

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## “All I try to do is make Jesus smile.”

For decades, a humble farmer’s faith has spurred him to feed thousands of hungry people.



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Farmer Andy Conner is a man of few words but many blessings. He avoids the spotlight but shines Christ’s light on hungry people. Moved by the image of Jesus on the crucifix, he often wondered how he could repay Jesus for his suffering. Then he realized he could use his gift for farming to share his bounty with others.

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Andy Conner is on a quiet quest.

For about 30 years, this farmer has cultivated a few acres of his land, located a short drive

outside Des Moines, to give away its bounty: eggs, meat, potatoes, squash, and vegetables.

Why?

“We all have something to do until God takes us home,” he said. “I feel my job is to feed people.”

Conner doesn’t like the

spotlight.

But now, in the season of giving, he is sharing why he gives generously in the hope that others might also feel moved to help people.

The spark for his passion to alleviate hunger is rooted in his faith.

“I fell head over heels in love with the good Lord through my Bible,” Conner said. “I read the Bible for 30 years. Everything in it, to me, is we should never have a hungry human being, and that’s what I strive for.”

He believes all of God’s

children should be treated with respect.

“The first step is just realizing they’re people,” he said. “They’re not ‘the homeless’ or just ‘the hungry.’ They’re men, women and children. They need love and shelter. If I have more than I need, why not share?”

Conner grew up on a farm and farmed about 320 acres with his brother. He worked in the wholesale meat business and became an electrician.

“I used to see a lot of hungry people,” he recalled. “I couldn’t understand how someone like me

– raising five kids and not having a lot of money – wasn’t hungry and those folks were. The good Lord put it on my heart: If you have extra, do something with it.”

And do something he has. He grows hundreds and sometimes even thousands of pounds of potatoes. He takes truckloads of apples and dozens upon dozens of eggs from his farm to area pantries.

“For a while, we were getting close to 50 dozen eggs every two weeks that I was taking to the shelters for him,” said his child-

Continued on page 10

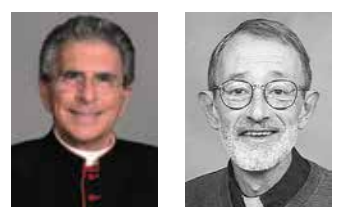
### Holy Days

Christmas Day, a holy day of obligation, falls on a Monday this year. This means the faithful will need to satisfy their Sunday obligation at a Saturday vigil or any Mass on Sunday AND satisfy the Christmas obligation with a Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. One Mass will not cover both obligations. Please note that parishes may have altered their weekend Mass schedule for the Fourth Sunday of Advent to accommodate the Christmas Vigil Sunday evening. Check your local Catholic church for Mass times.

We celebrate the Solemnity of Mary on Monday, Jan. 1. It will not be a holy day of obligation.

### Two diocesan priests died

Two gifted preachers, who served the Diocese of Des Moines for many years, died. See the stories on Monsignor Frank Chiodo and Father James Laurenzo on page 5.



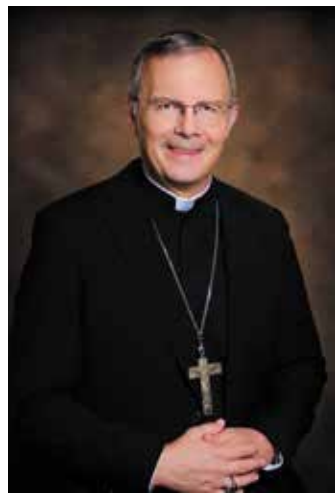
# The promise delivered by Christmas

I haven't bought a Powerball ticket in a long time. That's no boast; I simply haven't been paying attention. I don't think the times I did buy tickets were primarily motivated by greed; I thought about all the sorts of things I would do to benefit family members and the institutions I served—with one exception: I would buy myself a really, really nice bike.

I've never won the lottery. And chances are, neither have you. But this dynamic of becoming aware of an immense good joined to the recognition of all that is unfulfilled is not simply a twice/week, spin the cylinder affair. This movement of the heart underlies and expresses the whole of our human lives. Even before we are fully aware of it, the God who is infinite goodness—who cannot be measured by a long series of zeros—has spoken the Word who brought us into being. God gave us hearts that are capable of bearing a promise that communicates his own desire for us, of Love for the beloved.

God's immense, tender love moves him to form a covenant with his own creation. Father Guy Mancini, OSB, reminds us of Rabbi Nelson Glueck's contention that God's *hesed*, loving kindness, is the premise and essence of *berith*, covenant. There can be no covenant and the promise it represents apart from the invitation to loving friendship with God.

God's promise alone can



Bishop William Joensen

span the great chasm between creature and Creator by giving us hearts that can receive and return the faith, hope, and love that God supplies to us. The late Monsignor Luigi Giussani, founder of the Catholic Communion and Liberation movement, reflects, "Man is born with this hope; man is born with a heart which corresponds with the promise. . . . The core of life is a promise."

Again, in the spirit of Msgr. Giussani, we affirm that faith is to recognize a Presence that is certain. The Christ Presence was certified over 2,000 years ago by the shepherds, by angels, by Mary, by seniors such as Simeon and Anna as they go in peace, by the martyred Holy Innocents and by any of us who are willing to witness to Jesus. And it follows that hope is to recognize a certainty for the future that is born of this

Presence.

In eternity, the Son and the Father have no need to make promises to one another, since they are wholly of one will. In the Incarnation of Jesus in the flesh, the mystery of God's providential plan is revealed: a perfect human will is joined in Jesus' divine will, and the possibility of his promising on our behalf is initiated. Only if the Father and the Son make promises in history to one another for our sake will we have hope of salvation through the Messiah who descends in the line of David, Jesus of Nazareth.

For we are a people who repeatedly seem to lose our way, who wander into exile by forgetting the covenant promise. In the evangelist Matthew's opening genealogy that charts salvation history, he traces the fourteen generations from Abraham to David, followed by the fourteen generations leading to the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people. Yet to recognize our exiled state, our forced relocation to a city, a world, where believers often feel like aliens—this graced recognition is itself one of the fruits of the promise.

Fourteen more generations are needed after the Babylonian exile to overcome our stubborn refusal of God's promise and bring us back to the place about which Jeremiah prophesies: the crib that holds the swaddled body of the Messiah. How many more generations, how many more thousands of years will pass, un-

til the last day, the promised day of God transforms all into a new heaven and a new earth?

Sacred authors maintain we have some say in titrating the mixture of patience required and promise achieved. We can either accelerate or pump the brakes of the advent of peace and friendship among persons based on our readiness or refusal to keep our promises to one another.

Despite our halfhearted resolve to "just get along" during the holidays with family and accidental acquaintances (like siblings' newfound significant others), lurking not-too-far below the surface of our holiday pleasantries is our tendency to disregard, rather than abide, in relationship to God's promise. We confront the fact that we have been selfish, willful, complacent. This complacency is opposed to the sense of St. Thomas Aquinas, who speaks of the *complacentia boni*—the complacency of the good discovered but not yet fulfilled. This reservoir of potential energy is to be a source irrigating our activity, a foretaste of friendship that alone quiets our hunger.

At Bethlehem, the House of Bread, the Word made flesh comes down from heaven to do the will of the Father. Jesus gives us what alone will stave our hunger and quench our thirst for perpetual presence, for God with us; he gives himself. Even still, as the darkest days of the year weigh upon us, we look up and around, and see we are not so alone. There

are choristers who cannot help but break into song, who lend their musical artistry and beauty to draw us out of ourselves, to keep us from retreating into a fetal position. There are persons in our midst whose patience and longsuffering help put our own life challenges into perspective, who broaden our field of vision and help us see how foolish we have been to think God will leave us to our own devices.

We trace the movements of the conductors of holiness and devotion, the shepherds and others drawn from the margins into the heart of God's mysteries, women and men whose humanity is fulfilled, known forever as friends of God.

We are so bold to declare, "Fulfill the promise," both as petition to the God who cannot be anything but faithful to his Word, AND as an Advent antiphon that reverberates within our own hearts. We are roused to live as the sort of persons we ought to be, whom we long to be. By God's grace, we are rekindled in our desire to let God to work within hearts once frozen, in whom his message is inscribed by Spirit fire and faith. According to God's prompting, as for Mary and Joseph, at Christmas we travel to the city (or, better, to the church) we thought we had left forever, only to find ourselves at home, at peace, in the presence of the Child born unto us.

## La Promesa Cumplida para Navidad

Hace mucho tiempo que no compro un boleto del Powerball. No es por presumir; simplemente no he estado poniendo atención. No creo que las veces que compré boletos lo hice motivado por la avaricia; pensaba en todas las cosas que podría hacer en beneficio de miembros de mi familia y

las instituciones a las que he servido – con una sola excepción: comprarme una muy, muy buena bicicleta.

Nunca me he ganado la lotería. Y lo más probable es que ustedes tampoco. Pero esta dinámica de estar pendiente de un gran beneficio aunado a ver que todo eso queda sin cumplir no es un asunto al azar solamente una o dos veces a la semana. Esta sacudida del corazón es la base y expresión de nuestras vidas humanas. Incluso antes de que estemos conscientes de ello, el Dios que es bondad infinita – quien no puede medirse por una larga serie de ceros – ha dicho el Verbo que nos trajo a ser. Dios nos dio corazones que pueden soportar la promesa que comunica su propio deseo para nosotros, de Amor por los amados.

El inmerso y tierno amor de Dios le lleva a crear una alianza con su propia creación. El Padre Guy Mancini, OSB, nos recuerda del argumento del Rabino Nelson Glueck de que el *hesed* de Dios, amabilidad amorosa, es la premisa y la esencia de la *berith*, alianza. No puede haber alianza y la promesa que representa aparte de la invitación de una amistad en amor con Dios.

La promesa de Dios por sí misma puede extender el gran abismo entre criatura y Creador al darnos corazones que pueden recibir y dar la fe, la esperanza y el amor que Dios nos provee.

El fallecido Monseñor Luigi Giussani, fundador del movimiento Comunión y Liberación Católica, reflexiona, "El hombre nace con esta esperanza; el hombre nace con un corazón que corresponde con la promesa... El centro de la vida es una promesa."

Nuevamente, en el espíritu de Monseñor Giussani, afirmamos que la fe es reconocer una Presencia que es certidumbre. La Presencia de Cristo se certificó hace más de 2,000 años por los pastores, por los ángeles, por María, por ancianos tales como Simeón y Ana al partir en paz, por los martirizados Santos Inocentes y por cualquiera de nosotros dispuestos a dar testimonio de Jesús. Y sigue diciéndonos que la esperanza es el reconocer una certidumbre para el futuro que nace con su Presencia.

En la eternidad, el Hijo y el padre no necesitan hacerse promesas uno a otro, ya que son plenos en una sola voluntad. En la Encarnación de Jesús en la carne, se revela el misterio del plan providencial de Dios: una voluntad humana perfecta se une a la voluntad divina de Jesús e inician la posibilidad de su promesa a nombre nuestro. Solamente si el padre y el Hijo hacen promesas uno al otro en la historia en beneficio nuestro, podremos tener la esperanza de la salvación por medio del Mesías que desciende del linaje de David, Jesús de Nazaret.

Porque somos un pue-

lo que parece perder su rumbo en repetidas ocasiones, quienes vagan hacia el exilio olvidando la promesa de la alianza. En la genealogía que abre Mateo en su Evangelio describiendo la historia de la salvación, él señala las catorce generaciones de Abraham hasta David, seguido por las catorce generaciones que llevaron al exilio del pueblo judío en Babilonia. Pero aún reconociendo nuestra condición de exilio nuestra reubicación forzada a una ciudad, a un mundo, en donde los creyentes se sienten como extranjeros, este reconocimiento en gracia es en sí uno de los frutos de la promesa.

Se necesitaron catorce generaciones más luego del exilio a Babilonia para superar nuestro necio rechazo de la promesa de Dios para llevarnos de nuevo al lugar que profetizaba Jeremías: la cuna que tiene el cuerpo envuelto del Mesías. ¿Cuántas generaciones más, cuántos miles de años más pasarán hasta el último día, el día prometido en que Dios transforma todos en un nuevo cielo y en una nueva tierra?

Los autores sagrados sostienen que nosotros cierta participación al valorar la cantidad de paciencia que necesitamos combinar con la promesa alcanzada. Podemos ya sea acelerar o meter los frenos del adviento de la paz y de amistad entre persona basados en nuestra preparación o rechazo a mantener nuestras promesas

unos con otros.

A pesar de nuestra mediocre resolución de "llevarla bien" con nuestra familia y conocidos accidentales (tales como las nuevas parejas de nuestros hermanos) en la temporada de fiestas, escondemos no muy por debajo de la superficie de nuestros placeres de temporada nuestra tendencia a ignorar, en vez de cumplir, esa relación con la promesa de Dios. Enfrentamos el hecho de que hemos sido egoístas, voluntariosos, complacientes. Esta complacencia es contraria al sentido de Santo Tomás Aquino, quien habla de la *complacentia boni* – la complacencia del bien descubierto, pero aún sin cumplir. Esta reserva de energía potencial es una fuente que riega nuestras actividades, una probada de amistad que por sí misma tranquiliza nuestra hambre.

En Belén, la Casa de Pan, el Verbo hecho carne baja del cielo para cumplir la voluntad del Padre. Jesús nos da lo único que apagará nuestra hambre y saciar nuestra sed de presencia perpetua, del Dios con nosotros; él dándose a sí mismo.

Aún así, conforme los días más oscuros del año se avecinan, vemos hacia arriba y alrededor nuestro y sabemos que no estamos solos. Hay coristas que no pueden detener su canto, que comparten su talento y belleza artística para que salgamos de nosotros mismo, para evitar que nos escapemos en

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Bishop William Joensen  
Publisher

wjoensen@dmdiocese.org

Anne Marie Cox  
Editor

acox@dmdiocese.org

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PHONE: (515)237-5046

EMAIL: mirror@dmdiocese.org

org

DIOCESAN WEBSITE:

www.dmdiocese.org



# NCYC earns high marks from youth

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

About 475 teenagers and chaperones from across central and southwest Iowa boarded buses in the early morning hours of Nov. 16 for the long trek to Indianapolis for the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference.

They were filled with energy and faith.

“I assure you, our 15 along with 12,000 other hearts were fully alive and forever changed from this encounter,” said Tammie Dixon, of St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines.

“What made me feel fully alive this weekend was either the Eucharistic adoration or the end of Mass last night after listening to the bishop’s talk and singing the closing song with everyone in (Lucas Oil) stadium,” said Addison Murdock, of Sacred Heart

Parish in Woodbine.

“The main thing I will take away from this weekend is how to properly pray to the Lord, and a reminder of how powerful prayer is,” she said.

“This year’s NCYC was more meaningful,” said fellow parishioner Thomas Tremel. “I enjoy attending church, but at NCYC I meet people like me. I learned how to genuinely pray. I really enjoyed meeting new people and being social, which is something I do not usually do. This helped me be more confident with faith and now I can bring that back with me.”

Thirty two parishes in the Diocese of Des Moines sent a representative to NCYC. They joined six priests from the Diocese and Bishop William Jonsen, who celebrated a Mass for the youth of the Des Moines Diocese on Friday, Nov. 17.

The last NCYC in 2021 drew about 300 youth from the



Teenagers from Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine (top photo) and St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines (above) celebrate their faith with thousands of other youth at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis Nov. 16-19.

Diocese, but then the country was emerging from the pandemic, said Justin White, director of diocesan Young Adult Evangelization.

While the conference was

good, carrying the message home and into the community is important, said Dixon.

“What is important is taking Jesus with us as we go, body and

blood, soul and divinity. We bring Jesus through the Eucharist to his people by the Holy Spirit through prayer.”



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Join our free marriage enrichment program, **The Third Option**, which meets the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Mercy College, 928 6th Ave, Des Moines, IA 50309. Participants should use the north parking lot.

Couples can join at anytime!

This program is for all couples whether they are facing obstacles in their marriage or just trying to make a good thing better! Couples will walk through 14 skills-based workshops, listen to a couple who has overcome comparable frustrations, and provides support group discussions on suggested exercises / tools.

*If you have questions, or would like to register contact Julie Burdt at 515-201-4766 or [julie.burd@gmail.com](mailto:julie.burd@gmail.com). You can also contact Adam Storey at [astorey@dmdiocese.org](mailto:astorey@dmdiocese.org)*



# Pledge to strengthen body, mind, spirit this New Year

By Jennifer Willems  
Staff Writer

At this time of year, many of us are working on two lists, one for Christmas shopping and the other for New Year's resolutions.

The latter usually doesn't change much from year to year with better health — physical, mental, and spiritual — figuring prominently among the goals.

But what if you could do one thing that would check all the boxes?

Pietra Fitness is one way to accomplish that, giving people an opportunity to walk away feeling whole, the way God calls us to be, according to certified instructors Julie Dohrmann and Joy Nobles. They offer seven classes for a variety of ability levels at five parishes in the Des Moines area: St. Joseph, St. Mary of Nazareth and St. Theresa in Des Moines; St. Pius X in Urbandale; and Sacred Heart in West Des Moines.

## What is it?

Pietra Fitness is a stretching and strengthening program that incorporates Christian prayer in the Catholic tradition, said Dohrmann. She described it as the Christian alternative to yoga, which is based on Eastern religion and philosophy.

She completed her yearlong training in January 2020, and Nobles followed in 2021. Since then, they have been pro certified and trained to teach chair classes.

Developed according to the

teachings of the Catholic Church, the program is consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. A San Damiano Crucifix graces each class space, not only providing focus but encouraging participants, as it did St. Francis of Assisi, to “rebuild the church.”

“Pietra Fitness wants to rebuild the church by bringing people closer to Christ,” said Dohrmann, a member of Christ the King Parish who works in the childcare program at Sacred Heart School in West Des Moines.

## Prayer woven throughout

Each class begins and ends with the Sign of the Cross. Before working out, there is a prayer for the pope, bishops, priests and religious, as well as a prayer for a healthy body, sharp mind, joyful heart, and faithful and loving soul.

Participants also prepare by hearing a passage from Scripture. There are short breaks for bodily prayer throughout the warm-up and workout, and while winding down.

Instructors have access to 300 meditations provided by Pietra Fitness, which was founded by Karen Barbieri and is based in Cincinnati, Ohio. There are about 80 instructors around the world — four of them in Iowa.

While Pietra Fitness in Des Moines started with classes in a studio, the move to the parish setting has been important, said Nobles, a member of St. Theresa Parish and a surgical nurse at Uni-



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Joy Nobles leads a Pietra Fitness class at St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines. Pietra is a stretching and strengthening program that incorporates Christian prayer in the Catholic tradition. Nobles and Julie Dohrmann offer the classes at Des Moines metro area Catholic churches.

ty Point Health – Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines.

“I felt there were more people to teach,” she explained. “Community is a huge part of our faith and people want to get together with their church community.”

Grace flows from that, making people more patient and compassionate, she said.

“At one of my classes, I have an 87-year-old. The entire class is patient, waiting for her because naturally, by age, it takes her a little bit longer,” Nobles said. “But they’re so thrilled she is coming and doing this and praying with them and wants to stay active.”

Keeping St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body in mind, classes for men and women are offered separately to honor the dignity of each. This also allows them to maintain a focus on prayer.

To learn more about Pietra Fitness and the class schedules for Nobles and Dohrmann, visit [holisticlifestylewithjoy.com](http://holisticlifestylewithjoy.com). Contact them directly at [naniejulie@mac.com](mailto:naniejulie@mac.com) or [joymnobles@gmail.com](mailto:joymnobles@gmail.com).

Pietra Fitness also offers an online studio. For details, visit [pietrafitness.com](http://pietrafitness.com).

## Des Moines area Pietra opportunities

St. Joseph in Des Moines  
Saturday at 9:30 a.m.  
Sacred Heart in West Des Moines  
Tuesday at 1:15 p.m.  
St. Pius X in Urbandale  
Wednesday at 9:15 a.m.  
Thursday at 3:30 p.m.  
St. Theresa in Des Moines  
Tuesday at 5:40 p.m.  
Wednesday at 7:15 a.m.  
St. Mary of Nazareth in Des Moines  
Thursday at 8:45 a.m.

## 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 Jan. 6

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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 month, 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.



# Diocese loses two gifted preachers

## Pastor followed his call to preach fearlessly

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Monsignor Frank Chiodo was a gift to his family, friends and the people he so faithfully served for 46 years.

He died on Thanksgiving Day.

The Dec. 4 Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at St. Anthony Church in Des Moines, where Msgr. Chiodo was baptized, ordained a deacon, celebrated his first Mass as a priest, and served as pastor for 15 years before retiring.

At Msgr. Chiodo's first Mass as a priest, he was commissioned "to preach the word of God fearlessly and courageously and without concern," said Father Carl Sodoro, a friend from their seminary days. "He certainly did that."

Educated at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, Immaculate Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, and St. Thomas Theological Seminary in Denver, Msgr. Chiodo was ordained a priest by Bishop Maurice Dingman in 1976.

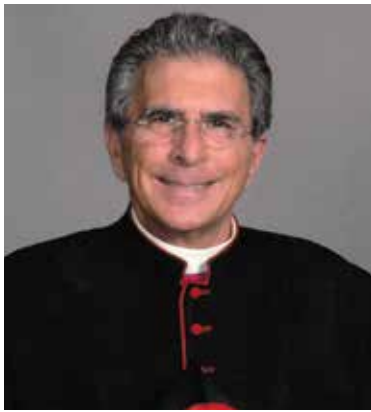
He served at Christ the King Parish in Des Moines, on the faculty at St. Albert High School in Council Bluffs, and joined team ministry based at St. Brendan Parish in Leon.

Msgr. Chiodo continued in team ministry at Sacred Heart Parish in Chariton, where he first met Rev. Dr. Gregory Nelson Davis, a Lutheran pastor also serving in Chariton.

"He was a great friend," said Rev. Davis, who joined Msgr. Chiodo for a weekly lunch and two tours of the Holy land.

"He had a good ecumenical heart," said Rev. Davis.

From team ministry in the southern part of the Diocese, Msgr. Chiodo went to the Basilica of St. John Parish in Des Moines, where he served for 15 years. Through his effort, the church joined the National Historic Registry (1987) and was elevated to the rank of a minor basilica in



Monsignor Frank Chiodo

1989.

He served four years at St. Thomas More Parish in Omaha and then returned to Des Moines, serving two years at Holy Trinity Parish before going to his home parish of St. Anthony.

While at St. Anthony Parish, the church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2021.

Msgr. Chiodo was a front-runner in seeing technology as a means of evangelization. He used this interest at both the Basilica of St. John and St. Anthony Church by installing video equipment.

At St. Anthony, Msgr. Chiodo had Father Guthrie Dolan, who also served at the parish, upgrade video equipment in October of 2019. Five months later, the pandemic prompted the closing of indoor public gatherings. During the pandemic, St. Anthony Parish could offer daily Masses, rosary prayer, and more.

"He would attribute that (upgrade in technology) to the work of the Holy Spirit. We had no idea it would be that necessary for us to update everything at that moment," said Father Dolan.

Msgr. Chiodo was gifted with languages – fluent in Spanish and Italian – and with the way in which he preached.

When he was a seminarian, Msgr. Chiodo had a part-time job working for the Iowa Department of Revenue. One of the agents there was a part-time Baptist preacher, who brought Msgr. Chiodo along when he would do summertime revivals, said his friend, John Gaffney.

"Monsignor was captivated by the way in which he rolled together fire and brimstone and stories that helped people connect with the gospel much quicker," said Gaffney.

Msgr. Chiodo liked to watch the preaching styles of Bishop Fulton Sheen and the Rev. Billy Graham, said Father Dolan.

"Msgr. Chiodo's homilies were among the most compelling I've heard during Mass, serving as a source of inspiration and encouraging me to actively embrace and live out my faith," said Ryan Johnson, of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines.

Msgr. Chiodo had a heart for the poor.

One extremely cold winter, Des Moines faith leaders including Msgr. Chiodo were concerned about the homeless dying. He worked with others to offer shelter in their warm parish halls. This was the birth of what became Churches United, which evolved into Central Iowa Shelter Services.

The pastor connected with people.

"When I was out of college and was going through a faith crisis, he happened to be at St. John's in Des Moines. He was a sight for sore eyes and a great relief in walking me through it all," said Father Chris Fontanini.

Bob Hallgren, of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale, said Msgr. Chiodo was there when he needed him.

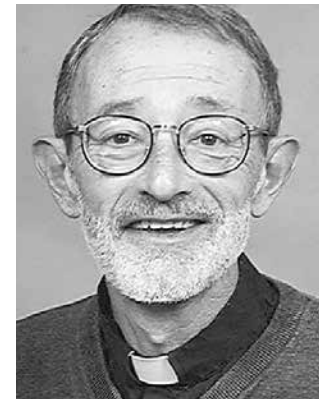
In a letter of gratitude to Msgr. Chiodo, Hallgren wrote: "I want you to know that I have received so much through you and that you have inspired my faith, bolstered my faith for more than 25 years now."

Perhaps his greatest witness to the faith was the way in which Msgr. Chiodo accepted, that God was in charge during his illness, said Father Sodoro.

Father Fontanini said: "He will be sorely missed by all of us, yet we look forward to one day being reunited with him."

## Bookworm, scholar, pastor, & educator dies

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer



Father James Laurenzo

A great preacher who was an expert on the Old Testament, and a compassionate man of God served the people of the Diocese of Des Moines for 40 years before retiring.

Father James Laurenzo, died Dec. 5 at age 82. His Mass of Christian Burial will be Saturday, Dec. 16 at Holy Trinity Church in Des Moines with a visitation at 9 a.m. and the funeral at 10 a.m.

He lived in a small Des Moines house filled to the brim with books – more than 3,000 – that fed his insatiable desire to learn. Nestled there with a German shepherd (he'd had five during his life), he studied the Old Testament, the Jewish faith, and poetry.

"He was a very complex man with simple means," said close friend Margaret Cavanaugh.

Born in 1941 and raised in Perry, Father Laurenzo was one of four brothers. He was educated at St. Joseph College in Collegeville, Indiana, and Immaculate Conception in Conception, Missouri. He also attended Mt. St. Bernard and Aquinas School of Theology, both in Dubuque.

He was ordained a priest in 1969 by Bishop Maurice Dingman.

Father Laurenzo was a parish priest, serving at St. Pius X in Urbandale, along with St. Ambrose Cathedral, St. Peter, Holy Trinity, and St. Catherine of Siena Parishes in Des Moines, and St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Carlisle. He oversaw the renovations at Holy Trinity and St. Ambrose Cathedral.

He was also a chaplain, serving at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center from 1980 to 1985.

Father Laurenzo took a year sabbatical to earn a master's degree at Notre Dame University, studying the Old Testament and learning Hebrew.

Father Laurenzo led formation efforts in the Des Moines metro area through the St. Joseph Educational Center in West Des Moines. He led adult education from 1994 to 1997, then served as director from 1997-2001. He also taught theology for a number of years at Drake University.

Father Laurenzo will be remembered for his preaching.

"I think he was the best preacher in the Diocese," said Father Tim Fitzgerald. "He was very concise and would reach very deeply for his words."

"I think he was an uncommonly good preacher,"

said Kyle Lechtenberg, who was hired by Father Laurenzo for music ministry at St. Catherine. "He'd relate to people's lives, particularly with a justice-focused message."

"His homilies were like poetry in that, in poetry, your sentences are very condensed," said Cavanaugh. "They were so beautiful."

He'll be remembered as a family priest.

"Father was a kind man. When I was little, he was a friend of our family," said Gigi Wilwerding, of Holy Trinity Parish. "We would celebrate Christmas with extended family at a home Mass with him as the celebrant. He would bring special children's readings for my brother and I to be readers. We felt so cool and special."

Father Laurenzo's friend, Father Anthony Aiello, and he went back 60 years.

"We were classmates in the seminary, were ordained the same day, and retired the same day," said Father Aiello. He will remember his friend as being creative and inquisitive.

Indeed, while pastor at St. Catherine, Father Laurenzo led 10 groups of Drake University college students on trips to El Salvador. The parish supported the construction of a church and the building of a school, and furnished it with computers, desks and teachers, said Cavanaugh.

Father Laurenzo also traveled to Italy, to the Holy Land, to the Galapagos Islands, and to Cuba. But two trips that stood out for him were his visit to Africa and Ethiopia during a famine.

In his retirement, Father Laurenzo continued his voracious reading and ministry in a quiet way. Cavanaugh's husband, Jack, would drive him on regular visits to see someone in prison.

"He'll be missed," said Lechtenberg. "He was a priest who studied the documents of Vatican II, Scripture and Tradition. He remained faithful and committed to his understanding and his education and formation in what a Vatican II renewal would look like. He was very proud of his work with that."

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## Around the Diocese

# Parish continues longstanding relationship with community in Africa

### Dec. 17 Sunday

#### St. John's Bible

DES MOINES – All seven volumes of the Heritage Edition of The St. John's Bible, the first hand-written and illuminated bible sponsored by the Benedictine community in more than 500 years, will be on display at the Catholic Pastoral Center 1-3 p.m. Michael Rubbelke, Ph.D., of St. John's School of Theology, will speak on art and spirituality at 1:30 p.m. The display will be available again at 4:30 p.m.

#### Umeri Concert

DES MOINES - The Drake University alumni choir, Umeri, is holding its holiday concert called Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas from 3-4:30 p.m. at St. Ambrose Cathedral. Dec. 17 at St. Ambrose Cathedral.

### Jan. 7

#### Prayer Ministry

WAUKEE – St. Boniface Church will host a series of four gatherings for those who want to learn more about how to pray for and with others. Register by Jan. 3 at [stbonifacechurch.org/prayer-ministry](http://stbonifacechurch.org/prayer-ministry) or by calling Fay Akers at 515-987-4597.

### Jan. 13 Saturday

#### Called & Gifted

WAUKEE – Discover the gifts God gave you and your unique purpose in life through a Called & Gifted discernment process. For five Saturdays, meet from 9-11 a.m. at St. Boniface Church to discover your spiritual gifts. Register at [stbonifacechurch.org/called-gifted](http://stbonifacechurch.org/called-gifted).

### Jan. 18

#### Forge

WEST DES MOINES – Pete Burak, vice president of Renewal Ministries, will be at Ironside Axe

Club to speak on masculine faith and the Holy Spirit. Cost is \$25/person paid at the door. Event begins at 7 p.m. with Burak speaking at 8 p.m. for more information, go to [myforge.org/event/masculine-faith-and-the-holy-spirit/](http://myforge.org/event/masculine-faith-and-the-holy-spirit/)

### Jan. 25 Thursday

#### Nourish for Caregivers

URBANDALE -- The next monthly Nourish for Caregivers support group in the Des Moines metro area is Jan. 25 from 6-7:30 p.m. at St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale, Archangels meeting room. Please share attached flyer with parishioners. Contacts are Deacon Dan Maxey or Deacon Jim Houston

#### Other

#### Priority registration for Catholic schools

Priority registration for parishioners has begun at Catholic schools in our Diocese. Don't miss the opportunity to experience and education filled with faith, excellence, community and values. With Education Savings Accounts and tuition assistance, an education at our Catholic schools is now more accessible than ever. Go to [dmdiocese.org/schools](http://dmdiocese.org/schools) to learn more.

#### Catholic Charities Needs

If you or your organization are looking for a way to help others in the community, Catholic Charities has put together a list with many ways you can make a difference this fall and winter. From small donations to full-time volunteers, there is something for everyone. Visit our website at [CatholicCharitiesDM.org](http://CatholicCharitiesDM.org) or information on how you can make an impact and the current needs of our programs.



The Des Moines Togo Committee and Father Yves with the Nyassivé Committee hold a banner showing the new name of their joint venture, Catholic Action for the Development of Demunited (a French word for very poor) Children. The Des Moines delegation includes: Lee Boisen, Kay Boisen, Liz Youngworth, Jack Youngworth, Amaya Romanski, Louann Housner, and Susan Malloy.

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish in Des Moines has a longstanding relationship with the parishioners of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in the village of Nyassivé, Togo, West Africa.

The relationship started almost 20 years ago when a young woman from Des Moines who was a member of St. Theresa, Nina Weisenhorn, was assigned to Nyassivé as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Inspired by that initial connection, the parishioners of St. Theresa in Des Moines have supported the children of Nyassivé in their pursuit of education, starting with 20 of the most disadvantaged children, primarily orphans.

Today, the Iowa parish provides funding for four teachers and scholarships for more than 250 students in Nyassivé and 10 surrounding villages.

St. Theresa Des Moines parishioners began traveling to Nyassivé in 2011 and members of the Togo Committee have made four trips since then.

This past August, seven

members from the Togo Committee traveled once again to Nyassivé. The 2023 travelers included Lee Boisen, Kay Boisen, Elizabeth Youngworth, Jack Youngworth, Susan Malloy and two committee members who live outside of Des Moines, Louann Hausner and Amaya Romanski.

During the visit, parishioners heard of a few needs of their sister parish in Togo.

Father Yves, the priest assigned to Nyassivé and 11 neighboring villages, discussed the education of the village children as well as the condition of the church. He lives in the priest's house in Gape Center, approximately seven kilometers from Nyassivé. His wish is to build a priest house in Nyassivé so that the village could have a full-time priest assigned to the church.

The village chief is also interested in building a priest's house. Although the chief is not Catholic, he says we worship the same God and building up the Catholic Church benefits the whole community.

Another issue is childhood hunger. Many of the students are too hungry, too tired, or too sick to return to the school's afternoon sessions. Directed by UNESCO, the Togolese government instituted a school feeding program through a grassroots support agency and the World Bank.

During the August trip, the group visited a neighboring school that has been using this government feeding program for five years. The program volunteers and teachers from the school all indicated that the program has been successful, resulting in significantly higher rates of attendance and students passing. The committee is continuing to explore options here and working with the support agency and the Nyassivé school.

The people of Nyassivé have never forgotten the courageous Peace Corps volunteer who started this program years ago, when Wisenhorn championed projects to support girls' education. To this day, 18 years after she left Togo, her name still resonates with the people of this small, rural village.

Through education and Christian teaching, these most vulnerable children can rise out of poverty and be in a better place to contribute to their communities.

For more information regarding this mission in Togo, please contact Kay Boisen at [okay1951@aol.com](mailto:okay1951@aol.com) or

visit [sainttheresaiaowa.org/togo-sister-parish/](http://sainttheresaiaowa.org/togo-sister-parish/). Contributions are welcomed year-round. The St. Theresa website includes a link for Togo donations on the Giving tab, Fund drop-down box, Togo.



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

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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).



# Iowa Catholic Radio launches capital campaign

Iowa Catholic Radio is launching a \$5 million capital campaign to pave the way toward a more robust FM presence that brings Catholic programming to more communities in Iowa.

“Growing the Faith” is a major step toward accomplishing the network’s goal of bringing Catholic radio to all of Iowa.

Joe Teeling, ICR’s chief mission officer, recognizes what’s at stake, pointing to a recent Pew Research survey suggesting the number of U.S. adults who identify as Christian (over 90% in 1970) has fallen to 65%.

“Our aim is to expand our outreach to cover all of Iowa, ensuring that our message continues to counter this trend,” said Teeling.

ICR began 17 years ago with just one signal, AM 1150 KWKY. Over the years, the AM station has faced its share of challenges, not the least of which is the increasing static interference generated on the AM band by a growing number of electronic devices, a problem which has contributed to the general decline in AM radio listenership across the country.

“We see automakers beginning to question the value of putting AM in their vehicles. Considering this, as well as long-term listener trends, we are focusing expansion particularly on the FM dial, as the technology in FM radio provides a much clearer

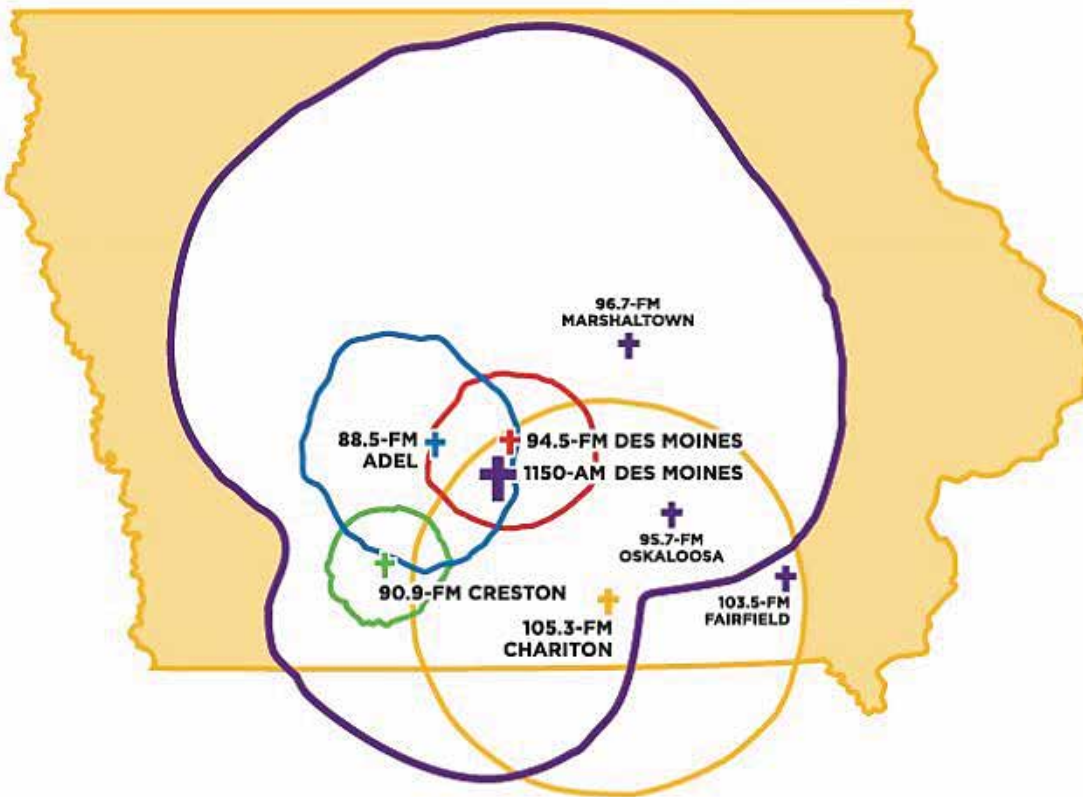
sound,” said Matt Willkom, director of programming and network development.

This past spring, the network stepped out in faith to make a bold move, acquiring a full power FM signal which will eventually serve the entire Des Moines metro area. Additionally, ICR in September added 105.3 KIHC-FM, a 34,000-watt powerhouse station based in Chariton. The acquisition expands the network’s reach into the Davenport diocese and Jefferson City diocese, reaching Albia, Bloomfield, Carlisle, Centerville, Indianola, Knoxville, Leon, Osceola, Ottumwa, Pella, and Unionville, Missouri.

ICR also recently upgraded its FM in Adel (88.5 KIHS) from a 560-watt station to 12.5-kilowatts. Last month, the Federal Communications Commission gave the network permission to activate a new, highly directional antenna, increasing coverage to areas northwest, west and southwest of Des Moines to more effectively reach communities including Guthrie Center, Panorama, Perry, Stuart, and Winterset. Some areas east of Adel will also hear an improved signal.

Having obtained various construction permits from the FCC, the network also plans to build new FM stations in other parts of the state, along with expanding its current footprint in the Creston area.

In a letter of support, Bish-



This map shows Iowa Catholic Radio Network’s growth. The large purple area represents the daytime reach of AM 1150 KWKY, which must power down significantly at night to comply with FCC regulations. This is one of the reasons why the network is expanding its FM reach.

op William Joensen said the Iowa Catholic Radio Network uses a “medium that powerfully serves the evangelical mission of the Church, helping people encounter Christ’s invitation to friendship and leading them to communion in his name.”

The capital campaign will help the network mobilize finan-

cial support to more effectively share the Gospel within Iowa, he said.

The Iowa Catholic Radio Network is comprised of AM 1150 KWKY; 94.5 FM K233BT (Des Moines); 88.5 KIHS-FM (Adel); 105.3 KIHC-FM (Chariton); 90.9 KLOX-FM (Creston), along with low power FM affli-

ates 103.5 KHFR-LP (Fairfield); 96.7 KCRM-LP (Marshalltown); and 95.7 KMFH-LP (Oskaloosa). More information about the “Growing the Faith” Campaign can be found at IowaCatholicRadio.com.



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# Eucharistic inspiration sparks painting

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Gene McKelvey felt a nudge.

The St. Mary of Nazareth parishioner was sitting in Mass when he felt called to create a painting.

"It caught me off guard," he said. "I may have shrugged it off."

A longtime artist, he developed his gift into a career for a while. Life took him in another direction and he'd been out of painting for about 30 years when he felt that nudge at church.

"My response was: 'Ok, God, how are we going to do this?'"

The resulting creation now hangs in a hallway outside St. Mary of Nazareth Church and has its own Facebook page as a way of teaching people about the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. The timing couldn't be better given the nation is in the midst of a Eucharistic Revival effort focusing this year on parish projects.

After nine months and about 350 hours, McKelvey produced "Source and Summit," a series of 24 panels that, when displayed together, show a perspective of what happens at Mass. A priest's hands are outstretched over a cup of bread. The crucified Christ

rises above the bread and, on his chest, is a heart.

"There were a number of incidents during the process that confirmed in my mind that this is something that God wanted me to do," he said.

McKelvey calls "Source and Summit" God's painting.

Every dab of paint represents someone who may see the painting directly or indirectly, he said.

"I was praying for them as I was painting."

The blue and green colors in the panels are inspired by the stained glass window behind the altar at St. Mary of Nazareth Church.

The crucifix in the painting was inspired by an image he'd seen. But in that image, Jesus' eyes were closed. McKelvey wanted Jesus' eyes to be open so Christ in the painting is looking at those who pause to appreciate the message.

"The message I got was that Jesus wanted to have a conversation with everybody who saw the painting," McKelvey said.

Flames in the foreground represent souls going to receive communion.

"As they get closer to Christ, they burn brighter. If you look at the edges of the painting, some flames turn away, some don't burn as bright," he said. "Some



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Artist Gene McKelvey says his painting "Source and Summit" is inspired by God.

flames are different colors, some are blue, some yellow and red. They represent the diversity of believers."

He thought the painting was done and had arranged to show it at an exhibit with a friend who creates free-form water color paintings.

"The night before the show at that gallery, I woke up in the

middle of the night and just had this feeling I couldn't shake that something was missing," he said. He added small flames coming from the Blessed Mother's robe; the flames represent the children who have died either through abortion or were stillborn.

It's been a few years since the painting was completed and it's now on display for parishioners and visitors to ponder.

"I like to think the timing was God's timing," McKelvey said. How appropriate that the

depiction of Mass be on display as the nationwide Eucharistic Revival renews emphasis on God's love for his people through Jesus' death and resurrection.

"There's a lot of times when we think we know how things should work out but it may not be God's timing," McKelvey said.

His image has its own Facebook page at Facebook.com/sourceandsummit.art as a means of teaching the truth about the Eucharist.



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# Longing for Jesus

## Marriage & Family Life

As Advent began this year, I was struck by the collect, also called the “opening prayer,” from the First Sunday of Advent.

The prayer asked the Father for the grace to “run forth to meet your Christ.”

This longing to meet Christ, and an exhortation to be watchful as we await his coming, was a theme throughout the prayers of the Mass, and in fact is a theme of Advent.

Now, I am as excited about Christmas as the next guy, but I am mostly excited about seeing my kids open presents, good food, and family time.

While I do truly love this liturgical

much more mundane—like a desire for my children to be successful, or for sibling squabbles to be resolved peacefully, or for financial security. Amid all these desires, I am forced to ask myself how deeply I desire Jesus’ Incarnation in my life.

These mundane desires are not bad, and in fact Pope Benedict XVI spoke of them in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, where he described them as the “greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day” (SS 31).

However, he goes on to remind us that these hopes are never enough without “the great hope, which must surpass everything” (SS 31). In fact, the daily highs and

lows are meant to orient our hearts to Jesus, who answers the deepest desires of our hearts, and who transforms all the ordinary circumstances of life into a graced encounter with his own life!

As we wrap up Advent and head into the Christmas season, my prayer for myself and us all is that our hearts may truly long for Jesus. When he comes, may we all run forth to meet him!

*Adam Storey is vice chancellor of the Diocese and mission lead in the Evangelization & Mission team. He can be reached at 515-237-5056 or [astorey@dmdiocese.org](mailto:astorey@dmdiocese.org).*



By Adam Storey

season, I do not know how ready I am to run forth to meet Jesus.

This made me think a bit more about my desires, because while I can often feel longing in marriage and family life, I do not know if I had often connected it to a desire for Christ. Most often, my desires are

## What makes a good homily?



### I've Been Wondering...

Father John Ludwig

*Q. What should a homily include? Should it just be the priest's or deacon's ideas, or does there have to be something else included?*

**A.** There are all kinds of homilies. Some of them, probably most, deal with the themes that are contained in the Scripture readings for a particular day. At Christmas, for example, the birth of Jesus is most probably the topic that the priest or deacon will zero in on.

There can be other matters in a homily. One possibility would be a particular need of the parish or diocese, or a particular need of a visiting missionary.

There is no one pattern for homilies. Pope Francis has suggested that sometimes homilies are too long. He proposes a homily that lasts between eight and ten minutes. Clearly, some homilists are easier to listen to than others. That's to be expected. On a given Sunday, the congregation can be made up of all age groups. It's hard to ap-

peal to little kids, teenagers, young adults, and the elderly all at the same time. Some homilists work very hard on the words they share with the faithful.

A good exercise for the ordinary parishioner might be to read the Scripture readings before Mass begins and consider what approach he or she might take for a homily. It's not as easy as it may seem at first. It's good to pray for the homilist who is trying to do his best to share the Good News.

*Q. Pope Benedict XVI made the decision to resign the papacy. It had been centuries since a pope had resigned. Could Pope Francis decide to resign at some time?*

**A.** As you say, it had been several centuries since the last pope had resigned.

But, yes, it's possible.

Years and years ago, it was uncommon for priests and bishops to resign unless there was a health issue.

Today, however, bishops are required to send a letter of resignation to the pope at age 75. The pope decides whether or not to accept the resignation or to delay.

Regarding the retirement of priests, different dioceses have varying policies. But certainly, it's more common today than it used to be. We'll have to wait and see what Pope Francis will do.

*Father John Ludwig is a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. Send him your questions at [communications@dmdiocese.org](mailto:communications@dmdiocese.org).*

## Richard “Rick” Gaillardetz - RIP

No community should botch its deaths. Mircea Eliade said that. What underlies his wisdom here is the truth that what we cease to celebrate we will soon cease to cherish.

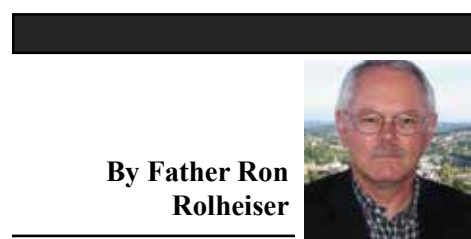
With that in mind, I would like to highlight what we, both the religious and secular community, need to celebrate and cherish as we mourn the recent death of Richard Gaillardetz.

Richard, known as “Rick”, was a husband, a father, a friend to many, and (by most every assessment) the best ecclesiology in the English-speaking world. He taught at Boston College, but lectured widely elsewhere, both as an academic lecturer and as a popular speaker. Beyond his stature as an academic, he had a humanity, a robust sanity, a keen intellect, a natural warmth, a friendliness, and a sense of humor that made him both pleasant and stabilizing to be around. He brought calm and sanity into a room.

What's to be said in terms of highlighting his contribution? What should we not botch in processing his death? What must we celebrate so as to continue to cherish?

Many things might be highlighted, all of them positive, but I would like to focus on four extraordinary gifts he brought to us.

First, he was a theologian who worked actively at bridging the gap between the academy and the pew. Rick was a highly respected academic. No one questioned his scholarship. Yet, he was highly sought after as a popular lecturer in spirituality and never compromised his scholarship for the sake of popularity. That combination of being understood and respected both in the academy and the pew is a rare thing (it's hard to be simple without being simplistic) and a huge risk (being a popular speaker generally makes you suspect among your



By Father Ron Rolheiser

academic colleagues). Rick took that risk because he wanted his scholarship to serve the whole community and not just those fortunate enough to be in graduate classrooms.

Second, he was an ecclesiology who used his scholarship to unite rather than divide. Ecclesiology is about church, and it is church denominationalism that still divides us as Christians. The divisions among us are largely ecclesial. In most other things, we are together. We share Jesus; we share a common scripture; we share (in different modalities) the Eucharist; we share a common struggle in trying to be faithful to Jesus' teachings; and we share many common human, moral, and social struggles. Spirituality unites us, but ecclesiology still divides. Rick's work in ecclesiology is a breath of fresh air in terms of helping us move beyond centuries of division. He loved his own denomination, Roman Catholicism, even as he was fully appreciative of other denominations. His secret? He didn't just do a theology of the church; he also did a spirituality of the church.

Next, he was a man who loved the church, even as, inside that love, he could be healthily critical of the church when it was merited. I attended his final public lecture in September of last year, and he began that lecture with these words: I was a Catholic by birth; then by choice, and now by love. He went on to share how the Catholic Church was the greatest love in his life and how, too, it has brought him continual disillusionment and pain. He challenged

us to love the church and to be critical of it, both at the same time. That manifests a big heart and a big mind. Some can love the church and never see its faults; others can see its faults but never love the church. Rick could do both.

Finally, he was a man who faced his death with faith, courage, and dignity that can serve as a paradigm for the rest of us who, all, someday will have to face what he faced. About eighteen months ago, Rick was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer. He knew that, barring a miracle, he probably had less than two years to live. Whatever his own internal anguish and struggle to come to peace with that, everything he said, did, and taught during the eighteen months following that diagnosis manifested faith, trust, courage, and a concern for others. He kept a journal of his thoughts during this period and those journals are soon to be published and will constitute Rick's last great gift to the church and to the world.

I'd like to end this tribute with a

little anecdote which Rick himself, I'm sure, would appreciate as adding a bit of color to a tribute which otherwise would be too somber. Some years ago, I went to hear Rick give a public lecture at one of the local universities here in the city. He was being introduced by a well-known theologian, Marianist Bernard J. Lee. After listing off for us, the audience, Rick's academic achievements, Lee turned to him and asked: “Richard, how the hell do you get the pronunciation ‘Gay-lar-des’ out of this spelling?”

Whatever the spelling and whatever the pronunciation, Richard Gaillardetz was a theological treasure whom we lost much too early.

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

### Leap year celebrations

Letter to the Editor:

Growing up, I had a neighbor who liked to joke about how she was older than her grandmother. Some people celebrate the fact that they were born during a leap year while others find it a real hassle. Updating their personal files can cause some problems. How we approach any day or year is a matter of our attitude. Our attitudes and our feelings result in our behaviors.

This is also true regarding how we approach the whole topic of forgiveness. Forgiveness is personal empowerment. If we want to be in control of our own lives, we must learn how to let go and forgive.

For a New Year's resolution, choose to try letting go of some bitter and resentful feelings. Start the year with an empty jar. Each week, add a note with a good thing that happened. Then next New Year's Eve you can empty the jar and read about the amazing year you've had.

Sandy Hoenig  
St. Joseph Parish, Winterset





Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Andy Conner shows where his garden grows. He keeps his generosity simple: “We grow things in the ground, and we give them away. Real simple.”

Continued from page 1

hood friend, Al Sieren.

Conner’s food has been distributed to people like a single mom with two kids, a man working two jobs and trying to make ends meet, and a homeless person trying to get out of poverty, said Steve Havemann, executive director of the St. Vincent de Paul in Des Moines, which operates two food pantries.

Conner’s generosity is inspiring, Havemann said.

“One of the beautiful things about Iowa is when someone like Andy steps up, other people follow,” he said. Conner and others at St. Patrick at Irish Settlement have provided food for some of the nearly 22,000 people who came to the pantries seeking a meal this year.

Conner keeps rooted in his faith as he gardens. He built a

wooden cross that stands about 8 feet tall by what he calls his “labor of love garden.”

“He’s so generous with his resources,” Sieren said. “He feels blessed that God has given him a good life and he just wants to help other people. He’s really inspired me.”

Conner has just one condition for the pantries that get his bounty: The food must be given away. No charge.

“I’ll give it to a millionaire or a poor man, but it won’t be sold,” he said. “That’s not what the good Lord wants me to do. It never gets sold.”

Conner’s brother, Tom, helps distribute his sibling’s bounty to the Catholic Charities Food Pantry in Des Moines.

“The people who ultimately receive it are appreciative,” said Tom Leto, program manager for

Catholic Charities Food Pantry. “We have a lot of grateful guests. They’re excited to see freshly grown produce.”

He invites anyone who might want to help to come take a tour and volunteer for an hour or two to see the need.

“We appreciate what the Conners do for us and we appreciate all the local gardeners and farmers,” Leto said.

“I think sometimes people will come, see the volume of need, see the appreciation everybody has, and I think that inspires them. They think ‘I’m going to get more and bring it back to them,’” he said.

Sieren takes Conner’s produce to the St. Vincent de Paul pantries. A friend who is a Pentecostal minister in Perry offers his food door-to-door to the needy, and another takes some to a pan-

try in Osceola.

In years past, Conner would fill up his pickup with watermelon and other produce and park across the street from MercyOne hospital in Des Moines and give the food out for free. When someone would ask how much they could take, Conner said he’d invite them to take as much or as little as they needed.

Just a few weeks ago, Conner continued a tradition of taking 50-75 pumpkins to House of Mercy in Des Moines for the children.

“This year, the kids all drew and colored little pictures for us, thanking us,” Conner said. “I damn near cried on the way home. A little pumpkin no bigger than a softball made those children so happy. It makes you know we can all do something.”

As he’s grown into middle age and coped with periodic

health issues, Conner has scaled back his farm to about 16 acres. His garden is smaller, too. He still works the land, and he still prefers to stay out of the limelight.

“I think Andy has a very deep faith. He doesn’t draw attention to himself,” said his pastor, Father Tom Dooley. “He just quietly lives the Gospel by sharing the goodness of the land with folks who go to bed hungry or need a little assistance.”

Conner refers to the story of Jesus multiplying the fish and the loaves to feed thousands as a call to action for himself and others. As humble as Conner is, it’s a simple truth that he has likely fed tens of thousands of people over the decades.

“All I try to do is make Jesus smile,” Conner said. “It warms my heart a million degrees if I think I made him smile today.”

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the enemies of your salvation.*

*Into your sacred hands, living and dying,  
Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.*

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## Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrated



Photo by Robert Nandell

Parishes across the Diocese had events leading up to the Dec. 12 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This display was set up at Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines.

# Concert to benefit Ghanian seminarians

St. Francis of Assisi Parish is hosting a concert of American Spiritual music featuring opera singer Patricia Bach on Jan. 21 to raise funds for seminarians in the Diocese of Techiman in Ghana.

The Des Moines Diocese is blessed with two priests from the Techiman Diocese serving in central Iowa: Father John Brobbey and Father George Nyarko.

Parishioners at St. Francis want to send a blessing back in the form of financial support for three seminarians, or about \$4,000, said organizer and pianist for the concert, Janet Bradford.

The Diocese of Techiman was created in 2007 by Pope Benedict XVI. Now the second largest diocese in Ghana, it has 1.2 million people living within it, with a Catholic population of 193,747. It has 30 parishes, each serving about 13 stations or communities.

The Techiman Diocese has about 80 seminarians studying



Patricia Bach



Janet Bradford

at five seminaries with one in Rome. Blessed with seminarians, the young Diocese is challenged with the cost of seminarian formation.

Some of the seminarians will serve their home Diocese while others may go to other dioceses like Fathers Brobbey and Nyarko.

“Any kind of help which you can individually and collectively give our bishop/Diocese

will be greatly appreciated,” said Father Brobbey in a flyer explaining the effort.

The one-hour concert from 4-5 p.m. features Bach, a dramatic soprano who has performed all over the world and in many languages including Russian, Hungarian, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

She will sing 18 American Spirituals, each preceded by a Scripture reading on which the Spiritual is based.

## La Promesa

Continued from page 2

posición fetal. Hay personas en medio de nosotros cuya paciencia y sufrimiento nos ayudan a poner en perspectiva nuestros propios retos de vida, haciendo más amplio nuestro punto de vista y ayudándonos a ver lo tonto que hemos sido al pensar que Dios nos ha dejado a nuestra suerte.

Sigamos los movimientos de los conductores de santidad y devoción, los pastores y aquellos que han ido de las periferias al corazón de los misterios de Dios, hombres y mujeres cuya humanidad es plena y son conocidos por su amistad con Dios.

Nosotros nos atrevemos a decir, “Cumple la promesa,” tanto como petición al Dios que es plenamente fiel a su Verbo, Y como una antífona de Adviento que resuena dentro de nuestros propios corazones. Somos elevados para vivir como el tipo de personas que debemos ser, quienes desea-

mos ser. Por la gracia de Dios, se vuelve a encender en nosotros nuestro deseo de dejar que Dios haga su obra dentro nuestros una vez congelados corazones, cuyo mensaje está inscrito por el Espíritu en fuego y fe. De acuerdo con el llamado de Dios, al igual que María y José, en Navidad viajamos a la ciudad (o, mejor aún, a la iglesia) que creíamos haber dejado para siempre, solo para encontrarnos en casa de nueva cuenta: en paz y en la presencia del Niño que nos ha nacido a todos.



Photo by Donna Bishop

Bishop William Joensen blessed a new addition at St. Joseph Catholic School in Des Moines on Dec. 3.

### Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas

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

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**Michael Bormann**  
 General Agent  
 563-689-6801  
[michael.bormann@kofc.org](mailto:michael.bormann@kofc.org)  
 Eastern Iowa



**Neil Pfeifer**  
 General Agent  
 402-379-0180  
[neil.pfeifer@kofc.org](mailto:neil.pfeifer@kofc.org)  
 Western Iowa



**Walker Bormann**  
 Assistant General Agent  
 563-219-5800  
[walker.bormann@kofc.org](mailto:walker.bormann@kofc.org)  
 Eastern Iowa



**Jeremy Borchers**  
 Assistant General Agent  
 402-750-4775  
[jeremy.borchers@kofc.org](mailto:jeremy.borchers@kofc.org)  
 Western Iowa



**Donnie Kenkel**  
 Field Agent  
 712-579-9066  
[donald.kenkel@kofc.org](mailto:donald.kenkel@kofc.org)  
 Council Bluffs, Atlantic, Red Oak, Glenwood, Avoca/Walnut, Shenandoah, Portsmouth



**Rob Ryan**  
 Field Agent  
 515-490-8753  
[robert.ryan@kofc.org](mailto:robert.ryan@kofc.org)  
 West Des Moines, St. Francis, Sacred Heart



**Pete Seuntjens**  
 Field Agent  
 712-880-0044  
[peter.seuntjens@kofc.org](mailto:peter.seuntjens@kofc.org)  
 Harlan, Earling, Audubon, Dunlap, Logan



**Gregory Waddle**  
 Field Agent  
 515-218-3550  
[gregory.waddle@kofc.org](mailto:gregory.waddle@kofc.org)  
 St. Augustin, St. Anthony's, Christ the King



**Justin Wadle**  
 Field Agent  
 515-975-2688  
[justin.wadle@kofc.org](mailto:justin.wadle@kofc.org)  
 Perry, Ankeny, Des Moines/All Saint's



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