

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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We Sow God's Spirit by Cultivating Connections in Christ.

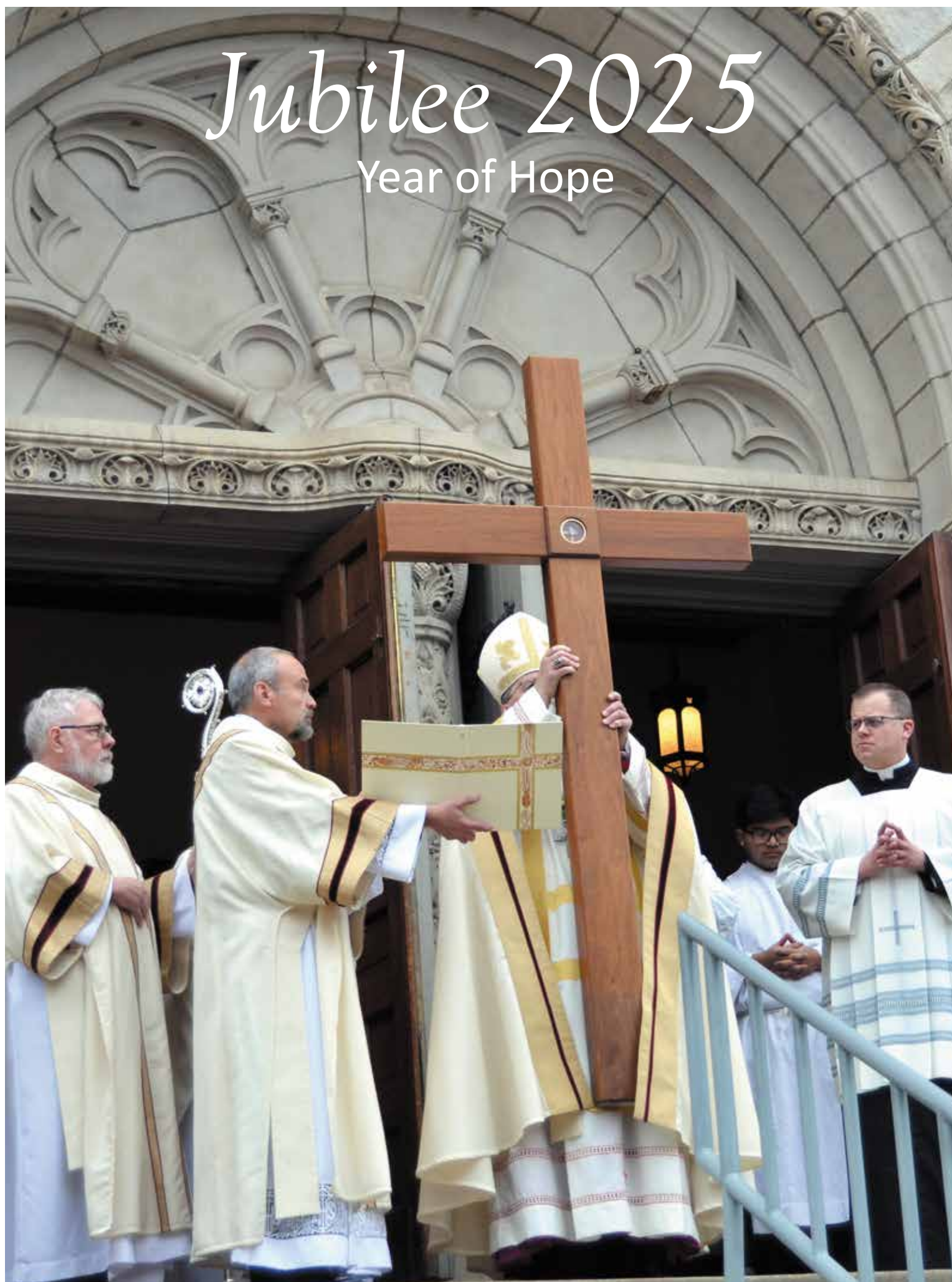


Photo by Alexis Nicholson

On Dec. 29, Bishop William Joensen and the faithful began the kickoff Mass for the Jubilee year at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Des Moines then, as pilgrims on a journey, proceeded with a large cross to St. Ambrose Cathedral. As part of the opening Mass for the Jubilee year, Bishop Joensen held up the large cross for the faithful to venerate on the steps of the cathedral. A Jubilee occurs every 25 years in the Catholic Church as a special time of grace, forgiveness of debts, and of reconciliation. The theme this year is Pilgrims of Hope, taken from St. Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom 5:5) in which he says, "Hope does not disappoint." The focus, in the Diocese of Des Moines, will be prayer, pilgrimage, and reconciliation. See more about prayer and pilgrimage on page 3.

Lisa's Tree matches those in need with those who serve

**By Jennifer Willems
Contributing Writer**

Ask Jeff Schwarte to describe his late wife, Lisa, and he'll tell you she was "wired for service." It was a passion they shared with each other and their children, Alex, Megan, and Zachary until her death from breast cancer on Feb. 4, 2023.

Now Jeff and Alex are making it possible for parishes and organizations to help their members "connect, serve and grow" through a new app called Lisa's Tree. It is designed to match people who want to help others with those who need help, one act of service at a time.

The inspiration for the app came from the love and support they received from their fellow parishioners at Sacred Heart Church in West Des Moines after Lisa's cancer diagnosis in February 2020. Not only were the Schwartes longtime members of the parish, but Lisa worked as the accountant in the parish office and the children attended Sacred Heart School.

"We had people serving us in our cancer journey for years – especially toward the end," Jeff said. "We never felt alone because we had relationships with folks that lifted us up during that difficult time."

Jeff said most churches are going to have almost every talent that would ever be needed sitting in the pews. He added that he believes people will use their gifts if given the opportunity.

"It's your talent, right? It's your passion. It's what God's given you as a gift," he explained. "And if somebody asks me to use my gift, I'm going to absolutely help them."

That's where Lisa's Tree comes in.

Opportunities, not chores

While Jeff, who has 30 years of experience as a stock portfo-

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Bishop William Joensen

Half of our actively assigned priests and many religious sisters in the Diocese of Des Moines come from countries other than the United States. Their ministry among us is crucial for animating sacramental life in our parishes, especially Holy Mass, and for the broader range of pastoral care in hospitals, prisons, and other venues. For international priests to be able to serve here involves the coordination of various folks, including the native (arch)dioceses' (arch)bishops, diocesan center staff, and of course, persons at the local parish or care institution.

One essential individual who has been assisting us for years to ensure that people have access to the ministry of priests and religious sisters in our Diocese is Lori Chesser, a well-respected immigration attorney and advocate for immigration reform with

Love within and beyond borders

the Dentons Davis Brown firm in Des Moines. Lori and her team are expert and nimble in procuring visas and assisting individuals as they negotiate the often protracted processes enabling clergy and others to legally work and live here under diverse circumstances. We are grateful for all she and her colleagues do in service of the Church.

Mention of the topic of immigration in mixed groups can quickly raise the temperature in a room. Though we are a couple months past our recent national election, as a new state legislature convenes and our nation's executive administration changes hands, we can expect that the focus on immigration and the various proposals to rectify the current unhappy state of affairs in our country will increase in intensity and attending controversy. As with other potentially volatile issues, any premium placed on reasoned argument and candid engagement with persons who have different views and priorities can quickly go out the window as discussion turns into heated debate that can quickly harden hearts and make ears go stone deaf. This dynamic can surface not simply between different partisan or special interest groups; it is present within our Church and many of our families.

When it comes to immigration, Catholic faith consults the

Scriptures such as John's First Letter 4:20: "If anyone says, 'I love God', but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." We also look to the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching for insight and guidance; see, for example, this link: uscgb.org/committees/migration.

But on a human level, the striving for unity and concord even among fellow Catholic Christians when it comes to the competing goods involved in migration matters is not primarily a matter of rational deduction from principles. Our faith, our fears, our family ties and other personal associations we have formed shape our attitudes and the stances we support far beyond the voting booth.

No one knows better how the challenges surrounding immigration and related issues hit home than Lori Chesser and her husband of 37 years, John. Both are members of St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Student Center. In the recent November-December issue of Living City, the bimonthly magazine of the Focolare movement of spirituality, faith, and cultural affairs, the Chessers' two-page article, "Living the Politics of Everyday Life," details their own personal struggles given their contrasting backgrounds and views. They offer practical



John and Lori Chesser

wisdom about how to approach one another and remain open to being transformed in the course of their attempts to love and dialogue in accord with God's grace. I excerpt a sampling of the Chessers' experiences and counsel:

"When a Republican guy from the South and a Democrat girl from the North meet in law school it's no surprise that the conversation turns to politics. More surprising is that we married and continued the discussion for the next thirty-seven years." "When Lori became active in the politics of immigration in the late '90s, John was supportive of her

contacts and learning the inner workings of advocacy. But we had different perspectives on the best tactics and solutions, which led to some frustrating interchanges."

"Being married means we couldn't say 'You're nuts!' and walk away. We had to dig into our own beliefs and root out inconsistencies, irrational biases, and the desire to cling to what is comfortable. It not only takes time but also the ability to see 'Jesus Forsaken' in the inability to agree." This mention of Christ

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Amor dentro y más allá de las fronteras

La mitad de nuestros sacerdotes asignados en activo y muchas hermanas religiosas de la Diócesis de Des Moines vienen de países fuera de los Estados Unidos. Su ministerio entre nosotros es crucial para animar la vida sacramental en nuestras parroquias, especialmente la Santa Misa, y para el cuidado pastoral en general en hospitales, prisiones y otras instalaciones. Para

que los sacerdotes internacionales puedan servir aquí es necesaria una coordinación que incluye a los (arz)obispos nativos de las (arqui)diócesis, personal diocesano y, por supuesto, personas en las parroquias locales e instituciones en que sirven.

Una persona que ha sido esencial en ayudarnos durante años para asegurarse que la gente tenga acceso al ministerio de sacerdotes y hermanas religiosas de nuestra Diócesis es Lori Chesser, una muy respetada abogada de inmigración y promotora de una reforma migratoria con el despacho de abogados Dentons Davis Brown en Des Moines. Lori y su equipo son expertos y expeditos en conseguir visas y ayudando a las personas en sus negociaciones de sus extensos procesos y permitiendo al clero y a otros a trabajar y vivir en el país en una variedad de circunstancias. Estamos agradecidos por todo lo que ella y su equipo hacen en servicio de la Iglesia.

El mencionar el tema de inmigración en grupos mixtos puede elevar rápidamente la temperatura de la habitación. Aunque han pasado ya un par de meses desde nuestra más reciente elección nacional, ahora que está por iniciar una nueva legislatura estatal y que la administración ejecutiva de nuestra nación está cambiando de manos, podemos esperar que vaya a aumentar la intensidad del enfoque en inmigración y en las diversas propuestas para rectificar el inaceptable estado de los asuntos de nuestro país, cau-

sando controversias. Al igual que con otros asuntos volátiles, cualquier confianza en argumentos razonables y conversaciones candidas con personas que tienen diferentes puntos de vista y prioridades, puede salir rápidamente por la ventana cuando una simple discusión se convierte en debates acalorados que aceleran el endurecimiento de corazones y que se ensordecen los oídos. Esta dinámica puede sacar a relucir no solamente diferencias partidistas o grupos de intereses especiales; está presente dentro de nuestra Iglesia y muchas de nuestras familias.

Cuando hablamos de inmigración, la fe católica consulta las Escrituras tales como la Primera Carta de Juan 4:20: "Si alguno dice: 'Amo a Dios', y aborrece a su hermano, es un mentiroso; pues quien no ama a su hermano, a quien ve, no puede amar a Dios a quien no ve." También observamos la tradición de la Enseñanza Social Católica para que nos guíe y nos ilumine; por ejemplo, esta liga: uscgb.org/committees/migration.

Pero a nivel humano, el esfuerzo por lograr la unidad y la concordia incluso entre hermanos católicos cristianos cuando se trata de los bienes competentes con respecto a los asuntos de inmigración, no son principalmente un asunto de una deducción racional de principios. Nuestra fe, nuestros temores, nuestros lazos familiares y otras asociaciones personales han dado forma a nuestras actitudes y posiciones que apoyamos

más allá de la casilla de votación.

Nadie conoce mejor cómo los retos y los asuntos relacionados con la inmigración golpean los hogares como Lori Chesser y su esposo desde hace 37 años, John. Ambos son miembros de la parroquia de San Agustín en Des Moines. En la reciente edición de Living City, la revista bimensual del movimiento de espiritualidad, fe y asuntos culturales Focolare, el artículo de dos páginas de los Chesser, "Viviendo la Política de la Vida Diaria," da detalles sobre sus propias batallas personales dados sus contrastantes antecedentes y puntos de vista. Ellos ofrecen una sabiduría práctica sobre como tratarse uno al otro y mantenerse abiertos a ser transformados en el transcurso de sus intentos de amarse y dialogar de acuerdo con la gracia de Dios. Tomé una muestra de las experiencias y consejos de los Chesser:

"Cuando un muchacho republicano del sur y una muchacha demócrata del norte se conocen en la escuela de Derecho, no sorprende a nadie que la conversación se vuelve política. Más sorprendentemente aún es que nos casamos y continuamos con la discusión por los siguientes treinta y siete años." "Cuando Lori empezó a participar activamente en la política de inmigración a fines de los noventa, John la apoyaba a sus contactos y aprendió los trabajos internos de la promoción. Pero teníamos perspectivas diferentes sobre las mejores tácticas y soluciones, lo que nos llevó a algunos intercam-

bios frustrantes."

"El estar casado significa que no puedes decir '¡estás loco!' e irte. Tuvimos que cavar en nuestras propias creencias y sacar de raíz las inconsistencias, tendencias irracionales y el deseo de aferrarse a lo que es cómodo. No toma solamente tiempo sino también la habilidad de ver al Jesús abandonado cuando no nos podemos poner de acuerdo." Esta mención de Cristo surge de la reflexión de la fundadora de Focolare, Chiara Lubich. "Lo vemos no solamente en nuestros sufrimientos personales, que nunca faltan, pero en aquellos de nuestro prójimo, frecuentemente solo, abandonado, olvidado, en la separación entre generaciones, entre ricos y pobres, dentro de la Iglesia misma en veces y, después, entre iglesias."

Los Chesser recuerdan la tensión que surgió entre los padres de Lori y de John en medio del trabajo de Lori para reformar la ley migratoria. "Ella se sintió herida y molesta cuando los padres de John le dieron un punto de vista contrario." Fue fácil el utilizar la distancia física entre ellos como una excusa para mantener la distancia emocional. Con el tiempo, ella reconoció la pérdida de la oportunidad y tiene mayor aprecio por la necesidad de poner las relaciones por delante de las ideologías – especialmente cuando la salud de los padres de John se debilitaba – y el estar presente a nivel físico y espiritual. "Fue

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Churches welcome pilgrims

During a Jubilee year, the Catholic Church establishes certain practices the faithful can undertake which grant special graces. Among the graces established for the Jubilee of Hope 2025 are pilgrimages.

Bishop William Joensen has identified the five churches listed below as churches of pilgrimage during this Jubilee year.

Each has “passport” postcards available. Take a

passport postcard and stamp it with a special Jubilee passport stamp that will be available at each of the pilgrimage sites.

If you visit all five Jubilee churches, post a picture on social media and tag #dmdiocese or send a picture of your passport booklet to the Diocese. We will send you a book by Pope Francis to use as you continue your faith journey.



St. Ambrose Cathedral
607 High St., Des Moines
515-288-7411 | saintambrosecathedral.org

Weekday Masses: M–F 12:10 p.m. (Rosary 11:45 a.m.)
Saturday at 8 a.m.

Weekend Masses
Saturday at 4 p.m.
Sunday at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. (Rosary at 8 a.m.)



Basilica of St. John
1915 University Ave., Des Moines
515-244-3101 | basilicaofstjohn.org

Weekday Masses: M–F Noon

Weekend Masses
Saturday at 4 p.m.
Sunday at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.



Christ the King
5711 SW 9th St., Des Moines
515-285-2888 | christthekingparish.org

Weekday Masses: M–F 5:30 p.m.

Weekend Masses
Saturday at 5:30 p.m.
Sunday at 7 a.m.; 9 a.m.; 11 a.m.; 3:15 p.m. (Spanish)



Saints Peter & Paul
106 W. 6th St., Atlantic
712-243-4721 | sspeterpaulandmary.org

Weekday Masses: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 7:15 a.m.
Tuesday 5:15 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m.

Weekend Masses
Saturday at 5:30 p.m.
Sunday at 10:30 a.m.



Corpus Christi
Queen of Apostles & Our Lady of Carter Lake
worship sites
3304 4th Ave., Council Bluffs
712-323-2916 | corpuschristiparishiowa.org

Weekday Masses: Monday 6 p.m. (Spanish)
Tuesday–Friday 8 a.m.; Thursday 6 p.m. (Spanish)

Weekend Masses
Saturday at 4 p.m.
Sunday at 8 a.m.; 9:30 a.m. (Our Lady of Carter Lake);
10 a.m., Noon (Spanish)

Meet our newest columnist

A big focus during this Jubilee year is prayer. Where do we begin? We turned to Monica Pugh.

Over the next 12 months, she will show us a variety of ways to pray. She has the academic background, and as a teacher of both children and adults, she understands how to take heavy theological thoughts and boil them down to a level we can all understand.

Monica is a wife and mom who, with her husband, Deacon Eric Pugh, raised five sons in Winterset. Her 12 grandchildren light up her life. She holds a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master’s degree in applied Catholic theology. She gained a deeper understanding of our faith as she accompanied her husband through deacon formation. She’s currently working on becoming a spiritual director and serves as the director of faith formation at St. John the Apostle Parish in Norwalk.

– The Editor

On Prayer By Monica Pugh



Prayer has been a battle for me my entire life. What is prayer? How do I pray? Why pray? These are questions I have had and also hear from other people. Have you wondered if you are praying enough or fallen into bed exhausted and never given a thought about praying? Even our ordained and religious might answer yes to that question at times.

Prayer is the voice of the Church. We are the Church. We raise our voices to God on our own and together in worship to give thanks and praise, pray for others, petition for our wants and needs, and ask forgiveness. We pray to God because he is our creator and we believe he is the source of truth. We humbly talk to him about all our deepest thoughts and desires through prayer.

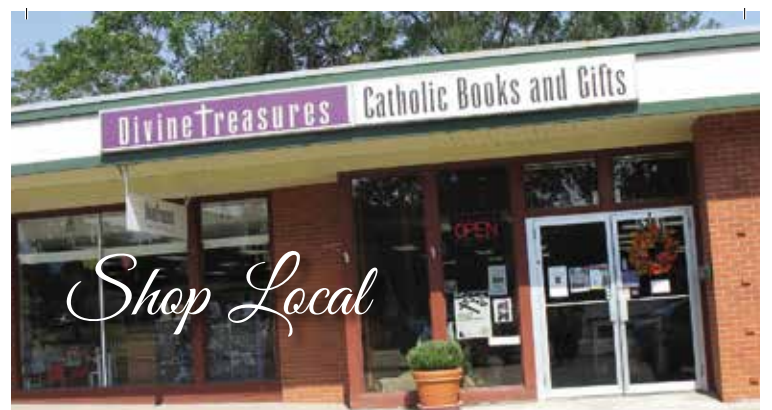
All of that is wonderful knowledge. But prayer is more than knowledge. Prayer is about the attitude of our hearts and being open to receive God’s will for our lives. Prayer is communion with God to grow in holiness and deeply desire God’s will. Prayer is conversion of our hearts. Then why do we need to pray if God knows everything about us?

Growing up as an Evangelical Protestant, I was taught to simply talk to God. But my words were few and I most often prayed, “Help me, Lord.” I selfishly asked to receive what I wanted. Please take away my sufferings and sufferings for those I love. In Thessalonians we read we are to rejoice always, pray without ceasing,

and give thanks in all circumstances. Suffering is something no one wants to experience. I needed to learn to pray for God’s will in my life and seek communion with him in order to accept all circumstances including suffering. We pray to be in communion with God so we can know his deep and abiding love for us.

God answered my deepest prayer to know him by leading me to the Catholic faith in 2009. My prayers began to change. I prayed the written prayers and lovingly recited the mealtime and faithfully departed prayers which were the only two I knew by heart. While studying the catechism during deacon formation with my husband, my eyes welled with tears as I read in section 2725, prayer is a battle. The battle is within us and against anything that turns us away from God. My heart began to understand Jesus praying for God’s will at Gethsemane and Mary’s prayer of God’s will being done to her. One of our diocesan priests, Father Dan Kirby, prays at every Mass, “We ask you what we think we need, give us what you know we need.” I see God always gives me what he knows I need. Prayer is me loving God.

In this year of Jubilee with our diocesan focus on prayer, I will be exploring these questions as I present more about prayer and different types of prayer. The hope is to help us all deepen our love for our faith and learn to rest in our Heavenly Father’s arms as we pray.



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March for Life pilgrims heading to D.C.

By Jennifer Willems
Contributing Writer

While Roe v. Wade was overturned two years ago via the Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, abortion didn't go away. For that reason, thousands will converge on Washington, D.C., on Jan. 24 to defend the right to life – including 60 students and parishioners from throughout Iowa.

The annual pilgrimage is being sponsored by Pulse Life Advocates, formerly Iowans for Life. Making the trip to the March for Life will be students from Dowling Catholic High School and members of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, both in West Des Moines, as well as the Basilica of St. John in Des Moines.

The bus will leave from St. Francis of Assisi on Jan. 22 and pick up students from St. Edmond Catholic School in Fort Dodge, St. Wenceslaus Parish in Iowa City, and the Quad Cities on its way to the nation's capital, according to Maggie DeWitte, executive director of Pulse Life Advocates.

The group will return on Jan. 26.

Mass, rally prepare pilgrims

The pilgrims will begin their day of pro-life advocacy with a youth rally and Mass hosted by the Sisters of Life on Jan. 24. The rally will take place near the Washington Monument that afternoon and then send participants down Constitution Avenue to an area that includes the Supreme Court building and the U.S. Capitol.

“Even though we've been victorious on the federal level, the reality is that abortion is still legal in many, many states,” DeWitte said. “So we do need to continue to march until all life is protected in our country.”

She called it “the largest human rights march that happens every year.”

“You get people from all across the country, all walks of life, all faiths coming together for one common mission, and that is to declare and bear witness to the fact that all life is valuable, all life has dignity, and therefore all life should be protected by our laws,” DeWitte said.

Working in different ways

Advocating for life must happen on the federal and state level now, DeWitte explained.

The Dobbs decision returned decisions about abortion to the state level, so there is still work to be done in the states where it is legal, she said. At the same time,



Photo supplied by Pulse Life Advocates

Abortion is legal in many states. The annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. will continue until all life is protected, said Maggie DeWitte, executive director of Pulse Life Advocates.

one of the biggest threats to life is telehealth and abortion pills that are being mailed through the U.S. Postal Service.

“That's across state lines and that is a federal issue,” DeWitte said. “That is going to take federal regulation to handle that.”

It also takes prayer and sacrifice, she said, calling the trip to Washington, D.C., a pilgrimage.

“It is a sacrifice to get on a

bus for many, many hours in close quarters. Lack of sleep, lack of comfort – all of those sacrificial things that we encourage them to offer up for the lives of our unborn brothers and sisters,” DeWitte said. “And use this opportunity to really prayerfully think about the pro-life movement, think about their family, think about their part.”

It can't just be the work of a

state organization, she said.

“We all have a duty and a responsibility to share that message. The only way we're going to create a culture of life and change hearts and minds is by engaging in conversation, by praying about this issue.”

For more information about Pulse Life Advocates, visit PulseforLife.org or (515) 255-4113.

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Blockbuster weekend

Three opportunities to enrich your faith in one weekend

By Ryan Johnson
Contributing Writer

If you're searching for new options to enhance your faith in 2025, there are at least three upcoming events that you won't want to miss.

The weekend of March 1 and 2 will be a blockbuster, from a Catholic perspective, as you can attend one or more of the following events in the Des Moines area. This will be the final weekend of Ordinary time before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (March 5).

March 1

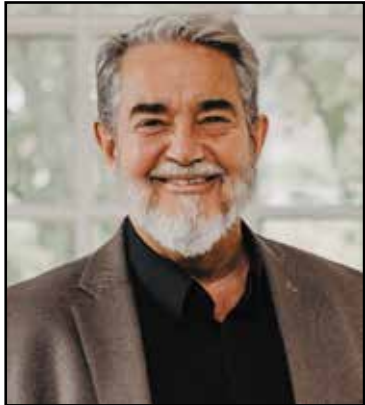
Scott Hahn, Ph.D.

Scott Hahn, Ph.D. will give two inspiring talks on Saturday, March 1 at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines.

The day will begin with Mass at 8 a.m., followed by the first talk at 9:05 a.m. and the second talk at 10:50 a.m.

Hahn is a former Protestant minister who converted to the Catholic faith at the Easter Vigil in 1986. Since joining the Catholic Church, Hahn has written numerous bestselling books about the Catholic faith.

The event is free, does not require registration and is open to families. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church is located at



Scott Hahn, Ph.D.

7075 Ashworth Road in West Des Moines. To find more information about the event, visit www.sfaprays.com/hahn

FORGE Men's Conference

Also on Saturday, March 1, FORGE will host a men's conference at the Embassy Suites in Des Moines (101 E. Locust St.).

The conference begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. In less than the length of an average workday, attendees will hear from eight nationally renowned speakers, receive the sacraments (Mass and reconciliation), and build brotherhood with 1,000-plus other men.

Speakers include Superbowl champion Matt Birk, New York Times best-selling author Leonard Sax, Benedictine Father Boniface Hicks, Bishop William Jonsen, evangelist Damon Owens and more.

John Bishop, Ph.D. founded FORGE to fight for families



Father Boniface Hicks, OSB

by empowering men to become saints. Last spring, FORGE was recognized by SENT Ventures as a Top 5 Emerging Catholic Non-Profit in the United States, and the conference is attracting attendees from throughout Iowa and the Midwest.

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March 2

El Paso Bishop Seitz

St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Student Center at Drake University will welcome its first speaker in the inaugural Dialogue Series on Sunday, March 2.

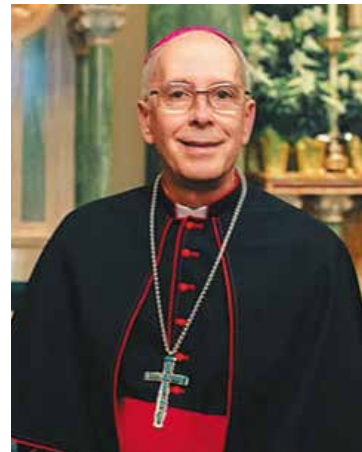
Bishop Mark J. Seitz of the Diocese of El Paso, Texas, will give a talk titled "Broken at the Border" at 2 p.m. at Sheslow Auditorium in Old Main on the Drake University campus.

According to Dialogue Series committee member Aimee Beckmann-Collier, the theme of the new series is "Faith in Action for the Common Good."

It invites people of all spiritual walks of life to listen, converse and then act to improve conditions that benefit all members of society. The event is free to attend.

Pre-Bishop Seitz visit

The Bishop Seitz visit is part two of a three-prong approach to providing opportunities to learn more about immigration and take action. Prior to his visit, on Feb.



Bishop Mark Seitz

2 at 2 p.m. there will be a panel discussion on the state of immigration in Iowa at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 601 Grand Ave., in Des Moines.

Featured speakers include immigration attorneys Lori Chessner, of Dentons Davis Brown law firm, and Yer Vang, director of immigration services for the Archdiocese of Dubuque. Also speaking will be representatives of Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services in Iowa, and Iowa

Movement for Migrant Justice.

Post-Bishop Seitz visit

And after Bishop Seitz's visit, on March 29 at 10 a.m. there will be an action workshop at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Student Center, 1150 28th St. in Des Moines.

There, people of faith are invited to learn about specific needs of refugees and immigrants and consider making a commitment to provide for some of those needs.

Organizations represented include Catholic Charities, Lutheran Services of Iowa, Iowa Movement for Migrant Justice, and the Refugee Alliance of Central Iowa.

A second Dialogue Series event is scheduled for Sept. 21 at 1 p.m. Brian D. McLaren will give a talk titled "What the World Needs from People of Faith."

Learn more about the new series online: www.stcatherine-drake.org/dialogue-series.

State legislature convenes

By Tom Chapman
Contributing Writer

The 91st Iowa General Assembly convened Monday, Jan. 13.

Leaders addressed the chambers about their plans for the session. On Jan. 14 at 6 p.m., Gov. Kim Reynolds was set to present the Condition of the State message to the legislature with live coverage from Iowa PBS. The Condition of the Judiciary and Condition of the National Guard speeches were also scheduled.

Iowa Catholic Conference staff anticipates advocating for several key issues at the Capitol, including preschool funding, maternal health care, immigration, conscience rights for medical professionals, probation reform, and addressing the online black market for abortion pills.

Stay informed about the 2025 legislative session

The Iowa Catholic Conference is hosting a webinar on Thursday, Jan. 30 at 7 p.m. called "Advocating for Justice 2025." Diocesan and ICC staff will update participants on current issues of interest and help participants find ways to advocate for justice. Register by going to iowacatholicconference.org/understanding-the-process/. Don't miss this opportunity to learn and engage.

Enrollment in Catholic schools increases

Enrollment in Iowa's Catholic schools increased in the 2024-25 school year. As of October 2024, there were 25,265 students en-

rolled in Catholic schools, up about 4% from the previous year.

About two-thirds of those students – 16,714 – received an Education Savings Account from the state, which means their family income was 400% or less of the federal poverty level. The number of students eligible for a free or reduced price lunch increased by 4.5% to 5,182. In addition:

- the number of non-White students was 5,835, a 4.6% increase
- there were 1,580 English Language Learner students, a 28% increase
- the number of students with IEPs increased by 15% to 834

Finally, there was a 77% increase in the number of Catholic school grade levels which have a waiting list to 96 statewide.

Let your friends know they can join the Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education and the National School Choice Awareness Foundation for a school fair at the Iowa State Fairgrounds on Saturday, Jan. 25 from 1 to 3 p.m. This event is free with family entertainment and will showcase different school and education

options including public schools, private schools, microschoools, and more.

Praying for life

Starting Jan. 16, Catholics are invited to pray "9 Days for Life," a novena for the protection of human life. In the Catholic Church, a 'novena' consists of prayers over nine successive days. Each day's intention is accompanied by a short reflection and suggested actions to help build a culture of life.

The annual Prayer for Life event at the State Capitol is scheduled in the rotunda for Monday, Jan. 27. A rally begins at noon.

And finally,

We've all seen the pictures of the devastating fires in Los Angeles. Catholic Charities USA has created a wildfire relief fund to help: catholiccharitiesusa.org/2025/01/10/catholic-charities-launches-relief-fund-for-survivors-of-los-angeles-wildfires/

Tom Chapman is the executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Iowa.

Des Moines Catholic Worker House Fund

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

Donations can be sent to:
Des Moines Catholic Worker House Fund
P.O. Box 1386 Ankeny, Iowa 50021

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

College students deepen faith at SEEK conference



Students from Simpson College pause to pose with Father Adam Westphal at the SEEK faith conference for college students held in Salt Lake City, Utah. Back row: Father Westphal, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola and chaplain at Simpson College, Claire, Trent, Jake, Matthew. Front Row: Matthew, Bailey, Madison, Marina. "SEEK provides an opportunity for fellowship, for prayer, and for reflection on the mysteries of our faith," said Father Westphal. "The community bonds formed through the power of the Holy Spirit let participants experience in the depths of their hearts the reality we are not alone as we journey to the heavenly homeland."

Making It Personal With Bishop Joensen

Check out Bishop William Joensen's podcast at Iowa Catholic Radio.

Upcoming episodes include:

- Father Chinna Devaraj, of St. Boniface Parish in Waukee,
- Peter Burds, chief mission officer of NET Ministries.

Recent guests were:

- Kenny Jensen, a retired Iowa state trooper on the tornado in Greenfield,
- Carles Camosy, professor of medical humanities, Creighton University School of Medicine.

IowaCatholicRadio.com/on-demand

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Around the Diocese

Jan. 18 Saturday

Chili and Pie Contest

COUNCIL BLUFFS – Corpus Christi is sponsoring a chili and pie contest as a benefit for their sister parish in Colombia from 5-6:30 p.m. in the Corpus Christi great hall, 3304 4th Ave.

Jan. 20 / Feb. 17 Monday

Uncorked

DES MOINES – Join us in January and February for our winter "Uncorked" series at St. Mary of Nazareth Parish from 6:30-7:30 p.m. We watch a quick video to learn about a saint followed by conversation, "beverage," and snacks. Come to one or both evenings. Bring a friend. All are welcome!

Jan. 25 Saturday

Trivia Night

NORWALK – St. John the Apostle Catholic Church is hosting Trivia Night. Form your team (up to 8 players) and join us! Doors open at 6 p.m. and the game begins at 6:30. A meal will be available for a free-will donation. Prizes awarded! Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased in the parish office, 515-981-4855.

Jan. 25 Saturday

Parish Auction

NEOLA – St. Patrick Parish is hosting a parish auction beginning with Mass at 4 p.m. followed by dinner and raffle at 4:30 p.m. Dinner will include Staley's chicken. The live auction will begin at 6 p.m. Cost is \$15 per person; \$5 for children age 8 and under. For questions or donations contact the parish office at 712-485-2750.

Feb. 1 Saturday

Choral Reading

WAUKEE – The local chapter of the National Pastoral Musicians is hosting a choral reading for music ministers from 9:30-11:30 a.m. at St. Boniface Church for all music ministers. Come practice newly published music for upcoming seasons. Contact desmoinesia@npm.org for details.

Feb. 2 Sunday

Immigration Discussion

DES MOINES - As a precursor to El Paso Bishop Mark Seitz's visit to Des Moines in March, come hear a panel of immigration experts explain the current state of immigration in Iowa. Starts at 2 p.m. at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Open and free to the public. Organized by St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Student Center at Drake University.

Feb. 11 Tuesday

Champions of the Marginalized

DES MOINES -- Catholic Charities and Diocese of Des Moines Director of Social Justice John Huynh, D.Min.

is hosting a monthly speaking series on Catholic Social Teaching. This month he will be discussing Catholicism's preferential option for the poor alongside a representative with the Catholic Charities Food Pantry at 7 p.m. at St. Theresa Church.

Feb. 11-12 Tues.-Wed.

Parish Mission

WEST DES MOINES – Join Sacred Heart in West Des Moines for a parish mission featuring Mari Pablo of the Evangelical Catholic. Pablo has led retreats across the country and was an emcee at the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. Feb. 11 is the English mission at 6:30 p.m. and Feb. 12 is the Spanish-language mission at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome. Learn more at maripablo.com.

Feb. 15 Saturday

Blessed Carlo Acutis relics

URBANDALE -- St. Pius X Church will have first-class relics of Blessed Carlo Acutis available for veneration and a Eucharistic miracles exhibit on display from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mass will follow at 5 p.m.

March 1 Saturday

FORGE Conference

WEST DES MOINES – FORGE, a new Des Moines apostolate, will host its first men's conference featuring Matt Birk, Father Boniface Hicks, Pete Burak, Dr. Leonard Sax, and John Bishop, Ph.D., and more. Learn more about the conference at myforge.org/conference/

Scott Hahn Coming

WEST DES MOINES – Scott Hahn, Ph.D., and the St. Paul Center will be at St. Francis of Assisi Parish. Free and open to the public, the morning event offers an opportunity to study Scripture.. Mass is at 8 a.m., welcome and check-in at 8:45 a.m. Hahn will deliver talks at 9:05 and 10:50 a.m. Between his talks, a representative will give a presentation. For more information, contact the parish at 515-223-4577 or pgrothus@saintfrancischurch.org.

March 2 Sunday

Broken at the Border

DES MOINES – St. Catherine of Siena Student Center presents, as part of its inaugural Dialogue Series, El Paso Bishop Mark Seitz for a discussion on immigration and the border at 2 p.m. at Sheslow Auditorium at Drake University. The free event is part of a dialogue series with the theme of faith in action for the common good.

March 9 Sunday

Lenten Music Concert

DES MOINES – Steve Agrisano will be do a Lenten music concert at St. Theresa Church at 6 p.m.

*Bl. Carlo Acutis
Relic Visit
& Eucharistic Miracles Exhibit*

ST. PIUS X CATHOLIC CHURCH
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH
10:00AM - 4:30PM



Lisa's Tree matches those in need with those who serve

Continued from page 1

lio manager at Principal Financial Group, promotes the app as the public face of Lisa's Tree, he gives the credit for designing it to Alex, 25, who studied software engineering and music performance at Iowa State University.

Alex had the "bare bones" put together in four or five months and has spent the last year testing, revising, refining and meeting with user experience designers to make the app user friendly and easy to use.

Sacred Heart will be the first installation for the app, but Alex said it should be very easy to add parishes and organizations once the paperwork is done and a licensing agreement is signed.

"On paper, someone could think about Lisa's Tree as an app that lets you do more chores. That's obviously not what we think of it as," Alex said. "It's about that connection and the opportunity to serve others. So being able to have a platform that essentially gives you a list of people that you connect with on a specific task I think is really going to be impactful to people that want to connect with others, but don't really know how."

The app invites people in the parish or organization to provide a photo and brief profile, as well as God-given gifts and talents they want to share. This allows people who need helpers to see who will be coming and get to know them a little bit.

Those who don't like to mow the lawn or rake leaves won't be matched with those particular opportunities Jeff said with a laugh, revealing his own dislike of rak-



Alex (left) and Jeff (right) Schwarte developed a new app that helps people serve others.

ing leaves.

Most of the service opportunities take 60 minutes or less to complete, so no one would be asked to renovate a bathroom, for example.

Forming community

Jeff said the real "God moment" for him came when he realized how serving each other builds community.

"Now you start to develop a relationship. The more you help, the more people you're going to get to know and build a sense of community, which is the foundation to our faith," he said. "The sacrament of communion is community, right?"

The logo for Lisa's Tree tells the story.

Two hands represent the trunk of the tree, with the leaves representing the members of the community that is being served. The heart in the middle symbolizes love.

"Ultimately our life is a love story. Jesus' life was a love story. Our faith is a love story," Jeff said. "So if we can use our God-given talents as foundational elements of that love story, that's the trunk of the tree."

Alex said it's cool to have people excited about the app and



A combination of Lisa Schwarte's passion for helping others and noting the help her family received as she battled breast cancer inspired her husband, Jeff, and son, Alex, to find a way to match those who have talents and a desire to help with those who need help. Thus, the app Lisa's Tree was born. It's expected to become available to parishes soon. Pictured above: Megan, Lisa, Jeff, Alex, and Zachary Schwarte.

know that it is likely to have a positive impact in the future. "A sort of dream outcome of this project is to have it be successful . . . and help people, as well."

Jeff said he is humbled by the response to the app.

"For me personally, I think it's going to leave a lasting legacy of how Lisa lived her life and how she cared about other people," he said. "Anytime there's a connection, whether it's at Sacred Heart or another app across the country that gets installed, anytime there's a connection it's in

honor of her mindset of helping other people."

Sacred Heart will be the first installation for the Lisa's Tree app, but Jeff hopes to see it being used in 100 churches within three years and 300 churches in five years. Bishop William Joensen told him, "Your numbers are way too low."

"Bishops talk, so I imagine Alex and I are going to be very busy in the next three years, across multiple parishes, multiple states across the country, working with organizations to get Lisa's Tree up and running," Jeff said.

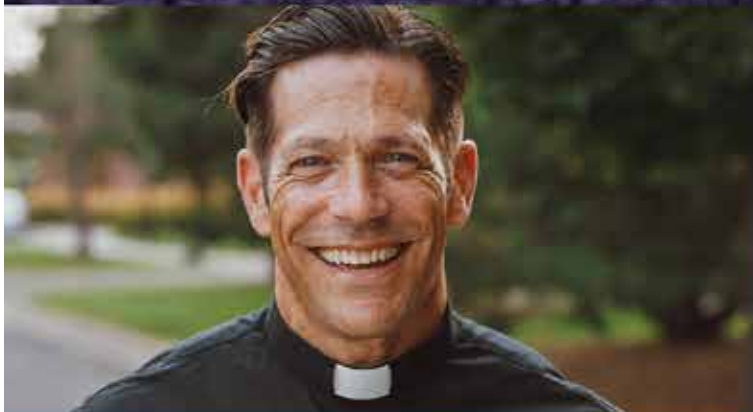
To learn more about Lisa's Tree and its launch, visit lisas-tree.com.

Find the latest news & inspiring stories @
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Annual Financial Audit

Fiscal Year 2024 Report

Diocese gets clean result in annual audit

By Robert Larson
Contributing Writer

The financial statements of the Diocese dated June 30, 2024 were audited by the independent certified accounting firm of CliftonLarsonAllen.

They issued an unqualified (clean) opinion that the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the Diocese of Des Moines in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

The Diocesan Audit Committee, chaired by Dan Kinsella, oversaw the audit process. The Diocesan Finance Council, chaired by Tom Mahoney, approved the audited financial statements.

The Diocese ended the year with an operating surplus of \$220,000. The main factors that impacted the results were the following:

- Higher Investment Returns: The financial market conditions were favorable.
- Higher Clergy Care Costs: This is mainly due to the higher costs for the Diocese to provide the healthcare for all of our active and retired clergy.
- Inflation: The Diocese's expenses were negatively impacted by inflation.

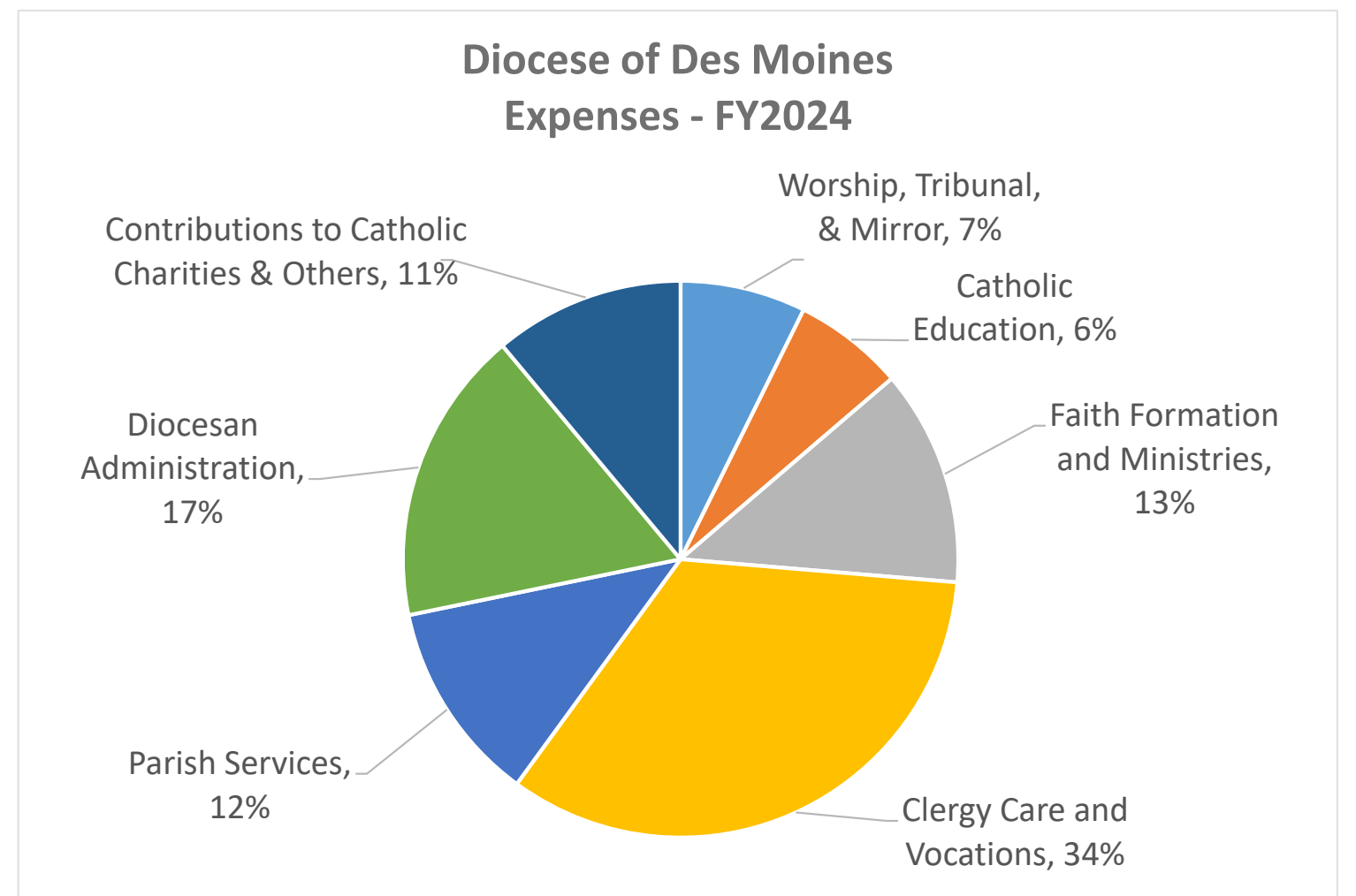
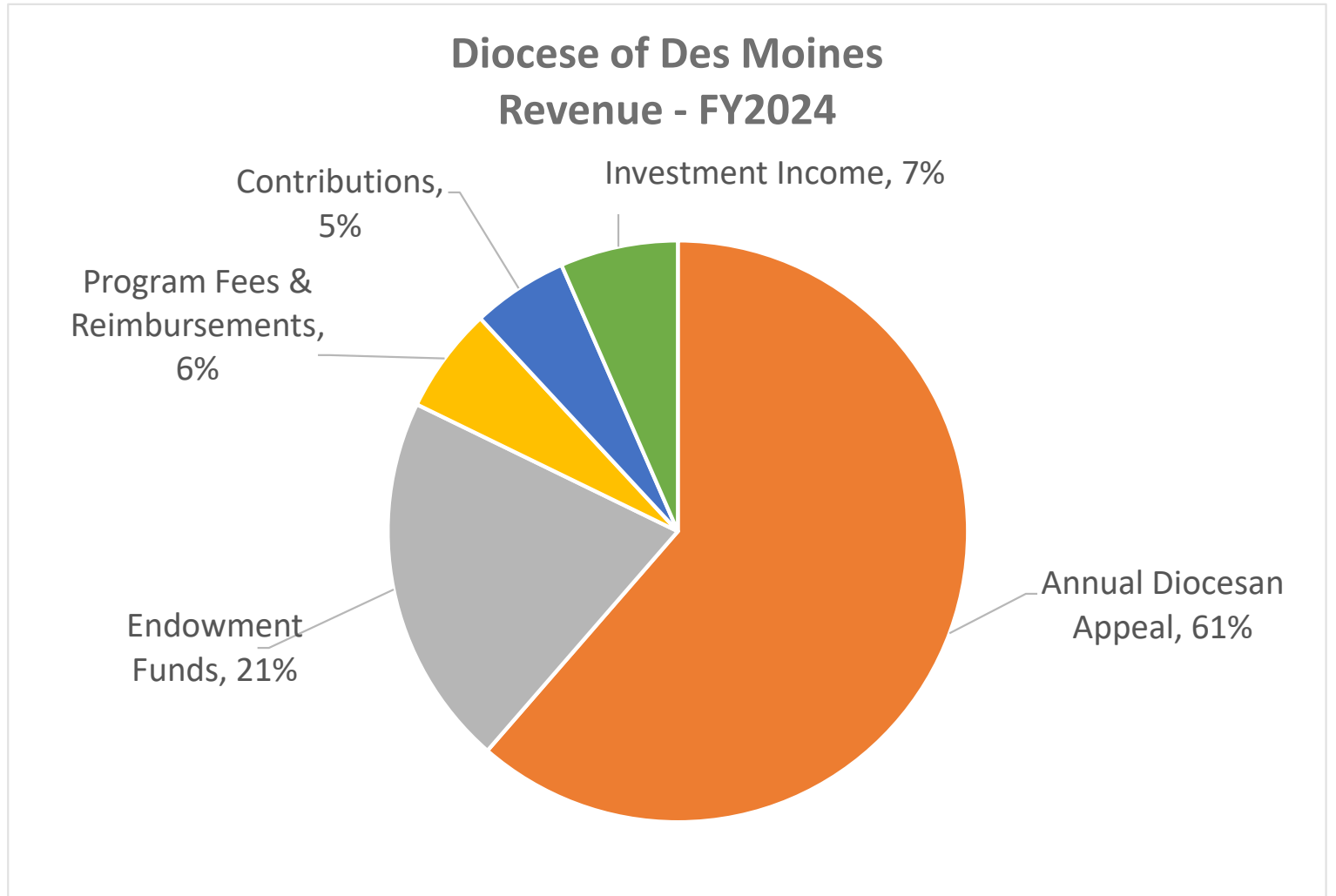
Thanks to the many generous donors to the Ignite! capital campaign, the Statement of Financial Position reflects the pledges outstanding. At the end of June 2024, the balance was \$7.2 million. The total amount collected and pledged for the Ignite! campaign is closing in on \$37 million. When the funds are received by the Diocese, they will be distributed according to the guidelines provided by the campaign and/or the donor's intent net of the costs to execute the campaign.

As we look to 2025, we look for opportunities to be more efficient and to manage spending to offset the impact of inflation.

We are also investigating how we can utilize technology to enhance our processes and services we provide to parishes and schools.

We continue to visit the parishes and schools on site and review internal controls. With the help of the pastor, staff and Finance Council members, we continuously work to insure financial transparency and accountability.

Robert Larson is the chief administrative and finance officer of the Diocese of Des Moines.



Support the mission of your parish or Catholic school by making a financial gift. Contact them directly or assist them by reaching out to the Diocese's Development Office at 515-237-5079. Or, you can contact the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa at 515-237-5044 or email contact@cfswia.org.

Financial gifts support mission

Fiscal Year 2024 Report

Diocese of Des Moines	
Statement of Activities	
Year Ended June 30, 2024	
Revenues	6/30/2024
Annual Diocesan Appeal	4,808,584
Endowment Funds	1,628,148
Program Fees & Reimbursements	461,232
Contributions	418,989
Investment Income	514,701
Total Revenues	\$7,831,654
Expenses	
Worship, Tribunal, & Mirror	556,722
Catholic Education	490,527
Faith Formation and Ministries	956,701
Clergy Care and Vocations	2,566,319
Parish Services	893,120
Diocesan Administration	1,304,687
Contributions to Catholic Charities & Others	843,815
Total Expenses	\$7,611,892
Operational Surplus/(Deficit)	219,762
Non-Operational Changes	
Restricted Investment Return	259,879
Restricted Fund Activity	304,515
Total Non-Operational Changes	\$564,394
Change in Net Assets	\$784,156

Diocese of Des Moines	
Statement of Financial Position	
6/30/2024	
Assets	6/30/2024
Cash	552,404
Investments - ADA collected for Next Year	3,557,198
Unrestricted Investments	2,453,959
Restricted Investments	6,793,258
Accounts Receivable	2,222,811
Ignite! Capital Campaign Receivable	7,244,868
Fixed Assets	169,230
Pre-Paid Expenses and Other Assets	536,196
Total Assets	\$23,529,925
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	1,036,023
Ignite! Capital Campaign Due to Other Orgs	8,967,811
Priest Medical/Pension Liability	3,197,992
Total Liabilities	\$13,201,826
Net Assets	10,328,099
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$23,529,925

This financial overview is a summary of the audit by CliftonLarsenAllen (CLA).
 CLA issued a clean (unmodified) opinion on the financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2024. To view the audit report, please go to our website at: <https://www.dmdiocese.org/resources/finance/financial-audit-report>

Gifts to the Annual Diocesan Appeal, and the Ignite! capital campaign, support the mission of our diocesan faith community: We share God's Spirit by cultivating connections in Christ through encounter, friendship, and communion with Christ and one another.

The mission and vision are carried out through the following ministries and services.

Ministries & Worship:

Worship Office
 Tribunal Office
 Communications/
 Catholic Mirror



Catholic Education:

Catholic Schools Office



Faith Formation & Ministries:

Faith Formation & Evangelization
 Family Ministry
 Hispanic Ministry



Clergy Care & Vocations:

Diaconate Formation & Continuing Education
 Vocations & Seminarians
 Priest Medical Insurance & Retirement
 Priest Care & Continuing Education



Parish Services:

Bishop's Office
 Parish Financial Reviews
 Human Resources



Diocesan Administration:

Building & Depreciation
 Finance & Technology
 Stewardship



Tingleff named director of CTO

Longtime Catholic schools supporter Brian Tingleff, of St. Theresa Parish in Des Moines, was appointed the new director of the Catholic Tuition Organization, a nonprofit organization dedicated to making Catholic education affordable and accessible to families in need.



Brian Tingleff

Tingleff took the reins Jan. 1. He brings a wealth of experience in nonprofit management and a deep commitment to advancing Catholic education. He has a proven track record of fostering donor relationships, expanding community engagement, and implementing innovative strategies to support students and families.

"I have a warm spot in my heart for Catholic schools," he said. "I'm a Catholic school graduate. All three of my kids went to Catholic elementary, high school, and colleges."

Tingleff graduated from St. Theresa Catholic School and Dowling Catholic High School (Class of '81).

In addition, throughout his

career, he's been involved in elementary, secondary, and collegiate Catholic education. He attended St. Theresa Catholic School and has supported a number of campaigns for improvements. He worked for five years as director of admissions at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, and for 19 years at Mercy College of Health Sciences.

"I'm a huge believer in Catholic education and its importance to kids, to families, and to the Church," he said.

Tingleff's leadership will build upon CTO's mission to

make Catholic education accessible to all students in need through tuition assistance programs funded by generous donors.

"We are thrilled to welcome Brian Tingleff as the new leader of the Diocese's tuition funding organization" said Rob Szalay, board president of CTO. "Brian's vision and expertise will guide CTO into its next chapter, ensuring that we continue to serve our schools, families, and communities with excellence and compassion. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mark Reed, Sr., for his leadership and dedication during his tenure."

Reed joined CTO in June 2022 and has played a pivotal role in advancing its mission.

As CTO transitions to new leadership, the organization remains steadfast in its mission to provide tuition assistance to families seeking a faith-based education for their children.

For more information about CTO and its programs, visit CTOIowa.org.

Young becomes director at Emmaus House

April Young wants Emmaus House to feel like home.



April Young

That's how she felt when she first encountered the center for spiritual companionship and contemplation years ago when it was in a three-story home in the Sherman Hill neighborhood in Des Moines.

Now, Emmaus House is in Urbandale and, as the new director, Young wants to ensure that both longtime community members and newcomers encounter a warmth and a welcome that makes them feel at home.

She wants that warm feeling not "just in aesthetics. I want to create a spirit of hospitality and invitation. Our vision statement says 'All will go forth with a sense of belonging' – belonging to God, to themselves, and that they feel they belong and feel invited here."

Young, who served as the associate director, became the director of Emmaus House on Dec. 4, when Kevin O'Donnell stepped down. He was with the center for six years, first as co-director, then as director when Father Dan Krettek retired.

Young brings a range of pastoral and institutional experience to her new role. Before joining the leadership at Emmaus House, she served as director of mission integration at CHI Living Communities in Johnston, and as pastoral minister at St. Theresa Parish in Des Moines.

She holds a master's degree in pastoral care from Fordham University, and a certificate in spiritual direction and retreats from Creighton University.

She invites the public to check out Mass at Emmaus House (Tuesdays and Thursdays at noon), centering prayer (Mondays at 5:30 p.m. and Tuesdays at 7:30 a.m.), spiritual direction, retreats, or just come for some quiet respite time.

"My first experience with Emmaus House was for spiritual direction. It wasn't something said but I just had a sense that everything I said in the room stayed in the room. I felt very comfortable coming in," she said. She wants that feeling to continue for others.

Emmaus House is in the midst of its 50th anniversary year of serving central Iowa.

"My hope is to deepen the roots here and strengthen relationships so we are poised to continue serving for another 50 years," she said.

Emmaus House, at 3315 70th St. in Urbandale, is a ministry of the Diocese of Des Moines and is open to all people of all faiths. Get more information at theemmaushouse.org

Do you know of someone who is an inspiration in how he/she lives their faith? Help us share those stories of encountering others, growing friendships, and communities of faith. Share story ideas by emailing communications@dmdiocese.org.



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Antoinette Deleon
antoinette.deleon@edencrestliving.com

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Shelly Timm
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Tasha Tucker
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455 SW Ankeny Road | 515.526.5908
Jessica Johnson
jessica.johnson@edencrestliving.com

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Source: April 2023 Forbes.com

Two Iowa native, lifelong educators die

Sister Carl Loras Pilmaier

Sister Carl Loras Pilmaier, BVM, 97, died Saturday, Dec. 21 at Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque.

Mass of Christian Burial was on Friday, Jan. 3. Burial was in the Mount Carmel cemetery.

Sister Carl Loras was born June 20, 1927, in Dubuque to Carl and Laura (Schmitt) Pilmaier. She entered the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary congregation Sept. 8, 1946, from St. Augustin, Des Moines. She professed first vows on Sept. 8, 1946, and final vows on Aug. 15, 1954.

She was an elementary teacher at: St. Jude in Cedar Rapids; Sacred Heart in Davenport; Blessed Sacrament in Chicago; St. Rose in Wilmington, Ill.; St. Augustine in Memphis, Tenn.; St. John in Seattle and Gesu in Milwaukee, where she also served as principal. She also ministered as principal in Nebraska at St. John

in Lincoln, St. Patrick in McCook, St. John the Baptist in Plattsburgh, and St. Michael in Fairbury. She served as school librarian in St. Pius X in Urbandale, Iowa; and a resident advocate at the Bishop Drumm Care Center in Johnston, Iowa.

Sister Carl Loras was very much a people person and happiest when she was helping others. She hoped to be remembered as "thoughtful, kind and considerate, peaceful and loving" and as one who "spread joy." At the time of her 60th Jubilee, Sister Carl Loras wrote: "Only time will tell how much longer each one of us has. All I know is, it's been a wonderful life filled with many blessings!"



She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Carl, John (Patricia) and Tom (Mary) Pilmaier; and sisters Mary Anne

(Robert) Roby and Therese (Arnold "Arnie") Janicek. She is survived by nieces, including Sister Linda Roby, BVM, Dubuque,

Iowa; nephews; and the Sisters of Charity, BVM, with whom she shared life for 78 years.

Sister Joan Sheil

Humility Sister Joan Sheil, 90, died Dec. 24 at Bishop Drumm Retirement Center in Johnston.

Mass of Christian Burial was on Dec. 31 followed by burial in Mount Calvary Cemetery in Davenport.

Margaret Joan Sheil was born July 28, 1934, in Des Moines. She grew up in Mount Ayr, entered the Congregation of the Humility of Mary in 1955 and professed vows in 1958 as Sister Michael Maureen. Sister was a lifelong learner dedicated to libraries and scholarship. She completed a BA degree in Library Science from Marycrest College, Davenport, in 1956, followed by her master's in Library Science from the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis, in 1965.

Sister Joan served Marycrest College/Marycrest-Teikyo University/Marycrest International University for 43 years, including

28 years as director of Library Services.

In her spare time, Sister Joan pitched softball for various organizations in the Quad Cities.

After retiring from Marycrest, she served as CHM archivist.

Sister Joan is preceded in death by her parents. She is survived by her cousins and her CHM community.

Memorials may be made to the Congregation of the Humility of Mary.



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9:00 - 9:05 am
Welcome and Introduction

9:05 - 10:05 am
Presentation by Dr. Hahn

10:05 - 10:20 am
St. Paul Center Presentation

10:20 - 10:50 am
Break (Book Sales Available)

10:50 - 11:50 am
Presentation by Dr. Hahn

11:50 - 12:05 am
Raffle & Closing Remarks
(Book Sales Available)

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Mark Dreckman - St. Pius X
Jan Hogan - St. Francis of Assisi
Mary Jo Howe - Sacred Heart
Ted Lockwood - St. Pius X
Mark Masters - St. Boniface

Pat O'Keefe - St. Mary of Nazareth
Brad Rea - Holy Trinity
Al Sieren - St. Patrick's
John Smith - St. Francis of Assisi
Doug Vail - St. Joseph
John Wild - Christ the King
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It IS about the gifts

Let's Get Psyched!

By Deacon Randy Kiel



There are just some things that only family members can say to one another and experiences that only happen within family walls such as grief, humor, conflict, hard discussions, savory foods, silly games, and personal gifts. What we do and say with our families often is not what we do and say in public. We have a public self and a private self. One way to think of family, is that it is a group of genetically and ancestrally related "selves" who continually reflect one another in all kinds of light. Aw, the gift of family

My family has a running joke that they use to get me. When we gather, there will be "hair jokes." For example, "Dad, I knew you were home because I saw your hair come in." Thank goodness we have been given humor to help with being a family. Aw, the gift of humor.

We need humor. The funny comments and stories that don't hurt anyone. We also need the supportive comments of empathy. "Dad, it's Christmas Eve," my son said, "how is your sadness tonight?" Only those closest to me would know of the personal history of Christmas Eve and its sad events. Aw, the gift of empathy.

Yet, we continue on in the holiday sea-

son. We sing Christmas carols that recall Christ's birth. Many of our favorite songs and carols speak to the longing for family at times of holiday, i.e. "I'll be home for Christmas." How nice it is when we get to be in our special places and celebrate with our families.

The word "family" is powerful. It evokes hopeful imagination, future longings and joyous desire, especially for the young. And yet reflectively, we may hear this word and recall not only joyous times but also memories of tumult or loneliness. Not all family holidays are "holly and jolly." Throughout life we will have a mixture of all sorts of experiences with holidays.

A holiday is not just any other day on the calendar. It is a day set aside for specific historical or joyous reasons, commonly

the commemoration of a momentous event in life. Within our Church, we have Holy Days and Feast Days, days identified and marked by God's intervention into our human lives for specific reasons. Yet, every "today," regardless of what comes our way, is like a holy day, being that it is a day that marks the miracle of life that is to be lived unto the purpose it asks of you.

In special celebrations we think of gifts. Gifts to be given and gifts to be received. Often, we may hear someone say, "It's not about the gifts!" Internally I wonder, "How would we have the Mass if it were not for the gifts?" Aw, the gift of Eucharist.

With every day, comes the gift of free will from God. It was His intent to grant us this free will; it is up to our intent how to respond to it. Our attitude about life is the reflection and response to this free will. How do we see life? The answer to this is personal perspective. Perhaps, in the morning when we rise, we can see God's daily miracle - life. And perhaps, every night as we sleep, we see God's evening miracle - rest. And it will be that in our eventual death, that we will receive God's eternal miracle, Heaven. Aw the gift of life.

Just as it is that during the nighttime that our brain does not fully sleep, so too our soul never sleeps. I think of the hymn from long ago, "He never sleeps. He never slumbers. He watches me, night and day. He keeps me safe along the way." He protects the soul living inside of each of us.

A beloved carol that is sung in many Churches on Christmas Eve is O Holy Night. This song seems to choke up the heart of all who hear it. Not only is it a beautiful tune, but the words of the song itself contain a beautiful message.

"Long lay the world in sin and error pining, till he appeared, and the soul felt its worth."

Our soul finds its worth in Christ, who IS family. He is Trinity - Father, Son, Holy Spirit. May we never be lost in the sense of not belonging. That would be darkness. He is Light. Aw, the gift of belonging. Aw, the gift of light.

You see, it IS about the gifts!

Deacon Randy Kiel serves at Christ the King Parish in Des Moines. He can be reached at kardiocounseling.com.

How do they pick a bishop?

Q. Recently a new bishop was installed in the Diocese of Davenport. Our bishop was installed five years ago. What is the process for choosing a bishop?

A. THE QUESTION HAS A LONG HISTORY. In the very early days of the church, the faithful themselves elected their leaders. The leader was referred to as an "overseer" or a "supervisor." That's the meaning of the word bishop. As the church became more organized, other bishops got involved in the selection of new bishops. Eventually, the bishop of Rome, confirmed the selection of a new bishop. Today, when a new diocese is created or when a vacancy occurs in a diocese, several things happen. The representative of the Holy Father - the nuncio or the apostolic delegate begins to research possible candidates. Sometimes the person selected is already a bishop in another di-



Father John Ludwig

ocese, and sometimes the candidate is not yet a bishop. The research often involves sending confidential inquiries to bishops, priests, diocesan officials, etc. When all of that information is collected, the nuncio or the apostolic delegate sends a list of three possible candidates to an office at the Vatican, the Congregation for Bishops. That office then sends the list to the Holy Father who makes a choice. The selection of new bishops is often announced at noon, Rome time, in an official bulletin, and also at the same time in the local diocese. The

I've Been Wondering...

new bishop often is present in that diocese for his introduction and frequently holds a news conference. In a diocese where an auxiliary bishop is chosen, the diocesan bishop is usually closely involved in the selection.

Q. What is a papal nuncio. Who is ours and what does he do?

A. A PAPAL NUNCIO is the representative of the Holy Father, the Bishop of Rome, to a particular government. An apostolic

delegate represents the Holy Father to the church in a given country, not to the government. A nuncio is much like an ambassador. The present nuncio to the United States is a Frenchman, Cardinal Christophe Pierre. One of his many duties is to recommend new bishops for the dioceses in our country. He's not the only one involved - ecclesiastical provinces (in the U.S., usually state by state) send names of potential bishops to the nuncio. Then the nuncio forwards those names to Rome. There is a department or "congregation" in Rome who assists the pope in choosing the final candidate.

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

Coming to peace with a lack of recognition

We crave few things as deeply as self-expression and recognition. We have an irrepressible need to express ourselves, be known, recognized, understood, and seen by others as unique, gifted, and significant. A heart that is unknown, unappreciated in its depth, lacking in meaningful self-expression and recognition, is prone to restlessness, frustration, and bitterness. And, truth be told, self-expression is difficult and full self-expression is impossible.

In the end, for most of us, our lives are always smaller than our needs and our dreams, no matter where we live or what we accomplish. In our daydreams each of us would like to be famous, the renowned writer, the graceful ballerina, the admired athlete, the movie star, the cover girl, the renowned scholar, the Nobel Prize winner, the household name; but in the end, most of us remain just another unknown, living among other unknowns, collecting an occasional autograph.

And so, our lives can seem too small for us. We feel ourselves as extraordinary, forever trapped inside the mundane, even as there is something inside us that still seeks expression, that still seeks recognition, and that feels that something precious inside us is living and dying in futility. In truth, seen only from the perspective of this world, much of what is precious, unique and rich, seemingly is living and dying in



By Father Ron Rolheiser

futility. Only a rare few achieve satisfying self-expression and recognition.

There's a certain martyrdom in this. Iris Murdoch once said: "Art has its martyrs, not the least of which are those who have preserved their silence." Lack of self-expression, whether chosen or imposed by circumstances, is a real death; but like all deaths it can be understood and appropriated in very different ways.

If it is accepted unhappily as tragic, it leads to bitterness and a broken spirit. If, however, it is understood and appropriated in faith as an invitation to be a hidden cell inside the Body of Christ and the human family, to anonymously provide sustenance and health to the overall body, it can lead to restfulness, gratitude, and sense of significance that lays the axe to the roots of our frustration, disappointment, depression, and bitterness.

I say this because much of what gives us life and sustains us in our lives has not been provided by the rich and famous, the

high achievers, and those to whom history gives credit. As George Eliot points out, we don't need to do great things that leave a big mark in human history because "the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs."

Well said. History bears this out. I think, for instance, of St. Therese of Lisieux who lived out her life in obscurity in a little convent tucked away in rural France, who when she died at age 24, was probably known by fewer than one hundred people. In terms of how we assess things in this world she accomplished very little, nothing in terms of outstanding achievement or visible contribution. She entered the convent at age fifteen and spent the years until her early death doing menial things in the laundry, kitchen, and garden inside her obscure convent. The only tangible possession she left behind was a diary, a personal journal with bad spelling, which told the story of her family, her upbringing, and what she experienced during her last months in palliative care as she faced death.

But what she did leave behind is something that has made her a figure who is now renowned around the world, both inside and outside of faith circles. Her little

private journal, *The Story of a Soul*, has touched millions of lives, despite its bad spelling (which had to be corrected by her sisters after her death).

What gives her little journal its unique power to touch hearts is that it chronicles what was happening inside the privacy of her own soul during all those years when she was hidden away and unknown, as child and as a nun. What she records in the story of her soul is that she, fully aware of her own uniqueness and preciousness, could unbegrudgingly give that all over in faith because she trusted that her gifts and talents were working silently (and powerfully) inside a mystical (though real, organic) body, the Body of Christ and of humanity. She understood herself as a cell inside a living body, giving over what was precious and unique inside her for the good of the world.

Anonymity offers us this invitation. There is no greater work of art that one can give to the world.

Jesus said as much. He told us to do our good deeds in secret and not let our left hand (and our neighbors and the world) know what our right hand is doing.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com.

School embraces Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

By Nicole Evans
Contributing Writer

St. Pius X Catholic School in Urbandale is proud to offer the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, an approach to children's religious formation that is deeply rooted in the Bible, the liturgy, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori.

This unique method of sharing the faith provides an environment where young children can grow in their relationship with God through hands-on, interactive learning experiences.

Unlike traditional religious education methods, CGS places children in a specially prepared space called the atrium. Simple, child-sized materials allow students to meditate on the Truths of the faith and build a personal connection with God. The atrium is a sacred space where children engage in religious life and listen to the Word of God, with the Holy Spirit serving as the instructor. It is not just a classroom—it's a spiritual retreat designed for children.

"We are thrilled to introduce the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program to our three-year-old preschool at St. Pius X. This program is a beautiful, hands-on way for our youngest learners to grow in their relationship with Christ," said Alex Baranosky, school administrator. "Through prayer, reflection, and child-led exploration, the children experience the richness of our Catholic faith in a deeply meaningful way. The connection to our parish is strengthened, as volunteers from our community will be a key part of supporting and guiding the children through this spiritual journey. We are blessed to have this opportunity to foster the seeds of faith in the hearts of our little ones, with the partnership and dedication of our parish family."

While CGS has been a part of St. Pius X's ministry since 2004, the formation method recently expanded to include the school's three-year-old preschool students, marking a new chapter in its commitment to fostering the faith of its youngest learners. School parent, parishioner and volunteer Jessica Gerhart played an instrumental role in bringing this beloved process to the preschool, believing that building a child's connection with God before age six is essential to their spiritual development.

St. Pius X Parish and School currently offers CGS Level I to students ages three to five, each guided according to their developmental stage. During Sunday mornings and throughout the school week, students work with age-appropriate materials and Scripture passages, helping to nurture their relationship with God. The beauty of this method is that children guide their learning while adults provide gentle support. This approach empowers children to follow their spiritual journey under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The central theme of Level I is The Good Shepherd, who loves and cares for his sheep—an analogy that resonates with young children. In this environment, children hear about God's covenant with his people, the life of Jesus, the parables, and liturgical themes like the Mass and sacraments. Through hands-on activities, they come to understand and internalize these profound lessons.

"A powerful example of the program's impact came during a preschool session when a three-year-old boy, after hearing a lesson on the Good Shepherd, prayed aloud 'I know Jesus loves me,'" shared Gerhart. "This touching moment encapsulates the heart of CGS—helping children to develop a real, personal relationship with God from a young age."

One of the most distinctive aspects of CGS is its reliance on physical materials to help children connect with the lessons of Scripture. The atrium is filled with items like wooden models of Bible stories, maps of Israel, and miniature representations of key events in the life of Jesus. For example, children might reenact the Last Supper using small figurines or build a tiny altar to reflect on the Eucharist. These activities



St. Pius X Catholic School in Urbandale is finding success in sharing the faith with children through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Several parish religious education programs, along with St. Thomas Classical Academy and School of Mary Montessori, also use CGS.

allow children to process and engage with their faith in a concrete, meaningful way.

Though CGS is still in its early stages at St. Pius X, feedback from parents, teachers and students has been overwhelmingly positive. The children are excited to spend time in the atrium,

and catechists find it deeply rewarding to witness their spiritual growth.

St. Pius X plans to expand the CGS program to more age groups and seeks to form new CGS catechists.

Eleven parishes in the Diocese of Des Moines use Catechesis of

the Good Shepherd along with St. Thomas Classical Academy and School of Mary Montessori.

To learn more about CGS, visit cgsusa.org or contact the St. Pius X Parish Office at 515-276-2059.



Rev. James Freeman - January 1

Rev. Raphael Masabakhwa - January 8

Msgr. Lawrence Beeson - January 9

Rev. Michael Berner - January 9

Rev. Daniel Siepker - January 20

Msgr. Frank Bognanno - January 21

Rev. John Brobbey - January 21

Msgr. Stephen Orr - January 27

Rev. James Kirby - January 28

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Amor dentro y más allá de las fronteras

Continued from page 2

una lección difícil, pero que trato de mantenerla presente.”

Lori y John son los suficientemente desafiantes para traer y ofrecer otras perspectivas en su matrimonio, y en su trabajo tanto en las áreas corporativas y sin fines de lucro, tal como la participación de John en la Red de Iowa en Contra del Tráfico Humano (Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking), junto con otras participaciones en su parroquia. Ellos comentan, “el valor de discutir candidamente algún asunto excede por mucho el riesgo de que estemos en desacuerdo. Por el otro lado, tratamos de evitar la tentación de no expresar un punto de vista opuesto simplemente porque preferiríamos relajarnos y ver la televisión en vez de enfrentar los retos del diálogo.”

Aplican la misma máxima en situaciones en grupo: “También hemos aprendido a nunca asumir que un grupo está de acuerdo con una decisión importante sin antes hablar sobre ello. Cuando no motivamos activamente a la gente

a compartir sus perspectivas, a veces enterramos problemas que van a explotar eventualmente.”

Más que nada, la necesidad de escuchar verdaderamente es primordial: “Esto significa escuchar para entender, no solamente como una pausa para reforzar nuestro siguiente punto de vista. Sin embargo, es importante el entender a la persona que está hablando tanto como el punto que está expresando. En veces una discusión parece que no a ningún nivel racional construye una nueva relación basada en la confianza porque escuchamos con atención hasta el final. Cuando la gente se siente amada y respetada, ellos posicionan a las personas por encima de las ideas y se vuelven más objetivas respecto a las opiniones. Y cuando se construye la confianza, comienzan a parecer manejables esos obstáculos que al principio parecían insuperables.” Y cuando esto sucede, si puedo hablar en nombre de la vocalmente talentosa Lori, eso es música para sus oídos y para los de todos.

Gracias al Centro de Estudi-

antes de Santa Catalina de Siena en la Universidad de Drake, tenemos dos próximas oportunidades para escuchar, conectarnos, y – esperemos – dialogar con otros de una forma en que podamos aclarar malentendidos, construir confianza e incluso transformar mentes y actitudes respecto a la política de inmigración en nuestro país. El primero será el domingo 2 de febrero a las 2 pm en el Centro Pastoral Católico de la Diócesis, en la 602 Grand Avenue. Tendremos un panel de discusión que va a tratar “El Estado Actual de la Inmigración en Iowa,” en el que estarán Lori Chesser, Yer Vang (Directora de Servicios Legales de Inmigración de la Arquidiócesis de Dubuque), y representantes de Caridades Católicas (Catholic Charities), Servicios Lutero de Iowa (Luther Services of Iowa), y el Movimiento de Iowa por la Justicia para Migrantes (Iowa Movement for Migrant Justice.)

La segunda oportunidad es el evento inaugural en la Serie de Diálogos de Santa Catalina de Siena. El obispo católico, Mark Seitz de El Paso Texas hablará el

domingo 2 de marzo a las 2 pm en el Auditorio Sheslow en el campus de la Universidad de Drake. Su sesión está titulada, “Rotos en la Frontera.” Como relata la preliminar del evento, “al haber pasado años caminando con inmigrantes, trabajando con oficiales electos en Texas, y conversando con agentes fronterizos, [el Obispo Seitz] compartirá su perspectiva sobre un tema que ven muchos americanos como críticamente importante para el futuro de nuestro país.”

Espero que consideren tomar parte en estos eventos y que, si lo hacen, lo hagan abiertamente y pidiendo al Espíritu Santo el don del entendimiento, consejo y fortaleza a ser vulnerables y honestos, a ser firmes cuando sea necesario y a la vez lo suficientemente humildes para permitir que el diálogo transforme nuestro punto de vista sobre nuestro mundo, nuestro país, nuestro prójimo, nuestra Iglesia. Porque en este Año de Jubileo en que debemos ser peregrinos de esperanza, gracias a los Chesser aprendemos de la visión de Chiara Lubich quien redefine la política como el “amor de todos los amores.” De seguro la experiencia de un diálogo gen-

uino es en sí mismo un acto de caridad fraternal que en sí mismo siembre esperanza y que ayuda a cultivar conexiones con Cristo aquí mismo en nuestra propia casa.

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Finalmente ofrecemos un ramo de agradecimiento y de alabanzas a Dios por uno de mis predecesores, el Obispo Emérito Joseph L. Charron, C.P.P.S., quien celebrará su 35vo aniversario de ordenación episcopal el 25 de enero, la Fiesta de la Conversión de San Pablo. El Obispo Charron sirvió primeramente como Obispo Auxiliar de la Arquidiócesis de St. Paul y Mineápolis antes de ser llamado a ser el 8vo Obispo de Des Moines de 1994-2007. Él sigue ofreciendo su presencia y oraciones como un conducto de gracias para nuestra Diócesis, y yo estoy personalmente agradecido con su acompañamiento espiritual y sus consejos. Si gustan enviar una tarjeta de felicitación o correo electrónico al Obispo Charron, pueden hacerlo a: Most Reverend Joseph L. Charron, C.P.P.S., 601 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50309; jcharron@dmdiocese.org.

Parish thanked for donation of plastics



Standing by bench gifted to St. Joseph Parish in Earling are (l-r) Betty Foxhoven, Jan Mahlberg, and Shirley Herbst.

Members of the group “Bags to Mats” working at St. Joseph Parish in Earling recently received a composite bench from the NexTrex company for having turned in 1,000 pounds of plastic film. A group of 10-15 volunteers work twice a month cutting grocery bags into five-inch strips which are the woven into 3’ x6’ mats. These mats are given to the homeless in Council Bluffs. The unused scraps and leftovers began the collection of all things made of plastic film. Thanks to the efforts of people from other towns and businesses, the group was able to collect 1,000 lbs. of plastic film. The bench sent to the parish sits in the back of St. Joseph Church.

Director of Faith Formation

St. John's Catholic Church in Adel is seeking a Director of Faith Formation. The full-time (35 hour week) position includes benefits with a flexible schedule. Located west of the Des Moines Metro area, St. John's is a growing parish community. This leadership position is responsible for the overall planning and implementation of the religious education and sacramental preparation of the parish. More information can be found on our Parish Website: www.stjohnsadel.org

Part time Music Coordinator

The Music Coordinator at St. John Parish in Adel facilitates the worship life of the parish community through music and liturgical planning, preparation, and coordination. The qualified candidate will be a practicing Catholic with knowledge of scripture, liturgy and liturgical music and be proficient in at least one performance area, keyboard, choral, voice, etc. Personal or professional experience in music leadership preferred. Please send your resume, cover letter and references to Rev. Michael Hutchison, office@stjohnsadel.org.



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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.

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Love within and beyond borders

Continued from page 2

draws from Focolare foundress Chiara Lubich's reflection, "We saw him not only in our personal sufferings, which were never lacking, but in those of our neighbour [sic], often alone, abandoned, forgotten, in the separation between generations, between rich and poor, within the very Church at times, and later, between churches."

The Chessers recall the tension that arose between Lori and John's parents in the midst of Lori's work to reform immigration law. "She felt hurt and angry when John's parents expressed an opposing view." It was easy to use the physical distance among them as an excuse to maintain emotional distance. With time, she recognizes the lost opportunity and appreciates more the need to place relationships before ideology—especially as John's parents' health weakens—and to be present on spiritual and physical levels. "It was a tough lesson, but one we try to keep in mind."

Lori and John are bold enough to risk inviting and offering other perspectives in their marriage, and in their work in both corporate and non-profit settings such as John's involvement in the Iowa

Network Against Human Trafficking, along with other parish involvements. They comment, "The value of candidly discussing an issue far exceeds the risk that we might disagree."

On the flip side, we try to avoid the temptation to not state an opposing view simply because we would rather relax and watch TV instead of facing the challenges of dialogue."

The same maxim obtains in group settings: "We also have learned never to assume a group agrees on an important decision without first talking about it. When we fail to actively encourage people to share their perspectives, we sometimes bury problems that eventually explode."

More than anything else, the need to truly listen is paramount: "This means listening for understanding, not just for a break to



CNS photo/Catholic Press Photo
Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare movement, is pictured in 2003. She died in 2008.

make our next great point. However, it is important to understand the person speaking as much as the point being made. Sometimes a discussion seems to be going nowhere on a rational level builds a new relationship based on trust because we listen attentively to the end. When people feel loved and respected, they put people above ideas and become more objective about opinions. And when trust is built, obstacles that seemed insurmountable at first start to seem manageable." And when this happens, if I may speak for the vocally gifted Lori, that is music to her and everyone else's ears.

Thanks to St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Student Center at Drake University, there are two upcoming opportunities to listen, engage, and—hopefully—dialogue with others in a way that dispels misconceptions, builds trust, and maybe even transforms minds and attitudes with regard to immigration policy in our country. The first occurs on Sunday, Feb. 2, at 2 p.m. at the Diocese's Catholic Pastoral Center, 601 Grand Ave. A panel discussion will address, "The Current State of Immigration in Iowa," and will feature Lori Chesser; Yer Vang (Director of Immigration Legal Services, Archdiocese of

Dubuque); and representatives of Catholic Charities, Lutheran Services of Iowa, and the Iowa Movement for Migrant Justice.

The second opportunity is the inaugural event in the St. Catherine of Siena Dialogue Series. Catholic Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, will speak on Sunday, March 2, at 2 p.m. at Sheslow Auditorium on the campus of Drake University. His session is entitled, "Broken at the Border." As the event preview relates, "Having spent years walking with immigrants, working with Texas elected officials, and conversing with border agents, [Bishop Seitz] will share his perspective on a topic that many Americans view as critically important to the future of our country."

I hope you will consider taking part in these events, and, if you do so, will be open and pray to the Holy Spirit for the gifts of understanding, counsel, and the fortitude to be vulnerable and honest, to be steadfast when necessary, and yet be humble enough to let the dialogue transform our view of our world, our country, our neighbors, our Church. For in this Jubilee Year when we are to be pilgrims of hope, thanks to the Chessers we draw from the insight of Chiara Lubich who redefines politics as the "love of all

loves." Surely, the experience of genuine dialogue is itself an act of fraternal charity that itself sows hope, and helps cultivate connections in Christ right here in our own backyard.

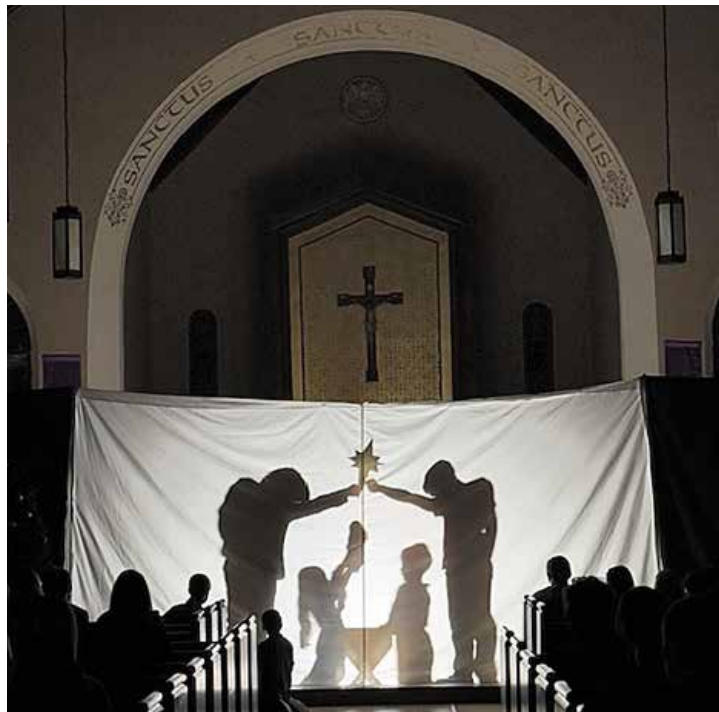
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Finally, we offer a bouquet of gratitude and praise to God for one of my predecessors, Bishop Emeritus Joseph L. Charron, C.P.P.S., who will celebrate his 35th anniversary of episcopal ordination on Jan. 25, the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Bishop Charron originally served as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis before being called to become the eighth Bishop of Des Moines from 1994-2007. He continues to offer his presence and prayers as a conduit of grace for our Diocese, and I am personally grateful for his spiritual accompaniment and counsel. If you'd like to send Bishop Charron a congratulatory card or email, you may do so at: Most Reverend Joseph L. Charron, C.P.P.S., Catholic Pastoral Center, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309; jcharron@dmdiocese.org.

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Christmas pageants draw in parishioners



St. Patrick's religious education program in Dunlap prepares the parish for Christmas. From left to right are: Chase Lehan (stable), Abe Hansen (Joseph), Lydia Gorham (Mary), Thomas Heistand (stable).



St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Panama held its annual Christmas play on Dec. 18 with the religious education students. They also enjoyed a soup supper. Juniors handed out the book "Holy Moments" by Matthew Kelly.

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Executive Director

The John Paul II Medical Research Institute, located in Coralville, Iowa is looking for an Executive Director to oversee the administration and development of the Institute. The John Paul II Medical Research Institute currently disperses grants to further ethical medical research and pro-life medical clinics. Non-profit and administrative experience preferred. Contact Search Team at office@JP2SRI.org.

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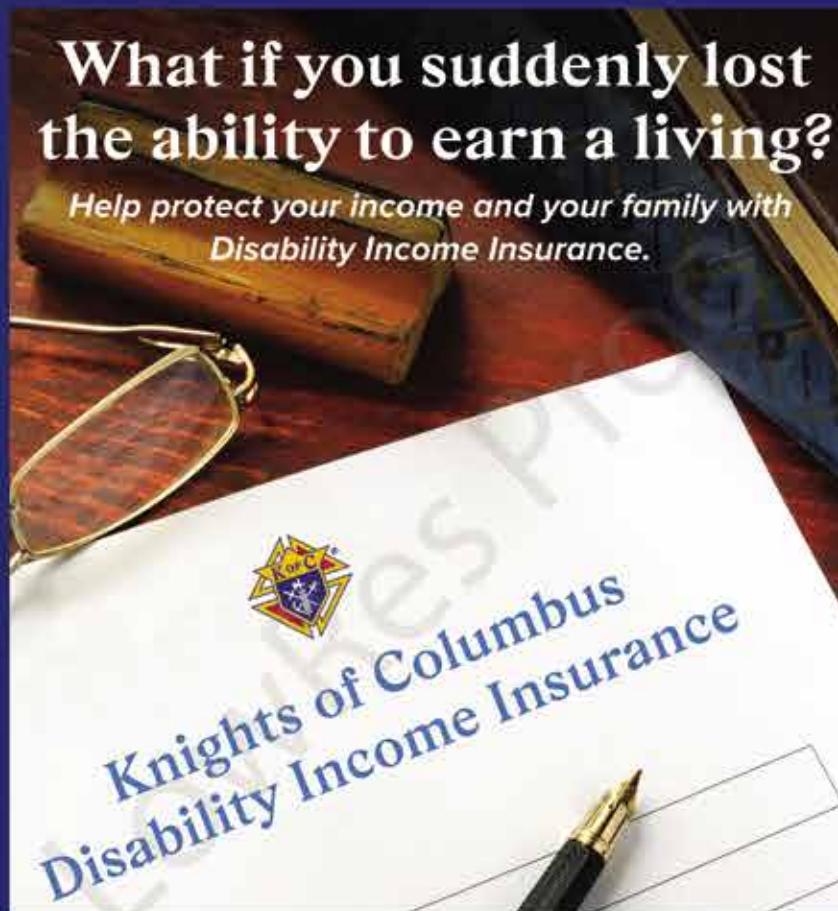
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