

In the Heartland

Anticipating a New Year

Catholic life adapts to different cycles on a yearly basis, e.g. the Liturgical year, the calendar year, and the pastoral year which to a large degree coincides with the academic or school year.

Summer provides the welcome and needed opportunity for vacation, relaxation and the suspension of our normal routine. It also allows time for planning and organizing for the pastoral year – or when most diocesan and parish programs occur spanning the period from September until mid-June.

The very capable staff of the Diocese of Des Moines along with invaluable parish staff and volunteers in addition to their summer activity have been engaged in developing plans for the upcoming pastoral year. Their efforts, I believe, will provide for exciting and productive activity in the coming year. Allow me to share some highlights.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND CATHOLIC IDENTITY

From their beginning until very recently, Catholic Schools benefitted from the charism, dedication, and service of women religious and diocesan priests who, in large measure, guided the Catholic identity of our schools in the Diocese of Des Moines.

The leadership seeding the Catholic character of our schools has transitioned into the hands of the laity. It is essential, at this point, to consolidate this reality and to come to a renewed understanding and acceptance of our Catholic character.

Dr. Luvern Gubbels, Superintendent of Schools for the diocese, is organizing facilitators whom I will join to visit all 17 of our Catholic schools in the 2012-2013 academic year. The purpose is to engage the stakeholders – priests, parents, students, teachers, administration, school/education and finance councils, parish representatives, etc. in the responsibility for a particular school's Catholic identity and the critical role all play in achieving this defining identity and vision. I look forward to being with this caravan over the course of the next year beginning at St. Albert Schools in Council Bluffs on September 15.

ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS AND THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Building on last year's increase of 500 additional teenagers and 55 more adult catechists, John Gaffney, Director, Department of Evangelization & Catechesis, Office of Catechetical Services, and Cheryl Fournier, Director, Evangelization, Adult Faith Formation & Lay Ecclesial Ministry, will join the professional Directors of Faith

Formation and Youth Ministries in the Diocese to build a catechetical program that will truly benefit our youth.

Utilizing the newly implemented diocesan policy restricting Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings to liturgical celebrations, family time and youth catechesis – special emphasis will be dedicated to developing the Confirmation program. The goal is first to enrich the wonderful catechists involved in this ministry. Building on this a joint effort will be launched to prepare the young people – now sophomore year and above – for this timely Sacrament of initiation. Highlighted will be appreciation for the Eucharist, the ongoing sacrament of initiation, central to the lives of the believing community.

YEAR OF FAITH AND CHRIST OUR LIFE CONFERENCE

Marilyn Lane and Ellen Miller and a host of associates have again organized a “Christ Our Life” Conference which will be held at Wells-Fargo Arena, September 22-23.

The first conference in 2011 was a remarkable success and proved to be inspirational for the thousands who participated. The array of speakers is again most impressive. It is headlined by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, D.C. and Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio. I encourage all to take advantage of this rare opportunity which will surely positively impact your faith.

The Year of Faith has been designated by Pope Benedict XVI to begin on October 11th of this year and conclude on the Feast of Christ the King, November 24, 2013. It will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican Council II and the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Our five most recently ordained priests, Fathers Guthrie Dolan, Zach Kautzky, Reynaldo Hernandez, George Komo and Ken Halbur are heading a committee to guide our diocesan commemoration. Tentative plans call for addressing the topics – liturgy as prayer, Vatican II in context, and special programs for our young adults.

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Additional diocesan activity is being organized by Father Joseph Pins, Director of Vocations, Adam Storey, Director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life, Kyle Lechtenberg, Director of Worship and Cheryl Fournier, Director, Evangelization, Adult Faith Formation & Lay Ecclesial Ministry, who will develop programs in the specialized ministries they serve.

2012-2013 promises to richly nourish and strengthen our relationship with God and the believing community. Stay tuned!