

In the Heartland

A Remarkable Christmas Present

A few months after I began my service as Bishop of Des Moines, Monsignor Steve Orr, Pastor of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart parish in Ankeny and Vicar General at the time, related to me that there were various factors that pointed to the establishment of a new parish and Catholic grade school in Ankeny.

The first is the rapid growth Ankeny has experienced over the years, growth that is projected to continue relatively rapidly over the course of the next few decades. The second was continuing interest in Ankeny to have a Catholic grade school. The third was that the burgeoning growth of Ankeny was packing to overflowing the current facilities of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart and spilling over into St. Mary Parish in Elkhart and All Saints Parish in Des Moines. Monsignor further related that there were two wonderful sisters who owned land on the western side of Ankeny, Fern and Mary Ringgenberg, who might possibly be interested in donating a portion of this land for a church and school. Finally, there was a family in Ankeny who indicated that they were prepared to donate significantly to get the school off the ground.

The implementation of the project was put on hold until the physical plant needs of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish (OLIH) were addressed. Under the leadership of Monsignor Orr, a successful capital campaign was conducted and extensive renovation and new construction including updating the church and a new Eucharistic chapel were completed.

In the meanwhile, planning was underway for the celebration of the diocesan centennial in 2011. Two forward-looking components of the commemoration were a new parish and school in Ankeny and the establishment of the Senior Housing Corp. of the Diocese of Des Moines to meet the housing needs of this rapidly growing segment of our society, those 65 and older. The first undertaking of the Senior Housing endeavor is that of a subsidized senior residence building by Christ the King Parish in south Des Moines. The diocesan centennial was launched with the groundbreaking of this 28-unit project on Nov. 21.

After finishing the renovation at OLIH, serious work began on establishing the new parish and school in Ankeny. I had the great joy of visiting Fern Ringgenberg with her family members and advisors and inviting her in her name and that of her deceased sister, Mary, to donate a 35-acre portion of family land for the purpose of a new Catholic church, school and senior living residence.

Fern could not have been more receptive, obviously generous and kind. She was particularly enthused by the proposal of a senior living residence, her only regret being that she might not have the opportunity to enjoy such a facility.

Fern's generosity is a remarkable Christmas gift to the Diocese of Des Moines and the future community of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny. In addition to Fern's gift, Don and Charlene Lamberti, longtime Ankeny residents have decided to donate \$2 million for starting up the new school. The combination makes for an even more wonderful Christmas present. Heartfelt thanks are extended to Fern Ringgenberg,

representing her family, and Don and Charlene Lamberti. Their gifts contribute mightily to our centennial celebration.

Father Larry Hoffman has agreed to be the founding pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny effective Jan. 1, 2011. Father will thereafter begin the organizing of the new parish with the founding members who will join him. Exciting days ahead!

Council Bluffs parishes organize in opposition to late-term abortionist

Late-term abortionist Leroy Carhart, currently conducting a late-term abortion clinic in Nebraska, has announced intentions to move to Council Bluffs, Iowa, Indianapolis and Washington, D.C.

Leroy Carhart is being forced to do so because on Oct. 15, 2010, the Nebraska Law, Legislative Bill 1033 took effect prohibiting abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy on the basis that the unborn children feel pain. The genesis of this bill resulted from significant medical research and expert testimony documenting the observations of doctors performing fetal surgery at and after 20 weeks of gestation. Unborn children recoil from painful stimulation, which also results in the elevation of stress hormones due to physiologic insult. It has been clearly demonstrated that unborn children seek to evade certain stimuli in a manner in which an infant or an adult would be interpreted as a reaction to pain. Anesthesia for the unborn child is now routine for surgical procedures performed at or after 20 weeks of gestation.

The eight parishes of Pottawattamie County, in which Council Bluffs is located, have organized to communicate their reasoned and strong opposition to the opening of such a clinic. Three hundred plus have met with the Council Bluffs City Council and on another occasion with county officials. Along with their pastors, I assured the members of the parishes of my wholehearted support and encouragement of their efforts.

While communication with city and county officials has some benefit the issue, as was the case in Nebraska, must be resolved at the state level. I encourage all in our diocesan community to be in contact with your state representatives and senators and Governor-elect Terry Branstad to undertake legislative action to prevent the practice of late-term abortion in Iowa via abortionist Leroy Carhart and other practitioners of his ilk.

Merry Christmas

I extend to all in our community my very best wishes for a Blessed and Merry Christmas. It is my hope that during our diocesan centennial year celebration we will grow in the Lord Jesus and through our witness and service make his name known and loved in our time.