

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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A community of communities

Faith, family, and fun draw diverse ethnic groups together to cultivate connections with Christ and one another



More than 400 people, representing various regions from around the world, gathered at a Hmong-Lao community farm outside of Des Moines on Sept. 15 for the second annual St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish picnic.

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

A 160-acre plot of land the late Bishop Maurice Dingman purchased in 1983 for the refugee Hmong-Lao community to farm has a new purpose for drawing a diverse community together for

faith and fun.

During most of the summer, the Hmong-Lao community grows corn, soybeans, and vegetables native to their homeland and sells them at the Des Moines downtown Farmers Market.

But for one day last year, the work paused as St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish celebrated the 40th

anniversary of the founding of the Hmong-Lao farm and community center in Prairie City. Three hundred people came and enjoyed it so much, they wanted to do it again.

A second parish picnic was held there last month, drawing 400 people from multiple ethnic groups in the parish.

Now, the parish wants to make the gathering an annual event and they're already planning on improvements for next year.

The cathedral parish has long been a hub for refugees trying to make their way in a new land. Seventy percent of the parish is

Ready, set, go!

Parishes begin using toolkits to advance their mission

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Parishes are ready to employ new resources to help their communities become more proactive in making Jesus known and loved.

This past Pentecost, Bishop William Joensen unveiled the new diocesan mission and vision: We sow God's Spirit by cultivating connections in Christ through encounter, friendship, and communion.

Together, parishes cultivate connections in Christ by strengthening their outreach through six pastoral priority areas:

- Creating a culture of welcome and care
- Inviting people to an encounter with Jesus
- Accompanying youth in discipleship
- Engaging young adults in the faith
- Preparing disciples for the domestic church (family)
- Communicating the Gospel boldly and clearly

Each of these priorities focuses upon different spiritual and human opportunities to grow in relationship to one another and to Christ.

To help parishes in these areas, a cross-section of parishioners collaborated to create a toolkit of best ideas and practices for each priority.

Over the summer, pastors and their parish leaders selected at least one of the six pastoral priorities based on the needs of their parish and which toolkit might be a good resource to help their faith community advance their work in that area.

In the midst of the planning, the diocesan faith family focused on Eucharistic revival with one leg of the national Eucharistic pilgrimage swinging through the west and southwest corner of Iowa and the Eucharistic Congress that drew hundreds from the Des Moines Diocese.

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Bishop William Joensen

Those who've participated in a parish Confirmation Mass since this past Easter know that in my homily I challenge the newly-confirmed to "be real"—to live in a way that the outer sealing with Sacred Chrism is one with their inner identity, hopes, passions, and prayer. Following one such recent Mass, I left church alongside a father whose three sons were walking ahead of us; he turned to me and said, "I really hope and pray that one of my sons becomes a priest." I replied, "Thank you; in some ways, they've already cleared the biggest hurdle—the support or lack thereof of parents—or worse, outright discouragement—should their son consider a priestly vocation." The same might be said of daughters [and sons] considering a vocation to religious life.

The late aerospace scientist, priest, theologian, and New Yorker contributor, Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete, in his essay collection, *The Relevance of the Stars: Christ, Culture, and Destiny*, comments: "Salvation is fundamentally the heart's recognition of the real; therefore, it's part of the drama of creation, independently of how it is shaped by the power of sin."

He continues, "But it is not enough to end where I've just ended: Christ and the real. The question is, now what? Where is this Christ? Where does this happen? If there is any connection between Christ and the real. . .

Not fantasy, but really possible

then any increase in the one leads to the other. An experience of the presence of Christ will make you passionately fascinated by what is real—by the little flower, the cosmos. . . even accounting at Merrill Lynch. Conversely, if you know that, if you follow that passionate fascination, the path will lead you to Christ. Pursuing that path of interest will lead you to Christ" (Albacete 15).

While it may be hard for me to fathom how accounting can be a passionate affair (!?), I'm glad there are men and women for whom this is the case—and I don't think it's all about the money. When we follow our passions in the light of day, when

life. He not only wants to inspire our actions, he wants to act himself through us" (Bread That is Broken, 24, 36). The experience of being enlisted by Jesus to act in his name is worth more than tickets to Taylor Swift's or Coldplay's next world tour!

This year the Catholic Church's annual Vocation Awareness Week is November 3-9. We are aware that in our own day, in our own Diocese of Des Moines, God really calls women and men to give up houses and siblings, mothers and fathers and property for the sake of the Gospel. We are grateful for the sisters, priests, and deacons alive or deceased who have touched our lives in

ginning in 2026..

The mixed news: in our Diocese, there will be no priesthood ordinations next year, as there were no transitional deacons ordained this year. This situation reflects the fact that a few men discerned in the course of seminary formation that they were not called to be priests. We are grateful for their openness to the possibility of priesthood and know they will serve the Church in some way. We remain thankful for our present 11 seminarians; all are strong candidates for Holy Orders whom I would readily ordain.

It is encouraging that, as things presently stand, there are a dozen or so men of the appropriate age who are seriously considering priesthood; our vocations director, Father Ross Parker, and I did not think they were quite ready to enter seminary this Fall, but next year may well be the appointed time. Nonetheless, four to five years from now we will face another blip when we do not ordain priests or transitional deacons.

I have every confidence that thanks to initiatives of Father Parker and assistant vocation directors, Fathers Max Carson and Reed Flood, there are plenty of boys and young men who will eventually be ordained priests—but this fruit may be five to ten years away. Key events to "fan the flame" of possible priesthood are so-called Andrew Dinners at St. Albert and Dowling Catholic High Schools this month. Bravo to Father Aquinas Nichols at the Basilica of St. John who will host an Andrew Dinner on November 5, Election Night; we anticipate that more than 50 young men will "elect" to join area priests and myself to pray, dine together, and share from the heart what priestly life is like. It's not too late to sign up: please contact diocesan vocations coordinator Cathy Jordan to do so: cjordan@dmdiocese.org.

I am convinced that if our diocesan parishes wholeheartedly

discern and pursue pastoral initiatives corresponding with our strategic priorities toolkits (including "Preparing Disciples for the Domestic Church," since families are the seedbed for all vocations), among the evangelical fruit we will see in coming years is a rise in vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

But even before then, I charge all of us—especially parents—to pray with renewed intent that God's Spirit will call forth priests and religious from among our own diocesan parishes and communities. A rich cornucopia of possible prayers are available on the Vocations Awareness Week website: uscdb.org/prayers/prayers-vocations.

If you find yourself ambivalent about the prospect of a son or daughter pursuing this path, pray anyway, and let God turn your heart to believe what St. John XXIII said in 1959 before he called the Second Vatican Council: "So let Christian families consider it one of their more sublime privileges to give priests to the Church, and so let them offer their sons to the sacred ministry with joy and gratitude" (Sacredotii nostri primordia n. 113).

A mother in our Diocese who herself has a priest son shared with me the following prayer that extends back to 1881 to the little village of Lu in Italy. Mothers in particular prayed this simple prayer (it's far simpler than our present diocesan prayer for vocations!) at Mass on the first Sunday of each month:

"Dear God, please call one of my sons [or 'my son'] into the priesthood. I myself will strive to live a good Christian life and will educate my children to do good. Bestow upon me the grace to give you, O God, a holy priest."

Since parents began praying this prayer, more than 500 priestly and religious vocations have come forth from Lu. Impossible in our own Diocese? Hardly. For with God, all things are possible.

I charge all of us – especially parents – to pray with renewed intent that God's Spirit will call forth priests and religious from among our own diocesan parishes and communities.

they express what is truly human, good and virtuous, then somehow Christ is implicated. He does not impose himself on us or want to encroach on our prospect of happiness. For if we encounter the real Jesus—whether in our experience of the Eucharist at Mass or in adoration, in supporting a vulnerable person, in an unexpectedly soul-filling and funny friendship, in the love of parents and family, in the spectacle of the Northern Lights, in music that stirs our soul to joy, peace, and praise—he is at the heart of our happiness.

The question, "Then what?" isn't felt as gloomy or disturbing, but mysteriously inviting, exciting. Then life's drama really takes off. Jesus' remark, "All things are possible for God" (Mark 10:27) becomes our personal possibility, as we contemplate giving ourselves over to our Spirit-prompted passion. Following the Teacher and Savior is where we find life. For as Carmelite Father Wilfrid Stinissen, OCD, observes, Jesus' "love caused him to want to keep nothing for himself." "Christ is present in the Eucharist as the living Lord who wants to be our

some way and helped us to trust that God is for us, that love and mercy are real. And we look around and take stock of where we are as a family of faith, including where we may have become complacent when it comes to recognizing, affirming, and praying for the young people in whom we see the sparks of a priestly or religious vocation. That's what our Des Moines priests did when we gathered recently for our annual workshop as we reflected critically on what we have or have not done to promote vocations. I think the Spirit "jostled" us to be ever more intentional in engaging young people through a vocational lens.

The good news: More than 20 young women from our Diocese have entered various religious communities in the past ten years. In addition, there are presently 19 permanent deacon aspirants who, if they persist in formation, will be ordained to the diaconate in Summer 2028. And there have been so many men supported by their spouses who have expressed interest that we will be starting a second concurrent diaconate cohort next year with formation be-

Bishop William Joensen's column will be made available in Spanish at dmdiocese.org.

Are you a Licensed Mental Health Professional?

Join the Diocese of Des Moines Mental Health Referral Network. The Office of Marriage and Family Life is looking for more local clinicians who would like to support Catholic families and individuals seeking mental health care that aligns with and respects our Catholic beliefs and values. We are especially in need of therapists who can provide services in other languages, especially Spanish or Vietnamese.

If you are interested in joining or for more information about this program, please contact: **John Gaffney, Interim Director, Marriage and Family Life/Director of Evangelization and Mission, at jgaffney@dmdiocese.org or 515-237-5026**



OFFICIAL

Bishop William Joensen made the following appointment effective Oct. 4, 2024.

Rev. Mr. Frank Lopez, to diaconal ministry at St. Anthony Parish, Des Moines, until Aug. 30, 2026.

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

Jason Kurth
Chancellor

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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Equip parents to pass on the faith

11 parishes examine how to help parents gain confidence in teaching their children

By Jennifer Willems
Contributing Writer

Over the next three years, 20 dioceses across the country will be developing plans to engage and equip parents to be more confident in their roles as leaders of their “domestic church” – their family -- and the Diocese of Des Moines is one of them.

“Parents and Families at the Center of Faith Formation” is a project being piloted by the National Community of Catechetical Leaders, under the leadership of John Roberto, executive director. The project is made possible by a \$1.25 million grant from the Lilly Endowment.

Eleven parishes across southwest Iowa have been invited to participate, according to John Gaffney, diocesan director of Evangelization and Mission. They are: St. Ambrose Cathedral, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mary of Nazareth and St. Theresa in Des Moines; Ss. John and Paul in Altoona; Corpus Christi in Council Bluffs; Assumption in Granger; St. Patrick in Neola and St. Columbanus in Weston (which work together); St. John the Apostle in Norwalk; St. Mary in Red Oak; and Sacred Heart in West Des Moines.

The consultant provided by NCCL to work with the parishes and their coordinators is Kathie Amidei. She holds a doctoral degree in education and leadership, is an author, and a speaker on



Youth carry gifts to the table as Father Mark McGeary, of Ss. John and Paul Parish in Altoona, prepares for opening prayer at the parish’s intergenerational faith formation night.

lifelong formation. A pastoral associate for a parish in Wisconsin, she formerly served as associate director for Catechesis and Child Ministry for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Supporting what’s working

The goal is not to create a one-size-fits-all program, said Paulette Chapman, a longtime faith formation consultant from Urbandale, who is assisting Gaffney.

“What I think is really interesting and exciting about the way NCCL is approaching this is they’re starting from the stand-

point of looking at what is happening in families -- how families are successfully transmitting faith and values, and then trying to build on that, to look to the strengths of families in our time, in our day,” said Chapman, who is also the NCCL consultant to the Diocese of Davenport and the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

Gaffney called it “the art of accompaniment.”

“How are we walking with our moms and dads? In some of our families it’s grandparents who are doing all of this. In some of them it’s foster families. All sorts of families, all sorts of shapes,” he

explained. “How are we walking with them and then helping them really be the domestic church?”

Passing on the faith entails more than passing on knowledge, he emphasized.

“Having the faith come alive and be lived in a more vibrant way in our families -- I think that’s what really excited me with regards to this project,” Gaffney said.

Pope Francis has often stressed the importance of accompaniment, which was Jesus’ model, Chapman added.

“I think it’s a good model for all of us,” she said.

man said assessing goals and tweaking them each year is vital to the success of the project.

Gaffney hopes that as the parish teams communicate the plan to parents, they will start to see and feel that they have a partner.

Just as 2024 has been a preparation year, 2028 will be devoted to evaluation.

“So it really gives us data and then we can, in real time, share that with colleagues across the Diocese,” Gaffney said. “The same thing with NCCL -- they can then share with the larger church what they’re discovering at every step of the way.”



A family works together on a project during the first night back to religious education at St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines.

Sharing results in real time

Parishes were invited to participate in the project based on their experience with family faith formation or intergenerational faith formation, Gaffney said. Diversity was also key and is reflected in the rural, suburban and urban parishes on the list, as well as the large Hispanic communities or immigrant and refugee populations found among them.

Parish teams were formed over the summer, and meetings for the parish coordinators and Amidei are planned for this fall. The teams will begin by gathering information from the parents and bringing what they have learned to a workshop early in 2025.

A series of meetings will take place during the next three years as the parishes develop their own plans and share them with their parents and parish family. Chap-

Adjusting the model

Noting that those ministering in religious formation “stand on the shoulders of giants,” Gaffney said it may be time to “adjust the model” that has been used.

“We really have to, at some point, recognize that it’s going to be the parents that are going to be with the kids for a lifetime. So we really need to be focused on how we can better facilitate that,” Gaffney said.

“I hope that parents and caregivers will feel empowered to live out what they promised when their child was baptized, to raise them in the faith and be the primary catechist,” Chapman said. “That will come when those parents and caregivers either have their own awakening or deepening of their faith that hopefully will be part of the fruits of this project.”

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Holy Day

The Solemnity of All Saints – celebrated Friday, Nov. 1 – is a holy day of obligation. All Saints Day is a feast in the Catholic Church that was originally instituted to honor the Christian martyrs of the late Roman Empire. Although we often associate martyrdom with events of the past, violent persecution of Christians is still happening at an alarming rate in modern times in many countries. Therefore, in praying for the martyrs of ages past, let us also pray for suffering Christians around the world who continue to be persecuted in this day and age for following Christ.

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

BraveLove honors women who placed children for adoption

A free dinner for birth mothers who placed a child for adoption is being offered Oct. 24 by BraveLove, which hopes each woman walks away knowing they are not alone. "It is my hope these women in our community will come forward and meet other women who share their story of courage, love, and life," said Laura Linder. For more information, go to: bravelove.org/birth-mom-dinners/

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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Life Chain draws attention to unborn



Life Chain is a nationwide prayerful pro-life public witness. On Oct. 6, about 55 people held signs encouraging prayer and adoption in Council Bluffs.




Life Chain is the first Sunday in October, which is Respect Life Month. In Urbandale, there were pro-life supporters along Douglas Avenue outside St. Pius X Church. At right in the above photo is Father Daniel Adjei.

The POPE'S visit to IOWA

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Family grateful for tuition assistance



Jason and Jenna Feeney can send their three children to Christ the King Catholic School thanks to generous gifts to the Catholic Tuition Organization and the new Education Savings Accounts.

**By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer**

Jason and Jenna Feeney send their three children to a Catholic school, where the lessons on faith complement what they teach and practice at home.

The Feeney family couldn't choose a Catholic school without tuition assistance.

But thanks to the Catholic Tuition Organization, a parish-based scholarship program, and now Education Savings Accounts, second grader Evelyn, first grader Ava, and preschooler Oliver can go to Christ the King School. They're among nearly 230 students growing in faith and academic excellence at the school.

"With three kids, tuition assistance was going to be necessary one way or another," Jason said. "CTO and ESAs are the only things that make a Catholic education possible for our three children."

Jason and Jenna see themselves as the primary teachers of the faith to their children. They want a Catholic education for their children so that lessons at home are complemented by the lessons at school and vice versa.

"I like that when I have those conversations with them, and we do that job as the primary catechists at home, that it's continuing conversations that already began happening at school."

The kids like seeing Father PJ McManus or Father Nick Smith around the school.

"Whenever they see either one of the priests, they want to stop and say 'Hi,' give them a hug, or tell them about something

that happened in their day," said Jason.

He went to Christ the King middle school and then Dowling Catholic High School.

"Catholic education became important to us not only because I had a good experience when I was a kid, but we wanted that same thing for our kids," he said.

A perk of the children going to Christ the King is that their dad can pick them up after school. He's the parish director of evangelization and catechesis and can have the kids with him until it's time to go home at the end of the day.

Jason would like to see support for tuition assistance programs grow.

"We filled out the forms for CTO for the past several years and received some form of benefit," Jason said.

Since it began in 2006, the CTO has distributed more than \$45 million in tuition assistance to 26,716 students thanks to generous donors who receive a state tax credit when they gift funds for tuition assistance.

Jason and Jenna's two daughters qualify for the education savings account and next year, when Oliver enters the pre-kindergarten program, all three children will qualify.

Jason said: "It's important for those to continue, particularly for CTO and Guardian Angel (parish supplied tuition scholarship program) that help families that can't afford a Catholic education."

To make a donation to the CTO or to apply for tuition financial assistance go to CTOIowa.org

Eighth Christ Our Life a success

The Christ Our Life Catholic Conference held in Des Moines Sept. 28-29 was a hit.

"The most dominant highlight of the 2024 Christ Our Life Conference was the tremendous response to every speaker," said co-founder Marilyn Lane. "Over and over, all of us on the steering committee heard the words, 'Not a weak link in the entire conference.'"

Of 6,075 tickets sold or donated, 900 were used for livestreaming, 1,150 youth attended free, (590 of those tickets were for children coming with their families).

There were likely more people benefiting from the conference than those holding tickets, as numerous watch parties were held in parishes and homes throughout the state and beyond.

Organizers worked hard to draw young people with generous donors paying for tickets for those 23 and younger and their

effort succeeded.

"It's exciting to think that we more than doubled our youth tickets this year," said co-founder Ellen Miller. She said 560 of the free tickets went to high school or college students.

"Our emphasis on youth also was a joyful response and so vital," said Lore McManus Solo, who oversaw communication for the event. "Our youth are forming the foundation of our faith today and for the future."

Five speakers were part of breakout sessions for the youth and young adults including Msgr. Stephen Rosetti, Sr. Josephine Garrett, Steve Agrisano, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, and Jason Evert.

Teens from St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap boarded a bus early Saturday morning after homecoming week and a football game the night before. Beth Reineke brought 13 students and 14 adults to the conference.

"They liked it and (the teens) were sad to hear that they had to wait two years to go back," Reineke said. "I think it was beneficial to have their own sessions in Hy-Vee Hall. I think it showed them that young people matter."

Father Craig Vasek's talk to the whole crowd spoke to the young Catholics.

"Father Vasek gave a good talk to get us started by sharing his experience as a high school athlete," Reineke said. "He was a jock who went down the wrong road and turned his life around to Christ."

Though there was an emphasis on drawing more youth, the conference is geared toward every age group.

"Our mission is that all ages are coming together to celebrate God's infinite love and living the messages that spoke to their heart out loud in their lives," said Miller.



Twenty seven people from St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap took a bus to Des Moines for the biennial Christ Our Life Catholic Conference Sept. 28-29.

How Does the Catholic Tuition Organization and ESAs Work Together?

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*Gifts to CTO qualify for a 75% Iowa tax credit

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@polkcountyiowa.gov.

Leave a legacy of faith, compassion, and generosity

October is National Estate Planning Awareness Month — a perfect time to reflect on the legacy you leave to benefit others and how you leave it.

“Having a solid estate plan is essential to your financial well-being,” said Jodi Halligan, director of Development for the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa. It ensures that your wishes are honored, both during your lifetime and after you’re gone.”

Why Estate Planning Matters

Estate planning is about more than just drafting a will. It’s a com-

prehensive process that addresses the management and distribution of your assets in the event of incapacity or death. Here’s why estate planning is so important:

1. **Protect Your Loved Ones** – Estate planning allows you to provide for your family and loved ones, ensuring they are cared for financially and emotionally after you’re gone.

2. **Avoid Probate** – Proper estate planning can help you minimize the time and costs associated with probate—the legal process of validating a will and distributing assets.

3. **Minimize Taxes** – With strategic estate planning, you can reduce the impact of estate taxes, preserving more of your assets for your beneficiaries.

4. **Healthcare Decisions** – Estate planning allows you to designate someone to make healthcare decisions on your behalf if you become incapacitated, ensuring your medical wishes are respected.

Planned Giving

While estate planning covers a broad range of considerations, one crucial aspect that is often

overlooked is planned giving. Planned giving allows you to incorporate charitable donations into your estate plan, supporting causes you care about and leaving a lasting legacy. Here are a few common types of planned gifts:

1. **Bequests in a Trust or Will** – Including a charitable bequest in your will or trust allows you to designate a specific amount or percentage of your estate to a charitable organization.

2. **Donor Advised Funds** – These funds enable you to contribute to a charitable fund and recommend grants to your favorite charities over time.

3. **Charitable Trusts** – Charitable trusts, such as charitable remainder trusts or charitable lead trusts, provide income to beneficiaries while supporting charitable organizations.

4. **Gifts of Stock or Real Estate** – Donating appreciated assets like stocks or real estate can offer tax benefits while supporting

charitable causes.

5. **Gifts of Grain** – For farmers, donating grain directly to a charitable organization can provide tax advantages while supporting important initiatives.

Your Partner in Planned Giving

The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa helps you navigate the complexities of planned giving. As the planned giving office for the Diocese of Des Moines, our team is dedicated to guiding you every step of the way. Whether you’re considering a charitable bequest, setting up a charitable trust, or exploring other planned giving options, we’re here to support you.

For more information or to discuss your planned giving goals, call 515-237-5044 or email contact@cfswia.org. Let the Catholic foundation help you leave a lasting legacy of faith, compassion, and generosity.



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS DIOCESE of DES MOINES

Why should you financially support Catholic schools?

Catholic education is a large part of our mission of cultivating connections in Christ to:

- Pass on Catholic faith values.
- Raise future leaders committed to our Catholic faith community.
- Provide parents an opportunity to choose for their children to have an education experience grounded by our Catholic faith.

The cost to educate

- Current tuition does not cover the full cost to educate.
 - For many of our schools the cost for the 2024-2025 school year exceeds the \$7,826 Education Savings Account (ESA) offered by the state.
- The majority of our teachers are currently compensated below market rate.

Education Savings Accounts

- These state funds are available to families to choose to send their child to an accredited nonpublic school.
- State funds are deposited into student accounts to be used for approved, eligible education expenditures.
 - Approved education expenditures include tuition, tutors, technology, etc.
- In the 2025-2026 school year, ESA will be available to any family that chooses a nonpublic education for their children.
- Public schools do not have the capacity to absorb all of the nonpublic school children. The Des Moines Diocese has nearly 7,000 students in its 16 schools.

Mercy College celebrates 125th anniversary

Mercy College of Health Sciences in Des Moines hosted its 125th anniversary Legacy of Faith Gala presented by Estes Construction, raising \$187,000 to support student scholarships and student emergency needs.

“As a result of the pioneering efforts of the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy College has proudly served Des Moines for over a century,” Mercy College President Dr. Adreain Henry said. “This incredible generosity by

our community ensures our students have the resources needed to thrive academically as we work to continue to address the healthcare workforce shortage.”

The Mercy Des Moines School of Nursing was established on April 7, 1899, to address the projected nursing workforce shortage. Today, Mercy College of Health Sciences offers 17 unique academic pathways with nearly 900 students preparing to enter healthcare professions.

Edward Jones

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Join Bishop William M. Joensen and Rev. Trevor Chicoine

Experience an authentic and faith-filled adventure in several of France’s most exciting destinations

Departure is Wednesday, August 27, 2025 and we return on Sunday, September 7, 2025.

During our 9 nights in France, we will visit Paris, Lourdes, Lyon, Vichy, Paray-le-Monial, Ars-sur-Forman, Avignon, Arles, Aix-en-Provence, Marseille, and the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. This exciting program will include daily Mass at local churches and basilicas, a spiritual journey through the Basilique de Sacre-Coeur, dinner cruise along the Seine, tour the of the Roman ruins, and so much more!

Participants should expect to walk during much of the tours as this tour will certainly help you get your daily steps in!

The trip price per person is tentatively \$6,559* and includes topnotch accommodations for 9 nights (based on double occupancy), breakfast and dinner daily, ground transportation within France, all gratuities, entry tickets to iconic monuments and sights, and expert guides provided by our travel partner. Pricing will be finalized 6 months prior to departure (due to airfare). Trip insurance is not provided by the travel agency, but is strongly recommended.

witte Spiritual Journeys

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Religious Education kicks off

Last year, parishes in the Des Moines Diocese served 8,594 children and teens from pre-k through high school. More than 1,240 catechists helped.



St. Mary of the Assumption religious education in Panama enjoyed their kickoff on Sept. 18 at the ball field. Father Michael Antoh joined in the festivities by playing soccer. Classes began Oct. 2.



On Oct. 5 and 6, St Mary's Youth Ministry in Shenandoah held their third annual fall pumpkin sale. This helps to raise funds for NCYC 2025 and support their social justice project, the Shenandoah Community Food Pantry.



Father Brad Robey joined a bowling night with 22 high school youth from four parishes in Cass County kicking off the year on Aug. 28.

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Founder of Catholic Youth Camp dies

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

In 1961, a young priest began hosting kids at a 4-H camp for a few days of fun and faith.

Little did he realize he planted a seed that would grow over the next 60 years, bringing countless young people the kind of joy that they remember and then want their children to experience.

Known as the founding father of Catholic Youth Camp, Father Nelo Leto died Oct. 1 at the age of 95. He was a priest for 70 years.

Father Leto will forever be remembered for laying the groundwork for CYC, based at the St. Thomas More Center near Panorama.

He was serving at the Basilica of St. John in Des Moines when he began to host boys for three



Father Nelo Leto

days, then girls for three days, said Father Tom DeCarlo.

"I used to help him out at the camp," said Father DeCarlo. "I'd quit my job and go help him there. I did that for six years when I was in the seminary."

Father Leto gave kids a chance to have fun.

"A lot of those kids never had

a chance to get out of town very much," said Father DeCarlo. "He was a lot of fun with people. He enjoyed a good time and he tried to share that with the kids."

By the time Father DeCarlo took over the camp in 1969, it was one full week for boys and one full week for girls.

Over the years, the location shifted until 1984, when land was purchased at Lake Panorama in the north central part of the Diocese so CYC had a permanent home. More and more children wanted to go to camp, too.

This past summer, 718 boys and 1,000 girls enjoyed fun activities like swimming, archery, ziplining, gaga ball, field games, arts and crafts, canoeing, a camp fire, while also celebrating their faith through daily Mass, prayer, and presentations.

Father Leto will also be re-

membered for his artistic skills. He could repair statues that had broken or were chipped.

"He was very creative and artistic. He did a lot of good things," said his cousin, Father Frank Palmer. "I still remember him being a major player creating the nativity crib at St. Anthony. He and his dad did all that."

Father Leto was also known as a hard worker who improved parishes for the next pastor. Father Tim Fitzgerald followed Father Leto as pastor at parishes in Lenox and Clarinda, and said each church had been updated when he arrived.

Father Leto, the fifth of seven children, was born in 1929. His parents, Ignazio and Josephine (Collo) Leto, emigrated from Italy. He attended St. Anthony Catholic School, Dowling Catholic High School, and Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri.

His assignments included: Christ the King, St. Ambrose Cathedral, Basilica of St. John, Visitation (now Our Lady of the Americas) and St. Anthony in Des Moines.

He also served: Ss. Peter & Paul in Atlantic, Assumption in Granger, St. Patrick in Perry, St. Patrick in Lenox, St. Mary in Guthrie Center, St. Cecilia in Panorama, St. Ann in Woodward, St. Clare in Clarinda, Sacred Heart in Bedford, St. John in Greenfield, St. Mark in Orient, St. Peter in Defiance, St. Joseph in Earling, and St. Elizabeth Seton in Carlisle.

He retired on July 8, 1999, and continued to serve the Catholic Daughters of the Americas and Mercy Hospital as a chaplain until 2011.

His funeral was Oct. 9 at the Basilica of St. John in Des Moines. He was buried at Glendale Cemetery.

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Ready, set, go!

Continued from page 1

"With the wind from the summer's Eucharistic activities and the toolkits in hand, we are excited to follow the Holy Spirit to incredible outcomes for our parishes and everyone in southwest Iowa," said Dan Kinsella, co-chair of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. The DPC is a consultative group tasked by Bishop Jonsen to assist him in implementing the diocesan strategic vision and plan.

"The Des Moines Diocese was one of the national leaders for the number of new Catholics last Easter," he said. "With the strategy's focus on evangelization, let's continue that trend."

DPC co-chair Maria Matamoros agreed that, as the Diocese moves forward, it must listen to the Holy Spirit.

"It is the Holy Spirit that guides us. We need to continue to pray and be attentive to God's work within our diocese, parishes, and communities," she said.

Of 80 parishes in the Diocese, 52 selected a priority, with 6 more parishes saying they're in the process of selecting a pastoral priority. Of the 58 parishes that have responded, 39 – or more than half – have selected the priority "Creating a Culture of Welcome & Care."

Parishes working together on pastoral priorities may cultivate relationships with each other, Matamoros said.

"To be most effective, we hope each parishioner can play some part in the invigoration effort the Bishop has laid out," Kinsella said. "The best is yet to come."

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Priest with a gift for music, serving the sick, dies

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Father Martin Chevalier, a man who had an interest in good liturgy, a gift for music, and a particular charism for ministering to the sick, died Sept. 25. He was 70 years old.

Father Chevalier graduated from North High School in Des Moines, earned a bachelor's degree in audiology from the University of Iowa, and entered the seminary where he earned a master's degree from St. John's University in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

His friend, Jennifer Willems, will remember him for his kindness when she moved to take a job in Omaha.

"He was assigned to Queen of Apostles in Council Bluffs and Our Lady of Carter Lake at that time and on my first day in Omaha, he came over to make dinner and play with my dog," she said. "His hospitality extended to showing me around Omaha so I could get to know my new surroundings. I will never forget his kindness, and his love for music and the liturgy."

A tenor, Father Chevalier used his gift in Musica Ecclesia, a diocesan choir conducted by

Aimee Beckmann-Collier from 1987-1992.

"His energy and desire to serve the music with his time and talents, along with his just slightly sarcastic wit, made him a very valuable member of the choir," she said.

It was at a concert at the (Anglican) Cathedral of St. Paul in downtown Des Moines, where Father Troy Beecham, dean emeritus there, met him.

"He was such an outgoing, jovial, and open man. He was a breath of fresh air, a ready counselor, and always helped me see the light during dark moments," said Father Beecham. "He always helped me find where God could be found when I was perplexed or hurt from the difficulties of parish life. We often had lunch or dinner together."

Father Chevalier, impressed by the choral program at the Anglican church, joined the chorus, though remaining faithful to being a Catholic priest, said Father Beecham.

"I've known many priests in my life, and Father Martin was one of the most truly joyful I've known, and one of the most priestly," he said. "His vocation was obvious and true, and ran deep. He was a faithful priest, a



Father Martin Chevalier

true believer in the orthodox, Catholic faith. He was a faithful witness of the Lord, never afraid to speak the truth or to call Christians to remember the Gospel of Jesus. He was a peace maker."

Ordained in 1983, Father Chevalier served on each side of the Diocese at Sacred Heart Church in West Des Moines and Queen of Apostles (now part of Corpus Christi Parish) in Council Bluffs.

Much of his parish ministry was in rural parishes: St. John in Adair; St. Mary in Anita; St. Joseph in Casey; St. John in Adel; Holy Trinity of SE Warren County in Lacona, and St. Elizabeth Seton in Carlisle.

In 2003, he studied to be a chaplain and spent the rest of his years of ministry to the sick.

He was a chaplain at Mercy-One Des Moines Medical Center while serving for a year at Immaculate Conception Parish in

St. Marys; and St. Patrick in Irish Settlement. In 2009, he became a chaplain at St. Joseph Medical Center in Kansas City, Missouri, then served as a hospice chaplain at Grace Hospice, also in Kansas City. In 2013, he became a chaplain at St. Mary Medical Center in Long Beach, California.

He retired from active ministry in the Des Moines Diocese in 2015 and served as chaplain at the Veterans Administration hospital in Des Moines, retiring in 2023.

Father Chevalier's Mass of Christian Burial was scheduled for Oct. 17 at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Des Moines.

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Sacred scribbles: piece by piece, page by page

Opal Whiteley was six years old when she began keeping a diary, scrawling with a crayon in tightly spaced, phonetically spelled words.

She recorded her wanderings and wonderings in the woods of her Oregon logging community. She was prodded by her mother's admonition to write about what, where, when, how, and why, and she was grasping at the transcendent, describing a "Cathedral" of cedars.

"I hear songs – lullaby songs of the trees," Opal wrote. "I am happy, listening to the twilight music of God's good world. I'm real glad I'm alive."

Opal stored her diary in a hollow log in the forest, maintaining it for six years. She felt a duty to document nature's music, whispered by the wind "to folks to print for other folks."

But heartbreak came at age 13, when her destructive younger sister found the diary and tore it to pieces. Opal collected the shreds and put them in a hatbox, tucked out of sight and mind for years.

Twenty Something

By Christina
Capecchi



As a young woman, Opal tried to launch a writing career and one day visited the Boston office of the prestigious Atlantic Monthly. Charmed by her personality but unimpressed by her writing samples, the editor asked if Opal had kept a diary.

The hatbox was delivered promptly – some scraps as large as a half-sheet of notebook paper, many the size of a thumbnail. Opal spent nine months reassembling the diary, an undertaking the editor called "enormous" and "methodical."

"First, the framework of a sheet would be fitted and the outer edges squared,"

the editor wrote. "Here the adornment of borders in childish patterns and the fortunate fact that the writer had employed a variety of colored crayons, using each color until it was exhausted, lent an unhelped-for aid."

The entire process guts me: the destruction, the restoration. Pain-staking, bleary-eyed work.

Beginning in March of 1920, the first two years of Opal's diary were serialized in the magazine, billed as "a revelation of the spirit of childhood" and a balm for Americans disillusioned by the recent war in Europe.

It was a hit.

Come September, the excerpts were published as a book.

Opal had heeded advice that I think of often – as a Catholic, as a writer, as a seeker of wonder: three "instructions for living a life" from the poet Mary Oliver. "Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it."

That is our work this season, when each

falling leaf gives permission to change, to weep, to let go. "Behold!" we proclaim. "God makes all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

We send postcards from the road. We share revelations from the back pew. We light candles and we kneel, we confess and we listen.

When I think of the cornerstone Catholic belief that all people have inherent dignity, I picture Opal's diary, reassembled piece by piece. A story worth telling. A little girl who still matters.

This is what our Heavenly Father does for each of us: taking our discarded bits and piecing them together, making a masterpiece of our scraps. This is what Catholics are called to do for each other: encountering a mess and seeing the promise, taking great care with the smallest of parts.

It is hard, holy work.

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

Q&A: What kind of wine do we use at Mass?

Q. Is the wine used at Mass supposed to be a particular color? Red wine, white wine, rose-colored wine? Some have suggested that it should be red to symbolize blood. And are there specific kinds of wine that can be used? -M.A., Clive



I've Been Wondering...

Father John Ludwig

A. The color is not regulated. It can be white, rose, or red. It must be grape wine, not any other fruit. Also, it is not to have any additives or flavors or carbonation. The Church uses grape wine because that was also the wine that the Lord and his disciples used. Some national conferences of bishops may have some additional regulations or specifications. Also, some dioceses make certain stipulations. The main point is that the wine we use should be pure and unadulterated grape wine. (For what it's worth, most wine sommeliers would also concur with that.)

Q. What is the term for the special cloth the priest uses during Benediction? T.C., Anita

A. It's called a humeral veil. It's one of the liturgical vestments of the Roman Rite, also used in some Anglican and Lutheran churches. It consists of a piece of cloth, often of silk, draped over the shoulders and down the front. At the ends there are sometimes pockets in the back for hands to go into so that the wearer can hold items without touching them with the hands.

The origins of the humeral veil can be traced to the 7th century, to a smaller cloth

called the "Sindon" which was used to cover the hands while holding consecrated objects during Mass.

The humeral veil is of the liturgical color of the day on which it is used, or else is white or cloth of gold.

The humeral veil is most often seen during the liturgy of Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. When priests or deacons bless the people with the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance, they cover their hands with the ends of the veil so that their hands do not touch the monstrance as a mark of respect for the sacred

vessel and as an indication that it is Christ sacramentally present in the Eucharistic species who blesses the people and not the minister.

The humeral veil is also seen on Holy Thursday at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. It is used when the Ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament is taken in procession to the place of reservation, and again when it is brought back to the altar without solemnity during the Good Friday service.

The humeral veil when used at Benediction is white (gold and silver may also be used for Benediction). On Good Friday, a red humeral veil may be used.

Father John Ludwig is a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. Send questions to communications@dmdiocese.org.

Refugees, immigrants, and Jesus

On borders everywhere in the world today we find refugees, millions of them. They're easily demonized, seen as a nuisance, a threat, as invaders, as criminals fleeing justice in their homelands. But mostly they are decent, honest people fleeing poverty, hunger, victimization, and violence. And these reasons for fleeing their homelands strongly suggest that most of them are not criminals.

Irrespective of the fact that most of them are good people, they are still seen most everywhere as a problem. We need to keep them out! They are a threat! Indeed, politicians frequently use the verb invasion to describe their presence on our borders.

What's to be said about this? Do we just let everyone in? Do we select judiciously among them, letting some in and keeping others out? Do we put up walls and barbed wire to block their entry? What's to be our response?

These questions need to be examined from two perspectives: pragmatically and biblically.

Pragmatically this is a huge issue. We cannot simply open all borders and let millions of people flood into our countries. That's unrealistic. On the other hand, we may not justify our reluctance to let refugees into our countries by appealing to the bible, or to Jesus, or to the naïve rationalization that "our" countries are ours and we have a right to be here while others don't



By Father Ron
Rolheiser

unless we grant them entrance. Why not?

For Christians, there are a number of non-negotiable biblical principles at play here.

First, God made the world for everybody. We are stewards of a property not our own. We don't own anything, God does, and God made the world for everybody. That's a principle we too easily ignore when we speak of barring others from entering "our" country. We happen to be stewards here, in a country that belongs to the whole world.

Second, the Bible everywhere, in both testaments of scripture, is clear (and strong) in challenging us to welcome the stranger and the immigrant. This is everywhere present in the Jewish scriptures and is a strong motif at the very heart of Jesus' message. Indeed, Jesus begins his ministry by telling us that he has come to bring good news to the poor. Hence, any teaching, preaching, pastoral practice, political policy, or action that is not good news for the poor is not the gospel of Jesus Christ,

whatever its political or ecclesial expediency. And, if it is not good news for the poor, it may not cloak itself with the Gospel or with Jesus. Hence, any decisions we make vis-à-vis refugees and immigrants should not be antithetical to the fact that the Gospels are about bringing good news to the poor.

Moreover, Jesus makes this even clearer when he identifies the poor with his own person (Whatever you do to the least of my people, you do to me) and tells us that at the end of the day we will be judged by how we treat the immigrants and refugees (Depart from me because I was a stranger and you didn't welcome me). There are few texts in scripture as raw and challenging as this one (Matthew 25, 35-40)

Finally, we also find this challenge in scripture: God challenges us to welcome foreigners (immigrants) and share our love, food, and clothing with them because we ourselves were once immigrants (Deuteronomy 10, 18-19). And this isn't just some abstract biblical axiom, especially for us who live in North America. Except for the Indigenous nations (whom we forcefully displaced) we are all immigrants here and are challenged by our faith never to forget this, not least when dealing with hungry people on our borders. Of course, those of us who have been here for a number of generations can make the moral case that we have been here a long time and are

no longer immigrants. But perhaps a more compelling moral case can be made suggesting it can be rather self-serving to close the borders after we ourselves are in.

These are biblical challenges. However, after they are affirmed, we are still left with the practical question; what realistically do we (and many countries around the world) do with the millions and millions of men, women, and children arriving at our border? How do we honor the fact that the land we live in belongs to everyone? How do we honor that fact that, as Christians, we have to think first about the poor? How will we face Jesus in judgment when he asks us why we didn't welcome him when he was in the guise of a refugee? And how do we honor the fact that almost every one of us is an immigrant, living in a country we forcibly took from someone else?

There are no easy answers to those questions, even while at the end of the day we still need to make some practical political decisions.

However, in our pragmatism, in sorting this out, we should never be confused about which side Jesus and the Bible are on.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. Learn more at ronrolheiser.com or Facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Multicultural parish picnic

Continued from page 1

comprised of refugees. In the 1970s, soldiers and their families who helped Americans during the Vietnam war came. In the early 2010s, the parish welcomed Sudanese, South Sudanese, Burmese, then Eritrean refugees.

The food at the picnic tells the tale. Traditional dishes from Sudan and South Sudan, Eritrean along with Burmese food and some from Lao was prepared.

“Three ladies each brought 200 egg rolls. They were gone in less than 15 minutes,” said Father Nivin Scaria, rector of the cathedral parish.

He sees the picnic as a means of bringing diverse groups of people together for faith, fellowship, and fun.

“We are celebrating the diversity of this parish. It’s a community of communities,” said Father Scaria.

The picnic is analogous to a story in the Bible. “In the Acts of the Apostles, they were speaking different languages but they heard the same message,” he said.

Madeleine Kelly was awed by the work the Zomi and other groups put into the successful event.

“It was really a delight. My husband and I were tickled that we got to go and see the great grandchildren play with their friends from school and join different groups. It was really very spiritual,” she said.

“All of us enjoyed something fun where we just take our time off from the parish and just have a

place at the Hmong village where we pray, hang out, and eat a lot of delicious food,” said Dah Meh, of the Karenni ethnic community.

“I was very happy that the whole parish came to our farm,” said Lee Chao, of the Hmong community.

Various ethnic communities sang during Mass.

“It showed the universality of the Church,” said Martin Nawl, of the Zomi ethnic group. “Everyone can be Catholic.”

“This picnic was a lot better than last year’s picnic,” said Marin’s son, Charlie. “There were more people. Since we did it (last year), people are used to it and we could plan things better. People were communicating better, talking to each other.”

Michael J. Colosimo was in charge of the raffle.

“We got people to donate throughout the community,” he said. “I don’t want to stop because in the future I see it getting larger with more prizes and more opportunities for the parish to get involved.”

He praised the Knights of Columbus, who went to the farm to mow the lawn, set up chairs and tables and get things ready for the picnic.

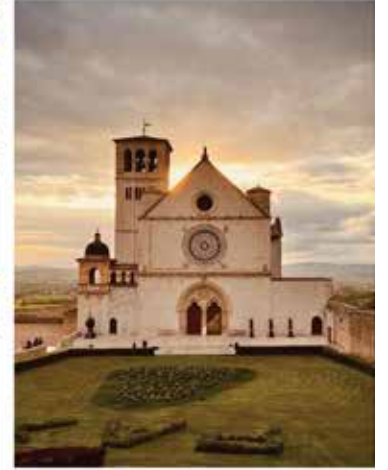
It was a beautiful day, Colosimo said. After Mass, people ate, they had the raffle, a band played, and children learned how to fish, played volleyball, and more.

“They come together as a community for the purpose of honoring each other and honoring Jesus Christ,” he said. “I love that.”

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Insure their Insurability.



5 Reasons to Purchase Life Insurance for your Child with the Knights of Columbus

Protecting their insurability. Purchasing a life insurance policy for your child can mean locking in their insurability, regardless of any future health complications that may occur later in life.

Flexibility. The Knights of Columbus offers a variety of customizable plans that provide you with the flexibility to choose the options that work best for your family.

Opportunity. With the additional purchase of our Guaranteed Purchase Option (GPO) Rider, a Knights of Columbus juvenile policy guarantees the child the opportunity to purchase additional insurance in the future, regardless of any changes to their health.

The financial advantage. Simply put, juvenile policy premiums are often less expensive, which can make them cost effective for most families. Likewise, as a permanent life insurance product, your child's policy will grow tax-free, providing potential cash value for future needs.

The Catholic Difference. Work with an organization that conducts its business in an unapologetically Catholic way. With the Knights you can protect your family while preserving your Catholic principles and values.

Contact me today – your brother Knight – to see what we can offer you and your family.

Riders are optional and available for an additional cost. Terms and conditions apply. Issue of rider is subject to insurability requirements.



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