

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## *Sowing God's Spirit* by Cultivating Connections in Christ



About 25 pastors and their key leadership joined Bishop William Joensen at meetings in Atlantic and Adel last month to discuss the Diocese's mission and vision, created from feedback by the faithful: *Sowing God's Spirit* by cultivating connections in Christ through encounter, friendship, and communion. Two more meetings are scheduled for Council Bluffs and Des Moines.

## Bishop outlines vision with parish leaders

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff writer

Priests and parish leaders gathered in Atlantic and Adel last month to learn about the Diocese's vision for the future, top priorities, and resources for helping people grow in their faith.

Bishop William Joensen shared how parishioners' feed-

back, parishioner-based advisory committees, and the Holy Spirit led the Diocese to determine its vision moving forward: *Sowing God's spirit* by cultivating connections in Christ through encounter, friendship, and communion.

Through a series of focus groups, questionnaires, and interviews, the faithful identified six priorities for the Diocese:

- Creating a culture of welcome and care;
- Inviting people into an encounter with Jesus Christ;
- Accompanying our youth into discipleship with Jesus Christ;
- Engaging our young adults into full participation;
- Preparing disciples for the domestic church;
- Communicating our mes-

sage boldly and clearly.

Over the summer, parishes are asked to determine which of the priority areas they would like to focus on. During this discernment period, pastors and parish leaders may gather various groups together to gauge the needs of their parishes.

By the end of the summer, each parish should have in mind at least one priority of the six di-

ocesan priorities to focus on in the coming year.

The Diocese also is sharing resources, called toolkits, developed by parish leaders in each of the six priority areas, by seeking best practices locally and nationally.

Groups of parishes in each priority area will be formed. They'll work through the tool-

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## Outpouring of support uplifts tornado-stricken



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Homes were destroyed when an EF4 tornado went through Greenfield on May 21.

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff writer

The afternoon of May 21 will forever be etched in the memory of the town of Greenfield, where an EF4 tornado brought tragedy and destruction from one end of town to another.

The tornado killed four people in Greenfield and one near Corning, and destroyed more than 100 homes in the community of about 2,000 people located an hour southwest of Des Moines.

Within an hour, St. John Church, which suffered no damage, opened its doors for the stunned, the weary, the friends and neighbors who lost everything. Local churches pitched in to offer what they could. St. John Parish provided a safe place where folks could get a sandwich, a frozen graduation cookie, and recharge their phones.

St. John became a refuge and a hub for donations. Newly confirmed teenagers fielded the calls of support that poured into the parish office.

"Your response to your neigh-

bors, to your fellow parishioners, to those who were previously strangers, will be the lasting and enduring memory that eclipses all else," said Bishop William Joensen in his homily at St. John Church in Greenfield just four days later.

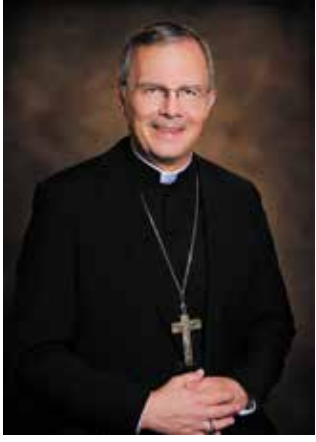
When he arrived the Saturday after the storm, he found the parking lot of the church was bustling with food trucks offering free food, stations with work gloves and construction supplies, and an array of people from town and surrounding communities who wanted to help.

In the social hall, stacks of personal hygiene items, diapers, and more items were neatly organized and labeled.

"The awesome power and terrifying power of Mother Nature struck fear in human hearts for was it a few seconds? A few minutes? It left many without electrical power for hours and even days," said Bishop Joensen.

"The more wondrous display of spiritual power was your solidarity with each other, the care

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Bishop William Joensen

Summer is fast heating up, and with it, so are events in our Diocese and our country that are sure to stir the flame of the Holy Spirit among us to even greater intensity.

Coincident with last month's Pentecost Feast was the kick-off of our diocesan Strategic Visioning implementation phase. And on June 23-25, our Diocese will host the Serra Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage as it winds its way from Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs to Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood, then on to St. Patrick Parish in Imogene, and finally to St. Mary Parish in Shenandoah before heading on to Missouri and Kansas.

Details can be found on our diocesan website at: [dmdiocese.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage](http://dmdiocese.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage).

I hope you and some of your family and friends will join us for at least one of the processions, Masses, meals, and the overall celebratory spirit of these days that represent a once-in-a-lifetime event sure to open a wide channel of grace for our diocesan family!

And then in July, after the swimming pool constructed in Lucas Oil Stadium for the June U.S. Olympic Swimming Trials has been taken down, the four spokes of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage will converge in Indianapolis as the first National Eucharistic Congress in 80+ years will take place at that same venue. More than 200 members of our Diocese, including laity

and clergy representing many of our 80 parishes, will participate.

As in our local parishes each Sunday and at daily Mass, we will dive into the water and fire of the Spirit who always accompanies our Eucharistic Lord. As the prophet Elijah prepared to make sacrifice on the altar on Mount Carmel, he told the people, "The God who answers with fire is God" (1 Kings 18:24). It is by the fire of the Spirit that bread and wine on the altar are changed into the Sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood. For as Father Donald Haggerty reminds us, "The Eucharist is not a static reality, unmoving, a thing to be admired like a painting in a museum. No, it is alive, a fire burning and leaping with flame."

"We need and desire priests who will bring us to Jesus, and bring Jesus to us through the life-giving, paternal potential of the priesthood."

The National Eucharistic Congress will segue into the third year of our National Revival, the Year of Missionary Sending. To be a genuine Catholic Christian is to be missionary. This is particularly true in our Diocese as we embrace our mission, "Sowing God's Spirit." The mission is organically tied to our vision: "Cultivating Connections in Christ through Encounter, Friendship, and Communion." Going forward over the next year and beyond, we will regularly highlight in these pages and on our website, in podcasts and other media where and how this mission and vision are unfolding.

In anticipation, I would like to familiarize you more intently with the Eucharistic dimension of our diocesan vision. In this Father's Day month, I also accent the spiritual fatherhood of our priests who dedicate their lives to offering the Eucharist to

# Firing Up Fathers

their people. Our two "freshest" priests, soon-to-be Fathers Luis Cabrera and Michael Mahoney, will be ordained to the priesthood on June 21 at St. Ambrose Cathedral—two days before the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage "hits our shores" at Riverview Park in Council Bluffs. I invite and challenge us all to be more fervent and faithful in asking the Lord to raise up vocations to the priesthood of Jesus Christ from among our families and parishes.

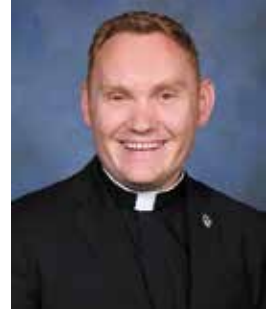
In the "friendship" and "encounter" sections of our Diocese's vision, we reflect: "Jesus is not simply the loving 'giver' who pours out his body and blood, his very life for others. He shows us God's humility in not being afraid to share his 'need' for us. God's truest friends, including saints such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, know that he still thirsts for souls to whom we are called to show love, to reveal that whatever we do for the hungry, naked, imprisoned, the vulnerable and least among us, we do for him. And in the process, these connections sown and sealed in the Spirit endure forever."

Further: "How many of us are still searching for a place to belong, to feel that we are unconditionally loved and accepted as we are? Jesus wants to incorporate our story into his story, which is more incredible than anything we could have imagined. The Father sends his Son in the fullness of time so that we can participate in the communion of love who is God, thanks to Jesus becoming God-with-us, both human and divine in the wonder of the Incarnation. Jesus greatly desires to eat and drink with us as he did with disciples and the multitudes drawn around him. He then fulfills his desire to BECOME food and drink for us in the mysterious, miraculous gift of the Eucharist."

Each of our ordinandi, Deacons Luis and Michael, have had a mysteriously winding, sometimes surprising, sifting, and ultimately affirming path to the



Deacon Luis Cabrera



Deacon Michael Mahoney

priesthood. For Deacon Luis, the exploration of a call to religious life, then to marriage, then as a grieving widower followed by a resurgent call to priesthood has been both a tragic and poignant path of God's persistence.

And for Deacon Michael, the initial promptings to teach middle school students eventually prompted the intuition that he was called to be a spiritual father and priest. Both men have probed their identity as sons of earthly and heavenly Fathers, have identified the wounds life has left them bearing to this day—marks that will enable them to be selfless conduits of God's compassion. Each of them humbly, boldly offers himself to Christ and his Church to be a day laborer who sows the seeds of the Word, an instrument of God's generative grace in the sacraments—fore-

most in the Eucharist.

Every woman, man, and child—whether they know and acknowledge it or not—longs for Jesus. Hence, we need and desire priests who will bring us to Jesus, and bring Jesus to us through the life-giving, paternal potential of the priesthood. We rejoice and give thanks to God that these two deacons choose to lay down their lives for Jesus, for us. And we give thanks to their parents, the Manuel and Maurita, and Tom and Celia, who gave them life, who sowed seeds of their vocation by their own example, generosity, and fidelity to their own vocations as spouses and parents.

All this is good news that stirs not only thanksgiving, but fervent petition in the spirit of Elijah who says, "The God who answers with fire is God": Please, Lord: fire up spiritual fathers for our Diocese!



## OFFICIAL

Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointments effective July 11, 2024 unless otherwise noted.

**Rev. Michael Acquah**, from Parochial Vicar at St. Francis of Assisi, West Des Moines, to special Diocesan Sacramental and Pastoral Ministry. This will include full-time temporary coverage of the parishes of St. Mary, Red Oak, and St. Patrick, Imogene from January – June 2025.

**Rev. Enrique Garcia**, from Special Ministry, to Hospital Chaplaincy with UnityPoint Hospitals, Des Moines metropolitan area.

**Rev. Oscar Rosales-Hernandez**, to Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of the Americas, Des Moines, and St. Joseph Parish, Des Moines, effective upon completion of language studies (Divine Word Seminary, Epworth, Iowa) in the late Fall of 2024.

**Rev. Jomi Joseph**, from Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of the Americas, Des Moines, and St. Joseph Parish, Des Moines, to Parochial Vicar of St. Anthony Parish, Des Moines, for a three-year term.

**Rev. John Owusu-Agyemang**, from Hospital Chaplaincy with UnityPoint Hospitals (Des Moines metropolitan area), to Parochial Vicar of Ss. John and Paul, Altoona.

**Rev. Eze Venantius Umunnakwe**, C.S.Sp, from Pastor of Holy Trinity Parish of S.E. Warren County, Lacona/Milo, and Immaculate Conception Parish, St. Mary's, to Hospital Chaplaincy with UnityPoint Hospitals, Des Moines metropolitan area.

**Rev. George Boachie Nyarko**, from Parochial Vicar at St. Boniface Parish, Waukee, and St. Theresa Parish, Des Moines, to Parish Administrator of Holy Trinity Parish of S.E. Warren County, Lacona/Milo, and Immaculate Conception Parish, St. Mary's.

**Rev. Emmanuel Offiong**, to Hospital and Pastoral Chaplaincy for the Council Bluffs metropolitan area, upon completion of Clinical Pastoral Education Studies, effective September 1, 2024.

### Newly Ordained

**Rev. Mr. Michael Mahoney**, upon ordination to the priesthood, to Parochial Vicar at St. Theresa Parish, Des Moines, for a two-year term.

**Rev. Mr. Luisito Cabrera**, upon ordination to the priesthood, to Parochial Vicar at Corpus Christi Parish, Council Bluffs, for a two-year term.



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



Jason Kurth  
Chancellor

## THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

**Bishop William Joensen**  
Publisher  
[wjoensen@dmdiocese.org](mailto:wjoensen@dmdiocese.org)

**Anne Marie Cox**  
Editor  
[acox@dmdiocese.org](mailto:acox@dmdiocese.org)

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PHONE: (515)237-5046  
EMAIL: [mirror@dmdiocese.org](mailto:mirror@dmdiocese.org)

DIOCESAN WEBSITE:  
[www.dmdiocese.org](http://www.dmdiocese.org)

## Animando a los Padres

El verano se calienta rápidamente y, con ello, los eventos en nuestra Diócesis y en nuestro país y que seguramente animarán la llama del Espíritu Santo entre nosotros con una mayor intensidad.

La Fiesta de Pentecostés del mes pasado coincidió con el arranque de nuestra fase de implementación de la Visión Estratégica. Y del 23 al 25 de junio, nuestra Diócesis recibirá la Ruta Serra de la Peregrinación Eucarística Nacional que transitará de la Parroquia de Corpus Christi en Council Bluffs a la Parroquia de Holy Rosary en Glenwood, hacia la Parroquia de St. Patrick en Imogene y, finalmente a la Parroquia de St. Mary en Shenandoah, antes de partir hacia Missouri y Kansas.

Puede encontrar los detalles en nuestra página web de la diócesis en [dmdiocese.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage](http://dmdiocese.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage). ¡Espero que ustedes y sus familiares y

amigos se nos unan en al menos una de las procesiones, Misas, comidas y espíritu general de celebración en estos días que representan un evento único en la vida y que seguramente abrirá un gran canal de gracia para nuestra familia diocesana!

Y luego en julio, luego de que remuevan la piscina que construyeron en el Estadio Lucas Oil para las Pruebas Olímpicas de Natación de los Estados Unidos el mes de junio, las cuatro rutas de la Peregrinación Eucarística Nacional convergirán en Indianapolis para el primer Congreso Nacional Eucarístico desde hace más de 80 años y que se llevará a cabo en ese mismo lugar. Participarán más de 200 miembros de nuestra Diócesis, incluyendo laicos y clero, representando muchas de nuestras 80 parroquias.

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# Corpus Christi

Several parishes held a public procession in their communities to celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, when Catholics honor the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. All are invited to be part of the National Eucharistic Procession June 23-25. See more information below.



Father Matthew Luft and Father Daniel Adjei of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale brought Jesus in the Eucharist into the community with a procession.



Father Nick Stark and Deacon Tom Bradley lead a procession at St. Elizabeth Seton in Carlisle.



Father John Brobby holds the monstrance while Father Michael Acquah leads with a censer and Deacon Dan Bombrosky carries another censer at St. Francis of Assisi Parish's procession in West Des Moines.



Father Jim Kirby, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Missouri Valley, celebrates the Feast of Corpus Christi with parishioners.

## Be part of the National Eucharistic Procession

From June 23 - June 25, a National Eucharistic Pilgrimage will be making its way through the Diocese of Des Moines along the St. Junipero Serra Route, stretching from San Francisco to Indianapolis for the Eucharistic Congress.

During these three 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 want. All events are

free to attend, but registration is encouraged to allow parishes to plan for food at lunch/dinner and overall attendance. Go to [dmdiocese.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage](http://dmdiocese.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage).

The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage is a unique initiative, a beautiful fusion of the journey TO Jesus and the journey WITH Jesus. And, it is an adventure that all Catholics can do together, either by praying from where you are, or physically accompanying Jesus in the Eucharist.



## Experience the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

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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

- ◆ Bilingual Sunday Mass @ Tom Hanafan's River's Edge Park
- ◆ Eucharistic Processions from Omaha to Corpus Christi
- ◆ Fellowship Dinner
- ◆ Holy Hour
- ◆ Overnight Adoration (7PM to 8AM)

### June 24th

Glenwood & Imogene

- ◆ Holy Mass @ Corpus Christi
- ◆ Eucharistic Procession on the Wabash Trace Nature Trail (8 miles)
- ◆ Fellowship Lunch & Dinner
- ◆ Holy Hours (afternoon & evening)
- ◆ Overnight Adoration (7PM to 8AM)

### June 25th

Shenandoah

- ◆ Mass with Bishop Joensen @ St. Patrick (Imogene)
- ◆ Solemn Eucharistic Procession (1 mile)
- ◆ Holy Hour
- ◆ Fellowship Lunch



Father Patrick Amedeka leads a procession at Holy Spirit Parish in Creston.

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[www.MyCatholicDoctor.com](http://www.MyCatholicDoctor.com)

# Greenfield family lost everything, but grateful for everyone

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff writer

Teenage Gavin Meisenheimer and his mom, Janet, were home early on Tuesday, May 21 when the weather turned.

About 3:45 p.m. Gavin saw debris and roof shingles fly around his house.

A tornado warning blared from Janet's phone.

"Run," she screamed.

They raced to the safest room of their rural Greenfield home, a space behind the garage that had three cement walls.

Windows crashed.

Dirt blew around them.

The roof ripped off the house.

In that safe room, mother and son hung on to one another.

"I could hardly breathe at one point," said Gavin.

In less than a minute, it was over. The deadly EF4 tornado had destroyed their home.

"It's a miracle that we're alive," Janet said.

The pair carefully emerged from hiding. They looked through the debris for shoes to wear. They smelled gas so they made their

way to the road. Water shot into the air from a pipe that once carried water into their home.

In what was left of their house were trees, an electric pole, and wires from the pole.

Janet's husband, Nick, drove home from work after the storm. She told him over the phone that the house was gone.

"I thought there'd be something left but there's nothing left," he said. "It's hard to believe."

She also called back her older son who lives in Ankeny. He was on a Facetime call with her when she shouted "Run" and the connection ended.

The family stayed with Nick's mom that night. They went to their church, St. John in Greenfield, the next day where they were told they might be able to get some supplies.

There, the Meisenheimers were embraced.

"We were just overwhelmed with the community support and love and kindness. You could just feel it from everyone," Janet said. "When one person goes through it, we all go through it. We're all just so supportive of everyone."

Volunteers joined the family

in picking through the insulation and debris to see if anything was salvageable. Credit cards were sucked out of Janet's purse, but the cash and purse were left behind.

Janet had put her wedding ring on her dresser along with her mother's ring while she did household chores. They found both rings in the debris.

A 33-year teacher at St. Malachy School in Creston, Janet said the school took up a change collection at Mass the day after the tornado and again at a music night the following day for her and for a third-grade teacher whose mother lost her house in Greenfield.

"They have been so supportive. We really, truly are a family at St. Malachy," she said. "The outpouring of support from the St. Malachy family and the whole community has been overwhelming and humbling. It makes me grateful that we are here in this community."

In facing the loss of their home, and nearly their lives, Gavin and Janet say they believe God saved them for a reason.

"I could have gotten killed in a tornado," Gavin said. "I feel like I'm on this earth for a purpose."



Photo by Pam Jensen

The Meisenheimer family - Gavin, Janet, and Nick - survived a tornado that destroyed their home near Greenfield.

The family was at Mass the following Saturday, where Bishop William Joensen praised the community for its immediate and loving response to the tornado and encouraged the community to have hope. The pastor, Father Philip Yaw Bempong said, "God is good" and the congregation responded, "All of the time."

The recessional song was "Now Thank We All Our God."

Janet said: "God has a purpose for me. Maybe that purpose is to continue to share my faith with the kids at St. Malachy. I don't know. But I believe he has a plan for him (Gavin) and me and without faith, you can't get through things like this."

## Support uplifts tornado-stricken

Continued from page 1

that continues to be unfolding, the material support overflowing, streaming in from different directions, and of course, prayer and simple presence to each other. This cannot be denied: Your witness and hospitality, your resiliency and your get-er-done attitude that radiates to all who watched or read reports online."

The parish estimates the night after the tornado, about 4,000 free meals were served by generous vendors.

"In the midst of darker moments, there is an irrepressible goodness, a light that's a connection among us," said Bishop Joensen.

Three weeks after the tornado, the pastor of St. John Parish, Father Philip Yaw Bempong, expressed gratitude for the volunteers, the donations, and support for his community.

"I take this opportunity to thank the Bishop and all God's people in the Diocese for their tremendous support, donations and above all, their prayers," he said.

Catholic Charities USA gave Catholic Charities of Des Moines \$25,000 to help victims of the April 26 tornado that roared through Pottawattamie and Shelby Counties, and another \$25,000 for those who suffered loss from the May 21 tornado that damaged farms and destroyed homes

most severely in Greenfield but in areas across southwest Iowa. Anyone who suffered damage – Catholic or not – who lives in the Diocese of Des Moines can apply for a grant online: catholiccharitiesdm.org/disaster-relief.

Bishop Joensen called on all parishes to hold a special collection so all parishioners could have an opportunity to help those in need.

At the end of the Mass following the tornado, Father Bempong used a familiar call and response. "God is good," he said.

"All of the time," responded his congregation.

He said: "Let us continue to be there for one another."

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# Cultivando conexiones en Cristo

En este Pentecostés, el pulso del Espíritu Santo guiando al Diócesis de Des Moines se acelera mientras implementamos la misión y la visión que nosotros creemos que Dios nos ha concedido. Llegamos a este momento importante después de más de tres años de escuchar entre nosotros, orando, identificando prioridades estratégicas, y elaborando medios concretos para realizar nuestra misión. En general, nos hemos abierto humildemente a lo que la voluntad de Dios nos pide. Somos una gente de fe que reconoce

que hay muchos entre nosotros quienes todavía están buscando a Dios en el centro y suroeste de Iowa. Nuestra inversión considerable de recursos espirituales, inspiración humana y sabiduría práctica es una obra de amor para Dios y nuestros prójimos. Yo, en lo personal, creo con todo mi corazón que Dios unge esta audaz operación de fe y acompañamiento mutuo con su Espíritu Santo—el mismo Espíritu que se les posó a los que se reunieron en el primer Pentecostés.

Me agrada compartir con usted

los frutos de esta concertada sesión de escucha, aprendizaje, respeto mutuo, y transparencia en lo que sigue: una “canasta” con una variedad de recursos y un medio propuesto de participación. Esta canasta de los frutos del Espíritu se les ofrece a nuestros líderes parroquiales y personas de todas las edades viviendo su llamado bautismal para cultivar su fe y fortalecer su relación con Jesucristo y entre ellos mismos— ¡y espero que nos incluya a cada uno de nosotros!

Cuando el tiempo del Pentecostés se cumplió, ellos estaban en un lugar juntos.

Y de repente vino un ruido del cielo como un viento fuerte y potente, y llenó la casa entera en donde estaban.

Allí se les aparecieron lenguas como de fuego,

las cuales se separaron y llegaron a posarse en cada uno de ellos.

Y todos se llenaron del Espíritu Santo

Y empezaron hablar en diferentes lenguas/lenguas, como el Espíritu les permitió proclamar...

Ahora habían Judíos devotos de todas las naciones bajo el cielo quedándose en Jerusalén.

Al oír este ruido, se reunieron en una gran multitud, pero estaban confundidos porque cada uno lo oyó hablando en su propio idioma.

Ellos estaban asombrados.

—Actos de los Apóstoles 2:1-7a

## Nuestra visión y misión estratégica

Como Jesús mismo, quien seguido hablaba en parábolas usando imágenes tomadas de las experiencias ordinarias de las personas y la naturaleza, la armonía

de la Escritura y nuestra propia cultura diocesana local—con el sentido de los fieles, los signos de nuestros tiempos, y una ética de agricultura fuerte y unificada—contribuyen a nuestra misión y visión principal: “**Sembrando**

## el Espíritu de Dios: Cultivando la Relación Cristo por medio de Encuentro, Amistad y Comunidad.”

Los seis conjuntos de herramientas (toolkits) incluidos en esta “canasta” representan un

recurso robusto y colectivo que corresponde con nuestras seis prioridades estratégicas diocesanas que hemos identificado. Juntos, piden discernimiento y deliberación paciente y selectiva por cada una de nuestras parroquias. Los conjuntos y el proceso de desarrollo no se pretenden ser un mandato de arriba hacia abajo de ninguna manera, y mucho menos un programa teórico de mí, su Obispo, del cual está obligado a simplemente obedecer y adoptar pasivamente. Ver a los conjuntos y a la visión con una luz tan tenue es sin duda una receta para estancar y agotar el potencial del Espíritu entre nosotros.

Más bien, tengo mucha confi-

anza en el poder del Espíritu presente en cada miembro bautizado y confirmado de los fieles—y hasta más allá de los límites de nuestras comunidades parroquiales establecidas. Cuando creemos en el poder dinámico del Espíritu Santo y nos involucramos y colaboramos en esta obra profética, sembramos las semillas del Espíritu de Dios. Cooperamos con el Señor de los mies en reunir el producto del Reino hecho realidad en la presencia misteriosa del Señor Resucitado entre nosotros.

Ese mismo día salió Jesús de la casa y se sentó a la orilla del mar.

Y se congregaron junto a Él grandes multitudes, por lo que subió a una barca y se sentó; y toda la multitud estaba de pie en la playa.

Y les habló muchas cosas en parábolas, diciendo: He aquí, el sembrador salió a sembrar; y al sembrar, parte de la semilla cayó junto al camino, y vinieron las aves y se la comieron.

Otra parte cayó en pedregales donde no tenía mucha tierra;

y enseguida brotó porque no tenía profundidad de tierra; pero cuando salió el sol, se quemó; y porque no tenía raíz, se secó.

Otra parte cayó entre espinos; y los espinos crecieron y la ahogaron.

Y otra parte cayó en tierra buena y dio fruto, algunas semillas a ciento por uno, otras a sesenta y otras a treinta.

El que tiene oídos, que oiga.

--Mateo 13:1-9

## Prioridades y pasos prácticos de implementación

Ya es hora de identificar específicamente las prioridades emergentes y el calendario propuesto del plan de implementación para la Diócesis de Des Moines. Las prioridades son:

- Crear una cultura acogedora y un cuidado en nuestras comunidades parroquiales;
- Invitar a las personas a un encuentro con Jesucristo;
- Acompañar a nuestra juventud al discipulado de Jesucristo;
- Involucrar a nuestros adultos jóvenes en participación entera;
- Preparar a los discípulos para la Iglesia doméstica; y
- Comunicar nuestro mensaje con audacia y claridad.

“Porque aquel a quien Dios ha enviado habla las palabras de Dios, pues El da el Espíritu sin medida.

El Padre ama al Hijo y ha entregado todas las cosas en su mano.

El que cree en el Hijo tiene vida eterna.”

--Juan 3:34-36

## Calendario de la Implementación del Plan Estratégico

• Domingo, 19 de mayo, fin de semana de Pentecostés: Lanzamiento y Anuncio del Plan Estratégico de la Diócesis de Des Moines con Conjuntos de Herramientas Pastorales por el Obispo y los Pastores

• Mayo-junio 2024: Juntas Parroquiales de Lanzamiento en cuatro sitios por la Diócesis con el Obispo, los pastores, y el liderazgo parroquial quienes participarán en el discernimiento de las prioridades pastorales

• Verano 2024: Pastores individuales colaboran con el liderazgo parroquial en un proceso de discernimiento para determinar cuáles de las seis prioridades pastorales evangélicas (y sus conjuntos correspondientes) habrá que desarrollar en el primer año. El discernimiento debe ocurrir durante los meses de verano y debe de concluir para mediados

de septiembre (con algo de flexibilidad para parroquias donde hay un cambio en pastor llevándose a cabo en julio 2024). El proceso parroquial de discernimiento incluye:

○ Una encuesta para parroquianos identificando las áreas de prioridad que ya están floreciendo y las áreas donde atención concertada y crecimiento potencial son deseables.

○ Consulto con el Consejo Pastoral parroquial, personal, y posiblemente otros principales interesados (por ejemplo, Grupo Juvenil parroquial, líderes Latinos, ministros de personas confinadas a su casa) para discernir y escoger uno de los conjuntos (toolkits) para implementar. Decidir si el Consejo Pastoral tiene la capacidad para implementar, o si un grupo es-

pecial debe ser formado y cargado con esta responsabilidad.

○ Exponer los planes para implementación en el otoño 2024-primavera/verano 2025

• Otoño 2024 y más allá: Avanzar con por lo menos uno (y no más de tres) prioridades e iniciativas relacionadas con el conjunto (toolkit).

○ Comunique esta(s) iniciativa(s) a los parroquianos y a la Diócesis. La Diócesis se comunicará con el grupo de implementación parroquial para ver qué apoyo y acompañamiento se puede proporcionar, y con cuales retos se están enfrentando.

○ Planificación parroquial debe incluir desarrollando metas mensurables, asignando participación a partes específicas, e identificando oportunidades fáciles al alcance.



• Finales de invierno 2024/Primavera 2025: Evaluación: Empiece a juntar testimonios de éxito. La Diócesis llevará a cabo la encuesta para ver cómo van las parroquias, donde hay retos y donde las semillas del Espíritu Santo han sido plantadas y están germinando y produciendo frutos inspirados por el Evangelio.

• Verano 2025: Nombrando y

Celebrando las Obras Llenas de Maravilla de Dios entre Nosotros: Comuníquese a parroquianos y a otras personas en la Diócesis en donde evangelización está floreciendo, en donde ha habido obstáculos. ¡Afirmaciones de las personas más involucradas directamente y animo de otras es importante mientras damos las gracias y gloria a Dios!

## Conclusión: Alabanza a María, de esta Visión y este Plan

### Madre de la Iglesia Evangelizadora

Ahora iniciamos con confianza constante y santa audacia la implementación de este proceso de Visión Estratégica en la vida de la gente del centro y suroeste de Iowa. Sabemos que desde la “primera semilla” de la primera comunidad cristiana hasta hoy, muchas nuevas semillas del Espíritu han brotado y estamos encargados con la tarea de sembrarlas generosamente por las varias comunidades locales y parroquias que constituyen la Diócesis de Des Moines.

Nos alienta que María siga acompañando a la Igle-

sia de su Hijo e intercede de nuestra parte. Como su Hijo, María siempre nos apoya y nunca nos abandonará. Con la energía evangelizadora y buen consejo del Espíritu Santo guiando nuestro discernimiento, pedimos la sabiduría práctica y sentido común de los pastores, los diáconos, religiosos, líderes parroquianos, y personas laicas de fe y buena voluntad quienes nos acompañan ahora y quienes pronto, pedimos, se unirán a nuestra misión de Sembrar el Espíritu de Dios.

A lo mejor no usaremos un arado físico, pero invertimos nuestros corazones y nuestras mentes en este

proyecto del Reino de permitir a Dios que salve a almas por medio nuestro, motivados con esperanza por nuestra visión común: “**Cultivando la Relación con Cristo por Encuentro, Amistad, y Comunidad.**”

¡Ven, Espíritu Santo! ¡Ven a encender nuestros corazones y sella los vínculos de amistad y comunión que se pueden encontrar en Cristo, en unión con María, Madre de la Iglesia Evangelizadora y Cónyuge del Espíritu Santo!

## Around the Diocese

### June 21 Friday

#### Presbyteral Ordination

DES MOINES – Deacon Luis Cabrera and Deacon Mike Mahoney will be ordained to the priesthood at 5 p.m. at St. Ambrose Cathedral. All are welcome.

### June 22 Saturday

#### March for Life

DES MOINES – The Iowa March for Life starts with a 1 p.m. rally at the Iowa State Capitol Rotunda and a 1:45 p.m. walk to the Iowa Supreme Court buildings. Go to PulseForLife.org for details.

### June 29 Saturday

#### Retreat

CRESTON – Holy Spirit Church will be hosting a day retreat, “Let’s Talk Roses.” It begins at 8 a.m. with Mass and ends at 4 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Come explore the numerous gifts and deep joy of the rosary, what Scripture says about roses, and the saints of roses. Cost is \$30. For more information contact Virginia Aguilar at 641-340-2745.

### June 29 Saturday

#### Garage Sale

DES MOINES – Christ the King Parish is having a garage sale from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. in the Christ the King Parish Hall, 5711 SW 9<sup>th</sup> St. in Des Moines. Great finds for everyone! Sales are by donation only. All proceeds help support the Altar and Rosary Society and parish library.

### July 25-27 Thurs.-Saturday

#### OLIH Rummage Sale

ANKENY – Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish will have its annual rummage sale this July. This is one of the largest events of its kind in Ankeny each year. Go to our website for more information, [olih.org/church-events/rummage-sale](http://olih.org/church-events/rummage-sale).

July 25: 4-8 p.m. (\$5 early bird entrance fee from 4-5 p.m.)

July 26: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

July 27: 8 a.m.-Noon

### July 31 Wednesday

#### 50th Anniversary

URBANDALE – Jesuit Father Gene Merz arrived in Des Moines on July 31, 1974, to begin Emmaus House, a ministry rooted in Ignatian Spirituality which gives the exercises, retreats, and spiritual direction. On Wednesday July 31 we will celebrate 50 years of Emmaus House ministry. Stay tuned for more information on

our website [theemmaushouse.org](http://theemmaushouse.org), or social media: @emmaushousia (Facebook & Instagram).

### Aug. 11 Sunday

#### St. Lawrence Gathering

NORWALK – In an effort to encourage diaconal vocations within the Diocese, the Vocations Office will host something new: the St. Lawrence Gathering at 2 p.m. at St. John the Apostle Catholic Church. A barbecue lunch will be provided. The St. Lawrence Gathering offers an opportunity for men (30 years or older, and their wives if they are married) who would like to investigate the permanent diaconate to ask questions in a relaxed atmosphere, learn more about life as a deacon, and hear others share their vocation stories. Deacon Jim Houston, diocesan director of the Permanent Diaconate Office, along with other deacons will be present to interact, support, and encourage the men and their wives as they follow the Lord’s call. Contact the Vocation Office with questions at [vocations@dmdiocese.org](mailto:vocations@dmdiocese.org) or 515-237-5034.

### Aug. 17 Saturday

#### Ignatian Retreat Day

DES MOINES – Jesuit Father Larry Gillick will join us for this year’s Ignatian Retreat Day from 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. at St. Mary of Nazareth Parish. Director of the Deglman Center for Ignatian Spirituality at Creighton University since 1991, Father Gillick is a spiritual director to students, faculty, and alumni of Creighton as well as directing retreats and days of reflection around the country. Father Gillick was with us for our very first Ignatian Retreat Day and we are honored to have him back as we kick off celebrating our 50th year of ministry this summer. For more information and to register, visit our website [theemmaushouse.org/ninth-annual-ignatian-retreat](http://theemmaushouse.org/ninth-annual-ignatian-retreat)

### Aug. 24 Saturday

#### Bishop’s Celebration of Schools

WEST DES MOINES -- Join us at this year’s Bishop’s Celebration of Catholic Schools at St. Francis of Assisi Parish. This event unites all of our Catholic schools in celebration of Bishop William Joensen’s unwavering commitment to our Catholic schools. During the event, the Diocese will recognize special honorees, educators, administrators, and volunteers for their impact on our Catholic schools. Mass is at 4:30 p.m., followed by a social hour at 5:30 p.m.,

dinner and an awards presentation at 6:30 p.m. This year’s event will also feature a keynote address from the Schweizer family, a name synonymous with excellence in athletics and a proud product of the Catholic schools. To reserve your tickets visit Bishop’s Celebration of Catholic Schools at [dmdiocese.org](http://dmdiocese.org) and look under the Events tab or call 515-237-5079 or email [lholms@dmdiocese.org](mailto:lholms@dmdiocese.org).

#### Other

### July 8-11

#### National Catholic Musicians Convention

KANSAS CITY -- Music ministers are invited to attend the National Association of Pastoral Musicians annual convention in Kansas City. Go to [NPM.org](http://NPM.org) for details. Contact the local NPM Chapter at [desmoinesia.npm.org](mailto:desmoinesia.npm.org).

### Aug. 3 Saturday

#### Awake My Soul Revival Event

NEW ULM, MINNESOTA -- This significant evangelization event will bring the energy from the national Eucharistic Revival Congress back to Minnesota and ignite the third year of the Eucharistic Revival - the Year of Going Out on Mission! See Jeff Cavins and musician Matt Maher. Before the event, Mass will be celebrated at 4 p.m. by New Ulm Bishop Chad Zielinski, at the Church of St. Mary in New Ulm. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for youth ages 7-17. Children under 6 are free. For more information and to register, visit [holycrossaf.org/awake-my-soul-event](http://holycrossaf.org/awake-my-soul-event).

#### Pray a Monthly Rosary

DES MOINES -- Join fellow Iowans to pray the rosary the third Sunday of every month at 1:30 p.m. (rain or shine) at the Iowa Capitol, west side steps. For more information call Diana at 515-974-7691 or Jeff at 515-778-6087.

#### Bishop Drumm Garage Sale

JOHNSTON -- The Bishop Drumm Garage Sale will be held from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. every Thursday to Sept. 26 at the Bishop Drumm campus, 5837 Winwood Dr. in Johnston. Donations of good household items, furniture and clothing will be accepted on the days of the sale. Please contact Helen Thull at 515-669-4621 for large, donated items.

## Schweizer family to give keynote address at Bishop’s celebration

On Saturday, Aug. 24, the Diocese of Des Moines will host its annual Bishop’s Celebration of Catholic Schools at St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines.

The event unites the community in celebration of the life-changing impact faith-centered education at its schools has provided for over 150 years.

The Diocese will honor exceptional individuals dedicated to Catholic education during the event. This year’s honorees include:

**Administrator of the Year:** Ann Andersen, Shelby County Catholic

**Teacher of the Year:** Jane Brown, St. Augustin Catholic School

**Volunteer of the Year:** Megan Kluesner, Sacred Heart Catholic

**Honorary Chairs:** Frank Harty of Des Moines

Dennis and Connie Purdum of Creston

This year’s event will also feature a keynote address from the Schweizer family, a name synonymous with excellence in athletics and a proud product of the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools. The family, represented by three generations, including Olympian Karissa Schweizer, will share their unique experiences and insights, highlighting how Catholic education has been instrumental in their success both academically and beyond.

Karissa Schweizer’s roots in Urbandale and her journey through Dowling Catholic are steeped in a rich legacy of athleticism and determination.

Daughter to Mike and Kathy Schweizer, both of whom boasted successful collegiate track careers at Mankato State, Karissa inherited a passion for running from a lineage of champions.

Her grandfather, Frank Schweizer, an NCAA Division II All-American runner at Mankato State, left an indelible mark on Dowling Catholic, coaching track for over four decades. Although he retired before Karissa’s high school tenure, his legacy thrived through her family’s continued dedication to the sport.

The family’s connection to Dowling’s track program runs deep, with Karissa’s father and uncles, Steve and Doug, leaving their own tracks on the school’s history.

Even her siblings, Kelsey and Ryan, followed suit, lacing up their shoes to represent Dowling Catholic on the track. Ryan’s athletic prowess shone brightly as he clinched eight impressive state championships, including a swimming title. His achievements extended beyond high school, as evidenced by his stellar performance at the 2017 USA Track and Field Junior Championships, where he secured third place with a remarkable 3:49.04 PR in the 1500m event. Currently, he’s a member of the University of Notre Dame’s track team.

To reserve tickets or to get involved in this year’s event, call 515-237-5079 or email [lholms@dmdiocese.org](mailto:lholms@dmdiocese.org).

### Edward Jones

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Member SIPC  
Source: April 2023  
Forbes.com



## 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

With only 58 spots available, this trip will book quickly. If you would like more information or a brochure, email Sue McEntee at [smcentee@cfswia.org](mailto:smcentee@cfswia.org) or call 515-237-5239. To guarantee your spot(s) for this trip, email Natalie Delph at [natalied@wittetravel.com](mailto:natalied@wittetravel.com) or call 616-957-8113.

# Two priests combine golden anniversary celebration

## Joy is in getting to know people

By Jennifer Willems  
Contributing Writer

As he prepares to observe 50 years of priestly ministry, Father John Ludwig's joy is compounded by the relationships he has built over five decades.

"Getting to know people – individuals and families – and working with them for weddings and baptisms and funerals. Hospital calls, where you get to be with people at very vulnerable times. To be trusted and accepted in those situations," he said. "We get to do that."

Father Ludwig looks forward to greeting many of those people at an open house that will be hosted by Our Lady's Immaculate Heart in Ankeny for him and his classmate, Monsignor Stephen Orr, on Sunday, July 28, from 2 to 4 p.m. The afternoon will end with sung evening prayer at 4 p.m.

Father Ludwig and Msgr. Orr have been classmates since the first grade at St. Augustin School in Des Moines. They went on to Dowling High School and Loras College in Dubuque, where they studied philosophy, and then parted ways for their formation in theology.

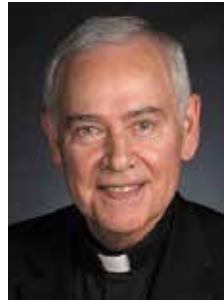
Father Ludwig was sent to the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, and returned with a Baccalaureate of Sacred Theology (STB) and a master's degree in theology.

He and Msgr. Orr were ordained by Bishop Maurice Dingman on July 27, 1974, at their home church of St. Augustin.

Father Ludwig's first assignment sent him back to Dowling High School in West Des Moines to teach religion. After two years, he was named director of religious education for the Diocese of Des Moines.

Parish ministry followed at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, where he was as-

sociate pastor for three years; St. Mary of Nazareth, Des Moines, as pastor for seven years; and St. Joseph, Des Moines, as associate pastor for two years.



Father John Ludwig

When

Father Ludwig was named pastor of the Newman Center at Drake University, he knew the community needed a permanent, identifiable place for students to gather for Mass and ministry. He oversaw construction of the St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Student Center, which was dedicated in 1997.

"When I got to the Newman Center, somebody said, 'Don't you find college students kind of intimidating?' And I said, 'To be real honest, I have found them to be like lambs.' The nicest kids."

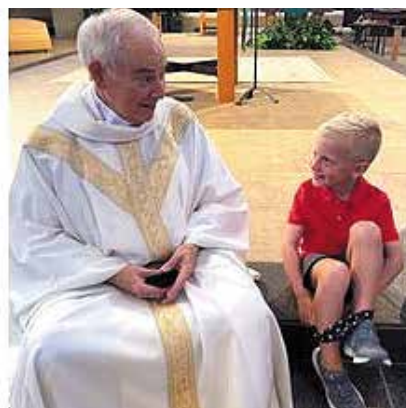
After a short sabbatical, he was building again – St. John the Apostle Church in Norwalk, to serve the Cumming and Norwalk faith communities. It was dedicated in 2005 and Father Ludwig stayed as pastor until he retired in 2018.

In addition to his service in parishes, he has served the diocesan Tribunal since 1978 with annulment cases.

Since then, Father Ludwig has helped to cover Masses at St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines, and St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines, as well as Wesley on Grand, a senior living facility, once a month, and a school Masses as needed for Our Lady of the Americas.

Father Ludwig has been writing a question-and-answer column for *The Catholic Mirror* since 2017.

Cards may be sent to him at 1390 Buffalo Road, West Des Moines, Iowa 50265.



Father John Ludwig visits with a young parishioner a few years apart.

## Variety of ministries was life-giving



Msgr. Stephen Orr visits with students at St. Anthony School in 2005.

By Jennifer Willems  
Contributing Writer

Variety has marked Monsignor Stephen Orr's ministry for 50 years and that suits him just fine.

"For me, it was life giving. It was always hard to leave what I was doing, but once I got into the new setting I thought, 'Gosh, look at these new experiences, these new people, new opportunities,'" he said. "So the variety of ministry is what kept me fresh, I think."

He added that "people are what makes the whole thing enjoyable."

Msgr. Orr will have a chance to catch up with many of these "wonderful people" at an open house for him and his classmate, Father John Ludwig, on Sunday, July 28. It will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart in Ankeny, and conclude with sung evening prayer at 4 p.m.

Well wishes may be sent to Msgr. Orr at 1390 Buffalo Road, West Des Moines, Iowa 50265.

### Helped plan pope's visit

Msgr. Orr and Father Ludwig have been classmates since they attended St. Augustin School in Des Moines.

They continued at Dowling High School in West Des Moines and then studied philosophy at Loras College in Dubuque, where Msgr. Orr earned a bachelor's degree in history and an Iowa state teacher's certificate.

He completed his studies for the priesthood at the Pontifical North American College and Gregorian University in Rome. There he earned a bachelor's of sacred theology (STB) and a master's degree in pastoral theology.

Msgr. Orr and Father Ludwig were ordained by Bishop Maurice Dingman on July 27, 1974, at their home church of St.

Augustin.

Msgr. Orr taught at St. Albert High School and served at St. Francis Xavier in Council Bluffs for four years. Then he went back to school for a master's degree in church administration from Catholic University of America in preparation to serve as chancellor with Bishop Dingman for six years.

Within his first week as chancellor, he learned that Joe Hays, a farmer from Truro, wanted to invite Pope John Paul II to visit Des Moines. When the Vatican confirmed the visit for Oct. 4, 1979, Msgr. Orr found himself on the planning committee and "from the end of June until after the pope's visit, that's all we did."

### Served as diocesan administrator

He would return to Rome in 1986 to serve on the faculty of the Pontifical North American College for six years, and as vice rector there for two years.

When he came back to the Diocese of Des Moines in 1991, Msgr. Orr was named the founding pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines. It is now the largest parish and Catholic school in Iowa.

While the prospect seemed intimidating at first, "We had a lot of fun. We did a lot of hard work, but everybody pitched in. It was just amazing."

Msgr. Orr returned to diocesan administration as vicar general and moderator of the curia in 1997 at the request of Bishop Charron, and added pastoral care of St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Student Center in Des Moines in 2001.

Three years later, he was named pastor of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart in Ankeny, while retaining his ministry as vicar general and vicar for priests.

When Bishop Charron retired in 2007, Msgr. Orr was appointed administrator of the Diocese of Des Moines for 13 months as he continued to lead the Ankeny faith community.

He retired in 2018 after 13 years as pastor of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart.

Since then, Msgr. Orr has continued to help in Des Moines-area parishes, primarily at St. Pius X in Urbandale, where he will fill in this summer.



Msgr. Stephen Orr

## 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.

## You Shall Wander Far in Safety

July 19, 7:30 p.m. - July 21, 1:00 p.m.  
Schuyler, NE



During this retreat, based on St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, specially composed instrumental music and texts will help retreatants enter into moments in the life of Jesus. **Fr. Bob Dufford, SJ**, is an internationally known musician (*St. Louis Jesuits*) and composer of liturgical music. He has preached many retreats and parish missions.

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

St. Benedict Center  
www.stbenedictcenter.com  
Retreats@stbenedictcenter.com  
402.352.8819



# Congratulations Father Luisito Cabrera!



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# Prayer vigil supports immigrants, families

By Alexis Nicholson  
Contributing Writer

“We gather to pray, not to protest.”

These were Bishop William Joensen’s opening words to the more than 100 people who attended a June 9 prayer vigil, held in opposition to SF 2340, a new state law regarding immigration that is set to go into effect on July 1.

The prayer vigil was held on the eve of two major lawsuits against the bill, filed by civil rights groups and the Department of Justice, with arguments set to begin on June 10.

During the vigil on the steps of St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines, there was music, worship, and a Scripture reading before members of the community spoke about the impact that this law could have on families in Iowa.

Ry Meyer, an immigration attorney who works for Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Dubuque, explained the legal complications behind immigration law.

“Immigration law is the only

thing that makes the tax code look easy,” he said.

The new law will impact everyday people who are actively pursuing legal status and doesn’t include any exceptions for certain visas, which help victims of crime who were trafficked to the United States, he said.

“It is especially problematic that SF 2340 will explicitly allow state officials to prosecute an individual for state immigration crimes, even if that person is pursuing legally admissible means for immigration relief before federal authorities or have actually received federal authorization to be present.”

Marisol Guerra, a teacher who leads the language immersion program at St. Anthony Catholic school, spoke about her personal experiences of immigrating to Iowa and becoming part of the community.

“We came here and the city embraced us. The people would smile and say hi. They were so nice to us. It was so safe to be here. We could drive around at midnight, and I wasn’t afraid of being kidnapped, murdered or carjacked. We would sleep in peace knowing that if something

happened someone would help us, that if we called the police they would come. This city welcomed us as a family of immigrants and made us feel at home.”

This warm welcome was a comfort. While grateful for the opportunity to be here, Guerra notes that the choice to leave is never easy or simple.

“Nobody leaves their homeland, or their home, because they want to” she says.

Despite the difficult times that may lay ahead, Guerra encouraged those present to stay strong.

“I know that what I’m going to say is not easy, but don’t be afraid. Don’t put your heads down. Don’t walk with your heads down. Because this is our second home and we have nothing to be ashamed of because we come from another country or being immigrants. Walk with your head up high.”

Following Guerra’s talk Bishop Joensen led the crowd in a bilingual rosary before sending people forth with a blessing.

“Above all, we look to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to intercede for us and to spur us to lighten the yoke of life by removing those undue burdens and obstacles we humans sometimes place on others.”



Photos by Alexis Nicholson

Marisol Guerra, a teacher at St. Anthony School in Des Moines, shares her gratitude for the support she received when she came to Iowa.

## Bishop outlines vision

Continued from page 1  
kits, providing guidance and learning from each other.

In the spring, parishes will be able to report to their parishioners what they accomplished. The following year, they may choose to continue working on that priority and/or select a second

priority to address.

Two more gatherings for pastors and their key advisors are planned to review the vision, the process, and the toolkits available as resources. The meetings will be at the end of this month in Council Bluffs and Des Moines.

Get your message out to 30,000 Catholic homes in central and southwest Iowa by advertising in *The Catholic Mirror*.

Contact Sandy Riesberg at 515-237-5046 or [sriesberg@dmdiocese.org](mailto:sriesberg@dmdiocese.org) for details.

### 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 our website to give online at:  
<https://friendsofcatholicworker.com/>

### 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).

**Edencrest™**

**FIND YOUR Squad**

**Jjuan Hakeem**  
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shawn.kinnison@edencrestliving.com  
THE TUSCANY  
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shelly.timm@edencrestliving.com  
KETTLESTONE  
805 SE TALLGRASS LANE | WAUKEE  
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**Jessica Johnson**  
jessica.johnson@edencrestliving.com  
SIENA HILLS  
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# Father Acra: The Man, The Myth, The Icon

## Guest Column

By Joe Hartman

Father John Acra is the kind of person who doesn't like having the attention on him; he would rather be celebrating others.

He is one of the most humble people at Dowling Catholic High School. If Father Acra had it his way, he would be celebrating someone else rather than celebrating himself. During our entire interview, Father Acra was making jokes and having a good time, even though I could tell that he was uncomfortable having the attention on him.

On Feb. 6, students and staff at Dowling Catholic celebrated Father Acra's 88th birthday. Father Acra is our spiritual di-

rector. He started at the all-boys Dowling High School in 1962 where he taught English and Theology. He remembers the day that he packed up his old classroom at the old Dowling High School, put it in his car and drove it to the "new"/current Dowling Catholic High School, which had merged with St. Joseph Academy, then an all girls' Catholic high school.

Father Acra was the first coach of the Dowling Catholic speech and debate team. He recalls the day that he got called into the office and asked if he would be willing to be the coach and he saw it as something new to learn and took on the role with enthusiasm.

His favorite role at Dowling Catholic now is celebrating reconciliation with students. Another one of his favorite things is

to preach. Father Acra takes comfort in the fact that students who are struggling with their mental health are able and willing to reach out to him and ask him for help.

Father Acra has also helped multiple priests on their journey to priesthood. Father Reed Flood, the chaplain at Dowling, is one of them. Father Flood said that when he was discerning his vocation and was talking to Father Acra, Father Acra said, "At least



Father John Acra celebrating his birthday.

you care to discern the priesthood."

In my time at Dowling, Father Acra has always been a person to strive to be like. As I have recently been growing back toward the church, Father Acra has always been there as someone to talk to. He is always just standing in the doorway to the Dowling narthex so that he can be there for people who walk by. I remember the first time that I saw Father Acra. I did not know who he was but as I started to ask around, everyone had something good to say about him. Father Acra has always gone out of his way to help people who need someone to talk to.

Joe Hartman is in the Class of 2024 at Dowling Catholic High School.

## Can we take communion at a Lutheran church?

*Q. We speak of God's mercy, yet in Scripture it says "the person who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven." Mark 3:29. What does it mean to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and how does the Church view those words?*

A. It's only found in Mark's Gospel. Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit is found liberally throughout Acts and is responsible for the guidance of the Christian mission after the Ascension of Jesus. Thus, this sin repudiates the whole mission of Jesus and the early Church. So, someone who repudiates the whole mission of Jesus and the early Church is probably not interested in being forgiven.

*Q. What does "Son of Man" mean referring to Jesus? cf. John 9:35. Why not Son of God?*

A. Well, why not both? Son of Man and Son of God. I checked this out in the Encyclopedia of Catholicism. "Son of Man" is a designation for Jesus. In Aramaic and Hebrew, it is a fairly indefinite idiom for "man" or "someone." In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet is regularly addressed as "son of man." In the four gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, this title has



*I've Been Wondering...*

Father John Ludwig

become definite, a fixed moniker for Jesus. Of course, we also refer to Jesus as Son of God. But even that term is also used for other holy people in the scriptures. We believe in Jesus is God and Human. There is no other religious figure whom we refer to as both human and divine. So, the scriptures use both terms "Son of God" and "Son of Man" for Jesus. If you find this answer not particularly helpful, I agree with you!

*Q. Since the Jewish people don't think that Jesus was ever here, why are they on the same calendar year as Christians? - I.G. Norwalk*

A. Interesting. I'll bet you mean that the Jewish people don't believe that Jesus was the Son of God; so why would they use the calendar that begins more or less with the birth of Jesus. I don't know of any Jewish scholar who denies that Jesus existed. The current Jewish year of 5784 began at sunset on Sept. 15, 2023 and will

end at sunset on Oct. 2, 2024. The starting point of Hebrew chronology is the year 3761 BC, the date for the creation of the world as described in the Old Testament. The Jewish calendar is luni-solar, based on lunar months of 29 days alternating with 30 days. Interesting perhaps, but most people throughout the world use the same calendar we do which is based on the year we think Jesus was born. Throughout history, there have been many calendars based on many ethnic and national events. Traditionally we have used B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (anno Domini - in the year of our Lord). More and more we are seeing BCE (before the common era) and CE (the common era).

*Q. I'm Catholic and sometimes I also attend services with my spouse at a Lutheran church. The pastor has invited me to take communion. What does the church say about that? -P.M., Des Moines*

A. It's been over 500 years since the Lutheran - Catholic rift started. Several years ago, the Catholics and the Lutherans in the Des Moines metro observed that historic split. Lots has happened during those five centuries. Following the Second Vatican Council, the ecumenical movement became part of the renewal of the Church - not just Catholics but Lutherans and other Christian denominations. Pope John Paul said that his role as Bishop of Rome was to be a sign of unity, not just for Catholics but for all the followers of Christ. We've made progress. One point of disunity at present is intercommunion. At present, Catholics don't receive Communion in non-Catholic Churches, and non-Catholics don't receive Communion in Catholic Churches. (It's not a surprise to note that people don't always follow that pattern.) To answer your question directly, when the pastor of your spouse's church invites you to take Communion, the Catholic Church would say "not yet." We look forward to the time that we can share together at the Lord's Table, but not yet.

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

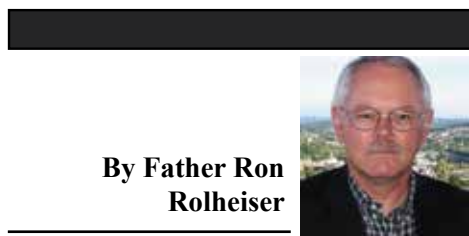
## Rhythm of the ordinary anchors our sanity

In its calendar, the church singles out special seasons to celebrate - Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. But, outside of these special times, it invites us to live and celebrate Ordinary time.

Ordinary time. For most of us, I suspect, that phrase conjures up images of something that is less than special - bland, flat, routine, domestic, boring. Inside us there is the sense that the ordinary can weigh us down, swallow us up, and keep us outside the more rewarding waters of passion, romance, creativity, and celebration.

We easily vilify the ordinary. I remember a young woman, a student of mine, who shared in class that her greatest fear in life was to succumb to the ordinary, "to end up a content, ordinary housewife, happily doing laundry commercials!"

If you're an artist or have an artistic temperament, you're particularly prone to this kind of denigration because artists tend to set creativity in opposition to the ordinary. Doris Lessing, for example, once commented that George Eliot could have been a better writer "if she hadn't been so moral." What Lessing is suggesting is that Eliot kept herself too anchored in the ordinary, too safe, too secure, too far from the edges. Kathleen Norris, in her biographical work, *The Virgin of Bennington*, shares how as a young writer she fell victim to this ideology: "Artists, I believed were much too serious to live sane and normal



By Father Ron Rolheiser

lives. Driven by inexorable forces in an uncaring world, they were destined for an inevitable, sometimes deadly, but always ennobling wrestle with gloom and doom."

The ennobling wrestle with gloom and doom! That does have a seductive sound to it, particularly for those of us who fancy ourselves as artistic, intellectual, or spiritual. That's why, on a given day, any of us can feel a certain condescending pity for those who can achieve simple happiness. Easy for them, we think, but they're selling themselves short. That's the artist inside of us speaking. You never see an artist doing a laundry commercial!

Don't get me wrong. There is some merit to this. Jesus, himself, said that we do not live by bread alone. No artist needs an explanation of what that means. He or she knows that what Jesus meant by that, among other things, is that simple routine and a mortgage that's been paid do not necessarily make for heaven. We need bread, but we also need beauty and color. Doris Lessing, who was a great artist, joined the communist party as a young woman but she

left after she'd matured. Why? One phrase says it all. She left the communist party, she says, "because they didn't believe in color!" Life, Jesus assures us, is not meant to be lived simply as an endless cycle of rising, going off to work, responsibly doing a job, coming home, having supper, getting things set for the next day, and then going back to bed.

And yet, and yet, there's much to be said for seemingly dram routine. The rhythm of the ordinary is, in the end, the deepest wellsprings from which to draw joy and meaning. Kathleen Norris, after telling us about her youthful temptation to sidestep the ordinary to engage in the more ennobling battle with gloom and doom, shares how a wonderful mentor, Betty Kray, helped steer her clear of that pitfall. Kray encouraged her to write out of her joy as well as her gloom. As Norris puts it: "She tried hard to convince me of what her friends who had been institutionalized for madness knew all too well: that the clean simple appreciation of ordinary, daily things, is a treasure like none on earth."

Sometimes it takes an illness to teach us that. When we regain health and energy after having been ill, off work, and out of our normal routines and rhythms, nothing is as sweet as returning to the ordinary - our work, our routine, the normal stuff of everyday life. Only after it has been taken away and then given back, do we realize

that the clean simple appreciation of daily things is the ultimate treasure.

Artists, however, are still partially right. The ordinary can weigh us down and keep us outside the deeper waters of creativity, outside that one-in-a-million romance, and outside of the wildness that lets us dance. However, that being admitted, the ordinary is what keeps us from being swept away. The rhythm of the ordinary anchors our sanity.

Paul Simon, in an old 1970s song entitled, *An American Tune*, sings about coping with confusion, mistakes, betrayal, and other events that shatter our peace. He ends a rather sad ballad quite peacefully with these words: "Still tomorrow's gonna be another working day, and I'm trying to get some rest. That's all I'm trying, is to get some rest."

Sometimes obedience to that imperative is what saves our sanity. There's a lot to be said for being a contented, little person, anchored in the rhythms of the ordinary, and perhaps even doing laundry commercials.

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](https://www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser).

# Animando a los Padres

Continued from page 2

Así como en nuestras parroquias locales cada domingo y en las Misas diarias, nos hundiremos en el agua y fuego del Espíritu Santo que siempre acompaña a nuestro Señor Eucarístico. Así como el profeta Elías se preparó para hacer el sacrificio en el altar del Monte Carmelo y dijo al pueblo, “El verdadero Dios es el que responderá enviando fuego” (1 Reyes 18:24). Es por el fuego del Espíritu que el pan y el vino en el altar se transforman en el Cuerpo y Sangre Sacramentales de Jesús. Como nos lo recuerda el Padre Donald Haggerty, “La Eucaristía no es una realidad estática, inamovible, algo que admirar, así como una pintura en un museo. No, está con vida, un fuego que arde y salta con llamas.”

El Congreso Nacional Eucarístico dará inicio al tercer año de nuestro Reavivamiento Nacional, el Año del Envío Misionero. El ser un auténtico cristiano católico es ser misionero. Esta es una verdad particular en nuestra Diócesis cuando acogemos nuestra misión, “Sembrando el

Espíritu de Dios.” La misión está orgánicamente aunada a nuestra visión: “Cultivando Conexiones en Cristo por medio del Encuentro, la Amistad y la Comunión.” Comenzando el próximo año y de ahí en adelante, haremos hincapié regularmente tanto en estas páginas como en nuestro sitio web, en podcasts y en otros medios sobre dónde y cómo se revelan esta misión y visión.

En anticipación, quisiera que se familiarizaran más intencionalmente con la dimensión Eucarística de nuestra visión diocesana. En este mes del Día del Padre, también hago acento en la paternidad espiritual de nuestros sacerdotes quienes dedican sus vidas a ofrecer la Eucaristía a su pueblo. Nuestros dos “más recientes” sacerdotes, próximamente a ser Padres Luis Cabrera y Michael Mahoney, se ordenarán al sacerdocio el 21 de junio en la Catedral de San Ambrosio – dos días antes de que la Peregrinación Eucarística Nacional llegue a “nuestras costas” en el Riverview Park en Council Bluffs. Invito y reto a todos a que sean más fervi-

entes y fieles en pedirle al Señor que aumente las vocaciones al sacerdocio de Jesucristo entre nuestras familias y parroquias.

En las secciones de “amistad” y de “encuentro” en la visión de nuestra Diócesis, reflexionamos: “Jesús no es simplemente el ‘dador’ de amor que derrama su cuerpo y sangre, su vida misma por los demás. Él nos mostró la humildad de Dios al no tener miedo de compartir su ‘necesidad’ de nosotros. Los verdaderos amigos de Dios, incluyendo a santos como la Madre Teresa de Calcuta, saben que él aún tiene sed de almas a quienes estamos llamados a mostrar amor, a revelar que todo lo que hacemos por el hambriento, el desnudo, el encarcelado, el extranjero, el vulnerable y por el más pequeño entre nosotros lo hacemos por él. Y, en el proceso, estas conexiones que se tejen y se sellan en el Espíritu duran por siempre.”

Más aún: “¿Cuántos de nosotros estamos aún buscando un lugar en donde pertenecer, y sentir que somos amados incondicionalmente y que se nos acepta tal y como somos? Jesús quiere incor-

porar nuestra historia en su historia, la cual es más increíble que cualquier cosa que pudiéramos imaginarnos. El Padre envía a su Hijo en la plenitud del tiempo para que podamos participar en la comunión de amor que es Dios, gracias a que Jesús se convirtió en Dios-con-nosotros, tanto humano como divino en la maravilla de la Encarnación. Jesús desea arduamente el comer y beber con nosotros, así como lo hizo con sus discípulos y con las multitudes a las que atraía a su alrededor. Él entonces cumple su deseo de CONVERTIRSE en comida y bebida para nosotros en el milagroso regalo de la Eucaristía.”

Cada uno de nuestros ordenantes, Diáconos Luis y Michael, han tenido un misterioso desarrollo, en veces sorprendente, escrutinador, y finalmente afirmante de su camino hacia el sacerdocio. Para el Diácono Luis, su exploración al llamado a la vida religiosa, luego al matrimonio, y luego como un adolorido viudo seguido de un renacido llamado al sacerdocio, han formado un camino tanto trágico como emocional de la persistencia de Dios.

Y para el Diácono Michael, los llamados iniciales a ser maestro de estudiantes de secundaria que eventualmente provocó una intuición de ser llamado a ser un padre espiritual y sacerdote. Ambos hombres han demostrado su identidad como hijos de Padres terrenales y celestiales, han identificado las heridas la vida les ha hecho cargar hasta el día de hoy – marcas que les permitirán ser conductos abnegados de la compasión de Dios. Cada uno de ellos se ofrece plena y humildemente a Cristo y su Iglesia para ser trabajadores que siembran las semillas de la Palabra, un instrumento de la gracia generativa de Dios en los sacramentos – más principalmente en la Eucaristía.

Cada mujer, hombre y niño – ya sea que lo sepan y reconozcan o no – busca a Jesús. Por lo tanto, necesitamos y deseamos sacerdotes que nos lleven a Jesús y que nos traigan a Jesús por medio del potencial paternal y dador de vida del sacerdocio. Nos llenamos de gozo y damos gracias a Dios para que estos dos diáconos elijan entregar sus vidas por Jesús, por nosotros. Y damos gracias a sus padres, el fallecido Manuel y Maurita y a Tom y Celia, quienes les dieron vida, quienes sembraron las semillas de su vocación con su propio ejemplo, generosidad y fidelidad a sus propias vocaciones como esposos y como padres.

Todas estas son buenas noticias que agitan, no solamente en acción de gracias, pero de petición ferviente en el espíritu de Elías que dice, “El verdadero Dios es el que responderá enviando fuego”: Por favor, Señor ¡enciende padres espirituales para nuestra Diócesis!



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*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*

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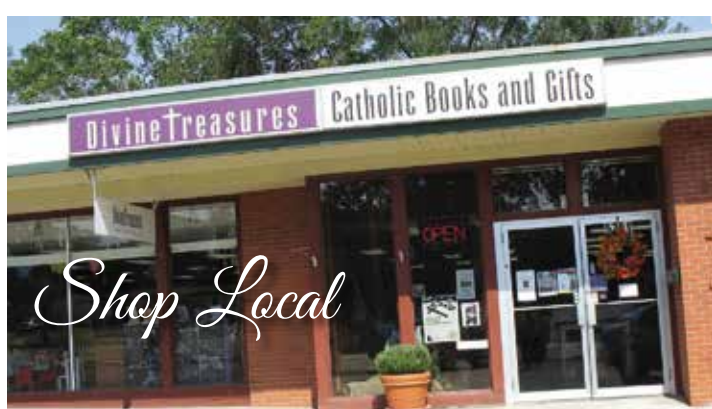
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**Michael Bormann**  
General Agent  
563-689-6801  
michael.bormann@kofc.org  
Eastern Iowa



**Neil Pfeifer**  
General Agent  
402-379-0180  
neil.pfeifer@kofc.org  
Western Iowa



**Walker Bormann**  
Assistant General Agent  
563-219-5800  
walker.bormann@kofc.org  
Eastern Iowa



**Jeremy Borchers**  
Assistant General Agent  
402-750-4775  
jeremy.borchers@kofc.org  
Western Iowa



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



**Rob Ryan**  
Field Agent  
515-490-8753  
robert.ryan@kofc.org  
West Des Moines, St. Francis,  
Sacred Heart



**Pete Seuntjens**  
Field Agent  
712-880-0044  
peter.seuntjens@kofc.org  
Harlan, Earling, Audubon,  
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Field Agent  
515-218-3550  
gregory.waddle@kofc.org  
St. Augustin, St. Anthony's,  
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**Justin Wadle**  
Field Agent  
515-975-2688  
justin.wadle@kofc.org  
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