also plant seeds and say, ‘Now go back and talk about this on your own.’”

“They have worksheets that they can go through to help stimulate conversations,” Doug added.

The Moores hold the traditional three sessions with the couple but then invite them back a fourth time for dinner. They also make themselves available to the couple even after their sessions are complete. Sometimes couples do call with questions and wonder if what they are experiencing during their first year of marriage is normal.

“We’ve seen the fruit of the ministry through their weddings and conversations afterwards and through direct feedback on how the things we’ve



Photo by Get Kara'd Away

talked about have been beneficial for them,” Doug added.

They also try to help the couple stay grounded in reality, Mary Kay added.

“So many times couples come in and think everything is going to be perfect,” Mary Kay added. “And we let them know that there are going to be challenges and it’s important to find God. Too many people have this idealistic view of marriage and they are just dumbfounded and don’t know how to handle things. We give them the tools to help them realize marriage isn’t always going to be easy and how to approach those.”

The couple has enjoyed the ministry so much that they have even been involved in teaching God’s Plan for a Joy Filled Marriage, a class required for all engaged couples in the Diocese

of Des Moines.

Though cultural trends in marriage are sometimes discouraging, Storey still has much hope for the sacrament of marriage.

“That’s where marriage preparation becomes a real opportunity to invite the engaged to do something richer,” Storey said. “You have to know the challenge is worth it before you’re going to say ‘yes.’”



**Interested in becoming a sponsor couple?**

**Contact Adam Storey at the**

**Diocese of Des Moines to learn more.**

**Call 515-237-5056**

**or email [astorey@dmdiocese.org](mailto:astorey@dmdiocese.org).**

### Providing a safe environment

# Protecting young people a priority

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

The diocese’s Office of Administrative Services helps ensure a safe environment for children by processing all background checks and Virtus training to ensure all staff, volunteers and seminarians at any of the 117 diocesan locations – including parishes, schools, the Diocese of Des Moines and Catholic Charities – have been cleared for interaction with young people.

The background checks are processed every seven years

for all active volunteers and staff who have regular contact with children, said Shirlee Krouch, diocesan services coordinator.

All of these efforts are in accordance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, a comprehensive set of procedures established by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy.

The charter also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. That document was re-

vised in 2005, 2011 and 2018.

Completing the online Virtus training is required by all staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children. Designed by the National Catholic Risk Retention Group, Inc., the training is designed to empower organizations to better control risk and improve the lives of all those who interact with the Church.

To date, the diocese has processed 21,077 individuals in the safe environment program.

In addition to the initial basic Virtus training required of all those who interact with chil-

dren, priests, seminarians and educators also receive monthly email training bulletins on protecting young people.



Shirlee Krouch

“It gives examples of things going on in the world, how to watch for signs of abuse, how to work with children and enable them to come forward and address issues that are happening,” Krouch said.

Sister Jude Fitzpatrick,

diocesan safe environment coordinator, acknowledges the great credit which the parishes and schools of the diocese deserve for their efforts to implement the charter. Each location is required to complete a quarterly audit of their program so that the diocese has assurance that all are in compliance.

“While there is always room for improvement, we are grateful that the Diocese of Des Moines has been found in compliance when the USCCB audit of our program is done every three years – most recently in October 2019,” Sister Jude said.



# Celebrating Catholic Schools

Programs involving science, technology, engineering and math, also known as STEM, have grown in the Diocese of Des Moines. Here are some examples.

## Holy Family School, Des Moines

STEM activities are incorporated throughout the school year but culminate with a special year-end event called Junk Box Wars. Students are broken up into groups of three to four and are literally given a box of cardboard, milk jugs, egg cartons, and broken electronics. The goal is to create something that would improve our lives or create a solution for the world. The project teaches students how to define the criteria of the project and constraints, evaluate solutions, analyze data and develop a model for testing.

The groups brainstorm, plan, construct their piece and test it before judging time. Principal Martin Flaherty visits the classrooms, where students explain their project and how it could help others.

"He then selects a first, second and third place group for the top Junk Box War winners," said teacher Traci Rogo.

## Holy Trinity School, Des Moines

School activities include not only science, technology, engineering, and math but religion and arts, for a comprehensive STREAM program.

The five-time Governor's Scale-Up STEM Award recipient has a STEM lab with a newly renovated Makerspace used for coding, engineering, design and robotics; a technology-rich environment with one-to-one chromebooks/tablets and blended learning opportunities, extracurricular activities and more.

The teachers "take the time to understand individual student needs and plan learning activities so all can succeed through application, creation, ingenuity and making meaningful learning connections," said Dr. Anne Franklin, the principal. "These meaningful connections help students see real world applications."

## Sacred Heart School, West Des Moines

Programming is a key part of what students are learning at Sacred Heart School. Fifth graders have learned how to code a Sphero robot to navigate mazes on a mat.

Sixth graders used a Scratch coding program to create sounds for instruments. Then they hooked up a Makey Makey to their computer. This interactive circuit kit can be coded to play music and record sounds. Students made instruments

out of cardboard and then used aluminum foil as a conductivity source to play their instruments.

Fourth graders read the book "Balloons Over Broadway," then created a balloon for a parade taking into account size and weight. Underneath each balloon inside a tube was a small robot called an ozobot. The ozobots were coded to run the balloon around the parade route, which was drawn out on paper, along with the codes to make the balloons slow down or speed up.

## Shelby County Catholic School, Harlan

Grants have come from the Iowa STEM Scale-Up program, the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa and the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

Students in pre-kindergarten to second grade are using a computer-based visual math program that helps students develop an understanding of concepts by providing creative problem-solving scenarios.

Fourth through sixth graders are building and programming robots.

All students are learning coding activities.

A grant from Iowa Scale-Up Program has funded a Makerspace, in which teachers can take materials on portable carts to their classrooms so students can hammer, saw, drill, sew, fuse plastics and more to build and create.

## St. Albert Schools, Council Bluffs

One of the 2019 STEM Best programs in the state was St. Albert Catholic Schools. The program supports school-business partnerships that allow teachers and industry professionals to work side-by-side on curriculum and projects that give students real workplace experience and an understanding of the opportunities and required skills for careers in STEM fields.

Teacher Devin Yeoman was named a STEM Best recipient for a proposal for a mobile robotics/coding lab, an hour of code for the entire school and professional development for teachers through the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

## St. Augustin School, Des Moines

Third, fourth and fifth graders

complete a STEM activity on Blue & Gold Day each month.

Students of mixed grade levels work as a team to complete different challenges. Some of the projects completed include cardboard imagination station, paper airplane challenge, the construction of a new Catholic school and most recently a paper beam bridge, said fourth grade teacher Missy Waller.

## St. Luke the Evangelist, Ankeny

Kindergarten students explored the warming effects of the sun while using critical thinking, communication and collaboration to design and build a covering to block the sun, said kindergarten teacher Susan Battani.

Another project involved figuring out how to devise a shorter delivery route for a farmer who made many trips back and forth to his farm, using too much gasoline.

A third project involved having students find a sunny spot to put park benches in a new park. Students learned how the earth rotates around the sun and how that makes it appear that the sun "moves" across the sky.

## St. Malachy School, Creston

Ten eighth grade students have taken advantage of a new optional Computer Science class this year that has them learning HTML and CSS so they can create their own websites. Once students finish their websites, they'll begin coding an app.

"We hope this group can design a St. Malachy website by the end of this school year," said Principal Jennifer Simmons.

## St. Patrick School, Perry

A third grade teacher does some STEM projects in class and works with students in kindergarten through fifth grade in a STEM club.

## St. Pius X School, Urbandale

Level Up Village is a unique program that delivers pioneering global STEAM (STEM plus Arts) enrichment



Above, kindergarten students at St. Luke the Evangelist School in Ankeny are Dominic, Addison and Sara. At right, Sacred Heart School students in West Des Moines, used hooked up a Makey Makey to their computer to play music and record sounds.

courses that promote design thinking and one-to-one collaboration on real-world problems between students at more than 250 schools in the United States and more than 40 global partner organizations in more than 20 countries.

"Turmoil in Zimbabwe, access to reliable internet and general safety for teachers and students allowed opportunities for us to begin to understand some of the difficulties other children face when trying to obtain an education," said teacher Nina Moser.

Fifth graders are building and tinkering with water-filter prototypes, collaborating with partners in Ukraine, Jordan, Zimbabwe and Mexico.

## St. Theresa School, Des Moines

All students preschool-8<sup>th</sup> grade participate in STEM activities. The school has two professional 3D printers, a laser cutter, sewing machines, electronics, robotics, woodburning, a cricut and more.

A STEM Innovation Fund award was used to purchase SeaPerch equipment for students and partner schools, which allowed middle school students to build and program underwater drones.

"As the first school in Iowa to work with SeaPerch, we were excited to develop the first regional SeaPerch competition, which was held at Dowling Catholic in the swimming pool," said principal Ellen Stemler. "One of our teams qualified for the national competition, which was held in Washington, D.C. in June, 2019."



St. Augustin School students Landyn (fourth grade), Stella (third grade), Mylee (fifth grade), Taylor (fifth grade) and Campbell (fourth grade) show off a STEM project.



St. Patrick School (Perry) students Chance Tomlinson, Noah Kezar and Adair Meyers work on a STEM project.



# s: Where Christ is the focus!

## Strategic plan implementation underway

### *Producing abundant fruit at St. Albert*

By Deacon Vernon Dobelmann

No grass has been growing under our feet at St. Albert Catholic Schools. We have been on the move implementing initiatives that will lead us into a dynamic and thriving future. Catholic education is strong in southwest Iowa.

The last six months have seen numerous changes at St. Albert. New leadership at multiple levels has resulted in a dynamic team approach to governance. This has brought unity among the school community. That is no small feat when you are talking about an institution that goes from six weeks of age through grade 12.

Catholic identity has already been enhanced with some simple additions. One of the favorite additions is school-wide prayer offered each morning via the intercom. This unity of the whole school sets the tone for each classroom to then pray in a more intimate fashion in their own room and at the appropriate age level. Specific endeavors such as this help demonstrate the unity of the Body of Christ.

Academic excellence

is essential. The leadership team evaluated existing data to determine next steps in building and enhancing our academic product. Some ideas have already been implemented because of these assessments. One example is an ACT test preparation course for our high school students. Equipping students to do their best in school and in life is the ultimate goal.

The fine arts program has already seen multiple enhancements with four new pianos and a new electronic keyboard. The emphasis on the fine arts program was put on display in December as we produced an all-school Christmas festival. This was much more than a concert featuring both band and choral members. It was a celebration of faith from the child-care center all the way through high school.

STEM programs have received a huge boost in recent months. Successful grant writing and other fundraising endeavors have made this possible. New computers, 3-D printers, and supplies for robotics competitions are just the beginning of what we hope to see down the road.

A large facility such as St. Albert requires a significant amount of maintenance. A facilities manager was hired to oversee this important function. Our external curb appeal and internal environment have both improved because of this addition.

Finally, it takes money to keep the school up and running efficiently and effectively. Thus, an intentional effort has been directed toward establishing a development and advancement office. We hired an advancement person and an alumni relations person to launch a new and vibrant outreach to our alumni and supporters. Staying connected to the people invested in our school and community is vital. We are now poised to do that much more effectively.

No grass is growing under our feet, but we are producing an abundance of good fruit at St. Albert Catholic Schools.

*Deacon Vernon Dobelmann is the executive director of St. Albert Catholic Schools.*

### Des Moines regional schools complete parent meetings, assessing best practices

By Dr. Jerry Deegan

Progress is being made on the Catholic schools strategic plan.

During October and November, we hosted a parent meeting at every school in the metro area to talk about the regional strategic plan. The presentation gave a picture of the current state of the schools, revealed by the data and information collection during the strategic planning process, and then a list of recommendations and solutions recommended by the plan.

For those parents who were not able to attend one of the twelve meetings, you can view the presentation at [dmdiocese.org/SchoolsParentMtg](http://dmdiocese.org/SchoolsParentMtg). A consolidated list of questions and answers from the presentations is on the diocesan web site under Schools Strategic Plan.

Superintendent Donna Bishop, Dowling Catholic High School President Dr. Dan Ryan and I met with Bishop William Joensen and the pastors of the Des Moines region in November, December and January. Meeting monthly has been a huge help for sharing progress and getting their feedback. We look forward to more meetings going forward.

The eight subcommittees – formation, governance, academics, finance, enrollment management/marketing, advancement, and diverse community engagement – are in various stages of making final recommendations to Bishop Joensen. We want to ensure that he has time to process the recommendations and get his and the pastors' feedback as we work to finalize key recommendations of a multi-year plan.

Our school principals and staff are working together to determine best practices in assessment, textbooks and resources, curriculum, and professional development. This work will develop practices that will be shared by all staff across the schools.

The Faith Formation subcommittee is working on recommendations to enhance engagement of students and families in their faith journey in our

schools and in our parishes. Enhancing the partnership among parents, schools, parishes and pastors in forming our children is key to their faith foundation and ongoing, developing faith life.

A new hire in the diocesan schools office is focusing on enrollment management and marketing and is working with individual schools to develop best practices and a consistent message across the metro area Catholic schools and all schools across the diocese.

We are meeting monthly with business managers from all 12 schools and have made great progress on getting a consistent vocabulary of terms used in the budgeting and reporting process, a timeline for budgeting with common dates and processes for recommending a budget, and a study of purchasing of material and services to find areas where purchasing as a group would save money.

Staff of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa, with the help of school principals and professional staff, are recruiting volunteers from all schools to support and inform fund raising processes at each school and create stronger development and advancement processes. The goal is to coordinate, inform and enhance the messaging and fund raising taking place presently at our schools.

Work is being done to secure enhanced financial support of tuition assistance. This is a complicated process and we want to make sure the plan has a firm foundation to build on.

We want to thank all those who attended the parent meetings and gratefully acknowledge the continued support and input from Bishop Joensen, our pastors, principals, faculty and staff and parents in our effort to build on our successes to reach our goal of providing the highest quality Catholic education for our children.

*Dr. Jerry Deegan the Schools Strategic Plan Implementation Coordinator.*

## Come visit us: Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 26-Feb. 1

Catholic schools celebrate their accomplishments, educators, families and supporters who help make it possible for parents to choose a faith-based education. Some schools have activities planned for Catholic Schools Week. All of the schools welcome families who want to visit and consider a Catholic education for their children.

CHRIST THE KING, Des Moines

Jan. 26 -- Pancake breakfast and registration information sessions following all Masses

HOLY FAMILY, Des Moines,

Jan. 31 -- Open house 6:30-8 p.m.

HOLY TRINITY, Des Moines,

Jan. 26 Open house 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., kindergarten & preschool/preK 11:15 a.m.

SACRED HEART, West Des Moines

Call the school for tours and enrollment information.

ST. ALBERT, Council Bluffs

Jan. 26 -- Open house, 1-3 p.m. Parent/grandparent luncheon during the week, meeting about Exact Path program and beginning enrollment process.

ST. ANTHONY, Des Moines

Call the school for a tour and enrollment information.

ST. AUGUSTIN, Des Moines,

Jan. 26 -- Open house noon-1:30 p.m., Jan. 7 kindergarten night 5:30 p.m.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, West Des Moines

Jan. 31 -- Open house (no pre-registration required)

ST. JOSEPH, Des Moines

Teachers speaking at weekend Masses during Catholic Schools Week, hosting a table at coffee and donuts on Sunday mornings in the parish center

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST, Ankeny

Jan. 26 -- Student-led Mass at 10:30 a.m. Call for a tour & enrollment information.

ST. MALACHY, Creston

Feb. 11 -- Open house/info night for pre-k and kindergarten 6-7 p.m.

ST. PATRICK, Perry

Jan. 25 -- After 4:30 p.m. Mass, chili and St. Pat's cinnamon roll supper provided along with tours of the building, parish wide chili and pazole dinner after Mass,

ST. PIUS X, Urbandale

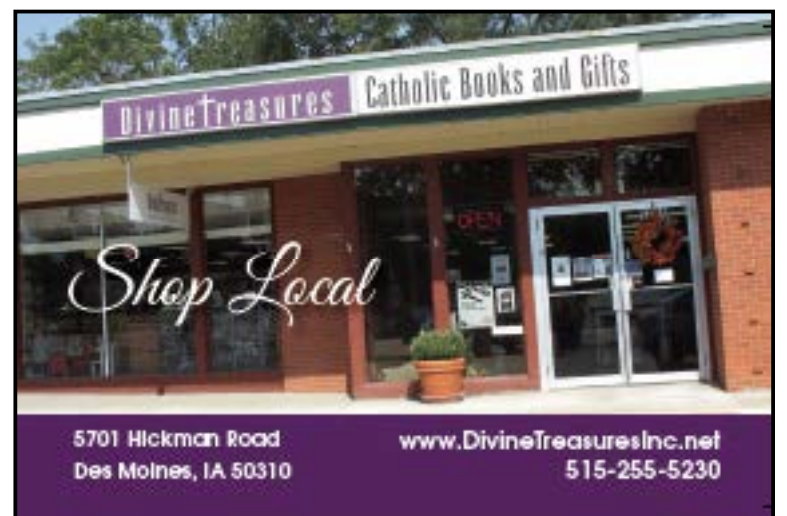
Jan. 26 -- Open house 10 a.m. – noon, 9 a.m. student-led Mass

ST. THERESA, Des Moines

Jan. 26 -- Open house, 9 a.m. to noon

SHELBY COUNTY CATHOLIC SCHOOL, Harlan

Jan. 26 -- Breakfast and open house 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.







CNS photo/courtesy of Father Michael Schueller

Father Michael G. Schueller's viral photo of a cattle cross set up by the Gotto family is seen Dec. 23, 2019, on their farm in Bankston, Iowa. Father Schueller, pastor of St. Elizabeth Pastorate, which includes St. Clement Parish, pilots drones in his spare time and enjoys taking aerial photographs.

## Iowa photographer surprised by appeal of viral cattle cross image

By Dan Russo  
Catholic News Service

BANKSTON, Iowa (CNS) -- It wasn't a miracle, but the scene that unfolded on Dan and Judy Gotto's farm in Bankston shortly before Christmas became a beautiful testament to faith.

On Dec. 23, 2019, members of the family had carefully laid out many small piles of cattle feed in the shape of a giant cross on one of their fields, attracting 171 hungry cows into planned position. In the distance, the steeple of St. Clement Church in Bankston reached upward toward a clear sky.

At the right moment, Father Michael Schueller sprang into action. The pastor of the St. Elizabeth Pastorate, which includes St. Clement Parish, pilots drones in his spare time and enjoys taking aerial photographs.

The priest flew his camera equipped remote-controlled device high above the herd, capturing both still shots and video and posted the image of the Angus beef livestock appearing in the shape of the sacred symbol on his Facebook page.

Almost immediately, the image went viral. There were dozens of comments, hundreds of shares, and the image was featured with an article in the Telegraph Herald, the area's biggest daily newspaper, which ran the story with the headline: "Holy cow: Bankston cattle photo going viral ahead of Christmas."

Thousands have seen the photograph and its impact continues weeks after the priest took the shot.

"I am humbled by the response from the photo," Father Schueller told The Witness, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Dubuque. "I have received many messages from people far and wide, and it has been shared many times -- such a simple image that has connected with so many people."

The inspiration for the photo came from the Gottos' desire to integrate their Catholic faith into their farming. Judy and Dan work land that has been in the family since 1889. Many other relatives also are in the agriculture business, including their son Chad Gotto, who is also a full-time farmer. Most of the cows in the photo are his. This successful effort to capture a cross wasn't the first time they had tried.

He said it is something he and his dad have done the last few years to celebrate the Christmas season, and they just couldn't get a good enough photo.

Father Schueller is a friend and pastor of the family's parish, so the Gottos decided to

ask for his help this time. Chad Gotto said it was easy to get the cows in the right place. Also, their goal in staging the photograph wasn't to achieve fame.

"I didn't even know he posted it," said Gotto. "We just wanted a picture for the family."

The image encapsulates a way of life that has been important to the Gottos for generations.

"Our family lives by the three 'Fs' -- faith, family and farming," Gotto explained.

Father Schueller couldn't have predicted the response to the photo when he started flying drones as a hobby about five years ago.

"It was just something different," he recalled of his first experiences with piloting. "At the time, drones were a newer technology. I started taking pictures in the area, primarily of churches."

After crashing the devices quite a few times, especially in the early days, he has since improved his skills and developed a nice portfolio.

The hobby has helped him get to know the rural communities he serves. Farmers will sometimes ask him to photograph them at work, so they have images to share with friends and loved ones.

The priest offered encouragement to anyone who might want to take up the hobby. "I think a lot of people are afraid to fly drones because they are afraid to crash," he said, suggesting that people should take the risk and start with something inexpensive.

In the wake of the popularity of the cattle cross photo, Father Schueller has made it his Facebook profile photo and has posted one of the videos showing how the Gottos got the cows lined up. Commenters on the cattle cross image express a wide range of feelings -- everything from reverence to humor.

Father Schueller believes the photo went viral for two reasons.

"I think it is the faith aspect," he said. "There is a yearning when you see a symbol like that. I also think people like cows."

Chad Gotto is getting ready to welcome some new calves into his herd. The message he wants to share with those who like the photo is that people can make faith part of their daily lives, even if they are engaged in something as simple as feeding cows.

"I just wanted to tell everyone to involve Christ in everything you do," he said.

Dan Russo is editor of The Witness, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

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'No end in sight to the horror'

# Australian bishops respond to fires

CANBERRA, Australia (CNS) -- Saying that "there is no end in sight to the horror which confronts us," Archbishop Mark Coleridge, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, said the bishops have implemented a national response to months of wildfires.

The bishops have set up a national network, connecting people affected by the fires with "people who can help with tasks such as preparing meals, clearing properties, rebuilding communities, as well as pastoral and counseling support." They are collaborating with other religious agencies and their institutes and will take up a special collection the last weekend in January, when Australia Day is celebrated.

Archbishop Coleridge said people who do not want to wait to donate to their parish collections can donate to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, known in Australia as Vinnies.

The bishops' conference also set up a special page, [www.catholic.org.au/bushfires](http://www.catholic.org.au/bushfires), with a button for donation to the Vinnies, as well as resources such as prayers of intercession, prayers for those affected, and statements on the fire from other organizations.

"We have all seen the apocalyptic images, even if we are not in the areas most affected," the archbishop said. "Lives have been lost, homes and towns have been destroyed, smoke has shrouded large swathes of our country."

"The efforts of firefighters have been heroic. The resilience of the communities affected has been extraordinary."

Meanwhile, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, offered words of solidarity to Archbishop Coleridge.

"Please know we are praying for you and your people

in these difficult days," Archbishop Gomez said in a brief letter dated Jan. 8.

"We pray in solidarity with you for those who have lost their lives and livelihoods and we pray for those whose homes and lives are still threatened," Archbishop Gomez wrote. "We pray for the heroic firefighters and first responders and for all those working to provide relief and comfort to victims."

At least 24 people have died in the fires, which began in August and now are in four states. CNN reported Jan. 7 that more than 2,000 homes in the state of New South Wales alone have been destroyed.

Archbishop Coleridge said the bishops were aware of "the huge amount being done" by governments and first responders and noted that local faith communities also were responding.

"This has been Australia at its best, and we all stand with those who have been most stricken and with those who are putting their lives on the line to fight the fires," he said.

He also renewed his call for "insistent prayer for those stricken by drought and fire, for those who have lost their lives in the fires and their families, for rain to quench the parched land and extinguish the fires, and for urgent action to care for our common home in order to prevent such calamities in the future."

"A genuinely Catholic response to a crisis of this magnitude must draw strength from prayer, which inspires concrete and compassionate action."

At the Vatican Jan. 8, during his general audience, Pope Francis also remembered those affected by the fires: "I would like to ask everyone to pray to the Lord to help the people in this difficult time, with that blaze that is burning so strong. I am close to the people of Australia."



CNS photo/Tracey Nearmy, Reuters

Above: Flames from a bush fire are seen along the Princes Highway near Milton, Australia on Jan. 5. Soaring temperatures, often higher than 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and a protracted drought have contributed to an unprecedented national emergency which, by Christmas, had already seen more than 14.5 million acres of forest and rural land burned.



CNS photo/Dean Lewins, AAP via Reuters

At right: Firefighters contain a bushfire along a highway near Ulladulla, Australia on Jan. 5.

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# Pope sets special day to honor, study, share the Bible

By Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The newly established "Sunday of the Word of God" is an invitation to Catholics across the world to deepen their appreciation, love and faithful witness to God and his word, Pope Francis said.

By papal decree, the third Sunday in Ordinary Time -- Jan. 26 this year -- is to be observed as a special day devoted to "the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God."

A day dedicated to the Bible will help the church "experience anew how the risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world," the pope said in the document establishing the special Sunday observance.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, said added emphasis on the importance of the word of God is needed because "the overwhelming majority" of Catholics are not familiar with sacred Scripture. For many, the only time they hear the word of God is when they attend Mass, he told Vatican News Sept. 30, when the papal document, titled "Aperuit Illis," was published.

"The Bible is the most widely distributed book, but it's also perhaps the one most cov-

ered in dust because it is not held in our hands," the archbishop said.

With this apostolic letter, the pope "invites us to hold the word of God in our hands every day as much as possible so that it becomes our prayer" and a greater part of one's lived experience, he said.

In his letter, Pope Francis wrote, "A day devoted to the Bible should not be seen as a yearly event but rather a yearlong event, for we urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the community of believers."

"We need to develop a closer relationship with sacred Scripture; otherwise, our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut, struck as we are by so many forms of blindness," he wrote.

Sacred Scripture and the sacraments are inseparable, he wrote. Jesus speaks to everyone with his word in sacred Scripture, he said, and if people "hear his voice and open the doors of our minds and hearts, then he will enter our lives and remain ever with us."

Pope Francis urged priests to be extra attentive to creating a homily each Sunday that "speaks from the heart" and really helps people understand Scripture "through simple and suitable" language.

The homily "is a pas-



CNS photo/Paul Haring

**Pope Francis greets the crowd as he leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Jan. 1.**

toral opportunity that should not be wasted," he wrote. "For many of our faithful, in fact, this is the only opportunity they have to grasp the beauty of God's word and to see it applied to their daily lives."

Pope Francis encouraged people to read the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, "Dei Verbum," and Pope Bene-

dict XVI's apostolic exhortation on the Bible, "Verbum Domini," whose teaching remains "fundamental for our communities."

"The Bible cannot be just the heritage of some, much less a collection of books for the benefit of a privileged few. It belongs above all to those called to hear its message and to recognize themselves in its words," the pope wrote.

The celebration of the Sunday of the Word of God also "has ecumenical value, since the Scriptures point out, for those who listen, the path to authentic and firm unity," he wrote. The third Sunday in Ordinary Time falls during that part of the year when the church is encouraged to strengthen its bonds with the Jewish people and to pray for Christian unity.



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## Puerto Rico residents fear what comes next

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Hurricane Maria was a body blow to Puerto Rico in 2017, one from which it has yet to fully recover.

Then came the series of 5-magnitude-and-higher earthquakes that began Dec. 29 -- topped off by three such temblors in a 30-minute span Jan. 7 and followed by a magnitude 5.9 quake Jan. 11 -- that has resulted in only two confirmed deaths, but untold losses in property damage. And there are many aftershocks.

Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez Nieves of San Juan lives on the northern part of the island, which was spared most of the worst effects of the quakes. But on a Jan. 10 visit to the island's southern region in the Diocese of Ponce -- what he could see of it -- the damage was much worse.

"I got around by car," Archbishop Gonzalez said. "But I wasn't able to go everywhere I wanted to because a bridge here or there collapsed."

Driving around Ponce, the archbishop told Catholic News Service in a Jan. 10 telephone interview from near San Juan, "I saw a number of people in Ponce now with their suitcases and looking for a place to find shelter."

"I can see lots of damage," he said.

Archbishop Gonzalez added, "I

didn't see many buildings that had collapsed, but you see buildings with pieces of cement, pieces of the roof that have fallen off. It will take a while for structural engineers to make an assessment. The cathedral has been quite damaged. I say it might take a year or two to fix the cathedral."

People are sleeping in tents and spending most of their waking hours outside, he noted, fearing an aftershock might cause more of their homes to crumble.

Complicating people's quest to find shelter is the weather. It has been raining on the island. Archbishop Gonzalez, during the interview, said it was raining heavily, and that the quake also has affected telephone and internet service on Puerto Rico.

Another fear is people not knowing where their next meal is coming from.

"There are many people without food," Archbishop Gonzalez told CNS. He mentioned one district where "there are at least 400 people homeless. Caritas has been doing their best to provide them with food. Yesterday (Jan. 9) we purchased \$150,000 for our Catholic Charities for that group of 400 or so."

Archbishop Gonzalez noted: "One can prepare for a hurricane but you cannot prepare for an earthquake. It just happens."



News & Events for Faithful Listeners

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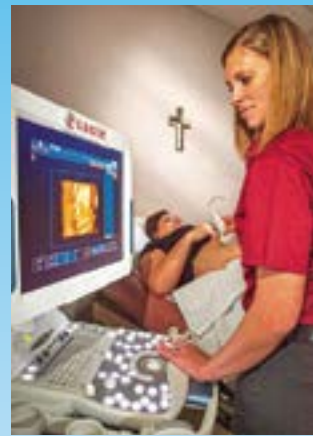


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# Culture of Life



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**A**mong the vulnerable for whom the church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us. Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this... Precisely because this involves the internal consistency of our message about the value of the human person, the Church cannot be expected to change her position on this question... It is not 'progressive' to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life...

Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis

In union with the Magisterial teachings of the Church and the Holy Father, the Knights of Columbus stands strong in its conviction that every human life is a gift of God, endowed with certain inalienable rights — the first among these being the right to life. Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, we believe that human life is sacred and inviolable, and ought to be defended with maximum determination. To this end, the Knights of Columbus supports policies that promote a Culture of Life and opposes legislative efforts that promote abortion, contraception, sterilization, cloning, the destruction of embryos, assisted suicide, and euthanasia.

One of the most effective ways in which the Knights of Columbus has promoted a Culture of Life and helped thousands of women save their children is through the Ultrasound Initiative. As of October 2019, the initiative has funded and placed 1134 ultrasound machines — valued at more than \$54 million — in all 50 states, Mexico, Canada, and countries in South America and Africa. Thousands of babies have been saved, and the lives of countless mothers, fathers, and families have been enhanced thanks to the work of the Knights.

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