

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## Dioceses collaborate on vaccination campaign



Photo by MJ Meister

The Rosmann family, of Shelby County, will share their vaccination stories in a collaborative effort of the four Iowa dioceses to encourage vaccination for the common good.

By Dawn Prosser &  
Anne Marie Cox

Out of a concern for their neighbors, the Rosmann family in Shelby County shared their COVID-19 stories as part of a four-diocese communications

collaboration.

The Iowa Catholic Conference and the Catholic dioceses of Iowa launched a statewide video campaign to encourage use of the COVID-19 vaccine. In a partnership with Catholic Cares, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and

the Iowa Department of Health, the campaign features Iowans from across the state who share their reasons for supporting vaccinations.

The Rosmanns – Daniel and Ellen; his brother David and his wife, Becky; and parents

Maria and Ron – are among those featured in the campaign sharing their COVID-19 stories along with a pastor from Storm Lake, a student at Buena Vista University, a factory worker and her grandson in Storm Lake, and a businessman in Davenport.

Iowa currently ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> in fully-vaccinated residents as compared to the rest of the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Also, the percentage of rural

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## New fund helps parishes come to the aid of another

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

The faithful in the Diocese of Des Moines are generous in helping others around the state, country and world when disaster strikes.

Now, the Diocese is establishing a way for the faithful to help their fellow Catholics and parishes when one faces a major struggle.

The Parish Solidarity Fund serves the people of God in the 23 counties of the Diocese of Des Moines when a need arises and the most local parish or faith community has exhausted resources and abilities to meet the need.

The most current need is at St. Mary Parish in Hamburg in the far southwest corner of the



Photo by Peter Soby

The new Parish Solidarity Fund will help children at St. Mary Parish in Hamburg, who need a place for religious education.

Diocese. Sandwiched between the Missouri River and the Nishnabotna River, the church experienced a major flood in 2019. The area has seen minor flooding in the past but nothing as damaging

as what happened in 2019.

The Flood of 2019 significantly damaged the church

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A new beginning

## Diocese takes time to stop, listen

By John Gaffney  
Contributing Writer

Last May, Pope Francis invited bishops from every diocese in the world to begin a process, called a synod, to spend time with the Catholic faithful reflecting upon communion, participation, and mission.

The term “synod” means to be on the same path with other disciples who follow Jesus Christ, the Way who leads us to abundant life.

This phase of the process in our diocese runs through April 2022. The first step in this process is listening to the faithful within parishes, schools, hospitals, and other church-related ministries, and to those on the margins of the

Church and society; in order to deeply hear from our sisters and brothers with various perspectives about the future of our local Church.

Pope Francis has shared the following vision and goals for this process.

• Vision: “By walking together, and together reflecting on the journey made, the Church will be able to learn from what it will experience which processes can help it to live communion, to achieve participation, to open itself to mission.”

• Goals: To listen, as the entire People of God, to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church.

We do this by listening together to the Word of God in Scripture and the living

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# Thanksgiving Aromas

Ah, the indelible experience of walking into a house where Thanksgiving dinner is being prepared! Even for someone as olfactorily challenged as I am, the singular cornucopia of smells that converge on this day—sweet potatoes adorned with marshmallows and cinnamon, the scalloped corn casserole, the fresh-baked rolls, the cranberry sauce, mushroomed green beans, sage stuffing, assorted pumpkin, pecan, and take-your-pick fruit flavored pies—and of course, the great bird at the center of it all—create an aroma that evokes memories and stirs tastebuds to prepare for the onslaught of flavors that await us when we finally sit down at table.

For most of us, the smells of this year's Thanksgiving feast will be ever more vivid when set against last year's COVID-19 induced fast—from food, and from the company of family, friends, and new acquaintances whose physical presences contribute their own unique and complementary array of scents. For scientific researchers such as Rachel Herz have pierced some of the mystery surrounding the reasons why we not only detect and interpret smells in a very personal way, but also emit our own boutique bodily scent prior to any skin products or perfumes we might apply.

For it seems there is a genetic complex of genes tied to our immune system that gives rise to our eminently unique and



By  
Bishop  
William  
Joensen

inimitable “fragrance” among the human community (identical twins excepted, of course). Hence, grandma and grandpa, teenage cousins and young couples, toddlers and newborns with their fresh ruddy skin giving rise to a pleasant scent that even a dirty diaper can only temporarily suppress: all contribute to the privileged sensation of being together in the same household for Thanksgiving.

In a spiritual sense, there is another Thanksgiving feast that is not limited to the fourth Thursday of November, but is perpetually and frequently available to persons of faith: the Eucharist. By God's intention, the celebration of the Eucharist is a graced composite of many aspects that impinge upon our consciousness, our appetites. It is both gift and sacrifice, medicine and food for the journey of life, stimulus for conversion and foretaste of the heavenly banquet, source of celebration and cause for Thanksgiving, ineffable Mystery and materially perceived (albeit, under the appearance of bread and wine) assurance of Christ's presence among us.

The Eucharist is a fragrant offering, meant to rise like incense before the throne of the heavenly Father. The re-presentation of Christ's Body and Blood at Mass is the catalyst and goal of God's love forming us into a pleasing household of faith. We become a communion of believers spanning heaven and earth where the varied degrees of personal holiness participate diversely in a body whose immune systems should be allergic to sin, rather than to one another.

At this writing, our U.S. Catholic bishops are engaged and may have already approved a message addressed to all of our country's Catholics: The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church. It is intended to help activate a revival of Eucharistic faith among us, to stir conversion and transform us into disciples who, having feasted on the Lord's love, are moved to bear this love outwardly in witness, service, and might I suggest, personal “scent” into places where the acrid and sweated odors of human struggles are intense. The bishops' draft message has itself created a “stink” in certain circles for the contentious spin that claims certain politicians would be targeted for exclusion from communion at Mass. This is not the case.

Among the inspiring and refreshing features of the draft message are the mention of particular modern-day saints whose Eucharistic faith and insights into the Mystery enhance the aroma

and awareness of the experience of being personally present at Mass. These saints include Dorothy Day, Teresa of Calcutta (no surprise there!), Elizabeth Ann Seton, and two others with whom you may or may not be familiar. I cite the draft document briefly.

Blessed Carlo Acutis was an Italian teenager and computer “geek” who died at the age of 15 and was beatified in 2020. He attended daily Mass and prayed in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. He was also fascinated by Eucharist miracles and created a website detailing these miracles, in effect becoming an “apostle of the Eucharist through the internet.” He emanated joy and humility to others whom he accepted and drew into friendship. Amid the wave of distractions that confront us each day, including teenagers perhaps more than any others, he focused on the main course of life: “To always be united with Christ: This is my life's program.” “The Eucharist is my highway to heaven.” His sudden illness and death did not spoil the recipe of his youthful sanctity, but seasoned it to perfection.

Likewise, José Sánchez del Río, another teenager from Mexico, was filled with the love of Jesus and his Church. He was imprisoned and ultimately martyred at the age of 14 because he would not renounce Christ and his Kingship. Others helped to smuggle the Blessed Sacrament into his cell along with a basket of

food, strengthening him to pray for the conversion of his persecutors. He resolutely declared, “My faith is not for sale.” St. José Sánchez del Río was canonized in 2016.

Blessed Carlo and St. José join all the rest of God's saints around the banquet table of the altar each time and everywhere Mass is celebrated in the churches of our Des Moines Diocese and around the world. We are privileged to count them among the household of our faith family, grateful that they enhance and elevate the rich aroma of our feasting and our capacity to be grateful for what God has bestowed upon us in his Son. Jesus mysteriously accompanies us whether we are buying groceries, preparing a meal, visiting the homebound or volunteering at a food pantry, washing dishes, or yes, simply kicking back and watching a football game and taking a nap. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we again coordinated our holiday so that it is truly a Holy Day, giving the cook and everyone else a chance to first take in Thanksgiving Day Mass, where it is not the turkey, but the Son of God himself, who is simultaneously the main course and the head chef? Whether the presiding priest chooses to use incense or not, our presence will make the experience even more fragrant for all who partake, even if we have yet to achieve the odor of sanctity.

## Aromas de Acción de Gracias

Ah, ¡la experiencia inolvidable de entrar en una casa en donde se está preparando la cena de Día de Acción de Gracias! Incluso para aquellos que, como yo, sufren de un mal olfato, la singular abundancia de olores que se

combinan en este día – camotes decorados con malvaiscos y canela, un guisado de elotes gratinados, los bollos recién horneados, la salsa de arándano, ejotes con champiñones, relleno de salvia, diversos pasteles de calabaza, de nuez, o de cualquier fruta que prefieran – y por supuesto, el gran ave al centro de todo – crean un aroma que despierta memorias y estimula las glándulas gustativas en preparación a degustar el embate de sabores que nos esperan cuando nos sentemos finalmente a la mesa.

Para la mayoría de nosotros, los aromas de la fiesta de Acción de Gracias de este año estarán más vivos, más aún cuando los comparemos con el ayuno forzado del COVID-19 del año pasado – desde la comida hasta la compañía de familiares, amigos, o nuevas amistades cuya presencia física contribuyen con su propia y única gama de aromas. Algunos investigadores científicos como Rachel Herz han descubierto algunos de los misterios que rodean las razones por las cuales no solamente detectamos e interpretamos los olores de una forma muy personal, pero también emitimos nuestra propia boutique de esencia corporal incluso antes de que apliquemos cualquier tipo de productos para la piel o perfumes.

Y parece que aunado a nuestra genética existe un complejo de genes en nuestro sistema inmunológico que da lugar a nuestra eminentemente única e inigualable “fragancia” entre la comunidad humana (con la ex-

cepción de gemelos idénticos, por supuesto). Consecuentemente, abuela y abuelo, primos adolescentes y parejas jóvenes, infantes y recién nacidos con su rosada piel que dan lugar a un placentero olor que ni siquiera un pañal sucio puede opacar: todos ellos contribuyen a la privilegiada sensación de estar juntos en la misma casa en el Día de Acción de Gracias.

Desde el punto de vista espiritual, hay otra fiesta de Acción de Gracias que no está limitada al cuarto jueves de noviembre, pero que está perpetua y frecuentemente disponible para las personas de fe: la Eucaristía. Por intención de Dios, la celebración de la Eucaristía es un compuesto de muchos aspectos de gracia que se impregnan en nuestras consciencias, en nuestros apetitos. Es tanto un don como un sacrificio, medicina y alimento para el camino de la vida, estímulo para la conversión y la preparación para el banquete celestial, fuente de celebración y razón para dar gracias, inefable misterio y garantía percibida materialmente (aunque bajo la apariencia de pan y vino) de la presencia de Cristo entre nosotros.

La Eucaristía es una fragante ofrenda, que debe elevarse como el incienso ante el trono del Padre celestial. La representación del Cuerpo y Sangre de Cristo en la Misa es el catalizador y la meta del amor de Dios formándonos en un placentero hogar de fe. Nos convertimos en una comunión de creyentes que abarca el cielo y la

tierra y en donde una amplia variedad de santidades personales participa diversamente en un cuerpo cuyo sistema inmune debe ser alérgico al pecado en vez de serlo de unos con otros.

Al escribir estas líneas, los obispos católicos de los Estados Unidos están trabajando o han aprobado un mensaje dirigido a todos los católicos del país: El Misterio de la Eucaristía en la Vida de la Iglesia. La intención es la de promover y activar un renacimiento de la fe Eucarística entre nosotros, el motivar la conversión y transformarnos en discípulos quienes, habiendo festejado del amor de Dios, estamos motivados a llevar ese amor exteriormente en testimonio, servicio y, si pudiera sugerirlo, una “esencia” personal a lugares en donde son más intensos los ácidos y sudorosos olores de los problemas humanos. El mismo borrador del mensaje de los obispos ha creado cierto “hedor” en algunos círcu-

los por el contencioso giro que clama que ciertos políticos podrían ser blanco de exclusión de la comunión en la Misa. Este no es el caso.

Entre las características inspiradoras y frescas de este borrador del mensaje se incluye la mención de ciertos santos de tiempos modernos cuya fe en la Eucaristía y visión en el Misterio, amplían el aroma y la conciencia de la experiencia de estar presente personalmente en Misa. Estos santos incluyen a Dorothy Day, Teresa de Calcuta (¡ninguna sorpresa!), Elizabeth Ann Seton y otros dos con quienes pueden estar o no familiarizados. Voy a citar del borrador brevemente.

El Beato Carlo Acutis fue un adolescente italiano adepto a las computadoras quien murió a los 15 años y fue beatificado en el 2020. Él asistía a Misa diariamente y oraba en adoración ante el Santísimo Sacramento. También estaba fascinado por los Mi-

THE CATHOLIC

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Official



Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointment effective Nov. 10, 2021.

Father Emmanuel Etim Offiong, of the Archdiocese of Calabar, Nigeria, with the permission of his bishop, to chaplain, Unity Point Hospital, Des Moines.

*William Joensen*

Faithfully in Christ,  
Most Rev. William Joensen, Ph.D.  
Bishop

*Jason Kurth*

Jason Kurth  
Chancellor



# Lifelong advocate, Deacon Bray dies

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Deacon Robert Bray was born into a family that didn't have much.

That upbringing influenced the direction of his life as he devoted time and energy to helping the poor, those unrepresented and those who were underserved, said his wife of 63 years, Kathleen Bray.

Deacon Bray died Oct. 1 at the age of 84.

Born in Manilla, Iowa, he married Kathleen when she was 19 and he was 21 in 1958. He graduated from Creighton Law School in 1962, where Kathleen said he was influenced by the Jesuits.

He went into private practice and became the assistant county attorney.

Deacon Bray attended a Cursillo retreat, which was life changing.

It gave "a different focus for what you believed in. I think it did affect a lot of the deacons we know," said Kathleen.

Deacon Bray became a part of the first group of men to be ordained permanent deacons for the Diocese in 1972. They were among some of the first in the country to be ordained to the diaconate, which was established following the Second Vatican Council.

He continued his passion for helping the needy.

"He was born into a family that didn't have much and he always had a keen affinity for poor people and people who were unrepresented and underserved, particularly minorities," said Kathleen. "He always just wanted to help them. That's been a thrust of what he's been about."

He was instrumental in bringing Legal Services Corp., which later became Iowa Legal Aid, to Council Bluffs.

"He gave up on his regular practice of law to become a lawyer for folks who didn't have a voice," said Deacon Bob Howe, who studied with the first diaconate cohort. "He was passionate about helping people overcome whatever their situations were in life and have a chance at something better."

"After a while, he began to feel like he was applying Band-Aids to all the problems," Kathleen said.

The Bray family moved to Des Moines, where Deacon Bray could lobby for clients of Legal Aid.

"I think that's where he felt like he could be more influential, talking to legislators about laws they were passing and bills and explain to them how it affected the underserved. He wasn't intimidated by power and position at all," said Kathleen.

Dennis Groenenboom, who worked at Legal Aid in Mason City, collaborated with Deacon Bray on legislative matters

"He was just a low-key, nice guy," Groenenboom said. "Clearly, he had connections with legislators. Relationships are what lobbying is all about."

Later, Deacon Bray served as litigation counsel for Allied Group Insurance and spent much of his time in social justice ministry assisting the Campaign for Human Development, preparing engaged couples for marriage, helping the marriage Tribunal, and ministering to men in prison.

Deacon Bray worked closely with former Bishop Maurice Dingman on a number of issues, said Father David Polich.

"He always was just very passionate about issues of justice and peace," he said.

"When he saw something that should be changed, he went right to the source," Kathleen said.

After 22 years in Des Moines, Deacon Bray and his wife moved to Lenexa, Kansas to be closer to family. Vaccinated family and friends were invited to a celebration of life on Nov. 6 in Lenexa.

His obituary said: "While he was an avid fly fisherman and a passionate reader, his greatest joy was being happily married to Kathleen O'Neill for 63 years."



Deacon Robert Bray

## Catholic Charities supporters enjoy new event



Photos by Anne Marie Cox

### Catholic Charities Breakfast with the Bishop celebrated decades of service.

Catholic Charities Breakfast with the Bishop in Council Bluffs was a celebration of more than 30 years of service in southwest Iowa.

"I truly have been blessed to work for Catholic Charities," said the retiring Diane McKee, who saw the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault program grow from a staff of one to 20 full time and eight-10 part-time staff over the

past 32 years. The program annually serves about 1,400 individuals in nine counties in west and southwest Iowa.

Catholic Charities Executive Director Barbara Decker thanked supporters for their financial assistance and many hours of volunteer help.

"You're glimmers of light, bringing hope to people," said Bishop William Joensen.

Catholic Charities sup-

porters evolve to see and meet community needs, and enlist others who share the same passion and professional competence, he said.

Pope Francis extolls the creative courage of St. Joseph.

Bishop Joensen said: "I think you really embody that."

**Pregnancy & Infant Loss Memorial Mass**  
**Mon, Nov 29 7:00 pm**  
**Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Church, Ankeny**  
**Presider Bishop William Joensen**



*Offered for all who have suffered the loss of a child.*

RECEPTION AFTERWARDS IN MARY'S PLACE; RESOURCES FOR HEALING AND EDUCATION PROVIDED. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT OFFICE OF MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE, 515.237.5056

PHOTO BY KAYLEE GARRETT ON UNSPLASH

  
**ADVENT**

[dmdiocese.org/advent2021](http://dmdiocese.org/advent2021)

Reflection videos for each week of Advent

Family prayers, activities and Advent plan

Advent Feast Day celebrations

and much more!



# Your gift can change someone's life

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

In a spirit of Thanksgiving, there are countless opportunities available for individuals, families and businesses to make a difference in someone's life by making a contribution before the end of the year: cash and noncash gifts.

For individuals and families that qualify, there may be tax advantages as well.

Gifts can benefit seminarians, students, parishes, schools, ministry and outreach programs.

For instance, the late Jeanine Rothermel, who through her estate, left funds for her parish, Catholic Charities, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Joseph Educational Center and the Diocese of Des Moines Deaf Ministry. It was a gift that did not cost her anything in her lifetime, but will help many in her memory.

As a direct result of her generosity, a child who is hearing impaired was able to go to Catholic Youth Camp for the first time aided by interpreters and an assistant.

There are multiple ways to make a gift. Donors can speak with their local parish to learn of the greatest needs. For diocesan ministries, a donor can go to [dm-diocese.org/give](http://dm-diocese.org/give). There, one can find opportunities that range from a general disaster relief fund to the seminarian special collection, and more options.

If you prefer electronic giving, gifts may be made online through credit card, through a donation of grain or stock, IRA distributions, memorial gifts or planned gifts. With grain at an all-time high, a gift of grain can help reduce your income. For more information, contact the Catholic Foundation at 515-273-5044.

For gifts such as stock, it typically takes a few days to process, said Sue McEntee, ex-

ecutive director of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa. It's recommended that such gifts are initiated by Dec. 23 to ensure they are fully executed by Dec. 31.

For those who are interested, the foundation is offering a webinar Dec. 2 on creative ways to use noncash assets as a giving tool. To register, go at [cfswia.org](http://cfswia.org) and click on "webinars" at the top of the homepage.

Catholic Charities is grateful for donations it has received throughout the year and welcomes end-of-the-year gifts for its general fund that supports its shelters, counseling program, food pantry and refugee resettlement program.

"We thank all of our friends and colleagues who have provided support to Catholic Charities this past year, including financial contributions, in-kind donations, and volunteer service," said Barbara Decker, executive director. "This expression of dedication and hope to help others in need enables Catholic Charities to serve our 23 counties in southwest Iowa. We appreciate the ongoing commitment by many to advance our mission to empower individuals and strengthen families."

The Catholic Tuition Organization has had an exceptional year in the Des Moines Diocese. It has used all of the tax credits earmarked for the Diocese in 2021. CTO is accepting pledges for the 2022 calendar year to help families afford a Catholic school education for their children. With a recent change in Iowa law, 75 percent of a donation to the CTO is returned in the form of Iowa tax credits.

Options for making an end-of-the-year donation: [dmdiocese.org/giving](http://dmdiocese.org/giving), [cfswia.org](http://cfswia.org), [CTOIowa.org](http://CTOIowa.org), [catholiccharitiesdm.org](http://catholiccharitiesdm.org), [svdpdsm.org/donations](http://svdpdsm.org/donations)



## It's for community, family, friends. Get vaccinated.

Daniel and Ellen Rosmann farm near Harlan, Iowa. From working the organic Rosmann Family Farms with Daniel's father and brother to managing their farm-to-table restaurant in town to parenting their children, Daniel and Ellen approach it all with a focus on others. That's why they chose to get vaccinated for COVID-19 and encourage others to do the same.

**It's not too late to make a difference.**  
Find resources and Daniel and Ellen's full story on video at [iowacatholicconference.com/getvaccinated](http://iowacatholicconference.com/getvaccinated).



Paid for by the Iowa Catholic Conference and the Catholic Dioceses of Iowa. Made possible in part by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Catholic Cares Coalition and the Iowa Department of Public Health.

## Join Bishop William M. Joensen and the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa

Experience an authentic and faith-filled adventure in several of Italy's most exciting destinations

Departure is Tuesday, October 18, 2022 and we return on Friday, October 28, 2022.

During our nine nights in Italy, we will visit Assisi, Florence, the Amalfi Coast, Pompeii and Rome. This exciting program will include daily Mass at local churches and basilicas. In the Eternal City, we will specifically visit the North American Pontifical College, attend the Papal audience, and join the Scavi Tour, and so much more! Participants should expect to walk during many of our tours as this tour will certainly help you get your daily steps in!

The trip price per person for the land portion of the program is \$4,785 and includes topnotch accommodations for 9 nights (based on double occupancy), breakfast and dinner daily, 3 lunches, ground transportation within Italy, all gratuities, entry tickets to iconic monuments and sights, and expert guides provided by our travel partner, Authentic Explorations. Airfare will be priced separately and trip insurance will be made available to participants who wish to purchase it at an additional cost. Single supplements available.



With only 45 spots available, this trip will book fast. If you would like more information, or to guarantee your spot(s) for this trip, email Gary Portuesi at Authentic Explorations at [gary@authentic-explorations.com](mailto:gary@authentic-explorations.com) or call 646-767-0089



## Diocese takes time to stop and listen

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Tradition of the Church, by listening to one another, and especially to those at the margins, and discerning the signs of the times.

In the Diocese of Des Moines, Bishop William Joensen has already entered into a strategic visioning process that already incorporated a great deal of what Pope Francis and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops asked of dioceses for the synodal process. The challenge was aligning the Diocese's processes with those outlined in the instructions that were received.

A few of the ways the Diocese of Des Moines will be able to align the synodal process with strategic visioning include:

- Using the strategic visioning process as our primary synodal process. The visioning process is deeply rooted in the movement of the Holy Spirit. It includes one-on-one deep listening sessions, focus groups, and monthly peer listening sessions from the strategic visioning steering committee members to those they know who are active and inactive in the Catholic faith. This process includes voices from all around the Diocese, every age group, those actively engaged and those on the margins.

- Using a survey tool to include those who were not able to participate in the strategic visioning process, but whose voice can help prioritize the needs of the diocesan community.

- As the strategic vision and core values of the Des Moines Diocese is formed, the synodal process will be an excellent model to help parishes, schools, hospitals, and other church-related ministries in creating a pastoral plan for implementation.

One of the hopes and expected fruits of the visionary process is that we will discover and offer ways in which we are already a synodal church who consults and accompanies one another, lay people, religious, and clergy alike.

Through these processes, rooted in the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church of southwest Iowa, we look forward to beginning a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls us to live out in the third millennium.

# Parish Solidarity Fund paves way

Continued from page 1

hall and the basement of the rectory, where religious education classes occurred. Insurance covered the repair and remodel of the church hall. The rectory, built in 1895, posed a problem. The cost to repair and bring it up to code was too extensive.

Earlier this year, St. Mary Parish tore down the rectory and still hopes to build a Religious Education Center.

The parish has been saving for this project for years but kept suffering setbacks. Despite significant fundraising efforts (more than \$700,000 in cash and pledges), unavoidable delays due to the 2019 flood and 2020 pandemic resulted in higher construction costs and delays due to supply shortages.

The Diocese is committed to seeing this mission territory of the state flourish and to constructing the Religious Education Center so that all might be nurtured in their faith. The Diocese has committed \$100,000 to support the project and seeks \$300,000 from the 79 parishes and faith communities to be contributed to the Parish Solidarity Fund to support St. Mary Parish.

"We have a long history of helping fellow parishes in our diocesan faith family," said Maureen Kenney, director of Stewardship.

- Parishes and parishioners rallied behind Holy Family Catholic School in Des Moines when it faced closure.

- Sacred Heart in West Des Moines and St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale provided substantial support for the start of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines.

- Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny offered substantial support upon the start of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, also in Ankeny.

- The faithful contributed \$50,000 during the height of



Photos by Peter Soby

Children at St. Mary Parish in Hamburg need help building a religious education center.

the pandemic to help the parishes most affected by the virus. Grants of various sizes were made to 10 parishes or schools within the Diocese, including St. Mary Parish.

"We are asking the faith community to take St. Mary Parish under their wing, and adopt this sister parish in our Diocese much like we might contribute to a special mission project in a sister parish in a different part of the

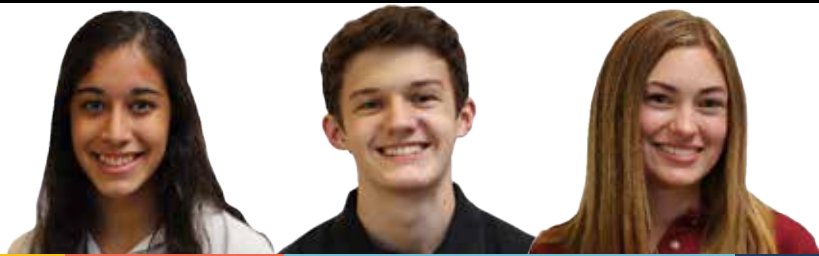
world," said Kenney.

In the coming weeks, each parishioner will be invited to support the effort and stand in solidarity with the people of Hamburg and their desire to form their young people in our faith. Some parishes are already leading the effort by making five-figure financial commitments alongside the diocesan commitment of \$100,000.

"The people of Hamburg have proven their resilience and faith in God's provision time and time again. Our support makes present our care for a member of the Body of Christ," said Kenney. Find more information and online giving to the fund at [dmdiocese.org/hamburg](http://dmdiocese.org/hamburg).



**we are maroons**



To keep our students on the road to success, Dowling Catholic High School relies on the generosity of those who support the We Are Maroons Annual Appeal. The Annual Appeal helps ensure our students and teachers have the resources they need to be successful and impacts every aspect of the DCHS experience, including faith and academic programming, student activities, athletics and the arts.

Now is the perfect time to make a gift to DCHS. As we approach the end of the year, we are seeing more and more supporters choose to donate:

- Shares of stock
- Donor Advised Funds
- Qualified Charitable Distributions from your IRA (donors 70 1/2 and older)

**These options may provide favorable tax benefits with the flexibility to support DCHS!**

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.



# Around the Diocese

## Nov. 20 Saturday Holiday Bazaar

WINTERSET – St. Joseph Parish is hosting a holiday bazaar from 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Lots of unique craft items made by our parishioners and a bake sale. Breakfast and lunch available.

## Christmas Gala

WEST DES MOINES - Iowans for LIFE will host a pro-life Christmas Gala, The Holy Family at Hy-Vee's Ron Pearson Center. The evening consists of a cash bar, a dinner, auction items, and Christmas entertainment featuring top talent including Gina Gedler and Tony Valdez. Monsignor Frank Chiodo will speak on the importance of the pro-life movement. Tables of ten/\$600; \$65/seat. Order online today: [IowansforLIFE.org](http://IowansforLIFE.org).

## Nov. 21 Sunday Musicians Mass

DES MOINES -- Musicians, liturgists, pastors and guests are invited to join the Des Moines Diocese Chapter of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians at a Mass and reception that begins at 3 p.m. at St. Ambrose Cathedral. A blessing of musicians will be at Mass. Following Mass, enjoy a reception and networking opportunities at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Contact Sarah Graf, [desmoinesia@npm.org](mailto:desmoinesia@npm.org) for further information.

## Dec. 4 Saturday Cookie Walk and Craft Fair

INDIANOLA – The St. Thomas Aquinas Altar and Rosary Society is hosting its annual Cookie

Walk and Craft Fair from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. For more information go to <https://fb.me/c/1uxtM2v1f>.

## Christmas Bazaar

DES MOINES – The Annual St. Theresa Altar & Rosary Society Christmas Bazaar will be from 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. at the Parish Hall, at Merle Hay and University Avenue. Use the west entrance. Shop a variety of popular vendors featuring art, handcrafts, gifts, jewelry, clothing, and more. Pick up delicious items at the bake sale. Light lunch is available. Admission is free. Masks are required for vendors and visitors this year.

## Catholic Charities Family Christmas Fest

DES MOINES – Catholic Charities' newest event will run 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Parents, grandparents and kids of all ages will enjoy this fun new event all in support of the programs and services provided by Catholic Charities. Come for games, crafts, a reading of the Christmas story by the bishop, a raffle for a hand-carved nativity and more. Questions? Go to [CatholicCharitiesDM.org](http://CatholicCharitiesDM.org).

## Dec. 7 Tuesday Lay Ministry Program

DES MOINES – Hispanic leaders who would like to participate in the next cohort for Lay Ministry Formation should attend an informational session at the Catholic Pastoral Center at 7 p.m. For more information, call 515-237-5011.

## Dec. 17-19 Bishop's Discernment Retreat

For men who are high school seniors or older and thinking about priesthood, consider attending Bishop's Discernment Retreat. Join Bishop William Joensen, Father Ross Parker and seminarians on retreat to learn more about life as diocesan priest. Email [vocations@dmdiocese.org](mailto:vocations@dmdiocese.org) for details.

## Other

### Cathedral Holy Hours

All are welcome to join Bishop William Joensen at St. Ambrose Cathedral on Mondays for an hour of Eucharistic adoration and evening prayer from 5-6 p.m. Evening prayer will be livestreamed at [Facebook.com/dmdiocese](https://Facebook.com/dmdiocese).

### Friends, Romans, Iowans podcast

Be sure to check out the Diocesan young-adult focused podcast "Friends, Romans, Iowans." Currently in the second season, this podcast aims to connect the Diocese by hosting casual conversations with Catholic leaders from around southwest Iowa. Episodes can be found wherever you get your podcasts, or at [dmdiocese.org/fripod](http://dmdiocese.org/fripod).

### Registration for CYC open

PANORA -- Registration for Catholic Youth Camp at the St. Thomas More Center opened Nov. 12 For information on how to register or apply for sponsorship, go to [stmcenter.com](http://stmcenter.com).

## Schedule of Feast Our Lady of Guadalupe FIESTA DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE

### COUNCIL BLUFFS

CORPUS CHRISTI  
Dec. 1 – Dec. 11 Rosary at 7 p.m.  
Sunday, Dec. 12  
6 a.m. Mañanitas and Mass  
11:30 a.m. Rosary  
12 p.m. Mass  
1 p.m. Reception

### DES MOINES

BASILICA OF ST. JOHN  
Saturday, Dec. 11  
5:30 p.m. Rosary  
6 p.m. Mass

### CHRIST THE KING

Saturday, Dec. 11  
Rosary 11 at 6:30 p.m.  
Sunday, Dec. 12  
5:30 a.m. Mañanitas with Mariachi  
2:30 p.m. Rosary  
3:15 p.m. Mass presided by Bishop William Joensen  
Dances and reception after Mass

### OUR LADY OF THE AMERICAS

Saturday, Dec. 11  
4 p.m. Mass in English  
6:30 p.m. Mass in Spanish  
7:45 p.m. Reception with food, dances, representation of the apparitions  
10 p.m. Procession to St. Ambrose Cathedral  
11 p.m. Rosary  
12 a.m. Midnight Mass presided by Bishop Joensen  
1 a.m. Amanitas

Sunday, December 12  
7 a.m. to 8 a.m. Adoration  
8 a.m. Mass  
11 a.m. Mass  
12 p.m. to 1 p.m. Music  
1 p.m. Rosary for children

ST. ANTHONY PARISH  
Novena Dec. 3-11 at 6:30 p.m.  
Saturday, Dec. 11  
6 p.m. Rosary  
7 p.m. Mass. After Mass, there is a procession to the hall and a reception  
Sunday, Dec. 12  
7 a.m. Mañanitas con Mariachi – Salon Parroquial  
8 a.m. Mass

### PERRY

ST PATRICK  
Novena Dec. 3-11 at 6:30 p.m. at St. Patrick Church  
Sunday, Dec. 12  
5 a.m. Mañanitas  
10:30 a.m. Mass  
After Mass, there is a procession to St. Patrick School's gym  
Reception with dances, music, and food

### WEST DES MOINES

SACRED HEART PARISH  
Sunday, Dec. 12  
11 a.m. – Procession around the church  
11:30 a.m. - Mass  
12:30 p.m. - Reception at school's gym featuring food and dances by Los Jóvenes Embajadores

*Winter Feast Days*  
WHAT TO CELEBRATE & WHEN

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2						

**December**

- 8 - Feast of the Immaculate Conception.
- 11 - Vigil Masses for the 3rd Sunday of Advent after 4 pm.
- 12 - The 3rd Sunday of Advent. This falls on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is required that the readings of the day be for the 3rd Sunday of Advent. Marian hymns, prayers and mention of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the homily are encouraged.
- 24 - Christmas Eve Masses after 4 pm.
- 25 - Christmas Day Masses all day. Parishioners may attend an evening Mass on this day that counts as their Sunday obligation only if they have already attended either a Christmas Eve or Christmas day Mass. One Mass cannot count for both obligations.
- 26 - Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
- 31 - Vigil Masses for the Feast of Mary, Mother of God after 4 pm.

**January**

- 1 - The Feast of Mary, Mother of God until 4 pm. / Vigil Masses for the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord after 4 pm.
- 2 - The Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord.

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**ADVENT**

[dmdiocese.org/advent2021](http://dmdiocese.org/advent2021)



# From AM station to a network, ICR positions for more growth

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Iowa Catholic Radio Network is celebrating 15 years of growth.

The network welcomed Executive Director Matt Willkom, who came to the station last February. A former seminarian with a master's degree in pastoral theology, his background in radio and diocesan communication helps him see how the station could grow in new directions.

Fifteen years ago, under St. Gabriel Communications, Iowa Catholic Radio consisted of one station: KWKY 1150 AM. The best way to reach people now, Willkom said, is on the FM dial.

"Study after study has shown over 90 percent of radio listenership is on the FM dial," he said. "In order for us to remain relevant and lay the groundwork for the next 15 years and beyond, we need to look at enhancing FM coverage in whatever way possible."

One way for the current network of Iowa Catholic Radio stations – 1150AM, 94.5FM, and 88.5FM – is to expand southwest by acquiring KLOX 90.9 FM in Creston.

"Through generous local support in the Creston area we were able to obtain that station," Willkom said.

At 500 watts, the station covers the rural community. However, the station's power could be increased to 100,000 watts, the largest an FM station

can be, thereby reaching into the southwest part of the Des Moines metro area, along large stretches of Interstates 80 and 35 and south into northern Missouri.

To expand the reach, the radio network needs to build a tower.

"We have a designated area to locate this tower," Willkom said. "But we are in need of some land to build on. We're looking for preferably a donor to either donate or lease to us this land at a relatively low cost. Building a tower will save money in the long run so we avoid paying tower rent to someone else, which can get expensive."

A second approach to boosting FM reach is by improving KIHS 88.5 FM, based in Adel.

Iowa Catholic Radio applied to the Federal Communication Commission for a power upgrade, which would take the station from 560 watts to 12,500 watts with a directional antenna. This would improve coverage in the western part of the Des Moines metro area and west to Stuart and beyond on the FM dial.

The station is expanding its production capability by moving from a temporary, one-studio office to a newer and larger two-studio office in West Des Moines.

"Along with the move, we're building our brand new studios that will not only provide a main studio and a production studio, to afford us the flexibility that we need in the interplay between host and producer, but also brand new, state-of-the-art broadcast equipment that is all



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Matt Willkom, who came to Iowa Catholic Radio last February, brings experience to the network as a diocesan communications director and program manager/producer at Spirit Catholic Radio Network.

ethernet based," Willkom said.

The new space, located next to Innervations Healthcare, will have a chapel and space for small gatherings.

Iowa Catholic Radio Network is also expanding its programming by recording the 7:15 a.m. weekday Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines and airing it at 10:30 a.m.

The network will celebrate its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Dec. 11 with a banquet with speaker

Paul Zucarelli sharing his near-death experience. The station will debut a panel display of the Vatican International Exhibit of the Eucharistic Miracles of the World, which will become available to parishes, schools or other groups as a tool to enhance Eucharistic fervor within the Church. Also planned is a pilgrimage cruise with Steve and Janet Ray and Father Mark McGeary, pastor of St. John and Paul Parish in Altoona, Oct. 13-23, 2022. It has also unveiled a new website and updated

its logo to reflect that it's a network of stations.

"Catholic radio has an incredible power to open up people's hearts to listen to the Holy Spirit," Willkom said. "Radio is such a powerful medium because you can be listening to it and doing something else or doing that alone. It can be your companion throughout the entire day and it is for many people."

## Advent Family Faith resources available

How do you talk to your kids about Advent?

Find [dmdiocese.org/Advent2021](http://dmdiocese.org/Advent2021) for a wealth of ideas and suggestions for little ones to teenagers.

The Diocese of Des Moines, in conjunction with the St. Joseph Educational Center, has created Advent family resources that offer hands-on activities, suggested conversation topics for the dinner table, and more.

"These simple ideas provide meaning to family traditions while incorporating prayer and acts of kindness," said John Gaffney, diocesan director of Evangelization and Catechesis.

There are three parts to the resources:

- Living Advent provides how-

to guides with opportunities for the whole family.

- Advent Faith Conversations offer a brief adult reflection and daily questions to spark family conversations of faith around the Advent wreath or dinner table.

- Additional resources include a blessing for the Advent wreath, a family prayer called Making Room for Jesus, Fostering Faith at Home suggests ways to live acts of love at home, a Jesse Tree Bible study guide, and more.



### Dias Festivos en el Invierno

QUE CELEBRAR Y CUANDO

Diciembre						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
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**Diciembre 8** - Fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción.  
**11** - Vigil Masses for the 3rd Sunday of Advent after 4 pm.  
**12** - El Tercer Domingo de Adviento. Este cae en la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Se requiere que las lecturas del día sean del tercer domingo de Adviento. Himnos Marianos, oraciones y se recomienda mencionar a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en la homilía.  
**24** - Noche Buena después de las 4 pm.  
**25** - Misas de Navidad todo el día. Los parroquianos pudieran asistir a la Misa vespertina en este día y cuenta como la misa dominical solo si ha asistido a una de las Misas de Noche Buena o una de las Misas de Navidad. Una Misa no cuenta como dos.  
**26** - Fiesta de la Sagrada Familia de Jesús, María y José.  
**31** - Misas de Vigilia para la fiesta de la Solemnidad de María, Madre de Dios después de las 4 pm.  
**Enero 1** - La Fiesta de la Solemnidad de María, Madre de Dios hasta las 4:00 pm. / Misas de Vigilia para la Fiesta de la Epifanía del Señor después de las 4:00 pm.  
**2** - La Fiesta de la Epifanía del Señor.

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# Shoebox ministry warms the soul

## Thinking about priesthood?

Bishop William Joensen is offering a unique opportunity Dec. 17-19 for men who are high school seniors or older and thinking about priesthood. Come to Bishop's Discernment Retreat and learn more about what discernment is and what life as a diocesan priest is like. Email Vocations Director Father Ross Parker at [vocations@dmdiocese.org](mailto:vocations@dmdiocese.org) or call 515-237-5050 for more information.



By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Good ideas spread. The folks who use Connection Café in downtown Des Moines benefit from one such idea.

A member of the St. Vincent de Paul group at Sacred

Heart Parish in West Des Moines heard about another group that filled shoeboxes with personal care items and distributed them to the needy.

The local SVDP group adopted the idea and started saving shoeboxes. Bill Ehm, who headed the project, didn't realize how well people would respond.

"When you come up

with an idea, you got to get out of the way," he said. "They just really jumped all over this."

Members gathered 15-17 personal care items ranging from gloves to warm socks, soap, toilet tissue, bus tokens and more. They filled 50-75 boxes and wrapped them with holiday gift-wrap for their first distribution in 2019. Included in the box was a

small card that explained who the shoebox came from and what the St. Vincent de Paul conference does.

The group prepared another 50 boxes in the summer and prepared more for distribution this month, their third fall shoebox give away.

"It's been a real good project," Ehm said.

## Catholic Daughters celebrate 101st anniversary

By Carol Hollenbeck  
Contributing Writer

Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court St. Anthony #330 gathered Oct. 24 at St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs for its 100th anniversary one year afterward.

The court began on Oct. 31, 1920.

Current officers of the court welcomed CDA Regent

Rita Carlson, CDA Secretary Julie Marlow, Council Bluffs Mayor Matt Walsh, chaplain Deacon John Pfenning (St. Patrick), and former chaplain Father Chuck Kottas (St. Peter). Thirty-two members gathered to observe the occasion.

Four Catholic Daughters with the longest membership were honorees, receiving a purple amethyst CDA rosary and a certificate. They are: Evelyn Seidler of Denton, Texas, member since

Nov. 6, 1955; Josephine Goefer of Council Bluffs, a member since Nov. 3, 1957; Marcella Lee of Bradenton, Florida, a member since Nov. 18, 1967; and Mary Alice Wickham of Council Bluffs, an active member in the court since Nov. 2, 1969. Wickham has given 52 years of charitable and prayerful work to the court.

The court serves all the Catholic parishes of Council Bluffs, St. Albert School, and nearly all the charitable organi-

zations of the city.

The reception was held to honor Wickham and the hundreds who have come before.

Carol Hollenbeck is the Court #330 Regent.



Mary Alice Wickham and Carol Hollenbeck



## PLAN NOW TO APPLY FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR 2022-2023

# Thankful AND Blessed

*CTO has been so blessed by our donors for utilizing all our tax credits for the 2021 year!! And in the quickest amount of time in our history! CTO is also so thankful to be able to help 2024 students in 2021-22 by giving out \$3,275,119 dollars in tuition assistance!!*

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- 1) CHOOSE THE BEST CATHOLIC SCHOOL TO FIT YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS... FIND THEM AT <https://www.dmdiocese.org/catholic-schools/find-a-school-near-you>
- 2) COMPLETE YOUR CTO APPLICATION FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE AT <https://fairapp.com> SCHOOL CODE: 450 PASSWORD: cto450

Tuition Assistance Available!

Asistencia de matrícula disponible!

The first qualification for families to receive tuition assistance is income. State law requires families to be at or below the following income guidelines. Once a family qualifies, they can receive tuition assistance based on their financial need.

*Family Size	**Maximum Income	*Family Size	**Maximum Income
2	\$ 69,680	5	\$124,160
3	\$ 87,840	6	\$142,320
4	\$106,000	7***	\$160,480

\*\*\* Add \$18,160 for each additional dependent

- 3) UPLOAD YOUR TAX RETURN ONLINE AT THE END OF YOUR CTO APPLICATION

APPLICATIONS FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE BEGIN FEBRUARY 1ST

The bottom line? It's for the KIDS... and their futures!

\* Family size includes parent(s)/guardian(s) and total number of dependents plus others living in household  
 \*\* Families/households are eligible for CTO assistance if their total income is at or below the above listed income level reported on Line 9 of federal income tax form



# Parish musician retires after 70 years of service

By Kathy Graeve  
Contributing Writer

Wilhelmina (Willy) Eckrich played the piano and organ for St. Patrick Church in Neola for more than 70 years before retiring this past September.

Eckrich began playing when she was 14 years old, having learned to play the piano from

the religious women who served at St. Joseph Catholic School, which had been next to the church. Her mother, Clara Fischer Talty taught her how to play the pipe organ.

She met and married her



high school sweetheart, Louis Eckrich, and they raised a family in the parish where she herself had been baptized. He would help her put the song numbers up every Saturday night when she played the keyboard for Mass and helped where needed.

The number of weekend and daily Masses she served, the weddings and funerals, prayer services and more are countless. The parish is grateful and cele-

brated Eckrich's many years of dedicated service at a Saturday evening Mass and at the fall Staley's Chicken Dinner where she was surrounded by family and friends. Honoring her were keyboard artist Bonnie Kramer and vocalist Heather Turner, who performed "Servant Song" in her honor.

Each note she played she dedicated to her family with the hope that they would continue

to live their faith.

"Church isn't really complete without music," she said.

Anyone wishing to send a card or prayer to Eckrich can address it to her in care of St. Patrick Church, 311 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Neola, Iowa 51559.

## Women's conference focuses on family

Remain strong in praying for your family, said speakers at the Iowa Catholic Radio Women's Conference on Oct. 14.

"Sometimes, we're thinking why isn't God talking to me, and the Lord is saying I've been talking to you and I've been hearing you. You need to get a little closer so you can hear what I'm saying," said Barbara Heil.

Kathleen Beckman, author of *A Family Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, said she sees a need to focus on the domestic church.

"Never give up, even if you're the only person in your family still walking with the Lord," she said. "You are the person God chose to be the vessel of faith."

There are challenges and obstacles put in the way of living a faithful life, she said.

"If you believe that you're going to draw close to God, you want to develop a prayer life, you want to develop a sacramental life, if you think you're going not do that without any resistance, you're wrong," she said.

But spiritual leaders encourage us to maintain the course.

Pope Francis said families are the domestic church where Jesus grows, said Beckman.

And she referenced St. Teresa of Calcutta in encouraging families to focus on the need within: "Perhaps they're not hungry for a piece of bread, perhaps our children, husband or wife are not naked or dispossessed, but are

you sure there is no one there who feels unwanted or deprived of affection?"

Organizer Leslie Teeling was pleased with the turnout.

"The subject matter was timely for a lot of people," she said. "We had really good positive feedback."

The event gave women something to think about as the pandemic continues.

"I think that people felt that there was something they could do about the distress they're feeling with the power of prayer, and the power of reconciliation," she said. "I think people walked away feeling they had some spiritual tools."

Remaining faithful and taking part in the sacraments will strengthen individuals for their families and the broader community, Beckman said.


"That Eucharist we just received, that rosary we just said, it's meant to affect change in us. They should see some growth in our virtue. We should not be acting the same after receiving Holy Communion or praying the rosary if we're really internalizing those prayers, if we're not just saying them with our lips; but living them in our hearts," she said.




Kathleen Beckman

# THANK YOU

to the




## Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa & Fr. Fabian Moncada!



Your grant enabled THE VEIL REMOVED to translate our Little Yellow Book into Spanish and distribute to Hispanic parish communities all throughout the Diocese. We also just finished recording the audio version of the book with Fr. Fabian and it will be made available to all parishes as well. He did an amazing job! THANK YOU!

★★★★★

"I learned a lot about Mass from this book. It is a great worship aid. It is brief and simple to understand yet so impactful!" - Jon C.



### The Veil Removed

★★★★★

"I experience Mass in a completely different way now after doing this 30 day reflection. Thank you!" - Cheryl

Go to [theveilremoved.com](http://theveilremoved.com) to watch the film and the SHOP page to see the Little Yellow Book.

Join us in celebrating 15 years of connecting listeners to Christ

# THE IOWA CATHOLIC RADIO NETWORK

# DINNER IN DECEMBER

## 12/11/2021

WITH GUEST SPEAKER PAUL ZUCARELLI

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# Good Book, Great Teacher: Faithful flock to Bible study

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Word has spread at St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs that longtime pastor Father Chuck Kottas offers a fantastic Bible study.

This past summer, 75-100 people consistently attended.

"I have taught every book of the Bible in these 23 years," Father Kottas said. "First of all, I never dreamed it would be this big. And second, I never dreamed it would be going on for all these years."

The turnout reflects the thirst among the faithful to learn more. Father Kottas feels a sense of humble pride at parishioners' dedication to learning the Bible.

"One time a visitor asked a technical question and somebody from the Bible study answered," Father Kottas said, marveling at their ability to grasp and retain the information year after year.

Parishioner and St. Albert Catholic Schools President Anne Rohling has been attending since its inception.

"He's a phenomenal teacher," Rohling said. "He is very educated. And he studies it

and works hard to present it in terms that we understand and also in a very pleasant [way]."

Longtime members Mike and Jean Thomas agree.

"We learn more in-depth things about the Bible," Mike said, noting that it goes beyond memorizing Scripture verses. "We've learned why the people did what they did. And we can see the parallels in the Old and New Testament and the Church today and how it's all built on tradition.

"It's a good time," Mike continued. "There's a lot of interaction at the Bible study."

Everyone seems to agree that Father Kottas does an excellent job preparing notes and explaining things in a down-to-earth and easy-to-understand way.

"It makes me understand the world today and makes me understand human nature a little better," Mike continued. "It makes me understand why Jesus came and why he had to sacrifice and be crucified."

Parishioners in attendance range from 30-somethings to 80-year olds. They enjoy gathering together for faith, fellowship, desserts and listening to Father Kottas.

"He's a fantastic priest," Rohling said. "We're very, very

fortunate that we have him at St. Peter. He treats all people the same – he doesn't care if you've got a million bucks or nothing. He is an outstanding priest and he loves his people."

Bible study is an opportunity to see everyone – especially those you often miss because of attending different Mass times. The sense of togetherness and community often feels like one, giant family, they agreed.

"Father Chuck has this unique ability [to reach people]," added Jean. "He knows every person in this parish, knows where their kids go to school, what they do, and he can remember their names."

And so when Father Kottas speaks – you listen, Jean added, because it's like a family friend is filling you in on something you want to know.

People often walk away feeling confident and equipped to share what they've learned with

others, added Mike.

The Bible study has enabled him to be a better witness to his faith. Mike notices it most at Legends, a local restaurant where he's a breakfast regular. He and fellow Catholics and non-Catholics alike share in food, but also

thoughtful discussion about faith, religion and politics.

"And [knowing the Bible] helps you to keep on the narrow and straight path and hopefully you get yourself into heaven," Mike concluded.



File photo

Father Chuck Kottas, pastor of St. Peter Church in Council Bluffs, draws a crowd to his summertime Bible study. Here's he's pictured celebrating Mass a few years ago at the St. Francis Worship Center.

# Prayerful song lives on in parish after organ cleaning

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

A 125-year-old parish pipe organ is back up and running after a serious cleaning.

Guided by Dobson Organ Builders, of Lake City, a team of volunteer parishioners removed all 720 pipes from Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Atlantic recently. Each pipe was cleaned and dents were removed before it was carried back up to the choir loft to be put in place.

Some of the wooden pipes were taken away for maintenance. A leather component on the top of the pipes was worn out. They were repaired and the organ is again fully operational.

Parishioner Dawn Freund volunteered to help move the pipes, some of which were big and heavy while others were light and small like flutes. She got to go inside the organ and found a lot of dust.

"They did an amazing job cleaning it out. It looked like a whole new organ," she said.

The parish is grateful to the many volunteers who helped over several days to carry pipes from the choir loft down stairs

and outside for cleaning and then brought them back up.

"It sounds fantastic," said one volunteer. "I always say when they play that pipe organ, they raise the roof. I think everyone sings better."

The organ is still the primary instrument parishioners sing to, which helps put them in touch with those who've come before them, said Father Trevor Chicoine, the pastor.

"The pipe organ in particular is fascinating," he said. "It has a great history in the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council says it has pride of place in the liturgy in part because of its heritage.

"All the great chants of the church were done on this in part because of the great repertoire of music. Think of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart; they were written to be played on an organ at Mass," he said.

The pipe organ helps a congregation sing in a way no other instrument can.

"If you hit a note on a piano, you get one note. One key, one note," he said. "On this, I can hit a note and I can get up to four different notes, the same note sounding four different octaves:

One below, two above. That enables a congregation with voices at different pitches to join in the singing in a way that sometimes a single note on a piano or a strum on a guitar can't. It's a really unique thing."

Cleaning the instrument was important to the parish because music is important in the liturgy.

"It lifts our hearts to God. It bands us together as a community when we sing with one voice, and it deepens our prayer," said Father Chicoine. "Even if it's music we're not necessarily singing. It deepens our prayer and adds a certain color to our prayer together. We encounter God through beauty. God, who is all good; God, who is all knowing; God who is truth and beauty itself is encountered through all of those things.

"Music helps us encounter God because it's through beauty that we get a glimpse of what heaven looks like," he said.

"It's amazing that this organ, first powered by a water pump in the sub-basement of the church (you'd open a little valve, let water come through, it would turn a thing and send air up through the pipes) is still a primary instrument that we sing to, that lifts our hearts to God, even as it does contemporary music written just a few years ago," said Father Chicoine. "It's the voice of the parish and we're glad it's sounding full throat again."



Top photo, left to right: Cathy Baragary, Kathy Sweeney, Janet Hascall and Debra Murphy help move and clean the organ pipes. Above: A representative of Dobson Organ Builders works on the organ.

## Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese's Victim Assistance Advocate is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps victims of 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.



## Milestone marriages honored

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

How do you make a marriage last?

Monte Clark, of St. Anne Parish in Logan, says it all comes down to sharing everything 50/50.

His wife of 64 years, Joan, added, "He never leaves without kissing me goodbye. Never."

The Clarks were among 61 couples celebrating landmark anniversaries across the diocese with Bishop William Joensen at Masses at St. Anne, St. Mary in Red Oak and St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines.

Ace and Mary Schrunk, of St. Patrick Parish in Missouri Valley say the key to their 57-year marriage is communication.

"One thing you do have to do, you have to talk," said Ace. "If you don't talk about things you aren't going to make it."

The Schrunks met at a dance and got engaged just three months later. His brother said it wouldn't last; they needed more time to think about it.

"We said we thought



(Left) Joan and Monte Clark celebrated 64 years of marriage, and (right) Mary and Ace Schrunk celebrated 57 years of marriage with a Mass with Bishop William Joensen at St. Anne Church in Logan on Nov. 7.

about it and here we are," Mary said. They got married, welcomed four children into the world and now look forward to reaching 60 years of marriage in just three years.

Bishop Joensen said love requires a deep faith and trust.

"To grasp what love asks of us is a profound brand of faith and trust that can't be downloaded or accessed from an app," he said. "Love's demands must be disclosed in a life lived patiently, dutifully and in collaboration with the Holy Spirit. It entails a

form of poverty of spirit, if not material poverty, that allows God's abundance to be revealed."

At the Mass at St. Anne Church, Merle and Theresa Kenkel, of St. Patrick Parish in Missouri Valley, celebrated 67 years of marriage. Among all three Masses across the Diocese, a total of 2,870 years of marriage were honored. The celebrations were

for anyone celebrating 1, 25, 50 or more years of marriage.

"Talk about a prophetic countercultural witness in a time when enduring commitment is more rare and hence, more precious than bitcoin," said the bishop.

"On behalf of the Church of the Diocese of Des Moines, as part of God's harvest, we say

thank you and congratulations," he said. "May God continue to grant you many years and may you continue to inspire young people and not-so-young people to desire the sacrament that leads all spousal lives up the ladder to heaven and also inspires us to see and be seen by God as you are, saints-in-the-making and citizens of the kingdom of God."

## Weekly Mass in Extraordinary Form allowed to continue at St. Anthony

After prayerful discernment, Bishop William Joensen will allow St. Anthony Catholic Church in Des Moines to continue its weekly Latin Mass using the 1962 Missale Romanum, formerly referred to as the Extraordinary Form.

Bishop Joensen sent a letter to the pastor, Monsignor Frank Chiodo, and Father Guthrie Dolan on Sept. 21 explaining his decision, which is in accord with Pope Francis' apostolic letter Traditionis Custodes.

Pope Francis revised rules on when the 1962 Missale Romanum could be used. The Holy Father was responding to perceived discord and division manifested in some parts of the

Church that was attributed to the use of the 1962 Missale Romanum. The new norms affirm that it is the diocesan bishop, who guards the liturgical life of the Diocese and can authorize the use of the 1962 Roman Missal in his Diocese.

Bishop Joensen's letter noted that in the Diocese of Des Moines, there has not been conspicuous liturgical discord and division.

"St. Anthony Parish has demonstrated a great devotion both to the sacred liturgy and to communion with the greater Church in the weekly Sunday celebration of Mass according to the 1962 Missale Romanum," he wrote. "For the good of the faith-

ful who attend that Mass, I desire this means of spiritual edification for all participants – lay and clergy alike – to continue."

The St. Anthony Mass that uses the 1962 Missale Romanum is celebrated on Sundays at 5 p.m. The Mass can be celebrated on Holy Days of Obligation and other feast days, but not during the Easter Triduum.

"The Diocese is blessed with diversity of liturgical styles and expression, yet remains united in our adherence to the same liturgical rite," wrote Bishop Joensen. "We witness the fruit of deepened communion, rather than division, among us."



Photo by Adam Storey

Couples with milestone anniversaries were honored at a Mass at St. Ambrose Cathedral on Oct. 30.

### Part-Time Director of Music Ministry

St. Mary's Church in Pella, IA is a vibrant Catholic parish of 300 households seeking to hire a part-time Director of Music Ministry. This position is responsible for planning and coordinating the parish's music ministry in order to facilitate the full and active participation of the assembly in the liturgical life of the Church. Candidates must have a high degree of proficiency in the use of the piano, an understanding of the Catholic Liturgy and the role of music in the Liturgy, familiarity with a wide range of music genres from traditional to contemporary and "Praise and Worship," be a capable choir director, and possess good organization and people skills. Hours will vary depending on the liturgical season, averaging approximately 10-20 hours a week. Compensation to be based on candidate's experience and educational background. Position must be filled by March, 2022. Please mail cover letter, resume, and references to: Director of Music Ministry Search Committee, St. Mary's Church, 726 218<sup>th</sup> Place, Pella, IA 50219.



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# Invest time in your marriage

As I write this, my wife and I are only a couple days away from heading to a couple's retreat at Broom Tree Retreat and Conference Center in South Dakota.

It has been eight years since our last couple's retreat, the World Wide Marriage Encounter that we attended in Ankeny.

A couple of days ago we received a questionnaire, which asked us to tell some of our story, our greatest joys and challenges, and what we hoped to get out of this retreat. Filling out the survey got me thinking about our time away, and I have to say I have not been this excited for a particular weekend in a long time!

With four kids running around the house, and a fifth on the way, Kara

## Marriage and Family Life

By Adam Storey



and I can often feel like our marriage is on autopilot. We barely have enough time to discuss whose picking up the kids, or what needs to go on the grocery list, let alone a conversation about our marriage, our spiritual lives, or dreams for the future.

So these next three days will be a welcome reprieve, a chance to set aside the noise of daily life and to dive deeply

into our love, our challenges, and where God is acting in the midst of it all.

The questionnaire reminded me how much Kara and I need this time, and just as we need it, I think all couples need to take time for each other on a regular basis.

We need times to set aside distractions, to waste time together, and to be vulnerable with each other. God's plan for marriage is more than just "getting by," or an endless list of precariously balanced obligations.

He wants us to flourish and grow.

He wants us to continually deepen our communion with our spouse.

He wants us to be aware of his love and grace. And that happens when we

make time for each other.

When we find space and set aside urgent, but ultimately unimportant things, we are able to be attentive to each other, and attentive to God.

This retreat was Kara's idea, but I'm so grateful that she signed us up!

My prayer for the couples of the Diocese of Des Moines is that we'll all regularly make time for our marriages. I'm confident that it will bear great fruit now, and eternally!

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

## The yearning of love

When life doesn't seem to go as expected, we understandably look for a back-up plan; this might be called a contingency plan.

From God's perspective, we are all living in a contingency plan, i.e... Adam in the Garden of Eden; the Israelites crossing the Red Sea; and Jesus' death and resurrection. We are all part of something much larger than we can realize.

Everything exists because it is contingent upon something else. Contingency is defined as something occurring or existing only if certain circumstances are the case; or, as a group of people, united by some common features, forming part of a larger group. We know that the moon is contingent to the Earth as the planets are to the sun (as to the galaxy, solar system, universe, etc). Man is contingent to mankind, the human species. We are all subjectively contingent to some system or group. We are not simply a person that is contingent upon the self.

Emotions, similarly, are contingent upon stimuli, whether causation is internal or external. Hatred exists as the re-

## Let's Get Psyched

By Deacon Randy Kiel



sult of man's fall from grace through sin, thus, hatred is not contingent upon itself, but is contingent upon its source – sin.

Similarly, we can look at love. Love is not contingent upon itself but is contingent upon its source – God.

Love exists because of God. He created us in his image therefore we humans are the "lovingest" creatures of all his creation.

Love is not just love itself, but rather love is God and God is love.

The only thing or creature that has ever existed on this earth that was not contingent to something else was the person of God as man, Jesus Christ.

While we can see the innumerable

ways that love is expressed and demonstrated among us, we realize that love is even more than we see evidenced.

Love is more than feelings of affection, sunset strolls, rocking a colicky baby, a special gift, fixing leaky faucets, school conferences, and even more than a beautiful wedding gown.

But love is compassion – a forbearance put into the hearts of man's spirit to search for places and people to be given to. Love yearns to be given away. Love is more than we as humans can ever express.

If we think carefully, we might even remember a time when the love inside felt so large and so strong that it could have burst.

When we are totally yielded to the will of God, it is then that we know the truth of love. Love is not simply a noun but a proper noun. It is and was firstly a "who" before it was ever a "what". Love is God. Love is Jesus. He is yearning to give his life away for the sake of all of us. And he did!

Love is giving a compliment when feeling the urge to criticize. Love is

extending patience when tolerance feels tapped out and being courteous while yet offended.

Love is a matter of free will and choice when one is surrendered unto Love himself.

Our love for God draws us to believe in him even when faith feel difficult, to trust him when doubt is strong, and to praise him when tempted to complain. Yet, love is so much more.

Our actions are finite, but love is infinite; it is eternal. It goes on and on and it grows. Life is contingent upon love and love is God. May it be our yearning prayer be to be fully given away through love.

Love, He never ends. Love, He never fails. Thank you, God, for being love.

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

## Rejection letters and the spiritual life

Just as "Tiger King" became a defining show of our early quarantine days and "Bridgerton" carried us through the first Covid winter, "Squid Game" has dominated this fall. It's not hard to see how the Korean drama resonates more deeply in the pandemic's long shadow.

The nine-episode Netflix series depicts a survival game with 456 participants desperate for money. It's dark and riveting.

Every day new headlines tout the show's global success, shattering record after record. "Squid Game" became the first Korean show to reach the No. 1 spot on the U.S. Netflix chart. Now it's poised to overtake "Bridgerton" and become Netflix's biggest show ever.

Not bad for the show that almost didn't launch, declined by studio after studio for the last decade.

Hwang Dong-hyuk, the writer, started drafting scripts while living with his mother and grandmother. He had to halt the project when he found himself – like the game's contestants – strapped for cash. At one point he sold his laptop for \$675.

## Twentysomething

By Christina Capecchi



Pitching the show was no easier. Prospective investors and actors found the plotline implausible. Then the coronavirus brought us closer to our mortality and underscored the public-health repercussions of the wealth gap.

"The world has changed," Dong-hyuk told The Wall Street Journal. "All of these points made the story very realistic for people compared to a decade ago."

Dong-hyuk is now in good company, among literary superstars like Louisa May Alcott, Agatha Christie and J.K. Rowling, all of whom faced repeated rejection early in their careers.

I've been thinking about Dong-hyuk's story as "Squid Game" continues to make news. It's hard to admit, but I don't

possess the same kind of persistence.

An exciting new creative pursuit presented itself last spring that, by its nature, has a slow timeline. Not 10 years, but much longer than my typical writing. And I've let it slide to a back burner that conveniently allows denial and good intentions to keep simmering.

The church teaches that there are four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Fortitude is defined as forbearance mixed with courage – to bravely press on. It's a virtue we sorely lack in this Insta-age: Instagram for an instant telegram, Instacart for an instant grocery cart. We expect same-day deliveries, immediate results, click and procure. Anything slower feels irrelevant. Isn't that a shame?

Because spiritual growth doesn't happen on the first try. Good things are worth working at and waiting for. They mean more.

Jennifer Dukes Lee, a Christian writer from Iowa, is reminding me of this. Her message feels like a permission slip to drop out of the hustle culture: "You were not made for speed."

Her new book "Grow Slow" and its accompanying Bible study explore this in depth, drawing on the wisdom she's gleaned from farming.

"This is the important work of cultivation – learning to trust the One who is in charge of the growth," Jennifer writes. "If you're like most people, you want things faster, sooner, easier. But life isn't a reality TV competition where someone is suddenly discovered in front of a live audience. As I reflect on God's cultivating work in me, I believe that the quality of the fruit I produce is directly proportional to the time God takes to shape me."

I want God to take his time shaping me. I'm working on the patience and perspective that make way for persistence. I'm trying to see red lights as yellow lights, to hear "no" as "not yet." Maybe something better is around the corner – when it is ready, when I am ready, when the time is right.

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



# Finding happiness comes with challenges

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

This question has made me think and feel very philosophical. Really, is there any perfect happiness?

I am an eternal optimist. But I have to be realist.

I did not sleep much last night. My phone rang about 1 a.m. My brother had sent a text message that an uncle, a gem of a man, had just passed away. I sent a condolence message to his son, my maternal cousin. Unable to sleep as sadness came over me.

But soon I realized that this sadness followed happy news from yesterday. Another uncle had been discharged from the hospital.

Where is the perfect happiness?

## Guest column



By Udaya Kabadi, MD

When I was around 10 years old, my Dad made me read a book with messages of wisdom. I remember two of them vividly.

One: There were two neighboring families. One family was having a big party, a lavish celebration because the head of the household got promoted to a new job. No bounds to their happiness and joy!

In contrast, there was extreme

sadness in the household next door because the bread winner was fired from the same job assignment that the neighbor was promoted to.

Thus, the extreme happiness in one family was compensated by the extreme sorrow in the other. Where is the perfect happiness?

Two: There were two families. Arrival of a newborn, a bundle of joy in one family, an extremely joyful occasion. A huge celebration! At the same time, friends next door were preparing to bury the head of the household. Once again, where is the perfect happiness?

On a personal note, myself and Mary were abundantly happy and grateful when our older son Saj was born. But we never forgot that this very joyous occasion

neutralized the extreme sadness of yester year when we had lost a beautiful baby girl.

I believe even Jesus wept with both sadness and happiness. There is no flowering spring without gray winter, no sunrise without dark of the night, no resurrection without crucifixion and death.

Be desirous of perfection and put in your very best efforts to achieve it. Always though, realize that we may never get to perfection despite our most sincere and diligent efforts.

We will be cherished for our desire and efforts to create the perfect happiness. We all must try.

*Dr. Udaya Kabadi, author of Rain Drops, is a member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines.*



## I've Been Wondering...

**Q.** *Our college age son has told us he is gay. His entire life he has been active in church but no longer attends because he does not feel he is welcome. As Catholic parents, how do we deal with this? We don't agree with this lifestyle but since we love him we are not going to abandon him. At Mass, we say and sing that all are welcome, but unless he lives a celibate life, he isn't welcomed as a Catholic. He did not take a vow of celibacy like a priest, so is it right to exclude him? As parents, how will we be judged by God? The God I believe in loves all his children, and welcomes them. Please give us guidance on this. Thank you.*

**A.** **I AGREE COMPLETELY** with your statement that God loves all his children, and welcomes them. Conversations about homosexuality seem much more civil these days. It wasn't always so. Nearly everyone has a friend or a relative who is gay or lesbian. The Supreme Court has legalized same-sex marriages. What are Catholics to do? In 1997, the U.S. Conference of Cath-

olic Bishops issued a statement about this question called "Always Our Children."

It recommends that church ministers "Welcome homosexual persons into the faith community, and seek out those on the margins. Avoid stereotyping and condemning. Strive first to listen. Do not presume that all homosexual persons are sexually active. Learn more about homosexuality and church teaching so your preaching, teaching, and counseling will be informed and effective." It added that, "it is not sufficient only to avoid unjust discrimination. Homosexual persons 'must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.'"

Nine years later, the 2006 Guidelines for Pastoral Care issued by the bishops' conference said it was "sad to say" that many LGBT Catholics felt unwelcome, rejected, and alienated from the Church. The document called for "outreach programs and evangelization efforts... to be mindful of such persons," and said that a "welcoming stance of Christian love by the leadership and the community as a whole

is essential for this important work. It also says: "It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action.

Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs."

Pope Francis has reminded us that one of our chief obligations as followers of Jesus is to "accompany" people in their personal journeys. From your question, I can tell that you are "accompanying" your son admirably. If God judges you, it will be on the ways that you show your love and care for him. I would suggest that you and he speak with a compassionate priest who can assure him that he is most welcome in the parish, a place where we accompany each other in responding to the call to conversion, holiness and friendship with Christ.

**Q.** *Recently I was at a lecture. The speaker was addressing the topic "Name of Jesus". He said that there was no letter "J" equivalent or "J" sound in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, or English (before the 17th century) so the name for salvation (see Acts 4:10+) could NOT be 'JESUS' because Peter was talking to the Sanhedrin and all the people of Israel*

*– Hebrew and Aramaic speakers. Could you comment? (Edited for brevity.) – Jim*

**A.** **YOU'RE CORRECT ABOUT** the "J" sound. However, the name of Jesus in Greek and in Latin is pronounced as "yay-sooz." In English and French and Spanish the name is pronounced according to those languages. In Hebrew the name Jesus means "God saves." Jesus himself doubtless never used a "J" sound when he was speaking Aramaic or Hebrew. Priests who celebrate the Eucharist in English pronounce the name as "Jeezus. French pronounce the name "Zhay-zoo." And Hispanic priests pronounce the name "Hay-SOOS." Many people during the time of Jesus and long past didn't read or write. In the section of the Acts of the Apostles that you cite, Peter would have pronounced the name of Jesus in the vernacular language – without a "J" sound.

*Father John Ludwig is a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. Do you have a question for him? Send it to communications@dmdiocese.org or mail it to The Catholic Mirror, Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.*

## Beware of your inner circles

By Father Ron Rolheiser

*No man is an island.* John Donne wrote those words four centuries ago and they are as true now as they were then, except we don't believe them anymore.

Today more and more of us are beginning to define our nuclear families and our carefully chosen circle of friends precisely as a self-sufficient *island* and are becoming increasingly selective as to who is allowed on our island, into our circle of friends, and into the circle of those we deem worthy of respect. We define and protect our idiosyncratic islands by a particular ideology, view of politics, view of morality, view of gender, and view of religion. Anyone who doesn't share our view is unwelcome and not worthy of our time and respect.

Moreover, contemporary media plays into this. Beyond the hundreds of mainstream television channels we have to choose from, each with its own agenda, we have social media wherein each of us can find the exact ideology, politics, and moral and religious perspective that fosters, protects, and isolates our island and makes our little nuclear clique, one of self-sufficiency, exclusivity, and intolerance. Today we all have the tools to plumb the media until we find exactly the "truth" we like. We have

come a long way from the old days of a Walter Cronkite delivering a truth we all could trust.

The effects of this are everywhere, not least in the increasingly bitter polarization we are experiencing vis-a-vis virtually every political, moral, economic, and religious issue in our world. We find ourselves today on separate islands, not open to listen, respect, or dialogue with anyone not of our own kind. Anyone who disagrees with me is not worthy of my time, my ear, and my respect; this seems to be the popular attitude today.

We see some of this in certain strident forms of "cancel culture" and we see much of it in the increasing hard, inward-turned face of nationalism in so many countries today. What's foreign is unwelcome, pure and simple. We will not deal with anything that challenges our ethos.

What's wrong with that? Almost everything. Irrespective of whether we are looking at this from a biblical and Christian perspective or whether we are looking at it from the point of view of human health and maturity, this is just wrong.

Biblically, it's clear. God breaks into our lives in important ways, mainly through "the stranger", through what's foreign, through what's other, and through what sabotages our thinking and blows

apart our calculated expectations. Revelation normally comes to us in the surprise, namely, in a form that turns our thinking upside down. Take for example the incarnation itself. For centuries people looked forward to the coming of a messiah, a god in human flesh, who would overpower and humiliate all their enemies and offer them, those faithfully praying for this, honor and glory. They prayed for and anticipated a superman, and what did they get? A helpless baby lying in the straw. Revelation works like that. This is why St. Paul tells us to always welcome a stranger because it could in fact be an angel in disguise.

All of us, I am sure, at some point in our lives have personally had that experience of meeting an angel in disguise inside a stranger whom we perhaps welcomed only with some reluctance and fear. I know in my own life, there have been times when I didn't want to welcome a certain person or situation into my life. I live in a religious community where you do not get to choose who you will live with. You are assigned your "immediate family" and (but for a few exceptions when there is clinical dysfunction) like-mindedness is not a criterion as to who is assigned to live with each other in our religious houses. Not infrequently, I have had to live in community with someone who I would not, by

choice, have taken for a friend, a colleague, a neighbor, or a member of my family. To my surprise, it has often been the person whom I would have least chosen to live with who has been a vehicle of grace and transformation in my life.

Moreover, this has been true for my life in general. I have often found myself graced by the most unlikely, unexpected, initially unwelcome sources. Admittedly, this has not always been without pain. What's foreign, what's other, can be upsetting and painful for a long time before grace and revelation are recognized, but it's what carries grace.

That is our challenge always, though particularly today when so many of us are retreating to our own islands, imagining this as maturity, and then rationalizing it by a false faith, a false nationalism, and a false idea of what constitutes maturity. This is both wrong and dangerous. Engaging with what is other enlarges us. God is in the stranger, and so we are cutting ourselves off from a major avenue of grace whenever we will not let the foreign into our lives.

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted at ronrolheiser.com.*



Building bridges not barriers

## Bishop Zinkula and deacon candidates go to the U.S.-Mexico border

By Barb Arland-Fye  
The Catholic Messenger

Thirteen-hundred miles from home, a group from the Diocese of Davenport on a border immersion trip encountered a young woman with two kids and a car with a flat tire in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

The group, which included five deacon candidates, their formation director, diocesan bishop and immersion experience leaders, stopped to change the tire.

The unexpected encounter reinforced the purpose of the Iowans' journey: to witness life on the border, to learn about the experience of migrants, and to better minister to migrants back home. "It is one thing to hear their stories, but it is quite another to see and be at one of the main crossing points from Mexico to the U.S.," said Bishop Thomas Zinkula.

"It is important to talk to and learn from people who are ministering to forcibly displaced

persons at the border and to the migrants themselves."

Their journey began Nov. 2 with a 20-hour drive in a van from Davenport to El Paso, Texas, where they took up residence at the Encuentro Project retreat house. The Encuentro Project provides a faith-based, multifaceted immersion program in the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez border region to give participants a deeper understanding of the complex migration reality and of the community. "Encuentro" is a Spanish word that means encounter.

The five deacon candidates — Kent Ferris, Ryan Burchett, Andy Hardigan, Gary Johnson and Andrew Reif — began and ended each day with prayer and theological reflection with their formation director, Deacon Frank Agnoli, and Bishop Zinkula.

They met with Bishop Mark J. Seitz of the El Paso Diocese, a vocal advocate of immigrants and refugees who most recently opened up space at the

chancery for Afghan refugees. When Ferris asked Bishop Seitz about opening up the chancery to refugees, the bishop responded, "Why not?"

The deacon candidates visited a Catholic church in El Paso just blocks from the border bridge that connects El Paso and Ciudad Juarez. They learned stunning details of prejudice against Mexicans in the first half of the 20th century. They met with Bishop J. Guadalupe Torres Campos of the Ciudad Juarez Diocese to hear his assessment of the border situation. Clergy and lay people who work with migrants spoke with passion and knowledge about the difficult lives of people in transit.

The dioceses organize a border Mass to "remind us, missionary disciples of Christ, that we are primarily called to live in communion," the El Paso Diocese's Facebook page states. "For our Catholic faith, there is no 'us and them,' but one family of God."

## Dioceses collaborate on vaccine campaign for the common good

Continued from page 1

Iowa residents vaccinated lag behind the state's urban areas. Iowa Catholics are slightly above the average when compared to other segments, yet some Catholics still struggle with the decision.

### Campaign origins

Kent Ferris, social action and Catholic Charities director for the Diocese of Davenport originally had the idea of working on faith-based messaging to encourage vaccination after conversations with the University of Iowa Medical Center staff and Tom Chapman, executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference. The group decided to apply for a Catholic Cares grant to assist with the messaging.

"We realized that might be something the four bishops would be interested in together. We knew they had put together their comment statement last December. All of them were very encouraging toward people getting the vaccine with the understanding that some people would decline," Chapman said, noting he presented the idea to the bishops, who agreed to collaborate.

Chapman, Ferris, the diocesan communication directors along with Deacon Frank Agnoli, M.D., of the Davenport Diocese, began to meet via video conferencing to put the plan into action. M.J. Meister, of MJ & Associates marketing firm in Des Moines, was recruited to join the team and add her creative and technical ex-

pertise.

The goal of the campaign, explained Ferris, is to raise awareness among rural Iowans about the vaccine by offering real human experiences that are calm and thoughtful on a topic that has become controversial.

"Our messages are grounded in the Catholic and Christian belief in the common good," Ferris explained. "For those who still have questions about whether or not getting the vaccine will make a difference, we want people to know that their friends and neighbors across Iowa believe in the vaccine ... It's worth our efforts to join the conversation across our state."

Meister noted she was motivated to volunteer her time and talent to the campaign to communicate messaging from Iowans who have received the vaccine out of concern for others.

"We want to show the conversation out there doesn't represent us," she said. "These are stories of Iowans not on the news, not being controversial. I wanted to contribute to this effort and help the voices of regular Iowans to be heard."

### Stories across the state

Daniel and Ellen Rosmann, farmers near Harlan, and their family agreed to share their story of losing family member and Sioux City Diocese retired priest Father John Vakulskas to COVID-19 last year and why they believe in the vaccine.

Ryan Burchett, small

business owner from Davenport shared his story of why he feels strongly about the vaccine as one way to protect the employees, families, customers and friends of The Mississippi River Distilling Company.

Meléndez shared that she was encouraged to receive the vaccine to continue her volunteer work in local schools. The college student said she also wanted to protect the health of her family, including her father, Ricardo Meléndez Faz, who has some health issues. Meléndez had suffered from COVID-19 last year.

### Campaign rollout

The campaign materials will be rolled out in waves in the next two months across diocesan, Iowa Catholic Conference and secular media communications channels. Those interested in learning more can go to [iowacatholicconference.org/getvaccinated](http://iowacatholicconference.org/getvaccinated).

As the messaging from the campaign is distributed, Chapman said he is hopeful the efforts motivate more vaccinations against the virus.

"The idea would be that the campaign moves a few people who are reluctant for various reasons and nudge them along to get the vaccine and possibly get the vaccine for their family. The bishops were pretty clear, encouraging people that this is something they believe is a positive for the common good," he said.



The diaconate formation class for the Diocese of Davenport accompanied their bishop and diocesan staff members to the U.S.-Mexico border to learn about faith-based programs and complex migration issues.

## Aromas de Acción de Gracias

Continued from page 2

lagros Eucarísticos y diseñó una página web dando detalles sobre tales milagros, convirtiéndose efectivamente en un "apóstol de la Eucaristía por medio del internet." Él emanaba gozo y humildad hacia los demás a quienes aceptaba y atraía en amistad. A pesar de las olas de distracciones que nos confrontan cada día, que afecta más especialmente a los adolescentes, se enfocó en el curso principal de su vida: "El estar siempre unido con Cristo: este es el programa de mi vida." "La Eucaristía es la autopista hacia el cielo." Su repentina enfermedad y muerte no afectaron la receta de su juvenil santidad, pero la sazonaron a perfección.

De la misma forma, José Sánchez del Río, otro adolescente de México estaba lleno con el amor de Jesús y su Iglesia. Fue arrestado y finalmente martirizado a los 14 años porque no renunciaba a Cristo y a su Majestuosidad. Otros ayudaban a llevarle el Santísimo Sacramento de contrabando a su celda en una canasta de comida, fortaleciéndole para orar por la conversión de sus perseguidores. Él declaró con resolución, "Mi fe no está en venta." San José Sánchez del Río fue canonizado en el 2016.

El Beato Carlo y San José se unen al resto de los santos de Dios alrededor de la mesa

del banquete en el altar cada vez y en todo lugar donde se celebra la Misa en las iglesias de nuestra Diócesis de Des Moines y alrededor del mundo. Tenemos el privilegio de contarlos entre los miembros del hogar de nuestra familia de fe, agradecidos de que ellos intensifican el rico aroma de nuestra celebración y nuestra capacidad de ser agradecidos por lo que Dios nos ha concedido en su Hijo. Jesús nos acompaña misteriosamente ya sea que estemos comprando el mandado, preparando alguna comida, visitando a quienes no pueden salir de sus casas o como voluntarios en una despensa comunitaria, lavando los platos, o sí, simplemente sentándonos para ver un juego de fútbol o tomando una siesta. ¿No sería maravilloso que pudiéramos nuevamente coordinar nuestro día de fiesta para que sea en verdad un Día Santo, dándole la oportunidad al cocinero y a todos los demás la oportunidad de participar en la Misa del Día de Acción de Gracias, en donde no es el pavo sino el Hijo de Dios mismo quien es simultáneamente el platillo principal y el cocinero en jefe? Ya sea que el sacerdote que preside decida utilizar o no incienso, nuestra presencia hará que la experiencia tenga una mejor fragancia para todos los que participen, incluso si aún no hemos logrado el olor de la santidad.

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## As international climate discussion goes on, local parish studies 'Laudato Si'

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

From Scotland to Iowa, climate change mitigation is at the top of people's minds.

World leaders gathered earlier this month in Scotland to negotiate ways to cut greenhouse gas and find other ways to protect the earth from destructive climate patterns.

At St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola, about a dozen parishioners, with a copy of *Laudato Si': On Care For Our Common Home* in hand, spent the last four weeks reading, studying and discussing Pope Francis' encyclical on becoming proactive in shaping the future of the planet.

The encyclical, released in 2015, was the first to focus on the environment and its destruction in a comprehensive way. It acknowledges the urgency of environmental challenges and offers hope and encourages resolve to work for the common good.

"I think it's our moral duty" to address the major climate issues facing human kind, said Rene Staudacher. "I want to leave the world for the next generation."

She grew up on a farm and always appreciated God's creation.

"I don't feel like we have a right to destroy that," she said. Climate change is affecting other worldwide issues including immigration, hunger and diseases.

The series of discussions piqued the interest of retired science teacher Deb Marriott.

"I've just been really impressed," she said of the encyclical. "That's really refreshing

to see all the parts of Catholicism come out in such wisdom."

The parish series, PowerPoint presentations, and reflection questions were the brainchild of Rita Bresnan, who began to take an interest in the environment about seven years ago. She went to the state Capitol to lobby for solar energy when she met an environmentalist who also lived in Indianola.

"She was instrumental in getting me excited about ways to stop global warming," Bresnan said.

She took part in a Just-Faith formation opportunity offered by the Center for Social Ministry and was encouraged to create an action that could affect change.

"One of my goals was to educate members of my parish about how we need to care for our earth," she said.

She and her husband, Ken, gathered the group for four sessions, each one covering a chapter or two in the encyclical. They provided a summary of the content, then broke those present into small groups to discuss reflection questions.

One part of the encyclical that motivates her says: "Christians must realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith."

Participants were encouraged with more coming from the pope. The Vatican is launching a new program called the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, a seven-year journey of ecological conversion, Bresnan said. "This seemed like an appropriate time to revisit the encyclical and get our parish involved."



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Rita Bresnan, Mary Nesved and Rene Staudacher discuss how they can contribute to a cleaner environment.

## *Laudato Si'* Action Platform set to integrate encyclical into church life

By Dennis Sadowski  
Catholic News Service

The Vatican's seven-year plan to widen the reach of Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical on the environment is just what the church needs in a time of global climate change in the mind of Father Emmet Farrell, a retired priest living in San Diego.

"The church is very serious about what we need to do to address climate change," Father Farrell, volunteer director of the Creation Care Ministry of the Diocese of San Diego, said of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform that launched Nov. 14.

The pope introduced the initiative in a video May 25, asking the world to join a new global grassroots movement to create a

more inclusive, fraternal, peaceful and sustainable world.

Coordinated through the Dicastery for Integral Human Development, the platform is "a seven-year journey that will see our communities committed in different ways to becoming totally sustainable, in the spirit of integral ecology," the pope said.

"We need a new ecological approach that can transform our way of dwelling in the world, our lifestyles, our relationship with the resources of the earth and, in general, our way of looking at humanity and of living life," he said.

Father Farrell is working on the effort with a team of lay leaders. The diocesan ministry has developed a "Creation Care Action Plan" that includes numerous actions – from the

simple to more complex – that individuals, parishes and wider society can take to promote sustainability.

The ambitious San Diego plan falls in line with the dicastery's aspiration of building an integrated global effort to protect creation for future generations. The Vatican platform is meant to help those who want to increase their commitment to bringing the encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, on *Care for Our Common Home*, to life by promising to carry out a set of actions for seven years.

Father Farrell told Catholic News Service Nov. 11 his diocese joined the pope's initiative because failing to act to protect Earth is not an option.

"*Laudato Si'* is a spiritual and moral document. It's not political," he said.

Keep up with the latest news and inspirational stories in the Diocese of Des Moines at [dmdiocese.org](http://dmdiocese.org).

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