

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

Vol. 57, No. 9

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## Back to School



Nearly 7,000 students took their seats in the Diocese's 16 Catholic schools in central and southwest Iowa. Catholic schools are part of our mission of cultivating connections in Christ so that we can pass on Catholic faith values, raise future leaders committed to the Catholic faith community, and provide parents an opportunity to choose for their children an education experience grounded in the Catholic faith. Above, Father Mark Neal, of Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, blesses children's backpacks. At right, a family is welcomed into the St. Albert Catholic School community in Council Bluffs. Kindergarteners will be in the high school Class of '37. Below, Bishop William Joensen cuts the ribbon at a new playground at Holy Family Catholic School in Des Moines.



## Christ Our Life returns

### Faith conference draws thousands closer to God

Here we are: Just one week away from one of the largest Catholic faith conferences in the Midwest.

The Christ Our Life Catholic Conference held Sept. 28-29 at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines is expected to draw thousands in person and online.

Since its debut in 2010, the Christ Our Life Catholic Conference has grown exponentially with new ways to draw in thousands of Catholics in person and online.

Now for the first time ever, all youth tickets—those typically sold for people ages 23 and younger—will be free of charge for recipients thanks to the extensive fundraising commitment made by Joe Lane, Sr., who serves as the volunteer conference director of development.

While typically approximately 500 youth tickets are sold at \$15 each—at a value of \$7,500—Lane sought out donors who supported bringing more young people to the conference.

“They are, after all, the future of our faith,” says Lane. “I’m confident that many donors will recognize the value of this endeavor.”

Echoing this belief are co-founders and co-chairs Ellen Miller of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola and Marilyn Lane, of Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines.

“We know the future of our faith is to catechize, support, and energize our youth,” said Lane. “While the conference, its world-class speakers and the sacraments, remain aimed at entire families, we’ve chosen to hold breakout sessions with several of the speakers whose topics in these youth sittings will directly appeal to where they are at in their young lives. We are pouring on even more effort to connect with youth ministers, RE instructors, and parishes to encourage our young Catholics to participate.”

The conference has grown from a regional gathering to an international event that will include worldwide livestreaming once again in addition to in-person attendance.

According to thousands of testimonials over the past 14 years, many lives have been dramatically changed by the caliber

## Bishop reflects on fifth anniversary

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

On his fifth anniversary of ordination and installation as the 10<sup>th</sup> bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines, Bishop William Joensen will be with his brother bishops celebrating the ordination and installation of the new bishop of the Davenport Diocese.

As he wishes Bishop-Elect Dennis Walsh well, Bishop Joensen will remember what it felt like to wear similar shoes. Five years ago on Sept. 27, the Loras College teacher, spiritual director, and priest assisting rural and city parishes answered God’s call to

lead the faithful in the Diocese of Des Moines.

A lifelong Iowan raised in Ames and ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Bishop Joensen is thrilled that he can serve people in his home state.

“I’m an Iowan. I’ve really grown to love the people of our Des Moines Diocese!” said the diehard Cyclones fan.

He recently reflected on his fifth anniversary as shepherd of the Diocese’s 80 parishes and 16 Catholic schools, on grappling with a pandemic and emerging with a renewed sense of mission and opportunities to accompany people as they come to know and

love God.

Perhaps among the best parts of his five years as shepherd have been celebrating sacraments, landmark parish anniversaries, ordaining new priests and deacons, and just being with people.

Reflective of the responsibilities as bishop, particularly as his good friend Father Scott Bullock prepares to become Bishop Bullock of the Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota, Bishop Joensen is humbled by his role. He gets to experience Iowa “through the lens of being a priest/bishop who is both to be a visible witness, a humble disciple, but a courageous leader willing to lay down his life both spiritually and in whatever

way God might ask of me.”

Bishop Joensen’s strength stems from the Holy Spirit.

“There’s no way I could do one day of this role without the guidance and peace and counsel of the Holy Spirit.”

His strength also comes from your prayers.

“For 30 years I was ordained a priest. I certainly believed in the Holy Spirit. But I have ever greater assurance and gratitude that the prayers of the people in Mass, where my name is mentioned, are truly effective,” he said.

In his time leading the Diocese of Des Moines, there’s been great joy and many blessings.

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Bishop William Joensen

As my Uncle Ralph, aka Msgr. Ralph Simington, declined while receiving hospice care in Waterloo, Iowa, these past weeks, there were moments of prayer, of sharing the sacraments of anointing and the Eucharist, and some reflections on what heaven might be like. But there were also some lighter moments, like when my brothers, sister, and I finally tried to coax out of this lifelong Notre Dame fan whom he really cheers for when it comes to in-state schools: Iowa or Iowa State. No luck; he will bear his allegiances in his heart to the grave.

The same is true when it comes to Uncle Ralph's political sensibilities. Over the years, he has never disclosed a single candidate for whom he voted nor toward which political party he might incline. I don't think it was out of timidity or lack of conviction; I sense that he took seriously his role as priest pastor to be a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to preach and teach the values of justice and compassion, of solicitude for the poor and lowly along with the irrepressible joy that the message of Jesus Christ should stir in us.

It should be obvious that the values and commitments on particular matters involving human life in society and the role our faith has in informing our discernment and choices as citizens in the public square do not align well across the board with any given political party or with the positions espoused by candidates in their stump speeches or media ads. As the number of such

ads—especially of the “attack” variety—ramp up in this full bore political season, their frequency seems to have an inverse relationship with the truth. One often feels like one needs to take a shower, given the invective and muck being tossed around with abandon.

Two temptations confront us: (1) the temptation to simply opt out of the political process entirely, ignoring and diverting one's attention to other pursuits, like the pigskin orgy that continues from now through the expanded College Football playoff and the Super Bowl. This sort of indifference is usually met with cynicism about politics in general as a God-forsaken arena of society. (2) The second is to go “all in” with one's unswerving support of a political party and their slate of candidates.

Both alternatives avoid the

*“Solidarity” remains a key theme within Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and in the call to all Catholic Christians to be actively involved both in the political process and in all the other ways which society and culture can be transformed in accord with God's intent.*

challenging work of examining candidates' views, deepening our awareness of what the Church and her bishops and pastors are to teach and preach in accord with the Lord's own designs—particularly the tradition in the area known as Catholic Social Justice teaching. And then we are to prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to aid us in discerning and choosing those candidates whom God and we ourselves will lead us.

Among the pastors, who remains truly God's gift to the Church, I've been thinking a lot about St. John Paul II lately. I'm partly prompted by awareness of the approaching 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polish pontiff's Oct. 4, 1979 visit, on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi to St. Patrick, Irish Settlement Church, before he went on to the Living History Farm in West Des Moines to celebrate Mass in a field with 350,000 faithful. Further, St. John Paul's Feast Day falls a few weeks after the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi on Oct. 22, the date he began his ministry as universal Pastor of the Church.

But on a personal level, the influence and engagement with the life and message of St. John Paul II in my life was brought home in a vivid way when I joined with well over a hundred alumni of the Tertio Millennio Seminar a couple weeks ago at the St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, D.C. There I was privileged to be the main celebrant at the Mass celebrated in the Redemptor Hominis Church (“Redeemer of Humanity” is the title of JP II's first encyclical as pope) and participate in the panel discussions that reflected on the 32 years of summer gatherings among young adults from Eastern and Central

Europe and the United States—most of which have been hosted in Krakow, Poland, the city of “Shindler's List” where the young future pope, Karol Wojtyła, lived, studied, and eventually served as archbishop, all under the spectre of the Nazis and then Stalinist communism.

I first followed the summer seminar in 2003 as a young priest with a freshly minted doctorate in philosophy, and then served as a faculty member for ten years engaging the annual class of about 35 young people about how the Church's understanding of the human person is reflected in her moral teaching about bioethical issues at the beginning and end of life. It was in Krakow during the seminar in July 2019 that I received the call from the apostolic nuncio to the United States, then Archbishop Christophe Pierre, informing me that Pope Francis had

appointed me to become the 10<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Des Moines.

As pope, St. John Paul II was a major figure in the Solidarity workers' movement that ultimately contributed to the fall of the Soviet Union and state communism throughout much of Europe in 1989. “Solidarity” remains a key theme within Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and in the call to all Catholic Christians to be actively involved both in the political process and in all the other ways which society and culture can be transformed in accord with God's intent.

In this political season, our U.S. bishops emphasize the call of “Faithful Citizenship” as a summons to greater solidarity, drawing from JP II's message, “On Social Concerns”: “Solidarity is ‘a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to . . . the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all’” (n. 38). God's truth, love and justice are inscribed in creating humans as social beings meant for enduring communion with God and one another. Only when we live in accord with our God-given dignity in virtue and truth can a free society be sustained.

Our economics, our politics, our environment, our hope of human flourishing are all to rest on the defense of human life and all the other God-given rights that follow, as Pope Francis, JP II's successor, asserts: “Everything, including political life, belongs to Jesus Christ, and so participation in political life belongs to the mission of the Church” (Evangeli Gaudium n. 181). All rights undergird God's providential plan that we abide as sisters and brothers in one human family. God

wills that politics be enlisted as an art and practice aiming at the common good in which all can share and pursue abundant life together. This is the essence of solidarity.

As the election approaches, we American bishops draw from all three recent popes as part of a united ‘chorus’ composing Catholic Social Teaching: “We are called to practice ‘radical solidarity’ by accompanying pregnant women to choose life and by offering support to new mothers and their children. As neighbors to all, we also advocate for families affected by poverty, unemployment, or illness, individuals struggling with mental illness or addiction, the elderly and those with disabilities, and all whose livelihoods and homes are endangered by climate change.”

Further, “In countries ravaged by war, such as Ukraine, West Africa, and the Middle East, we must ‘touch the wounded flesh of the victims’ and support efforts for relief and peace, while also working collaboratively to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons.’ We seek policies that ‘welcome, protect, promote, and integrate’ migrants and refugees who arrive at our borders, and which aid development in countries of origin.’ Racism is an obstacle to solidarity, and we strive to root it out not only by examining our hearts individually, but also by looking critically at our policies and institutions. In a culture that overemphasizes the accumulation of wealth, we must not forget our ‘obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.’”

Besides the practice of charity, along with personal discernment, exercising the right to vote, and taking part in other forms of political advocacy on issues in accord with the precepts of natural reason and our faith, one op-

tion to perhaps “rehabilitate” our sense of politics is to take part in an broader opportunity offered by one of the Tertio Millennio faculty with whom I was privileged to teach. Dr. Joseph Woods is a former Air Force pilot who turned to philosophy in his post-military chapter of life to find wisdom that would illuminate and respond to the issues and ultimate questions that weigh upon us today. He is a man of gentle humility, great insight, and faith—and a really good guy. He offers the fruits of his reflection and experience in an on-line course consisting of four one-hour sessions he's offering during this “solidarity” season: “Political Philosophy in a Time of Turmoil” (see link below).

If Dr. Wood's sessions can help restore personal sanity, dispel cynicism, and shore up hope in the human condition and even in the political order—all in the ambiance of faith—then maybe that's just what the spiritual doctor, Jesus Christ, prescribes for you during these crazy days. Whether you avail yourself or not of this opportunity, I promise NOT to ask you for whom you voted, or with which party you aligned. That's between you and God—now unto eternity—knowing that as for Uncle Ralph and me, we will all stand before the Wise Judge someday who will bring all things to light.

Finally, please pray for our country and for the candidates. May God mold our collective hearts and minds after the heart and mind of Christ.

Find election-related prayers at: [dmdiocese.org/blog/election-prayers](http://dmdiocese.org/blog/election-prayers)

“Political Philosophy in a Time of Turmoil” link: [courses.the.catholicthing.org/](http://courses.the.catholicthing.org/)

## THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## OFFICIAL



Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointment effective July 1, 2024.

**Adam Storey**, from Vice-Chancellor, Mission Team Lead, and Director of Marriage and Family Life, to Vice Chancellor of Canonical Affairs. As Vice Chancellor of Canonical Affairs, he will assist with questions about the handling of cases presented to the Tribunal; respond to requests for training of parish leadership in understanding and complying with canon law; assist in preparing internal and external canonical petitions or acts, and serve as resource for general questions about the application of the law to parish and diocesan policies, procedures, and decisions.

Bishop William Joensen made the following assignment effective Sept. 1, 2024.

**Rev. Mr. Anthony Valdez**, from diaconal ministry at Christ the King Parish, Des Moines, to retirement.

*William Joensen*

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

*Jason Kurth*

Jason Kurth  
Chancellor



## Seminarian appeal kicks off this month



**Seminarian Dominic Nguyen, of St. Peter Vietnamese Community in Des Moines, studies at St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota. He is pictured with his family and Father Ross Parker, diocesan director of the Vocations Office.**

The Annual Seminarian Appeal will take place this month at parishes across the Diocese.

Parishioners are invited to donate via a second collection in their parish or to visit the diocesan website to make a gift online.

The annual Seminarian Appeal supports our seminarians studying and discerning a vocation to the priesthood.

The Diocese has eleven seminarians studying in Iowa, Minnesota, New York and Italy. In the last eleven years, 19 priests have been ordained, with Father Mike Mahoney and Father Luis Cabrera ordained this past summer.

“The support allows the seminarians to enter their studies with a peace of mind that is crucial with all they have to know. Thank you for all the support I received in

my time in seminary!” said Father Mike Mahoney.

Father Luis Cabrera also has profound gratitude for the support he received from Diocese on his journey to priesthood.

“Financially, the Diocese ensured that I had access to quality education and resources, easing the burden of tuition and living expenses, thus allowing me to focus with little distraction on my studies and spiritual growth.

The diocesan Office of Stewardship can help facilitate a gift of grain, a gift from a retirement account, or a gift of stock to benefit the Seminarian Appeal. Email [Stewardship@DMDiocese.org](mailto:Stewardship@DMDiocese.org) or call 515-237-5079. To offer a gift to support our seminarians online, go to [dmdiocese.org/giving](http://dmdiocese.org/giving).

## Shenandoah woman makes final vows

“It was not you who chose Me, but I who chose you.”  
-John 15:16

One month ago, Sister Faustina Lightfoot knelt in the Cathedral of the Risen Christ in Lincoln, Nebraska, and professed perpetual vows with the Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln.

It’s been a long road for the farm girl formerly known as Megan Lightfoot from St. Mary Parish in Shenandoah. Yet it’s a journey that brings her joy. St. Mary Parish and her fellow Marian sisters celebrated her perpetual vows Aug. 18 with a celebration in Shenandoah.

“The sisters were able to visit the Lightfoot farm and enjoy a great day together in Iowa,” she said.

Sister Faustina grew up on her family’s farm near Shenandoah with her sister, Trisha, attended Farragut Community School, and was active in sports, 4-H, rodeo, Two County Dusters, St. Mary’s Youth Ministry, FFA and many academics at Farragut.

“My first encounter with God’s love in a deep way was in high school when I attended NCYC (National Catholic Youth Conference) in Kansas City with St. Mary’s Parish. As I received Jesus in the Eucharist, I knew that God was real and that he loved me and was inviting me to grow in

a deeper relationship with him, but I had no idea what that would look like.”

She went to Creighton University, where she studied to be a pharmacist.

“A friend in bible study asked if I had ever thought about religious life and I thought she was crazy! I had never met a religious sister before and thought that wasn’t in the plans for my life,” said Sister Faustina.

The friend encouraged her to meet the Marian sisters and that’s when she said, “I fell in love.”

“The sisters were real people, filled with joy and a spirit of peace and I felt like I was at home and was attracted to go back.”

“My focus shifted from, ‘What do I want to do with my life?’ to a prayer. ‘God, what do you want me to do with my life?’”

Sister Faustina graduated pharmacy school in May, 2016 and entered the Marian sisters just four months later. She professed her first vows in 2019.

She serves as a nurse at the Nebraska Heart Hospital where she loves encountering Jesus’ suffering heart in the patients.

The Marian sisters serve in the apostolates of education, social work and healthcare. To learn more about the Marian sisters visit [mariansisters.org](http://mariansisters.org).



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

**Sister Faustina Lightfoot (center) with Sister Joy on the left and Sister Benedicta on the right at the Seek conference for college students in Des Moines two years ago.**



**Sister Faustina Lightfoot and fellow Marian sisters celebrate her perpetual vows on her family farm near Shenandoah. With them is Father Tom Thakadipuram, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Shenandoah.**

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# Healing Mass focuses on trusting God

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

A Mass of Suicide Healing and Remembrance was held on Sept. 8 at St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines.

Families and friends remembered those who died and symbolized commending them to God's love, mercy, and care.

"In our world today we are surrounded so much by fear, by anxiety, by brokenness, by anger. The list goes on," said Father David Fleming, the celebrant of the Mass. "The world around us seems to close in on us so often, watching us turn our gaze away from the loving Father, to turn inward to our own brokenness, fear, and pain."

Suicide is a leading cause of

death, he said.

"Perhaps today, in these very powerful stories of healing that we hear in the Gospel, we are reminded again and again and again to trust in God, to trust in his presence in your life and in my life every day," said Father Fleming.

A tea candle was lit in the name of each suicide victim, and placed on a table near the altar at the cathedral during the Mass.

The Mass springs from a collaborative effort between the Diocese and Catholic Charities during Suicide Awareness Month as a means of offering healing for those who lost loved ones by suicide.

The Catholic Church's understanding of suicide has evolved over the years. Where it was once not openly talked about and stigmatized families, the Catholic

Church now sees it as the outcome of emotional illness.

"Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility" of a person who dies of suicide, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives."

What's important to remember is that God's mercy is there, said Patty Origer, the diocesan coordinator for Persons with Disability Ministry. She had at the Mass 100 copies of a small booklet penned by Father Ron Rolheiser, a syndicated colum-



In memory of those who died by suicide, candles were lit and on display during a Mass of Suicide Healing and Remembrance.

nist whose articles appear in The Catholic Mirror, called After Suicide: Seven Things For Catholics To Know.

In the midst of grief over the death of a loved one, Father Rolheiser wrote: "But at a different level of understanding, something else will break through that will help us better deal with all those conflicted feelings; namely, empathy for and understanding of someone whose emotional immune system has broken down. And that understanding will also bring with it the consolation that God's empathy and understanding far exceeds our own."

The Mass was both for the deceased and for those mourning their loss, said Father Fleming.

"It's a unique kind of pain and it's one of the worst kinds of things I've ever experienced with parents who have lost a child through suicide because of how it

affects survivors," he said.

Family members question if there was something they could have done to prevent the death and that creates additional brokenness in their lives, he said.


Parishes are encouraged to hold their own Mass of Remembrance, use intercessory prayers to remember those who have died by suicide, or remember them with a display of flowers, candles, or names in a book, Origer said.

How do we move forward, asked Father Fleming in his homily?

Listen to one another, accompany those who are struggling and let them know they are not alone, seek the assistance of others, and stay connected in a relationship of love.

He said: "When you take the Eucharist, you can carry Christ out into the world to others in need."

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Tune in to Bishop William Joensen's weekly radio show Saturdays on Iowa Catholic Radio at 8 a.m. and Sundays at 11 a.m.



and Spirit Catholic Radio Network each Saturday at 5:30 p.m.





# Sports reporter now broadcasting the faith

By Ryan Johnson  
Contributing Writer



Tony Powers Polich

Once a staple on Des Moines broadcast TV, this former sports journalist now spends his days supporting the Knights of Columbus and veterans.

Meet Tony Powers Polich.

If you were around Des Moines in the 1970s and 1980s, you may remember seeing Powers reporting on the latest Iowa or Iowa State football or basketball game.

The Iowa native spent much of his professional career behind the broadcast desk or in a stadium covering sports. He even attended the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, where fellow journalists called upon him to share his knowledge of Iowans competing in the Olympics that year.

It was after Powers decided to take a break from broadcasting that he found his two passions: supporting the Catholic Church through the Knights of Columbus and helping veterans.

It was at his brother's prompting that he joined the Knights of Columbus. His late brother, Father James Polich, a priest for the Diocese of Des Moines, encouraged Powers to join the Catholic fraternal organization.

"He helped strengthen my faith by watching him celebrate Mass despite his illness," Powers said.

He joined the Knights of Columbus and is currently a

member of Council 12422 at St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines. He is also part of the fourth degree assembly.

member of Council 12422 at St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines. He is also part of the fourth degree assembly.

"As a fourth degree Knight of Columbus, we always strive to serve our fellow man," he said. "We always help others, whether it be a homeless person or someone who needs assistance. I pray every day and thank God for living in this wonderful state, country and world."

### Surviving Vietnam

Before a successful career in broadcasting, Powers served in the U.S. military and was stationed in Vietnam. He was draft-

ed in 1968, left central Iowa and trained at the United States Army's Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course (NCO) school in Fort Benning, Georgia. The training there prepared him for Vietnam and "saved his life."

"My combat experience in Vietnam taught me one thing: 'I wanted to live and not die over there.' There was a chaplain in Vietnam who blessed me with the Sign of the Cross every time we were ready to go on patrol. 'Just in case you don't come back, Tony,' he'd always say."

While serving in Vietnam, Powers was wounded and received two Purple Hearts. His second injury took him out of action, and he returned to the United States, where he recovered at the VA Hospital in Denver, Colorado.

His experience serving in the military led to a second career after broadcasting. Powers worked with veterans and helped them find meaningful employment opportunities.

### Writing Experience

An interest in writing spurred Powers to author letters to the editor of The Des Moines Register. That led to longer writing projects, including a mystery novel titled "Murder on the Opinion Page."

Powers to author letters to the editor of The Des Moines Register. That led to longer writing projects, including a mystery novel titled "Murder on the Opinion Page."

Powers's faith called him to write a novel titled "Famous People You Might Meet in Eternity." It's about a former sportscaster who goes in for minor knee surgery and ends up in eternity.

"It's a Christian novel with the theme that all my characters

in the novel have the same thing," he said. "That they could live their lives all over again. I plan to write a sequel soon."

While Powers's military service and professional career took him around the world and into many sporting arenas, his Catholic faith kept him grounded.

He attributes his strong faith to his mother, who helped raise him on the family farm after his father passed away.

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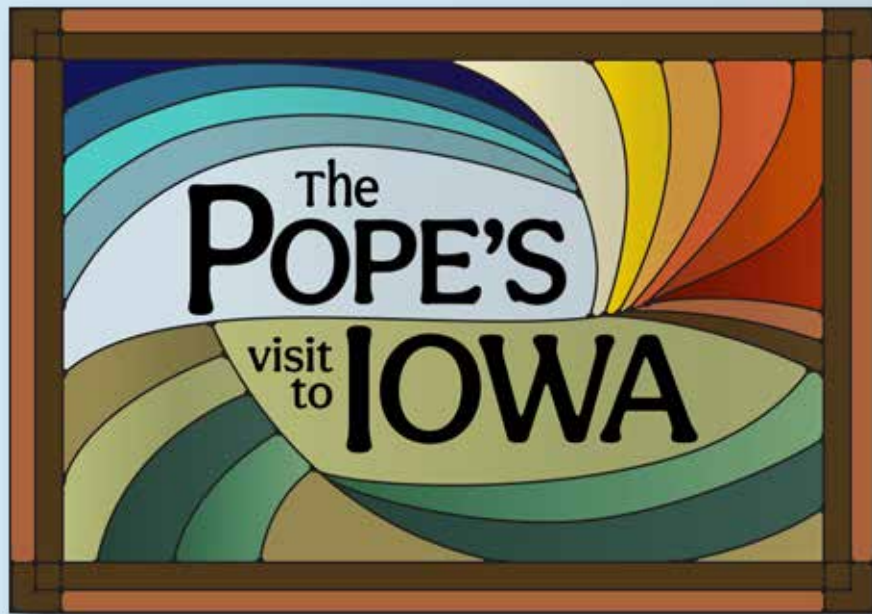
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The story behind the historic visit to Iowa from Pope John Paul II.

Tune in October 7 at 8 p.m.



# Thank you!

## Catholic Charities honors retiring executive director

By Kendall Begnoche  
Contributing Writer

Catholic Charities Executive Director Barbara Decker announced last February she would be retiring after six years of leading the social ministry nonprofit.

She will retire in October.

Decker came to Catholic Charities in 2018 in partnership with the Diocese of Des Moines and the Catholic Charities USA network, both with a rich history of faith-based services and advocacy for those in need. Her leadership and vision propelled Catholic Charities to greater heights in service and charity.

During her tenure, she championed program enhancements, including the establishment of post-resettlement refugee services, fostered the creation of a new social justice initiative, and created innovative solutions to service delivery during the pandemic.

“We have been blessed by Barbara’s faithful leadership and dedication to the mission and ministry of Catholic Charities for the past six years. As a woman of great passion and wisdom,



At a gala celebrating the 100th anniversary of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Des Moines are Bishop William Joensen, Catholic Charities Executive Director Barbara Decker, and Bishop Emeritus Richard Pates.

Barbara leads with pride for her staff and compassion for those we serve,” said Bishop William Joensen.

Catholic Charities recently celebrated its 100-year anniversary of providing care and compassion to the people of central and southwest Iowa. Decker leaves behind a strong legacy as the organization enters into a new chapter.

“For a century, Catholic Charities has worked diligently to provide life-changing care to all who come to us in need of help,”

said Decker. “I am proud to have led this organization through this momentous milestone and I am grateful to the many individuals and colleagues who help sustain this important ministry.”

With a distinguished career in higher education, health care, and social services, Decker makes her mark in the community as a notable leader. Her retirement will allow her to focus more time with her family and to continue to serve those in need through various board and community roles.

## After 23 years, Sharma retires from Catholic Charities

Sapana Sharma made her mark on Catholic Charities through her dedication, passion, and love for the mission.

After 23 years of committed service, she retired on Aug. 2.

Sharma was introduced to Catholic Charities while studying for her master’s degree.

She first learned of Catholic Charities after seeing a presentation from a classmate who worked at Catholic Charities for the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault program in Council Bluffs.

Sharma began her journey at Catholic Charities as an intern in 1999. She worked her way up through various roles and is retiring as the director of programs for southwest Iowa.

The work to reduce gender violence intrigued her and the idea of treating this issue as a community while helping survivors and families move toward self-determination and sufficiency is what attracted her most to the program.

“At my core, my values

aligned with Catholic Charities’ mission to help the most vulnerable in our society,” said Sharma. “I learned so much and saw how small help could make a life-changing difference in someone’s life for the better.”



Sapana Sharma

## A leader in fundraising, Reed retiring from CTO

Imagine you have a significant sum of money that you’d like to use in a way that brings someone hope, or joy, or meaningful change to a person or charity of your choice.

Who would you go to for advice?

Mark Reed, Sr., has been matching people with resources with those in need for most of his life.

After 39 years of raising significant funds for good causes and nonprofit organizations, he’s retiring as executive director from the Catholic Tuition Organization at the end of the year.



Mark Reed

“I’ve helped a range of people from those who make small but helpful financial gifts to showing philanthropists how they could create a lasting legacy that lives on,” said Reed. “No matter the size of the gift, I’ve been blessed to work throughout my career with people who have a desire to help others, who want to give back.”

A Dowling Catholic High School graduate, Reed holds a master’s degree from Drake University in public administration and is a certified fundraising executive. Early in his non-profit career, he assisted several nonprofits in fundraising roles including: United Way; Columbus Catholic High School in Waterloo; and Meals on Wheels.

Later, Reed served as the first executive director of Make-A-Wish Foundation of Iowa, where he helped to create “Jolly Holiday Lights” – the charity’s largest annual fundraiser. He also served as president and chief operating officer of Special Olympics of Iowa, became the founding executive director of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa, and raised funds for St. Benedict’s Abbey in Kansas.

In 2022, Reed took the helm as executive director of the CTO, which raises funds to provide tuition assistance to qualifying students attending a Catholic school within the Diocese of Des Moines.

“As a result of Mark’s hard work, 6,581 children were able to attend a Catholic school with funding from the CTO. In addition, Reed worked with more than 500 donors annually to help needy families provide the education of their choice to their children,” said Robert Szalay, chair of the CTO board. “Mark’s dedication and service will be greatly missed.”

Anyone interested in making a gift to the CTO can call 515-237-5010 or visit their website at CTOIowa.org.

## Victim Assistance Advocate

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



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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.

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 or call 515-393-5239. To guarantee your spot(s) for this trip, email Natalie Delph at Witte Travel at natalied@witte-travel.com or call 616-957-8113.



# Process of welcoming new Catholics gets update

By Father Trevor Chicoine  
Contributing Writer

Keen observers among the faithful of central and southwest Iowa may soon begin to notice a change in language around their parishes: bulletins and announcements later this fall may begin to use the acronym "OCIA" to refer to the process by which adults join the Catholic Church.

Catholics have been used to RCIA -- the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults -- for some decades now, referring to the renewed process of welcoming new adult Catholics, which was inaugurated after the Second Vatican Council.

Now, we prepare to implement the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults.

What's going on?

Just as the Roman Missal (the official texts of the Mass) was re-translated from the original Latin text some years back (remember when the Mass responses changed?), so too the other rituals of the Church are slowly being re-translated.

Baptism, confirmation, and marriage are among other liturgical texts that have received updated translations. They too changed from being referred to as "rites" to being now called "orders," more closely reflecting the original Latin titles.

This change, however, is not mere ecclesiastical wordsmithing. Particularly with OCIA, there is an important emphasis that begs us take note when we use the word "order."

Far from being a simple ritual by which individuals are simply inducted as members, the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults invites those seeking full communion with the Catholic Church on a journey of conversion and encounter with Jesus Christ, his Word, and his Church.

Getting to know Jesus cannot end with the celebration of the sacrament of confirmation. Everyone is invited to make a lifelong journey of conversion and discovery with the Lord.

Any time the Church renews a liturgical translation, new emphasis is brought out of the text and proposed for reflection and adoption.

For many decades now, RCIA has been an experience which tends to kick off in the fall and carry through to the Easter Vigil. OCIA challenges us to think differently. As the late (and great) Father Bob Aubrey remarked recently, where RCIA has become heavily tied to the academic year, OCIA invites us to think more liturgically and communally about Christian initiation and formation, meeting people where they are; inviting them on a lifelong journey to encounter the Lord Jesus.

One of the distinctions OCIA brings out that, while present in RCIA, was perhaps a tad lost, is the distinction between those persons approaching the Church to join who have less experience



Photo by Alexis Nicholson

**Jesuit Father Protas Okwalo, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Student Center in Des Moines, listens during a small-group discussion about the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults.**

of Jesus and have never been baptized (called "catechumens") and those who are coming as baptized Christians from another denomination, having already walked with the Lord in their lives (called candidates) for full communion.

For the catechumen (non-baptized), OCIA offers a rich journey composed of five stages (see sidebar) which seeks to introduce the catechumen to the Christian life and faith.

This almost always ends with the catechumen being baptized, confirmed, and admitted to Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil.

For those who come already baptized as Christians but not yet Catholic, the Church recognizes that their walk with Jesus isn't beginning at square one. Their formation should be more individually tailored and seek to meet them where they are in their walk with Christ.

Thus, they may be received into the Church at any point in the year, whenever their pastor and those preparing them for reception into full communion deem them to be ready.

Far from ending their formation in the faith, such a reception of the sacraments of initiation starts the new Catholic on a journey which will last the rest of their lives.

Some parishes have already made this adaptation and distinction. I encourage all parishes to think creatively to meet these Christians where they are in their walk with Christ. Larger parishes may choose to receive candidates at several fixed points in the year in cohorts, smaller parishes may be able to take on a truly one-on-one approach. I hope all of those involved in this ministry can get creative and ask themselves how they can respond to Pope Francis' call to truly accompany those who come to us seeking full communion.

On Sept. 14, catechetical leaders across the Diocese met in Atlantic to discuss OCIA. We discussed both the richness of the journey for Catechumens and strategies for welcoming those already baptized.

We were blessed to be led by several master catechists who work with Liturgy Training Publications out of Chicago. Sessions were offered in both English and Spanish.

I have to give a shout-out to

my friend and colleague, John Gaffney, the diocesan director of Evangelization and Mission, and his team who put together this opportunity for our parishes at no cost to them.

The updated OCIA texts will begin to be used starting Dec. 1. Please pray for all of us who work with those seeking to join our Catholic family as we strive to offer a welcoming and rich journey for all seeking to become Catholic, both those Catechumens needing Baptism and those Christians who come to us already baptized.

May we welcome them with the joy of the Gospel, sewing seeds of true communal encounter and life-long discipleship.

## What are the steps of bringing someone into the Catholic Church?

There are five stages to becoming Catholic and growing more deeply in one's relationship with Jesus and others.

### Pre-catechumenate

This is a phase of inquiry, when one wants to get to know more about the Church. Parishioners may pray with the individual, invite him or her to gatherings and Mass and cultivate friendship with the inquirer. This is a phase in which one's marital status is reviewed so that any impediments to their eventual celebration of the sacraments is known and addressed early on.

### Catechumenate

If there is interest in learning more about the Catholic Church, the Rite of Acceptance is celebrated and a more formal catechesis process begins. For some, it may be a short period of time. This could include someone who has been attending Mass for a long period of time, or who has participated in their children's growing faith. Ordinarily this period is to last from Easter to Easter so that the person experiences a full liturgical year.

### Purification

This is a stage at which one asks if God is really leading them to the Catholic Church. Hopefully, the person begins to see where God is working in their life.

### Easter Vigil

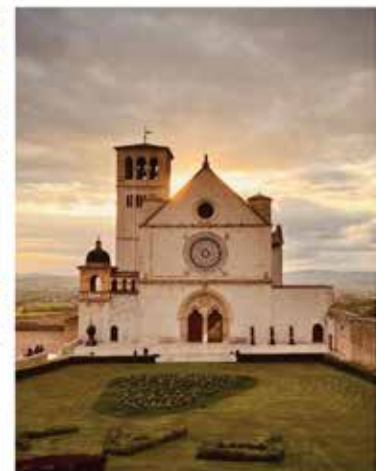
It is at this celebration where catechumen (who have never been baptized) and candidates (who were baptized in another Christian tradition, or someone who has not received all three initiation sacraments of baptism, First Eucharist, and confirmation) come into full communion with the Catholic Church.

### Mystagogy

The process doesn't end with Easter. In some ways, it's just beginning. Ongoing learning about the Church, the parish, and why we do what we do, continues while one is encouraged to not just study the faith, but live the faith by helping the needy, assisting other parishioners, and giving of time, talent, and treasure. Mystagogy is a lifelong process.

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# Rice Bowl grants help feed the hungry & soul

By John Huynh, D.Min.  
Contributing Writer

Receiving the Lord in the Eucharist is to receive God's love without conditions, but it is not without consequences.

The primary consequence is that communion with the Eucharistic body of Christ must be accompanied by our communion with the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church—our brothers and sisters. In 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, St. Paul emphasizes that partaking in the Eucharist signifies a profound communion with both Christ and the community of believers.

In the same vein, St. Augustine emphasizes that it is important to be reconciled before receiving Holy Communion.

This is particularly true regarding the poor, the afflicted, and the destitute. The Jesus who instituted the Eucharist by declaring, "This is my body," (see Matthew 26:26) also identified himself with the poor when he declared, "You did it to me," refer-

ring to acts of charity towards the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned (also in the Gospel of Matthew, 25:35).

This past spring, the Diocese of Des Moines and Catholic Charities, in partnership with CRS Rice Bowl, awarded grants to seven organizations within the Diocese to support their efforts in alleviating food insecurity.

This year's recipients are The Good Samaritan Food Pantry, Highland Park Community Services, Catholic Charities Food Pantry, Waukee Area Christian Services, Youth Group at Holy Trinity, Children and Family Urban Movement, and Afghan Partners in Iowa.

As Gigi Wilwerding, director of Youth Ministry at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, shared: "The best part of the summer was Tuesday lunch day. Families were fed and relationships were made!" The joy and love these gatherings foster tell us that a meal extends beyond just the food—it makes real communion.

Pastor Philip Herman of Highland Park Community Church



A free lunch program funded through the Rice Bowl program not only fed the hungry, but the souls of the volunteers who provided the meals. The Eucharist calls us to a deep communion not only with Christ but with one another, especially the poor and hungry.

highlighted a similar experience: "Roughly 95% of the children in our Summer Adventure Camp come from low-income families who struggle with proper nutrition. The CRS Rice Bowl grant helped us provide fresh fruit and vegetables each afternoon as part of their snack. Thank you for making this a great summer for these children."

The Eucharist calls us to a deep communion—not only with Christ but with one another, especially the poor and the hungry. In receiving Christ's body, we are compelled to serve his body in the world.

The work of the CRS Rice Bowl grant recipients answers this call, exemplifying Christian charity. By feeding the hungry

and supporting the vulnerable, they remind us that every act of service is an act of love for Christ and his body.

May the power of the Eucharist continue to inspire the Diocese, Catholic Charities, and all who serve, as they work to heal the wounds of our communities through love in action.

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**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:  
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Or go to our website to give online at:  
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# Organ restoration preserves a legacy

By Jennifer Willems  
Contributing Writer

From the very beginning of the church's liturgical tradition, music has been essential.

In fact, praying and singing aren't two different things, according to Mark Thomas, music director and organist at St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines.

"We pray through singing," he said, adding that the organ has been the primary instrument in the church's liturgical ministry. "It is very essential to supporting the singing and also to raise our hearts to God."

Now, after nearly 100 years, that "voice" at St. Ambrose is in need of restoration.

In June, work started to clean and repair the cathedral's organ, built in 1929 by the Milliman Organ Company. It is being done by Benjamin Hoskins of the Hoskins Pipe Organ Company of Des Moines. If the name sounds familiar, it's because he is the former director of music at St. Ambrose.

The work is expected to take 60 weeks, with completion anticipated by July 31, 2025, said Father Nivin Scaria, cathedral rector.

## Significant Instrument

Preservation of this "significant, liturgical instrument" is also necessary, said Dr. Gregory and Ramona Peterson, co-chairs for the organ restoration project and longtime members of St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish.

"It's such a historic piece and it would be cost prohibitive to try to replicate it if we weren't able to repair it," Ramona Peterson said. "This time it is really necessary to invest in the organ."

Thomas estimated that a new organ of similar size and specification would cost about \$2 million.

## Organ heard during work

Much of the work will entail replacing the aging and deteriorating



The 100-year-old pipe organ at St. Ambrose Cathedral, that has assisted in the worship of countless Masses, weddings, funerals, ordinations, and more, is undergoing extensive renovation.

rating leather in the instrument's wind reservoirs, which are the "lungs" of the organ.

"They provide the air for the pipes in the different divisions or different sections of the organ," Thomas said.

The organ has nearly 2,000 pipes that need to be cleaned carefully, as well as two consoles -- one in the loft and another "remote console" on the floor of the cathedral, near the altar.

"It's a very labor-intensive thing," Thomas said. "But it's also, I think, a very beautiful thing to think of how much human craftsmanship goes into the instrument."

Much in demand for diocesan liturgies and weddings, as well as weekend Masses, the organ will continue to be used while the work is being done. This will require flexibility on the part of the organists, Thomas said, but these minor inconveniences are worth it to

make the organ more reliable in terms of sound and tonal "color."

For Father Scaria, it's also a matter of stewardship.

"Our past generations have gifted us this beautiful instrument, a testament to their faith, love, and dedication to the church," he said. "This organ is not just an instrument; it is a living legacy that connects us to our past."

"As stewards of this church, it is our responsibility to preserve this priceless treasure. We are committed to maintaining the organ so that it can continue to inspire and uplift the hearts of our congregation for another hundred years," Father Scaria said.

Donations are welcome to the St. Ambrose Cathedral Investment Fund, which is supporting

this effort.

Checks made payable to St. Ambrose Cathedral may be sent to 607 High St., Des Moines, IA 50309. Write "Organ Resto-

ration" in the memo line. Or, go to: <https://www.catholicfoundationiowa.org/agency-funds-2/st-ambrose-cathedral-des-moines/>



The organ at St. Ambrose Cathedral is being restored so it may enhance worship for another 100 years.

## Catholic Divorce Survival Guide

### DATE:

Begins Tuesday, October 29  
12-week session,  
break for Christmas and New Year]

### TIME: 6-7:30 pm

### LOCATION:

St. Pius X Catholic Church  
Parish Center Room 103,  
Urbandale, IA

**COST:** \$30 for materials  
[Scholarships available upon request]

### QUESTIONS:

Contact Bill or Ann Moore  
[moorefamilysm@gmail.com](mailto:moorefamilysm@gmail.com)  
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Bill cell: 515-480-3314  
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# Christ Our Life conference returns


Continued from page 1

of the presenters and music and the focus on Catholicism, including the faith-filled reverence at Mass, Eucharistic procession, adoration, benediction and the sacrament of reconciliation.


In 2020 despite COVID, livestream participants represented some 18 countries. Total attendance was estimated at 2,300 in-person and 4,200 livestream. At COL2022, there were 3,600 in-person tickets sold and 14 countries represented in the 700 livestream tickets sold.

The conference this year will feature internationally renowned presenters: Father Robert Spitzer; Father Craig Vasek; Sister Josephine Garrett; Monsignor Stephen Rossetti; Jeff Cavins, and Jason Evert; along with Mary's Meals' Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow and his wife Julie, and Steve Angrisano.


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LUNCH BREAKOUT	SPEAKER	TOPIC
12:30 pm	<b>Jason Evert</b> <i>(His concourse exhibitor booth)</i>	
	<i>(Location TBD)</i>	
1:15 pm	<b>Music with Steve Angrisano.</b>	<b>Contemporary Music</b>
1:30 pm	<b>Sr. Josephine Garrett</b>	<b>Joy in Daily Living</b>
2:00 pm	<b>Jason Evert</b>	<b>Love vs. Lust</b>
3:30 pm	<b>Discussion &amp; Prayer</b>	
4:25 pm	<i>(Return to Wells Fargo Arena)</i>	

DINNER BREAKOUT	SPEAKER	TOPIC
	<i>(Location TBD)</i>	
5:40 pm	<b>Pizza Dinner &amp; Q/A</b> -Msgr. Stephen Rossetti -Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow	<b>Good vs. Evil</b> <b>Mary's Meals</b>
6:50 pm	<i>(Return to Wells Fargo Arena)</i>	

## Around the Diocese

**Sept. 22 Sunday**

**Tap Into Faith**  
POLK CITY – Starting at 7 p.m., Tom Chapman, executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference, will be at Fenders Brewing to talk about how the Church's social teaching can shape a person's conscience and inform their decisions about who to vote for and how to advocate for the common good. Get details at [fendersbrewing.com/tapinto-faith](http://fendersbrewing.com/tapinto-faith).

**Sept. 23 Monday**

**The Third Option**  
DES MOINES -- Join a free marriage enrichment program to help build a stronger, more fulfilling marriage. Group meets every second and fourth Monday at Mercy College starting at 7 p.m. Contact Julie Burdt with questions at 515-201-4766 or [julie.burdtd@gmail.com](mailto:julie.burdtd@gmail.com).

**Sept. 26 Thursday**

**Enlarge the Space of Your Tent**  
ADEL -- Families with special needs and those who minister to them are invited to a discussion and Q&A with Charleen Katra, executive director of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability on how parishes can be communities of welcome and care. Go to [dmdiocese.org/events](http://dmdiocese.org/events) to register.

**Oct. 8 Tuesday**

**Social Justice**  
ANKENY -- Hear about the Catholic view of human dignity from conception to natural death at 7 p.m. at St. Luke Parish in Ankeny with John Huynh, diocesan social justice coordinator who holds a doctoral degree in ministry and theology. Joining him will be Pulse Life Advocates.

**Oct. 13 Sunday**

**Harvest Festival Dinner**  
HARLAN – St. Michael's Harvest Festival Dinner is 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at the Rosman Parish Center. Raffle & carnival activities included. Staley's chicken dinner is adults/\$15, children (ages 3-8)/\$5, free for children under 3.

**Oct. 20 Sunday**

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

**Nov 2-3, Sat – Sun**

**Fall Craft Show**  
DES MOINES –Annual fall craft show is Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday, Nov 3 from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Christ the King Parish Hall. We're giving away four \$50 Visa/MasterCard gift cards just for visiting our vendors. Interested in being a vendor? Contact Rita Holtz @ 515-971-6771.

**Nov. 14 Thursday**

**Appreciation Dinner**  
COUNCIL BLUFFS – The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, Council Bluffs Region, invites you to save the date for its annual appreciation dinner for priests, sisters, and deacon couples at St. Patrick Parish. The celebration begins at 6 p.m. with a dinner following. All are welcome. Questions? Contact Joan Gubbels at 712-322-4459.



*Do you have a story idea for The Catholic Mirror? Email your ideas to: [communications@dmdiocese.org](mailto:communications@dmdiocese.org).*

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Amen

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

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# Bishop reflects on fifth anniversary

Continued from page 1

## Eucharistic Revival

This past summer, the Diocese had the unique experience of participating in the national Eucharistic procession that moved through Omaha and into Council Bluffs, Glenwood, Imogene and Shenandoah. And a 300-strong group of pilgrims from the Diocese went to the national Eucharistic Congress last summer.

Those events plus local parish events during the national three-year Eucharistic Revival hopefully “have advanced the appreciation, the devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament,” said Bishop Joensen.

The upcoming Christ Our Life Catholic Conference, which is organized in partnership with his office and draws thousands of people to Des Moines, is another opportunity for people to grow in their faith.

“I continue to be a participant and promotor of the Christ Our Life conferences,” he said. “It’s one of those joyful things that gives me a chance to be in communion with people, to preach, to celebrate our faith with people, as well as to be fed, too.”

## Diversity

Another highlight of his five years is the outreach to those of diverse backgrounds.

Two years ago, the Diocese of Des Moines welcomed a national conference for African Catholic clergy and religious.

“We celebrated the presence of international priests in our Diocese. Their missionary spirit both blesses us and continues to allow us to be Church for all of our parishes. But it also spurs us to say we can’t be passive recipients of others’ ministry. We have to be more missionary in our own right.”

For the Hispanic community, a lay leadership formation program will be expanded and offered both in Des Moines and Council Bluffs. Those who complete the program work with their pastors to serve fellow parishioners.

## Servant leadership

Ministries serving the faithful have been reorganized or expanded, such as the permanent diaconate.

Deacon Jim Houston was hired as the director of the permanent diaconate, who works closely with Deacon Matt Halbach, the director of formation.

After a review, the formation program was revamped to include accommodations for those in rural areas and for Spanish speakers, and included a greater use of technology.

In addition, while there is currently a group of men and their wives in formation, a second, concurrent formation group will be created next year. For the first time in the diocesan program, there will be two groups of men and their wives in formation.

“I think this will bring new

life and service to our parishes,” said Bishop Joensen.

Another area of service involves Church law.

The Tribunal, which focuses on situations involving canon law, is in the process of being reorganized. While the Tribunal will continue to assist and accompany persons seeking annulments, the Tribunal seeks to serve the people of the Diocese in a broader sense.

“The law should not be a heavy burden placed upon people but help guide, order, and free people to take their rightful place in the Body of Christ. The staffing of our own diocesan Tribunal and the formation of both vice-chancellor Adam Storey (who is studying for a degree in canon law) and Father Alex Kramer (who recently completed his canon law license) allows us to do locally what we had previously outsourced. Along with present Judicial Vicar, Father Christopher Pisut, they assist me in my role as shepherd to respect the procedures and guidelines that inform our way of being church.”

Bishop Joensen has overseen the strengthening of the Diocese’s effort to more boldly and clearly communicate Church teachings through the hiring of digital evangelist Alexis Nicholson. Last year, the Diocese rolled out a service called Catholic Social Media that helps parishes use social media tools to reach out in their communities.

And John Huynh, who holds a doctorate in theology and pastoral ministry, focuses on Catholic Social Justice for both the Diocese and Catholic Charities.

During his five years in the Diocese, Bishop partnered with Barbara Decker, executive director of Catholic Charities. He wishes her well as she retires and is grateful for her work strengthening families and empowering individuals through Catholic Charities’ refugee services, and programs providing counseling, shelter, and food to those in need.

## Spirit-led

Bishop Joensen says the Holy Spirit is alive and well in the Diocese evidenced by the number of people entering the Catholic Church at the last Easter Vigil.

“It’s something to shout from the rooftops,” he said. “Even as we recognize many who don’t identify with a particular faith community, we’re working to cultivate connections in Christ by providing those moments of encounter, by looking to establish friendships that are not superficial, by creating meaningful relationships that are life-giving and reflect the goodness with which God has created us as brothers and sisters in our human family. Ultimately, we seek to abide in the communion that God generates through death and resurrection of Jesus.”

## Looking ahead

New resources are helping.

Thanks to the generosity of the faithful, the successful Ig-



Bishop William Joensen celebrates an outdoor Mass in Council Bluffs as part of the National Eucharistic Procession this past summer. The event was a highlight of his five years as shepherd of the Des Moines Diocese.

nite! capital campaign raised \$37 million, shoring up resources for caring for retired priests and seminarians while positioning the Diocese to better pass on the faith through Catholic schools and parishes.

Also, the new Education Savings Accounts provided by the state “are a great godsend” said Bishop Joensen. ESAs provide financial resources for parents who want to choose the kind of education that’s best for their children.

Catholic schools are working smarter to be good stewards of resources.

The Des Moines Catholic school regionalization process

will consolidate business practices, like payroll, among 11 Catholic schools so they can focus on education and faith formation. This year, four Des Moines-area schools join two who piloted the program last year, and the remaining Des Moines-area Catholic schools will join next year.

“I’m committed to the Des Moines region,” said Bishop Joensen. “I think our persistence, even as we make necessary adjustments in how we deliver our educational mission, is one from which we will ultimately see fruit.”

Through a consultative, grassroots, Spirit-led discernment

process, parishioners across the Diocese shared what they need to grow in their faith. Their feedback was used in determining key pastoral priorities that parishes will focus on in the coming years.

The mission and vision -- sowing God’s Spirit so we may cultivate connections in Christ through encounter, friendship, and communion -- presents new opportunities to evangelize.

“We won’t be complacent,” said Bishop Joensen. “God continues to call us to be a people for whom the Lord offers us a portion and cup of eternal life.”

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# Temporada de Solidaridad

By Bishop William Joensen

Cuando en las pasadas semanas mi tío Ralph, también conocido como Monseñor Ralph Simington, declinó el recibir cuidados de hospicio en Waterloo, Iowa, hubo momentos de oración, de compartir los sacramentos, de unción y de Eucaristía, así como algunas reflexiones sobre cómo es el cielo. Pero tuvimos también momentos más ligeros, como cuando junto con mis hermanos y mi hermana tratamos de persuadir su afición vitalicia por Notre Dame a quien sigue apasionadamente tratando de cambiarlo hacia las universidades estatales de Iowa y de Iowa State. No tuvimos suerte; él llevará su lealtad dentro de su corazón hasta la tumba.

Lo mismo aplica cuando hablamos de las sensibilidades políticas de mi Tío Ralph. Al pasar de los años, él nunca nos ha revelado a ningún candidato por el que haya votado ni su preferencia por un partido político. No creo que esto haya sido por timidez o por falta de convicción; siento que se tomó en serio su papel como sacerdote párroco de ser testigo del Evangelio de Jesucristo y predicar y enseñar los valores de justicia y compasión, de atención hacia los pobres y desprotegidos junto al gozo incontinente que nos debe inspirar el mensaje de Jesucristo.

Debe ser obvio que los valores y compromisos en ciertos asuntos con respecto la vida humana en la sociedad y el papel de nuestra fe tienen en informar nuestro discernimiento y opciones como ciudadanos en la plaza pública no se alinean en su totalidad con cierto partido político o las posiciones que acogen los candidatos en sus discursos políticos o en anuncios en los medios. Conforme aumenta el número de estos anuncios – especialmente los de la variedad de “ataque” – en esta temporada política a todo vapor, su frecuencia parece tener una relación inversa a la realidad. A veces sentimos la necesidad de darnos un baño dada la naturaleza de insultos y de campañas de lodo

sin medida.

Nos enfrentamos a dos tentaciones: (1) la tentación de simplemente alejarnos completamente del proceso político, ignorando o enfocando nuestra atención a otros asuntos, como la avalancha de fútbol americano que comienza desde ahora hasta la postemporada del Fútbol Colegial y del Súper Tazón. Este tipo de indiferencia la enfrentamos frecuentemente con cinismo hacia la política en general como una arena de la sociedad olvidada por Dios. (2) La segunda es “lanzarse de lleno” con nuestro apoyo incondicional a un partido político y a su lista de candidatos.

Ambas alternativas nos liberan del reto de trabajar en el análisis de los puntos de vista de los candidatos, profundizando nuestra conciencia sobre los que la Iglesia y sus obispos y párrocos nos deben enseñar y predicar de acuerdo con los designios mismos del Señor – particularmente en la tradición en el área conocida como las enseñanzas de Justicia Social Católica. Luego debemos pedir en oración que el Espíritu Santo nos ayude en el discernimiento y selección de aquellos candidatos a quienes Dios y nosotros mismos deseamos que sean nuestros líderes.

Entre los párrocos que siguen siendo verdaderamente un don de Dios para la Iglesia, recientemente he estado pensando mucho sobre San Juan Pablo II. En parte porque tengo presente que se aproxima el aniversario 45 de la visita del pontífice polaco el 4 de octubre de 1979, en la Fiesta de San Francisco de Asís a la Iglesia del Asentamiento Irlandés de San Patricio, antes de ir al campo de Living History Farms en West Des Moines y que celebró la Misa con 350,000 fieles. Además, la Fiesta de San Juan Pablo II es unas semanas después de la Fiesta de San Francisco de Asís, el 22 de octubre, que es la fecha cuando inició su ministerio como el Pastor universal de la Iglesia.

Pero a nivel personal, la influencia y conexión de mi vida con la vida y el mensaje de San Juan

Pablo II me llegó al corazón intensamente cuando me reuní con más de 100 exalumnos del Seminario Tertio Millennio hace un par de semanas en el Santuario Nacional de San Juan Pablo II en Washington, D.C. Ahí tuve el privilegio de ser el celebrante principal en la Misa que celebramos en la Iglesia Redemptor Hominis (“Redentor de la Humanidad” igual que el título de la primera encíclica de Juan Pablo II como papa) y participar en el panel de discusión que reflexionaba sobre los 32 años de reuniones veraniegas de adultos jóvenes de Europa Oriental y Central y de los Estados Unidos – la mayoría de las cuales se habían llevado a cabo en Cracovia, Polonia, la ciudad de “La Lista de Schindler” en donde el joven futuro papa vivió, estudió y eventualmente sirvió como arzobispo, todo esto bajo el espectro de los Nazis y del comunismo Estalinista.

Comencé a seguir el seminario de verano en el 2003 como un joven sacerdote con un muy reciente doctorado en filosofía, y que luego serví como miembro de la facultad durante diez años enseñando a la clase de aproximadamente 35 jóvenes sobre cómo lo que la Iglesia entiende sobre la persona humana se refleja en su enseñanza moral sobre asuntos bioéticos al inicio y al final de la vida. Fue durante un seminario en Cracovia en julio del 2019 que recibí la llamada del nuncio apostólico para los Estados Unidos, entonces Arzobispo Christophe Pierre, informándome que el Papa Francisco me había nombrado para ser el Décimo Obispo de Des Moines.

Como papa, San Juan Pablo II fue una figura principal para el movimiento de trabajadores Solidaridad que ultimadamente contribuyó con la caída de la Unión Soviética y el comunismo de estado en gran parte de Europa en 1989. “Solidaridad” sigue siendo un tema clave dentro de las Enseñanzas Sociales de la Iglesia (ESI) y en el llamado a todos los católicos cristianos a involucrarse de manera activa tanto en el proceso político y en todas las demás maneras en que se pueden conver-

tir la sociedad y la cultura de acuerdo con el plan de Dios.

En esta temporada política, nuestros obispos de los Estados Unidos enfatizan el llamado a una “Ciudadanía Fiel” como una convocatoria a una mayor solidaridad, tomada del mensaje de Juan Pablo II, “Sobre Preocupaciones Sociales”: “La solidaridad ‘es la determinación firme y perseverante de empeñarse por... el bien de todos y cada uno, para que todos seamos verdaderamente responsables de todos.’” (#38). La verdad, el amor y la justicia de Dios están inscritos en crear humanos como seres sociales con la intención de llevar una comunión con Dios y con los demás. Una sociedad libre puede sostenerse únicamente cuando vivimos de acuerdo con la dignidad que nos ha dado Dios en la virtud y en la verdad.

Tanto nuestra economía, nuestra política, nuestro ambiente, nuestra esperanza de prosperidad humana se hacen de lado ante la defensa de la vida humana y de todos los demás derechos otorgados por Dios que le siguen, como lo asegura el sucesor de Juan Pablo II, el Papa Francisco, “Todo, incluyendo la vida política, le pertenece a Jesucristo y, por lo tanto, la participación en la vida política pertenece a la misión de la Iglesia.” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 181). Todos los derechos se apoyan en el plan providencial de Dios al que nos sometemos como hermanos en una familia humana. Dios desea que la política se vea como un arte y práctica que busca el bien común en el cual todos podemos compartir y buscar juntos una vida abundante. Esta es la esencia de la solidaridad.

Conforme se aproxima la elección, los obispos americanos aprendemos de los tres recientes papa como parte de un ‘coro’ unido compuesto de las Enseñanzas Sociales Católicas: “Estamos llamados a practicar una ‘solidaridad radical’ acompañando a las mujeres embarazadas a optar por la vida y ofreciendo apoyo a las nuevas madres y a sus hijos. Como prójimos, también abogamos por las familias afectadas por la pobreza, el desempleo, la enfermedad, las personas que su-

fren de enfermedades mentales o de adicciones, los ancianos y las personas con discapacidades, y todos aquellos cuyo estilo de vida y viviendas están en peligro por el cambio climático.”

Más aún, “en países azotados por la guerra tal como Ucrania, África Occidental y el Medio Oriente, debemos ‘tocar la piel lastimada de las víctimas’ y apoyar los esfuerzos de alivio y de la paz, a la vez que trabajamos en colaboración para reducir y eliminar las armas nucleares. Buscamos políticas que ‘acojan, protejan, promuevan e integren a migrantes y refugiados que llegan a nuestras fronteras y que puedan promover el desarrollo de sus países de origen.’ El racismo es un obstáculo para la solidaridad, y buscamos sacarlo de raíz no solamente examinando individualmente nuestros corazones, pero observando de manera crítica nuestras políticas e instituciones. En una cultura que hace demasiado énfasis en la acumulación de riqueza, no debemos olvidar nuestra ‘obligación de asegurarnos que cada persona pueda vivir con dignidad y que tiene suficientes oportunidades para su desarrollo integral’”

Como ciudadanos del Reino y con nuestras miradas fijadas en el cielo, nos comprometemos a la práctica de la caridad, a discernir y ejercer personalmente el derecho al voto y a tomar parte en otras formas de promoción política en asuntos que van de acuerdo con los preceptos de la razón natural y de nuestra fe.

Prometo NO preguntarles por quien votaron o con cual partido simpatizan. Eso es entre ustedes y Dios – desde ahora hasta la eternidad – a sabiendas que como el Tío Ralph y yo, todos estaremos algún día frente ante el Sabio Juez quien traerá luz sobre todas las cosas.

Finalmente, hagamos las oraciones de Ciudadanía Fiel que puede encontrar en <https://www.usccb.org/es/prayers/orando-como-un-ciudadano-fiel>. Oren por nuestro país, por los candidatos, por nosotros mismos, para que Dios moldee sus corazones y mentes, y las nuestras propias, similares al corazón y a la mente de Cristo.

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# Social justice champion dies

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Humility Sister Elaine Hagedorn lived by a few simple words from the prophet Micah: “Act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God.”

After a lifetime of advocating for justice, caring for others, and being faithful to God, she died Aug. 20 at age 88.

“Elaine was a Sister of Humility in every possible sense,” said Father David Polich at her Mass of Christian Burial at her home parish of Holy Trinity in Des Moines. “It was never about her. Elaine is the homily today. She is the one breaking open the faith, pointing us to the Word that we have and the meal that we share, our union with Christ, our union with one another.”

“Today is a day of remembering her. Today is a day of being thankful for her, certainly. This day is about lifting her up to our eternal, loving God. But we lose the point of all that if we haven’t learned from her or continue to learn from her,” he said.

Sister Elaine was born in 1935 in Denison, raised in Des Moines, attended St. John Grade School and St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines. She entered the Congregation of the Humility of Mary in 1957, one year after her younger sister, Humility Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, entered the community. Sister Elaine professed religious vows in 1960 as Sister Marie Paul.

She held a bachelor’s degree in education from Marycrest College, taught for eight years



**Sisters by birth and in religious community, (left to right) Jeanie and Elaine Hagedorn served much of their lives in the Des Moines area. Humility Sister Elaine Hagedorn died Aug. 20.**

in Catholic schools in Iowa (including St. Patrick in Dunlap), served four years as a principal in Marshalltown, and then as area coordinator for the Des Moines Diocese Social Action division for a year. She worked for Meals on Wheels in Des Moines for two years before beginning a 30-year stretch of ministry at Visitation Parish, now called Our Lady of the Americas.

Sister Elaine served as the director of Religious Education and pastoral minister for 22 years, then as pastoral minister full time while Sister Jeanie directed the religious education program. In her role, Sister Elaine focused on service to the elderly, the sick and the dying. She also served as coordinator of adult faith formation and peace and justice. Much of her work at Visitation involved ministry to the growing number of Hispanic members of the parish many of whom remain in close contact today.

“Sister Elaine realized that people sometimes suffer injustices because they are either unaware

(of their rights or the resources available to them,” her community’s communication director Lisa Bellomy observed in 2005.

Sisters Elaine and Jeanie lived together for more than 70 years. In a 2007 story in The Catholic Mirror about their golden jubilees, the sisters said their togetherness worked because they shared the same values, priorities, and commitments instilled in them by their parents, Lester and Grace: “Peace and justice, care for the earth, family and faith.” The story of their vocations as “Sister Sisters” appeared this year in the Congregation of the Humility of Mary’s Fall-Winter publication of The Flame.

Sister Elaine remained active in peace and justice efforts including the Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace and as a board member of the Catholic Peace Ministry.

“I think rumors of the retirement of these two (Sisters Elaine and Jeanie) have been drastically exaggerated,” said Father Polich. “If there was retirement, nobody noticed it over time.”

There is a passage in St. Paul’s letter to the Colossians that talks about what it means to live out one’s faith in Jesus.

Father Polich said Sister Elaine modeled this for us: “Elaine was a teacher. She taught even more so by her example, by her life, and by showing, by doing, by caring, by healing, by loving.”

# Priest gifted in liturgy, healing, dies

If you heard the phrase: “Wisdom, be attentive,” chances are, Father Robert “Bob” Aubrey was celebrating Mass.

Known as a gentle soul, he was particularly gifted for work with hospital chaplaincy, fond of music, a good cook.

“He had a big heart,” said his friend Father Tim Fitzgerald.

Father Aubrey died Sept. 1 at age 79.

Born in Philadelphia, he was schooled in Baltimore, Maryland, where he met Father Wayne Gubbels, of Shelby County, Iowa, who was also at St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore.

“We became good friends out there,” said Father Gubbels.

Father Aubrey was ordained in 1971 in Camden, New Jersey.

“He came out for our ordination and first Mass,” said Father Gubbels. “He said, ‘I might be out here for good someday.’”

In fact, the East Coast priest did come and stay. He served in his home diocese until 1982, when he moved to rural Iowa and was named pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Massena and St. Timothy in Cumberland.

In 1987, he became pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Glenwood.

When there was a need for a city chaplain, Father Aubrey’s priest friends suggested he consider it.

“He really did have a gift of healing,” said Father Gubbels. “He had such a peaceful presence.”

Another friend, Father Tim Fitzgerald, said, “He had a good pastoral radar for people’s needs and just being with people.”

Father Aubrey also had a great love of liturgy, said Father Fitzgerald.

“He took his role as president and preacher very seriously and he was very good at it.”



**Father Robert Aubrey**

In 1994, he studied clinical pastoral education and then began serving St. John Parish in Cumming, now known as St. John the Apostle Parish in Norwalk, while working part-time at MercyOne.

In 2001, he began hospital chaplaincy in Des Moines and served the sick and their families at Methodist, Methodist West, Broadlawns, Lutheran, and Blank.

While serving as a chaplain, he ministered at Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart in Ankeny, St. Theresa in Des Moines, St. Mary Parish in Jamaica, and St. Patrick in Bayard.

He retired in 2011.

Father Aubrey loved music. He went to the symphony, the opera, played the organ and had a harpsicord, said Father Gubbels.

“He went to a lot of the national music presentations in various parts of the country,” said his friend, Monsignor Robert Chamberlain.

In retirement Father Aubrey helped St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines with RCIA, with training ministers of the Eucharist, visited the sick in hospitals, and served as a chaplain to first responders, said Father Gubbels.

Reflecting on his 50 years of priesthood in 2021, Father Aubrey said leading worship and preaching allowed him to be a bridge builder, connecting people with God.

## 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).

## ADVERTISEMENT

### Patricia L. Forret, RSM

March 23, 1938 –  
August 30, 2024

Sister Patricia (Pat/Patti) Forret was born March 23, 1938 in Waukee, Iowa to Louis and Sara E. (Dillon) Forret. The youngest of nine children, when asked, she would gladly name each of her siblings in their exact birth order. As the “baby,” she proudly spoke of being “very spoiled.”

Sister Pat entered the Sisters of Mercy in Omaha, NE on February 2, 1958 and was given the religious name of Sister Mary Kurt. Prior to professing perpetual vows in 1965, she completed her BSN degree and began a lifelong commitment to her ministry in healthcare. She received a Master of Healthcare Administration degree from Notre Dame University in 1980 and completed a Fellowship in Healthcare Ethics at Yale University in 1986.

Early on she was recognized as an excellent nurse and administrator. She held positions as Nursing Supervisor, Director of Nursing Service, Director of Nursing Specialties, Vice-President of Primary Care in Mercy hospitals in Council Bluffs, IA, Omaha, NE, Des Moines, IA, North Bend, OR, Pocatello, ID, and Denver, CO. While ministering within the Eastern Mercy Health System, she served as Vice-President and Senior Vice-President for Sponsorship.

In 1998, Sister Patricia was called back to Omaha to serve as President of the Omaha Community of the Sisters of Mercy. She served 10 years in this position and was instrumental in forming the Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community which brought together six former regions of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

Following her time in community leadership, Sister Pat began volunteering at Bethlehem House in Omaha, a program for pregnant and parenting women in crisis. She served as secretary of the board of directors and is credited with creating the cuddling program that pairs volunteers with infants in offering support and respite for new moms. She was presented with The Bethlehem House 2019 Service Award. To this day she has maintained a very strong relationship with one of the first babies she had the privilege of “rocking!”

Sister Pat’s ring motto is LOVE, a quality she lived throughout her life, with her family, with her community, with her colleagues, and all those she served.

As her niece, Karyl Reynolds shared, “Aunt Patti was always available to any of her nieces and nephews who needed her.

She was a good listener and never judgmental. She always offered her prayers and we all knew she was on our side! She loved her brothers and sisters and especially loved their various children. She was my spiritual guide in many ways and I loved her very much!”

Sister Pat preceded in death by her parents, her siblings Harold (Lorraine), Madeline (Jim), Eugene (Helen), Geraldine (Ralph), Chuck (Ann), Mary Evelyn (Ralph), Joe (Darlene), and Joanne (Ferdinand). She is survived by over seventy nieces, nephews, their families and her Sisters of Mercy.



She has left us a legacy of LOVE!

FUNERAL MASS Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024 at 10:30 a.m. with Visitation 1 hour prior at Christ the King Catholic Church, 654 S. 86th St. Omaha, NE.

VISITATION Friday 4-6 p.m. with a VIGIL SERVICE at 6 p.m. at John A. Gentleman Mortuaries 72nd Street Chapel. Service livestream links on the funeral home website.

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# He walks with me

## Let's Get Psyched

By Deacon Randy Kiel



it before he can ever harvest it.

For me, a garden creates a place of solace. In order to get to this place of peace though, all the prior work must be done.

But that's not to say that there aren't mishaps along the way—such as unwanted critters or derechos. While there are many things that can damage a garden, it is neglect by the gardener himself that can pose the most risk for the success and beauty of the garden.

So as to make sure all things are in order in my garden, I have a bench. My bench

is a place to sit, watch over, ponder, pray and most often simply wonder about how my garden is doing. I wonder about how special gardens must be to God.

I often wonder if the joy and solace I feel may be an emotional glimpse of what God felt when he created the Garden of Eden. I can almost hear him say, “ahh” as he sat on his bench to look at his garden.

The Bible tells us how God's gardens were marred by humanity. Eden was marred by man's free will to be disobedient.

Gethsemane was Jesus' retreat. It is where Jesus prayed, suffered and finally, was betrayed.

Golgotha became a garden known for death, but it also gave us the resurrection.

Finally, the Garden of God, in Revelation, gives us the picture of God's paradise that will never be marred by mankind.

At different points in life, we will experience these first three gardens, perhaps

many times over, and hopefully we will eventually attain entrance into the last garden—the garden of paradise.

Whichever garden you may presently be in, let's remember the words from the well-known hymn, “In The Garden”:

“I come to the garden alone...and he walks with me, and he talks with me. He tells me I am his own...”

Jesus will always be walking beside us. Let's ask ourselves, who has always been with me? It's not our parents, siblings or friends who will be with us forever. Only Jesus says, “I will always be with you.”

If Jesus was not walking with us, we would have loneliness at a far deeper level than we have ever known. As believers, we do not know the full depravity of loneliness. Most likely, we have experienced psychological loneliness in many deep ways but not in a spiritual form of depravity.

Continued on page 15

## Q&A: When did Christianity begin?

*Q. Our family moved here from a different diocese. That diocese celebrated the sacrament of confirmation in seventh or eighth grade. I've been told that now we celebrate confirmation in 10th grade. Can you help me understand this? -J.L., West Des Moines*



### I've Been Wondering...

Father John Ludwig

A. You're not the only one confused about this. When the sacrament of confirmation was revised following the Second Vatican Council, the ordinary age for confirmation was left up to the various national conferences of bishops. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops left this choice of age to the local bishop. So, in the United States, there are many variations. A case can be made for combining the celebration of confirmation with baptism. This is frequently done when an adult is baptized or welcomed into the Church. And the ordinary minister in this case is not the bishop but rather the priest who is administering baptism. Another case would be to combine confirmation to First Communion. A few dioceses have made this choice. The remaining dioceses have chosen to celebrate confirmation with

the faithful of diverse ages. In the Diocese of Des Moines presently, confirmation is conferred primarily in 10th grade.

*Q. In a previous column, you noted that the Scripture readings for Sunday Mass are chosen in a certain way. Could you remind me how they are selected? S.O., Norwalk*

A. Sure. The book of readings is called the lectionary. Each year, beginning with the First Sunday of Advent, we begin a new liturgical year. The readings are chosen from the first three Gospels: Matthew (year A), Mark (year B), and Luke (year C). The Church uses a three-year cycle, which is repeated every three years. So, last November we began the Gospel of Mark (year B). This year, we'll

begin the Gospel of Luke (year C). And the following year, we'll begin the Gospel of Matthew (year A). Ah, you say, the three Gospels – what about the Gospel of John? Well John's Gospel is sprinkled through the three-year cycle, especially during the year when Mark's Gospel is featured. Mark's is the shortest Gospel, and so John's Gospel is used more prominently during that year.

The first reading is from the Old Testament (except during the Easter season when the Acts of the Apostles is read). It is chosen to match the theme of the gospel for a given Sunday. The second reading is usually a consecutive reading of one of the epistles over several Sundays. These readings are read not only in Catholic churches, but also in other mainline Christian

churches. Following the Second Vatican Council, this set of readings (or lectionary) was compiled to give the faithful a more comprehensive exposure to the Scriptures than was previously the case.

*Q. Can you tell me what a pall is?*

A. There are two types of palls used in the liturgy. One of them is the cloth that is placed over the coffin of the deceased at the funeral Mass. It's white or off-white. The pall is reminiscent of the baptismal garment used following the immersion or pouring of water on the candidate.

A second kind of pall, not related as far as I can tell, is the square white cover for the chalice during the Mass. The practical purpose of this pall is to keep the wine before and after consecration free of any debris or flying insects. In older churches in previous centuries, this pall was more of a necessity for that purpose than it is in today's churches.

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

## Our real legacy: The energy we leave behind

Several years ago, at a time when the national news was much fixated on a high-profile case of sexual harassment, I asked three women colleagues: “what constitutes sexual harassment? What's the line here that may not be crossed? What's innocent behavior and what's harassment?”

They answered to this effect. It's not so much a question of a clear line, a certain remark or behavior that goes too far. Rather, we know what is innocent and what is not. We can read the energy beneath the behavior. We know when it's harassment and when it's not.

I have no doubt that in most instances this is true. All of us have very perceptive inner radar screens. We naturally feel and read the energy in a room – tension, ease, jealousy, affirmation, innocence, aggression. You see this already in very young children, even babies, who can sense ease or tension in a room.

It is interesting that the great Carmelite mystic John of the Cross, draws on this notion when he writes on discernment in spiritual direction. How, he asks, do you discern if a person is in a genuine dark night of the soul (a healthy thing) or whether he is sad and down because of an emotional depression or because of bad moral behavior? John elaborates a number of criteria for discerning this, but ultimately they



By Father Ron Rolheiser

all come down to reading the energy that the person is radiating. Are they bringing oxygen into the room or are they sucking the oxygen out of the room? Are they depressing you as you listen to them? If yes, then their issue is not spiritual nor healthy. People who are in an authentic dark night of the soul, irrespective of their personal interior struggle, bring positive energy into a room and leave you inspired rather than depressed.

My purpose in sharing is not for us to become more critical and start judging others by trying to consciously read the energy they are radiating. (We are already unconsciously doing that.) What I want to highlight rather, as a challenge, is for each of us to more consciously examine ourselves vis-à-vis what energy we are bringing into a room and leaving behind.

Each of us needs to courageously ask: what energy do I bring into a room? What energy do I bring to the family table? To a community gathering? To those with

whom I discuss politics and religion? To my colleagues and fellow workers? To the social circles within which I move? And more deeply, as a parent or as an elder, what energy am I habitually bringing to my children and to the young? As someone teaching or doing ministry, what energy am I radiating as I try to lead others?

That's a critical question. What energy am I habitually bringing into a room and leaving behind? Frustration? Anger? Chaos? Jealousy? Paranoia? Bitterness? Depression? Instability? Or am I bringing and leaving behind some stability, some sanity, some joy of heart, some energy that blesses rather than curses others? Ultimately, what am I leaving behind?

When Jesus is giving his farewell speech in John's Gospel, he tells us that it is better for us that he is going away because otherwise we will not be able to receive his spirit; and that his spirit, his final gift to us, is the gift of peace. Two things should be noted here: first, that the disciples couldn't fully receive what Jesus was giving them until he had gone away; and second, that ultimately his real gift to them, his real legacy, was the peace he left behind with them.

What may seem strange at first glance is that his followers could only fully inhale his energy after he had gone away and left

them his spirit. That is also true for each of us. It is only after we leave a room that the energy we left behind is most clear. Thus, it is after we die that the energy we have left behind will constitute our real legacy. If we live in anger and bitterness, in jealousy and unwillingness to affirm others, and if our lives sow chaos and instability, that will be what we ultimately leave behind and will always be part of our legacy.

Conversely, if we are trustworthy and live unselfishly, morally, at peace with others, bringing sanity and affirmation into a room, then, like Jesus, we will leave behind a gift of peace. That will be our legacy, the oxygen we leave on the planet after we are gone.

And this is not a question of who can best light up a room with humor and banter, good as these can be. It is rather a question of who has enough personal integrity so as to bring trust and stability into a room?

Given all this, it's good to ask oneself: when I enter a room am I bringing some oxygen into that room or am I sucking some oxygen out of that room?

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com. Now on Facebook at facebook.com/ronrolheiser.*



# Rwandan cardinal visits Des Moines metro area

Rwandan Cardinal Kambanda participated in a special luncheon, celebration of the Eucharist, and reception for the local Rwandan community on Sept. 7.

With the support of local Christian leaders, Bishop William Joensen, and the local Rwandan community, St. Boniface of Waukee hosted Mass and fellowship for the cardinal and for the community.

He then headed to his next stop in Cedar Rapids. He was the special guest of Steve Noah of Clive, a friend of the prelate. Noah has visited Rwanda over three dozen times, often working directly with Cardinal Kambanda.

Special guests of the luncheon were Ambassador Emeritus Kenneth Quinn of the World Food Prize Foundation, and Jean Claude Mbonigaba, himself from Rwanda, who ministers through the Diocese with Catholic Charities.

Father Chinna Devaraj and Father Vince Rosonke hosted the cardinal for the Mass and reception at St. Boniface Church in Waukee.

"It was a great opportunity for over 100 of the metro Rwandan



community to pray and visit with Cardinal Kambanda," said Father Rosonke.

Cardinal Kambanda was ordained by St. John Paul II in 1990. Cardinal Cambanda was a young priest during the 1994 genocide, when hundreds of thousands of people were massacred, including many family members.

His present position is Archbishop of Kigali, Rwanda.

In 2020 Pope Francis elevated him to the College of Cardinals.

"The local Rwandan community as well as the entire Diocese of Des Moines were blessed by his brief visit here," said Father Rosonke. "He's a reminder to all of us to support dignity and justice for all God's people."

# Column: He walks with me

Continued from page 14

Psychological loneliness is different than spiritual loneliness. It is a form of disconnection that the presence of another cannot resolve. It lies within the emotions of different points in our lives. These thoughts and feelings sound like, "if I disappear tomorrow, no one will even notice." Or "I have to shoulder all of life's burdens by myself."

According to our Surgeon General, "Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling—it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular

disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety and premature death."

Loneliness is not a topic that should be minimized by anyone. It is at the bare minimum a significant matter and at times, it can even be a matter of life and death. Yet, we are thankful that as Christians, no matter the amount of loneliness we feel, we never stand in total depravity because Christ is always walking along side of us, regardless of our awareness of him.

So, for these very reasons, many days I need to grab my shovel and go to my garden to sit, ponder, pray and wander,

back to the words of that old hymn:

"And He walks with me,  
And He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own.

And the joy we share as we tarry there

None other has ever known."

May we ask ourselves, what do I do when I feel lonely? Where is my solace? In what do I find joy? May Jesus walk with us in these answers. May we never know the depravity of isolation, separation, and loneliness from our Creator and Savior.

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The Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO) is seeking a new Director! Mark Reed, Sr. has announced his retirement at the end of this year, creating a unique opportunity to join our team and lead our efforts in supporting Catholic education across the Diocese of Des Moines.

CTO provides tuition assistance to over 2,300 students in 16 Catholic schools, fostering a faith-based learning environment. This critical role involves securing donations to provide tuition assistance to these students, with a 75% Iowa tax credit for donors who pay taxes in Iowa!

The ideal candidate will be passionate about Catholic education and driven to advance our mission. A bachelor's degree in finance, education, or a related field is required, along with knowledge of Catholic



schools and 2 to 5 years of relevant experience. The successful candidate will have strong public speaking skills, computer proficiency, excellent data management capabilities, and be an organized, results-oriented self-starter.

For a full job description and qualifications, please contact CTO at CTO@dmdiocese.org. To apply, send your cover letter and resume to:

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