

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## As virus cases soar, diocese takes protective measures

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Following a spike in COVID-19-related infection, hospitalization and mortality,

Bishop William Joensen's requiring face masks or coverings at all public events in diocesan church buildings until Feb. 2, when it will be reviewed.

"I have taken this critical step so we may responsibly

continue to gather around the Eucharistic altar – the source and summit of our faith – and worship together," he wrote in a Nov. 11 letter to the faithful.

In addition, diocesan and parish-sponsored social

events will be suspended in all 80 parishes beginning Nov. 23 through Jan. 10 out of a concern for the physical health of the faithful, and their spiritual health, by hopefully preserving the faithful's ability to worship

together.

Parish activities such as faith formation and public worship will continue under current guidelines of physical distance-

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## Thanksgiving inspires gratitude, reflection and giving back

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Even in the midst of a global pandemic, there are reasons to give thanks, said Maureen Kenney, director of Stewardship for the Diocese of Des Moines.

We can take a cue from St. Paul, Kenney said, whose letters often begin and end in Thanksgiving.

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you...Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving," he wrote.

Traditionally, the holidays are a time when many people give back to their church community or those in need. This has been a tough year though, Kenney concedes, noting that not everyone is in a position to give back financially due to pandemic-induced furloughs, job loss or hardships created by local, natural disasters.

"Are there other ways God is calling you to use the gifts and talents he has asked you to cultivate and grow?" Kenney added.

Volunteering your time and talents to help those in need is just one way we can be of service.

The Catholic Charities Food Pantry is always looking for volunteers, said Leslie Van Der Molen, poverty reduction program manager.

"It's a good way to be able to give back and see all the need in our community," she said.

"When COVID first hit we lost 60 percent of our volunteers," Van Der Molen continued. "We changed how we serve people to make sure everyone is safe. We were really able to adapt, but we still have volunteer needs."

Some volunteers perform duties that have minimal contact with others, such as building food packs, while others safely interact with the public. The Catholic Charities Food Pantry works hard on sanitation and social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure safety for every-

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## Creative ways to be together over the holidays



Last year's Christmas gathering for the extended Fangman family (pictured above) looked very different from how it will look this year. Sue McEntee of Assumption Parish in Granger (center, kneeling) has fun virtual activities planned for her family Christmas celebration next month.

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Carol Mensink and 17 family members will be gathering around the table for next Thursday's Thanksgiving holiday. Only this year, they'll be gathering virtually.

"We're just going to have a big Zoom with all of the extended family..." said Mesink, a mental health therapist at the Catholic Charities Counseling Center in Des Moines. "We're going to have our laptops, dinner is planned at the same time and we're all going to have our own turkey and carve our own turkey. We'll say the prayers of

thanksgiving – what we're thankful for. And then we dig in."

It's not your typical Thanksgiving gathering, Mensink admits. But at least they can still be together.

"It's going to be weird," Mensink said. "We know we're going to

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## New initiative heals post-election wounds

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

In the months leading up to the presidential election, there were people who took breaks from social media and avoided talking politics with family and friends because of the strain it puts on relationships.

To address the divisions, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops launched

Civilize It: Dignity Beyond the Debate, an initiative to promote civility, clarity and compassion.

Now, post-election, the Diocese of Des Moines has launched Civilize It Iowa, to promote healing and unity.

"We saw a lot of division [before the election]," said diocesan Vice Chancellor Adam Storey. "But that division obviously still exists."

Hurtful words exchanged leading up to the elec-

tion have not been magically forgotten.

"Those wounds haven't gone away," he said. "They might become less visible after the election, but they are still there."

The solution? Love and compassion.

"Jesus tells us that our call is to love on another and that if I want to see charity in the world, that charity has to dwell in my own heart first," Storey said.



Take a photo of this QR code with your cell phone to connect with the Civilize It Iowa website.

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# Night Saving Time



By  
Bishop  
William  
Joensen

My brother David suffered a freak accident several weeks ago when he was opening a plastic drink container and the cap shot into his right eye, driving the natural lens back to the retina and leaving the eyeball filled with blood. The trauma left him grappling with the prospect of being permanently blind in one eye—his depth perception compromised, his field of vision reduced. His family and circle of people in his life ramped up the prayers. And though he was attended by great MercyOne and Wolfe Clinic medical staffs and surrounded by a lot of love, there was an inevitable sense of isolation and wrestling with uncertainty and discomfort by himself that no one else could alleviate.

As we draw close to Thanksgiving and the season of Advent that quickly follows, I wonder if Dave's experience captures what we all face as we trudge onward through the pandemic. Infection rates are rising, the admonitions not to gather for traditional holiday meals and customary socializing are growing more strident. The waning daylight makes us all vulnerable to a seasonal affective disorder of the soul that leaves us feeling sad, angry, and disoriented as we try to negotiate our way through half-light, half-darkness. Our percep-

tion of what lies ahead is shrouded by our present life disruptions and the specter that things are going to get much worse this winter before they get better.

We might feel both actual and anticipatory grief, intensified by our November remembrance of the souls who have gone before us in faith, whose absence from the dinner table is compounded by the prospective inability to even gather with family members and friends whose fond stories of lost loved ones might spark laughter and supply balm for the soul. And, of course, we dare not broach the topic of the recent election, lest we squander any enduring sense of connection and goodwill that helps us hang together despite it all. Sigh. . .

I'm not trying to plunge into the pool of melancholy or draw you with me below the surface, but to simply name what is and what is not. Light and darkness, sight and blindness mingle these days in degrees we best engage with a healthy dose of good

sense and robust faith. Wellness experts will dispense the usual advice about preventive measures that will sustain mental health (e.g., plenty of sleep, temperance in food and drink, moderate exercise, intentional outreach to folks who would delight in hearing from us, fasting from media or conversations that rile us up and rob us of our peace). Yet our faith offers resources beyond what modern medicine or self-help guides supply. Our prayer, with varied courses of thanksgiving, petition, and praise—some from the treasury of Scripture and Catholic tradition—is so vital if we are to keep hope alive, to be able to yield to sleep and awaken and step into the next day.

The first century St. Pope Clement of Rome draws from Psalm 19 in reminding us that we are always in God's presence, and that he is always poised to communicate his life and grace to us: "Day unto day pours forth speech; night unto night whispers knowledge. There is no speech, no words; their voice is not heard." Yet still, "A report goes through all the earth, their messages to the end of the earth." God's Spirit wants to whisper to us, but only if we take a risk and open our hearts to the darkness that would befriend us. Only a holy boldness that responds

to God's tug on our hearts will nudge us to be "alone with the Alone," to allow God to share our discomfort, and to communicate what only the Creator of both night and day knows—above all those unspoken words, "I am with you."

As the prophet Daniel acclaims in an alternating play of praise, "Nights and days, bless the Lord. Light and darkness, bless the Lord." We need not be anywhere other than where we are for God to find us, so that we might discover the elusive peace that only Jesus can bestow. While we have a natural preference for light, and recoil from anything that would snatch sight from us, our lives inevitably present us with darkness we did not choose. We can run from it and hide, or we can choose to let the Author of both night and day enlist the night to save us from ourselves, from our surrender to despair.

As we approach an Advent unlike any other, we cannot do an end run around darkness and hope to have our joy and peace replenished. Unlike the artificial night of sin and solitary confinement, a night "where no man can work," (John 9:4), God himself is at work, offering this graceful season as his personal gift to us. He promises to reveal his gentleness, his capacity for

Love to "presence" itself in the acute absences that beset us. We must pass into a night that is not oppressive, a night not made by human hands, a night that—dare I say it—is 'pregnant' with life in communion that no virus can take from us.

Thanks to a skillful surgeon and, by his own account, the power of prayers, my brother Dave can now see colors and shapes in his damaged eye, though he awaits the insertion of an artificial lens. His traumatic experience was a night of faith in which God's goodness and care for him was confirmed, and we are all profoundly grateful. Yet even if he had lost his sight, as grievously tough as that might have been, God's promise and presence would have not have been diminished, for night and day both belong to God. Advent came early, though it still awaits all of us. The poet Robert Conquest sets the table for what lies ahead:

Soft sounds and odours brim up  
through the night  
A wealth below the  
level of the eye.  
Out of the black,  
an almost violet sky  
Abundance flowers into  
points of light.

## Horario de Invierno

Mi hermano David sufrió un extraño accidente hace varias semanas cuando al estar abriendo una bebida en envase de plástico la tapadera le saltó a su ojo derecho, empujando su lente natural hacia la retina y dejando su ojo lleno de sangre. El trauma le hizo enfrentar la posibilidad de quedar ciego de un ojo permanentemente – afectando su percepción de profundidad y reduciendo su campo visual. Su familia y el círculo de personas en

su vida se lanzaron a la oración. Y aunque le atendieron los excelentes equipos médicos de MercyOne y de Wolfe Clinic y estuvo rodeado de mucho amor, existía el inevitable sentido de aislamiento y el enfrentarse a la incertidumbre e incomodidad por sí mismo, algo que nadie puede aliviar.

Al acercarnos al Día de Acción de Gracias y a la temporada de Adviento que le sigue inmediatamente, me pregunto si la experiencia de Dave capta lo que enfrentamos todos en nuestra marcha por esta pandemia. Las proporciones en infecciones están aumentando, siguen creciendo más estridentemente las recomendaciones de no reunirnos para las tradicionales comidas y reuniones sociales en las fiestas. La decreciente luz del día nos hace vulnerables a un desorden afectivo temporal en el alma que nos hace sentir tristes, enojados y desorientados al tratar de navegar a través de luz y oscuridad parciales. Nuestra percepción de los que nos espera el día de mañana se nubla por las interrupciones de nuestra vida presente y el espectro de que las cosas van a empeorar este invierno antes de ver cualquier mejora.

Podemos sentir el dolor tanto presente como anticipado, intensificándose por nuestro recuerdo en noviembre de las almas que han partido en fe antes que nosotros, y cuya ausencia en la mesa se hace más pesada con la perspectiva de no poder siquiera reunirnos con miem-

bros de nuestra familia y amigos cuyas tiernas historias de los seres queridos que hemos perdido nos provocan risas y que son un ungüento para el alma. Y, por supuesto, no podemos atrevernos a tocar el tema de las recientes elecciones, a menos que queramos agotar el mínimo sentido de conexión y buena voluntad que nos ayuda a estar unidos a pesar de todo. En fin. . .

No estoy tratando de saltar en la piscina de la melancolía o hundirles conmigo bajo la superficie, pero simplemente nombrar lo que es y lo que no es. Luz y oscuridad, vista y ceguera se mezclan en estos días a un grado que es mejor enfrentarlos con una saludable dosis de buen humor y de fe robusta. Los expertos en bienestar nos llenan de sus usuales consejos sobre medidas preventivas que nos ayuden a conservar nuestra salud mental (por ejemplo, dormir lo suficiente, temperamento en el consumo de alimentos y bebidas, ejercicio moderado, un esfuerzo intencional de conectarse con aquellos a quienes les daría gusto saber de nosotros, liberarnos de la prensa o de conversaciones que nos alteran o que nos roban la paz.) Nuestra fe nos sigue ofreciendo recursos más allá de lo que pueden ofrecernos la medicina moderna o sistemas de auto ayuda. Nuestra oración, con sus variaciones de acción de gracias, petición y alabanza – alguna forma de tesoro que consta de Escritura y tradición católica – es tan

vital si queremos mantener la esperanza viva, para ceder al sueño dispuestos a despertar y comenzar un nuevo día.

En el primer siglo el papa Clemente de Roma se refiere al salmo 19 al recordarnos que estamos siempre en la presencia de Dios y que él está siempre dispuesto a comunicar su vida y gracia con nosotros: "Día a día nos llena de diálogo; noche a noche susurra conocimiento. No hay discurso, no hay palabras, no se escucha su voz." Aún así, "Se hace un reporte a toda la tierra, su mensaje llega hasta los confines de la tierra." El Espíritu de Dios quiere hablarnos en susurro, pero solo si tomamos el riesgo de abrir nuestros corazones a la oscuridad que pudiera envolvernos. Solamente una seguridad santa que responde al jalón que Dios da a nuestros corazones, nos llevará a estar "solos con el Solo" para poder compartir con Dios nuestras adversidades y comunicar lo que solamente el creador del día y de la noche sabe – por encima de todas esas palabras sin pronunciar, "estoy contigo."

Tal como lo aclama el profeta Daniel en su alternante canto de alabanza, "Noches y días, bendigan al Señor. Luz y oscuridad, bendigan al Señor." No debemos estar en otro lugar más que en donde estamos para que Dios pueda encontrarnos, para que podamos descubrir la paz elusiva que solamente puede concedernos. Ciertamente tenemos una preferencia natural por la luz, y nos alejamos de cualquier cosa que pueda bloquear nuestra vista, nuestras vidas nos presentan inevitablemente con oscuridades que no elegimos. Podemos huir de estas y escondernos, o podemos optar por permitir al Autor del día y de la noche alistar la noche para salvarnos de nosotros mismos, de que nos rindamos a la desesperación.

Al acercarnos a un Adviento como nunca a existido, no podemos esforzarnos en la oscuridad y esperar que se llenen nuevamente nuestra paz y nuestro gozo. A diferencia de la noche artificial del pecado y el confinamiento solitario, una noche, "cuando nadie puede trabajar," (Juan 9:4), Dios mismo está trabajando, ofreciéndonos esta temporada de gracia como su regalo personal para nosotros. Él promete revelarnos su gentileza, su capacidad de Amor para "estar presente" sí mismo en las agudas ausencias que nos afectan. Debemos entonces pasar hacia una noche que no oprime, una noche que no está hecha por manos humanas, una noche que – me atrevo a decir – está 'embarazada' con vida en comunión que ningún virus nos puede arrebatarnos.

Gracias a un habilidoso cirujano y, según sus propias palabras, el poder de las oraciones, mi hermano Dave ya puede ver colores y formas con su ojo, y que espera que le coloquen un lente artificial. Su traumática experiencia fue una noche de fe en la que la que se confirmó bondad y el cuidado de Dios por él, y por lo que todos estamos agradecidos. Aún si él hubiera perdido la vista, con lo doloroso que eso hubiera sido, no se hubieran disminuido la promesa y presencia de Dios, porque el día y la noche le pertenecen a Dios. El Adviento llegó temprano, aunque aun nos está esperando a todos. El poeta Robert Conquest pone la mesa de lo que nos depara:

Sonidos y olores  
suaves llenan toda la noche  
Una riqueza debajo  
del nivel del ojo.  
Fuera de lo negro,  
un cielo casi violeta  
Abundantes flores  
en puntas de luz.

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### Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas

El Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas es un empleado de Polk County Victim Services. Ella ayuda a víctimas de abuso sexual por parte del clero durante el proceso de la queja y buscando servicios de apoyo y consejería. Pueden comunicarse al 515-286-2028 o en [advocate@dmdiocese.org](mailto:advocate@dmdiocese.org).



## Registration for Catholic Youth Camp now open

Registration for Catholic Youth Camp for the summer of 2021 opened at noon on Nov. 15.

Campers driving to the St. Thomas More Center in Panora next June, July and August will find new cabins, a renovated Dingman Lodge and double the number of paid summer staff hired to ensure safety procedures are followed so everyone can have a safe experience.

COVID-19 prompted the closing of CYC last summer as a precautionary step toward protecting families from the spread of the virus.

Administrators took advantage that free time to make major changes. Without youth at the camp, construction moved forward on new cabins and sidewalks. Dingman Lodge, which houses a kitchen and space for group activities, is undergoing renovation now.

In addition, over the last few months leaders have learned from health experts and talking with other youth camps about how to host groups safely in the age of the coronavirus.

"Over the last six months, we've gained valuable information about COVID-19 safety," said Alex Kautzky, executive director of the center. "This includes field-tested best practices from countless childcare centers, schools and businesses that have reopened and used various strategies to create a safe and health community."

CYC serves about 1,500 youth over the summer who come for a week-long adventure of building friendships, creating fun memories and growing in their Catholic faith.

For information on how to register, go to [stmcenter.com](http://stmcenter.com).

## Healing post-election wounds

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Becoming more like Jesus and increasing in holiness will help us better see our neighbors as sons and daughters of God – instead of political party affiliation.

"Even in the end if we disagree, the relationship is important," said John Gaffney, diocesan director of Evangelization and Catechesis. "That ongoing commitment to the dignity of the person right in front of us is [vital]."

Civilize It Iowa invites people to make a personal commitment to pray, fast and give alms in small ways for the sake of charity in our hearts and for our nation.

To learn more about Civilize It Iowa and sign up for monthly emails highlighting resources that help foster unity, go to [CivilizeItIowa.com](http://CivilizeItIowa.com) or in Spanish at [CivilizaloIowa.com](http://CivilizaloIowa.com)

# Mission accomplished

In sorrow or joy, deacon challenged others to find God in their experiences

By Gregg Lagan  
Contributing Writer

The clock would strike 8:30 a.m. at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center, and the sound of bells was heard throughout the halls.

Then came the familiar, booming greeting: "Good morning, MercyOne!" as Deacon Dave O'Brien captured attention and shared a morning message and prayer.

For 14 years, he led pastoral care, reminding staff, visitors and patients that the healing ministry of Jesus is alive and present for them.

During the first week of November, Deacon O'Brien started a new chapter in his life as he retired.

He wasn't looking for a job when his ministry went in a new direction. With a 32-year career in public and Catholic education and coaching, in 2006 he was teaching at Dowling Catholic High School and serving at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines. Also a member of St. Francis, MercyOne Central Iowa Chief Mission Officer Laura Wenman experienced firsthand Deacon O'Brien's strong faith and energy. She approached him about the need for a director of pastoral care at MercyOne.

With no clinical background nor idea of what to expect, Deacon O'Brien approached retired Bishop Joseph Charron, who led the diocese at the time, for counsel.

"Approaching Catholic health care is a mission not a cause," Bishop Charron advised.

While serving in health care, Deacon O'Brien quickly experienced joy and the pain of



Photo by Gregg Lagan

Deacon Dave O'Brien distributes communion to a patient at MercyOne Des Moines.

loss. During his first week, he was called to the pediatric unit, where a 15-month-old child had died. When he arrived, Deacon O'Brien saw the nurse gently placing the child in the mother's arms, much like the Blessed Virgin held Jesus. The family had asked for Deacon O'Brien specifically, as they knew he worked at the hospital.

"This was very challenging and I wasn't sure I could do this," he said.

Shortly afterward, he officiated at a family wedding in Buffalo, New York. During the reception, a woman approached him and gave Deacon O'Brien an image of Jesus watching over a surgeon. The woman said she had been told she should give it

to someone one day, and it was for him. Those at the wedding did not know her.

Reflecting back, he said he believes these events were ways God was answering his questions.

He served patients, their families and the staff.

"Serving in health care is very rewarding but it also takes its toll on all caregivers," said Wenman. "For the MercyOne family, Dave helped bring perspective to moments of both sorrow and joy, always challenging us to see where God was present in our experience."

Deacon O'Brien began to better understand the bishop's advice. It became clearer that he and his colleagues were there

to serve the sick from all faiths by connecting to others on their spiritual journey and walk them through their crises.

"I witnessed him comfort a man who had just lost his mother, and the same with parents who gave birth to a stillborn baby," said Wenman. "This happened every day, and his presence to our patients, families and colleagues was dearly appreciated. We will miss him, but are so joyful he can spend the time with his beloved grandchildren."

His goal was focused on mission: "When a person is discharged, their faith should be better as well."



we are  
**maroons**  
FAITHFUL. CARING. DEDICATED.



We are grateful for the many ways the community has come together to support our students and teachers during the pandemic. As we focus on fulfilling our mission, support of the We Are Maroons Annual Appeal is more important than ever before.

Now is the perfect time to make a gift to DCHS. The CARES Act relief initiative allows taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 of their cash donations made in 2020 to qualifying organizations like ours. This new tax deduction helps provide COVID-19 relief by giving any taxpayer, whether or not you itemize, a tax break for your generosity.

Your support can truly make a difference in preparing Leaders for Life, Centered on Christ. To donate, please visit [www.dowlingcatholic.org/donate](http://www.dowlingcatholic.org/donate) or mail a check to Dowling Catholic High School, 1400 Buffalo Road, West Des Moines, IA 50265.



# Emmaus House begins pilgrimage to new home



The new home of Emmaus House, located in Urbandale, is expected to have the \$450,000 renovation project complete by spring 2021. The property at 1521 Center Street in Des Moines is for sale.

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

The Catholic spirituality center Emmaus House will soon be moving from its longtime location on Center Street in the Sherman Hill neighborhood of Des Moines to its new home in Urbandale.

The new building, purchased in May, is the former Urbandale City Hall, at 3315 70<sup>th</sup> St.

An anonymous donor was the catalyst for raising matching renovation dollars, said board chairperson Mary Ann Van Dyke.

The complete internal demolition and rebuild will offer a modern, handicap accessible oasis for those seeking to deepen their spirituality and be part of a faith community.

"It will have the essence of Emmaus House, even though the building doesn't appear to be a house," Van Dyke said. "It's what inside that makes the differ-

ence."

"We plan to create that homelike, warm feeling that we've always had," added Kevin O'Donnell, who co-directs Emmaus House with Father Dan Krettek. Both men also offer spiritual direction.

The renovation project will include a new HVAC system, roof, windows and lift. Completion of the \$450,000 renovation is projected for Spring 2021.

This progress could not have been possible without the support of some "fantastic donors," said board member Mary O'Brien. However, they are still accepting donations to reach full renovation.

Emmaus House has the full support of Bishop William Joensen.

"I'm inspired as the 46-year-old history of Emmaus House now makes 'pilgrimage' from its long-time Sherman Hill location to the demographic center of the diocese in the old Urbandale City Hall," said

Bishop Joensen. "The tradition of providing spiritual direction, reflection, faith formation, and mediating the fruits of the Holy Spirit for folks of different ages and faiths will be magnified with the enlarged, accessible spaces that will retain the human-friendly, inviting character of its former home once renovations are completed.

"The Emmaus board, in collaboration with my predecessor, Emeritus Bishop (Richard) Pates, and dedicated donors and supporters are bringing a long-germinating vision to fruition," Bishop Joensen continued. "The strategic location will enable individuals to drop in during the day for spiritual renewal amid their busy work, family, and other commitments. Truly, it will remain an oasis of peace and life that will kindle hearts just as the first disciples discovered at Emmaus."

Learn more at [TheEmmausHouse.org](http://TheEmmausHouse.org).

# Finding faith online

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

The pandemic has affected the faith community's ability to gather.

In response, Emmaus House is offering a number of virtual opportunities.

"People are connecting that maybe wouldn't have before," said Kevin O'Donnell, co-director of Emmaus House. "Maybe people can't get away or wouldn't be able to drive to us, but they can join for a Zoom gathering."

People from out of state have even joined, opening up the possibilities, O'Donnell added. In fact, this year's online Ignatian retreat had 70 attendees – up from approximately 45 people last year.

"People are very much appreciating the space to gather and find a way to connect," O'Donnell said.

Attendees appreciate the intimacy of seeing each other in virtual gatherings. If these same gatherings were in person, they would be spread out six feet apart and wearing masks.

The Catholic spirituality center offers virtual centering prayer every Wednesday at noon, guided prayerful meditation every Friday at noon and a session



called Reflecting on Our Experience every Saturday at 10 a.m.

Emmaus is also offering a variety of virtual events in the month of December, including an Advent Evening Retreat.

Virtual spiritual direction is available by appointment with O'Donnell or Emmaus co-director Father Dan Krettek.

"From the feedback we've gotten, people are still just very much appreciating [what we offer] during this difficult time," O'Donnell said. "People are looking for spaces to nourish their spiritual life and finding Emmaus is a wonderful place for that... People are very much experiencing God's presence and entering into those gatherings."

Learn more and register for virtual opportunities at [TheEmmausHouse.org](http://TheEmmausHouse.org).

## Emmaus Advent Evening Retreat

Virtual Advent Evening Retreat:  
Hope in the Midst of the Imperfect

Thursday, Dec. 3  
6:00 - 8:00 P.M.

Whether 2,000 years ago or the year 2020, this hopeful truth remains: God enters, God resides. During this holiday season, when our lives and celebrations may not be as we hoped, join Emmaus for a quiet evening of prayer, and listen for God's gentle voice reminding us of our true hope: God enters, God resides...even in these apparently imperfect moments of our lives.

Register for this virtual retreat at  
[TheEmmausHouse.org](http://TheEmmausHouse.org)

# St. Luke in Ankeny breaks ground for expansion



Father Ken Halbur leads the groundbreaking ceremony at St. Luke Catholic School and Parish in Ankeny on Oct. 27 for its \$3.5 million expansion project.

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic School and Parish in Ankeny broke ground on their expansion project Oct. 27.

Expansion includes six new classrooms, a multipurpose meeting room, expanded parking, storage, and storm shelter. Completion is expected in July 2021 – just in time for the new school year.

Funding for construction is provided through its capital campaign. The St. Luke community has secured \$3.2 million in pledged gifts and cash for the \$3.5 million project. A groundbreaking ceremony was held

"This project has been a long time coming and we have had a number of iterations of the plans, but it is finally happening," said Father Ken Halbur, pastor. "It is a wonderful blessing for the parish to add classrooms, meeting rooms,

and more storage space to accommodate our growth now and for years to come."

St. Luke Catholic School grew by more than 35 percent this past year. Growth is likely connected to educational continuity the school provided to families during the pandemic.

Last spring as schools across the state closed, the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools – including St. Luke – quickly implemented a high-quality, interactive distance learning program for all students.

"I am so excited to see our building expand, which will allow our school to continue to grow," said Misty Hade, school administrator.

To learn more about enrollment opportunities, visit [stlucatholic.org](http://stlucatholic.org) or call 515-985-7074.



Working to break the cycle of poverty by helping low-income people participate in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities.



# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS



# OF CCHD

For over 50 years, CCHD has been working to empower new mothers, immigrants, the elderly, and families to together address the root causes of poverty in their communities.

Celebrate CCHD's 50th anniversary and social justice work with their annual national collection happening the weekend of November 21-22.



Your support for this collection brings change to communities across the country and empowers those living in poverty to transform the places where they live into reflections of the Kingdom of God. In addition to the national impact, those living in poverty in our own diocese may benefit through the 25% share of our collection that stays in the Des Moines diocese.

*Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.  
Bishop of Des Moines*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Debra Powers, Catholic Charities Development Director at 563-275-9643 or [dpowers@catholiccharitiesdm.org](mailto:dpowers@catholiccharitiesdm.org)



[usccb.org/cchd/collection](http://usccb.org/cchd/collection)



[dmdiocese.org](http://dmdiocese.org)



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## Around the Diocese

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, all diocesan and parish-sponsored or hosted social events are suspended between Nov. 23 and Jan. 10. As the Church enters the season of Advent, there are opportunities for the faithful to be community by gathering online.

### Dec. 1, 8 Workshop in Spanish about Implementation of Directory for Catechesis

The U.S. bishops and the national Hispanic Ministry diocesan directors along with Sadlier Religion are offering workshops in Spanish about the implementation of the New Directory for Catechesis in the Hispanic Community. This

is intended for ministers, pastoral agents, catechists, RCIA facilitators, lay leaders, pastors, deacons, youth ministers, parents, etc. Register by going to <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUrD-GprDMqE-9BoN--GpRgruMMKhaJRrHV>. Sessions will also be held Jan. 5, 12 and 19.

### Dec. 3, 10, 17 Thursdays Advent Retreat Opportunity

The diocese is offering a virtual retreat during Advent called "Hope in the Midst of the Storm." The three-week online retreat provides sacred space to journey through Advent in contemplation and conversation with others along the way. It's designed to help you find solace

and hope. The Advent series will be held on the first three Thursdays in December either at 2 p.m. or 7 p.m. Contact John Gaffney at [jgaffney@dmdiocese.org](mailto:jgaffney@dmdiocese.org) for more information or to receive the Zoom link.

### Dec. 4 Friday No Room at the Inn Goes VIRTUAL

Join Bishop William Joensen and the Catholic Charities Board of Directors for 2020 No Room at the Inn VIRTUAL. This year the entire family can join in from the comfort and safety of your home. Listen to some holiday music, have some fun trying to spot all the candy canes, and go on virtual tours of Catholic Charities programs and

learn how we address homelessness in our community. Register at <https://www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/nri/>. Raffle tickets available at <https://www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/nativity/>

### Dec. 6 Sunday Catholic's Divorce Survival Guide DIVORCED? The Catholic's DIVORCE SURVIVAL Guide 12-week group begins Dec. 6 at Holy Trinity Parish, 2926 Beaver Ave, Des Moines, IA. Meetings are from 6-7:30 p.m. Cost of \$30 per person includes a "Personal Survival Guide" and all materials for 12 weeks. Find comfort and counsel consistent with Catholic teachings. Call Bill and Ann Moore for more information, or to

register, at 515-480-3314 (Bill) 641-425-0109 (Ann) or email them. For more information visit the Catholic's Divorce Survival Guide website.

### Now CYC Registration Open

Catholic Youth Camp is offering new cabins, a renovated Dingman Lodge and double the number of paid summer staff to ensure safety procedures are followed so everyone can have a safe, faith-filled, fun summer experience. Registration is now open at [stmcenter.com](http://stmcenter.com).

The Catholic's

# DIVORCE SURVIVAL Guide

**Is anyone in YOUR family DIVORCED?** Please give someone a copy of this ad or invite them to *The Catholic's DIVORCE SURVIVAL Guide* 12-week group which begins December 6<sup>th</sup> at Holy Trinity Parish, 2926 Beaver Ave, Des Moines, IA 50310. Cost of \$30 per person includes a "Personal Survival Guide" and all materials for 12 weeks. Find comfort and counsel consistent with Catholic teachings. Call Bill and Ann Moore for more information, or to register, at 515-480-3314 (Bill) 641-425-0109 (Ann) or email [moorefamilysm@gmail.com](mailto:moorefamilysm@gmail.com). For more information visit [www.catholicdivorce.com](http://www.catholicdivorce.com)

## No Room at the Inn VIRTUAL is the safe way to celebrate



Phil Koehler, of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, hand carved a nativity scene for a raffle for No Room at the Inn.

### By Beth Gibbins Contributing Writer

No Room at the Inn has been a staple holiday fundraising event for Catholic Charities for many years. It has endured winter storms and a major gas leak.

The pandemic was this year's unexpected twist. Fortunately, it did not derail the event, just sent it down a different track.

This year's event will be broadcast on the Catholic Charities website. It will air on Friday, Dec. 4, at 7 p.m. Presenting sponsors are Mercy-One and Ryan Staiert Interior Design. Anyone who donates to No Room at the Inn VIRTUAL will receive the computer link to the broadcast to watch from the comfort and safety of their own home.

Bishop William Joensen and Barbara Decker, executive director of Catholic Charities, will host the show. The evening's theme is "from our home to yours," and is set in the bishop's home. We will feature Catholic Charities housing initiatives, including the Emer-

gency Family Shelter, Refugee Services, and the Domestic Violence Shelter.

"We hope that people will join us online," said Community Outreach Manager Holly Ackermann. "We have some great musical performances. This year the whole family can watch together and count candy canes throughout the show!"

"This year has been very challenging for Catholic Charities. We have implemented cost-saving measures at every turn, in order to keep our programs open," said Decker. "The need is greater than ever for No Room at the Inn, so we hope people will not only give, but join us online for a fun and educational evening."

Another tradition is the raffle of a hand-carved nativity by Phil Kohler of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny. This year's eight-piece nativity features a single figure of the holy family sleeping. Tickets are \$20 or six tickets for \$100.

For more information, call Holly Ackermann at 515-237-5027. To register, buy raffle tickets, and donate, go to [www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/nri](http://www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/nri).



Pictured are Sinishaw Itcha of Catholic Charities Refugee Program and his 5-year-old son, Yerosan. Yerosan shares his parents' refugee and citizenship story and reads a prayer at the beginning of the broadcast of No Room at the Inn.

Tune in to

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## Thanksgiving inspires gratitude, giving back

Continued from page 1

one, she added.

The Food Pantry serves almost 400 people per day during the daily distribution.

Many volunteers enjoy the camaraderie and friendships they have developed.

“But it’s also a meaningful opportunity to give back to the community,” she said. “Some of our volunteers have been here for a really long time and have built a rapport with some of the clients we serve.”

For those who are in a position to give back financially, there are a variety of ways to serve those in need with their treasures, Kenney added.

Catholic parishes across the diocese have not been immune from the negative, economic impacts of COVID-19.

Father Joel McNeil, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap and Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine, said the parish had to cancel this year’s annual fall festival, one of their biggest fundraisers of the year.

With Mass attendance down to about one-third of pre-COVID attendance, would people still remember their church community?

In lieu of a fall festival, Father McNeil wrote a letter to all parishioners explaining their situation.

“We have had several meetings to figure out what to

do during this COVID crisis,” he wrote. “We thought long and hard about maybe having an abbreviated or modified event. However when you get into the specifics of volunteers and tasks and distancing, we realized it just wasn’t feasible.”

He closed his letter, asking “that you consider the amount you might have spent on donations, food tickets, raffles, auctions, games, etc.,” and make a donation to the parish.

Parishioners gave, surpassing Father McNeil’s expectations.

“We gave the reasons why the fall festival was important and they stepped up in a big way,” he said. “We’re very gratified that even in the midst of COVID, people have been concerned about the parish. They have not forgotten about us and continued to send in their donations.”

He is grateful for their continued support.

“Because the bills don’t stop coming in,” Father McNeil said. “Even though the ministry has declined, most of the expenses are pretty static...I still have to heat the church, whether there’s 300 people in it or 30 people in it.”

Reaching parishioners at home with technology so they can continue joining in the celebration of Mass has meant increased costs, from upgraded internet services to new equipment, such as an iPad and camera.

The parish also offers significant support to their youth so they can attend Catholic Youth Camp and the National Catholic Youth Conference – “really important evangelization opportunities for our students,” he added.

## Matching funds sweeten gift for Catholic school students

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

A matching grant from the Reichardt family is making financial gifts for Catholic school students go a little farther.

The Reichardt Family Foundation is doubling contributions from new donors to the Catholic Tuition Organization, which provides financial assistance to needy families who want their children educated in Catholic schools.

A \$1,000 gift to the CTO that’s intended to help pay the tuition for students becomes \$2,000 thanks to the matching grant. The \$1,000 gift also earns state tax credits.

The generosity of the Reichardt family will help the CTO reach its \$3.9 million goal for this calendar year.

“We felt very fortunate to be able to send our kids to Dowling. We think it’s important that others have the opportunity who could not otherwise afford the tuition have the same opportunity,” according to the Reichardt family.

Roughly a third of the students in the 16 schools in the Diocese of Des Moines -- 2,063 kids -- are learning reading, math and more in a faith-based environment right now thanks to tuition assistance from the CTO.

Jeanne Wells, the organization’s executive director, says she’s leaving no stone unturned as she invites donors to help families. She needs to meet her goal by Dec. 31 to help as many students as possible.

“From St. Joseph on

the east side of the diocese all the way over to St. Albert on the west side, with St. Malachy, Shelby County, and St. Patrick in Perry in between, if families qualify, they get help,” Wells said. “Every school has families in need.”

The Iowa legislature created school tuition organizations in 2006, allowing for \$2.5 million in tax credits split among the nonpublic schools in the state. The state has incrementally increased the cap in tax credits over the years. Last year, the state allocated for this school year up to \$15 million to non-public schools.

“Many times, the legislature came together to say yes, we’re going to encourage school choice,” Wells said. Since the start of the program, “we’ve given more than 20,000 awards to families amounting to \$31 million in the Diocese of Des Moines.”

The CTO benefits both families and donors.

Families apply to the CTO for help with tuition. The application goes to a third-party vendor to determine whether the family meets the criteria to get a grant.

Donors give to the CTO and get 65 percent of their contributions back with tax credits that can reduce their state income taxes while sharing their financial resources with others.

Wells encourages donors to check out CTOIowa.org to learn how a gift to help families through the CTO would work for them.



Father Larry Hoffmann, a retired priest for the Diocese of Des Moines, volunteered his time at the Catholic Charities Food Pantry in early November.

### 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.



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## Letter to the faithful from Bishop William Joensen

### Masks or face coverings required at all events in Church buildings

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am acutely aware that in the State of Iowa and in our country the incidence of infection, hospitalization, and mortality due to the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 is rising significantly just as we enter the holiday and winter seasons. I conclude that it is necessary to require face masks or coverings at all public Masses, sacramental celebrations, and other events in Church buildings in the Diocese of Des Moines, effective immediately. This requirement extends through February 2, 2021 (The Feast of the Presentation), at which time it will be reviewed. I have taken this critical step so we may responsibly continue to gather around the Eucharistic altar – the source and summit of our faith – and worship together.

The Eucharist is the pearl of great price won at the cost of Christ's saving sacrifice on the Cross. The personal and communal sacrifice entailed in wearing a mask, while it involves for many a yielding of our will and personal preference and comfort, pales in comparison to the privilege of participating in the Mass. Our ability to continue to experience God's grace in the sacramental life of the Church is directly linked to our ability to mitigate the risk of COVID infections; therefore, a mask requirement is prudent at this time. Moreover, simple charity obliges us to take into account the physical and psychic health of others as a way to ensure that worship is relatively safe and accessible to as many parishioners as possible. None of us wants to be the cause for someone else to withdraw or refrain from Mass attendance because certain members of a congregation fail to employ this basic means of protection for our neighbor.

This diocesan requirement applies to all those over the age of five, who do not have a medical or psychological condition prohibiting mask use. A personal preference opposed to mask use, or the belief that masks are not effective, does not qualify as a condition exempting one from mask use. If parishioners are unsure whether an exemption applies to them, they should consult with their pastor who can assist in discernment.

The Diocese asks parishes to communicate this requirement to all parishioners, and to ensure observance by the faithful. Again, the one thing needful is to be able to place ourselves at Jesus' feet, to heed his command to take, eat, and drink his sacramental Body and Blood. We are consoled and revived in our belief that Jesus continues to meet us in the Eucharist; we continue to support each other as the family of God, and we remain in God's providential care. As Cardinal Robert Sarah has reminded us in his letter, *Let Us Return to the Eucharist with Joy*, "The Church will continue to cherish the human person as a whole. She bears witness to hope, invites us to trust in God, recalls that earthly existence is important, but much more important is eternal life: sharing the same life with God for eternity is our goal, our vocation."

The Sunday Mass obligation remains suspended. For those who are not able to attend Mass during the pandemic because of personal vulnerability, God's infinite grace and mercy remain abundantly available.

Faithfully in Christ,




**Bishop William Joensen**

Queridos amigos en Cristo,

Estoy muy consciente que en el estado de Iowa y en nuestro país la incidencia de infección, hospitalización y mortalidad debida al coronavirus que causa el Covid-19 está aumentando significativamente justo ahora que empezamos los días festivos y la temporada de invierno. Concluyo que es necesario exigir a la gente el uso de cubre bocas o cubiertas para asistir a todas las misas públicas, celebraciones sacramentales y otros eventos en los edificios de la Iglesia en la Diócesis de Des Moines, con efecto inmediato. Este requisito se extiende hasta el 2 de febrero del 2021 (La Fiesta de la Presentación), momento en el que se revisará. He dado este paso crítico para que podamos seguir reuniéndonos responsablemente alrededor del altar eucarístico -la fuente y la cumbre de nuestra fe- y seguir adorando juntos.

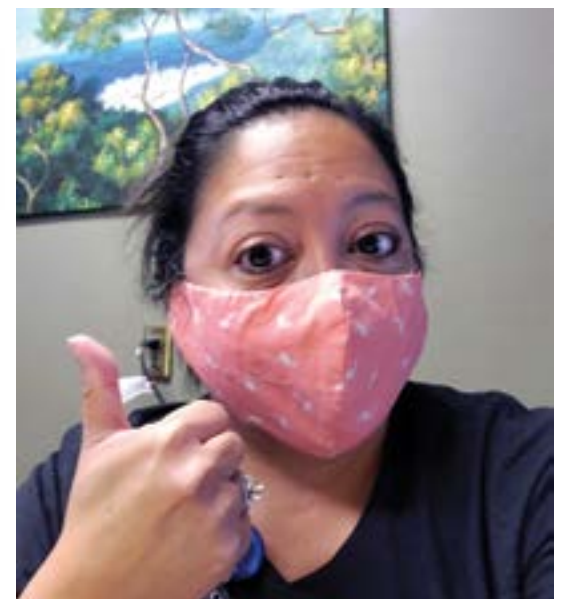
La Eucaristía es la perla preciosa ganada a costa del sacrificio salvador de Cristo en la Cruz. El sacrificio tanto personal como comunitario que implica llevar un cubre boca es para muchos el renunciar a nuestra voluntad y preferencia personal y a nuestra comodidad, pero eso no es nada cuando se compara con el privilegio de participar en la Misa. Nuestra habilidad para seguir experimentando la gracia de Dios en la vida sacramental de la Iglesia está directamente relacionada con nuestra habilidad para reducir el riesgo de infecciones de COVID; por lo tanto, el requerir el uso de cubre bocas es prudente en este momento. Además, la simple caridad nos obliga a tener en cuenta la salud física de todos los parroquianos como una forma de garantizar que la Misa sea relativamente segura y accesible al mayor número posible de parroquianos. Ninguno de nosotros quiere ser la causa para que otra persona se retire o se abstenga de la asistencia a la Misa porque ciertos miembros de una congregación no emplean este medio básico de protección para nuestro prójimo.

Este requisito diocesano se aplica a todos aquellos mayores de cinco años, que no tengan una condición médica o psicológica que prohíba el uso de cubre bocas. Una preferencia personal opuesta al uso de cubre bocas, o la creencia de que los cubre bocas no son efectivos, no califica como una condición que libre a la persona del uso del cubre bocas. Si los parroquianos no están seguros de sí pueden o no usar su cubre bocas deben consultar con su párroco, quien puede ayudarles en el discernimiento.

La Diócesis pide a las parroquias que comuniquen este requisito a todos los parroquianos, y que garanticen que se lleve a cabo por parte de los fieles. Una vez más, lo único que se necesita es ser capaces de ponernos a los pies de Jesús, para escuchar su orden de tomar, comer y beber su Cuerpo y Sangre. Nos consuela y revivimos en nuestra creencia de que Jesús continúa encontrándonos en la Eucaristía; seguimos apoyándonos mutuamente como la familia de Dios, y permanecemos en el cuidado providencial de Dios. Como nos ha recordado el Cardenal Robert Sarah en su carta: *Volvamos a la Eucaristía con Alegría*: "La Iglesia seguirá atesorando a la persona humana. Nos da testimonio de esperanza, nos invita a confiar en Dios, nos recuerda que la existencia terrenal es importante, pero mucho más importante es la vida eterna: compartir la misma vida con Dios para toda la eternidad es nuestra meta, nuestra vocación".

La obligación de la Misa Dominical permanece suspendida. Para aquellos que no asisten a la Misa durante la pandemia, la infinita gracia y misericordia de Dios permanecen abundantemente disponibles.

Fielmente en Cristo,

**Karla Vaquerano Willis of Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines**

## As virus cases soar, protective measures taken

Continued from page 1

ing, hand sanitizing and the use of masks as a means of protecting each other from the spread of COVID-19.

These changes came as cases of COVID-19 surged in Iowa. At press time, nearly 1,400 people with the virus were in Iowa hospitals. During a spring peak, there were 417 patients with the virus in Iowa hospitals, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health.

While medical centers

are working with public health partners to meet the community needs, MercyOne Dr. Hijinio Carreon asked every Iowan to do what he or she can to limit the spread of the virus.

"It's going to take every Iowan to do their part to get this virus under control," he said at a news conference. "I'm asking you as an emergency room physician, as a father and as a husband, please protect your families, our community and our healthcare workers by wearing a mask, avoiding large gatherings, maintaining physical distancing and using meticulous

hand hygiene."

Being attentive to COVID-19 mitigation practices is a way to serve the common good and show loving concern for our neighbor, and it helps ensure that the Catholic community can continue to worship together and celebrate the Eucharist, the source and summit of the faith.

The Sunday Mass obligation remains suspended. For those who do not attend Mass during the pandemic because of personal vulnerability, God's infinite grace and mercy remain abundantly available.

## Prayer for those unable to receive the Eucharist

Prayer for spiritual communion for those who would like to receive the Eucharist but cannot during the pandemic.

Jesus, I believe that You are present  
in the Most Holy Sacrament  
I love you above all things,  
and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as  
if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.  
Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.



# Tips for making the best of socially distanced holidays

Drastic differences in this year's holiday gatherings can trigger a variety of emotions, from grief to guilt or anger, said Carol Mensink, mental health counselor at Catholic Charities Counseling Center. Mensink points to Magellan Health recommendations:

- Think about changing your family traditions to adapt to social distancing. Consider virtual alternatives to keep in touch with important people in your life.
- Follow the CDC's recommendations when organizing a gathering at your home. If possible, hold outdoor events with a small group of local friends and family members, make sure everyone wears a mask, maintain 6-foot social distance and do not share food or drinks.
- If you have lost a loved one, honor their memory with a special ornament, wreath or

centerpiece, or perhaps a candle lit during a holiday. If you can, take part in a voluntary activity that your loved one used to do.

- If in-person religious services or events have changed, see if you can still participate via televised services, video chats and online prayer meetings. A list of Christmas Masses available online in the Des Moines diocese will be in the December edition of *The Catholic Mirror*.
- Most importantly, take care of your mental health. Try to replace negative thoughts by focusing on the things you can control. Building your resilience skills can help protect your mental health.

Find more tips at the CDC website, [bit.ly/dailylifecoping](http://bit.ly/dailylifecoping).

## COVID-19

# It's harder to find the happy this 2020 holiday season

*"I've seen people who restored their faith during this, and I've seen people abandon faith during this," said Deacon Randy Kiel.*

**By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer**

Brightening spirits this holiday season amidst the COVID-19 "new normal" will be more difficult.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends social distancing and avoiding large gatherings as a way of protecting others from contracting the virus.

"For many people, this is the first time they have been confronted with empty chairs at the table because loved ones cannot or are unwilling to attend family gatherings," said Carol Mensink, mental health therapist at the Catholic Charities Counseling Center.

"Cherished traditions and religious events may have been canceled due to the virus, with no clear end in sight due to social distancing restrictions," she said. "People who live alone or far from family, or who have lost loved ones, may find holidays especially difficult."

People have been strugg-

ling to cope – COVID-19 has been associated with mental health challenges. According to the CDC, last June 40 percent of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance abuse.

COVID-19 is an uninvited guest at the table this holiday season, said Deacon Randy Kiel, founder of Kardia Counseling in Clive. But we have to make room for it, whether we like it or not, for the health and safety of ourselves and our loved ones.

This pandemic has had such a strong impact that the American Psychiatric Association has even identified a new syndrome – the COVID Stress Syndrome.

"We have been charged as clinicians to be watchful for people's mental health," he said. Five indicators of COVID Stress Syndrome are:

- Fear of danger from COVID-19 and getting infected by different means e.g. touching contaminated objects, breathing contaminated air.
- Worry about the social and

- financial impact of the virus.
- Marked concern that foreigners spread the disease.
- Related symptoms of traumatic stress.
- Compulsive checking and seeking reassurance.

People react differently to the COVID-induced upheaval in their lives.

"I've seen people who restored their faith during this, and I've seen people abandon faith during this," Deacon Kiel said.

Accepting that COVID-19 is here versus a refusal to accept it comes in stages, Deacon Kiel added.

That means grieving the way life used to be in order to move forward into our new reality, he added.

"We really have to grieve the way life used to be in order to accept the way life is becoming," Deacon Kiel said. "And fortunately, God created the brain to always find normal. We will stabilize with it."

## Knights serve Central Iowa Shelter & Services



Bruce Kalisek (left) and Rob Ryan (right) fry fish at the Central Iowa Shelter & Services in downtown Des Moines in October. COVID-19 caused the Knights of Columbus from Council 12422 to cancel a Lenten fish fry last March. Knights from St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines had already purchased the frozen food for the meal. Due to the uncertainty of hosting a fish fry at the parish, the Knights donated the food and their time to serve about 200 guests at CISS. Photo provided by Ryan Johnson/Knights of Columbus Council 12422

## Creative ways to be together for the holidays



Carol Mesnick's family gathers around the computer every Saturday evening. They also plan to be together at Thanksgiving virtually.

### Continued from page 1

laugh and we can't change it, we can't control it. So I know it's hard to be optimistic, but it's going to help you get through it."

On the bright side, their virtual Thanksgiving celebration will include many more relatives than one of their houses would typically be able to handle if they gathered in person. Eighteen relatives from Clear Lake, Clive, Waterloo, Texas, Nebraska and Minneapolis will all be together virtually. The bonus: zero hours spent driving to their destination.

"We are going to be able to connect with a lot more people than we were able to last Thanksgiving," Mensink said. "Everybody gets to be included."

Sue McEntee is bummed their house won't be filled with family at Thanksgiving or Christmas, but understands precautions need to be taken for the safety of everyone.

"This is my favorite time of the year – and to have everyone in one place – there's just nothing like that," said McEntee, who is executive director of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa. "It's just a really fun time and we usually do things like bowling, ugly sweater contests. We've had a Caribbean Themed Christmas, we've done a gingerbread contest. There's all kinds of things we do together and silly games we play."

In lieu of the in-person gathering, McEntee has already planned out a day of virtual Christmas festivities for their

large family. "It's going to be a virtual Zoom Christmas," said McEntee, who created secret boxes to ship to families members, filled with surprises and activities that they'll do together on December 12. "What they know now is that they are all have to dress Christmas-y."

The secret box will include a Christmas scavenger hunt, Christmas bingo, cookie decorating and more. Prizes will be mailed out to the winning teams after the family's virtual Christmas.

Though 2020 has been a tough year, there's still reason for hope.

"I think it's made [my faith] much stronger..." McEntee said. "We just have to believe that we're all going to get through this."

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Contact Kelly at [kcollins@dmdiocese.org](mailto:kcollins@dmdiocese.org) or call 515-237-5054 to learn more.



# Memorial honors victims of COVID-19



Photos by Bob Nandell

**Pam Douglas is making a paper crane for each Iowan who has died of COVID-19. The photo was taken from a safe social distance.**

**By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer**

One by one, Pam Douglas folds a colorful piece of paper into an origami crane.

Each crane represents one Iowan who has died from COVID-19.

More than 1,600 paper birds have been created and hung like banners in the sanctuary of Sacred Heart Church in West Des Moines. Two banners, each about 10 feet long, flank a sculpture of Jesus on the cross.

The art installation, put up Oct. 16, illustrates the toll the virus has taken in Iowa.

“This is a beautiful tribute at Sacred Heart to those that we have lost this year in the state of Iowa to Covid-19,” said Father Chris Hartshorn, the pastor. “There has been so much loss and so much grief upon grief this year. These are not just numbers, they are people. Let us hold them in prayer.”

Douglas chose the crane for her artwork because the bird, with its broad wing span, carries much symbolism in some cultures. A victim of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 began a tradition of paper crane folding to encourage healing and hope.

Douglas created a

sculpture with cranes several years ago and has incorporated it in her church’s décor for All Saints Day and All Souls Day since then. She adapted her artwork when she read about a Californian who was attempting to create a paper crane art installation that represents each person in the United States who lost his or her life to the virus.

With a prayerful heart for the men or women who died and for their families, she recently added another 100 cranes representing the number of Iowans who died of the virus in just eight days. Each crane is colorful, representing the victims’ unique personalities, and about 200 have names on them for the people she could identify who have died.

“It makes people think about other families and what they’re experiencing,” said Douglas. “People are dying from this terrible pandemic. There are people left grieving and they’ve never had to grieve this way before.”

Many of the victims have died without their families at their side because of the risk of contracting the illness. The thought of a loved one dying alone creates an added dimension to the grief, she said.

“We have to figure out different ways to reach out to

them,” she said. “Grieving is a difficult process for some people and they just need someone to listen to them and befriend them.”

Douglas plans to keep adding to the banners until the end of November, when the art installation comes down so that the church can be prepared for Advent.

After that, she’ll continue making the cranes.

“I will continue to make the cranes, even if they’re boxed up because the pandemic is still going on. We’re still losing people. They still need to be remembered. Prayers still need to be said for the families.”

Anyone in Iowa who would like to have the name of someone who died from COVID-19 written on a crane in the memorial can call the church office at 515-225-6414 to give the name to the receptionist.

The art installation can be seen at Sacred Heart Church in West Des Moines between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and before and after weekend Masses. Go to the main church office doors during the week to gain access to the sanctuary.

# Priest’s vocation brings him across the world



Father Raphael Assamah with a parishioner.

**By Stanley Asjes  
Staff Writer**

Father Raphael Assamah has been serving St. Mary Parish in Shenandoah and St. Mary Parish in Hamburg since Oct. 7, 2016.

He arrived with a fellow priest from the Diocese of Accra in Ghana, Father James Ahenkora.

Father Assamah is a priest of broad cultural experience. His story begins in Accra, the capitol of Ghana. His mother played an important role in nur-

turing his faith.

“I went to church with my friends, and not specifically the Catholic Church, but I joined them at other churches,” he said. “Then my mom started encouraging me to go to the Catholic Church. I remember I was in the church close to where we lived, but because of my friends, I didn’t pay attention. My mom saw that and she took me to a church far away. So when I went there, I had no friends so I had to be attentive. That is how the whole thing started.”

As his faith grew and he received the sacraments, Father Assamah started to hear a call to the priesthood through the example of his parish priest, who later became the archbishop who ordained him.

“I started going to church, I was very active in the altar serving,” said Father Assamah.

He used to make a thurible, which holds incense, at home out of an empty can with charcoal and say his own “Mass” at home with incense.

“When we had the altar servers’ rehearsal, I always played the role of the priest in teaching them how to serve so people started alluding to the fact that I looked like a seminarian because of how I behaved, and the way I was very influential among the youth,” he said. “That was when I started nurturing the call, even though I had it in mind, but it wasn’t concrete.”

Before he made the decision to enter the seminary, Father Assamah first went to

technical school to build on his background in plumbing and construction. During this time, he was a lay member of the Society of the Divine Word missionaries. After completing some prerequisite studies, he entered seminary where he studied with Father James Ahenkora and Father Philip Bempong.

He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Accra on Aug. 23, 2008, and served in parishes for six years.

Celebrating Mass is his special encounter with Christ, he said.

“The mystery for me is that these feeble hands with my weaknesses can transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ,” he said.

When a need arose for priests in Jamaica, he and Father Ahenkora volunteered, serving there for three years.

“Jamaica has really added to my liturgy and to my perception about life and spirituality and growth. It helped me to appreciate people and how to relate to them,” he said.

Fathers Ahenkora and Assamah then came to Iowa. Father Assamah described the warm welcome he received in Hamburg and Shenandoah, where he has been serving since 2016.

His parishioners check in on him frequently, bringing a bounty from their gardens.

“They all show the love they have for you. It is the love that keeps me going,” he said.

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# Thankful and blessed

Parishes and schools around the diocese are expressing gratitude for their educators and faith formation volunteers and staff who've experienced a challenging year.



St. Patrick Parish in Corning is grateful for its fourth through eighth grade religious education students who made paper chain rosaries for their church door and the parish center bulletin boards. Middle school and high school youth groups made a balloon rosary for the church lawn and one to share with parishioners at Mass, according to parish office manager Jane Rychnovsky.



Donna Huehold began helping at St. Theresa Catholic School many years ago. "Though she is not back with us yet this year due to COVID, she has been integral to the development of our backpack program," said principal Ellen Stemler. "Donna also volunteered every morning as a primary classroom aid."

Donna Huehold began helping at St. Theresa Catholic School when she retired.



St. Albert Catholic School is grateful for Lisa Rosloniec, mother of Lena '23, Molli '26, and Michael '30. "Lisa is a regular volunteer in our building running the St. Albert Spirit Store, which has raised thousands of dollars for the school," said Katie Fischer Grudle, the school's director of mission. "Lisa also is the head of the Falcon Family Connection, the elementary parent support group. She greets students every day and also assists in the cafeteria."

Lisa Rosloniec and her son, Michael, wear the blackout for childhood cancer shirts that raised more than \$2,000 for Angels Among Us, an organization that assists children with childhood cancer including two of St. Albert Catholic School students.



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School	Enrollment	Number of Students Receiving CTO
Christ the King, Des Moines	178	129
Dowling, W Des Moines	1387	407
Holy Family, Des Moines	212	202
Holy Trinity, Des Moines	343	113
Sacred Heart, W Des Moines	499	111
Shelby Co Catholic, Harlan	84	46
St. Albert, Council Bluffs	531	248
St. Anthony, Des Moines	275	183
St. Augustin, Des Moines	238	49
St. Francis, W Des Moines	650	52
St. Joseph, Des Moines	167	100
St. Luke, Ankeny	241	57
St. Malachy, Creston	133	55
St. Patrick, Perry	85	62
St. Pius X, Urbandale	327	110
St. Theresa, Des Moines	247	139
	5,597	2,063
















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## Hospitality at six feet: keeping our distance while letting others in

“Can you come in?”

My grandma’s favorite question is one we now discourage her from uttering.

The impulse to swing open her door and her arms, honed over nine decades and stitched into her Irish-Catholic DNA, is not easily thwarted. Yet we have attempted to do so this year.

She’s doing her best, but she doesn’t like it one bit. Social distancing goes against every fiber of her being.

At 90, Grandma still lives in the two-story brick home where she raised her six kids. It is the hub for our sprawling extended family. We all gather there on Christmas Eve, when she’s perched at the piano, plucking out carols we sing along to across the living room.

Individually, we flee there on bad days, when we need a sympathetic ear and a soft place to land. She sits by the fireplace, a candy dish at one elbow and a basket of newspapers and magazines at the other. She listens so wholeheartedly, with appreciative sounds and interjections, and instantly everything seems better.

That is hospitality in its truest

### Twenty Something



By name  
Christina Capecchi

sense. The word originates from the Latin word for hospital. Grandma’s expression of hospitality does indeed turn her home into a hospital: a refuge for the sad and lonely, a place for healing.

I’ve been reflecting on the virtue of hospitality, which feels more needed than ever and also harder than ever to exercise amid a pandemic. How are we to practice hospitality now, when our faces are covered and our reserves are depleted? How are we to embrace the stranger while keeping six-foot distance?

If hospitality is defined as kindness toward strangers, the friendly reception of guests, then the opposite is judgment.

It’s forming unfair and unfavorable ideas about others based on our own insecurities and ignorance. This means hospitality is not so much an act as a disposition. It is recognizing the opportunity to be Christ to others and to receive Christ from others.

It does not require uncluttered counters. It does require an uncluttered heart.

Emily Stimpson Chapman, author of “The Catholic Table,” taught me this back when visions of immaculate Pinterest boards held me back. “When we think of hospitality not as impressing people but as loving people, it’s easier to let go of all the extras that make welcoming people into our home stressful or expensive,” the Pittsburgh mom told me.

The Biblical command to care for those in need does not exclude times of pandemic, Emily pointed out. It does require greater creativity and greater courage. “What God calls us to, he always gives us the grace to do,” she said.

The Benedictines consider hospitality a charisma, a special spiritual gift. St. Benedict explored the topic in a chapter of his book “Rule of Benedict,” written in

the year 516. He believed guests should be warmly received upon arrival and departure. Doesn’t it feel good when a host grabs your bag as you enter or walks you out as you leave?

St. Benedict emphasized the “humility” at the core of hospitality, and he described it in action: a host should bow to their guests to adore the Christ within, pray with them, sit with them and wash their hands.

The spirit of those gestures can be done from a distance, even remotely: listening well, affirming others, praying for them, checking in, mailing cards, leaving banana bread at the front door.

We can smile with our eyes even when our mouths are masked. Perhaps that’s a metaphor for hospitality in 2020: We have less to work with, but we’re doing what we can. We’re trusting that, once again, God will give us the grace.

*Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn.*

## I need a hug!

Especially in these times, don’t we all need a hug?

I suppose the following story has been told in a variety of ways, yet it illustrates so well the heart-cry of all mankind. As I heard it, a little boy woke up in the midst of a violent storm. He was frightened by the thunder and lightning so he cried out for his mother. She reassured him, and told him never to be afraid of the dark or the storm because God was right there with him. In a few minutes, the child cried out again, and the mother went back to his side and once again told him that God was with him in the storm. “I know,” said the boy, “but I want someone with skin on!”

Don’t we all?

Just like we crave food when we are hungry, and crave sleep when we are tired, so also do we crave touch when we are expressing our emotions outwardly. Without touch, all will be lonely. And to be lonely is quite often too vulnerable.

While some religions are based on noble thoughts or impersonal cosmic forces, others have been centered around idols made of wood or stone. These approaches to connect with a deity have never sufficed the deep longing within the human soul. We humans hunger for a God with whom we can have a communal and yet personal living experience. We seek a God whom we can touch. One that is our path toward life eternal, our

### Let’s Get Psyched



By  
Deacon Randy Kiel

suffering’s intercessor, and our Savior from the ailments of life and death.

As God created us, we are wired to touch and be touched. When a child is born, it is through physical touch that they bond with their mother. Our wiring system computes touch everywhere. Every cell in our body knows when we touch or are touched. So, therefore, it is foreign for us to neither think about nor experience physical touch.

Multitudes of studies show that within the brain, touch signals a sense of safety and trust, therefore it comforts the mind and soothes anxiety. Apart from the brain, basic warm touch calms cardiovascular stress, demonstrating that we imperatively need touch. Positive human touch is an integral part of our relational interaction. Whether it’s a warm embrace, a reassuring hand on the shoulder, one arm linked through another, or a hug, physical contact is a large part of how we show concern and establish camaraderie with friends and loved ones. It is

also how we define the level of significance within a relationship.

Family therapist Virginia Satir said that we need 4 hugs a day for survival, 8 hugs a day for maintenance, and 12 hugs a day for growth. While that may sound like a lot, it is for sure that many hugs are far better than no hugs. Physical touch opens us, heals us, and ultimately brings us profound peace. All the senses become further experienced through physical touch, therefore broadening the depth and texture of life and our awareness of it.

Perhaps the most powerful touches we encounter are those that are unplanned, unrehearsed, and unannounced. When we risk leaning into these unrehearsed touches from life, we discover the need to be further open to life. While it is a present necessity, social distancing creates a human hardship. People can become touch deprived. Spontaneous hugs are “Temporarily Out of Order.” It is known that touch deprivation can contribute to mental health decline. During this time, we must be open to other ways for life to touch us while we are unable to have a hug from a neighbor or even a high five from a friend. Life will continue to touch us. Whether we are touched in ways that are ecstatic, peaceful, or joy-filled, or in ways that are painful, fearful, or despairing, we are being invited into a bond that is patristic in nature and eternal in spirit. All the ways that we are

touched in life are further bonds with our Beloved, whose touch should make us all quiver.

Let us see that this is exactly what God does for us in Jesus Christ. He becomes one of us so that we can touch the Father and be touched back by him. It is within this process of touch that we are eternally changed.

As an old Gospel hymn says:

He touched me, Oh, He touched me  
And oh the joy that floods my soul  
Something happened and now I know  
He touched me and make me whole

Matthew 9:29 says: “Then he touched their eyes and said, ‘According to your faith be it done unto you.’”

“Oh, how lucky to be those touched by Christ himself,” we might think. Then we realize, “Oh wait, we are those!” God gave himself to us in the Eucharist not only so that we could see him spiritually, not only so that we could touch him physically, but also so that our total internal self would be united with him as we consume him through Holy Communion.

I don’t know of any better or deeper way to experience a hug.

*Deacon Randy Kiel is the founder of Kardia Counseling and serves Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. To connect with him email randy@kardiacounseling.com.*

## We do not walk alone during these challenging times

That the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you all. From March 2020 until now, it seems that things in life are getting complicated every day.

The newscast bombards us with news of the pandemic COVID-19, the death of George Floyd and the racial injustice public manifestations, the derecho, the political elections, and U.S. Supreme Court nomination.

With all of that, I have seen discouragement, deception, frustration, anxiety, depression, despair, anguish, incredibility, hopelessness, fear, and much more among the community.

Definitely, practicing my faith in this hard time has made a difference for my family and me.

From an early age, I have learned to find the goodness inside of difficulties. With the social distance rules the hectic daily sounds and activities of life have been reduced, and with that, comes the opportunity to be by myself in silence, to meditate, and pray.

It gives me the opportunity to rediscover myself and to explore where I am in my relationship with God.

Early this year I took long walks alone, where I used social media and YouTube for praying the rosary, the Crown of Divine

### Guest Column



By Eliabeth  
Balcarcel

Mercy, listening to different religious men and women talk, and take online religious classes while I was walking.

That is something I couldn’t have done in a normal time due to all my daily chores and work responsibilities that consume most of my time.

I also have seen committed and concerned people doing good for others: to ensure that others have food on their tables; provide resources to pay their basic expenses; share the little they have with others; clean up after the natural disaster; provide comfort to the ones struggling with the loss of a family member due to the pandemic; and help those who face other everyday difficulties.

That reinforces my faith and brings me hope.

It reminds me that we are not walking alone and that the love of the Father and the Son is with us giving us comfort.

The Holy Spirit reminds us that in our baptism we received the three theological virtues - faith, hope and charity - and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are equipped to face the hardness of life.

This is the time to unpack our gifts and use them.

Use the wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God that was poured on us.

My brain sees images when I talk about things or am listening to someone else. I imagine that someplace in my house there is a box full of gifts I received and have not used lately. I take out the box of gifts. I start to dust and clean them until I can see them glow and shine.

The more I used them, the more they glow and shine. The most beautiful thing is that we all have these gifts.

Take out yours.

*Balcarcel is a member of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines and a participant in the Diocesan Lay Formation Program. She was among the honorees for the 2020 Iowa Latino Hall of Fame.*

### Letter to the Editor

One way we pray for the dead is with a Mass intention. Although this brings some comfort, there is an uplifting moment when we actually hear our loved one’s name. I understand that each pastor decides whether the name is heard. Some parishes include the Mass intention during the prayer petitions or at the beginning of the liturgy. Sadly, some parishes do not oblige.

Hearing the name is an important part of remembrance. The name unites us in the communion of saints. It matters. I ask each pastor to practice the following spiritual work of mercy: To comfort the sorrowful.

Michaelene Zawistowski  
St. Theresa



## Ask a Priest

*Q. How is God able to answer/listen to all the prayers all the time?*

**A. We tend to think of God in HUMAN terms.** We know that God is pure spirit and has no physical elements. We refer to God as “he” but we know that God is neither male nor female. It’s the best we can do with the limits of language. So, God doesn’t have ears or eyes or arms or legs. When we pray, we try to connect ourselves to the creator of the universe who sent us Jesus to show in concrete ways how best to live our lives. There are lots of other things we don’t know, but our faith tells us that we are made in God’s image and likeness.

*Q. If God knows a person’s future, why does He keep bad people in the world?*

**A. It might be hard for us to believe, but, for God, there are only good people who make bad decisions and choices.** The doctrine of redemption says that we can improve our lives. Even our prison system (that has many inadequacies) is often called the department of corrections. People can change their ways, can make up for past mistakes, can say “I’m sorry.” If that weren’t the case maybe God would get rid of all of us!

*Q. How do you know if God wants you to do something or if you should do something else?*

**A. The Jesuits are well versed in the “discernment of spirits.”** They have a whole process of deciding what we should do in a particular case. Often enough it has to do with a path of life – should we study law or medicine? Should we marry a particular person? Should we think about a religious vocation? But less life-changing decisions need our discernment as well. And some-

times, after we’ve made a decision, we decide to go another way. Some important questions you can ask yourself when trying to decide: What do I like to do? What have people told me that I’m good at? Do I have the patience to undertake the task? It’s also important to ask advice from people you trust.

*Q. How old was Jesus when He died?*

**A. We don’t know for sure, but most estimates put his age in his early thirties.** Thirty-three is the most common answer.

*Q. Who wrote the Bible?*

**A. No, it wasn’t John Grisham – although he has written many books.** Rather, lots and lots of people are responsible for the sections of the bible over several centuries. The bible is a collection of writings that have been put together in one volume for convenience. It would almost be like asking “Who wrote the library?” What’s more, not all the material in the bible is of the same type. There are songs, letters, histories, etc. Read a gospel all the way through – its not as long as you might think. Or read the book of Genesis and see the wonderful stories it contains. Don’t try to read the whole bible all at once.

*Q. Are we all related?*

**A. I believe we are.** That’s the reason that wars and conflicts and racial hatred and slavery and greed are to be condemned. We’re all one human family with lots and lots of differences.

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

## Structure, ritual, and habit as anchoring love, prayer and service

### Guest Column



By Father  
Ron Rolheiser

In his book, *The Second Mountain* David Brooks suggests that a key to sustaining fidelity in any vocation is to build a structure of behavior for those moments when love falters. He’s right.

Anybody who has made a commitment to be faithful for the long haul inside a marriage, a friendship, a faith community, or a vocation to serve others, will need more than initial enthusiasm, bare-footed sincerity, affective energy, and good resolutions to sustain himself or herself on that road. It’s one thing to have a honeymoon with someone, it’s another to be in a marriage over many years. It’s one thing to be an enthusiastic neophyte on a spiritual journey, it’s another thing to remain faithful inside that journey for seventy or eighty years. And it’s one thing to go out for a season and serve meals to the homeless, it’s something else to be Dorothy Day.

So the question is: how do we sustain our initial enthusiasm, sincerity, affective energy, and good resolutions through the boredom, heartbreak, misunderstanding, tiredness, and temptations all of us will undergo in our lives, whether that be in our marriage, our vocation, our church life, our prayer life, or our service to others?

That question was put to me recently, speaking to a group of young seminarians, I shared that I had just celebrated forty-eight years of ministry. The seminarians peppered me with questions: What’s the secret? How do you get through the rough times? How do you sustain good intention, good will, and good energy year after year? How do you sustain your prayer life over forty or fifty years?

I answered with an insight from Dietrich Bonhoeffer who, whenever he officiated at a wedding, would tell the couple: Today you are very much in love and think your love will sustain your marriage. It can’t. But your marriage can sustain your love. I advised the seminarians in the same way: don’t trust your present enthusiasm and good energy to sustain your priesthood; let your priesthood sustain your enthusiasm and energy. What’s at stake here?

A genuine commitment in faith, love, or service becomes a ritual container, an ark, like Noah’s, that existentially locks you in. And the fact that you’re locked in is exactly what makes the commitment work. You enter naively, believing that your good feelings and affective energies will sustain you. They won’t. Inevitably they will

be worn down by time, familiarity, boredom, misunderstanding, tiredness, wound, and new obsessions that emotionally tempt you elsewhere. So how can you sustain yourself in a commitment through periods of dryness? David Brooks’s answer is a good one - by building a structure of behavior for exactly those moments.

How do you do that? Through routine, ritual, and habit. Anchor your person and your commitment in ritual habits that steady and hold you beyond your feelings on any given day. Set rituals for yourself, certain ritual behaviors, which you will do regularly no matter how you feel.

For me, as a priest, some of these are pre-set. As a priest, you are to daily pray the Office of the Church as a prayer for the world, no matter how you feel. You are to celebrate the Eucharist for others regularly, irrespective of whether or not this is personally meaningful to you on any given day. You are to do some private prayer daily, particularly when you don’t feel like it. The list goes on. These rituals give you structure and healthy routines, and they are needed because in the priesthood as in every other vocation, there are times of fervor when feelings are enough to sustain you; however there are also desert times, bitter times, angry times, times when love falters. It’s then that a structure of behavior can steady and sustain you.

The same holds true for marriage. Couples have to build a structure of behavior for those times when love falters. To name one such ritual: a wife and husband need to have some ritual expression of affection when they wish each other a good day as they part each morning, no matter their emotions and feelings on a given day. That ritual is a container, an ark, which locks them in and holds them together until a better season and better feelings return. Ritual can sustain love when it falters.

In understanding this, we need to beware of “Job’s friends,” that is, beware of the various books and gurus on spirituality, prayer, and marriage that give you the impression there’s something wrong with you if your enthusiasm and emotional affectivity are not the glue that daily sustains you in your commitment. Simply put, these are books written by spiritual novices and marriage manuals written by someone confusing a honeymoon for a marriage.

Enthusiasm and good feelings are wonderful, but they can’t sustain you through a marathon. For a marathon you need to have long-practiced strategies to carry you through the long tiring miles in the middle and at the end.

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website [Ronrolheiser.com](http://Ronrolheiser.com).*

## Finding St. Paul’s confidence

While our calendar year ends in a little more than a month, our liturgical year is ending sooner.

The last Sunday of the liturgical year is always the solemnity of Christ the King, which this year is Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>. This solemnity is a reminder that death has been conquered, that God reigns, and that we are all held in his providential care. I know for me, this is a vital message to hear at the end of 2020.

In the midst of a chaotic and painful year, I know I’ve needed to be regularly reminded that Christ still reigns. I’ve needed to examine my conscience, asking myself if I’ve sought my hope in Christ, or in things that never satisfy: my own abilities, an illusion of control, and other distractions.

God’s reign is not an easy consolation, for it doesn’t promise us that everything will go according to our plans. As St. Paul says, “If for this life only we have

### Marriage and Family Life

By Adam Storey



hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

But the reign of God can, and should, give us St. Paul’s confidence when he says to the Romans: “What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?” (Romans 8:35).

This year has presented plenty of anguish, distress, and even peril, yet we have the knowledge that we “conquer overwhelmingly” through Jesus Christ who saves us.

I have to admit I don’t always have St. Paul’s confidence in this truth, and yet, by God’s grace, I’ve caught glimpses of it, and I pray often for the grace to see more clearly.

It is important to remind ourselves that we have victory in Christ and not despair in these challenging and uncertain times.

However, God is not a tyrant, and so he will only reign in my life if I invite him to be king of it. This requires my forsaking false gods. I get to experience God as trustworthy by actually trusting him. I come to know he’s reliable by relying on him. Lord, give me this grace!

Beyond the feast of Christ the King, it’s also worthwhile to reflect on how our liturgical year begins.

Advent is meant to help us prepare for the Incarnation, when we encounter the stunning reality that God chooses to live among us.

Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus joined the family of Israel, which is a pretty messy, imperfect, and broken family. He came to heal wounds, to free people from sin, and to bring new life. He seeks to dwell with us still, even in the midst of our own messiness.

Even in the midst of the challenges of this year, even in the divisions we experience, and even when we feel isolated from each other, still Jesus comes. I pray that this year we can be reminded of Jesus’ kingship and his presence.

May we have the courage to invite his reign and presence into our lives more fully.

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



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## McCarrick report continues Church's action toward accountability, transparency



Then-Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington speaks with the media at the White House in Washington in this Dec. 1, 2005, file photo. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

By Cindy Woodsen  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Although dogged for years by rumors of sexual impropriety, Theodore E. McCarrick was able to rise up the Catholic hierarchical structure based on personal contacts, protestations of his innocence and a lack of church officials reporting and investigating accusations, according to the Vatican report on the matter.

In choosing then-Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark in 2000 to be archbishop of Washington and later a cardinal, St. John Paul II likely overlooked rumors and allegations about McCarrick's sexual misconduct because of a long relationship with him, McCarrick's own strong denial and the pope's experience with communist authorities in Poland making accusations to discredit the church, the report said.

But, in fact, rumors of McCarrick's conduct led the Vatican to decide it would be "imprudent" to promote him when looking for candidates to become archbishop of Chicago in 1997, New York in 1999-2000 and, initially, of Washington in July 2000, the report said.

The text of the report makes clear that because the allegations involved behavior with adult men, not minors, both diocesan and Vatican officials did not consider McCarrick's actions abusive, made excuses for McCarrick based on his lack of real family ties and were overwhelmingly concerned with the church's reputation, not the health or safety of his alleged victims.

The "Report on the Holy See's Institutional Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to Former Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick" was released Nov. 10.

During his general audience on Nov. 11, Pope Francis said: "I renew my closeness to all victims of every form of abuse and the church's commitment to

eradicate this evil." After reading his brief comment on the report, the pope bowed his head and closed his eyes in silent prayer.

In February 2019, after a canonical process found McCarrick guilty of "solicitation in the sacrament of confession and sins against the Sixth Commandment with minors and with adults, with the aggravating factor of the abuse of power," Pope Francis dismissed him from the priesthood.

"I welcome the report of the Holy See's investigation into its knowledge and decision-making regarding Theodore McCarrick during his long career as a priest, bishop and cardinal," said Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. "We are studying these findings, and we are grateful to our Holy Father Pope Francis for his pastoral concern for the family of God in the United States and his leadership in calling the Church to greater accountability and transparency in addressing issues of abuse and the mishandling of abuse claims at every level."

In a statement issued with the report, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said the contributions of survivors were "fundamental."

Over the course of the two years it took to complete the investigation and compile the report, "we have taken significant steps forward to ensure greater attention to the protection of minors and more effective interventions to avoid" repeating errors of the past, he said.

Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori said the long-awaited Vatican report on former cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick "brings us to another moment of painful awareness of our church's past failures."

But "it also marks a new era of transparency in our church, which the lay faithful have rightly demanded," he wrote.



News & Events for Faithful Listeners



## Happy Thanksgiving!

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## Cardinals-designate facing quarantine, trip cancellations due to pandemic

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- As the consistory to create 13 new cardinals approached, the coronavirus pandemic forced two cardinals-designate to cancel their trips to Rome while one was placed in quarantine upon arrival.

According to the Philippine bishops' news service Nov. 11, Father Emilio Arbatin, spokesman for Archdiocese of Capiz, confirmed that given the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Italy, the apostolic nunciature in Manila gave

Cardinal-designate Jose Advincula "the option not to go to Rome for the consistory."

The consistory is scheduled to take place at the Vatican Nov. 28.

Father Arbatin said that although Cardinal-designate Advincula initially purchased a plane ticket to Rome, he ultimately decided to cancel. He also said that Cardinal-designate Cornelius Sim of Brunei canceled his trip to Rome due to the pandemic.

## Italian dioceses celebrate 190th anniversary of Marian apparition



Pope Francis places a rosary in front of a statue of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal during a private audience at the Vatican Nov. 11, 2020. The statue was about to begin a pilgrimage through Italian dioceses marking the 190th anniversary of Mary's apparition to St. Catherine Laboure. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

## Pope Francis congratulates president-elect

WILMINGTON, Del. (CNS) -- Pope Francis called President-elect Joe Biden early Nov. 12 to congratulate him on winning the U.S. presidential election.

"The president-elect thanked His Holiness for extending blessings and congratulations and noted his appreciation for His Holiness's leadership in promoting peace, reconciliation and the common bonds of humanity around the world," said a readout on the call

released by Biden's transition team in Wilmington.

Biden will be the nation's second Catholic president, after John F. Kennedy, who was elected to the nation's highest office 60 years ago, on Nov. 8, 1960.

On Nov. 7, the media declared Biden the winner of the Nov. 3 election, but as of press time President Donald Trump had not conceded.

## Game show host Alex Trebek dies at 80

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- When the death of Alex Trebek -- beloved longtime host of "Jeopardy!" -- was announced, celebrities and fans around the country took to social media to express their grief.

Trek, a Canadian-born American who was educated in Catholic schools, died of pancreatic cancer at his home Nov. 8. He was 80.

He was consistently described as calm, reliable, intelligent and personable with a dry sense of humor. He was known as a comforting presence in America's family rooms with a show that always stayed with its simple format.

In an interview last year with ABC's "20/20," he said: "Laughter is one of the greatest cures that we can possibly have. It's right up there with prayer, believe me."

He also said he wanted to be remembered as a "nice man" who "helped people through his charity work" and was "kind to everybody he encountered."

Trek was born in northern Ontario, Canada, and attended Jesuit schools there until age 12 when he went to a boarding school run by a missionary religious congregation.



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