

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## Second blow tests Perry

By Jennifer Willems  
Contributing writer

PERRY – To say that 2024 has been a tough year for Perry would be an understatement.

Rocked by a shooting at Perry High School on Jan. 4, this Dallas County community of 7,500 is now dealing with the closure of the Tyson Foods pork processing plant. This second blow in just three months is expected to put nearly 1,300 people out of work on June 28.

St. Patrick Parish in Perry stepped up in January with prayer and presence, as well as resources like counseling. Father Litto Thomas said they are prepared to do it again as the church community and community at large try to figure out what comes next.

“Sometimes we only think about the negative things that happen, but God can bring good from evil. The good we see is that the community is stronger,” he said.

“Everyone is worried about their neighbor. They ask, ‘How are you doing? Did you find a job?’ They are talking to one another and there is more caring,” Father Thomas explained. “The community is more united.”

### Coping skills developed

St. Patrick parishioners honed their coping skills after the shooting at Perry High School, which happened the day students returned from their Christmas break.

The parish responded with a rosary for the whole town and special blessings for first responders, teachers, students and their parents at Masses. Mental health resources were made available and a second collection was taken at Mass to support the victims and their families.

Then, it was announced on March 11 that Tyson, one of the region’s major employers, was closing the Perry facility, said Father Thomas.

### Identifying those in need

Father Thomas has been told that roughly half of the 1,276 people who will lose their jobs are from the Des Moines area. Many of those from the Perry area, especially those who belong to St. Patrick Parish, are Hispanic.

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## Volunteers build school chapel

Faith is infused in the learning environment at Catholic schools



**Bishop William Joensen, at right, consecrates with Sacred Chrism a new altar at a small chapel envisioned by Principal Gretchen Watznauer and built by volunteers at St. Theresa Catholic School in Des Moines. Catholic schools offer faith-centered education designed to build confidence, facilitate problem-solving, and build critical thinking skills all while building a strong foundation of gratitude, passion, empathy, and a commitment to service. Top photo, Father Raphael Assamah helps a Deklyn Nolan and Anna Seymour find their place in a worship aid. Above, the choir was comprised of: Annabel Niggemeyer, Hemira Dawood, Bella Gerk, and music teacher Liz Patrick.**

By Emily Melcher  
Contributing writer

In the summer of 2023, St. Theresa Catholic School Principal Gretchen Watznauer had a vision of turning an unused classroom into a chapel.

She wanted students, teach-

ers and staff to have an accessible place in the school to go and pray individually, in small groups, and as a class.

Although a church is just across the parking lot, a smaller space in the school would be more intimate and accessible during the school day for students and staff.



She shared this idea with the parish pastor, Father Raphael Assamah, parish business manager Kenneth Seymour, and facilities director Tony Tedesco that summer.

They all embraced the idea and worked to bring the vision to life.

On March 26, Bishop Wil-

liam Joensen blessed the fruit of their labor. He blessed the Little Flower Chapel and consecrated its altar.

As a team, the group learned about erecting a chapel from the beginning concept to the blessing of its beautiful space with the guidance of Father Trevor Chi-

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## 18 priests receive new assignments

Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointments effective July 11. The appointments are for six years unless otherwise noted.

**Father James Ahenkora**, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs, will become pastor of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny.

Born in Ghana in 1976, Father Ahenkora was ordained in 2007.

He came to the Des Moines

Diocese in 2016 first to serve St. John Parish in Greenfield and St. Patrick Parish in Massena. After three years, he moved to Council Bluffs where he began serving St. Patrick Parish.

**Father Michael Amadeo**, pastor of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, will become the pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines. While in this assignment, he will also continue to serve as Vicar for Priests for the Diocese of Des Moines.

Born in 1964 in Des Moines. He attended Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, St. Ambrose University in Davenport, St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota, St. Meinrad in Indiana and did post-graduate work at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Ordained in 1992, Father Amadeo has served the following parishes: Sacred Heart in West Des Moines; St. Mary/Holy Cross in Elkhart; Holy Trinity in Des Moines; and Our Lady’s Immac-

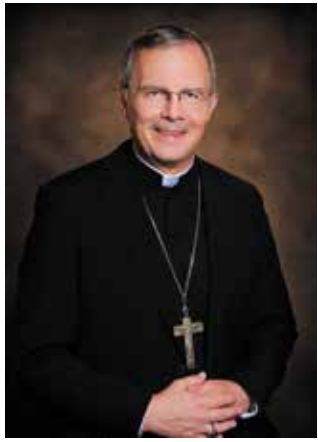
ulate Heart in Ankeny.

He has also served the Diocese in administration, having worked with the Tribunal, and in the roles of Vicar General and Vicar for Priests.

**Father Samuel Danso**, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Chariton, St. Francis Parish in Corydon, and St. Brendan Parish in Leon will become the pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap, and

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Bishop William Joensen

One of my favorite Catholic philosophers, the late Robert Spaemann, devoted a lot of attention to the meaning of human dignity. He observes that the concept of dignity was largely implied and not explicitly invoked much until the twentieth century, and asks: “Is it because the dignity of humankind was not accepted until [the last] century? Or because that dignity was never in such jeopardy as it is now?” He surmises that the answer to both questions might be ‘yes’.

Regardless, there is still some ambiguity in the concept because it strikes us to be so basic and foundational that it undergirds everything else, especially our sense of human rights. At the same time, dignity suggests a value and worth that transcends all appearances and contingencies; it “signals something sacred.”

The Germans are known for their precision engineering. Yet Spaemann, himself German, points out the ambiguity introduced by whoever engineered Article 1 Section 1 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, which states, “Human dignity shall be inviolable.”

How is one to interpret this clause: in the maximal sense, where individuals are entitled to lay claim to every form of government support, including welfare benefits and subsidies based on subjective preferences, which if denied, evoke the cry, “violation!”? Or in the minimal sense

# Human Dignity: A Vocation to Vision

of inviolability, as expressed by the late heterodox Catholic moral theologian Bruno Schüller: he maintains that an individual only violates personal dignity when someone commits an objective wrong against one’s own conscience. Using this criterion, if someone believes that assisted suicide is morally justified, or that one can validly, willfully submit to acts of torture or to be trafficked by another, the inviolability of dignity is preserved. Eeeek!

Human dignity has become a more intense focus for me recently for two reasons: the release earlier this month of the declaration by the Vatican Dicastery (formerly Congregation) for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas infinita/On Human Dignity*; and my participation just prior to Holy Week in a “Bishops’ Lenten Experience” with five bishops and others on a pilgrimage of prayer and encounter in the cities of Montgomery and Selma, Alabama. There we traced the sobering, sordid legacy of slavery and racism in our country that has left us with deep-seated wounds and soul-searing matter for reflection regarding the gains and ongoing gaps in social justice (particularly in connection with current crimi-

nal justice practices).

We were also spurred to honestly face how our Church has responded—in ways both repugnant and redemptive—over the past 150 years in particular. There are too many threads to either untangle or weave together here, but I offer the following thumbnail summary of the Vatican document. In next month’s edition of *The Catholic Mirror*, I will share more about my experience in Alabama and how it altered my perspective, and has made me even more intent on addressing social structures that do not respect human dignity.

## Remedy for ambiguity

I find the Vatican document on human dignity to be a much-needed remedy for the ambiguity and polarity among varied construals of dignity I introduced above. The document is both principled and practical in scope. The authors trace the development in understandings of human dignity from ancient era to the present. Christian revelation played a critical contributing role in the eventual elaboration of human rights and objective grounding of human freedom. I encourage committed readers to

engage the Declaration themselves: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2024/04/08/240408c.html>.

## Faith and Reason

Overall, after some recent consternation surrounding the dicastery’s statement on blessings of persons with same-sex orientation, *Dignitas infinita (DI)* strikes the reader as a more even-keeled document that is generally consistent with the trajectory of biblical and magisterial teaching over two millennia. It affirms that we can grasp the truth of the infinite, intrinsic, unique, and inalienable nature of human dignity compared to other created beings—even as the latter possess their own inherent goodness, for they all represent God’s creative intention, and are not simply an evolutionary accident.

A sample of claims: the givenness of human dignity can be grasped both by human reason and by faith (see DI nn. 1, 6). It is a truth that transcends culture and history. The incarnation of Jesus Christ initiates a radical elevation of human dignity for every person, especially those deemed “unworthy” (see n. 19). The unfold-

ing philosophical and political awareness of the inherent, absolute value of human beings came in fits and starts, and is subject to distortion if left solely to human reason. While St. Thomas Aquinas was obviously on track when it came to asserting the uniqueness of human identity as created in the image and likeness of God, even spoilers like Descartes and Kant echoed Christian revelation when it comes to the appreciation of our dignity.

Faith illuminates and reinforces what reason intuits: “Dignity is intrinsic to the person. . . it is prior to any recognition, and it cannot be lost. All human beings possess this same intrinsic dignity, regardless of whether or not they can express it in a suitable manner” (DI n. 15). “The unique and transcendent value of every human being “belongs to the person simply because he or she exists and is willed, created, and loved by God” (DI n. 7). Our dignity is bestowed by God and is a guarantee that every human being is “called to communion with God, destined to last forever.” Our ultimate vocation is to behold God face-to-face; our present

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Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointments effective July 11. The appointments are for six years unless otherwise noted.

**Rev. James Ahenkora**, from Pastor of St. Patrick’s Parish, Council Bluffs to Pastor of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish, Ankeny.  
**Very Rev. Michael Amadeo**, from Pastor of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish, Ankeny, to Pas-

tor of St. Anthony Parish, Des Moines. While in this assignment, he will also continue to serve as Vicar for Priests for the Diocese of Des Moines.

**Rev. Samuel Danso**, from Pastor at Sacred Heart Parish, Chariton, St. Francis Parish, Corydon, and St. Brendan Parish, Leon to Pastor of St. Patrick Parish, Dunlap, and Sacred Heart Parish, Woodbine.

**Rev. James Downey**, while continuing his assignment as faculty at Dowling Catholic High School, will serve as Weekend Sacramental Assistance at St. Boniface Parish, Waukee, for a three-year term, effective July 11.

**Rev. Jacob Epstein**, from Parochial Vicar of Corpus Christi Parish, Council Bluffs, to Pastor of St. Peter Parish, Council Bluffs.

**Rev. Enrique Garcia**, from Special Ministry, to Parochial Vicar at St. Anthony Parish, Des Moines, for a three-year term effective July 11, 2024.

**Rev. Robert Harris**, from Pastor of All Saints Parish, Des Moines, to retirement.

**Rev. Oscar Rosales Hernandez**, from the Diocese of Zacatecoluca, El Salvador to Parochial Vicar at Christ the King Parish, Des Moines, for a three-year term effective July 11, 2024.

**Rev. Michael Hutchison**, from the Diocese of Konongo-Mampong, Ghana to Canonical Administrator of St. John’s Parish, Adel, for a three-year term effective July 11, 2024.

**Rev. Charles Kottas**, from Pastor, St. Peter Parish, Council Bluffs, to retirement.

**Rev. Alex Kramer**, from Graduate Studies, Rome, to Parochial Vicar of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, West Des Moines, for a three-year term effective July 11, 2024. In addition to this assignment, he is assigned to serve one day a week in the Diocesan Tribunal Office.

**Rev. Rodrigo Landeros**, extending his current appointment as Parochial Vicar at St. Anthony Parish, Des Moines, for an additional three-year term effective July 11, 2024.

**Rev. Matthew Luft**, from Parish Administrator to Pastor of St. Pius X Parish, Urbandale, effective March 15, 2024. Father Luft, formerly of the Order of St. Benedict, St. John’s Abbey, was also officially incardinated as a priest for the Diocese of Des Moines on March 15, 2024.

**Rev. Joel McNeil**, from Pastor of St. Patrick, Dunlap and Sacred Heart,

## OFFICIAL

Woodbine, to Pastor of St. Patrick Parish, Council Bluffs.

**Rev. David Nkrumah**, from Administrator, St. Patrick, Audubon, and Holy Trinity, Exira, to Pastor of St. Patrick, Audubon, and Holy Trinity, Exira. In addition, his assignment at these two parishes has been extended by six years.

**Rev. Remi Okere, C.S.Sp.**, from Pastor at St. John Parish, Adel, to Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Chariton; St. Francis Parish, Corydon; and St. Brendan Parish, Leon.

**Rev. Chris Reising**, from Pastor of St. Anthony Parish, Des Moines, to Pastor of All Saints Parish, Des Moines.

**Rev. Nicholas Stark**, from Parish Administrator to Pastor of St. Elizabeth Seton, Carlisle. In addition, he is assigned to Sacramental Ministry to the Hispanic Communities in the parishes of St. Patrick, Corning and St. Patrick, Lenox.

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Bishop William Joensen has granted the following priests a six-year assignment extension effective July 11.

**Rev. Thomas Dooley**, Pastor of St. Joseph, Winterset, and St. Patrick, Irish Settlement.

**Rev. Dan Kirby**, Pastor of St. John the Apostle, Norwalk, Administrator of the Shrine of the Assumption, Churchville, and Director of Junior Priests, including Assistance with International Priests during their transition into ministry in the Diocese of Des Moines.

**Rev. Antony Mathew**, Pastor of All Saints Parish, Stuart, and St. John Parish, Adair.

**Very Rev. P.J. McManus**, Pastor of Christ the King, Des Moines, and Vicar for Hispanic Ministry.

**Rev. Mark Neal**, Pastor of Holy Trinity, Des Moines.

**Rev. Seth Owusu**, Pastor of St. Mary Parish, Avoca, and St. Patrick Parish, Walnut.

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

Jason Kurth  
Chancellor

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# National Eucharistic Pilgrimage swings through Diocese

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Four routes.  
Sixty days on the road.  
Six thousand five hundred miles traveled.  
Jesus in the Eucharist will be the focus of four pilgrimages working their way from the North, South, East and West to Indianapolis in the middle of the country this summer for the culmination of a three-year revival with a Eucharistic Congress.

One of those four routes is coming through the Des Moines Diocese. The path, dubbed the St. Junipero Serra Route, kicks off May 18 in San Francisco and winds its way across the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains on foot. The Serra route will be the longest and most challenging branch of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage—covering over 2,200 miles.

Plans are being made to give the faithful many opportunities to see, pray, and be a part of the pilgrimage as it comes through Iowa June 23-25.

“We invite individuals and families to take some time, bring their families and friends, and embark on their own pilgrimage to see the Lord along the route

part of our Diocese,” said John Huynh, a diocesan coordinator.

Bishop William Joensen will celebrate an outdoor bilingual Mass at the Tom Hanafan River’s Edge Park in Council Bluffs on Sunday, June 23. After Mass, he will accept the Eucharistic Lord from Omaha Archbishop George Lucas.

Bishop Joensen will bring the Eucharist into Iowa and begin the local portion of the pilgrimage to its first stop at Corpus Christi Parish/Queen of Apostles Church in Council Bluffs.

Why does the Church do processions?

It started in 1264 with a desire to have a full day focused solely on the Eucharist

“It is because Pope Urban IV promulgated the celebration of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. The Eucharist was honored on Corpus Christi with processions,” said Father Luis Mejia, pastor of Corpus Christi Parish.

“The priest would carry the Blessed Sacrament through the city, stopping several times for benediction. This custom is still encouraged and practiced in many countries throughout the world,” he said. “Also, it is a great way to tell people who we are. We are Eucharistic people, who bear witness outside of the periphery.”

## A historic series of Eucharistic processions to crisscross the country this summer



From all four directions starting in May, national Eucharistic processions will work their way toward Indianapolis for a Eucharistic Congress this summer. Eucharistic processions are held to give praise and honor to God and to publicly witness to the faith by walking with Jesus.

## Experience the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

On June 23 - June 25, 2024, the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage will be making it’s way through the Diocese of Des Moines. During these 3 days you are invited to journey with Jesus in the Eucharistic processions, celebrate Mass, and participate in Holy Hours and overnight adoration.

You are invited to attend as many events as you interested in and able to. All events are **FREE** to attend, but registration is encouraged to allow parishes to plan for food at lunch/dinner and overall attendance.

June 23rd Council Bluffs	June 24th Glenwood & Imogene	June 25th Shenandoah
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Bilingual Sunday Mass @ Tom Hanafan’s River’s Edge Park</li> <li>◆ Eucharistic Processions from Omaha to Corpus Christi</li> <li>◆ Fellowship Dinner</li> <li>◆ Holy Hour</li> <li>◆ Overnight Adoration (7PM to 8AM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Holy Mass @ Corpus Christi</li> <li>◆ Eucharistic Procession on the Wabash Trace Nature Trail (8 miles)</li> <li>◆ Fellowship Lunch &amp; Dinner</li> <li>◆ Holy Hours (afternoon &amp; evening)</li> <li>◆ Overnight Adoration (7PM to 8AM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Mass with Bishop Joensen @ St. Patrick (Imogene)</li> <li>◆ Solemn Eucharistic Procession (1 mile)</li> <li>◆ Holy Hour</li> <li>◆ Fellowship Lunch</li> </ul>

Opportunities for the faithful to celebrate Mass, adoration, benediction, and walk with Jesus as the Apostles did, will be available as Jesus in the Eucharist moves from Council Bluffs to Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood, St. Patrick in Imogene, and St. Mary in Shenandoah.

The U.S. bishops hope that, through the three-year Eucharistic Revival and the four pilgrimage routes crisscrossing the country to one central Eucharistic Congress, Christ will draw the faithful into greater unity as a people, as a nation, and as a Church.

The Catholic Church holds Eucharistic processions for two reasons, said Father Trevor Chicoine, diocesan Vicar for Divine Worship.

One reason Eucharistic processions are held is “to give praise and honor to God because we love Jesus. We want to adore him and be with him,” he said.

A second reason is “to give public witness to our faith. It’s not just what we do in church that’s important but it’s what we do out on the highways and byways of life. So, we take our faith, we take the Eucharist out there and we’re not afraid to be seen as Catholics and walk with Jesus,” he said.



Scan the QR code to learn more, explore the full schedule for each day, and register.  
[dmdiocese.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage](http://dmdiocese.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage)

## Eucharistic Revival preacher coming

The three-year, nationwide Eucharistic Revival’s mission is to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

Father Luke Spannagel, from Peoria, Illinois, will be talking about this when he comes to St. Theresa Parish in Des Moines this month.

Opportunities to hear this Eucharistic Revival preacher are at the 6:30 a.m. Masses on April 24, 25 and 26. He will also give a talk April 25 at 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

For more information contact St. Theresa Parish at 515-279-4654.



Father Luke Spannagel

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# Q&A: What are ESAs & how do they work?

*This school year, more than 2,400 students used new ESAs to help with educational expenses at Des Moines diocesan schools*

**By Nicole Evans**  
Contributing writer

Initiated in February 2023, the Students First Act makes state funding available for eligible Iowa K-12 students who choose to attend accredited nonpublic schools in the form of an Education Savings Account.

The legislation also provides public schools additional funding for students who live in the school's district but attend nonpublic schools.

"Public schools are the foundation of our education system and for most families they will continue to be the option of choice, but they aren't the only choice," Gov. Kim Reynolds said when she signed the Students First Act into law. "For some families, a different path may be better for their children. With this bill, every child in Iowa, regardless of zip code or income, will have access to the school best suited for them."

### What is an ESA?

An ESA (a form of school choice) is a deposit of public funds into government-authorized savings accounts, which eligible families may use to cover tuition, fees, and other qualified

education expenses.

ESAs foster good stewardship and responsible use of educational spending by empowering parents to shop for educational providers based on price and quality, according to Greg Forster, Ph.D., in "A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Choice."

Moreover, unlike traditional voucher programs, unused ESA funds can be rolled over yearly to save for future educational expenses.

"School choice improves academic outcomes for participants and public schools by allowing students to find the schools that best match their needs and by introducing healthy competition that keeps schools mission-focused," Forster wrote. "It breaks down the barriers of residential segregation, drawing students together from diverse communities."

### How do ESAs work?

Parents who enroll their eligible children in an accredited nonpublic school will receive approximately \$7,600 annually per child for tuition and other qualified educational expenses.

Funds are deposited into the student's ESA (managed by a state contractor) yearly, and the

parent pays the school through an app.

Funds remain available until the student graduates from high school or turns 20. Any remaining balance is returned to the state general fund at that time.

During the 2023-2024 school year, 16,757 students used a Students First ESA to attend an accredited nonpublic school in Iowa as of the Oct. 1 certified enrollment date, according to the Iowa Department of Education.

Among these students, 2,405 enrolled at a Diocese of Des Moines Catholic school.

### Is my child eligible?

ESAs are available based on the following eligibility:

#### School Year 2024-25

- All entering kindergarten students.
- All students enrolled in a public school.
- A student enrolled in a private school with a household income at or below 400% of the 2024 federal poverty guidelines.

#### School Year 2025-26

- All K-12 students in Iowa, regardless of income.

"As stewards of knowledge

and faith, embracing the transformative power of education savings accounts in Iowa is a testament to our commitment to nurturing both the minds and spirits of our students," said Donna Bishop, diocesan schools superintendent.

"By removing the financial barriers for families, we can pave the way for a brighter future, where every child can access the quality education they deserve," she said.

### What about tuition assistance?

ESAs will not affect the tuition assistance families may receive through the diocese's Catholic Tuition Organization.

The CTO is part of a larger tuition organization program in Iowa that supports more than 11,000 students.

The CTO helps parents whose education choices are restricted by their income or zip code. Donors to the CTO are encouraged to continue to support tuition assistance for families that want a nonpublic or faith-based education for their children.

### Can families apply for both an ESA and tuition assistance?

Yes!

Qualified families can receive both an ESA and tuition assistance.

Applying for both options

gives eligible families the best chance at receiving the most assistance.

The remaining funds in an ESA account can be used for future tuition costs or other eligible educational expenses.

All families at or below 400% of the federal poverty guidelines qualify for CTO tuition assistance, even if they apply for an ESA.

### Learn more and apply

The application window opened April 16 for the 2024-2025 school year and applications must be submitted by June 30.

Only one application is needed per household. Parents/guardians can add multiple students attending multiple schools from their household.

The application process should take 10-15 minutes, and results will be available immediately. Applications are valid for one year; a family must apply annually to remain eligible for the program.

For more information about ESAs, email [studentsfirst@iowa.gov](mailto:studentsfirst@iowa.gov) or call 515-281-5211. Families can also contact Iowa ACE at 515-313-0687 or [info@iowaace.org](mailto:info@iowaace.org).

For more information about tuition assistance in the Diocese of Des Moines, visit [ctodsmdiocese.org](http://ctodsmdiocese.org) or reach out to Mark Reed at the Catholic Tuition Organization, 515-237-5010 or [mareed@dmdiocese.org](mailto:mareed@dmdiocese.org).

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# Vocation is a holy adventure

By Ryan Johnson  
Contributing Writer

Iceland is not a country of endless ice as the misnomer suggests. Instead, it's untamed wilderness, breathtaking natural wonders and verdant landscapes.

It's also the place where Father Reed Flood felt called to bring young men discerning a vocation to the priesthood.

Father Flood is the chaplain at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines and the assistant vocations director for the Diocese of Des Moines. Father Flood was ordained in 2021 and is in his second year as the chaplain at the high school.

## Why Iceland?

"Why not Iceland?" asked Father Flood.

"The phenomenon of the word hits you and presents a kind of adventure to it, but also a mystery," he said. "Even the word itself is a mysterious destination. There is a mystic quality to it, something grandiose and adventurous. It is that quality that I wanted to focus on Iceland."

He first traveled to Iceland when he was in seminary studying in Rome. He and two other seminarians wanted to see snow for Christmas and selected Iceland as their destination. While visiting Iceland, he experienced a strong calling to return to the country.

"I had this awareness, I felt I would be coming back here with a group of high school men," Father Flood said.

At the time, he was not aware of his future assignment as the chaplain at Dowling Catholic High School. Once assigned at Dowling Catholic High School, Father Flood brought up his call-



Thomas Huegerich, Lucas Hilligas, and Jack Freking observe a moment of silence on the slopes of Mt. Helgafell. Several prolonged moments of silence were provided while climbing the mountain so the men could practice listening to the sounds of nature.

ing to take a group of young men to Iceland on a religious pilgrimage.

"It was immediately met with tremendous interest," he said. "It did not take long before students were drawn to that, and they wanted to pursue it. Parents and benefactors wanted to support the trip. Bishop gave his permission."

During the first pilgrimage to Iceland, Father Flood led a group of six young men on the trip to discern God's calling for their lives. It wasn't a mission trip nor was it a vacation, rather he described it as a "discernment pilgrimage."

"It's a time set apart for intentional prayer and searching for

the Lord in the wilderness," he said.

He took a group inside a volcano, where he described the experience of utter darkness. Another significant moment from the trip was climbing Helgafell mountain, which means the holy mountain, behind the parish where they were staying.

During the pilgrimage, the group took deliberate moments of silence.

"This emptiness is where we give space for God to enter into our lives," he said.

## Return Trip

Father Flood and Father James Downey led a second group of 12 young men to Iceland in January 2024. The participants were seniors at Dowling Catholic and expressed an interest in a vocation to the priesthood.

The trip focused on their discernment and calling to the Catholic priesthood and religious life. Every day was structured much like a seminarian's daily schedule.

"Each day began with Eucharistic adoration and silent prayer," said Father Flood. "We did a holy hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament. We followed that by praying the major liturgy of the hours. Following the holy

hour, we had Mass, then a reflection given by one of our mentors focused on a theme of vocations."

The participants enjoyed living the "radical, intentional lifestyle." Father Flood explained the adventures and the community life were present during the pilgrimage. The formation was directed toward their identity as sons of God.

## What's Next

Upon returning from the pilgrimage, the young men continued their prayer, community, and formation through a variety of religious opportunities at Dowling Catholic. These include participating in the following: the Legion of Our Lady small group, Ut Fidem small groups, daily Mass, and daily Eucharistic adoration.

Father Flood anticipates another trip next winter based on the strong interest during the first two years. He hopes to expand the

pilgrimage to include young men beyond Dowling Catholic who may be discerning a religious vocation.

"I encourage vocations to the priesthood, and I work as an intermediary between young men and women who are discerning God's will to help them make the step to join the seminary or pursue their vocation through a religious calling," he said. "Healthy formation occurs in healthy cultures. Surround yourself with good holy people seeking goodness and holiness, and you will be formed by that."

There is a misconception that holiness is boring and tame, he said.

"Holiness is anything but boring; in my experience, it's rugged, dangerous," he said. "If you want to avoid living a boring life, follow God's will. You will not be able to escape the adventure."

"The purpose behind the Iceland pilgrimage is to reveal an essential truth regarding vocations: God calls us on a divine adventure. The exterior experiences in Iceland reflect an even greater interior experience: the inner spiritual life. Climbing mountains, exploring petrified volcano tunnels, and eating sharks all help contribute to this tangible experience of adventure. Somewhere along the line, pursuing one's vocation and living a life of faith became labeled as boring by today's society. That is so far from the truth. The greatest adventure we can ever hope to experience is rooted in our God-given vocations. God created the world and he created us, so he knows what will ultimately fulfill our deepest desires. I pray this pilgrimage will inspire the world to live out their vocations. If God is calling you to the seminary or religious life, then buckle up. I cannot fathom a greater adventure than that."

— Father Reed Flood, chaplain at Dowling Catholic High School, assistant Vocations director

"Iceland is a land where nature is immense and overwhelming. The landscape looks like it is from an alien movie. It is so beautiful that you cannot help but be in awe of God's creation. This trip allowed us to spend time with God in prayer, with his people and his nature. This had a tremendous impact on me, as I continuously encountered God in many ways. God speaks to us in the silence, but he was screaming through it all week."

— Terry Clark, director of Ministry and Formation and chair of the Theology Department, Dowling Catholic High School



The men stand along a river running through the Golden Circle, where in the year 1000 AD, an assembly convened for the country declared Christianity the official religion of Iceland. Now fewer than 20 priests remain in the entire nation.



## Around the Diocese

### April 20

#### Sponsor Couple training

WAUKEE – St. Boniface Church is hosting a sponsor couple training from 9-11:30 a.m. Couples must register for this training and can do so with Adam Storey at 515-237-5056 or astorey@dmdiocese.org.

### April 23-26 Tues.-Fri.

#### “This is My Body Given for You”

DES MOINES – Father Luke Spannagel from Peoria, Illinois, will be coming to St. Theresa Parish in Des Moines this month. Opportunities open to the public to hear this Eucharistic Revival preacher are at the 6:30 a.m. Masses on April 24, 25 and 26. Also, we are invited to a talk scheduled for April 25 at 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. For more information contact St. Theresa Parish at 515-279-4654.

### April 22 Monday

#### Holy Hour

DES MOINES – Join Bishop Wil-

liam Joensen for a holy hour at St. Ambrose Cathedral at 5 p.m.

### April 24-28 Wed.-Sun. Eucharistic Miracles Exhibit

IMOGENE – St. Patrick Church is hosting the international Eucharistic Miracles of the World exhibit. View it April 24-26 from 3-7 p.m.; April 27 from 2-5 p.m. and April 28 from 8 a.m. – noon. The Eucharistic Miracles of the World exhibit is a traveling display on loan from Spirit Catholic Radio. The Knights of the Holy Eucharist, consecrated lay Franciscan brothers dedicated to fostering reverent devotion to Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, will be speaking about the Eucharist April 27 at 6:30 p.m. We are hosting a soup supper after the 5 p.m. Mass (approx. 6 p.m.). All are invited to attend.

### April 29 Monday

#### Holy Hour

DES MOINES – Join Bishop Wil-

liam Joensen for a holy hour at St. Ambrose Cathedral at 5 p.m.

### April 29 Monday

#### Music Coordinators

DES MOINES – Greater Des Moines parish music coordinators will meet at 6:30 p.m. at Caribou Coffee on Ingersoll Ave. to get to know each other, learn about an upcoming convention, and pick up some new choral settings.

### May 5 Sunday

#### Mental Health Awareness Month

DES MOINES – Come to the 11 a.m. Mass at St. Ambrose Cathedral and a retreat from noon to 4 p.m. at the Catholic Pastoral Center for those who want to explore mental health from a Catholic perspective. Lunch is provided. Look at [dmdiocese.org/events](http://dmdiocese.org/events) for more information.

### May 6 Monday

#### Holy Hour

DES MOINES – Join Bishop Wil-

### May 7 Tuesday

#### Parish Mission

DES MOINES – You're invited to St. Mary of Nazareth Parish from 6:30-8 p.m. for a parish mission on “What’s the Matter With Mass?” - A Spiritual Health Adventure with Deacon Randy Kiel. He will tackle some tough questions such as “Why do some people leave the Church and others stay?”, “What do I do with the ache in my heart for my family not attending Mass?” and “How can I help people come back?” A social will immediately follow and childcare is available upon request. For questions or childcare, contact Deacon Greg Lievens at (319) 240-0840 or [deaconggreg@stmarysdsdm.org](mailto:deaconggreg@stmarysdsdm.org).

### May 23 Thursday

#### St. Vincent de Paul Golf Outing

PLEASANT HILL – Chip in Fore Charity benefit for St. Vincent de Paul will be held at Copper Creek Golf Club. Registration is at 8:30 a.m. and shotgun start is at 10 a.m. For more information contact Randi Radosevich at [resourcedirector@svdpdsm.org](mailto:resourcedirector@svdpdsm.org). To register go to [svdpdsm.org/news-events/golf-fundraiser/](http://svdpdsm.org/news-events/golf-fundraiser/)

## Two deacons celebrate golden anniversary

Two deacons will celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination on April 28.

Deacon Leo Gaul, of Shelby County, and Deacon Don Jacobi, of Cedar Rapids, were among eight men and their wives in the second class of deacon candidates.

The men were ordained at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Harlan. Also ordained with them were Deacons Marvin Klein, Tony Critelli, Jerry Leininger, Donald Kunecke, John Metz, and John Stessman.

“It was kind of an exciting time. It was a culmination of three or four years of studying,” said Deacon Jacobi.

St. Michael Parish, in Harlan, will honor the two deacons with a Mass and reception on April 21.

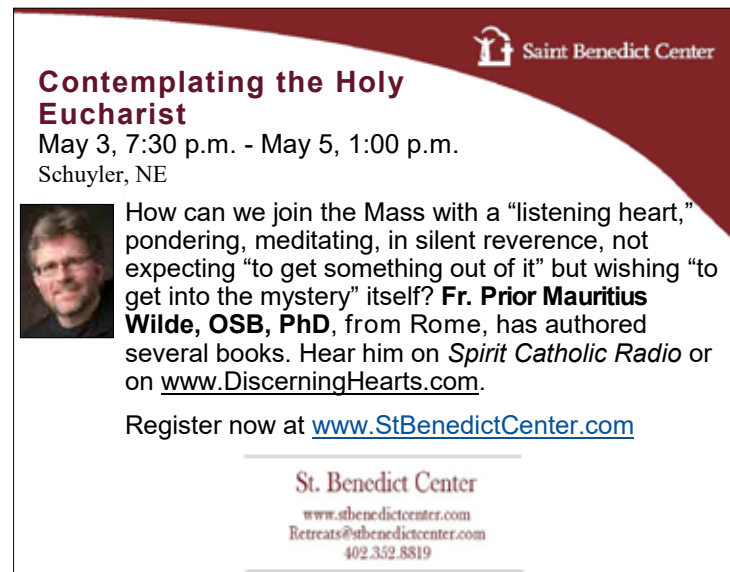
It was through Vatican II, that the permanent diaconate was restored after a long dormancy. Bishop Maurice Dingman had proposed to his priests that the Des Moines diocese join some of the first in the country to explore a formation program for those who would be good candidates for the diaconate. The diocese was looking for men and their wives who, by their lifestyle, could illustrate and then motivate a renewed spirituality in the laity. In fact, the Des Moines Diocese was sixth in the nation to ordain permanent deacons in what was a groundbreaking move for the Catholic Church and the Diocese.

“The Diocese thanks Deacons Gaul and Jacobi for answering God’s call to serve others through ordained ministry,” said Deacon Jim Houston, coordinator of the permanent diaconate.



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May 3, 7:30 p.m. - May 5, 1:00 p.m.  
Schuyler, NE

How can we join the Mass with a “listening heart,” pondering, meditating, in silent reverence, not expecting “to get something out of it” but wishing “to get into the mystery” itself? **Fr. Prior Mauritus Wilde, OSB, PhD**, from Rome, has authored several books. Hear him on *Spirit Catholic Radio* or on [www.DiscerningHearts.com](http://www.DiscerningHearts.com).

Register now at [www.StBenedictCenter.com](http://www.StBenedictCenter.com)

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[Retreats@stbenedictcenter.com](mailto:Retreats@stbenedictcenter.com)  
402.352.8819

### In gratitude

A missionary image of Our Lady of Guadalupe will be at multiple events in the Diocese of Des Moines to encourage thanksgiving to Our Lady for her intercession to protect life.

Sunday April 21 - 1:30 p.m., Iowa State Capitol, west steps, rosary.

Tuesday April 23 - 5:15 p.m. Mass, presentation, veneration until 7 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, in Des Moines

Friday April 26 - 5:30 p.m. Mass, veneration until 7:30 p.m., Christ the King Church in Des Moines

Sunday April 28 - 8:30 & 10:30 a.m. Masses, veneration until 12:30 p.m., Ss. John & Paul in Altoona & 3:30 p.m. presentation, 4 p.m. Mass, veneration until 6 p.m., St. Joseph Church in Des Moines

### 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](mailto:Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov).

## Experience the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

On June 23 - June 25, 2024, the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage will be making its way through the Diocese of Des Moines.

During these 3 days you are invited to journey with Jesus in the Eucharistic processions, celebrate Mass, and participate in Holy Hours and overnight adoration.

You are invited to attend as many events as you interested in and able to. All events are **FREE** to attend, but registration is encouraged to allow parishes to plan for food at lunch/dinner and overall attendance.



### June 23-25, 2024

Council Bluffs | Glenwood | Imogene | Shenandoah

Scan the QR code to learn more about the event, explore the full schedule for each day, and register.





# Sisters build support for new medical clinic

Through the generosity of Iowans, a new medical clinic in Kenya is under construction.

The land was blessed and ground was broken this past Jan. 2 in rural Tunyai, Kenya, where the Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation serve the poor who come needing medical assistance.

The current open-air clinic – where patients are seen outside, with no place to store supplies, and rain forces the clinic to close -- will be replaced by the new medical clinic building.

The construction is the fruit of long and hard work of a group assisting three Nazareth Sisters living in Des Moines, who moved to central Iowa about 10 years ago

to earn and raise funds that they send back home to support their order's work in Africa. Sisters Rosalia Njura, Joan Clare Njoroka, and Joan Susan Mwendu work at MercyOne Medical Center in Des Moines and are members of St. Pius X Church in Urbandale.

Fundraising for the new clinic began in 2021 and a little more than \$75,000 toward the goal of \$150,000 has been raised. About \$60,000 was needed to build the new medical clinic. The additional funds are needed for furnishings, medical equipment and supplies, water access for the clinic, and transportation to deliver supplies and to transport very sick patients to the nearest hospital 15

miles away.

There will be an open house on Thursday, April 25 at 7 p.m. at St. Pius X Church in Urbandale in the Martha and Mary Room. All are invited! Attendees will meet the three sisters living in Des Moines and learn the latest news on the building of the clinic. The Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation-USA 501c3 non-profit was established for those who want to offer financial support. Support can also be given through the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa. For more information, contact Steve Craig at mbcraig1@msn.com or visit the NazarethSisters.com website.



Before work on a new medical clinic began in rural Tunyai, Kenya, patients were seen outside in the open-air facility. Above, a sister provides a medical talk to patients.

## Second blow tests Perry community

Continued from page 1

The implications of the closing will become apparent in the coming years, he said.

Some have worked at Tyson for 20 or 30 years. For some families the hardship will be compounded because both husband and wife are employed there.

Father Thomas said people are opting to work until the plant closes on June 28. After that, some will apply for unemployment benefits as they search for a new job, while others may take their job hunt to California or Florida, where they have extended family.

"Right now, the city is organizing job fairs, so one thing I have asked the parishioners to do is share job opportunities," he said. That is done in the parish bulletin and on St. Patrick's Facebook page, as well as their WhatsApp group.

By helping people find jobs and stay in Perry, it also helps the businesses in town who depend on revenue from gas sold and groceries purchased, among other things, Father Thomas said.

In addition, his goal is to identify families who need immediate care.

"Here at the parish, we have Knights of Columbus, Regina Guild and St. Vincent de Paul, so

if they need support – buying groceries and meeting their needs – we try to provide them," he said.

### Resources needed

Another avenue of support at St. Patrick is the Hispanic Leadership Team, which works to make certain the Spanish-speaking community is "vibrant and active" there. Enrique Cruz, a member of the team, said the group planned to meet on April 12.

Language is a major concern, he said.

"You're looking at a lot of people who do not have enough English to communicate, so the resources are limited for them," Cruz said.

In addition, they may not have access to a computer or the necessary skills to apply for jobs online, which is required more and more.

"Do we use the school equipment – computers – to host a day for a job fair, but also a day that you can apply," Cruz said. "Or finding someone who can help you with your resume, create a resume, or helping with your interviews. I think that's very important."

### A moment of trust

PerryNext, a group of businesses and organizations held the

first of several planned job fairs in Perry on April 3. In a video greeting, Perry Mayor Dirk Cavanaugh said it was more than a job fair, however.

"It is a beacon of hope and testament to the resilience of our great city," he said. "We are committed to ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to find new employment, polishing their existing skills, or exploring new training avenues."

Cavanaugh added that a team is "working very hard" to find someone to take over the Tyson plant.

"This is a moment of trust – trusting the Lord," Father Thomas said. He also expressed gratitude to the larger community, including the Diocese of Des Moines, for their care and concern.

"As St. Paul would say, 'We are the body of Christ. When part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers,'" Father Thomas said. "So we truly experience that support. We truly experience that we are one family, with support from the Diocese, and with the help of other parishes, as well."

Those would like to assist people with job applications, creating resumes or job coaching can reach Cruz at 515-771-6212 after 3 p.m. Anyone who knows of job openings may call the parish office at 515-465-4387.



Several members of the Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation moved to central Iowa to work and send money back home. A local group is assisting the sisters in fundraising to help build a new medical clinic in the poor rural community of Tunyai, Kenya. Above, construction has begun on the new clinic.

## Hamburg church supports new pregnancy, resource center

Volunteers at St. Mary Catholic Church in Hamburg held a biscuits and gravy fundraiser on Feb. 4, raising \$388 for The Shenandoah Pregnancy and Resource Center.

SPaRC is a pro-life, faith-based ministry in Shenandoah that serves families from all over southwest Iowa and northwest Missouri.

Since opening its doors in borrowed space in September 2021 to moving into its newly built building recently, the center has served more than 100 families with more than 260 people including children.

The pregnancy center provides tangible help in the form of diapers, wipes, baby formula, clothing and baby furniture and apparatus through the donations of compassionate people who desire to help them fulfill their mission to "provide hope and help to all those facing pregnancy decisions and parenting needs," said Joella Travis, coordinator of the volunteers.

The center also provides referrals to other community services and parenting education and training for both men and women. Soon the center will offer free ultrasounds to expectant mothers.

Anyone with questions can contact the center at 712-246-9118. To schedule a tour of the new facility, learn more, or see how you can volunteer, call the number and ask for Angela.



Joella Travis, coordinator of some volunteers at St. Mary Parish in Hamburg, presents a check to Angela Bentley, executive director of Shenandoah Pregnancy and Resource Center.

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# Priest assignments go into effect this summer



Father James  
Ahenkora



Father Michael  
Amadeo



Father Samuel  
Danso



Father James  
Downey



Father Jacob  
Epstein



Father Enrique  
Garcia



Father Robert  
Harris



Father Oscar  
Rosales Hernandez

Picture  
unavailable

Father Michael  
Hutchison



Father Charles  
Kottas



Father Alex  
Kramer



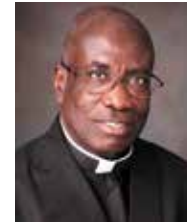
Father Rodrigo  
Landeros



Father Matthew  
Luft



Father Joel  
McNeil



Father David  
Nkrumah



Father Remi  
Okere, C.S.Sp.



Father Chris  
Reising



Father Nicholas  
Stark

Continued from page 1

Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine.

Born in Ghana in 1975, Father Danso holds degrees in business education, education, divinity, and has a license in theology. He studied in Rome for four years before being ordained in 2010.

When he came to the Diocese of Des Moines in 2018, he began serving his current three parishes in Chariton, Corydon, and Leon.

**Father James Downey**, while continuing his assignment as faculty at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, will offer weekend sacramental assistance at St. Boniface Parish in Waukee, for a three-year term, effective July 11.

Father Downey was born in Des Moines in 1992. He is an alumnus of Dowling Catholic, St. John Vianney in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

After his ordination in 2019, he served Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish and St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, both in Ankeny. In 2022, he was assigned to the faculty of Dowling Catholic.

**Father Jacob Epstein** is moving from Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs to become pastor of St. Peter Parish, also in Council Bluffs.

Born in 1988 in Alexandria, Virginia, he attended Urbandale High School, Iowa State University and St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota. He had earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering before entering the seminary.

Father Epstein has served Corpus Christi Parish since his 2021 ordination.

**Father Enrique Garcia** will begin serving at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines for a three-year term effective July 11.

Born in Mexico in 1975, Father Garcia earned a master's degree in religious studies from the University of LaSalle and was ordained in 2001.

He joined the faculty at Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri while serving as a senior priest in Hispanic Ministry in the Des Moines Diocese in 2014. In 2019, he began serving Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs.

**Father Robert Harris** is retiring from All Saints Parish in

Des Moines.

Born in 1954, he attended Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee, and Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corner, Wisconsin.

He was ordained in 1996 by Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S.

After ordination, he served St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, St. Patrick Parish in Missouri Valley, and St. Mary/Holy Cross Parish in Elkhart. He has been serving at All Saints Parish in Des Moines since 2008.

**Father Oscar Rosales Hernandez**, is coming from the Diocese of Zacatecoluca in El Salvador to serve at Christ the King Parish in Des Moines, for a three-year term effective July 11.

Born in 1990, he was ordained in 2018. He has been at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa since January.

**Father Michael Hutchison** is originally from the Diocese of Konongo-Mampong in Ghana. Born in 1979 and ordained in 2007, he has been doing post-graduate work at Fordham University in New York. He will serve as the canonical administrator of St. John Parish, Adel, for a three-year term effective July 11.

**Father Charles Kottas**, from pastor of St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs, to retirement.

Father Kottas, born in 1944, attended high school in Nebraska, and attended St. Thomas in Denver, Immaculate Conception in Conception, Missouri, and the University of Nebraska.

He was ordained in 1970, and began serving in the Diocese of Des Moines in 1986 at St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines. He also served Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines.

He served the Shelby County Parishes of St. Joseph in Earling; St. Peter in Defiance; St. Mary Parish in Panama; and St. Mary in Portsmouth.

He was incardinated into the Diocese of Des Moines in 1991.

He's also served St. Patrick in Dunlap, Sacred Heart in Woodbine, St. Patrick in Massena, and Ss. Peter and Paul in Atlantic.

In 1996, he began serving as pastor at St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs.

He has been the chaplain for the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, St. Anthony Court

#330 since 2004, and he served as canonical administrator at St. Albert Catholic School.

**Father Alex Kramer** is returning from graduate studies in Canon law in Rome to serve as parochial vicar at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, West Des Moines, for a three-year term effective July 11.

In addition, he is assigned to serve one day a week in the diocesan Tribunal Office.

Father Kramer, born in 1996, attended Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, St. John Vianney College Seminary in Minnesota, and the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

He was ordained by Bishop William Joensen in 2022. Aside from his studies, he has provided sacramental ministry at the St. Thomas More Center in Panora.

**Father Rodrigo Landeros** will continue his current appointment as parochial vicar at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines for an additional three-year term effective July 11.

Born in 1996, Father Landeros attended Clarke Community High School in Osceola, Seminario Hispano de Santa Maria de Guadalupe in Mexico, and St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota. He was ordained by Bishop William Joensen in 2022.

Since his ordination, Father Landeros has offered spiritual and pastoral care at St. Anthony Parish and has assisted the diocese's Hispanic Ministry.

**Father Matthew Luft** became the pastor of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale on March 15. He had been serving as parish administrator.

Father Luft, formerly of the Order of St. Benedict, St. John's Abbey, was also officially incardinated as a priest for the Diocese of Des Moines on March 15.

Born in 1972, he is the son of Deacon Dennis and the late Sarah Luft, who served in the diocesan Marriage and Family Life Office. He was raised in Des Moines, and ordained in Collegetown, Minnesota in 2005.

Before returning to Iowa, Father Luft spent 23 years living in monastic life in Minnesota. As a monk, he lived in a religious community and worked in parishes, a university, and the community.

**Father Joel McNeil**, who has been serving as pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap and Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine, will become the pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs.

Father McNeil was born in 1961 and attended high school in Bellevue, Nebraska. He attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, St. Mary's University in Winona, Minnesota, and St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. He was ordained in Omaha in 1987.

Father McNeil came to the Diocese of Des Moines from Texas in 2015. He served as pastor and director of Campus Ministry at St. Catherine of Siena in Des Moines; as pastor of Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs; and as pastor of St. Patrick in Dunlap, Holy Family in Woodbine and Sacred Heart in Mondamin.

**Father David Nkrumah** will remain serving St. Patrick, Audubon, and Holy Trinity, Exira, for six more years. His title changes from administrator to pastor.

Born in 1969, Father Nkrumah attended college in Ireland, and earned theology degrees in Baltimore, Maryland and St. Paul, Minnesota. He was ordained in 1996 in Ghana.

Since he arrived in the Diocese of Des Moines, he has been serving his parishes in Audubon and Exira.

**Father Remi Okere, C.S.Sp.**, is moving from St. John Parish in Adel, to pastor Sacred Heart Parish in Chariton; St. Francis Parish, in Corydon; and St. Brendan Parish in Leon.

Born in 1963, he attended school in Nigeria.

He joined the Congregation of the Holy Ghost in the Archdiocese of Onidsha, Nigeria, and was ordained a priest in 1994.

Since coming to the Diocese of Des Moines in 1996, he has served St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines, Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines, Assumption Parish in Granger, and St. John Parish in Adel.

**Father Christopher Reising** is moving from pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines to pastor of All Saints Parish in Des Moines.

Born in 1978, Father Reising was home schooled, attended Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, and the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois. He was ordained in 2006 by Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S.

Father Reising has served Queen of Apostles, and Holy Family in Council Bluffs, and Our Lady of Carter Lake in Carter Lake.

He studied Spanish in Mexico and served Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines, St. Patrick Parish in Perry, St. Bernard Parish in Osceola, St. Joseph Parish in Mt Ayr, St. Patrick Parish in Grand River and St. Anthony.

**Father Nicholas Stark** will stay at St. Elizabeth Seton in Carlisle, though he's moving from administrator to pastor. In addition, he is assigned to sacramental ministry to the Hispanic Communities in the parishes of St. Patrick in Corning and St. Patrick in Lenox.

Father Stark was born in 1995. He attended Dowling Catholic High School, St. Pius X Seminary in Dubuque, and St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Ordained a priest in 2021, he has served Christ the King Parish in Des Moines, and St. Elizabeth Seton Parish.

## Six priests granted six more years

Bishop William Joensen has granted the following priests a six-year assignment extension effective July 11.

Father Thomas Dooley, pastor of St. Joseph, Winterset, and St. Patrick, Irish Settlement.

Father Dan Kirby, pastor of St. John the Apostle in Norwalk; administrator of the Shrine of the Assumption in Churchville; and director of junior priests, including assistance with international priests during their transition into ministry in the Diocese of Des Moines.

Father Antony Mathew, pastor of All Saints Parish in Stuart, and St. John Parish in Adair.

Father PJ McManus, pastor of Christ the King Parish in Des Moines, and vicar for Hispanic Ministry.

Father Mark Neal, pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines.

Father Seth Owusu, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Avoca, and St. Patrick Parish in Walnut.



# Eagle Scout displays stations

By Sue Evans  
Contributing Writer

“We adore thee, O Christ and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”

With these words on this past Good Friday, parishioners of Christ the King Catholic Church in Des Moines prayed the Stations of the Cross. But this year a new and special tradition began by walking the path of the stations outdoors.

Seamus O’Keefe, 18, and a member of Christ the King Parish, completed his Eagle Scout project through the Boy Scouts of America with the installation of the 14 Stations of the Cross on the perimeter of the playground on the parish and school campus, at the northeast corner of the intersection of Wall Street and Southwest 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

The year-long project culminated with the blessing and praying of the stations on Good Friday.

“I feel the stations will bring the people of the parish closer together and closer to God,” O’Keefe said, adding that they will provide an option for those who like to pray the stations outside.

The stations are located along an asphalt pathway on the playground.

In March 2023, O’Keefe

asked Jason Feeney, coordinator of youth ministry at Christ the King, for help in finding an idea for his Eagle Scout project. They consulted the pastor, Father P.J. McManus, who recommended they use a set of hand-carved Stations of the Cross that had been donated to the parish.

So, planning began. With the assistance of his parents, Sean and Pam, and siblings, scout leaders and fellow scouts from his Troop 383 in Altoona, members of the CTK Youth Group and confirmation class and Christ the King staff, O’Keefe began work on the project in August of 2023.

They weatherproofed the shadow boxes, which contain the stations and attached them to the posts.

After approximately 125 hours of labor, the construction and installation of the stations was completed in November. The project cost about \$465 and 18 people worked on its completion.

More than 100 people walked the Stations of the Cross late on a warm Good Friday afternoon. Father McManus blessed each of the



Sheamus O’Keefe and his parents, Sean and Pam O’Keefe

stations and then returned to the first station for prayer.

“Seeing the first use of the stations and the blessing of them was something special,” said O’Keefe. “I had known it was going to be a relatively large event, but I hadn’t realized just how it would actually be. It was very special to see and I am glad that I was able to do it for the parish and the community and with the help from the parish and community.”

O’Keefe is a member of the youth group at Christ the King and participant in the choir. He has been in scouts for 12 years.

## Make a gift without a checkbook or wallet

By Sue McEntee  
Contributing Writer

Planned giving offers a deliberate and thoughtful way for you to support causes close to your heart, transcending the limitations of traditional methods like writing checks or using cash.

Rather than spontaneous contributions, planned giving involves strategically incorporating charitable donations into your overall financial plan. By leveraging tools such as charitable gift annuities, charitable trusts, beneficiary designations, bequests, or donor-advised funds, you can maximize the impact of your giving while also potentially benefitting from tax advantages and legacy-building opportunities.

Unlike the immediacy of writing a check, planned giving allows you to carefully consider your philanthropic goals and explore avenues for creating lasting change. Whether it’s establishing or supporting an endowment for our faithful, funding specific programs through a charitable trust, or including charitable bequests in estate planning, planned giving offers you a tailored approach to making a difference.

Furthermore, planned giving provides the flexibility to contribute assets beyond cash, including stocks, real estate, or even retirement accounts, allowing you to optimize your giving while potentially minimizing tax liabilities.

This strategic approach not only benefits your parish or favorite not for profit but also aligns with your financial objectives and values, creating a legacy of generosity that extends far into the future!

Below is simple language for leaving a planned gift via your will or estate:

**General bequests** are legacies left to certain people or causes that come from the general value of the estate, and are made by designating a specific dollar amount, a particular asset or a fixed percentage of your estate to the cause of your choice. General bequest language:

“I give, devise, and bequeath to the (your nonprofit name) headquartered in (your city and state) the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or a description of the specific asset), for its general purposes.”

**Specific bequests** are made when a particular item or property is bequeathed for a designated purpose. Specific bequest language:

“I give, devise, and bequeath to the (your nonprofit name) headquartered in (your city and state) the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or a description of a specific asset), to be added to a permanent endowment fund held by the (your nonprofit name) for the benefit of (your nonprofit name). If at any time in the sole judgment of the Board of Directors of the (your nonprofit name), it is or becomes impossible or impracticable to carry out the designated purpose of this gift, then the Board of Directors shall determine an alternative purpose closest to the original designated purpose.”

If you’d like more information on any of these topics or additional bequest language options, please reach out to the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa at 515-237-5044 or via email at [contact@cfswia.org](mailto:contact@cfswia.org).

### 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).

### Des Moines Catholic Worker House Fund

Do you have an upcoming Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA? Do you have a donor advised fund? The Des Moines Catholic Worker House Fund is a 501c(3) non-profit. Your donations would be used to support the hospitality ministry of the Des Moines Catholic Worker House by providing food and other necessities to the homeless population of Des Moines.

Donations can be sent to:  
**Des Moines Catholic Worker House Fund**  
**P.O. Box 1386 Ankeny, Iowa 50021**  
Or go to link below and select  
“Des Moines Catholic Worker House Fund”



<https://www.catholicfoundationiowa.org/make-a-donation/parishes-schools-and-organization-giving/>



**Fountains of Faith**

47<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL NPM NATIONAL CONVENTION  
JULY 8-11, 2024 | KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

**Calling all parish music coordinators, singers and musicians...**

**Join us at the National Association of Pastoral Musicians Gathering in Kansas City this summer.**



### Who we are: NPM

The National Association of Pastoral Musicians fosters the art of musical liturgy. The members of NPM serve the Catholic Church in the United States as musicians, clergy, liturgists, and other leaders of prayer.

### About the 2024 Convention

Join us July 8-11 at the Sheraton Kansas City Hotel at Crown Center (2345 McGee St., Kansas City, MO 64108) for 4 days of learning, prayer, networking and music. Highlights include addresses by:

- Rev. R. Bruce Cinquegrani, DMin
- Rawn Harbor
- Jan Kraybill

And feature insightful sessions and events such as:

- A special afternoon for clergy
- The National Catholic Handbell Festival
- A concert at the famous Kauffman Center

**...and much more!**

Learn more about the 2024 Convention by scanning the QR code or visiting [npm.org](http://npm.org).  
OR



Contact Julie Curry, director of the Des Moines Chapter at [desmoinesia@npm.org](mailto:desmoinesia@npm.org)  
[Facebook.com/npmdsm](https://www.facebook.com/npmdsm)





# Our days are blessed a bit more with song

Easter is the one major holiday when my family does not travel to be with extended family.

This means we are able to celebrate the Triduum at our own parish and celebrate the whole octave at home.

After the Easter weekend, our days don't seem all that unique.

Our time remains filled with soccer practices, swim lessons, and helping the kids with homework. Yet, there are still marks of the Easter season: more flowers in the home, more singing, and even a few leftover Peeps.

## Marriage & Family Life



By Adam Storey

Our days haven't changed; they feel ordinary, and yet the grace of the season has caught my eye and reminded me how family life truly is extraordinary.

These days make me think of the proph-

ecy in Isaiah, "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19a) Easter is a season when God's grace breaks into the ordinary circumstances of life, when God transforms our lives, not by removing us from the context of our lives but by transforming it.

We are all invited into this new life, not just on Easter Sunday but throughout the Easter season, which extends through Pentecost on May 19.

Right now, the proximity of Easter makes it easier to appreciate this grace, but the challenge is to continue to see God's

hand in daily life throughout the Easter season and at all times.

Perhaps the Easter season provides a model for how to do this. We don't have to abandon our daily obligations, or try to live as monks.

Instead, we need to become a bit more attentive, slow down where we can, and bless our days with a bit more song.

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

## Questions on Holy Communion, the creed

*Q. Can a Catholic who is divorced and re-married receive communion? Is this issue presently under consideration by Pope Francis who seeks inclusion? -M. Z., Des Moines*

A. Yes and no. Yes, if the divorced Catholic has also received an annulment of that previous marriage. No, if the divorced Catholic has not received an annulment of that previous marriage. Pope Francis has simplified some of the process of granting annulments in the past few years. If you or someone you know is divorced, it's a good idea to speak directly to a priest or deacon to consider the circumstances and the best path to follow.

*Q. On the liturgical calendar many women are listed as virgin while men are not. It seems like a double standard. If belonging to a religious order, why not indicate "religious" for both men and women? (Please forward my sentiments to the appropriate source who determines such things.) -M.Z., Des Moines*

A. You ask good questions! There are various designations given to saints in the Roman Calendar. We see, for example, priest, bishop, pope, confessor, mar-



Father John Ludwig

## I've Been Wondering...

tyr, pastor, virgin, etc. Why women are referred to as virgins, and men are not isn't clear. We refer to Mary as the Blessed Virgin, but we don't refer to Joseph as virgin, but as spouse.

*Q. In Luke, the angel tells Mary "The Holy Spirit will come upon you." In Matthew, an angel appears to Joseph in a dream saying Mary's child was conceived through the Holy Spirit. Was this terminology (Holy Spirit) known to Jewish people? -M.Z., Des Moines*

A. Only two of the four gospels speak of the birth of Jesus: Matthew and Luke. These are often referred to as the "infancy narratives." The gospels of Mark and John begin with Jesus as an adult, beginning his public ministry. Matthew gives his attention to Joseph, while Luke gives his attention to Mary. While we often look to the Scriptures for concrete his-

torical information, the gospels often concentrate on the person and the character of the individual. Only Matthew gives us the story of the Magi coming from the East and their encounter with the wicked King Herod. Only Luke gives us the appearance of the angels to the shepherds tending their flocks. Both gospels try to set the stage for the development of the rest of their gospel – Who is this Jesus? How did we come to know him? How was he received? There are many similarities in the gospels, but there are also important differences.

The Hebrew word for Spirit (Ruach) is also the word for "breath." The Trinity as we have come to know it was not part of the Jewish tradition.

*Q. In the Apostles' Creed I love to pray "I believe in the communion of saints." Why is this not in the Nicene Creed? Which came first and why are there two creeds?*

A. There are different creeds or statements of belief both within the Catholic Church and in other denominations and non-Christian religious groups. The Apostles' Creed, once erroneously thought to have been composed by the apostles, is ordinarily used at the beginning of the rosary. It can also be substituted for the Nicene Creed at Sunday Mass. The Nicene Creed dates to 325 and 381 A.D. It was commissioned by the Council of Nicea and later revised by the Council of Constantinople. Creeds usually use a concise listing of beliefs. No one creed can express the whole faith of the Church. At the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, St. Paul VI introduced the Creed (or Credo) of the People of God.

The Apostles' Creed includes that phrase "I believe in the communion of saints." This refers to those who have gone before us in faith as well as those with whom we share our faith today. We can learn from the tradition of holy people and also our contemporary brothers and sisters in Christ.

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

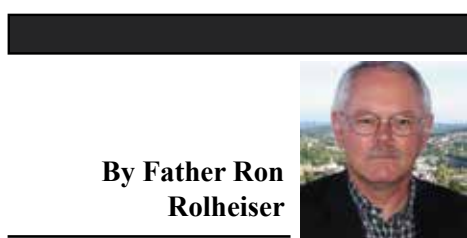
## God's silence in the face of evil

Theologians sometimes try to express the meaning of Jesus' resurrection in one sentence: In the resurrection, God vindicated Jesus, his life, his message, and his fidelity. What does that mean?

Jesus entered our world preaching faith, love, and forgiveness, but the world didn't accept that. Instead, it crucified him and by that seemingly shamed his message. We see this most clearly on the cross when Jesus is taunted, mocked, and challenged: If you are the son of God, come down from there! If your message is true, let God verify that right now! If your fidelity is more than plain stubbornness and human ignorance, then why are you dying in shame?

What was God's response to those taunts? Seemingly nothing, no commentary, no defense, no apologia, no counter challenge, just silence. Jesus dies in silence. Neither he nor the God he believed in tried to fill that excruciating void with any consoling words or explanations challenging people to look at the bigger picture or to look at the brighter side of things. None of that. Just silence.

Jesus died in silence, inside God's silence and inside the world's incomprehension. And we can let ourselves be scandalized by that silence, just as we can let ourselves be scandalized by the seeming triumph of evil, pain, and suffering in our world. God's seeming silence in the face of evil and death can forever scandalize us: in the Jewish holocaust, in ethnic genocides,



By Father Ron Rolheiser

in brutal and senseless wars, in the earthquakes and tsunamis which kill thousands of people and devastate whole countries, in the deaths of countless people taken out of this life by cancer and by violence, in how unfair life can be sometimes, and in the casual manner that those without conscience can rape whole areas of life seemingly without consequence. Where is God in all of this? What's God's answer?

God's answer is the resurrection, the resurrection of Jesus and the perennial resurrection of goodness within life itself. But resurrection is not necessarily rescue. God doesn't necessarily rescue us from the effects of evil, nor even from death. Evil does what it does, natural disasters are what they are, and those without conscience can rape even as they are feeding off life's sacred fire. Normally, God doesn't intervene. The parting of the Red Sea isn't a weekly occurrence. God lets his loved ones suffer and die, just as Jesus let his dear friend Lazarus die, and God let Jesus die. God redeems, raises us up afterwards, in a deeper, more lasting vindication. Moreover, the

truth of that statement can even be tested empirically.

Despite every appearance to the contrary at times, in the end, love does triumph over hatred. Peace does triumph over chaos. Forgiveness does triumph over bitterness. Hope does triumph over cynicism. Fidelity does triumph over despair. Virtue does triumph over sin. Conscience does triumph over callousness. Life does triumph over death, and good does triumph over evil, always. Mohandas K. Gandhi once wrote: "When I despair, I remember that all through history, the way of truth and love has always won. There have been murderers and tyrants, and for a time they seem invincible. But in the end they always fall. Think of it, always."

The resurrection, most forcibly, makes that point. In the end, God has the last word. The resurrection of Jesus is that last word. From the ashes of shame, of seeming defeat, failure, and death, a new, deeper, and eternal life perennially bursts forth. Our faith begins at the very point where it seems it should end, in God's seeming silence in the face of evil.

And what does this ask of us?

First, simply that we trust in the truth of the resurrection. The resurrection asks us to believe what Gandhi affirmed, namely, that in the end evil will not have the last word. It will fail. Good will eventually triumph.

More concretely, it asks us to roll

the dice on trust and truth, namely, trusting that what Jesus taught is true. Virtue is not naïve, even when it is shamed. Sin and cynicism are naïve, even when they appear to triumph. Those who genuflect before God and others in conscience will find meaning and joy, even when they are deprived of some of the world's pleasures. Those who drink in and manipulate sacred energy without conscience will not find meaning in life, even when they taste pleasure. Those who live in honesty, no matter the cost, will find freedom. Those who lie and rationalize will find themselves imprisoned in self-hate. Those who live in trust will find love. God's silence can be trusted, even when we die inside of it.

We need to remain faithful in love, forgiveness, and conscience, despite everything that suggests they are naïve. They will bring us to what is deepest inside of life. Ultimately, God vindicates virtue. God vindicates love. God vindicates conscience. God vindicates forgiveness. God vindicates fidelity. Ultimately, God vindicated Jesus and will vindicate us too if we remain faithful.

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



# Dignidad Humana: Una Vocación a Envisionar

Uno de mis filósofos católicos favoritos, el fallecido Robert Spaemann, dedicó una gran parte de su atención al significado de la dignidad humana. Él observa que el concepto de la dignidad mayoritariamente era implícito y no se mencionaba mucho explícitamente hasta el Siglo XX y se pregunta: “¿Se debe esto a que la dignidad de la humanidad no se aceptaba hasta el siglo [pasado]? ¿O a que la dignidad nunca había estado en tanto peligro como lo está ahora?” Él deduce que la respuesta a ambas preguntas puede ser un ‘sí’.

Sin embargo, aún hay algo de ambigüedad en el concepto ya que nos parece que es tan básico y fundacional que afianza todo lo demás, especialmente nuestro sentido sobre los derechos humanos. Al mismo tiempo, la dignidad sugiere un valor y una validez que trasciende cualquier apariencia y contingencia; “señala algo sagrado.”

Los alemanes son reconocidos por su precisión en la ingeniería. Aún así, Spaemann mismo siendo alemán, señala la ambigüedad que introduce quienquiera que haya diseñado el Artículo Primero, Sección Primera de la constitución de la República Federal Alemana, que dice, “La dignidad humana deberá ser inviolable.”

¿Cómo puede alguien interpretar esta cláusula: en el máximo sentido, en donde los individuos merecen reclamar toda forma de apoyo gubernamental, incluyendo beneficios de bienestar y subsidios basados en preferencias subjetivas, que, si les son negados, evoquen el grito “¡violación!”? O el mínimo sentido de inviolabilidad, como lo expresa el fallecido teólogo heterodoxo de moralidad católica Bruno Schuller: él sostiene que un individuo viola la dignidad personal cuando alguien comete un mal objetivo contra su propia conciencia. Utilizando este criterio, si alguien cree que el suicidio asistido es justificado moralmente, o que alguien puede legítimamente, someterse voluntariamente a actos de tortura para ser traficado por alguien más, se mantiene la inviolabilidad de la dignidad. ¡Válgame!

La dignidad humana ha recibido un enfoque más intenso recientemente para mí por dos razones: la publicación a inicios de mes de la declaración del Dicasterio Vaticano (anteriormente Congregación) para la Doctrina de la Fe, Dignitas infinita/Sobre la Dignidad Humana; y mi participación justo antes de la Semana Santa en una “Experiencia

Cuaresmal para Obispos” con cinco obispos y otras personas en una peregrinación de oración y encuentro en las ciudades de Montgomery y Selma en Alabama. Ahí pudimos observar el aleccionador y sórdido legado de la esclavitud y del racismo en nuestro país que ha dejado heridas muy profundas y asuntos dolorosos que reflexionar respecto al aumento de las continuas diferencias en la justicia social (particularmente en conexión con las prácticas actuales en justicia criminal).

Nos sentimos también alentados a enfrentar con honestidad el cómo nuestra Iglesia ha respondido – en formas tanto repugnantes como redentoras – particularmente durante los últimos 150 años. Hay aquí demasiados hilos que debiéramos desenredar o tejer, pero les ofrezco el resumen miniatura del documento del Vaticano. En la edición del próximo mes de The Catholic Mirror, compartiré más sobre mi experiencia en Alabama y del cómo cambió mi perspectiva y me ha hecho aún más intencional en atender las estructuras sociales que no respetan la dignidad humana.

## Remedio para la ambigüedad

Nota que el documento del Vaticano sobre la dignidad humana es un remedio muy necesario para la ambigüedad y polaridad entre las diferentes interpretaciones de dignidad que mencioné anteriormente. El documento tiene una perspectiva de principios y de práctica. Los autores relatan el desarrollo sobre el entendimiento sobre la dignidad humana desde las épocas antiguas hasta el presente. La revelación cristiana jugó un papel crítico en la contribución a una eventual elaboración de derechos y objetivos humanos cimentados en la libertad humana. Les exhorto a los lectores comprometidos a leer la Declaración por ustedes mismos:

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/es/bollettino/pubblco/2024/04/08/080424c.html>

## Fe y Razón

En general, luego de alguna consternación reciente alrededor de la declaración del dicasterio respecto a las personas con orientación del mismo sexo, Dignitas infinita (DI) se presenta al lector como un documento más balanceado y que es generalmente consistente con la trayectoria de enseñanzas bíblicas y magisteriales durante más de dos milenios. El documento afirma que podemos capturar la verdad de la infinita, intrínse-

ca, única e inalienable naturaleza de la dignidad humana comparada con otros seres de la creación – incluso cuando más adelante señala su propia bondad inherente, ya que todos representan la intención creadora de Dios y que no somos simplemente un accidente evolucionario.

Una muestra de las declaraciones: el razonamiento humano y la fe pueden reconocer el don de la dignidad humana (ver DI nos. 1, 6). Es una verdad que trasciende la cultura y la historia. La encarnación de Jesucristo inicia una elevación radical de la dignidad humana para toda persona, especialmente para aquellos considerados “indignos” (ver no. 19). El despliegue de la consciencia filosófica y política del inherente y absoluto valor de los seres humanos viene en los ajustes e inicios y están sujetos a la distorsión si se le abandona al razonamiento humano únicamente. Cuando Santo Tomás Aquino estaba obviamente en el camino correcto respecto a asegurar la singularidad de la identidad humana al ser creada a imagen y semejanza de Dios, incluso algunos perturbadores como Descartes y Kant hicieron eco de la revelación cristiana cuando atienden el aprecio a nuestra dignidad.

La fe ilumina y refuerza lo que la razón intuye: “la dignidad es intrínseca a la persona... es previa a todo reconocimiento y no puede perderse.

Todos los seres humanos poseen la misma e intrínseca dignidad, independientemente del hecho sean o no capaces de expresarla adecuadamente (DI no. 15). “El valor único y trascendente de todo ser humano “corresponde a la persona como tal por el mero hecho de existir y haber sido querida, creada y amada por Dios” (DI no. 7). Nuestra dignidad es concedida por Dios y es garantía de que todo ser humano está “llamado a la unión con Dios, destinada a durar por siempre.” Nuestra última vocación es la de contemplar a Dios cara a cara; nuestra presente vocación es la de percibir la presencia de Dios que se manifiesta en el rostro de toda persona humano como hermanos en Cristo (ver DI nos. 20-21).

## No podemos ser complacientes

No podemos presumir que todos – sin importar la afiliación (o falta de) fe – pueden intuitivamente afirmar la dignidad de cada miembro de nuestra especie. En DI, citan una declaración del fallecido Papa Benedicto XVI: “Sin la ayuda correctora de la religión, la razón puede ser también presa de distorsiones... dicho abuso de la razón fue lo que provocó la trata de esclavos en primer lugar y otros muchos males sociales” (DI no. 22).

Y es el rapaz legado de la esclavitud en nuestro país, sus efectos residuales, y aquellos que siguen con-

frontando este legado y que nos motivan a involucrarnos de manera positiva, quienes darán forma a la base de mi reflexión del próximo mes.

## Hay esperanza

El la “Declaración de la Dignidad Humana” del Dicasterio Romano concluye con notas de motivación y esperanza:

- a Iglesia “exhorta arduamente que el respeto a la dignidad de la persona humana más allá de todas las circunstancias sea puesto en el centro del compromiso por el bien común y en el centro de todo sistema legal.”

- Reconocer la dignidad humana forma la base para mantener los derechos humanos fundamentales, los cuales preceden y son base de toda coexistencia civil.”

- “En actividades políticas, debemos reconocer que ‘más allá de toda apariencia, cada uno es inmensamente sagrado y merece nuestro cariño y nuestra entrega’” (DI nos. 65-66).

Cuando defendemos juntos la dignidad humana y buscamos reflexionar sobre un sentido más claro de dignidad personal en la forma que nos tratamos unos a otros, y para inscribir la verdad de la dignidad individual en nuestras leyes y prácticas como gente con buen sentido y gran fe, logremos nuestra vocación de comunión.

## Human Dignity: A Vocation to Vision

Continued from page 2

vocation is to perceive God’s presence manifested in the face of every human person as a sister and brother in Christ (see DI nn. 20-21).

## We cannot be complacent

We cannot presume that everyone—regardless of faith (non-) affiliation—should intuitively affirm the dignity of every member of our species. In DI, an address of the late Pope Benedict XVI, is cited: “Without the corrective supplied by religion, though, reason can fall prey to distortions. . . Such misuse of reason, after all, was what gave rise to the slave trade in the first place and to

many other social evils” (DI n. 22).

And it is the sordid legacy of slavery in our country, its residual effects, and those who continue to confront this legacy and stir us to positive engagement, that will form the basis of my reflection next month.

## There is hope

The Roman Dicastery’s “Declaration on Human Dignity” concludes with notes of encouragement and hope:

• The Church “ardently urges that respect for the dignity of the human person beyond all circumstances be placed at the center of the commitment to the common good and the center of every legal system.”

• Acknowledging human dignity forms the basis for upholding fundamental human rights, which precede and ground all civic coexistence.”

• “In political activity, we should remember that ‘appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love and dedication’” (DI nn. 65-66).

When we together champion human dignity and seek to reflect a clearer sense of personal dignity in our way of beholding one another, and to inscribe the truth of individual dignity in our laws and practices as a people of good sense and great faith, we realize our vocation to communion.

## Little Flower chapel

Continued from page 1

cione, diocesan Vicar for Divine Worship.

Tedesco, along with dedicated volunteers Thomas McMahon, Jon Thill, and Denny Koenigsfeld worked endless hours to make the chapel what it has become today.

There was little cost to build this space.

The pews were donated by a church in the Des Moines area. The crew of volunteer workers cut down, sanded, reassembled, and stained the pews to make them perfect for the chapel space.

Parishioner Mike Tigges donated his services to repair the drywall prior to painting.

The crucifix was found, restored and donated by McMahon.

The Seymour family donated the beautiful wood-carved Stations of the Cross which line the wall of the chapel as a reminder to pray and offer love and thanksgiving for Christ who gave it all for us.

Tedesco donated small lights to illuminate the stations and also to bring a calming glow to the chapel.

Principal Watznauer donated the marble holy water font, ciborium, and chalice.

Molly Tedesco, Tony’s mom, collected altar cloths donated by St. Mary’s and handmade an additional set after speaking with Father Chicoine.

A statue of St. Therese was donated by a former class of St. Theresa Catholic School.

A statue of Mother Mary came from a teacher, who received it when her mother passed away years ago.

The stained glass windows were salvaged by Tedesco, Thill and McMahon from the parish office conference room, which was previously a chapel when the building was a convent.

The school invites the public to visit the St. Theresa Little Flower Chapel at its open house on Sunday, April 21, 9:30 a.m. to noon.

## 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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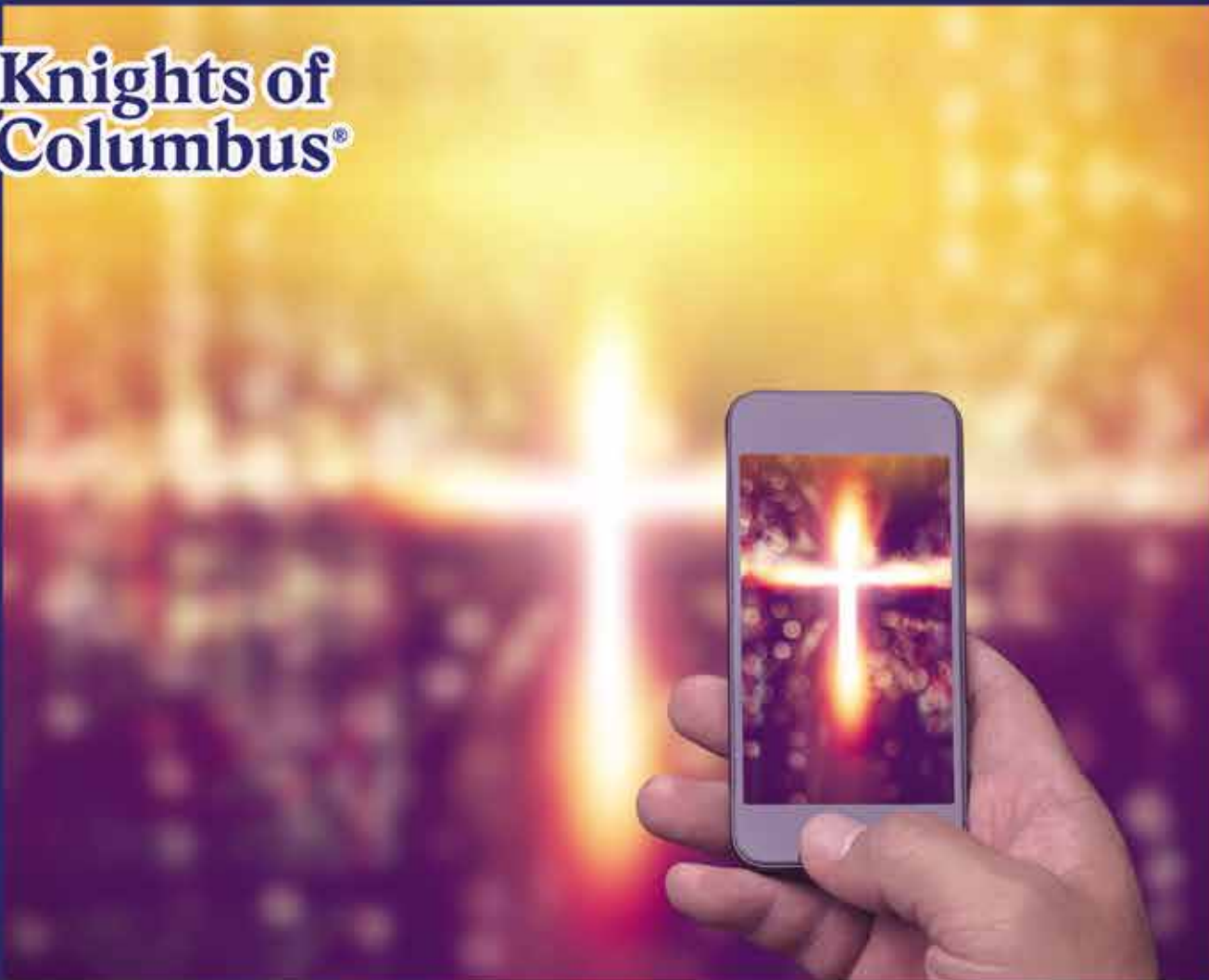
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