

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## Capital campaign just around the corner

*Silent phase under way, public launch in 2022*

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer



The Diocese of Des Moines is launching a \$45 million fundraising campaign to meet the growing needs of schools, parishes and diocesan ministries well into the future.

Bishop William Joensen, in consultation with pastors and other diocesan leaders, approved the campaign last January after a diocesan-wide feasibility study showed 72 percent of 1,200 Catholic participants were willing to support a fundraising effort.

The campaign theme, "Ignite! A Life. A Church. A Community." aims to enhance the capacity of the diocesan family—priests, women religious, deacons, mothers, fathers, teachers, catechists, and, especially, our children—to bear and communicate the message of Jesus within and beyond the Church to the larger society.

"As one body of Christ, we are seeking to boldly ignite the faith with the apostolic zeal and spirit of the first Christians to settle Southwest Iowa. We want everyone to claim and reflect our God-given dignity to others who may not yet know that they are unconditionally loved by God. Our greatest joy is found when we enable our neighbors to discover the freedom and beauty that are too easily clouded by the present challenges families face and the many voices that would distract us from hearing God's personal invitation to friendship," Bishop Joensen said.

The campaign goals include the establishment of an endowment to provide more financial aid to Catholic school families. It will also provide additional funding for the Diocese's growing number of seminarians,

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## Back to school



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Classes begin soon in the 16 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines. "The challenges we faced last school year have changed our schools for the better," said Diocesan Schools Superintendent Donna Bishop. "We are more agile, collaborative, compassionate, and inspired. I am confident that we have the resources and support in place so that our more than 6,300 students will experience the levels of achievement, growth and development they need for the next stage of their educational journey and beyond." Pictured above are students at Holy Family Catholic School in Des Moines.

Las clases comenzarán pronto en las 16 escuelas católicas en la Diócesis de Des Moines. "Los desafíos que enfrentamos el pasado año escolar han hecho que nuestras escuelas sean mejores," (dijo la Superintendente de Escuelas Diocesanas, Donna Bishop. "Somos más ágiles, colaborativos, compasivos y estamos más inspirados. Estoy segura de que contamos con los recursos y apoyos necesarios para que nuestros más de 6,300 estudiantes experimenten los niveles de logro, crecimiento y desarrollo que necesitan para la siguiente etapa de su proceso educativo y más allá."

## Devoted husband, father and deacon inspired others

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Deacon Dan McGuire died July 11, leaving a legacy of being a devoted husband, father and deacon in the Catholic Church.

Deacon McGuire, born and raised in Minneapolis, married Mary Kavanaugh in 1968. They had four sons.

"He was proud of his Irish heritage, loyal first to his family and faith, then to other things including his favorite sporting teams," said Deacon David Bartemes, who preached the homily at the funeral Mass.

"He was devoted absolutely 100 percent to his marriage and his wife," said Deacon Ron Myers.

He was also devoted to his faith.

"Church was more than a Sunday obligation; it was part of their lives," said Deacon Bartemes. "They did more than participate, they led."

Deacon McGuire visited the sick and incarcerated. He



Deacon Dan McGuire

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## Foundation awards nearly \$50,000 in grants

By Rachel Seidl  
Contributing Writer

Technology, faith formation resources and classroom materials are among the many projects that have been recently funded thanks to the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa.

The foundation awarded 12 Catholic parishes, schools, and organizations with grants totaling \$49,870.

Two of the twelve grants, called Cornerstone Grants, are valued at more than \$5,000.

In its five years of grant giving, the foundation has awarded more than \$280,000 to various groups and organizations within the Diocese of Des Moines.

Grant awards for 2021 range from \$1,450 to \$6,890 and are being used for projects like upgrading livestreaming capabil-

ities, science curriculum materials, website enhancements, and more.

"We are especially excited about this year's grant awards," says Sue McEntee, the foundation's executive director. "As we are beginning to come out of the pandemic, we know these dollars are very needed to keep projects alive within our parishes, schools, and organizations, and we are excited to see them come to fruition!"

Grant recipients are as follows:

- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Granger, \$1,450 to enhance adult faith formation
- St. Thomas More Center, Panora, \$1,500 to buy outdoor games
- St. Mary of Nazareth Parish, Des Moines, \$1,600 to

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# Still together after all these years

Our August celebrations of the Feast of the Assumption and the displaced feast of Mary, Queen of Heaven—the patronal feast of our Diocese—spur some sunny musings on what it means to become gracefully united within ourselves and as a local church bound by Spirit ties of faith, friendship, and unfolding opportunities to lift one another up in love. This month also marks the celebration of the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our Des Moines Diocese: Happy Birthday, sisters and brothers in Christ!

Our genesis as a Diocese was anything but an easy delivery, as Davenport bishops Henry Cosgrove and his successor James Davis were not eager to loosen the ties within the southern half of Iowa and let the western counties form their own organic body of the faithful. But with the pope's ratification of the request to form a new diocese on Aug. 6, 1911, and the Aug. 31, 1911 directive to Bishop Davis by U.S. papal nuncio Archbishop Diomede Falconio to pay administrative costs for the "fission" of Davenport and Des Moines—talk about taxation without representation!—our Diocese was born.

In her Assumption, Mary's graceful passage from earth to heaven enables her to transcend the fear and felt rupture that death ordinarily induces. The enduring unity of her body and soul until she is ushered by angels and saints into the company of her glorious Son is the culmination of a lifelong pilgrimage where she is sheltered from sin and triumphs over the forces that want to disrupt her and our own integrity of life. Mary remains a lithe dance partner of the Holy Spirit when her Son is conceived, when she hastens to her cousin Elizabeth to visit her in a shower



By  
Bishop  
William  
Joensen

of joy, and is a sublime vocalist as her "soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, her spirit rejoices in God my Savior." She keeps her wits about her as she gives birth and then flees with Joseph to Egypt and eventually returns to the hidden life at Nazareth. She grieves but does not despair when Joseph dies, when her Son embarks on his public ministry whose meaning she does not always grasp (see Mark 3:21, 31-34). Yet she trusts and remains truly present with all her being to the flesh of her own flesh up until Jesus' last earthly breath on the Cross.

Mary is privileged to anticipate the first breath of her Son's Resurrection Spirit, and abides in this Spirit until she takes her last breath. Mary's soul is never divorced from her body, for she realizes God's intention that we achieve harmonious coordination of our physical and spiritual potentials in order that we might share fully in God's merciful promise to draw us to himself. How painful it was to witness the decorated Olympic gymnast and woman of Catholic faith Simone Biles suffer bouts of the "twisties" that left her disoriented and unable to compete, let alone achieve the athletic perfection that lay within her grasp.

How much more anguish and "dis-ease" do we experience when we sense our body betraying us in the diagnoses of cancer, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, childhood or adult onset diabetes, or when our minds or those of

loved ones grow dim through dementia or stroke, depression, bulimia or other mental condition. As Robert Sokolowski observes, when we become sick, our very "I" becomes an issue as we ponder the disruption of our personal subjectivity, and are tempted to view ourselves as a heap of parts set against one another, a bag of objects that are destined to dissolve into oblivion unless someone takes drastic action. Soul and body can be seen as antagonistic competitors who are foreign rather than friendly powers inherently dependent on one another.

"We take comfort in the Gospel truth that those who share most fully in the cup of Christ's suffering will be filled to overflowing with the new wine of Spirit joy."

Bishop William Joensen

One of the acute challenges facing families and our society is the rising attention devoted to the situation of persons suffering from gender dysphoria/gender-identity discordance. The discomfort most people feel through puberty and the process of psychosexual maturation is rarely easy and often confusing. But for select young people, who at some point early in life may have experienced sexual or other forms of trauma, the sense of being either male or female inserted into a mismatched body is often connected with a sense of alienation within oneself and from the people around them. Those who advocate dramatic interventions such as prescribing hormonal blockers to sexual development, or surgeries that would alter sexual organs and recraft one's physiognomy, whether within the medical, LGBTQ+ communities or even one's own parents and family, may represent well-intended efforts to relieve suffering.

But these attitudes represent a fundamental mistaking of our essential human identity as original body-soul composites who are vulnerable from the moment of conception to all the disruptive forces of disease and original sin (including the unfortunate instances of genetic or physical anomalies such as hermaphroditism or intersex). Each of us is created by God from the first moment of our being—as for Mary and Joseph—to be this particular soul

intended to activate this particularly sexed body, which is the root of our vocational calling to accompany one another on the pilgrimage where we take our proper place in the company of God's children.

The emerging medical data confirm that so-called gender-altering surgeries and the chemical disruption of sexual development that is a preceding step do not deliver promised long-term therapeutic relief. Sadly, the incidence of suicide for these patients does not decrease. We do not want to be complicit with a cultural mindset that simply shrugs and goes along with irregular drumbeat of the demands to abet what is a fundamental mis-taking of our human personhood.

At the threshold of heaven, Christ is forever the firstfruits of eternal life, followed by those who belong to Christ, with Mary his mother foremost in the queue of saints as she is assumed into heaven, and then is crowned with the stars as the fairest daughter of humanity. Perhaps for persons who suffer gender-identity discordance, the yoke of suffering

they bear may not be fully alleviated until Christ destroys all authority and power, including death itself, and hands us over to his Father as the most prized possessions of his Kingdom. We take comfort in the Gospel truth that those who share most fully in the cup of Christ's suffering will be filled to overflowing with the new wine of Spirit joy.

Meanwhile, on this side of the vale of tears, we commit ourselves to love one another unconditionally, to be present to accompany one another through whatever personal crises we experience on the path of life, including whatever crosses we feel powerless to carry by ourselves. We enlist the Spirit to be prudently discerning, to distinguish voices that ultimately scatter and divide persons within themselves from those that solidify the bond of shared trials and anguish that by God's grace unite us ever more closely to one another in a compact of compassion and care.

When we respect our God-given "I," we discover anew that "we" take part plurally in the communion of persons meant to remain together until a mysterious number of years yield to eternity. With St. Joseph, we declare our own "fiat," let it be done, in whatever challenges that are imposed upon us, just as Mary did at the Annunciation (and Assumption), and as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And we become ever more the Church God intends when he created and called us, and when by his providential design, the Diocese of Des Moines came to be 110 years ago. May God continue to alternately shine on us and shower his graces upon us as we enter another decade, processing further into a second century of mission and identity as God's faithful in Southwest Iowa.

## Aún Juntos después de Todos Estos Años

Nuestras celebraciones de Agosto de la Fiesta de la Asunción y la desplazada fiesta de María, Reina del Cielo – la fiesta patronal de nuestra Diócesis – motivan algunas agradables reflexiones sobre lo que significa estar unidos en la gracia tanto en unos con otros y como iglesia local aunada por los lazos del Espíritu de fe, de amistad, y de nuevas oportunidades para elevarnos unos a otros en amor. Este mes marca también la celebración del 110 aniversario de la fundación de nuestra Diócesis de Des Moines. ¡Feliz cumpleaños hermanos y hermanas en Cristo!

Nuestro génesis como Diócesis no fue una hazaña fácil, ya que los obispos de Davenport Cosgrove y su sucesor James Davis no estaban muy contentos de soltar los lazos dentro de la mitad sur del estado de Iowa y permitir que los contados del oeste formaran su propio cuerpo orgánico de los fieles. Pero con la ratificación del papa a las solicitudes de formar una nueva diócesis el 6 de agosto de 1911 y la directiva del 31 de agosto de 1911 al Obispo Davis por parte del nuncio papal

Falconio para que pagara los costos administrativos de la "fisión" de Davenport y Des Moines – ¡vaya forma de impuestos sin representación! – nació nuestra Diócesis.

En su Asunción, el pasaje en gracia de María de la tierra al cielo le permite trascender el miedo y sentimiento de ruptura que induce la muerte ordinariamente. La perdurable unidad de su cuerpo y alma mientras es llevada por los ángeles y los santos a la compañía de su glorioso Hijo es la culminación de una peregrinación de vida en donde ella estaba protegida del pecado y triunfa sobre las fuerzas que quieren perturbarle a ella y a la integridad misma de nuestras vidas. María permanece como una compañera sutil de baile del Espíritu Santo cuando su Hijo es concebido, cuando se apresura a visitar a su prima Isabel en una fuente de alegría, y es una sublime vocalista cuando su "alma proclama la grandeza del Señor, se alegra su espíritu en Dios mi Salvador." Ella mantiene su ingenio as dar a luz y luego huir junto con José a Egipto y regresar

eventualmente a una vida oculta en Nazaret. Ella sufre, pero no se desespera cuando muere José, cuando su Hijo empieza su ministerio público, cuyo significado no siempre logra ella entender (ver Marcos 3:21, 31-34). Pero aún así ella confía y permanece verdaderamente presente con todo su ser a la carne de su propia carne hasta el último aliento terrenal de Jesús en la Cruz.

María tiene el privilegio de anticipar el primer aliento del Espíritu de su hijo Resucitado, y se mantiene en este Espíritu hasta ella tomar su último aliento. El alma de María no se divorcia nunca de su cuerpo, porque por ella se cumple la intención de Dios de que logremos una coordinación armoniosa de nuestros potenciales físicos y espirituales para que podamos compartir plenamente la promesa misericordiosa de Dios de llevarnos hacia sí mismo. Qué doloroso fue ver a la decorada gimnasta olímpica y mujer de fe católica Simone Biles sufrir los efectos del "twisties" que le dejó desorientada e incapacitada para competir, impidiéndole lograr la perfección atlética que tenía a su

alcance.

Qué mayor angustia y desencanto vivimos al sentir que nuestro cuerpo nos traiciona en los diagnósticos de cáncer, esclerosis múltiple, Parkinson, diabetes infantil o en adultos, o cuando nuestras mentes o las de nuestros seres queridos se empiezan a apagar debido a la demencia o a un infarto cerebral, por depresión, bulimia u otra condición mental. Como lo señala Robert Sokolowski, cuando nos enfermamos, nuestro propio "yo" se convierte un problema al analizar sobre la disrupción de nuestra subjetividad personal y estamos tentados a vernos a nosotros mismos como un montón de partes que se han armado, una bolsa de objetos que están destinados a disolverse en el olvido a menos de que alguien tome acciones drásticas. El alma y el cuerpo pueden parecer competidores antagonistas que son fuerzas foráneas en vez de ser poderes inherentemente colaborativos y dependientes uno del otro.

Uno de los mayores retos que enfrentan nuestras famil-

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THE CATHOLIC

MIRROR

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# Schools keep busy over the summer

## St. Albert Falcons win state baseball championship



The Council Bluffs St. Albert baseball team claimed the school's fourth summer state championship on July 29 with a 7-5 victory over Kee High of Lansing in the Class 1A title game at Merchants Park in Carroll. The Falcons added to championships in 1981, 1996 and 1999 by going 12-0 in the month of July to finish with a 35-8 record. At state, they beat Lisbon 9-3 and Alburnett 10-0 to set up the championship meeting with Kee. Seniors Cy Patterson (pictured pitching) and Isaac Sherrill, and sophomore Brendan Monahan were named first-team all-stars by the Iowa Print Sports Writers Association.

## Perry school celebrates 100 years of providing Catholic education




St. Patrick Catholic School in Perry celebrated 100 years of providing a Catholic education with a special Mass and semi-formal dinner in July. Nora O'Malley campaigned to bring a Catholic school to the community and, despite many challenges, her dream came true.

## Dowling Catholic erects memorial



Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines recently added a memorial to its campus to honor the faithfully departed members of the school community.



# MEMORIAL MASS

# FOR THE UNBORN

A Memorial Mass for all the lives lost through the violence of abortion. Together we will plead to the Lord to stop the evil of abortion.

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## SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

Diocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel & Divine Mercy

## GROTTO

NOON

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Join us for this important Memorial Mass to remember and pray for the millions of babies whose lives were lost through abortion. At this Mass, we will pray for the unborn and for the women and men suffering from the tragic effects of abortion. The Mass will be held at the Grotto, just north of St. Anthony Church. Chairs will be set up but feel free to bring your own in case they are filled up. All are invited, please bring everyone to join in this important Mass. More information contact Tom Hanson [tehanson4@msn.com](mailto:tehanson4@msn.com) 515.770.7648  
*If the weather is bad, the Mass will be moved into the church.*

Sponsored by Knights of Columbus Council 12482

We're looking for stories of inspiration!

Send your ideas to Kelly Mescher Collins at [kcollins@dmdiocese.org](mailto:kcollins@dmdiocese.org) or call 515-237-5054.



# Des Moines Olympian's family grateful for community support



Photo supplied by Kathy Schweizer

Dowling Catholic High School graduate, Karissa Schweizer, competing in the women's 5,000 meter track and field event at the Tokyo Olympics.

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

In the months, weeks and days leading up to the Olympics in Tokyo this summer, all sorts of variables loomed, potentially snuffing out Dowling Catholic High School alumna Karissa Schweizer's opportunity to compete there.

After the Olympics were postponed from 2020 to 2021 due to COVID-19, all possibilities seemed to be on the table.

"I was more disappointed for her," said Karissa's mother, Kathy, a longtime member of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale. "She was so ready and focused and then everything got shut down."

But Schweizer and the rest of her team at the Bowerman Track Club – an American training group for professional runners sponsored by Nike and based in Portland, Oregon – kept focusing on their next step.

It paid off. Karissa competed in Tokyo in the 5,000-meter race, coming in 11<sup>th</sup>, and in the 10,000-meter race, coming in 12<sup>th</sup>.

"I think she did wonderfully," said her grandfather, former longtime Dowling Catholic track and cross country coach Frank Schweizer. "Just to get there to run against the absolute best in the world is just so hard. We're very proud of her."

Pam and Lou Flori, of St. Francis Parish in West Des

Moines, were at the pre-dawn gathering on Court Avenue in Des Moines on Aug. 7 to watch Karissa race on a Jumbotron TV. Their son, Jack, runs cross-country at Dowling Catholic.

The running history of the Schweizer family is motivational and created a passion for running for Jack, they said.

Dowling Catholic runner Tyler Schweizer had a 13-mile run ahead of him that day. The senior watched his cousin race before he began his run.

"To have a cousin in the Olympics, it's crazy to see her get to this point," he said.

Dowling Catholic runner and Holy Trinity parishioner Gabe Shaw, a junior, said Karissa is a winner to him.

"Running in Tokyo today is an achievement in and of itself," he said.

Early on, there were concerns the Olympics would again be postponed due to the pandemic, or athletes would test positive for COVID-19.

"I was always praying that the Olympics would still just happen," Kathy said. "I was even mentally preparing myself [for the Olympics to be cancelled]," Kathy continued. "So for her to fight through all of the barriers, I kind of see her as Wonder Woman."

Another challenge for Karissa was losing Bowerman Track Club teammate, training



Left: Karissa Schweizer, a 2014 graduate of Dowling Catholic High School, competed in the finals for both the 5,000 and 10,000 meters at the Olympics in Tokyo. Top: Longtime members of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale, Mike and Kathy Schweizer with their children Karissa, Kelsey and Ryan. Bottom: Family and friends attended the watch party on Court Avenue on Saturday, Aug. 7 to watch Schweizer compete in the 10,000 meter final.

partner and friend – fellow Iowan Shelby Houlihan – who was banned from track and field events for four years after testing positive for an anabolic steroid. (Houlihan has gone on record stating she believes the steroid came from pork she consumed hours before her drug test and continues to appeal her case.)

"It's been a tough year on Karissa," said her father, Mike. "She knew about [Shelby's appeals to compete] for months.

"This came out a week before the trials and then the coaches were distracted. It was a tough couple of weeks. That's one of her main training partners."

Mike and Kathy agree it has been thrilling to see their daughter compete in the Olympics, albeit on a television screen.

The love and support from the community has been extraordinary.

They texted back and forth with Karissa, though the 14-hour time difference made it challenging, Mike and Kathy said.

In the past, they always travelled to cheer on and see Karissa (and their two other children compete.) But they accepted that watching her on television, along with millions of other people around the world, was the only way to see her compete.

"I didn't realize how nervous we'd be," Kathy said.

"I try not to think about it," Mike said. "You just want the best for her and want her to be happy."

Their faith has gotten the family through all of the try-

ing times. They offer prayers of thanksgiving to God for the special gifts he has given Karissa.

Friends and family have also provided much needed support and encouragement. Many of their friends and community are through the Catholic church and schools.

"If you would have been at [the 5K watch party] at Wellman's, it was almost all St. Pius and Dowling people," Mike said. "You have a great group of people – and they were there. It was a great celebration. And that's one thing that I really appreciate about the church and school and Dowling Catholic community is really that togetherness and the support."

## Free Citizenship Class by telephone

This free citizenship class will prepare you to pass your US immigration citizenship interview.

Experienced teacher will conduct this class bilingual – English and Spanish. Please contact local instructor Jim Supina at (515) 961-2026.

## 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@polkcountyia.gov.

## We're looking for stories of inspiration!

Send your ideas to Kelly Mescher Collins at [kcollins@dmdiocese.org](mailto:kcollins@dmdiocese.org) or call 515-237-5054.



# Stories behind the mission illustrate need, gratitude

**By Beth Gibbins  
Contributing Writer**

On a hot afternoon in July, a 36-year-old man stood looking at a table full of donated bread stationed at the front of the Catholic Charities Food Pantry. Clutching a white grocery bag loaded with zucchini, grapes, potatoes, and a container of chocolate milk, he selected a loaf of Italian bread.

“When I became homeless, I had nowhere to go. I would come by, and I knew that I could find something to eat when I was hungry,” he said. “It’s important to me that I have some stability... and the guys here are really nice.” He revealed that he became homeless after his girlfriend died three years ago. He now lives near the fairgrounds and relies on “the dailies” from the food pantry.

Earlier in July, an 89-year-old woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo landed in the United States after enduring life in a refugee camp in Rwanda for over 20 years. Family and friends prayed and celebrated as she, a daughter, and three grandchildren (age 23, 19, and 17) descended the stairs at Des Moines International Airport.

Catholic Charities Refugee Services program manager, Kelyn Anker, greeted the family and guided them through the airport for their luggage and on to their new life in Iowa.

Last year in Council Bluffs, a Catholic Charities Sexual Assault Advocate met with a survivor of human trafficking. The advocate helped unravel a lifetime of abuse and neglect from family and others and arranged legal assistance, medical care, mental health services, and

substance abuse counseling.

The client would eventually tell her advocate, “You are like a best friend, a mom, a sister, an advocate, and a saving grace—all in one. You have played the role of nearly every person I have always needed in my life.”

These are just a handful of stories that illustrate the impact Catholic Charities programs make through direct service to thousands of people in the 23 counties of the Diocese of Des

Moines each year. The organization’s mission and values are rooted in Catholic Social Teaching, a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amid the challenges of modern society.

Support through Catholic Charities Annual Appeal ensures programs and services can help now and into the future.

“To those who donated to the Annual Appeal in the past, we thank you,” said Barbara

Decker, Catholic Charities executive director. “We hope that you continue to find the programs and services of Catholic Charities a worthy investment of your charitable giving. Please consider an increase in this year’s contribution and sharing our mission with friends and family.”

To become an Annual Appeal donor, go to catholiccharitiesdm.org. Click the “Donate” button in the upper right corner of the screen. The website is full of

information about Catholic Charities programs, volunteer opportunities, upcoming events, and more.

For help with your contribution, contact Catholic Charities Development Director Debra Powers at 563-275-9643. She can help set up a giving plan, event sponsorship, or find the best way to make your contribution have the most impact.

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES**  
DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

Empower Individuals | Strengthen Families

## Catholic Charities Food Pantry

1815 Hubbell Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50316

“The pantry helps make ends meet.”

“I take this to an elderly neighbor lady.”

“I come here almost every day.”

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**Dr. Josiah Fitzsimmons**





## Around the Diocese

### Aug. 28 Saturday Conference for Parents in Spanish

DES MOINES -- A conference in Spanish for parents is 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Catholic Pastoral Center. We will have Dr. Dora Tobar, director of Family Life and Hispanic Ministry Office at the Diocese of Lafayette in Indiana as a key speaker. For more information, contact Mayra Moriel de Banuelos at 515-237-5011 or mmoriel@dmdiocese.org.

### Aug. 29-Sept. 1 Sun-Wed Parish Mission

ANKENY -- Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish is sponsoring a parish mission — "On Becoming the Body of Christ" — at 6:30 p.m. Come to one night or all four. Additionally, morning sessions available on Mon & Tues (using Lectio & Visio Divina) are 9-10:30 a.m.

### Aug. 30 Monday Golf Outing

Get your team together for the Catholic Charities Golf Outing on Monday, Aug. 30 with a shotgun start at 12:45 p.m. Proceeds benefit the mission of Catholic Charities to empower individuals and strengthen families. Sign up today: catholiccharitiesdm.org/2021-golf. For questions or sponsorship, please contact Holly at hackermann@catholiccharitiesdm.org

### Sept. 5 Sunday 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration

DES MOINES -- You are invited to a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Father Ken Gross at Curate, 322 E. Court Ave. Drinks and food will be available from 2:30-4:30 p.m. No cards or gifts please. Mass will be celebrated at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 4 at St. Theresa Church in Des Moines.

### Sept. 10-11 Friday-Saturday Parish Mission

COUNCIL BLUFFS -- Jon Leonetti will be at Corpus Christi Catholic Church on Sept. 10, 6 - 8:30 p.m. and Sept. 11 from 8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. for a Catholic mission. Daycare is available at the Corpus Christi Parish Center. Meals will be provided. RSVP by Sept. 7 by calling the parish office at (712) 323-2916 or by email at officemanager@corpuschristiia.com.

### Sept. 14 Tuesday Center for Social Ministry

DES MOINES -- Dr. Lewis Brogdon is the keynote speaker at the annual fundraiser for the Center for Social Ministry. Brogdon authored a newspaper column last June addressing the undercurrent and common

thread of hate animating the country and re-establishing moral character. Visit centerforocialministry.org for more information.

### Sept. 17 Sunday Chip in Fore Charity

PLEASANT HILL -- St. Vincent de Paul invites you to join them for their Fight Food Insecurity Golf Fundraiser at Copper Creek Golf Course in Pleasant Hill. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. with a shotgun start at 10 a.m. Registration is \$150 per person with additional sponsorship opportunities available for those interested. If you have questions contact our resource director, Randi Radosevich at resourcedirector@svdpdsm.org. All proceeds from this event will go towards keeping our healthy food pantries open to help ensure that nobody goes hungry. Don't golf but would like to donate? Find us on Venmo @SVDPofgreaterDSM or via PayPal at svdpdsm.org.

### Sept. 19 Sunday 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration

DES MOINES -- You are invited to a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Father Bob Aubrey at St. Joseph Church. There will be an open house from 2-4 p.m. with evening payer at 4:15 p.m.

### Sept. 19-21 Sun-Tuesday Parish Mission

ADEL -- All are welcome to join us for St. John's parish mission "To The Heights!" with Katie Patrizio. Come hear this fast-paced retelling of the Scripture story and discover your unique role in salvation history. Join us in our mission to refresh our minds and hearts with new insights. Learn more about our presenter at katiepatrizio.com. The schedule is: Sept. 19 - 5:30 dinner & speaker; Sept. 20 - 6:30 speaker & reflection; Sept. 21 - 5:30 Mass, fellowship, speaker & adoration.

### Sept. 25 Saturday Memorial Mass for the Unborn

DES MOINES -- A memorial Mass for all the lives lost through the violence of abortion will be held at noon at the Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel & Divine Mercy, just north of St. Anthony Church. Chairs will be set up, but feel free to bring your lawn chair in case seating is full. For more information contact Tom Hanson, tehanson4@msn.com, 515-770-7648.

### Sept. 25 Saturday St. Vincent de Paul "Friends of the Poor Walk"

CARLISLE -- This walk will take place from 9-11 a.m. on Scotch Ridge Nature Trail in Carlisle.

Money raised helps others & stays local. For more information go to fopwalk.org/event/2603

### Sept. 26 Sunday Chicken and Ham Dinner

LENOX -- St. Patrick Church, 600 W. Michigan, is hosting its annual grilled chicken and ham dinner from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. in its parish center. We missed you last year because of COVID-19 so we are looking forward to seeing everyone again this year.

### Faith Journey Catechetical Institute

DES MOINES -- Are you a Catholic who wants to fall deeper in love with Christ and his Church? Do you want to learn more about how you fit into greatest love story in the history of world? If you answered yes to these questions then the Catechetical Institute is for you. Contact John Huynh, 515-237-5006, to begin your faith journey into the heart of our Catholic tradition. More information can also be found at FaithJourneyCI.com

### Cathedral Holy Hours

All are welcome to join Bishop William Joensen at St. Ambrose on Mondays for an hour of Eucharistic adoration and evening prayer. These Holy Hours are 5-6 p.m. Evening prayer will be livestreamed on the Diocesan Facebook page.

### Friends, Romans, Iowans podcast

Check out the Diocesan young-adult focused podcast "Friends, Romans, Iowans." 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 our website at dmdiocese.org/fripod.

### Support The Catholic Mirror



We encourage you to take a subscription to our diocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Mirror*. Our newspaper was critically important during the pandemic. Whether you receive it digitally or through the Post Office, *The Catholic Mirror* brings to us a monthly message from Bishop William Joensen, news and inspirational stories of faith. You can call us at 515-237-5046, use the QR Code or give online at: dmdiocese.org/giving/special-collection-giving.

## CDA group installs new chaplain



Photo by Jessica White

Regent Carol Hollenbeck introduces the Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court #330 new chaplain, Deacon John Pfenning, of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs. With them is Father James Ahenkora, pastor of St. Patrick Parish.

By Carol Hollenbeck

Deacon John Pfenning, of St. Patrick Church in Council Bluffs, was installed June 28 as the new chaplain for Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court #330 of Council Bluffs.

The court's membership of 61 Catholic women includes representation from the three Council Bluffs parishes of Corpus Christi, St. Peter and St. Patrick.

CDA Court #330 will celebrate its 101<sup>st</sup> anniversary in October. The court planned to celebrate with its annual salad luncheon fundraiser on Aug. 11 at St. Peter Parish.

## CDA express gratitude

Regent Carol Hollenbeck and treasurer Jan Roth, of Catholic Daughters Court St. Anthony #330, thanked Father Tom Thakadipuram for his service at Corpus Christi Parish during a July 7 Mass and reception before he moved to his new assignment serving parishes in Shenandoah and Hamburg. Father Thakadipuram served as chaplain for the CDA court for four years. Pictured: Father Tom Thakadipuram and Hollenbeck with a gift she gave him on behalf of the CDA



## Neola garden blessed



Father Sylvester Okoh, of St. Patrick Parish in Neola, on June 25 blessed a new grotto surrounding a statue of the Blessed Mother at a rosary walk near the church. The rosary walk was created by Eagle Scout Tim Spiker about three years ago. The parish prays the rosary most Thursdays at 8 a.m., celebrates Mass at 8:30 a.m. and has an hour of adoration until closing at 10 a.m. with Benediction and a special blessing. All Catholics are invited to attend. Those who are not Catholic are invited to visit and pray, attend Mass and then call the church office for more information.

## Former St. Albert School educator dies

Former St. Albert Catholic School educator, Sister Micheline Curtis, died July 10 after a lifetime of service in education. She was 83.

Carolyn Cecilia Curtis, born in 1937 in Iowa City, entered the Congregation of the Humility of Mary in 1958 and professed vows in 1960.

She earned a bachelor's degree in English from Marycrest College in Davenport and completed post-graduate studies at the University of Kentucky English Institute, the Colorado State University Economic Institute in Colorado and the University of Iowa. She also earned a Family Intervention Chemical Dependency Certificate from the Johnson Institute in St. Paul, Minnesota.

She taught in Ottumwa, at St. Albert High School in Council Bluffs, Regina High School in Iowa City, in Rock Island, Illinois, Phoenix and in Lombard, Illinois, where she was honored for her 25 years of dedicated service. While there, she also served as an intervention counselor at Hinsdale Hospital.

She also served as an archivist assistant for the Congregation of the Humility of Mary.

At Bishop Drumm in Johnston, Sister Micheline served as president of the Resident Council. In an online memorial, Humility Sister Mary Rehmann wrote: "Some of us recall Sister Micheline, just days before her last hospitalization, participating in Zoom sessions in preparation for upcoming community elections. Now she directs us from her vantage point in heaven, where her voice is restored to its full volume and she continues to speak with authority."

Private services took place at Bishop Drumm, Our Lady of Peace Chapel and at Humility of Mary Center in Davenport. Memorials may be made to the Congregation of the Humility of Mary.





## Biking for Babies local ride



**Bishop William Joensen and Jimmy Becker hit the trail to raise awareness and funds for crisis pregnancy centers.**

Thirty four bike riders hit the trail in Ankeny with Biking for Babies on Aug. 7 to raise awareness of crisis pregnancy centers and raise funds for their effort.

Biking for Babies cofounder Jimmy Becker and Bishop William Joensen, cycling enthusiast and Biking for Babies spiritual advisor, headed for Woodward on the local ride.

Biking for Babies began 12 years ago, and has since grown. A national ride Aug. 11-17 drew about 50 riders who started at one of four locations north, south, east and west, all converging in St. Louis. Bishop Joensen joined the last leg of that ride at Springfield, Illinois.

The prolife organization has three main goals: to build up the next generation of prolife missionaries, to build awareness of pregnancy resource centers and to raise financial support for those centers.

This year, the group decided to do local rides in seven communities, Becker said. In the future, it's hoped the group will have a local ride in every state.

"By doing the local rides, we have the opportunity to achieve the goals that God set out for us to accomplish and get more families and communities involved on a local basis," Becker said.

The Des Moines metro area cyclists could choose from three options: a five-mile, a 23-mile and a 48-mile ride, said organizer Peyton Dueling.

Beneficiaries of the ride include Innervisions Healthcare, Agape Pregnancy Resource Center and Martha's House of Hope.

Listen to Bishop Joensen's interview with Biking for Babies co-founder at [iowacatholicradio.com/making-it-personal](http://iowacatholicradio.com/making-it-personal).

## Vaccination clinic aims to protect more people in the community



Catholic Charities, MercyOne and St. Ambrose Cathedral partnered to offer a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Catholic Pastoral Center on Aug. 8. Marbati Gabrab was among about 40 parishioners who became vaccinated that day. There were multi-generational and multicultural representation from St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish. The second shot will be offered Aug. 29. "We appreciate the nurses, priests and all volunteers who helped to coordinate and support this activity. We were blessed by the presence of all," said Barbara Decker, executive director of Catholic Charities.

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## School administrators continue learning in summer

**By Nicole Evans  
Contributing Writer**

Representatives from five Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools traveled to St. Patrick Catholic School in Elkhorn, Nebraska this summer to attend a two-day workshop on restorative practices.

Those in attendance were: Jon Aldrich and Gretchen Watznauer from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School; Misty Hade from St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic School; Jennifer Raes from St. Anthony Catholic School; Monica Morrison from Holy Trinity Catholic School; and Jodi Halligan from St. Joseph Catholic School.

The workshop helped school administrators develop a social-emotional framework for their schools that includes restorative practices.

When Diocese of Des Moines administrators were invited to attend the workshop, they jumped at the opportunity to learn more about restorative practices as part of a SEL framework.

"This workshop was an exceptional experience that provided an opportunity to collaborate with other administrators outside of our diocese," shared Halligan. "The restorative practices we explored during the workshop will allow us to be more proactive when addressing student behaviors as we implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in the coming school year."

What are restorative practices?

Restorative practices view wrongdoing or problem behavior as a violation of people and relationships rather than a violation of the rules. The focus is on the victim(s). The offend-

er must accept responsibility for his or her actions and the damage caused by those actions.

All humans desire to be treated with dignity, have a voice and be heard. These qualities are core to our humanity. Thus, there is considerable value in shifting from a punitive approach to promoting social bonding and community. Restorative practices align with Catholic social teaching by protecting the dignity of every person involved, teaching collective problem-solving, building community, and promoting forgiveness.

Initially, the five schools in attendance at the June workshop will begin implementing restorative practices this fall. However, the goal is to have all diocesan schools using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to employ restorative practices in the classroom.

## Join Avoca, Walnut parishes for first Saturday Mass

**Father Seth Owusu, of St. Mary Parish in Avoca and St. Patrick Parish in Walnut, shows a Divine Mercy sign with the words "Jesus, I trust in you" at the Walnut parish before a First Saturday Mass honoring the Blessed Mother on Aug. 7. He rotates the first Saturday Mass between the two parishes. Prayer begins with a rosary at 8 a.m. followed by the Mass. All are invited to attend. To get a Divine Mercy sign, contact Kathy Graeve, of Neola, at 402-680-4370 with a call or text.**

Photo by Kathy Graeve



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# Immigrants overcome challenges in new life

After Jesus was born, an angel appeared to St. Joseph in a dream, warning him that the infant's life was in danger (Matthew 2:13-23). St. Joseph took Jesus and Mary and fled to Egypt. Today, there are people who flee their countries for various reasons and have to

start over. In this Year of St. Joseph and with Labor Day approaching, here are two stories of families that had to start over in a new land. They believe God has been guiding them on their journey.

## 'Angels' show family the way to safety



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Monica, Sabrina, Laura and Javier Mejia feel safe and secure in their new home in Iowa.

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Six years ago, Javier Mejia had his own car mechanic shop in Colombia, where his wife helped him with the books and his two young daughters had friends, pets and a comfortable life.

"One day, everything changed suddenly," he said. His brother-in-law was murdered and his family no longer felt safe. They had to leave.

As he looks back on a journey that tested their faith, Javier sees God working to help his family every step of the way though they may not have realized it at the time.

"I learned to meet angels and demons," he said, pausing as tears slid down his face. "I learned that God changes our lives with purpose. We don't know what it is, but every day in my new prayer, I add in a new phrase and that is: 'Show me the way.'"

When he and his wife, Monica, decided they needed to leave their homeland, Javier put his resume on the internet, intending for it to go to Spain where he had a friend.

Instead, a woman from Cedar Rapids saw it and invited him to Iowa.

The family moved. They had no family here, they did not know the language and they didn't know how the hiring process works in the United States.

The woman who contacted Javier didn't know the hiring process for newcomers, either, he said. She moved them from a hotel to an apartment, and then to a motel.

"She realized she made a big mistake," Javier said.

The Mejias had no car, couldn't communicate and were running out of money as they were paying for food, clothes and motel expenses.

The family moved to a park in the Des Moines metro

area, a shelter and then with another family.

The family wanted to go to church. Someone took them to Sacred Heart in West Des Moines.

"In Colombia, we went to Mass every Sunday. But just because of our problem, we don't even know where we can find a Spanish Mass and nobody tell you where to ask," Javier said. Monica had purchased some candles and carried them with her everywhere just in case they found a church.

Javier paused.

"I never forgot that," he said. "My family and me were struggling to find a better place to live."

Javier, Monica, and daughters Laura and Sabrina lit the candles in front of an image of the Sacred Heart.

At the church, they met someone, who connected them with a lawyer, who said the family would qualify for political asylum and started the paperwork process, Javier said.

Eventually, they were able to get an apartment.

"It was an empty apartment," Monica said. "We were sleeping on the carpet, but it was good because we felt safe and we had a place to live," she said.

Leslie Van Der Molen, of Catholic Charities, has helped many families who find themselves homeless.

"That is reality. The harsh truth is when people leave a shelter, they often have nothing or very little," she said.

The Mejia family met Sacred Heart parishioner Joe Herrity, who they affectionately call "Mr. Joe."

While he met them in July a few years ago, Herrity knew the family needed winter weather clothes. He looked around and realized they needed a lot more: food, kitchen supplies, bedding, jobs.

"At that point, I realized that this was a lot bigger than

what I was about so I started calling around to friends," Herrity said. They provided necessities.

Herrity learned Javier is a skilled mechanic. He helped Javier get a job, made sure the family understood what school officials were saying, assisted at doctor appointments and more.

Joe and Jean Herrity have become family to Javier, Monica, Sabrina and Laura. When Monica and Javier had their marriage blessed by the church, Joe walked her down the aisle at her father's request.

"They're just wonderful people," Herrity said. "They're part of us. I guess the attitude that I've taken is that in order to help them, I've had to change my mindset and say, 'They're family' and I have to treat them as family. I laughingly refer to Laura and Sabrina as my two adopted daughters. I had all boys."

Today, Javier has a job as a mechanic with a trucking firm and proudly says he's a member of the Knights of Columbus. Monica has her own in-home daycare. Laura is a junior studying computer engineering at Iowa State University. Sabrina just graduated high school and will enter a paralegal program through Des Moines Area Community College.

The family is grateful for their angels, the people who guided and helped them the last few years.

"Never stop trusting God," Monica said. "I thank God for all the people who appeared, all his angels. God wanted to show us that he is real and he does exist. The changes he makes in people's lives have purpose."

One of Sabrina's angels was a teacher who helped her learn English and motivated her to keep learning.

"Be kind to everyone," said Laura. "You don't know what they're going through. A word, a gesture, a look can mean so much to someone."

## His dream came true with hard work, a mentor and faith



Emilio and Paola Nieto

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

While Emilio Nieto was growing up in Mexico, he dreamed of finding a better life in the United States.

He didn't realize, at age 15, how difficult his life would become.

"That's all I wanted to do was get to work and get some money and then go back to my country," he said. "I thought that was the simple way to see this dream come true."

Upon arriving in Iowa to be with a relative, he faced multiple challenges: He couldn't speak English, and he didn't have a way to get to a job.

He went to school during the day, working fast food jobs at night. Once he learned English, he could get better paying jobs and he could help his family back in Mexico.

While he worked to make ends meet, he realized something was missing in his life.

"I never smoke or drink, thanks to my mom and dad. I was a good boy. But then you realize that is not enough. Somebody has to wake you up and say that is not enough. Catholics, it's not about not drinking and not smoking and not doing drugs. We are about doing good things. And then I realized I was not doing anything good, and my life didn't have real meaning. My priorities were not straight. God was not in the first place. I was more about work or money or different things. But since I got my time with the Lord, then I realized that he was kind of giving me a chance."

His wife, Paola, arrived in the United States when she was 13 with her mother and two younger sisters. They joined her father and brother who were already here.

Paola remembers the fear she experienced on her journey to the United States.

"Definitely God protected us the whole way and guided us," she said.

Emilio and Paola met and married. She attended Iowa State University. They shared an apartment with another couple to make ends meet.

The Nietos had their first child.

Emilio sold his truck job to someone who did landscaping, and the buyer began to give Emilio jobs, Paola said.

Emilio approached his boss and said he either needed a big raise or he needed to go out on his own to try and earn more money. The owner helped Emilio start his own business.

"He helped me to start up. Then I brought my brother to work with me. Then I hired someone else. Little by little, I hired someone else and I got more customers. We were able to get our own apartment. Three years later, we were able to get our own home. About three to four years ago, we were able to get a nicer home.

Emilio speaks as if he's won life's lottery.

"Once upon a time, I had a dream and God has given me a chance to see it," he said.

"I have my own business; I can employ people. I love my wife. We have five kids. It's not just blessings on my work, it's blessings on my family. I'm an active person in the church. I try to do my best to be a good Catholic. I just want to say that I'm really thankful for all the opportunities that I got in this country. It's a great country and I think anyone who wants to make their dream come true, if they're here they can get it done but they have to work really hard and I'm sure they'll get it."

Emilio now has a son who is 15 years old.

"I told him that he just has to look back to me and see that I didn't have a lot of opportunities when I was 15, and he has double the opportunities than I had," he said. "If he really wants to fulfill his dreams, it can be done."



# CCUSA, Texas bishops address ministry with migrants

*“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matthew 25)*

The following is a recent statement from the Texas Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Charities USA.

ALEXANDRIA, VA – Catholic Charities USA and its 167 member agencies have a long history of serving their communities to help the most vulnerable find affordable housing, access vital food assistance and nutrition, receive mental and integrated healthcare and achieve economic self-sufficiency and stability.

When disaster strikes, its agencies provide emergency and long-term relief to help individuals and families rebuild their lives. Additionally, since its founding in 1910, Catholic Charities has provided immigration

and refugee services.

Catholic Charities’ work with migrants is rooted in the Gospel and in Catholic social teaching.

Agencies along the southern U.S. border, including in Texas, and around the country have provided these services in coordination with the federal government for decades across multiple presidential administrations. Catholic Charities’ efforts are humanitarian, not political.

Federal agencies and local border cities turn to Catholic Charities agencies and other faith-based and local nonprofit organizations to aid them in caring for migrants.

This role is as critical as it is turnkey. Once migrants have been granted permission by the

federal government to be present in the United States, they are sent to Catholic Charities for transitional care.

This care is threaded with the dignity we believe should be afforded to every person — a warm meal, a shower, clean clothing, medicine and other supplies.

Usually, within two days, the migrants leave the Catholic Charities centers to continue their journey while they await their immigration court process.

Many migrants are poor and in need of extended services and Catholic Charities partners with a variety of agencies to attend to those needs. Additionally, some migrants are tragically victims of human trafficking, and our ministries work closely with the appropriate federal, state and local public safety departments to ensure their protection and well-being.

The staff and volunteers

of Catholic Charities have the utmost concern for the health of the communities where they live and do everything they can to protect against the spread of COVID-19. They work with government officials to separate individuals and families who test positive to allow for isolation until a negative test is returned.

There is a concern about the ability of Catholic Charities and agency partners to care for the growing number of newcomers while recognizing the immigration system in the U.S. is in dire need of being revamped.

While those laws and trajectories remain outside of their control, Catholic Charities’ humanitarian work continues in full congruence with U.S. law.

We are grateful for the ability to work in many border communities in an ecumenical, interfaith way so that together we can serve those in need and keep our local communities safe.

We praise the tireless efforts of the Catholic Charities member agencies at the border and throughout the country in their ministry to migrants. With constantly changing conditions, surges in border crossings, limited facilities, the media spotlight, and the pressures of regulatory efforts designed to curtail their humanitarian work, they march on caring for one human life at a time — whether it be a fearful child, a parent seeking to provide for his or her family or a potential victim of human trafficking.

In caring for the stranger, they are the hands of Jesus Christ.

*Catholic Charities and its related agencies help and create hope to more than 15 million people a year regardless of religious, social, or economic backgrounds. To learn more about CCUSA, visit their website at [www.catholic-charitiesusa.org](http://www.catholic-charitiesusa.org).*

## Crowd gathers for perfect weather on Feast of the Assumption of Mary, Consecration to St. Joseph



Photos by Kelly Mescher Collins

The weather was perfect for the consecration to St. Joseph event. Bishop William Joensen celebrated the 4 p.m. Mass on the Feast Day of the Assumption of Mary and the consecration to St. Joseph, which was followed by a picnic.



Bishop William Joensen celebrated Mass and led the consecration to St. Joseph outside St. Patrick Church in Irish Settlement on Sunday, Aug. 15. The event also celebrated the 110th anniversary of the Diocese of Des Moines.

The

# BROTHERS AND SISTERS ON THE JOURNEY

A THREE-PART SERIES ON FAITH AND IMMIGRANTS

### A Three-Part Short Video Series on Faith and Immigrants

Part 1 focuses on the Italian immigrants who helped found St. Anthony Church in Des Moines. Monsignor Frank Chiodo, pastor and descendant of Italian immigrants, describes how the Catholic faith is extremely important to immigrants.

Part 2 of this series focuses on Jessica Hernandez, a member of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, who is an immigrant, DACA recipient and Hispanic Ministry Coordinator at the Diocese of Des Moines.

Part 3 of this series focuses on Sisters Elaine and Jeanie Hagedorn of the Congregation of Humility of Mary, who helped Jessica Hernandez and her mother get settled in Des Moines as they sought a better life away from crime, violence and poverty.

Watch at [dmdiocese.org/brothersandsisters](http://dmdiocese.org/brothersandsisters)

# Cathedral Holy Hours

Join Bishop Joensen at St. Ambrose Cathedral for an hour of Adoration & Prayer

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Visit [dmdiocese.org/holyhours](http://dmdiocese.org/holyhours) to find out about your parish's opportunities for Adoration and Holy Hours



# Faith pulls Indianola family through near death experience

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Joe and Dorothy Gezel have always lived out their faith in many ways at their parish, St. Thomas Aquinas, in Indianola.

Joe went on parish youth mission trips for nearly 14 years, serving as a chaperone and helping the kids serve those in need. Both have been involved in a number of endeavors and committees.

They even started Heal House – a homeless shelter in Indianola. The Gezels raised money, purchased an old hotel and sought out donors to refurbish the rooms, which now houses individuals and families, providing shelter until they get back on their feet.

But the Gezels' faith was put to the ultimate test in November 2019 when Joe had a massive heart attack, followed by a stroke the next day.

The outpouring of love, prayers and support from the Indianola community was quick.

"People went to church to pray the rosary and also a lot of them came up to the hospital," Dorothy said, estimating maybe 120 people at either church or the chapel in the hospital. "We were on the intensive care floor for a couple of weeks."

After being moved to a rehabilitation center, Joe's condition worsened, and he was moved back to the hospital for surgery.

"The doctor said, 'Joe has a severe vascular disease...,'" Dorothy said. "They told us that he's got an artery that is closed off that goes to his colon, and his colon is dying. We need to do surgery, and he's probably not going to make it. But if we don't do surgery he definitely [won't survive]."

In fact, it was just before Christmas when the family thought they might lose him. Daughter Amanda Merema remembers leaving Mass early that day after getting the call.

Clergy, including their pastor, Father Chris Fontanini, Deacon Dave O'Brien and Father George Komo walked with the family, offering prayers of healing more times than they can count, Merema said.

"Joe is a fighter and he is an inspiration to many of us because throughout this ordeal, all of the different surgeries and with all of the doctors, he was bound and determined he was going to be coming out of this," said Father Fontanini.

At one point, doctors had suggested perhaps taking him off the ventilator. Dorothy rejected



Joe Gezel survived a heart attack, stroke, countless surgeries - including an amputation - and five months in the hospital. Joe is pictured with his wife Dorothy and their family. The Gezels are members of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola.

that idea though, putting Joe's life in God's hands.

"Everybody at the hospital kept asking if I was ok," Dorothy said. "And I can't explain why I felt at peace like I did."

Dorothy credits the Holy Spirit for inspiring her to ask family, friends and the parish community to pray and fast for Joe one Friday just before Christmas. And then things started looking up.

"The week of Christmas Eve and Christmas – it all shifted," Merema said.

Father Fontanini agreed, noting "tremendous results."

Joe's steady improvements came as a relief to friends and family, and a surprise to some doctors, who even commented that he was a miracle.

Their daughters are grateful to God for their answered prayers.

"[Our parents] have always been huge role models for us," Merema said. "But on top of that, to witness how strong my

Mom was through everything was beyond amazing."

Dorothy spent months taking care of Joe at home after he was released from the hospital.

"And she still is amazing," Merema continued. "Today we are out in the 100-degree weather and my Mom is pushing him through the fair and we're all dripping with sweat. But she continues to be there in every way she can for him."

Joe was in the hospital for five months. The family lost track of the number of surgeries Joe had, but one of them included the amputation of his right leg. (Joe now hopes to find a way to use his experiences as an amputee to help others living under similar circumstances.)

When he finally came home, a crowd lined the streets, blowing foghorns, waving and welcoming him back.

"To be quite honest, I wouldn't be here if it weren't for my wife and kids – period," said

Joe, who was unconscious for a large amount of time while in the hospital. "The only one I had to talk to was God [during that time]."

"People say that they were praying for me," Joe continued. "I heard your prayers. I honestly, truly did. I know for me, the power of prayer is what brought me through."

Joe is pictured with his wife, Dorothy, who pushed Joe around at the Iowa State Fair on opening day when temperatures soared. The Gezels are members of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola.



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# Retired farmer drives over 100 miles a week to donate

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

A retired farmer, Deacon Marvin Klein of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap, has been donating blood since he was 18 years old.

Then one day, a nurse suggested he try donating blood platelets.

Blood platelets are blood cells that help a person's body form clots to stop bleeding. According to the American Red Cross, platelets are in constant demand by hospitals.

They give cancer patients the strength they need to keep fighting, since one major effect of treatment is low platelet count. Platelets also help patients survive major surgeries or serious injuries. And they give strength to patients with blood disorders and transplants.

"I finally did make the appointment," Deacon Klein said. "I gave one unit and then next time I came back, they said – 'Wow, you can give up to three.'"

Deacon Klein seems to have been blessed with a plethora of platelets, enabling him to give greater quantities each time, more than the typical donor.

Despite the time commitment and 60-plus minute car ride one way from Dunlap to Omaha, Deacon Klein keeps giving.

In fact, earlier this

spring, Deacon Klein marked his 250<sup>th</sup> blood platelet donation at the Red Cross.

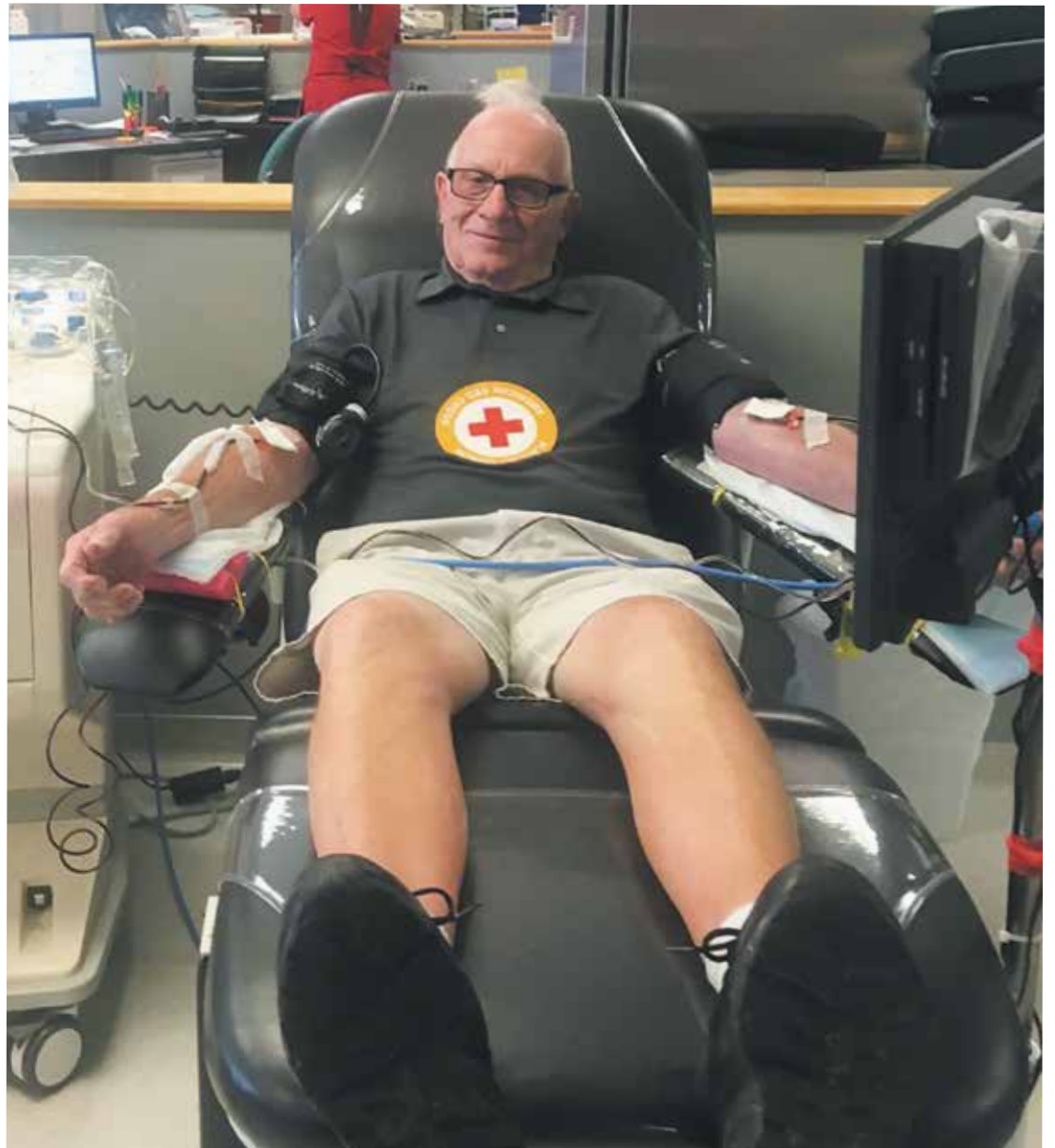
Positive feedback is rewarding, giving Deacon Klein sense of calling and purpose. He regularly receives letters from the Red Cross, informing him when his platelets are received by someone in Minnesota or other locations across the Midwest.

"A lady wrote a letter to me [after she saw the *Omaha World Herald* story about me]," Deacon Klein said on *Making it Personal with Bishop Joensen*, which aired on July 16 on Iowa Catholic Radio and the Spirit Catholic Radio Network. "She told me a personal story about a grandchild who receives platelets. And I guess all of those things encouraged me."

"I just want to give...and I can give the donation," Deacon Klein continued. "It's something I can't buy. But if you're dying of cancer, it's something you could sure use."

When he's not busy making trips to and from Omaha to donate platelets, Deacon Klein can be found on the tractor helping his two grandsons raise chickens or helping out at his parish.

Listen to the full interview with Bishop Joensen at [iowacatholicradio.com/making-it-personal](http://iowacatholicradio.com/making-it-personal).



Deacon Marvin Klein, of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap, drives 50 miles one way to Omaha every week to donate blood platelets. Listen to the full interview with Bishop Joensen at [iowacatholicradio.com/making-it-personal](http://iowacatholicradio.com/making-it-personal).

## Devoted deacon dies

Continued from page 1

moved into parish administration at Christ the King Parish in Des Moines and Assumption Parish in Granger.

He was ordained a deacon in 1993, and went on to help with the formation program for subsequent groups studying for the diaconate.

In 2001, retired Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S. asked Deacon McGuire and his wife, Deacon Ron and Tammy Myers and Cora Bartemes to reconstitute the formation process for deacons.

"Dan and Mary were just integral to the whole thing," Cora said. "Dan had great experience in the local church. He knew so many people and he had a finger on resources."

"He and Mary were a great team," said Deacon Myers. "Mary would be the creative person. She dreamed up things. We would want real life situations that we wanted to put the deacon candidates in and say, 'Ok, what would you do?' Dan was the actor. He could put it together and make it live."

Deacon McGuire had a gift for being able to read people,

Deacon Myers said.

"He was intuitive about thoughts people were having and he always felt he could read people well," said Deacon Myers. "Because of that, I think he could like everybody because he could see beyond the façade. He could see Christ in everybody. He really could see the real person in there, which was also the Holy Spirit. It was someone who had worth regardless of what they might have been thought of by other people. He was willing to give people a chance."

Deacon McGuire also will be remembered for always bringing a positive, upbeat attitude to gatherings.

"Dan's smile and easy manner made him a welcome addition to any gathering and before you know it, we were members of the same prayer and dinner group," said Deacon Bartemes. "As a group, we supported one another in our various ministries as well as the many hills and valleys that all of us face in our daily lives."

He said: "We say goodbye to Dan remember his smile his laugh and his love for everyone he met."

## Catholic foundation awards grants

Continued from page 1

purchase livestreaming materials

- Catholic Tuition Organization, \$3,050 to fund website enhancements

- Emmaus House, \$4,450 to purchase virtual ministry materials

- Ss. John and Paul Parish, Altoona, \$4,530 to fund virtu-

al faith formation items

- The Veil Removed, \$5,000 to create Spanish resources

- St. Theresa Catholic School, Des Moines, \$5,000 to build a digital marketing campaign

- St. Pius X Catholic School, Urbandale, \$5,000 to purchase science curriculum ma-

terials

- St. Patrick Catholic Parish, Lenox, \$5,000 to purchase livestreaming equipment

- St. Patrick Catholic Parish, Corning, \$6,400 to enhance Church sound equipment

- Christ the King Catholic School, Des Moines, \$6,890 to purchase STEM materials

## Capital campaign launching soon

Continued from page 1

support priests in their retirement, and promote parish renewal and vibrancy initiatives. In addition, a percentage of funds raised at each of the 80 parishes will be returned directly to each parish through a "parish share" component. These funds will be used for parish-specific needs.

"We are all called to participate, to stoke the flames of the Spirit and kindle faith and hope for our generation and those who will follow us," Bishop Joensen commented. "To be a Catholic Christian is God's great privilege to us, to celebrate sacraments in communion with Jesus and our sisters and brothers. As the Blessed Mother and St. Jo-

seph and all God's friends have shown us, we offer our lives as both sacrifice and gift. The Spirit is urging us right now to promote what our present and past popes have called a 'human ecology' by being good stewards of our lives and all the resources that God has entrusted to us."

The Diocesan Stewardship Office will manage the campaign with assistance from the Steier Group, a Catholic fundraising firm based in Omaha, Nebraska. Bishop Joensen has recruited a strong group of clergy and lay leaders to lead the charge.

A Clergy Committee, comprised of pastors from every region in the Diocese, is led by co-chairs Father Dan Kirby (pastor of St. John the Apostle in Nor-

walk) and Father Joe Pins (pastor of St. Joseph in Des Moines). A Campaign Cabinet has also been formed, led by general co-chairs Bryan and Betsy Boesen, Dan and Natalie Burkey, Kyle and Sharon Krause, Steve and Cathy Lacy, and Pete and Dana Wenstrand.

Since the campaign's approval earlier this year, these leadership teams have been engaged in preparing for the rollout of the public phase while also conducting the "silent" phase of the campaign, which will conclude in December.

The public phase will begin in January 2022, with every parish participating in one of three "waves" throughout the year. Preparations for the public phase will begin this fall.



# Singing invites us to joy

## Marriage and Family Life

By Adam Storey



Earlier this month my family went on a vacation that began with a family camp in Wisconsin, and ended with visiting my wife's parents in Minnesota. It was a refreshing week all around, and on one of the last days I had the joy of watching my kids color around their grandparents' table while they sang a song they had learned at family camp.

In reflecting on that moment, I'm reminded of a truth that I try to affirm as often as I can, which is that it is good to sing! Sometimes we forget this truth; singing can be treated as something best left to professionals, or something we ought only

do when no one can hear us. It can even feel like an embarrassing punishment.

Yet, why do we sing? In his short book, "Only the Lover Sings," Joseph Pieper argues that singing helps us to give voice to what cannot be said in any other way. Singing helps express our fundamen-

tal desire for happiness, our intuition that "to be" is good, and that the goodness of creation points to the goodness of the Creator. There is a longing in our hearts beyond words, something we want to say even when we don't know how, and so we sing!

This was definitely true for my children, who were singing "Estoy Alegre," a Spanish song about finding joy in the companionship of Jesus. My kids don't speak Spanish, and so much of the song was incomprehensible to them. Still, their act of singing revealed a comprehension that often goes beyond my own. In their simplicity, and through their singing, they invited me

into a joy of which I can often lose sight.

I am convinced that when we don't sing we're not avoiding embarrassment as much as we're forgoing something that brings profound joy and wisdom. I'd like to challenge all of us to finish the summer by learning, or relearning, at least one song, something we can belt out—even off pitch—alone, or even better with family and friends.

*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.*

## Want to reduce abortions? Start by reducing contraception

If we want to reduce abortions, we should start by reducing contraception. I know that sounds counterintuitive.

People assume that the way to reduce abortion is to promote comprehensive sexual education and increase access to contraception.

According to the research by the Guttmacher Institute, over half the woman who go into the clinic for an abortion were using some kind of contraceptive method the month they became pregnant.

Contraception is clearly not the solution to the problem of abortion. Quite the opposite is true. The abortion industry has figured out that in order to keep women coming in for abortions, they keep women coming in for contraceptives.

Contraception gives women a false sense of security and that false sense leads to taking greater risks. According to a British Medical Journal Study, individuals will be sexually active when they think the risk has been eliminated. The Journal of Health Economics provides even more proof. Economics Professor David Patton, who is an author of many studies on con-

## Guest Column

By Maggie DeWitte



traception, states there is "no evidence" that access to family planning reduces the abortion rate.

People say teens need contraception in order to prevent pregnancy, as if teenagers are incapable of controlling themselves. The real solution is abstinence. Teenagers are less likely to use contraception properly, and when they do become pregnant, they are more vulnerable and less equipped to handle the consequences than adults.

Also, there are severe health risks associated with contraception and abortifacient effects associated with many contraceptives, both of which are serious considerations.

Our society is saturated in sex; we

have an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases and pornography that further degrades human dignity and our respect for the God-given gift of our sexuality that is to be expressed in the context of heterosexual marriage.

It seems so clear to me that in order to reduce abortions, we need to return to God's creative intention. Sexual relations are to unite couples in enduring fidelity and to be open to the transmission of life. God created man and woman and he told them to be fruitful and multiply. Instead, we have taken the sacred, God-given gift of sexuality and often reduced it to mere subjective gratification.

Of course abortions were taking place before the sexual revolution, but it was the sexual revolution and the birth control pill that dramatically increased abortions and the moral decline in our culture. Contraception was purported to empower women and give them freedom and equality with men. But it didn't do any of that. It was inevitable that it would lead to the idea that the only way to advance in society would be to have the right to kill the

child in her womb.

When we look at reducing abortion, we often look to the laws and legislation that will impact the abortion rate. At the same time, we are constantly preaching the need to "change hearts and minds." And both things are needed.

But I genuinely believe that the key to unraveling the mess we have made in our families and relationships is to address the lie of contraception.

The only way we are really going to reduce the abortion rate is by honoring our God-given sexuality. It's by teaching our children from an early age that they matter, that they have inherent dignity, and they are unconditionally loved. And that dignity follows from the fact that they are made in the image of God. It means teaching our children what it means to be a man and be a woman and how members of each sex are intended to complement the other.

*Maggie DeWitte is the executive director of Iowans for LIFE.*

## The making of a champion

Growing up on a farm, my siblings were (and still are) some of my closest friends.

We entertained ourselves with our imagination and farm "props." It always seemed to involve dramatic tales of chase and narrowly escaping the "bad guys." Sometimes these adventures occurred on parallel rows of large, round bales of straw. We'd help each other scramble up top before leaping and sprinting an hour away. Or we'd climb the ladder into the barn's hay loft. Images of *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* flashed through my mind as we crawled through a tunnel of bales built my brother Pat. Sometimes my younger brother Nick and I pretended to be our favorite cartoon heroes – I was She-Ra: Princess of Power and he was He-Man. (Though he claims he doesn't remember that.)

We lived on a gravel road near the West Nishnabotna River, another favorite spot for adventure.

It was a combination of imagination and a real life encounter that inspired my sister Jody and I to pen a letter, put it in a bottle and send it down the Nishnabotna as kids. I probably thought we'd get a response in the mail in short order from someone in Thailand, or maybe even Australia, where my Mom's pen pal was from. (She even came out to the farm to visit us.)

But days and weeks and eventually years went by with no response. At least until 2010, when a guy about our age found the bottle on his rural property in our very own Diocese of Des Moines near Malvern. We've now been Facebook friends for years. (There were even stories in the *Omaha World Herald* and *Carroll Times Her-*

## Faith that Conquers

By Kelly Mescher Collins



ald.)

We enjoyed meeting my Mom's Australian pen pal, and enjoyed meeting the finder of our message in a bottle, who read our letter asking: "Need a friend?"

I reflect on how as kids we seemed to know something we busy adults too easily forget – the value of friendships and importance of community. It's undoubtedly been friends, family, co-workers and community that helped you through this past 18 months (and beyond.)

For those feeling isolated or alone, grand gestures are not required. A phone call, a letter or a short visit (when possible) have tremendous impacts on those in need of positive, human interaction. And lest we forget – we *all* need positive, human interaction. It's natural, normal and even vital – the way God created you.

In *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for Trust, Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*, social scientist Brené Brown writes: "Research shows that playing cards once a week or meeting friends every Wednesday night at Starbucks adds as many years to our lives as taking beta blockers or quitting a pack-a-day smoking habit."

Unfortunately, we live in an increasingly self-focused, digitally immersed

world.

Some see needing others as weakness. But no – it's by God's perfect design.

Studies have found post-war soldiers and firefighters with post-traumatic stress disorder show the mere presence of a spouse, family member or friend helped reduce intrusive thoughts and other negative effects. In fact, just *knowing* they had someone they could rely on or call improved their mental health.

Reflecting on my own life, the challenges I overcame or accomplishments I achieved were often because others encouraged me or walked by my side.

In 2016, I decided that if I was ever going to run a marathon, now was as good a time as any. I had been a runner for nearly 20 years and I certainly wasn't getting any younger. My husband Jason asked what he could do to help.

"Can you come with me on my long runs on your bike?" I asked. (More like pleaded.)

The training runs were very long and hot, and having him by my side kept me going. I fully admit I never would have trained for two marathons without him.

On race day, though, I was on my own. (Or so I thought.) During one of my walking breaks on a long, sweltering, ugly stretch of the course I made two new friends by striking up a conversation to commiserate. Marathons are a mind game, but they assured me we *would* cross the finish line together. And we did. We are still Facebook friends today, still cheering each other on.

My marathon times were far from stellar, but it didn't matter. I finished. And they helped me achieve something I always

wanted to do.

And it's not just me. Even some of the greatest – Olympic athletes – point to friends, teammates and family as a formula for success. Dowling Catholic alum Karissa Schweizer is one of them.

She credited friend, training partner and fellow Iowan, Shelby Houlihan, for challenging her physically but also mentally, blowing open ideas about speeds they could achieve.

U.S. hurdlers Sydney McLaughlin and Dalilah Muhammad have been breaking each other's records for years, pushing each other to be better. Olympic coverage of these two frequently cited Proverbs 27:17: "Iron sharpens iron."

McLaughlin, a 2017 graduate of Union Catholic Regional High School in New Jersey, took home the gold – the youngest ever in the 400 meter hurdles. Her community back home, including Union Catholic Principal, Sister Percylee Hart, was cheering her on.

Stories were abound during this year's Olympics of athletes pointing to friends, family and community, insisting they never would have achieved these goals without their love and support.

And if it works for them, it's certainly good enough for me – without shame.

*You can read the Carroll Times Herald story about their message in a bottle at [bit.ly/NishnabotnaBottle](http://bit.ly/NishnabotnaBottle).*

*Kelly Mescher Collins is multimedia journalist for the Diocese of Des Moines. She can be reached at [kcollins@dmdiocese.org](mailto:kcollins@dmdiocese.org).*



# House of Grass and Sky: an ode to the place that shapes us

Every house, in its own way, is a living thing. It changes as we change. It expands with joy and contracts under duress.

This strikes me as a Catholic concept. We embrace sacramental living and elevate each home as a “domestic church,” the first place a soul is formed. But it’s a human idea, really. It’s something we sense, deep down, even if we can’t articulate it or sound silly when we try.

We enter a home and breathe in its history. We know it is more than brick and stone, greater than the sum of its parts. Over time we come to believe the house is participating in our lives, tucking our memories within its walls, sighing with satisfaction, creaking with sorrow. We wonder, if we listen well enough, if we could hear its beating heart.

And eventually we dare to imagine that a house can love you back, offering beauty and security, light and darkness – and ultimately, helping you become who you were meant to be.

That’s what happened to Mary Lyn Ray, 75, who became a writer when she moved into an old farmhouse in South Danbury, N.H. It felt like the house in her favorite childhood book, Tasha Tudor’s “Snow Before Christmas.” Mary Lyn was certain that somewhere, a house like the one in the book waited for her.

Decades passed, and Mary

## Twentysomething



By Christina Capecchi

Lyn went about her business. One day, to celebrate her mother’s birthday, she promised her family a picnic at “some wonderful surprise place” without having one in mind.

As Mary Lyn prepared their food, a friend of a friend visited and mentioned a pretty spot: a boarded up white farmhouse facing a mountain half a mile down a back road in South Danbury.

When Mary Lyn found it, there was a flash of recognition. “It looked just like the Tasha Tudor picture I had been carrying with me,” she told me.

The house had been sitting empty for 40 years, ensnared in estate issues. So Mary Lyn waited, just as the house had waited for her. In 1984, five years later, she finally bought it, working with her father to make it livable while honoring what the builder had understood nearly a century and a half ago.

Never having married, Mary Lyn would live there alone. As she settled in,

she found a drawer built into the wall. Underneath, written in pencil, were two initials: ML.

Her initials.

“It gave me shivers,” she said. “It seemed the house had known my name before I came. I felt as if maybe I had been expected.”

Her education began.

“The farm taught me how to be open to story,” she said. “It gave me the space, and as I began to listen and look and be present, it taught me to see how story happens and where my story may wait.”

What poured out, in the ensuing decades, was nearly 50 acclaimed children’s books, including “Pumpkins,” “Go to Sleep, Little Farm” and “Christmas Farm.”

Her new release, “The House of Grass

and Sky,” tells the story of an old white farmhouse much like hers waiting for a family. The book is an homage to Mary Lyn’s beloved home, enriched by E.B. Goodale’s watercolor collages. You can feel the grass.

When a new family finally buys The House of Grass and Sky, they respect its history: “They listen to what it’s listened to for many years. They take time to notice and to wonder.”

It is a beautiful book for all ages, well timed for a wild housing market, as Americans pack up and return to their hometowns in droves, as parents reconsider what kind of childhood they want for their kids and empty houses rejoice.

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

## Can we prove God exists?

### Guest Column



By Father Ron Rolheiser

I wrote my doctoral thesis on the value of various philosophical arguments that try to prove the existence of God. Can there be such a proof? Brilliant philosophers, from Anselm, through Aquinas, through Descartes, through contemporary intellectuals like Charles Hartshorne, submit that the existence of God can be proven through rational argument. Except, except, a lot depends upon what exactly we mean by the word “prove”. How do we prove something?

There’s a legend about St. Christopher that’s pertinent here: Christopher was a man gifted in every way, except faith. He was physically strong, powerful, goodhearted, mellow, and well liked. He was also generous, using his physical strength to help others, but he found it hard to believe in God, even though he wanted to. For him, the physical was what was real and everything else seemed unreal. And so, as the legend goes, he lived his life in a certain honest agnosticism, unable to really believe in anything beyond what he could physically see, feel, and touch.

However, this did not prevent him from using his gifts, especially his physical strength, to serve others. This was his refuge, generosity and service. He became a ferryboat operator, spending his life helping to carry people across a dangerous river. One night, as the legend goes, during a storm, the ferryboat capsized and Christopher dove into the dark waters to rescue a young child. Carrying that child to the shore, he looked into its face and saw there the face of Christ. After that, he believed for he had seen the face of Christ.

For all its piety, this legend contains a profound lesson. It changes the perspective on the question of how one tries to “prove” God’s existence. Our attempt to prove God’s existence has to be practical, existential, and incarnate rather than mainly intellectual. How do we move from believing only in the physical, from believing only in the reality of what we can see, feel, touch, taste, and smell, to believing in the existence of deeper, spiritual realities?

There’s lesson in the Christopher story: Live as honestly and respectfully as you can and use your gifts to help others. God will appear. God is not found at the conclusion of a philosophical syllogism but as the result of a certain way of living. Moreover, faith is not so much a question of feeling as of selfless service.

There’s a further lesson in the biblical account of the apostle, Thomas, and his doubt about the resurrection of Jesus. Remember his protest: “Unless I can (physically) place my finger in the wounds of his hands and stick my finger into the wound of his side, I will not believe.” Note that Jesus offers no resistance or rebuke in the face of Thomas’ skepticism. Instead, he takes Thomas at his word: “Come and (physically) place your finger in the wounds of my hand and the wound in my side; see for yourself that I am real and not a ghost.”

That’s the open challenge for us: “Come and see for yourselves that God is real and not a ghost!” That challenge, however, is not so much an intellectual one as a moral one, a challenge to be honest and generous.

Skepticism and agnosticism, even atheism, are not a problem as long as one is honest, non-rationalizing, non-lying, ready to efface oneself before reality as it appears, and generous in giving his or her life away in service. If these conditions are met, God, the author and source of all reality, eventually becomes sufficiently real, even to those who need physical proof. The stories of Christopher and Thomas teach us this and assure us that God is neither angered nor threatened by an honest agnosticism.

Faith is never certainty. Neither is it a sure feeling that God exists. Conversely, unbelief is not to be confused with the absence of the felt assurance that God exists. For everyone, there will be dark nights of the soul, silences of God, cold lonely seasons, skeptical times when God’s reality cannot be consciously grasped or recognized. The history of faith, as witnessed by the life of Jesus and the lives of the saints, shows us that God often seems dead and, at those times, the reality of the empirical world can so overpower us that nothing seems real except what we can see and feel right now, not least our own pain.

Whenever this happens, like Christopher and Thomas, we need to become honest agnostics who use our goodness and God-given strengths to help carry others across the burdensome rivers of life. God does not ask us to have a faith that is certain, but a service that is generous and sustained. We have the assurance that should we faithfully help carry others, we will one day find ourselves before the reality of God who will gently say to us: “See for yourself, that I am real, and not a ghost.”

Can we prove that God exists? In theory, no; in life, yes. *Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through [www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com).*



## I've Been Wondering...

Father John Ludwig

**Q. Why do some people not like Catholics?**

**A. WE COULD ALSO SAY** that some Catholics don’t like people of other faiths. Of course, neither one is particularly honorable. Often enough, dislike stems from misunderstandings. Sometimes dislike comes from insecurity. Like many situations, once people get to know a Catholic personally, they change their minds. It happens with ethnic groups as well. For example, people who don’t like Hispanics or African-Americans or Italians or Asians or you-name-the-group. The challenge, of course, is to get to know people who might at first seem unlikeable. The more we can do that, the more peace we’ll have in the world. We can’t make others like Catholics, but we can live our lives in a way that speaks well of our tradition.

**Q. Is it wrong to steal even if you do good with it?** —Dan, West Des Moines

**A. YES. TAKING SOMETHING** that doesn’t belong to you can’t be justified by the mere fact that you use what is stolen for some good. Otherwise, we’d have no reason to be honest in our relations with others. We can’t simply rob a bank because we want to use the revenue for a favorite charity. Robin Hood was known for “stealing from the rich and giving to the poor.” There is not an absolute right to property. The common good needs to be considered in all of our dealings. So, we have the responsibility to be good stewards with our material goods, and we have to respect the property of others.

**Q. Where was Mary when she was assumed into heaven?**

**A. THE SHORT ANSWER** is “we don’t know.” Some traditions refer to the Assumption as the Dormition – falling asleep. The New Testament contains no explicit narrative

about the death or Dormition, or Assumption of Mary. In 1950, Pope Pius XII invoked papal infallibility to define the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in his Apostolic Constitution Munificentissimus Deus: “*We proclaim and define it to be a dogma revealed by God that the immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.*” There are some historical details that we simply have no information about. The feast of the Assumption is August 15.

**Q. What does it mean: St. Anthony was “Jesus’ confessor and doctor?”**

**A. THE TERM DOES** not refer to the sacrament of reconciliation. We often refer to priests as confessors in relation to the sacrament of penance. Over the centuries, certain titles have been given to canonized saints. Confessor is one title and Doctor is another title. Some saints are referred to as both Confessor and Doctor. Confessor is usually given to a saint who is not a martyr. Doctor is usually reserved for those who are great teachers. The most recent declarations of saints as Doctors include St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. Therese of Lisieux.

Anthony was born in Portugal and eventually made his way to Italy where he befriended St. Francis of Assisi. Francis directed Anthony to teach theology to the brothers of his fledgling community. He was known to be an extraordinary preacher. He died in Padua, Italy, at age 35 in 1231 and was canonized the following year. His feast day is June 13.

*Do you have a question for Father John Ludwig? Send it to [communications@dmdiocese.org](mailto:communications@dmdiocese.org), or mail it to The Catholic Mirror, Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.*



# Aún Juntos después de Todos Estos Años

Continued from page 1

ias y nuestra sociedad es la creciente atención que se dedica a la situación de personas que sufre de disforia de género / discordancias de identidad de género. La molestia que sufre la mayoría de la gente durante la pubertad y el proceso de maduración psico-sexual es raramente fácil y por lo general es confuso. Para algunos jóvenes, quienes en algún punto de su vida temprana han sufrido algún trauma sexual o de otro tipo, el sentido de ser ya sea masculino o femenino viviendo en un cuerpo equivocado se conecta frecuentemente con un sentido de aislamiento dentro de uno mismo y con la gente que les rodean. Aquellos que promueven intervenciones dramáticas tales como prescribir bloqueadores hormonales contra el desarrollo sexual o cirugías que pueden alterar los órganos sexuales y rediseñar su propia fisonomía, ya sea dentro de las comunidades médicas o LGBTQ+ o incluso sus propios padres y familias, pueden representar un esfuerzo bien intencionado a eliminar el sufrimiento.

Pero estas actitudes representan un error fundamental de nuestra identidad esencial humana como compuestos originales de cuerpo y alma que son vulnerables desde el momento de la

concepción ante todas las fuerzas disruptivas como enfermedades y el pecado original (incluyendo las desafortunadas instancias de anomalías físicas o genéticas tales como el hermafroditismo o la intersexualidad.) Cada uno de nosotros somos creados por Dios desde el primer momento de nuestro ser – como con María y José – para ser esta alma en particular con la intención de activar este cuerpo sexual en particular, cuya raíz es nuestro llamado vocacional a acompañarnos los unos a los otros en el peregrinar en que tomamos nuestro lugar apropiado en compañía de los hijos de Dios.

Los datos médicos que están surgiendo confirman que las llamadas cirugías de alteración de género y la disrupción química del desarrollo sexual que es un paso precedente no cumplen con el alivio terapéutico a largo plazo que prometen. Tristemente, la tendencia al suicidio por parte de estos pacientes no ha disminuido. Nosotros no queremos ser cómplices con el pensamiento cultural que simplemente se cruza de brazos y sigue al ritmo irregular de las voces que demandan que se cumpla con lo que es un error fundamental de nuestra personalidad humana.

En el umbral del cielo, Cristo es por siempre el primer fruto de la vida eterna, seguido por aquellos que pertenecen a

Cristo, con María su madre principalmente en el grupo de los santos ya que ha sido asumida en el cielo, y es luego coronada con las estrellas de la más hermosa hija de la humanidad. Probablemente para las personas que sufren discordancia de identidad de género, el yugo de sufrimiento con el que cargan no pueda ser totalmente apaciguado hasta que Cristo destruya toda autoridad y poder, incluyendo a la muerte misma, y nos entregue al Padre como la posesión más preciada de su Reino. Nos conformamos en la verdad Evangélica de que aquellos quienes comparten más plenamente el cáliz del sufrimiento de Cristo serán saciados hasta rebotar con el vino nuevo del Espíritu del gozo.

Mientras tanto, en este lado del valle de lágrimas, nos comprometemos a amarnos los unos a los otros incondicionalmente, a estar presentes en el acompañamiento de unos con otros a través de cualquier crisis personal que pudiéramos enfrentar en los caminos de nuestras vidas, incluyendo cualquier cruz que sintamos que no podamos cargar por nosotros mismos. Solicitamos al Espíritu que podamos discernir prudentemente para poder distinguir las voces que a final de cuentas esparcen y dividen dentro de sí mismas a las personas contra aquellos que

buscan consolidar los lazos de angustias y trayectos compartidos que, por la gracia de Dios, nos unen los unos a los otros más cercanamente en actos de compasión y cariño.

Cuando respetamos el “yo” que nos ha dado Dios, descubrimos nuevamente que “nosotros” tomamos parte pluralmente en la comunión de personas que deben permanecer juntas hasta que en un desconocido número de años nos entreguemos a la eternidad. Con San José, declaramos nuestro propio “fiat,” que así sea, en cualquier reto que se nos imponga, tal como lo hizo María en la Anunciación (y en su Asunción), y como lo hizo Jesús en el huerto de Getsemaní.

Y nos convertimos aún más en la Iglesia que Dios quiere que seamos cuando nos creó y nos llamó, y cuando por su designio providencial vino a ser la Diócesis de Des Moines hace 110 años. Que Dios continúe brillando continuamente sobre nosotros y que nos bañe con sus gracias al comenzar una nueva década, avanzando hacia nuestro segundo siglo de misión e identidad como los fieles de Dios en el suroeste de Iowa.

## Catholic agency helps resettle Afghan translators who aided U.S. forces

ARLINGTON, Va. (CNS) -- When U.S. service members were in a foreign land, unsure of the way and unable to speak the language, brave locals came to their assistance.

Now, the Afghans who served as interpreters and guides for the U.S. military need help adjusting to a new country.

For decades, the U.S. military has been in Afghanistan and is now in the process of withdrawing troops.

The Taliban, an extremist Islamic movement that ruled Afghanistan until ousted by a U.S.-led coalition, is taking advantage of the withdrawal to gain control in the region, making it especially dangerous for those who assisted U.S. forces. (At presstime, there were reports of the Taliban taking over Kabul, the country's capitol.)

Operation Allies Refuge, which began July 30, brought plane loads of Afghans to Dulles International Airport in Virginia outside of Washington and they were then taken to Fort Lee, near Petersburg, Virginia.

The families were pre-vetted and able to complete the immigration process safely stateside.

Federal, military and nongovernmental agencies all have come together on this project, said Jessica Estrada, director of newcomer services for Catholic Charities of the Arlington Diocese.

“In some circumstances, we wouldn't all be working together this well, but because this was such a unique situation, everybody's top priority was the individuals arriving,” she said. “It was quite amazing to see.”

Les invitamos a participar en esta conferencia para Padres de Familia con temas de gran interés para la crianza y el desarrollo integral de nuestros niños y adolescentes: ~Manejo de emociones, bullying, autoestima, disciplina con amor, educación exitosa, depresión, ansiedad, adicciones, seguridad cibernética, liderazgo y formación espiritual.



“Nada me causa mayor alegría que el saber que mis hijos viven en la verdad”

~3 Juan 1:4

**Sábado 28 de agosto**  
De las 8:30am a las 2:00pm  
Centro Pastoral Católico  
(601 Grand Avenue. Des Moines, Iowa)

**NO NIÑOS**

## PRESENTADORES:

**Maria Alonzo** – Consejera de la agencia Polk County Crisis & Advocacy Services

**Antonio Banuelos** – Analista de Sistemas por más de 20 años

**Marisol Guerra** – 28 años de experiencia en educación. Maestra de la Escuela Católica de St. Anthony.

**Juan Padilla** – Consejero de la agencia Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center

**Alex Piedras** – Director de alcance multicultural y comunitario en la Universidad de Grand View y consejero de la agencia YESS.

**Dra. Dora Tobar** - Directora de la oficina de matrimonio y familia y de la oficina del ministerio hispano de la diócesis de Lafayette en Indiana. Autora de artículos y material de formación para jóvenes y padres de familia al misterio del amor en familia.

## INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO:

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## New media entertainment sets the stage for new evangelization



CNS photo/The Chosen  
Catholic actor Jonathan Roumie, who plays Christ in the series "The Chosen," is pictured in a scene depicting the Sermon on the Mount. The series was launched in 2019 as a media project with the aim of showing Jesus in a new way, and it became the highest crowd-funded project of all-time. It is available for free on an app.

By Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

CITY (CNS) -- It was quite fitting for a Catholic actor and a Christian director of a new streaming series on the life of Jesus to meet Pope Francis on the feast of St. Clare of Assisi, patron saint of televisions and screens.

Jonathan Roumie, who portrays Jesus, and Dallas Jenkins, the series' director, creator and co-writer, were in Rome as part of an effort to expand the global reach and revenue of the multiseason, crowd-funded series, "The Chosen." They sat down with a small group of reporters, including Catholic News Service, a few hours after the audience Aug. 11.

Jenkins said he told the pope, "I'm a Protestant, but I'm making a show about Jesus that people of all faiths appreciate." The pope pointed to the bearded, wavy-haired Roumie next to him, asking astutely, "Is he Jesus?"

After Jenkins said, "Yes," the pope decided to poke some fun, asking Jenkins, "Are you Judas?" sparking a round of laughter.

, in all seriousness, Jenkins and Roumie have said in multiple interviews, the last thing they are aiming for is to betray

the beauty and truth of Jesus.

"I do want people, when they are done watching the show, to feel like they know and love Jesus more or at least want to know and love him more," Jenkins told reporters.

The problem with most renditions of biblical accounts, he said, is that a two- or three-hour film is not a lot of time to do a deep-dive into the characters, backstories, motives, conflicts and context connected with biblical events.

Not only do the characters often come across as "stiff" on screen, he said, "you go from miracle to miracle, Bible verse to Bible verse, and you never get to know anybody Jesus actually impacted."

"From a strictly artistic perspective, that is not really good drama, you need to see change, you want to see a character arc."

"The Chosen" was going to be different, Jenkins said, by looking at Jesus through the eyes of those he chose and changed, and to imagine what their lives and personalities were like and why they made the choices they did.

The finale of season two dropped mid-July and the plan is to make a seven-season show, giving writers and actors the time to fully explore and create "a collection of personal human moments," he said.

## Shrine honoring Blessed Stanley Rother hits milestone as dome set in place

OKLAHOMA CITY (CNS) -- Construction of a shrine honoring an American priest who was killed while serving in Guatemala reached a milestone with the installation of a massive dome.

Workers Aug. 12 carefully lifted the 45,000-pound dome onto the chapel in Oklahoma City memorializing Blessed Father Stanley Rother Aug. 12.

Construction is expected to be completed in summer 2022.

This was a momentous moment in construction of the shrine that will become a visible beacon of faith for thousands of people around the world," Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul S. Coakley said of the dome's placement. "They will come to visit our state and city, and come to learn about our ordinary priest

from Okarche who lived an extraordinary life."

The archbishop in an archdiocesan news release also expressed gratitude «for everyone who has played a part in this project and look forward to dedication next year.» The \$40 million shrine is the highest profile project undertaken as part of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City's first capital campaign.

## Oskaloosa women form first Columbiettes auxiliary in Iowa

By Lindsay Steele  
Contributing Writer

Last month, a group of 24 women from St. Mary Parish in Oskaloosa officially became the first Columbiettes auxiliary in Iowa. The international Catholic women's auxiliary is affiliated with and supportive of the Knights of Columbus.

The initiation ceremony was "a big reminder of how many Catholic women want to make a difference in our church and our community," said Julie Yachera, a parishioner who spearheaded the effort to form a Columbiettes auxiliary in Oskaloosa.

Yachera, whose husband is a Knight of Columbus, began researching Catholic women's organizations a little over a year ago, as the Oskaloosa parish did

not have a women's service organization. "I saw what they (KofC) were doing in the community and I wondered if there was a similar women's group. I looked online and found the Columbiettes." She contacted the Columbiettes Supreme Council to find out what it would take to start -- at least 20 members and the support of the parish's KofC council.

Knights of Columbus Marian Council 4108 in Oskaloosa was quick to support the formation of a Columbiettes auxiliary. Grand Knight Steven Phillips said he views the Columbiettes as an organization of Catholic women who support the Catholic Church and its teachings. "I see the Columbiettes strengthening St. Mary's, Oskaloosa and the surrounding communities."

Though the Columbiette organization has been around

since the 1930s, it is not the only female auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus. Ladies Auxiliaries are more common in Iowa and usually require members to be closely related to a KofC, though this isn't always the case. Columbiettes auxiliaries are open to women 18 years of age or older who are in good standing with the Catholic Church. About 270 Columbiettes auxiliaries exist, primarily in Florida and the northeast.

For more information, contact Mary Jane Sullivan at [mjs-4756cat@gmail.com](mailto:mjs-4756cat@gmail.com) or Julie Yachera at [jyachera@gmail.com](mailto:jyachera@gmail.com).

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### Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas

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



# A Higher Purpose

## REFUND SUPPORT VOCATIONS (RSVP)

Keep the faith alive by supporting our seminarians and postulants. As the strong right arm of the church, the Knights of Columbus are committed to providing moral, financial and spiritual support to future priests and religious at all stages of their formation. The Knights of Columbus stand in solidarity with our priests and religious. Through this program, council and parish families will raise funds to support seminarians in their area. Though financial support is vitally important, it is not the only aspect of RSVP. Councils are also called to provide their "adopted" seminarian or religious aspirant with moral support and prayers for their success. The Iowa Knights sponsor both the annual seminarian conference, the newly ordained priest conference, and financial support every diocesan seminarian throughout the state.



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