

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## Refugees find support from Catholic Charities

*"I was a stranger and you welcomed me." – Matthew 25:35*

By Ryan Johnson  
Contributing Writer

Imagine waiting up to 17 years in a refugee camp before finally coming to the United States to begin a new life. That is what many people do to escape life-threatening circumstances in their home countries.

Shalom Lule is the refugee services coordinator for Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Des Moines. Like many refugee services today, there's been an increase in resettlement activities and requests.

"As of October 1, 2023, we have increased the number of new arrivals to 250 for fiscal year 2024," Lule said.

That's an increase from 210 clients from fiscal year 2023. Catholic Charities refugee services helped almost 70 clients in September alone.

### New City, New Culture

Refugees arrive in Des Moines from a variety of countries and cultures. Upon landing at the Des Moines International Airport, refugees are greeted by a case manager from Catholic

Charities. That begins the process of acclimating to Iowa, our culture customs, and our weather.

For the first 90 days, the Catholic Charities refugee services staff works with clients to help them settle in their new home. This includes helping refugees find housing, make trips to the grocery store, enroll children in school, and look for employment.

Work is a top priority for refugees.

"One of the first questions many refugees ask when they arrive is 'When can I start working?'" Lule said. "They want to transform their lives. They want to provide for their families. They're geared toward working."

Transportation to their new jobs can also be a challenge for refugee clients. Lule helps families learn the Des Moines Area Regional Transit, also known as DART, the bus system in the Des Moines metro area which is vital to the success of refugees.

### Connecting With Families

In an effort to continue aiding refugees in Central Iowa,

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Photo by Lindsay Kurth

Benjamin Kurth plays with his new friend, a son of the Kongulu family, this past summer.

## Community, churches work together to serve Thanksgiving dinner

For over three decades, churches and other organizations in Council Bluffs put on a free city-wide dinner for anyone in the community who needs a hot, home-made meal on Thanksgiving Day.

It started in the basement of St. Patrick's Church on Harmony Street around 1985 and has grown to include deliveries of over 600 meals each year.

The meal began when St. Patrick's parish secretary, Sharon Morris, and nonprofit leader Clint McDowell witnessed first-hand the community need.

In 2008, the meal was moved to Community of Christ Church a few blocks east of St.

Patrick to help accommodate the growing number of meals and guests.

It takes 40 large turkeys, 200 boxes of stuffing mix, over 300 cans of green beans, 160 cans of cream of mushroom soup, 60 large bags of fried onion rings, 300 paper grocery sacks, 150 foil baking pans and lids, countless paper plates, plastic silverware and serving cups as well as hundreds of volunteers to make this meal work. The meal would not be possible without the help of all the organizations who donate space, time, and ingredients to the effort.

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## Deacon Rohwer, known for his service to the poor, dies

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Deacon Chris Rohwer was a quiet yet dedicated husband, father and servant leader whose passion was helping the poor. He died Nov. 1.

"He was a prince of a fellow," said Sister Sandy Rodemyer, of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM). "He was such a good, gracious man."

Born in 1939, the youngest of five children, he grew up in Sioux City, where he attended Blessed Sacrament Catholic School and Heelan High School. He met Janece Feinberg in 1964 and they married in 1965 at St. Augustin Catholic Church in Des Moines. They raised two daughters,

Mary Ann and Theresa Marie.

He had only seen a deacon a few times back in the early 1980s, when his wife, Janece, suggested he might be called to be a deacon, according to a history of the diaconate in the Diocese of Des Moines penned by Deacon Dave Bartemes.

They had to wait a year to start formation and when they did, the deacon candidates met every Thursday and spent one week in the summers at St. John University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

He was ordained in 1985, the Feast of St. Francis. He died on All Saints Day.

The Rohwers together took on a variety of ministries af-

ter Deacon Chris was ordained, including working with PATCH, a program that helped the poor find affordable housing. He was assigned to St. Ambrose Cathedral and Sacred Heart Parishes.

"Chris seemed to always find people in need, especially immigrants," wrote Deacon Bartemes in the history book. "Over the years, Chris and Janece have helped Bosnians, Vietnamese, Hondurans, Afghani, Greek, and



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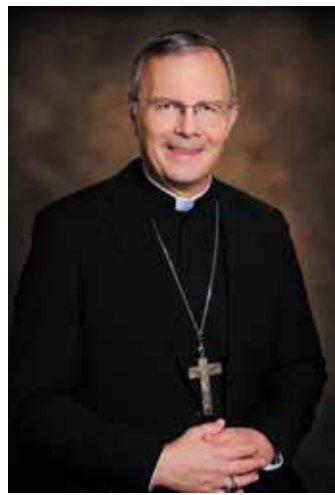
# Grace in grieving

The poet and teacher Robert Cording lost his 31 year-old son Daniel when he died suddenly at home of natural causes. Daniel was a rugged outdoorsman and skilled craftsman who could single-handedly renovate an old house and make it an inviting home.

In his book *In the Unwalled City*, Cording describes the enduring grief he and his wife still feel in two distinct ways: (1) “Grief is that art (can it ever be called that?) of starting over. Every morning the same morning. Every evening the same. The light tipping above the horizon, dipping below. A day. Another day of second thoughts. Another night of if only, what if, what else could we have done?” (p. 9).

And (2) “Perhaps grief is an attempt to hit a note that would shatter this world like glass and allow me to walk through the barrier that keeps my son apart from me for all my remaining days” (p. 46).

Robert Cording is a man of faith, but he doesn’t wear it on his sleeve. He has no conceit that faith will assuage the groaning ache and void his son’s death has left in his heart. He captures something deeply human that is a



Bishop William Joensen

precursor to faith, to what Jesus offers us. The art of starting over, morning after morning, echoes the author of Lamentations chapter 3, who sighs with the loss of peace, the forgetfulness and forsaking of the future, his felt poverty as the soul sinks like the sun at sunset.

Yet the Spirit of God does not leave the one who laments alone in the depths; the Spirit reminds him — remind us — of God’s nearness, and draws us to a place of hope in our respective griefs: “The favors of the Lord

are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness.”

God’s favors, his grace cannot be exhausted. His mercy is limitless, even passing over the apparent limit that is death. Each morning does not consign us to the perpetual hangover of loves lost, of relationships left with so much unfinished business, where the longing for reconciliation and peace is forever denied. Rather, each morning is a mini-resurrection, pointing us to the day that never ends, a promise that only God can fulfill—and has done so in the death and resurrection of his Son.

For his part, St. Paul declares, “God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. . . . We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son; how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life” (Romans 5). Jesus saves us for life—the life we know now, marked by the shadow of death and the grief it incites. And the life unfettered, a liberated life where we can be with one another without all the baggage, the broken intentions and strained relations. We will have no fear of

that even greater soul death that is rejection—rejection by other persons, rejection by God.

God has made provision in his Son for that unfinished project in the house renovation of our human souls caused by the interruption of death. In the union of wills between the Father and the Son, their perfect love for one another supplies what is lacking in our imperfect love. Jesus is so clear in John 6: “This is the will of the One who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day.”

No matter our sins, no matter our reluctance to love and let ourselves be loved because of some past shortcomings or outright failures of love, Jesus always treats us as a gift from the Father. Trappist monk and author Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (now known as Father Simeon) reminds us of the staunch hope supplied by faith: “The only thing a sinner is in God’s eyes is a potential saint, never a damnable criminal.”

We may be poor souls, just like our loved ones who’ve gone before us, but Jesus’ rich mercy is relentless, inexhaustible. The prospect of purgatory, of melting away resistance, resentments,

our hesitation to be embraced by God, should be a source of undying hope for us: hope that we will be life, that we will be with our loved ones.

And with the Church’s instinct of faith, if we know ourselves to be gift in God’s eyes, then we can make a gift, a pleasing sacrifice on behalf of those who have left us with a void. Our prayers at Mass and beyond, our aches, our challenges and crosses can be given to Jesus, who remembers us and those we remember before the Father, who can’t wait to say: “You are not rejected; come to me now and for all eternity.”

And so our grief enfolds Cording’s sort of grief in the faith of Lamentations: We wait for the Lord’s fidelity to his Father’s will to draw his sons and daughters into the house of heaven. “It is good to hope in silence for the saving help of God.” Our silence is not jagged, as if words were being ripped from us by the stunning event of death. It is the silence borne of trust, peace, Spirit, faith. We are gift in God’s eyes. Jesus saves us for life.

## Gracia en el Duelo

El poeta y maestro Robert Cording perdió a su hijo Daniel de 31 años cuando falleció repentinamente en su casa de causas naturales. Daniel era un robusto hombre de los exteriores y habilidoso artesano quien podía renovar una vieja casa por sí mismo convirtiéndola en un hogar acogedor.

Cording describe el constante dolor que él y su esposa aún sienten de dos formas diferentes: (1) “El dolor es ese arte (¿podemos siquiera llamarle así?) de comenzar de nuevo. Cada mañana la misma mañana. Cada noche la misma. La luz que distingue en

el horizonte, sumergiéndose. Un día. Otro día de cambios de opinión. Otra noche de, si hubiera, qué sería, ¿qué más podría haber hecho?” (En la Ciudad sin Murala (In the Unwalled City), pág. 9).

Y (2) “tal vez el dolor es un intento de alcanzar una nota que destrozaría este mundo como vidrio y me permitiría caminar a través de la barrera que tiene a mi hijo separado de mí por el resto de mis días” (pág. 46).

Robert Cording es un hombre de fe, pero no la trae en el bolsillo. No tiene concepto de que la fe va a mitigar el intenso dolor y el vacío que ha dejado en su corazón la muerte de su hijo. Él captura algo profundamente humano que es el predecesor de la fe, a lo que Jesús nos ofrece. El arte de volver a empezar, mañana tras mañana, hace eco del autor de Lamentaciones en el Capítulo 3, quien sufre por la pérdida de la paz, el olvido y el abandono del futuro, su sentimiento de pobreza al sentir que su alma se hunde como el sol en el ocaso.

Pero aún así el Espíritu de Dios no abandona al que se lamenta solo en lo profundo; el Espíritu le recuerda — nos recuerda — de la proximidad de Dios y nos lleva a un lugar de esperanza en nuestros respectivos dolores: “El amor del Señor no se ha acabado, ni se han agotado sus misericordias; se renuevan cada mañana, así de grande es su fidelidad.”

El amor de Dios y su gracia no pueden terminarse. Su misericordia es ilimitada, incluso por encima del límite aparente que presenta la muerte. Cada

mañana no es una consigna de una perpetua cruda de amores perdidos, de relaciones que dejaron tantos pendientes, en se niegan constantemente esos deseos de paz y reconciliación. Por el contrario, cada mañana es una pequeña resurrección, señalándonos hacia el día que nunca termina, una promesa que solamente Dios puede cumplir — y que lo ha hecho en la muerte y resurrección de su Hijo.

Por su parte, San Pablo declara, “Dios dejó constancia del amor que nos tiene: Cristo murió por nosotros cuando todavía éramos pecadores... Fuimos reconciliados con Él por la muerte de su Hijo; con mucha más razón ahora su vida será nuestra plenitud” (Romanos 5). Jesús nos salva de por vida — la vida que conocemos ahora, marcada por la sombra de la muerte y del dolor que nos provoca. Y la vida libre, la vida de liberación en donde podemos estar con los demás sin todas las cargas, las malas intenciones, las relaciones dañadas. No tendremos miedo de esa severa muerte de alma que causa el rechazo — el rechazo de otras personas, el rechazo de Dios.

Dios tomó medidas por medio de su Hijo para ese proyecto sin terminar renovación casera de nuestras almas humanas y que se interrumpe con la muerte. En la unión de voluntades entre el Padre y el Hijo, el amor perfecto del uno por el otro nos da lo que falta en nuestro amor imperfecto. Jesús es tan claro en Juan 6: “Esta es la voluntad del que me ha enviado, que yo no pierda nada de

lo que Él me ha dado, sino que lo resucite el último día.”

No importan nuestros pecados, no importa nuestra resistencia a amar y dejarnos ser amados a causa de algunas faltas en nuestro pasado o absolutos faltas de amor, Jesús siempre nos trata como un regalo del Padre. El monje trapista y autor Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (conocido ahora como Padre Simeón) nos recuerda de la esperanza incondicional que surge de la fe: “Lo único que es un pecador en los ojos de Dios es un santo potencial, nunca un criminal condenable.”

Podremos ser pobres almas, igual que nuestros seres queridos que se han partido antes que nosotros, pero la inmensa misericordia de Jesús es consistente, incansable. El prospecto del purgatorio, de derretir la resistencia, los resentimientos, nuestra resistencia a ser acogidos por Dios, deben ser fuentes de eterna esperanza para nosotros: la esperanza de que habrá vida, de que estaremos con nuestros seres queridos.

Y con el instinto de fe de la Iglesia, si nos sabemos ser no-

sotros mismos un regalo ante los ojos de Dios, entonces podemos ofrecer un regalo, un sacrificio agradable a nombre de aquellos que nos han dejado un vacío. Nuestras oraciones en la Misa y más aún, nuestros dolores, nuestros retos y nuestras cruces podemos entregarlos a Jesús, quien nos recuerda y a aquellos a quienes recordamos ante el Padre, quien no puede esperar a decirnos: “No eres rechazado; ven conmigo ahora y por toda la eternidad.”

Entonces nuestro dolor desenvuelve el tipo de dolor de Cording en la fe de las Lamentaciones: Esperamos que la fidelidad del Señor a la voluntad de su Padre llevará a sus hijos e hijas a su casa en el cielo. “Es bueno esperar en silencio por el auxilio salvador de Dios.” Nuestro silencio no es irregular, como si la sorpresa de la pérdida de un ser querido nos arrancara las palabras. Es el silencio que asume la confianza, la paz, el Espíritu y la fe. Somo regalos ante los ojos de Dios. Jesús nos salva de por vida.

Tune in to Iowa Catholic Radio or Spirit Catholic Radio Network Fridays at 9 a.m. to hear “Making it Personal With Bishop Joensen.” Upcoming guests include:

- Nov. 17 – Dubuque Archbishop Thomas Zinkula
- Nov. 24 – Fathers Ross Parker, Reed Flood & Max Carson, Vocations
- Dec. 1 – Father Dan Kirby, Vicar for Newly Ordained & International Priests
- Dec. 8 – Msgr. Eduardo Chavez – Our Lady of Guadalupe

Can’t tune in at 9 a.m. on Fridays? Go to [IowaCatholicRadio.com](http://IowaCatholicRadio.com) and click on podcasts to catch up on all the shows you’ve been missing!

*The Catholic Mirror* regrets an error in the October edition in which it listed Deacon Stephen Rallis as among deceased deacons. He is retired.

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# Thank you for a combined 90 years of service!

Two employees celebrate 45 years of helping others

## Riesberg's behind-the-scenes work praised

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Sandy Riesberg has been a cool, steady hand that's kept the wheels of various diocesan offices rolling for 45 years.

As an administrative assistant serving five bishops (Bishops Maurice Dingman, William Bullock, Joseph Charron, Richard Pates, and William Joensen), she's witnessed history in the Church in southwest Iowa.

She's done it with grace, confidence, and kindness.

Riesberg, of Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, has no regrets.

"This is where I'm meant to be," she said. "I really feel like God brought me here."

It all started in 1978 when her friend, who worked for Monsignor Frank Bognanno at the Diocese, was expecting her first child and planned to be a stay-at-home mom.

"She approached me and asked if I'd be interested in her job. She thought I'd be really good at it," said Riesberg. "I came in and talked to Father Frank (Bognanno) and he hired me on the spot."

At the time, Monsignor Bognanno served in an office for planning and pastoral councils, and ran a national retreat program

for priests.

"She was pretty darn good. She was very, very smart. She could keep track of everything. She was very reliable," he said.

Riesberg worked with his successor, Mercy Sister Stella Neill, and the Worship Office, then added the Communications Office.

"Her quiet competence and gentle spirit served the mission of the office and, indeed, of the whole diocese," said former Worship Director Vicky Tufano. "She was simply always a bright light."

"Working with Sandy for 15 years was a privilege," said Jim Bond, former diocesan director of the Worship Office. "Her dedication to the worship life of the diocese (along with other areas) was and is outstanding. I could always rely on her expertise and her going the extra mile despite unforeseen challenges and sometimes chaos."

Of the many hats she wore over the years, computer expert became one of them. She remembers when the chancery got its first computer.

"It was a big old clunker and there was only one," she said. "All it had on it was Word. I was in charge with training support staff. I learned it and I was teaching everybody else."

"When we moved to the Grand Avenue building, every-

body got a computer but we weren't networked yet. That was crazy. We were just learning it because we knew that was going to be the way of the world," she said.

Riesberg is known for her patience and kindness.

"She had a lot of patience with me when I started at the Diocese, for which I am very grateful," said former Communications Director Tom Chapman. He succeeded Sister Mira Mosle.

"She has an unbelievable work ethic in getting things done," Chapman said.

Her experience and institutional knowledge is vast.

"Sandy in many ways is the living memory of the Pastoral Center," said Father Trevor Chicoine, diocesan Vicar for Divine Worship. "Her knowledge of the cycle of the diocesan year is so deep and organic that things flow without effort. She can both weather change and simultaneously provide continuity. Over and over again, I hear from parish staff and parishioners how responsive and helpful she is. Words fail to express my gratitude to her and admiration for her dedicated service."

"It's hard to underestimate



Sandy Riesberg

the positive impact Sandy has had on diocesan liturgies in her 45 years of service," said former Worship Director Kyle Lechtenberg. "Alongside making the necessary arrangements, Sandy's experience and relational skills allow her to be a link from bishop to bishop, director to director, parish staff or pastor to staff or pastor."

Riesberg has a collection of memories.

There was the flood of 1993, when the office closed temporarily, and the time the city of Des Moines allowed a car race that went past the chancery. She fondly remembers the time Bishop Dingman dressed up as a clown for the support staff for Secretaries Day.

She worked with Worship Office Director Mary Ann Simcoe to prepare for the 1979 papal visit, forgoing the use of a parking

pass so she could walk to Living History Farms with her friends.

Riesberg may never know how many people she's helped grow closer to Christ.

"She has a love for the people these liturgies have impacted over the years from a papal Mass at Living History Farms to a noon Mass celebrating the Advent season with her beloved coworkers," said Lechtenberg.

"I do think it is interesting that for most of her 45 years of service, anyone in the diocese that received a sacrament involving holy oil did so through her efforts in preparing and distributing those oils – for the sick, catechumens, and Sacred Chrism (confirmation and holy orders) – to the parishes every year," said Bond. "She has touched many, many lives with that duty alone."

## Answering the call of compassion

By Nicole Evans  
Contributing Writer

Teresa Hensley, the dedicated office assistant at Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program in Council Bluffs, recently celebrated a remarkable milestone, marking 45 years of service with the organization.

A referral by a close friend who worked in adoption services brought Hensley to the organization, but her dedication to making a difference is why she stayed.

Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program provides critical services to those affected by abuse, offering a safe haven for survivors and supporting them on their journey to recovery. Services are available to the communities of



Teresa Hensley

Audubon, Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby Counties. The program offers a 24-hour crisis phone line, emergency shelter, court advocacy, empowerment education, support groups, and outreach to under-served populations.

Hensley's dedication has

been instrumental in creating a warm and welcoming environment for those seeking help during their most vulnerable moments.

During her tenure, Hensley became an integral part of the Catholic Charities team. She has served as a receptionist for the counseling program and managed the food pantry and financial assistance program. Although her work at Catholic Charities is often behind the scenes, she remained an essential mainstay, ensuring the shelter has the funds to operate and fulfill its mission.

Hensley's attention to detail and commitment to excellence helped the organization earn a low-risk designation from the Office for Victims of Crime (FNA Crime Victim Assistance Division). The Office for Victims of Crime provides grants to support victim assistance programs across the country and to enhance the professional expertise of victim service providers, including states, local units of government, Tribal communities, individuals, educational institutions, and private nonprofit organizations.

The low-risk designation Hensley secured for Catholic Charities' Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program streamlined grant claim processing, resulting in faster turnaround times on grant reimbursement - a key

funding source for Catholic Charities and its programs. As a result, Hensley's contributions and the impact she has made on survivors of abuse and assault are immeasurable.

"Over the decades, Teresa has been the first calming voice people hear when entering our building or calling our program seeking some relief," said Sapana Sharma, Catholic Charities assistant director of programming, southwest Iowa. "She withstood all the trials and turbulences of the changing time with flexibility and adaptability as she believes in the services Catholic Charities provides."

"She is an extremely dependable, knowledgeable, detailed oriented, organized, ethical worker who strives to ensure that our resources are properly utilized by our clients. Teresa's belief and support in our Catholic Charities' mission, her timely suggestions and occasional reminders of "what not to do," helps our whole team stay focused and on track," said Sharma.

"I am so grateful to know her and have her as my work partner."

When asked if her 18-year-old self would have ever imagined a lifetime career at Catholic Charities, Hensley laughed and said, "My teenage self would never work in an office!"

Her dream was to work outdoors with nature. Hensley often photographs nature during her travels to national parks, including Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons. At home, she is an adept gardener, growing an abundance of tomatoes, peppers, onions and more in her self-proclaimed "salsa garden." This last year, she expanded her garden to include squash and successfully grew her first pumpkin, much to the delight of her four-year-old grandson, Stone.

"He was so excited," recalled Hensley. "Anything I can do for him makes me happy."

As we celebrate Hensley's remarkable 45 years with Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program, her dedication stands as an enduring reminder of the profound difference one person can make in the lives of many. Her legacy is one of unwavering commitment, empathy, and the power of service to transform lives.

Next year, Hensley plans to retire and hopes to enjoy more time traveling to some of her favorite national parks, spending time with her grandson, and working in her salsa garden.

For more information about Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program, visit [www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/our-services/domestic-violence-sexual-assault/](http://www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/our-services/domestic-violence-sexual-assault/)



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# Community, churches work together to serve Thanksgiving dinner

Continued from page 1

Churches and organizations from all over town donate ingredients, money, and time to the effort. The three Catholic parishes in Council Bluffs (St. Patrick, Corpus Christi, and St. Peter) collect the ingredients for the green bean casserole, stuffing, and pies for several weeks before the dinner.

The dinner is primarily cooked at Community of Christ Church in Council Bluffs and the gymnasium is used as the headquarters for delivery and carry-out. The Pie Committee from St. Patrick Church makes 120 pumpkin pies for the event.

The families at St. Albert Schools in Council Bluffs donate 500 lbs. of potatoes and Karen Hander, food services director, along with a few dedicated volunteers, chop, cook, and mash the potatoes. A team of young men from St. Patrick Church in Neola pick up the potatoes from St. Albert kitchen and deliver them to Community of Christ just in time to begin filling containers for delivery.

The gravy is made by former Salvation Army employee Lori Cottrel, who flies in from Florida every year to begin making her family's famous gravy recipe in Community of Christ's lower kitchen at 7 a.m. Thanksgiving Day. It takes 20 fresh ingredients, including the stock from 40 turkeys, to make the five



The 2022 Turkey Team from left to right: Chef Lou Palacio (Papillion, Nebraska), Rick McDonald (Corpus Christi Parish, Council Bluffs), John Erixon, "Top Turkey" (St. Patrick, Council Bluffs), Jim Grote (St. Patrick, Council Bluffs), Burton Rausch, kitchen manager (Corpus Christi, Council Bluffs), Steve Feyerherm (Corpus Christi), Jim Knott (Corpus Christi). Front: Leon Zaiger (Corpus Christi).

stock pots of gravy.

The work begins at 4 a.m. on Thursday morning when the ovens and coffee pots are turned on and volunteers begin to arrive to warm food, sort and bag silverware, and cut and box pumpkin pie.

The coordination of deliveries is a huge undertaking. Orders are taken over the phone starting the first Monday in November.

Every year there is a story of true grace. In 2022, a young couple, the wife pregnant, arrived at about 10:30 a.m. They had been walking around Council Bluffs since dawn looking for a

place to get a meal. The hostesses just happened to be sorting winter gloves and hats for donation when the couple arrived. Since it was too early to eat, the couple was given warm coffee to drink, the use of the bathrooms to clean up and gloves and hats for the rest of their journey. After eating, a shelter was recommended, and the couple was sent off with extra food and milk.

Everyone is welcome at the Thanksgiving Dinner. The number to call for reservations, delivery, take out, or to volunteer is 402-973-0213. Local deliveries only, please. Donations are

accepted at any of the Council Bluffs Catholic parishes.

Leftovers, if any, are donated to local shelters.



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## THE FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

### HISTORY OF THIS DEVOTION

In 1917, in the remote village of Fatima, Portugal, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared on six different occasions to the three shepherd children with an urgent message for the world, which concerned the salvation of souls and peace in the world. On July 13, 1917 Our Lady showed the children a vision of hell and said, "You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace...I shall come to ask for...the Communion of reparation to be made on the first Saturdays..." Our Blessed Mother fulfilled her promise eight years later on December 10, 1925, when she appeared with the Child Jesus to Sr. Lucia in her convent cell and said, "Have compassion on the Heart of Your Most Holy Mother, covered with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them."



### THE INTENTION

The requirements of this devotion are to be fulfilled with the intention of consoling and making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for our own sins, for the blasphemies and ingratitude of unrepentant sinners, and for peace in the world.

You are invited to morning Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in West Des Moines to celebrate this devotion at 7:15 a.m. on Dec. 2.

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### OUR LADY'S PROMISE

Then Mary held out her thorn-wreathed Heart and said, "See, my daughter, my Heart encircled by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. Do you, at least, strive to console me, to tell them that I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, in order to make reparation to me, on the First Saturday of five successive months, go to confession, receive Holy Communion, say five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for a quarter of an hour, meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary."

In pastoral letter dated Oct. 13, 1930, Leiria (Portugal) Bishop Jose Alves Correia da Silva said the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three young children between May 13 and October 13, 1917 were credible and he encouraged devotion to Our Lady of Fatima.

The bishop also said the Blessed Virgin Mary's appearances were a great source of joy and the faithful had a duty to "reciprocate her goodness."

They could do this by:

- Living a pure life
- Observing the 10 Commandments and precepts of the Church
- Respecting and submitting to the instructions of the Apostolic See (Pope).

In addition, the bishop recommended the faithful:

- love God in a special manner through the Eucharist,
- practice a devotion to Mary,
- practice a devotion to St. Joseph,
- pray for the souls in purgatory,
- pray at least 5 decades of the rosary daily,
- avoid sin, particularly sins of the flesh
- avoid immodest attire
- avoid immoral readings
- do penance, and
- show charity to all particularly the sick and the poor.



# Community thankful for prayers answered

*Council Bluffs Planned Parenthood facility closes, but work continues to support life*

**By Jennifer Willems  
Contributing Writer**

Pro-life advocates in the Council Bluffs area will remember Oct. 9, 2023, as the day God answered 22 years of prayers. It was on that day that they learned the Planned Parenthood facility in Council Bluffs had closed permanently.

They screamed. They cried. They hugged.

But most of all they thanked God for his “perfect timing.”

“I could not stop crying,” said Catherine Schroeder, executive director of nearby Gabriel’s Corner Pregnancy Center, which has provided a “visible alternative” to Planned Parenthood for the last 18 years. “It was just such a joy to know that no more life was going to be taken across the road from us.”

Rejoicing with her was Jo Raymond, a longtime supporter of 40 Days for Life.

“We have spent 10 years on that sidewalk praying. Ten years on that sidewalk, seeing women go in scared and confused and come out empty. Ten years knowing that they were destroying God’s children,” Raymond said. “When they closed their doors, we were determined not to give one more minute to sadness. This was a time for joy.”

That joy became the “Answered Prayers” Celebration of Life on Nov. 4. It was held in an empty lot across from the former abortion clinic and drew about 120 people of all faiths.

Coordinated by Raymond and Jenny Trail, it came the day

before the fall campaign for 40 Days for Life ended. In addition to sharing, prayer and thanksgiving, the gathering included a chili dinner provided by local chef Elmo Gray, cake, and activities for the children.

The celebration literally stopped traffic as participants carried 500 long-stemmed red roses to the former Planned Parenthood facility. Circling the building, the group said the Lord’s Prayer, sang a hymn of praise to God, and left the roses in the parking lot in memory of the unborn children who lost their lives there.

## More Answered Prayers

Gabriel’s Corner grew out of a commitment to do something about abortion and the search for a ministry Deacon Jean Plourde and his wife, Kathy, could share after his ordination as a permanent deacon for the Archdiocese of Omaha 20 years ago.

Praying outside Planned Parenthood in Council Bluffs, the Plourdes saw an empty lot behind them and noticed it was for sale. Within the week the land was theirs and on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 2006, Gabriel’s Corner Pregnancy Center opened. Deacon Jean was accepted for diaconal ministry in the Diocese of Des Moines, and has been serving at Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs.

Schroeder told story after story of women who have found help and support at the pregnancy center. While it may start with a pregnancy test or ultrasound, that aid includes diapers, wipes and toiletries once a week, and clothing once a month for children

from birth through 5 years.

She will tell you that the most important room at Gabriel’s Corner is the chapel, where the Eucharist is reserved. Mass is celebrated on Saturday mornings and there is Eucharistic adoration from 5 p.m. each Tuesday through 7 p.m. on Wednesday.

## What’s Next?

Deacon Jean emphasizes that their celebration is mixed with caution.

“Obviously abortion is far from over,” he said. “We pray that nobody else takes their place. We’re abortion free for now (in Council Bluffs). We want to keep it that way.”

Another item that could affect the issue on the state level is something known as the Heartbeat Bill, passed during a special session of the Iowa Legislature in July. This would prohibit abortion after a heartbeat can be detected, according to Tom Chapman, executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference.

Legal briefs are being submitted now and oral arguments are scheduled for February. Chapman anticipates a decision next June.

“What we’re hoping for is



**Top photo: Pro-life supporters gathered around a now-closed Planned Parenthood clinic in celebration of prayers answered. Above: Rose pedals in the parking lot were left in memory of the unborn children to abortion.**

to find out what the (Iowa) Supreme Court is setting up as the standard in terms of Iowa’s constitution as regards abortion,” he said. “They’ve said there is not a fundamental right, but they haven’t really defined it.”

Currently, Iowa has a law that prohibits abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy. This has

been in place for about six years, Chapman said.

*Gabriel’s Corner Pregnancy Center is located at 131 S. 16th St., in Council Bluffs. For more information, visit [gabrielscorner.com](http://gabrielscorner.com) or follow them on Facebook.*



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## Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese’s Victim Assistance Advocate, Sam Porter, is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps people who are or were minors when they were victims of abuse by the clergy through a complaint process. He also helps them seek support and counseling services. Porter can be reached at 515-286-2024 or [Sam.Porter@polkcountyia.gov](mailto:Sam.Porter@polkcountyia.gov).



## Diocese welcomes new Development director

Laura Holms joined the Diocese as the Director of Development.

She wrote for *The Catholic Mirror*, and worked for Catholic Charities as a staff member at the Emergency Family Shelter, as the Communications/Volunteer Coordinator, and as the Director of Development.

She served in leadership roles for several nonprofit organizations, most recently as the executive Director of Urbandale Community Action Network and Program Director for NAMI Iowa.

Laura lives in Urbandale with her family and is a member of St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines.



Laura Holms

## Deacon couple celebrates 70 years of marriage

Deacon Chuck and Kay Putbrese will celebrate 70 years of marriage on Nov. 22. They were married at St. Augustin Church in 1953.

They were blessed with seven children: Steve (Maureen), St Petersburg, Florida; Kevin, Des Moines; Mark (Kim), Naperville, Illinois; Dan, Hilton Head Island South Carolina; John (Debbie) Des Moines; Heather (Scott) deceased, Keith, San Jose, Costa Rica.

They have 14 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Cards can be sent to them at 13731 Hickman Rd., #1006, Urbandale, IA, 50320.



## Umeri concert slated for Dec. 17

Umeri, the Drake University alumni choir, conducted by Aimee Beckmann-Collier, will present The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas on Sunday, Dec. 17, at 3 p.m., at St. Ambrose Cathedral.

In addition to offering Scripture readings, three commissioned reflections, and choral and instrumental music, the event will feature projections of illuminations from The Saint John's Bible, the first hand-written and illuminated bible sponsored by a Benedictine community in over 500 years. These images, which will appear on a massive screen, are gorgeous and powerful illustrations of each of the readings.

Prior to the concert, Umeri, in conjunction with the Diocese of Des Moines, will offer an engaging session on the art and spirituality of The Saint John's Bible at the Catholic Pastoral Center. This session, which will take place at 1:30 p.m., will feature Dr. Michael Rubbelke, a faculty member at the St. John's School of Theology. In addition, all seven volumes of the Heritage Edition of the Saint John's Bible will be available for viewing, both at 1 p.m. and following the concert, at the Catholic Pastoral Center. All events are free and open to the public.

## Around the Diocese

### Nov. 18 Saturday Open Book Gathering

DES MOINES – Join us at St. Catherine of Siena Parish for an evening of storytelling, dialogue, and authentic personal connection 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Storytellers who are “Books,” and listeners who are “Readers.” Through conversation, we discover we have much in common despite our differences. All are welcome. This is a free event.

### Holiday Bazaar

WINTERSET — St. Joseph Parish is hosting a holiday bazaar 8:30 - 1:30 p.m. Lots of unique craft items and a bake sale. This year we are relocating because of a schedule conflict at our church. Look for us at the Community Room of the Union State Bank located next to Fareway on US highway 92 just a few blocks from the church.

### NPM Membership Meeting

ONLINE — In honor of St. Cecilia, Patron Saint of Musicians, join fellow members of the Des Moines Chapter of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians at their annual membership

meeting, from 1 - 2 p.m. online. Contact Julie at [desmoinesIA@npm.org](mailto:desmoinesIA@npm.org) for the link and for more information.

### Nov. 18, Dec. 2, Dec. 9 Saturday retreats

URBANDALE — Join us at Emmaus House for one of the new Saturday retreats scheduled. On Nov. 18 Kevin O'Donnell will facilitate a Silent Retreat Day. In December there are two retreats beginning with Lectio Divina with Father Dan Krettek on Dec. 2. On Dec. 9, there's a Blue Christmas Retreat, offered for anyone who has experienced loss, difficulty, major life change, or anything else that makes this Christmas “blue.” Check out these and more offerings at [TheEmmausHouse.org](http://TheEmmausHouse.org).

### Nov 23 Thursday Thanksgiving Dinner

COUNCIL BLUFFS — Council Bluffs area Catholic churches are hosting a free Thanksgiving dinner at Community of Christ Church, 140 Kanesville Blvd., from noon - 1:30 p.m. Delivery

is available and reservations are required. Local Deliveries only. Call 402-973-0213 for reservation or to volunteer.

### Nov. 29 Wednesday Nourish for Caregivers

DES MOINES -- If you're caring for a parent, a spouse or a child and need prayerful support, consider coming to the next Nourish for Caregivers gathering at 6 p.m. at Holy Trinity Parish. Questions? Contact Patty Origer at [poriger@dmdiocese.org](mailto:poriger@dmdiocese.org).

### Dec. 2 Saturday Centennial Trivia

DES MOINES — Catholic Charities Centennial Trivia is a new, fun-filled holiday event from 5-8 p.m. Grab your most festive apparel and join us at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Proceeds benefit the Catholic Charities' Emergency Family Shelter. Tickets are: \$50/individual, \$40/ young professional (40 and under), \$300/trivia team (includes six tickets). Contact Emily Klisares at [eklisares@catholiccharitiesdm.org](mailto:eklisares@catholiccharitiesdm.org) or 515-237-5078 for tickets.

## NCYC updates on social media

Watch diocesan updates from the National Catholic Youth Conference at [Facebook.com/dmdiocese](https://www.facebook.com/dmdiocese) and [Instagram.com/dmdiocese](https://www.instagram.com/dmdiocese).





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# No matter how crazy life gets, family stays centered

By Jennifer Willems  
Contributing Writer

It seems like Deacon Matt and Stacy Halbach can do it all.

In addition to serving as director of deacon formation for the Diocese of Des Moines, Deacon Halbach is an author, speaker and senior national catechetical consultant for William H. Sadlier Inc. Ordained to the permanent diaconate in 2018, he is assigned to St. Luke the Evangelist Parish and School in Ankeny.

Stacy is the author of *Bloom: Unfolding the Beauty of Femininity in Light of the Son*, a mother-daughter guidebook that considers puberty in terms of the wisdom of the Catholic Church and how that can help us live the lives God wants us to live. She is also a speaker and blogger who homeschools five of their six children.

Together they have JUMP IN! Catholic Ministry, with the goal of “supporting Spirit-led family life.”

But the truth is, they don’t do it all, according to Stacy.

“We tend to see people and what they’ve accomplished, but it’s not all at once,” she explained. “It’s little things here and there, it’s little ‘yesses’ over and over.”

## Not perfect, but “Awesome”

That’s the concept of their JUMP IN! Catholic Ministry --- jumping into “the river of the Holy Spirit” and saying ‘yes’ to where God is leading. Stacy said when you do that, things tend to happen quickly and easily.

That is possible because they know their center needs to be their relationship with each other and with Jesus, she said.

“No matter what happens, no matter how crazy life gets, that’s what we always return to, is me and Matt together, worshipping God, praising him, finding things to be grateful for,” Stacy said. “So many things flow from that.”

That doesn’t mean they’re perfect, Deacon Matt said.

“We have our challenges. We have our own bandwidth issues. Everything else any other couple would deal with, we’re dealing with. It’s just typical married life,” he said. “We’re just trying to be as open to the Spirit as possible and I think that intentionality allows for more creativity and more ease with which we’ve done these things.”

A look at their blog at jumpincatholic.com gives honest vignettes of their family life with



Deacon Matt and Stacy Halbach, of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny, say date nights are opportunities to share their faith and their struggles. Their effort, JUMP IN! Catholic Ministry, encourages people to say ‘yes’ to wherever God is leading them.

its struggles and successes. They emphasize that just because life is hard, it doesn’t mean life can’t be awesome and beautiful.

“Through the struggles and through the trials, that’s when Jesus can really show up and show off,” Stacy said.

## Marriage “Glue”

Their desire to be totally committed to each other and Jesus grew out of how they met and got to know each other as they ministered at Totus Tuus in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Totus Tuus, which means “totally yours” in Latin, is a faith formation program for youth held in as many as 50 dioceses and archdioceses around the country each summer.

At that time, Deacon Matt had been accepted to study for the priesthood for the Diocese of Tulsa and Stacy had just completed her sophomore year as a theology

major at Newman University in Wichita, Kansas. It became obvious as time went on that their true vocation was marriage, however.

“When you talk about vocation and specifically a vocation to marriage, God calls you to marry a specific person,” Deacon Matt explained. “There’s such a powerful synergy here because we’re with the one we’re supposed to be with.”

He emphasized that they are their most authentic selves with each other. By journeying together, they seek to discover the steps the Lord wants them to take.

When the couple stops pray-

ing together and celebrating the sacraments, marriage becomes about two people co-managing a family and something gets lost, Deacon Matt said.

He called their date nights the “glue” for their marriage.

“Those date nights aren’t just making sure you have quality time with your spouse,” Deacon Matt said. “Always as a part of those date nights we’re talking about our lives in terms of our faith, talking about our current struggles and our current worries in terms of where is God and what’s going on in my heart.”

## NCYC, here we come

The Diocese of Des Moines is sending 473 young people and chaperones from 32 different parishes to the largest high school Catholic conference in the country.

They’ll board buses on Nov. 16 for the ride to Indianapolis, where the National Catholic Youth Conference will inspire youth and deepen their faith.

It’s an opportunity for teenagers to see thousands of others just like them praising and worshipping God.

“This delegation is about 150 or so more than in 2021, when we were still coming out of COVID protocols slowly but surely,” said Justin White, diocesan coordinator for NCYC.

Pilgrims on this faith journey will have two days and three nights of NCYC programming culminating with a big sending forth Mass on Saturday, Nov. 18. First thing Sunday morning, they’ll head back to Des Moines.

Watch diocesan social media platforms at Facebook.com/dmdiocese or Instagram.com/dmdiocese for updates from the youth.

## CARING ABOUT YOUR LOSS AND SHARING IN YOUR FAITH

**Prayer to St. Joseph for a Happy Death**

*O blessed Joseph who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary,  
obtain for me, I beseech you, the grace of a happy death.  
In that hour of dread and anguish, assist me by your presence,  
and protect me by your power against  
the enemies of your salvation.  
Into your sacred hands, living and dying,  
Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.*

*Amen*

John & Mark Parrish,  
parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi

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# Next diaconate class begins



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Assumption  
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**Kevin & Kathy Campbell**  
St. Michael  
Harlan



**Richard & Jessica Chamberlin**  
St. Augustin  
Des Moines



**Michael & Jamie Clyde**  
All Saints  
Des Moines



**David & Michelle Dufek**  
St. Boniface  
Waukee



**John & Andrea Fisher**  
St. Mary - Holy Cross  
Elkhart



**John & Yvette Fontana**  
St. Joseph  
Winterset



**Bill & Amy Gerhardt**  
Our Lady's Immaculate Heart  
Ankeny



**Gordon & Barbara Graham**  
St. Elizabeth Seton  
Carlisle

## Record-breaking large, diverse group begin formal discernment

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

A record-breaking 21 men and their wives have been invited to be a part of the next deacon formation class.

Called Cohort 17, the men and their wives comprise the 17<sup>th</sup> formation class of permanent deacons for the Diocese of Des Moines since the restoration of the diaconate followed Vatican II.

They represent a wide breadth of experience, education and ethnicity. Four couples are Hispanic, one is Burmese, five couples are from the west end of the Diocese, and one couple is from Leon. The rest are from the Des Moines metropolitan area.

They began a two-year discernment process, formally called Aspirancy, with a study day on Sept. 9. It is during Aspirancy when they pray and ponder whether God is truly calling the men to ordained ministry for the Church. During this time, the Diocese also discerns whether they are called to serve God's people as permanent deacons.

All of them are currently serving the Church in various capacities.

"They're already doing the work," said Deacon Houston, diocesan director of the Permanent Diaconate Program.

They seek to continue to serve the Church as ordained members of the Body of Christ for various reasons. Some are called to servant leadership, to minister better, or to lend more authenticity to the ministry that they do.

"Where the priest is 'persona Christi' the deacon is 'persona Christi the servant,'" said Deacon Houston. "We are Christ the servant."

The last big class – 17 – was

ordained in 2018. Six men were ordained permanent deacons in 2022.

Then the formation program paused for a year. New guidelines came out from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops calling for a five-year formation program instead of a four-year program. Bishop William Joensen used the opportunity to have representatives of USCCB review the Des Moines Diocese's program to see if there were areas that could be improved upon.

The pause also gave organizers an opportunity to explore new ways of forming deacon candidates. They found a program, Josephinum Diaconate Institute, through Pontifical College Josephinum, a Catholic seminary in Columbus, Ohio that provides for virtual learning in English and Spanish.

Previous classes would meet one weekend per month during the school year at Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, one Saturday per month somewhere in the Des Moines Diocese and in the summers for two weeks in Missouri.

Now, the class meets once per month at Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic, which is centrally located in the Diocese, and do virtual learning weekly during the rest of the month. The program offers curriculum in English and in Spanish so those who prefer learning in Spanish can do so.

Also, once per week, each couple meets virtually with an instructor to ask questions and ensure they understand the lessons. They meet weekly online with Deacon Matt Halbach, diocesan director of the Diaconate Formation Program. Deacon Troy Thompson meets with those who would prefer to share how they're doing in Spanish.



**Logan & Vicky Helton**  
St. Brendan  
Leon



**Ernesto & Alicia Lemus**  
Corpus Christi  
Council Bluffs



**Troy & Julie Marlow**  
Ss. John & Paul  
Altoona



**Martin Nawl & Josephine Ciin**  
St. Ambrose Cathedral  
Des Moines



**Andrew & Lynette Oberdorfer**  
St. Patrick  
Neola



**Jose & Viviana Santos**  
Christ the King  
Des Moines



**Ed Sitzmann**  
Sacred Heart  
West Des Moines



**Chris & Erin Smith**  
St. Francis of Assisi  
West Des Moines



**Patrick & Loretta Tinley**  
St. Patrick  
Council Bluffs



**Craig & Tracey Wilson**  
St. Francis of Assisi  
West Des Moines

Not pictured:  
Albaro & Anna Martinez

### DEACON FORMATION STEPS

#### 2 years – Aspirancy

The prospective deacon and his wife discern whether God calls him to serve the Church as an ordained permanent deacon. The Church also discerns whether God calls the man to ordained ministry.

#### 3 years – Candidacy

In this phase, the candidates receive formal education that leads toward ordination.



# Introducing three new seminarians

*They join 11 young men discerning a vocation to the priesthood*

### Shawn Daley

St. Patrick Parish, Council Bluffs  
2023-2024: Propaedeutic Year  
St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul,  
Minnesota

The call to the priesthood has entered my mind at various times in my life, but I didn't seriously consider that that's where God wanted me to be until the last few years. Through



receiving the sacraments, prayer, and growing to love the intellectual life of the Church I could see more clearly how God was moving in my life and the desire to serve him grew greatly as a result.

Growing up in the Diocese of Des Moines, I went to St. Albert High School and attended St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs. I was blessed to witness the example of many great priests in my area.

I attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha and studied Music Performance and Philosophy, and eventually earned a Master of Music Performance from Denver University. The pursuit of beauty and the intellectual life throughout these passions led me back to seeking God in the priesthood.

After much prayer and discernment, I am very excited to enter this new chapter of my life as I embark on the path to priesthood. The consolations in prayer in moving forward are humbling and I am very grateful to God. Please pray for me and my brother seminarians as we make this journey.

### Isaiah Peterson

Basilica of St. John Parish,  
Des Moines  
2023 - 2024: College Freshman  
St. Pius X Seminary,  
Loras College, Dubuque

I have always had a deep wonder and respect for the priest, and I always considered the vocation.

It was in my junior year of high school that I began to discern prayerfully whether God is calling me. Growing up a parishioner at the Basilica of St. John, I was given the opportunity to serve at holy Mass on a regular basis.

Without altar serving, I don't think I would have the love for the Mass that I do. It was very encouraging to see fellow parish-

ioners become seminarians. The rite of candidacy for Stan Asjes is what finally prompted

me to get in touch with Father Ross Parker.

I am very excited and joyful at the possibility of being called to the priesthood, and I am looking forward to my period of formation for the next several years.

I ask anyone reading this to keep me and my brother seminarians in your prayers.



### Mike Posegate

St. Pius X Parish, Urbandale  
2023-24: College Sophomore  
St. Pius X Seminary,  
Loras College, Dubuque

During my junior year of high school, I went on a retreat in which I came to realize the beauty of the Church and her sacraments for the very first time.

It was at this retreat where I encountered the love and mercy of Christ in adoration and through the sacrament of confession.

It opened my eyes to the beauty of the priesthood, but I did not start to feel a calling until about a year later.

I attended Benedictine College to pursue degrees in Theology and Secondary Education. I realized that I had never dis-

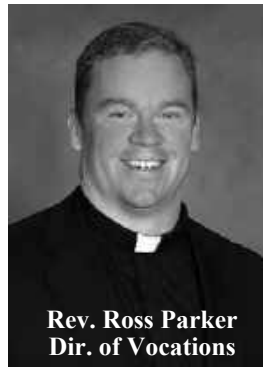
cerned or thought with an open heart about what vocation the Lord was calling me to.

As a result, I started asking the Lord in prayer what he wanted me to do with my life. Once I fully opened myself up to the possibility that God may be calling me to be a priest, I began to notice the beauty of the priesthood and saw it as a possibility for me.

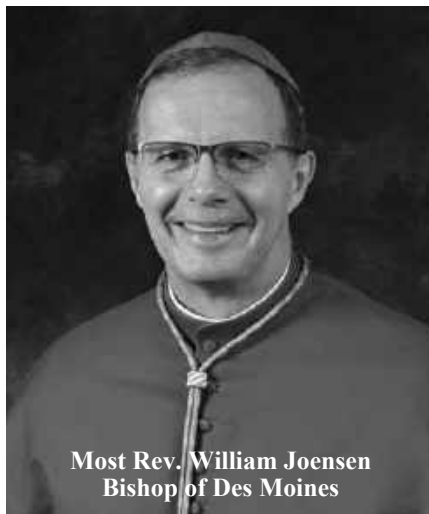
Please keep me and all of our seminarians in your prayers. They are greatly appreciated.



## National Vocation Awareness Week, November 5-11 2023-24 Diocese of Des Moines Seminarians



Rev. Ross Parker  
Dir. of Vocations



Most Rev. William Joensen  
Bishop of Des Moines



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Deacon Mike Mahoney Theology IV St. Francis of Assisi West Des Moines	Connor Lynch Theology I St. Thomas Aquinas Indianola	Deacon Luisito Cabrera Theology IV Christ the King Des Moines	Stan Asjes Theology II Basilica of St. John Des Moines	Dominic Nguyen Theology I Vietnamese Community Des Moines	Shawn Daley Propaedeutic Year St. Patrick Council Bluffs

<b>Saint Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, New York</b>	<b>Saint Pius X Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa</b>			
Luke Mohan Theology I St. Francis of Assisi West Des Moines	Matthew Johl Pre-Theology II Basilica of St. John Des Moines	Liam Dale College Senior Sacred Heart West Des Moines	Kyle Rowan College Senior Sacred Heart Bedford	Adam Hanten College Sophomore St. Theresa Des Moines

<b>The Saint Serra Club of Des Moines</b> Serrans are lay Catholic men and women of all ages open to all parishes in the Des Moines area. We are dedicated to fostering and supporting the priesthood and religious vocations to help ensure the future of our Church by creating a "culture of vocations." Serrans strive to accomplish their mission through prayer, fellowship and service to our bishop, priests, deacons, sisters, brothers and seminarians and in doing so, grow in their own holiness. We have fun together by hosting events that honor and affirm our bishop, priests, deacons, sisters and our seminarians in formation.			
	Andrew Robey College Sophomore St. Joseph Des Moines	Mike Posegate College Sophomore St. Pius X Urbandale	Isaiah Peterson College Freshman Basilica of St. John Des Moines



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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)



# Refugees find support

Continued from page 1

Catholic Charities started a new program called Catholic Charities Connect. The program pairs a refugee family with a family in the Des Moines area. The Kurth family of West Des Moines was one of the first families to sign up for the program.

Jason Kurth is the chancellor for the Diocese of Des Moines. Kurth, his wife and their children are members of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in West Des Moines. When the opportunity presented itself, the Kurths stepped forward to help a refugee family of eight who had been living in a refugee camp for 10 years before being resettled in Iowa.

The Kurths helped the family for more than four months, including assisting the family in becoming familiar to living and working in Des Moines, as well as helping them make connections to the community. The two families gathered throughout the summer for a variety of social activities. In July, they celebrated an American tradition – a barbecue on the Fourth of July and watching fireworks. The next month,

when both families had birthdays, they met at Gray’s Lake for a picnic and birthday cake.

Catholic Charities also helps with any material needs refugee families may have. This includes clothing, additional bedding, toys, games and personal hygiene items. In celebration of Catholic Charities’ centennial year, the organization announced its 100 Challenge, which encourages others to collect 100 personal care items to help relieve some of the immediate needs clients face. Items collected through this challenge will support all who are being served through Catholic Charities’ programs including new and current refugee families.

“Catholic Charities does the lion’s share of the material needs,” Kurth said.

Even with an outpouring of support from Catholic Charities and local families, refugees settling in Iowa still face challenges.

“It’s eye-opening seeing how difficult it is, even with the services we have,” Kurth said. “When you don’t know the language, when you don’t have transportation, when you don’t have the relationships, it’s challenging to get settled.”



Photo by Lindsay Kurth

The Kurth family spent time with the Kongulu family this past summer to help the refugee family feel more at home in Iowa.

## How can I help?

### Material Needs

Join the Catholic Charities 100 Challenge. Gather some friends or have a group collect 100 personal care items for refugees.

Catholic Charities needs material items for new refugee families settling in Des Moines. These include items such as toiletries, laundry detergent, new vacuum cleaners and lamps. A complete list of requested items can be found on the Catholic Charities website CatholicCharitiesDM.org. Donations are accepted on Mondays from noon to 4 p.m. at 3 College Ave. in Des Moines.

Questions? Contact Catholic Charities Community Relations Manager Emily Klisares at 515-237-5078 or eklisares@catholiccharitiesdm.org.

### Connect

Have your family get together with a refugee family to help them settle in our community. Have a picnic, go grocery shopping with them, or explore events and places around town. Contact Shalom Lule at slule@catholiccharitiesdm.org to be a part of this opportunity.



**CENTENNIAL** A benefit for the Catholic Charities' Emergency Family Shelter

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# St. Joseph Catholic School celebrates expansion



Anne Marie Cox

St. Joseph Catholic School seventh graders Apollo Winfrey and Brydee Denney study in a new middle school classroom.

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

St. Joseph Catholic School in Des Moines has much to be thankful for this holiday season.

On Dec. 3, Bishop William Joensen will bless a new expansion of the school that serves the whole parish community.

The expansion includes two new early childhood classrooms, three new middle school classrooms, a large multipurpose space that doubles as both a parish activity center and school

gymnasium, and an elevator to make accessibility easier.

A small chapel will be named for the late Father Dan Gehler, a longtime parishioner and supporter of the parish who died in 2021.

The expansion comes on the cusp of the parish's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2024 and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school. The school was founded by the Precious Blood sisters in 1949 and they served there for 23 years. The Sisters of the Humility of Mary provided service for the next 18 years.

Today, the school's growing student body is 59 percent diverse, with more than \$208,000 provided to St. Joseph families through tuition assistance programs such as the Catholic Tuition Organization, the diocesan Ignite capital campaign, parish assistance and the Kremer Foundation.

Middle school students are already using the new space while preschool 3- and 4-year-olds are expected to move to the new space after the Christmas holiday.

The former gymnasium, which is about a third the size of a standard gym, will become a permanent lunchroom.

A new gym/parish event center will allow the school for the first time to host sporting events in parochial leagues, said principal Lynn Ernst. It will function as a community center for the parish, providing more space for the parish's traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas meals for the needy.

The expansion was a dream for many years.

"The St. Joseph community has been talking about this and working towards this for about 20 years," Ernst said. There had been a number of galas and some generous donors came forward to help make the dream a reality.

The parish broke ground on Aug. 5, 2022, said Father Chris Fontanini. It was shortly after his arrival at the parish so he's seen

the construction go up.

"Things took a little bit of time before we started seeing some above-ground work," he said. "Now, we're getting close to completion."

The parish is grateful for the pledges to the capital campaign by parishioners and gifts from other donors. The parish still needs \$2 million to complete the project and invites anyone who

feels moved to support the expansion of St. Joseph School to go to [stjosephcatholicdsm.org](http://stjosephcatholicdsm.org), click on "schools" and the "donate now" button.

"We thank you in advance for your gift," said parish business manager David Ortega. "With your generosity you help to ensure that St. Joseph and its families will thrive for another 100 years."

## Sisters honored for major birthdays



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Two Humility of Mary Sisters – Sister Rosalia Riedel and Sister Virginia Bartholome – celebrated major birthdays on Oct. 26 at the Bishop Drumm Retirement Center in Johnston. Sister Virginia (Marita) turned 100 on Oct. 10. Originally from Montana, she served in libraries in Montana and Iowa. Sister Rosalia (Mary Andrew) turned 100 years old on Nov. 23. She died on Nov. 31. Born in Ohio, she entered the religious community in 1945 and professed vows as Sister Mary Andrew in 1948. She dedicated her life to teaching, including at St. Theresa in Des Moines.

## BVM sisters celebrate 190th anniversary

The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (known as the BVMs) in Dubuque, announced the congregation's 190<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Nov. 1.

The BVMs were founded by five young Irish women who left their homeland in 1833 to teach Irish immigrant children in Philadelphia.

Then in 1843, the sisters accepted an invitation from Bishop Mathias Loras to come teach in what is now Dubuque in the Iowa Territory.

The BVM sisters served the Diocese of Des Moines for 158 of those 190 years, primarily through education.

In 1865, the first BVM sisters came to Des Moines to teach at St. Ambrose Grade School. They stayed at St. Ambrose until the school merged with Visitation and St. John's schools to create Holy Family at the former Visitation site. Visitation Grade School was staffed by the BVMs beginning in 1881. St. John's Grade School had BVMs by 1906.

BVMs were invited to teach in the St. Francis parish grade school in Council Bluffs in 1871. By 1873, they had opened St. Francis Academy, a boarding school. The boarding school was purchased by the parish in 1915 and became a parish high school until St. Albert High School

opened in 1964. BVMs taught in St. Francis grade and high school and at St. Albert.

In Des Moines, the BVM sisters purchased the estate of W. H. Welch in October 1884 for \$20,000. (The land was in a suburb called Greenwood Park.) This would become St. Joseph Academy, a second boarding school in the Diocese. The Welch home, christened Villa Maria, served as both school and convent until brick school buildings were built. St. Joseph Academy (known fondly as SJA) was dedicated on March 19, 1885, and opened immediately. Two girls graduated in 1892. St. Joseph Academy pre-school was in operation by 1950. SJA and the pre-school remained open until the merger of SJA and Dowling High School in 1972.

Christ the King grade school was originally staffed by Adrian Dominicans, but by 1980 BVM sisters had replaced the Adrians until 1995.

Approximately 123 women entered the BVM Community from Council Bluffs and Des Moines. Of those, 30 returned to serve their home Diocese. Three BVMs who entered the congregation from the Diocese are still alive: Barbara Brooks from Council Bluffs, and Carol Marie Baum and Sandy Rode-myer from Des Moines.



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# Adoration offers peace, healing

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

The national Eucharistic Revival initiative of the U.S. bishops aims to inspire, educate, and unite the faithful in a more intimate relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist.

Adoration is one way to grow closer to Jesus through the Eucharist. It's a way to find peace and healing.

St. Augustin in Des Moines offers perpetual adoration at its chapel on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Other parishes, like Holy Rosary in Glenwood and Christ the King Parish, in Des Moines, offer extended hours for adoration.

Many parishes offer adoration. Check with your parish for days and times.

## St. Augustin

For more than 20 years, St. Augustin's side chapel has hosted 24-hour adoration seven days a week.

Parishioner Mike Woody started coming while he worked at a stressful job.

"It was a nice way to calm things down," he said.

After a 24-year run teaching religious education, Woody felt pulled in a new direction. He so enjoyed his time in adoration and the people he met there, he decided to pivot and help his parish by becoming a leader in ensuring

that enough people pledged to spend time in adoration that Jesus was always in the company of someone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"I decided this is what I want to do," Woody said.

He was amazed at the stories people shared of how adoration changed their lives, helped give them direction, and offered them peace. One woman met her future spouse at adoration. Another person came for healing while feeling suicidal. And, a woman drove at 3 a.m. from a suburb with something on her mind that she wanted to think about while in the presence of Jesus, he said.

Woody has been leading a push for more volunteers in or out of the parish to pledge to spend an hour a week or whenever they could in the adoration chapel. Email him at AdorationStA@gmail.com.

Adoration can be a transformative experience for people, said Father Christopher Pisut, the pastor of St. Augustin Parish.

"It's a place go to for consolation, for clarity of thought. A lot of vocation stories in Des Moines include time spent in the chapel," he said.

"There's a gamut of emotions we run through in our normal prayer. Those are things we bring to our normal prayer but even more so in adoration," said Father Pisut, who invites anyone who wants to spend quiet time

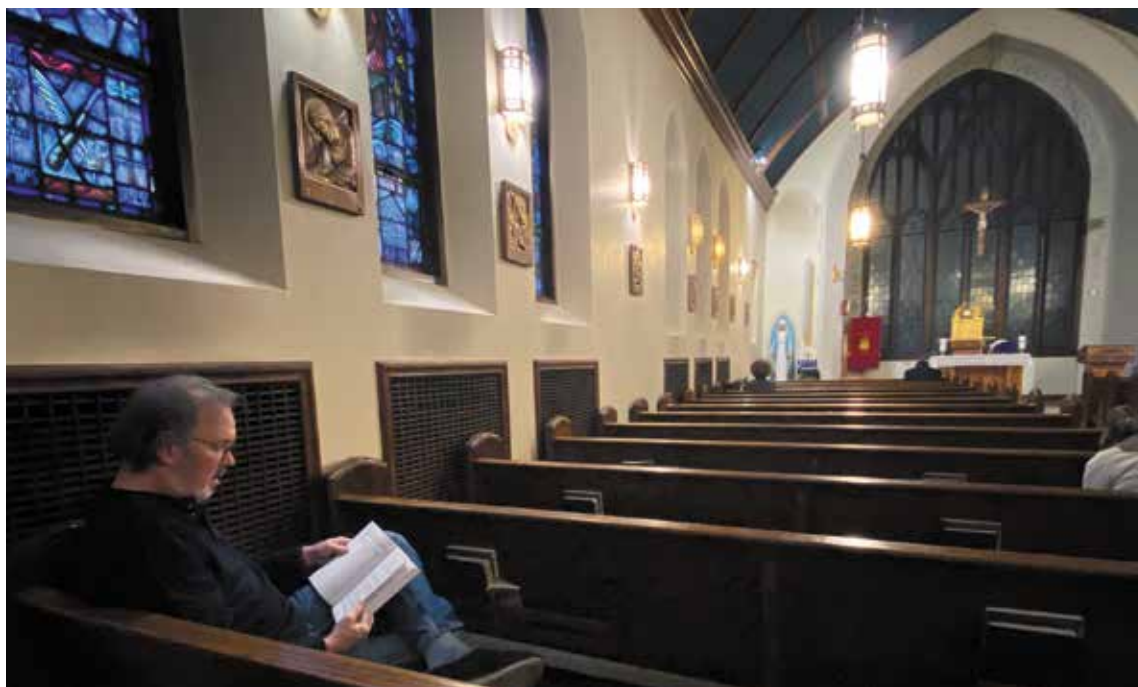


Photo by Anne Marie Cox

St. Augustin parishioner Mike Woody, pictured at left, encourages the faithful to consider spending time with Jesus in adoration. St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines offers adoration in a side chapel 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Other parishes throughout the Diocese offer adoration at varying times. Check with your local parish to get details.

with Jesus to stop by the parish's adoration chapel.

"Our Lord is for everyone," he said.

## Holy Rosary

Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood offers adoration from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week.

Sara Koch started going to adoration at Holy Rosary when she was in high school. In fact, the first date for her and her husband included a stop there.

"This chapel has been very good to me," she said.

Koch has been going to adoration for about eight years.

"It's a really good place for me to go and discern what I should be doing in my life," she

said. "Whenever I'm worried and anxious, God calms me down. I rely on that hour every week. I don't think I could ever give it up."

Hanna McGinnis went to religious education while growing up, but not to Mass. As soon as she could drive, she started going to Mass.

She had a nagging feeling that she ought to go to adoration.

"As a kid, my heart was listening to God but I didn't know where to go," she said.

So she would sit in her car in the church parking lot in front of the adoration chapel and talk to God. She began working with Monica Hughes, who helps with ministries at Holy Rosary. Hughes encouraged McGinnis to go in the chapel doors for adoration.

"I love it!" McGinnis said. "God's voice calms you. Satan's voice pushes you and worries you. I turn to God to figure out where to go."

Adoration deepens her faith.

"I've become such a better person with God in my life. I'm still learning. The more I learn, the more my life has gone better," she said.

## Christ the King

Kris Beltrane remembers her weekly prayer group at Christ the King Parish. The small group would both sing joy and praise and silently pray to God during adoration.

When Monsignor Frank Bognanno became the pastor, her group asked if they could have expanded adoration hours.

"I like the quiet time. You feel the Spirit. You feel God's presence," she said. "There's just

something about being in that space in front of the Blessed Sacrament, especially in the chapel because it's smaller and intimate, that just draws you in."

Christ the King doesn't have perpetual adoration, but it's close; more like 24 hours a day for six or six and a half days a week because it's a challenge to have people stay with the Eucharist in adoration over the weekends.

"At the end of the last Mass of the weekend (which is typically the Spanish Mass), we expose the Blessed Sacrament in the church for a period of silent prayer, have some songs and devotions, and then process with the sacrament to the adoration chapel, where it remains until the following weekend," explained Father PJ McManus, the pastor.

"Then on Saturday, before the first Mass of the weekend, we process the sacrament back into the church and have a common holy hour together as a parish, often with praise and worship music.

"This allows the community to see the connection between the sacrament celebrated and the sacrament adored, that we're really living from Eucharist to Eucharist, and that adoration is always best understood as a preparation for our next communion and a thanksgiving for our last one," he said.

Adoration is one way a diverse parish can join people in prayer. Second, the silence draws people.

Beltrane encourages people to spend time in adoration.

She said: "God can always touch our lives, but in adoration he seems to touch it so much more deeply."



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Sara Koch and Hanna McGinnis spend time in the adoration chapel at Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood.

# Deacon known for his love for the poor, immigrants, dies

Continued from page 1

others."

The flood of 1993 was pivotal for the couple.

Both Janece and Deacon Chris were on the front line of helping the community, assisting 300 families. He helped with flood relief work with Catholic Charities and Lutheran Relief Services. Deacon Chris was invit-

ed to work for Catholic Charities full time.

He became the manager of the Catholic Charities Food Pantry, then called St. Mary Food Pantry. It was originally located at a former Visitation Parish convent near Holy Family Catholic School. He also worked at Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter, then called St. Joseph

Emergency Family Shelter.

"The main thing I remember about Chris is how dedicated he was to the work of helping people," said Tom Chapman, who served as the diocesan director of communication and had worked with Deacon Chris.

"He would fight very hard to make sure that no bureaucratic or other obstacles got in the way of

the help being provided at the St. Mary Family Center," Chapman said.

Sister Sandy served as the director of the Des Moines Area Religious Council's Emergency Food Pantry when Deacon Chris managed Catholic Charities' food pantry.

"He was quiet but he had a dry sense of humor. He was just

a delight to work with," she said.

When she had something donated like a huge bag of masa flour, which is the flour used for tortillas and tacos, she'd call Deacon Chris.

"I remember one time, I had Indian fry bread in flour form and he took it. He always found a home for everything," she said.



# The key word this holiday season is patience

Advent is right around the corner, and I have to say Advent is probably the liturgical season I'm most inclined to rush through.

I can't wait for Christmas with all it brings, the wonder of my children, the time with family, the excitement of gifts both given and received. I can't wait for Christmas, and yet this year it's been on my heart to pray for more patience.

My prayers for patience are related to the liturgical season, but they're also related to various circumstances in my family's life. There are a few big decisions and thorny topics my wife and I are navigating, and it's easy to want pre-packaged answers to come with all the speed and decisiveness

## Marriage & Family Life

By Adam Storey



our culture teaches us to expect.

While my impulse is to look for quick fixes and clear solutions, our liturgical year is inviting me to a bit more patience.

I see this patience in the four weeks where we anticipate, and prepare for the Incarnation.

Even more pointedly I see this patience in the Psalms, and in the history in which the Psalms are rooted. We often hear a profound longing in the Psalms, a desire to see God and see his will accomplished, and at the same time we know the generations upon generations during which Israel waited for the Messiah. As the psalmist says, "I wait with longing for the Lord, my soul waits for his word. My soul looks for the Lord more than sentinels for daybreak" (Psalm 130:5-6a).

The Old Testament can teach us patience, and the mystery of God's plan in our lives.

Even as Israel longed for the Messiah, they didn't always do so perfectly, and nei-

ther do we.

Yet my hope for all of us this Advent is that we can grow in little ways to wait for the Lord's Incarnation in our own circumstances.

Certainly it'll be surprising, and perhaps disruptive, and always in God's own time. As we wait with longing let us pray, Come Lord Jesus!

*Adam Storey oversees the diocesan Marriage & Family Life Office and serves as Mission Lead on the Evangelization & Mission Team. he can be reached at 515-237-5056 or astorey@dmdiocese.org.*

## Let's make a deal

### Let's Get Psyched

By Deacon Randy Kiel



minds learn. Some say, "Never allow yourself to feel regret."

"Hmm, now just how is a person supposed to pull that off?"

I suspect that regret happened as soon as Adam and Eve first bit the forbidden fruit. How would they have expressed regret? They had never felt this emotion until then. It must have sounded like shouting and groaning, much like the sound when regret still strikes us to this day.

Perhaps Satan himself approached Eve with the same false proposal saying, "Okay, let's just make a deal and then I won't bother you anymore." They took the fruit. The deal was done. He then began to bother mankind forever.

It is important to know, that while we

might make deals in business or with car purchases, etc., God has never been in the mode of "deal making"; he makes covenants.

We are invited into the covenant of his Paschal mystery. We either come under the covenant or we don't. There is no deal making.

When we come under his covenant, the result is that we get to know him and have relationship with him for the sake of our salvation. If we avoid his covenant, we can only imagine who God is, but not really know him. Imagining God does not lead to salvation. This, in great part, is why we hear so many views of who God is: the universe, a higher power, or whatever a person wants to call him.

Let's make sure that our spiritual life doesn't become like the game show "Let's Make A Deal." If we think that we have the most perfect way to pray, the better way to be Catholic, or the holiest posture, then we might as well be dressing up in a shower curtain with no game show to attend.

After all, a "spiritual life" isn't necessarily a life of faith in Jesus Christ. A great part of our relationship with him is us tell-

ing him about how human we are and how divine he is.

He knows how much we regret the things we struggle with in our lives, so let's tell him about them. All our regrets are here to point us to a further understanding of life and its creator. If we allow ourselves to feel the regret, or come under it, *hypomeno*, then there will most often be a lesson waiting to be learned.

In the end, we will value the lesson more than feel the pain of the regret. The lesson will endure, *hypomeno*.

While it is hard to admit, "I made a mistake" it is even harder to confess "I did something I regret."

God did not make a deal with us that said anything like, if you follow me you will have no regrets. Rather, he made a covenant for us that said, if you follow me I will take care of everything for you and give you eternal life. That, my brothers and sisters, is not a "deal;" it is a promise!

*Deacon Randy Kiel serves Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines. Connect with him at randy@kardiocounseling.com.*

## Love beyond death

Gilbert K. Chesterton once stated that Christianity is the only democracy where even the dead get to vote. In light of that, I share two stories.

A psychologist at a conference I once attended shared this story. A woman came to see him in considerable distress. Her disquiet had to do with her last conversation with her husband before he died. She shared how they had enjoyed a good marriage for more than 30 years, with never more than a minor quarrel between them. Then one morning they had a quarrel about some trivial thing (of which she couldn't even remember the substance). Their argument had ended in anger, and he had stomped out the door to go to work – and to die of a heart attack that day, before they had a chance to talk again.

What awful luck! Thirty years without an incident of this kind, and now this, anger in their last words to each other! The psychologist first, humorously, assured her that the fault all lay on her husband's part, in his choosing to die at that awkward moment, leaving her with that guilt!

More seriously, he asked her, "if your husband was here right now, what would you say to him?" She answered that she would apologize and assure him that considering all their years together this little incident meant nothing, that their love for each other utterly dwarfed that mini moment. He assured her that her husband was still alive in the communion of saints and was with them right now. Then he said to her, "why don't you sit in this chair and tell him what you just shared, that your faith-

ful love for each other completely obliterates your last conversation. Indeed, share a laugh over its irony."

A second story. Recently, I met with a family whose father had died by suicide 20 years ago. Through the years, they had made peace with that, though, like most families that lose a loved one to suicide, some uncomfortable residue remained. They had long since forgiven him, forgiven themselves for any failure on their part, and forgiven God for the unfairness of a death like his. But something remained unfinished, something they felt but couldn't quite name (despite 20 years of time, despite forgiveness all round, and despite a more empathic understanding of suicide). I couldn't quite name it either, but I could suggest a remedy.

I suggested they have a ritual celebration in which they would celebrate their love for him, celebrate the gift that was his life, and work at redeeming the unfortunate manner of his death. Here's the suggestion: Pick a day, perhaps his birthday or even the anniversary of his death. Meet as a family and have a joyous celebration, complete with champagne, wine, and balloons. Share stories about him, highlighting stories in

which he was joyous, in which he was laughing, in which his spirit thrived, and in which he brought a special energy into a room. You are still in a communion of life with him. He is joyous now. Celebrate that with him. Lift away the 20 years of heaviness. The absence of this kind of celebration is what still lies unspoken between you and him.

Stories like this can sound fanciful, wishful thinking, but they take their ground in solid, defined Christian doctrine, that is, they are rooted in a faith that tells us that we are in living union with each other inside the Body of Christ. As Christians, we believe (as a doctrine in our faith) that we are in unity with each other inside a living body (an organism, not a corporation) and

that this union in one body takes in all of us, both the living and the dead. We can communicate with each other, apologize to each other, make amends to each other, and celebrate each other's life and energy, even after one of us has died.

As Christians, we are invited to pray for the dead. The real intent of our prayer for the dead is for us to stay in touch, in a communication of life with them, to continue to be in a more deliberate communication of life with them, to finish unfinished business, to apologize to them, to forgive them, to ask them to forgive us, to remain mindful of the special oxygen they breathed into the planet during their life, and to occasionally share a celebratory glass of wine with them.

### DMARC helps Catholic Charities Food Pantry

Letter to the Editor:

I read the article about the Catholic Charities Food Pantry with great interest. Years ago, when I was the director of the Des Moines Area Religious Council (known as DMARC) Food Pantry, we needed two pickup trucks (driven by Denny Wilson and Tom Ludwig) to pick up the weekly food order for what was then called St. Mary's Family Center. It was our busiest pantry even then, when Deacon Chris Rohwer (who died on Nov. 1) was in charge.

So I was a bit surprised to see no mention of DMARC in the article last month. On the Catholic Charities website, it states that the "Catholic Charities Food Pantry is a member of the DMARC Food Network." As such, Catholic Charities Food Pantry receives free food from DMARC on a regular basis.

The DMARC Emergency Food Pantry, established in 1976, was set up to receive food donations, repack the items if necessary, then send the food to its various food pantries.

*Sister Sandy Rodemyer, BVM*



# Nuncio: 'Holy Spirit has led you here today'

By Barb Arland-Fye  
Contributing Writer

DUBUQUE, Iowa (OSV News) -- As Cardinal Christophe Pierre prepared to read the apostolic mandate appointing then-Bishop Thomas R. Zinkula of Davenport to head the Archdiocese of Dubuque, his home diocese, the apostolic nuncio teasingly asked the gathering, "Do you know him?"

Laughter was the response from the 1,000 or so people who filled Church of the Nativity for the new archbishop's installation Mass Oct. 18.

When Cardinal Pierre asked about the presence of people from the Davenport Diocese, where the new archbishop was ordained a bishop and served for six years before his appointment to the Dubuque Archdiocese, no one spoke up.

"I didn't know the people of the Davenport Diocese were so silent," the cardinal joked, looking toward the rows of seats where they sat. "That means you are sad."

Archbishop Zinkula later evoked laughter when he began his homily with this caveat from Mark's Gospel: "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house." The archbishop added, "So I guess we will see how long the honeymoon lasts, me being the home-diocese boy and all!"

Kidding aside, Cardinal Pierre told the new archbishop, "Your entire life has been a gradual and rich preparation for the ministry you are about to undertake." The preparation began in his formation in the family, continued as he engaged in sports, academics and a law career, and in his ministry as a pastor, a canon lawyer, rector and bishop.

From the beginning of his episcopacy in the neighboring Davenport Diocese, then-Bishop Zinkula embraced Pope Francis' emphasis on evangelization and later the synodal process that the Holy Father initiated. In doing so, "You have experienced with your people the fullness of deep and careful listening while engaging in communion, discernment of the path on which the Holy Spirit is leading the church," Cardinal Pierre said. "We are glad the Holy Spirit has led you here today."

Prior to reading the apostolic mandate, Cardinal Pierre recognized Bishop Richard E. Pates. The retired bishop of Des Moines served as the apostolic administrator for the Dubuque Archdiocese since the resignation six months ago of Archbishop Michael O. Jackels because of health reasons. The congregation applauded in appreciation.

In the mandate on his appointment, Pope Francis praised Archbishop Zinkula for the qualities he manifested in carrying out his episcopal duties in the Davenport Diocese in southeast Iowa. "You have clearly manifested the spirit of a shepherd, qualities



OSV News photo/Barb Arland-Fye, *The Catholic Messenger*

**Archbishop Thomas J. Zinkula displays the papal bull on his appointment to head the Archdiocese of Dubuque, from Pope Francis during his installation Mass at the Church of the Nativity in Dubuque Oct. 18.**

which indeed sustain the hope that you are very capable in fulfilling this new responsibility."

Archbishop Zinkula and Cardinal Pierre exchanged a hug and the cardinal handed the mandate to the new archbishop. He opened the scroll and proceeded into the assembly to show the mandate to everyone.

He returned to the sanctuary, took his seat at the bishop's chair and received the pastoral staff, symbolizing his role as chief shepherd of the Dubuque Archdiocese. It was the pastoral staff of Bishop Mathias Loras, the first bishop of Dubuque, who served

from 1837-1858.

Archbishop Zinkula greeted representatives for the archdiocese's priests, deacons, women religious, youths and other Catholic entities as well as from other faith traditions and local and state governments. Among the representatives were the oldest and youngest priests in the archdiocese.

The archbishop's commitment to evangelization and to the synodal church as essential to its fruition were evident in his homily. He spoke of his family's roots in Bohemia, which inspired a pilgrimage in 2016 with some of his siblings.

The synodal process "is an opportunity to listen more carefully to one another and to the Holy Spirit, to draw closer together as clergy, parishes, diocesan communities and a universal church in a polarized society and church. It is an opportunity to discern the path forward communally and to accompany one another on our journey to the kingdom. ... It is time to shift back into apostolic and missionary mode, where we should have been all along. What an exciting and demanding time to be a Christian!"

In appointing Archbishop Zinkula to lead the Dubuque

Archdiocese, "the church chose wisely," said Father Joe Jacobi, a close friend dating back to their seminary days at The Catholic University of America in Washington more than 30 years ago.

"He is a very humble, a very faithful man and also open to where the Spirit is leading the church now. He alluded to that (in his homily during vespers) last night and today," added Father Jacobi, a priest of the Oklahoma City Archdiocese.

*Barb Arland-Fye is editor of The Catholic Messenger, newspaper of the Diocese of Davenport.*

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# Synod synthesis shows agreement, divergences

By Cindy Wooden  
Contributing Writer

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- A report summarizing discussions at the assembly of the Synod of Bishops said the church may need more welcoming pastoral approaches, especially to people who feel excluded, but also acknowledged fears of betraying traditional church teachings and practices.

Among the topics addressed in the report were clerical sexual abuse, women's roles in the church, outreach to poor and the concept of "synodality" itself.

The assembly, with 364 voting members -- 365 counting Pope Francis -- met in working sessions six days a week Oct. 4-28 after a three-day retreat outside of Rome. They were scheduled to join the pope Oct. 29 for the assembly's closing Mass.

After the voting on the synthesis concluded, the pope said he wanted to remind everyone that "the protagonist of the synod is the Holy Spirit." He briefly thanked the synod officers and joined members of the assembly in giving thanks to God.

The assembly's discussions set the stage for a year-long period of reflection that will culminate in the second and final synod assembly in late 2024 on the same topic.

The 41-page synthesis report, voted on paragraph-by-paragraph Oct. 28, described its purpose as presenting "convergences, matters for consideration and proposals that emerged from the dialogue" on issues discussed under the headings of synodality, communion, mission and participation.

Every item in the report was approved by at least two-thirds of the members present and voting, synod officials said. They published a complete list of the votes.

Within the synod topics, members looked at the role of women in the church, including in



CNS photo/Vatican Media

**Pope Francis prays while holding a crozier during Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Oct. 29, marking the conclusion of the first session of the Synod of Bishops on synodality.**

decision making, and at the possibility of ordaining women deacons. The report asked for more "theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the diaconate," including a review of the conclusions of commissions Pope Francis set up in 2016 and 2020.

Among members of the assembly, the report said, some thought the idea of women deacons would be a break with tradition, while others insisted it would "restore the practice of the Early Church," including at the time of the New Testament, which mentions women deacons.

"Others still, discern it as an appropriate and necessary response to the signs of the times,

faithful to the Tradition, and one that would find an echo in the hearts of many who seek new energy and vitality in the Church," it said. But, the report added, some members thought that would "marry the Church to the spirit of the age."

Assembly members also discussed pastoral approaches to welcoming and including in the life of parishes people who have felt excluded.

The synthesis said that "to develop authentic ecclesial discernment in these and other areas, it is necessary to approach these questions in the light of the Word of God and Church teaching, properly informed and reflected upon."

"In order to avoid repeating vacuous formulas, we need to provide an opportunity for a dialogue involving the human and

**What's next?**  
The Synod of Bishops' discussions set the stage for a year-long period of reflection that will culminate in the second and final synod assembly in late 2024 on the same topic.

social sciences, as well as philosophical and theological reflection," it added.

The divergences in the assembly, it said, reflected opposing concerns: that "if we use doctrine harshly and with a judgmental attitude, we betray the Gospel; if we practice mercy 'on the cheap,' we do not convey God's love."

The report emphasized the "listening" that took place on the local, national and continental levels before the assembly and the "conversations in the Spirit" that took place during it, which

involved each person speaking in his or her small group, other participants at first commenting only on what struck them, silent reflection and then discussion.

In several places throughout the report, assembly members insisted that greater efforts must be made to listen to the survivors of clerical sexual abuse and those who have endured spiritual or psychological abuse.

Members of the assembly said the process helped them experience the church as "God's home and family, a Church that is closer to the lives of her people, less bureaucratic and more relational."

The report also acknowledged fears, including that "the teaching of the Church will be changed, causing us to depart from the Apostolic faith of our forebears and, in doing so, betraying the expectations of those who hunger and thirst for God today."

In response, though, assembly members said, "We are confident that synodality is an expression of the dynamic and living Tradition."

The report also insisted the purpose of synodality is mission.

"As disciples of Jesus, we cannot shirk the responsibility of demonstrating and transmitting the love and tenderness of God to a wounded humanity," the report said.

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