As virus cases soar, diocese takes protective measures

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Following a spike in COVID-19-related infection, hospitalization and mortality, Bishop William Joensen requires face masks or coverings at all public events in diocesan church buildings until Feb 2, when it will be reviewed. "I have taken this critical step so we may responsibly continue to gather around the Eucharistic altar – the source and summit of our faith – and worship together," he wrote in a Nov. 11 letter to the faithful. In addition, diocesan parish-sponsored social events will be suspended in all 80 parishes beginning Nov. 23 through Jan. 10 out of a concern for the physical health of the faithful, and their spiritual health, by hopefully preserving the faithful’s ability to worship together. Parish activities such as faith formation and public worship will continue under current guidelines of physical distancing.

Thanksgiving inspires gratitude, reflection and giving back

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Even in the midst of a global pandemic, there are reasons to give thanks, said Maureen Kenney, director of Stewardship for the Diocese of Des Moines. We can take a cue from St. Paul. Kenney said, whose letters often begin and end in Thanksgiving. "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you...Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving," he wrote.

Traditionally, the holidays are a time when many people give back to their church community or those in need. This has been a tough year though, Kenney concedes, noting that not everyone is in a position to give back financially due to pandemic induced furloughs, job loss or hardships created by local, natural disasters.

"Are there other ways God is calling you to use the gifts and talents he has asked you to cultivate and grow?" Kenney added.

Volunteering your time and talents to help those in need is just one way we can be of service. The Catholic Charities Food Pantry is always looking for volunteers, said Leslie Van Der Molen, poverty reduction program manager.

"It’s a good way to be able to give back and see all the need in our community," she said.

"When COVID first hit we lost 60 percent of our volunteers," Van Der Molen continued. "We changed how we serve people to make sure everyone is safe. We were really able to adapt, but we still have volunteer needs."

Some volunteers perform duties that have minimal contact with others, such as building food packs, while others safely interact with the public. The Catholic Charities Food Pantry works hard on sanitation and social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure safety for everyone. Following a spike in COVID-19-related infection, hospitalization and mortality, Bishop William Joensen requires face masks or coverings at all public events in diocesan church buildings until Feb 2, when it will be reviewed. "I have taken this critical step so we may responsibly continue to gather around the Eucharistic altar – the source and summit of our faith – and worship together," he wrote in a Nov. 11 letter to the faithful. In addition, diocesan parish-sponsored social events will be suspended in all 80 parishes beginning Nov. 23 through Jan. 10 out of a concern for the physical health of the faithful, and their spiritual health, by hopefully preserving the faithful’s ability to worship together. Parish activities such as faith formation and public worship will continue under current guidelines of physical distancing.

New initiative heals post-election wounds

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

In the months leading up to the presidential election, there were people who took breaks from social media and avoided talking politics with family and friends because of the strain it puts on relationships. To address the divisions, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops launched Civilize It: Dignity Beyond the Debate, an initiative to promote civility, clarity and compassion. Now, post-election, the Diocese of Des Moines has launched Civilize It Iowa, to promote healing and unity.

"We saw a lot of division [before the election]," said diocesan Vice Chancellor Adam Storey. "But that division obviously still exists." Hurtful words exchanged leading up to the election have not been magically forgotten. "Those wounds haven’t gone away," he said. "They might become less visible after the election, but they are still there."

"The solution? Love and compassion. Jesus tells us that our call is to love on another and that if I want to see charity in the world, that charity has to dwell in my own heart first," Storey said.

Continued on page 8

Creative ways to be together over the holidays

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Last year’s Christmas gathering for the extended Fangman family (pictured above) looked very different from how it will look this year. Sue McEntee of Assumption Parish in Granger (center, kneeling) has fun virtual activities planned for her family Christmas celebration next month.

"We’re just going to have a big Zoom with all of the extended family...,” said Mesink, a mental health counselor at the Catholic Charities Counseling Center in Des Moines. "We’re going to have our laptops, dinner is planned at the same time and we’re all going to have our own turkey and carve our own turkey. We’ll say the prayers of thanksgiving – what we’re thankful for. And then we dig in."

It’s not your typical Thanksgiving gathering, Mesink admits. But at least they can still be together.

"It’s going to be weird,” Mesink said. “We know we’re going to..."

Continued on page 9

Take a photo of this QR code with your cell phone to connect with the Civilize It Iowa website.

Continued on page 3
El Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas

El Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas es un empleado de Polk County Victim Services. Ella ayuda a víctimas de abuso sexual por parte del cónyuge durante el proceso de la queja y buscando servicios de apoyo y consejería. Pueden comunicarse al 515-288-2628 o en advocate@dmdiocese.org.
Registration for Catholic Youth Camp now open

Registration for Catholic Youth Camp for the summer of 2021 opened at noon on Nov. 15.

Campers driving to the St. Thomas More Center in Panora next June, July and August will find new cabins, a renovated Dingman Lodge and double the number of paid summer staff hired to ensure safety procedures are followed so everyone can have a safe experience.

COVID-19 prompted the closing of CYC last summer as a precautionary step toward protecting families from the spread of the virus.

Administrators took advantage that free time to make major changes. Without youth at the camp, construction moved forward on new cabins and sidewalks. Dingman Lodge, which houses a kitchen and space for group activities, is undergoing renovation now.

In addition, over the last few months leaders have learned from health experts and talking with other youth camps about how to host groups safely in the age of the coronavirus.

“Over the last six months, we’ve gained valuable information about COVID-19 safety,” said Alex Kautzky, executive director of the center. “This includes field-tested best practices from countless childcare centers, schools and businesses that have reopened and used various strategies to create a safe and healthy community.”

CYC serves about 1,500 youth over the summer who come for a week-long adventure of building friendships, creating fun memories and growing in their Catholic faith.

For information on how to register, go to smcenter.com.

Mission accomplished

In sorrow or joy, deacon challenged others to find God in their experiences

By Gregg Lagan
Contributing Writer

The clock would strike 8:30 a.m. at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center, and the sound of bells was heard throughout the halls.

Then came the familiar, booming greeting: “Good morning, MercyOne!” as Deacon Dave O’Brien captured attention and shared a morning message and prayer.

For 14 years, he led pastoral care, reminding staff, visitors and patients that the healing ministry of Jesus is alive and present for them.

During the first week of November, Deacon O’Brien started a new chapter in his life as he retired.

He wasn’t looking for a job when his ministry went in a new direction. With a 32-year career in public and Catholic education and coaching, in 2006 he was teaching at Dowling Catholic High School and serving at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines. Also a member of St. Francis, MercyOne Central Iowa Chief Mission Officer Laura Wenman experienced firsthand Deacon O’Brien’s strong faith and energy. She approached him about the need for a director of pastoral care at MercyOne.

With no clinical background nor idea of what to expect, Deacon O’Brien approached retired Bishop Joseph Charron, who led the diocese at the time, for counsel.

“Approaching Catholic health care is a mission not a cause,” Bishop Charron advised.

While serving in health care, Deacon O’Brien quickly experienced joy and the pain of loss. During his first week, he was called to the pediatric unit, where a 15-month-old child had died. When he arrived, Deacon O’Brien saw the nurse gently placing the child in the mother’s arms, much like the Blessed Virgin held Jesus. The family had asked for Deacon O’Brien specifically, as they knew he worked at the hospital.

“This was very challenging and I wasn’t sure I could do this,” he said.

Shortly afterward, he officiated at a family wedding in Buffalo, New York. During the reception, a woman approached him and gave Deacon O’Brien an image of Jesus watching over a surgeon. The woman said she had been told she should give it to someone one day, and it was for him. Those at the wedding did not know her.

Reflecting back, he said he believes these events were ways God was answering his questions.

He served patients, their families and the staff.

“Serving in health care is very rewarding but it also takes its toll on all caregivers,” said Wenman. “For the MercyOne family, Dave helped bring perspective to moments of both sorrow and joy, always challenging us to see where God was present in our experience.”

Deacon O’Brien began to better understand the bishop’s advice. It became clearer that he and his colleagues were there to serve the sick from all faiths by connecting to others on their spiritual journey and walk them through their crises.

“I witnessed him comfort a man who had just lost his mother, and the same with parents who gave birth to a stillborn baby,” said Wenman. “This happened every day, and his presence to our patients, families and colleagues was dearly appreciated. We will miss him, but are so joyful he can spend the time with his beloved grandchildren.”

His goal was focused on mission: “When a person is discharged, their faith should be better as well.”

Healing post-election wounds

Continued from page 1

We are grateful for the many ways the community has come together to support our students and teachers during the pandemic. As we focus on fulfilling our mission, support of the We Are Maroons Annual Appeal is more important than ever before.

Now is the perfect time to make a gift to DCHS. The CARES Act relief initiative allows taxpayers to deduct up to $300 of their cash donations made in 2020 to qualifying organizations like ours. This new tax deduction helps provide COVID-19 relief by giving any taxpayer, whether or not you itemize, a tax break for your generosity.

Your support can truly make a difference in preparing Leaders for Life, Centered on Christ. To donate, please visit www.dowlingcatholic.org/donate or mail a check to Dowling Catholic High School, 1400 Buffalo Road, West Des Moines, IA 50265.

Photo by Gregg Lagan

Deacon Dave O’Brien distributes communion to a patient at MercyOne Des Moines.
Emmaus House begins pilgrimage to new home

The new home of Emmaus House, located in Urbandale, is expected to have the $450,000 renovation project complete by spring 2021. The property at 1521 Center Street in Des Moines is for sale.

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

The Catholic spirituality center Emmaus House will soon be moving from its longtime location on Center Street in the Sherman Hill neighborhood of Des Moines to its new home in Urbandale.

The new building, purchased in May, is the former Urbandale City Hall, at 3315 59th St.

An anonymous donor was the catalyst for raising matching renovation dollars, said board chairperson Mary Ann Van Dyke.

The complete internal demolition and rebuild will offer a modern, handicap accessible oasis for those seeking to deepen their spiritual life and be part of a faith community.

“It will have the essence of Emmaus House, even though the building doesn’t appear to be a house,” Van Dyke said. “It’s what inside that makes the difference.”

“We plan to create that homelike, warm feeling that we’ve always had,” added Kevin O’Donnell, who co-directs Emmaus House with Father Dan Krettek. Both men also offer spiritual direction.

The renovation project will include a new HVAC system, roof, windows and lift. Completion of the $450,000 renovation is projected for Spring 2021.

“This progress could not have been possible without the support of some ‘fantastic donors,’” said board member Mary O’Brien. However, they are still accepting donations to reach full renovation.

Emmaus House has the full support of Bishop William Joensen.

“I’m inspired as the 46-year-old history of Emmaus House now makes ‘pilgrimage’ from its long-time Sherman Hill location to the demographic center of the diocese in the old Urbandale City Hall,” said Bishop Joensen. “The tradition of providing spiritual direction, reflection, faith formation, and meditating the fruits of the Holy Spirit for folks of different ages and faiths will be magnified with the enlarged, accessible spaces that will retain the human-friendly, inviting character of its former home once renovations are completed.

The Emmaus board, in collaboration with my predecessor, Emeritus Bishop (Richard) Pates, and dedicated donors and supporters are bringing a long-gestaining vision to fruition,” Bishop Joensen continued.

“The strategic location will enable individuals to drop in during the day for spiritual renewal amid their busy work, family, and other commitments. Truly, it will remain an oasis of peace and life that will kindle hearts just as the first disciples discovered at Emmaus.”

Learn more at TheEmmausHouse.org.

St. Luke in Ankeny breaks ground for expansion

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic School and Parish in Ankeny broke ground on their expansion project Oct. 27.

Expansion includes six new classrooms, a multipurpose meeting room, expanded parking, storage, and storm shelter. Completion is expected in July 2021 - just in time for the new school year.

Funding for construction is provided through its capital campaign. The St. Luke community has secured $3.2 million in pledged gifts and cash for the $3.5 million project. A groundbreaking ceremony was held.

“This project has been a long time coming and we have had a number of iterations of the plans, but it is finally happening,” said Father Ken Halbur, pastor. “It is a wonderful blessing for the parish to add classrooms, meeting rooms, and more storage space to accommodate our growth now and for years to come.”

St. Luke Catholic School grew by more than 35 percent this past year. Growth is likely connected to educational continuity the school provided to families during the pandemic.

Last spring as schools across the state closed, the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools - including St. Luke - quickly implemented a high-quality, interactive distance learning program for all students.

“I am so excited to see our building expand, which will allow our school to continue to grow,” said Misty Hade, school administrator.

To learn more about enrollment opportunities, visit school.org or call 515-985-7074.

Finding faith online

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

The pandemic has affected the faith community’s ability to gather. In response, Emmaus House is offering a number of virtual opportunities.

“We are connect- ing that maybe wouldn’t have before,” said Kevin O’Donnell, co-director of Emmaus House.

“People are looking for spaces to nourish their spiritual life and finding Emmaus is a wonderful place for that...People are very much experiencing God’s presence and entering into those gatherings.”

Learn more and register for virtual opportunities at th eEmmausHouse.org.

St. Luke Catholic School and Parish in Ankeny broke ground on their expansion project Oct. 27 for its $3.5 million expansion project.

Emmaus Advent Evening Retreat

Virtual Advent Evening Retreat: Hope in the Midst of the Imperfect

Thursday, Dec. 3
6:00 - 8:00 P.M.

Whether 2,000 years ago or the year 2020, this hopeful truth remains: God enters, God resides. During this holiday season, when our lives and celebrations may not be as we hoped, join Emmaus for a quiet evening of prayer, and listen for God’s gentle voice reminding us of our true hope: God enters, God resides...even in these apparently imperfect moments of our lives.

Register for this virtual retreat at TheEmmausHouse.org.

St. Luke Catholic School and Parish in Ankeny breaks ground on their expansion project Oct. 27 for its $3.5 million expansion project.
Working to break the cycle of poverty by helping low-income people participate in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF CCHD

For over 50 years, CCHD has been working to empower new mothers, immigrants, the elderly, and families to together address the root causes of poverty in their communities.

Celebrate CCHD’s 50th anniversary and social justice work with their annual national collection happening the weekend of November 21-22.

Your support for this collection brings change to communities across the country and empowers those living in poverty to transform the places where they live into reflections of the Kingdom of God. In addition to the national impact, those living in poverty in our own diocese may benefit through the 25% share of our collection that stays in the Des Moines diocese.

Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
Debra Powers, Catholic Charities Development Director at 563-275-9643 or dpowers@catholiccharitiesdm.org

usccb.org/cchd/collection  dmdiocese.org  catholiccharitiesdm.org
The U.S. bishops and the Catechesis Implementation of Directory for Dec. 1, 8 there are opportunities for the faith-ful to be community by gathering online.

Dec. 1, 8 Workshop in Spanish about Implementation of Directory for Catechesis

The U.S. bishops and the national Hispanic Ministry diocese directors along with Sadlier Religion are offering workshops in Spanish about the implementation of the New Directory for Catechesis in the Hispanic Community. This is intended for ministers, pastoral agents, catechists, RCIA facilita-tors, lay leaders, pastors, deacons, youth ministers, parents, etc. Regis-ter by going to https://zoom.us/meeting/register/URL= sigu-mdm= -WbN=...gP=...MMKb=...HV Sessions will also be held Jan. 5, 12 and 19.

Dec. 3, 10, 17 Thursdays Advent Retreat Opportunity

The diocese is offering a virtual retreat during Advent called "Hope in the Midst of the Storm." The three-week online retreat pro-vides sacred space to journey through Advent in contemplation and con-verstation with others along the way. It's designed to help you find solace and hope. The Advent series will be held on the first three Thursdays in December either at 2 p.m. or 7 p.m. Contact John Gaffney at jgaffney@mdio- diocese.org for more information or to receive the Zoom link.

Dec. 4 Friday No Room at the Inn Goes VIRTUAL

Join Bishop William Joensen and the Catholic Charities Board of Directors for 2020 No Room at the Inn VIRTUAL. This year the entire family can join in from the comfort and safety of your home. Listen to some holiday music, have some fun trying to spot all the candy canes, and go on virtual tours of Catholic Charities programs and learn how we address homelessness in our community. Register at https://www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/nri/. Raffle tickets available at https://www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/nativi-

Dec. 6 Sunday Catholic's Divorce Survival Guide DIVORCED! The Catho-

lic's DIVORCE SURVIVAL Guide 12-week group begins Dec. 6 at Holy Trinity Parish, 2926 Beaver Ave, Des Moines, IA. Meetings are from 6-7:30 p.m. Cost of $30 per person includes a "Personal Survival Guide" and all materials for 12 weeks. Find comfort and counsel consistent with Catholic teachings. Call Bill and Ann Moore for more information, or to register, at 515-480-3314 (Bill) 641-425-0109 (Ann) or email moorefamilydm@gmail.com. For more information visit www.catholiccdlvori-

The Catholic’s DIVORCE SURVIVAL Guide

Is anyone in YOUR family DIVORCED? Please give someone a copy of this ad or invite them to The Catholic’s DIVORCE SURVIVAL Guide 12-week group which begins December 6th at Holy Trinity Parish, 2926 Beaver Ave, Des Moines, IA 50310. Cost of $30 per person includes a “Personal Survival Guide” and all materials for 12 weeks. Find comfort and counsel consistent with Catholic teachings. Call Bill and Ann Moore for more information, or to register, at 515-480-3314 (Bill) 641-425-0109 (Ann) or email moorefamilydm@gmail.com. For more information visit www.catholiccdlvori-

No Room at the Inn VIRTUAL is the safe way to celebrate

No Room at the Inn VIRTUAL is the safe way to celebrate this year’s unexpected twist. Fortunately, it did not derail the event, just sent it down a differ-

ent track. This year’s event will be broadcast on the Catholic Charities website. It will air on Friday, Dec. 4, at 7 p.m. Pre-

senting sponsors are Mercy One and Ryan Steiert Interior Design. Anyone who donates to No Room at the Inn VIRTU-

AL will receive the computer link to the broadcast to watch from the comfort and safety of their own home. Bishop William Joensen and Barbara Decker, executive director of Catholic Charities, will host the show. The evening’s theme is “from our home to yours,” and is set in the bishop’s home. We will fea-

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Phil Koehler, of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, hand carved a nati-

vity scene for a raffle for No Room at the Inn.

Tune in to Making it Personal with Bishop Joensen

Heard every Friday morning at 9 a.m.

Iowa Catholic Radio: 1150 AM | 88.5 FM | 94.5 FM
or stream at www.IowaCatholicRadio.com
Spirit Catholic Radio Network: 102.7 FM

By Beth Gibbins Contributing Writer

No Room at the Inn has been a staple holiday fundraising event for Catholic Charities for many years. It has endured winter storms and a major gas leak. The pandemic was this year’s unexpected twist. Fortunately, it did not derail the event, just sent it down a different track. This year’s event will be broadcast on the Catholic Charities website. It will air on Friday, Dec. 4, at 7 p.m. Presenting sponsors are Mercy One and Ryan Steiert Interior Design. Anyone who donates to No Room at the Inn VIRTUAL will receive the computer link to the broadcast to watch from the comfort and safety of their own home. Bishop William Joensen and Barbara Decker, executive director of Catholic Charities, will host the show. The evening’s theme is “from our home to yours,” and is set in the bishop’s home. We will feature Catholic Charities housing initiatives, including the Emergency Family Shelter, Refugee Services, and the Domestic Violence Shelter. “We hope that people will join us online,” said Community Outreach Manager Holly Ackermann. “We have some great musical performances. This year the whole family can watch together and count candy canes throughout the show!” “This year has been very challenging for Catholic Charities. We have implemented cost-saving measures at every turn, in order to keep our programs open,” said Decker. “The need is greater than ever for No Room at the Inn, so we hope people will not only give, but join us online for a fun and educational evening.” Another tradition is the raffle of a hand-carved nativity by Phil Koehler of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny. This year’s eight-piece nativity features a single figure of the holy family sleeping. Tickets are $20 or six tickets for $100. For more information, call Holly Ackermann at 515-237-3027. To register, buy raffle tickets, and donate, go to www.catholiccharitiesdm.org/nri.

Pictured are Sinishaw Iticha of Catholic Charities Refu-

glee Program and his 5-year-

old son, Yerosan. Yerosan

shares his parents’ refugee

and citizenship story and

reads a prayer at the begin-

ning of the broadcast of No Room at the Inn.
Thanksgiving inspires gratitude, giving back

Continued from page 1

one, she added.

The Food Pantry serves almost 400 people per day during the daily distribution. Many volunteers enjoy the camaraderie and friendships they have developed.

“But it’s also a meaningful opportunity to give back to the community," she said. “Some of our volunteers have been here for a really long time and have built a rapport with some of the clients we serve.”

For those who are in a position to give back financially, there are a variety of ways to serve those in need with their treasures, Kenney added.

Catholic parishes across the diocese have not been immune from the negative, economic impacts of COVID-19. Father Joel McNeil, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap and Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine, said the parish had to cancel this year’s annual fall festival, one of their biggest fundraisers of the year.

With Mass attendance down to about one-third of pre-COVID attendance, would people still remember their church community?

In lieu of a fall festival, Father McNeil wrote a letter to all parishioners explaining their situation.

“We have had several meetings to figure out what to do during this COVID crisis,” he wrote. “We thought long and hard about maybe having an abbreviated or modified event. However when you get into the specifics of volunteers and tasks and distancing, we realized it just wasn’t feasible.”

He closed his letter, asking “that you consider the amount you might have spent on donations, food tickets, raffles, auctions, games, etc.” and make a donation to the parish.

Parishioners gave, surpassing Father McNeil’s expectations.

“We gave the reasons why the fall festival was important and they stepped up in a big way,” he said. “We’re very grateful that even in the midst of COVID, people have been concerned about the parish. They have not forgotten about us and continued to send in their donations.”

He is grateful for their continued support.

“Because the bills don’t stop coming in,” Father McNeil said. “Even though the ministry has declined, most of the expenses are pretty static…I still have to heat the church, whether there’s 300 people in it or 30 people in it.”

Reaching parishioners at home with technology so they can continue joining in the celebration of Mass has meant increased costs, from upgraded internet services to new equipment, such as an iPad and camera.

The parish also offers significant support to youth so they can attend Catholic Youth Camp and the National Catholic Youth Conference – “really important evangelization opportunities for our students,” he added.

Father Larry Hoffmann, a retired priest for the Diocese of Des Moines, volunteered his time at the Catholic Charities Food Pantry in early November.

Matching funds sweeten gift for Catholic school students

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

A matching grant from the Reichardt family is making financial gifts for Catholic school students go a little farther.

The Reichardt Family Foundation is doubling contributions from new donors to the Catholic Tuition Organization, which provides financial assistance to needy families who want their children educated in Catholic schools.

A $1,000 gift to the CTO that’s intended to help pay the tuition for students becomes $2,000 thanks to the matching grant. The $1,000 gift also earns state tax credits.

The generosity of the Reichardt family will help the CTO reach its $3.9 million goal for this calendar year.

“We felt very fortunate to be able to send our kids to Dowling. We think it’s important that others have the opportunity who could not otherwise afford the tuition have the same opportunity,” according to the Reichardt family.

Roughly a third of the students in the 16 schools in the Diocese of Des Moines -- 2,063 kids -- are learning reading, math and more in a faith-based environment right now thanks to tuition assistance from the CTO.

Jeanne Wells, the organization’s executive director, says she’s leaving no stone unturned as she invites donors to help families. She needs to meet her goal by Dec. 31 to help as many students as possible.

“From St. Joseph on the east side of the diocese all the way over to St. Albert on the west side, with St. Malachi, Shelby County, and St. Patrick in Perry in between, if families qualify, they get help,” Wells said. “Every school has families in need.”

The Iowa legislature created school tuition organizations in 2006, allowing for $2.5 million in tax credits split among the nonpublic schools in the state. The state has incrementally increased the cap in tax credits over the years. Last year, the state allocated for this school year up to $15 million to nonpublic schools.

“Many times, the legislature came together to say yes, we’re going to encourage school choice,” Wells said. Since the start of the program, “we’ve given more than 20,000 awards to families amounting to $31 million in the Diocese of Des Moines.”

The CTO benefits both families and donors.

Families apply to the CTO for help with tuition. The application goes to a third-party vendor to determine whether the family meets the criteria to get a grant.

Donors give to the CTO and get 65 percent of their contributions back with tax credits that can reduce their state income taxes while sharing their financial resources with others.

Wells encourages donors to check out CTOIowa.org to learn how a gift to help families through the CTO would work for them.

Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese’s Victim Assistance Advocate is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps victims of sexual abuse of minors by clergy through a complaint process and in seeking support and counseling services. He can be reached at 515-236-2024 or Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov.

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Caldwell Parrish: Caring about your loss and your faith. Des Moines’ Only Catholic-Owned & Operated Funeral Home!

You don’t need to settle. Funeral preferences change.

You are not obligated to fulfill your service with the funeral home where you purchased your pre-plan. If you have pre-planned with another funeral home and they are no longer serving you, what you have in mind, take comfort knowing that Caldwell Parrish honors all existing pre-arrangements. There’s never a fee for the transition to our funeral home. Make an appointment today to discuss your options.

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WINTERSSET
1823 N. John Wayne Dr.
Winterset, IA 50273
(515) 462-4080

www.CaldwellParrish.com

The Catholic Mirror November 20, 2020 7
Dear Friends in Christ,

I am acutely aware that in the State of Iowa and in our country the incidence of infection, hospitalization, and mortality due to the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 is rising significantly just as we enter the holiday and winter seasons. I conclude that it is necessary to require face masks or coverings at all public Masses, sacramental celebrations, and other events in Church buildings in the Diocese of Des Moines, effective immediately. This requirement extends through February 2, 2021 (The Feast of the Presentation), at which time it will be reviewed. I have taken this critical step so we may responsibly continue to gather around the Eucharistic altar – the source and summit of our faith – and worship together.

The Eucharist is the pearl of great price won at the cost of Christ’s saving sacrifice on the Cross. The personal and communal sacrifice entailed in wearing a mask, while it involves for many a yielding of our will and personal preference and comfort, pales in comparison to the privilege of participating in the Mass. Our ability to continue to experience God’s grace in the sacramental life of the Church is directly linked to our ability to mitigate the risk of COVID infections; therefore, a mask requirement is prudent at this time. Moreover, simple charity obliges us to take into account the physical and psychic health of others as a way to ensure that worship is relatively safe and accessible to as many parishioners as possible. None of us wants to be the cause for someone else to withdraw or refrain from Mass attendance because certain members of a congregation fail to employ this basic means of protection for our neighbor.

This diocesan requirement applies to all those over the age of five, who do not have a medical or psychological condition prohibiting mask use. A personal preference opposed to mask use, or the belief that masks are not effective, does not qualify as a condition exempting one from mask use. If parishioners are unsure whether an exemption applies to them, they should consult with their pastor who can assist in discernment.

The Diocese asks parishes to communicate this requirement to all parishioners, and to ensure observance by the faithful. Again, the one thing needful is to be able to place ourselves at Jesus’ feet, to heed his command to take, eat, and drink his sacramental Body and Blood. We are consolidated and revived in our belief that Jesus continues to meet us in the Eucharist; we continue to support each other as the family of God, and we remain in God’s providential care. As Cardinal Robert Sarah has reminded us in his letter, Let Us Return to the Eucharist with Joy, “The Church will continue to cherish the family of God, and we remain in the providential care of God. As we have understood, the life of the family is important, but much more important is eternal life: sharing the same life with God for eternity is our goal, our vocation.”

The Sunday Mass obligation remains suspended. For those who are not able to attend Mass during the pandemic because of personal vulnerability, God’s infinite grace and mercy remain abundantly available.

Faithfully in Christ,

[Signature]

Bishop William Joensen

Queridos amigos en Cristo,

Estoy muy consciente que en el estado de Iowa y en nuestro país la incidencia de infección, hospitalización y mortalidad debida al coronavirus que causa el Covid-19 está aumentando significativamente justo ahora que empezamos los días festivos y la temporada de invierno. Concluyo que es necesario exigir a la gente el uso de cubre bocas o cubiertas para asistir a todas las misas públicas, celebraciones sacramentales y otros eventos en los edificios de la Iglesia en la Diócesis de Des Moines, con efecto inmediato. Este requisito se extiende hasta el 2 de febrero del 2021 (La Fiesta de la Presentación), momento en el que se revisará. He dado este paso crítico para que podamos seguir reunándonos responsablemente alrededor del altar eucarístico –la fuente y la cumbre de nuestra fe- y seguir adorando juntos.

La Eucaristía es la perla preciosísima ganada a costa del sacrificio salvador de Cristo en la Cruz. El sacrificio tanto personal como comunitario que implica llevar un cubre boca es para muchos el renunciar a nuestra voluntad y preferencia personal y a nuestra comodidad, pero eso no es nada cuando se compara con el privilegio de participar en la Misa. Nuestra habilidad para seguir experimentando la gracia de Dios en la vida sacramental de la Iglesia está directamente relacionada con nuestra habilidad para reducir el riesgo de infecciones de COVID; por lo tanto, el requerir el uso de cubre bocas es prudente en este momento. Además, la simple caridad nos obliga a tener en cuenta la salud física de todos los parroquianos como una forma de garantizar que la Misa sea relativamente segura y accesible al mayor número posible de parroquianos. Ninguno de nosotros quiere ser la causa para que otra persona se retire o se abstenga de la asistencia a la Misa porque ciertos miembros de una congregación no empleen este medio básico de protección para nuestro prójimo.

Este requisito diocesano se aplica a todos aquellos mayores de cinco años, que no tengan una condición médica o psicológica que prohíba el uso de cubre bocas. Una preferencia personal opuesta al uso de cubre bocas, o la creencia de que los cubre bocas no son efectivos, no califica como una condición que libre a la persona del uso del cubre boca. Si los parroquianos no están seguros de si pueden o no usar su cubre bocas deben consultar con su párrroco, quien puede ayudarles en el discernimiento.

La Diócesis pide a las parroquias que comuniquen este requisito a todos los parroquianos, y que garanticen que se lleve a cabo por parte de los fieles. Una vez más, lo único que se necesita es ser capaces de ponernos a los pies de Jesús, para escuchar su orden de tomar, comer y beber su Cuerpo y Sangre. Nos consuela y revivimos en nuestra creencia de que Jesús continúa encontrándonos en la Eucaristía; seguiremos apoyándonos mutuamente como la familia de Dios, y permanecemos en el cuidado providencial de Dios. Como nos ha recordado el Cardenal Robert Sarah en su carta: V olvamos a la Eucaristía con Alegría: “La Iglesia sigue atesorando a la persona humana. Nos da testimonio de esperanza, nos invita a confiar en Dios, nos recuerda que la existencia terrenal es importante, pero mucho más importante es la vida eterna: compartir la misma vida con Dios para toda la eternidad es nuestra meta, nuestra vocación”.

La obligación de la Misa Dominical permanece suspendida. Para aquellos que no asisten a la Misa durante la pandemia, la infinita gracia y misericordia de Dios permanecen abun dantemente disponibles.

Fielmente en Cristo,

[Signature]

Karla Vaquerano Willis of Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines

As virus cases soar, protective measures taken

Continued from page 1

ing, hand sanitizing and the use of masks as a means of protecting one from the spread of COVID-19.

These changes came as cases of COVID-19 surged in Iowa. At press time, nearly 1,400 people with the virus were in Iowa hospitals. During a spring peak, there were 417 patients with the virus in Iowa hospitals, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health. While medical centers are working with public health partners to meet the community needs, MercyOne Dr. Hijnio Carreon asked every lowan to do what he or she can to limit the spread of the virus.

“It’s going to take every lowan to do their part to get this virus under control,” he said at a news conference. “I’m asking you as an emergency room physician, as a father and as a husband, please protect your families, our community and our healthcare workers by wearing a mask, avoiding large gatherings, maintaining physical distancing and using meticulous hand hygiene.”

Being attentive to COVID-19 mitigation practices is a way to serve the common good and show loving concern for our neighbor, and it helps ensure that the Catholic community can continue to worship together and celebrate the Eucharist, the source and summit of the faith.

The Sunday Mass obligation remains suspended. For those who do not attend Mass during the pandemic because of personal vulnerability, God’s infinite grace and mercy remain abundantly available.

Prayer for those unable to receive the Eucharist

Lord, you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as

If You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Amen.

Prayer for spiritual communion for those who would like to receive the Eucharist but cannot during the pandemic.

Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as

If You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Amen.
Tips for making the best of socially distanced holidays

Drastic differences in this year’s holiday gatherings can trigger a variety of emotions, from grief to guilt or anger, said Carol Mensink, mental health counselor at Catholic Charities Counseling Center. Mensink points to Magellan Health recommendations:

• Think about changing your family traditions to adapt to social distancing. Consider virtual alternatives to keep in touch with important people in your life.
• Follow the CDC’s recommendations when organizing a gathering at your home. If possible, hold outdoor events with a small group of local friends and family members, make sure everyone wears a mask, maintain 6-foot social distance and do not share food or drinks.
• If you have lost a loved one, honor their memory with a special ornament, wreath or centerpiece, or perhaps a candle lit during a holiday. If you can, take part in a voluntary activity that your loved one used to do.
• If in-person religious services or events have changed, see if you can still participate via televised services, video chats and online prayer meetings.

A list of Christmas Masses available online in the Des Moines diocese will be in the December edition of The Catholic Mirror.

• Most importantly, take care of your mental health. Try to replace negative thoughts by focusing on the things you can control. Building your resilience skills can help protect your mental health.

Find more tips at the CDC website, bit.ly/dailylifecoping.

COVID-19

It’s harder to find the happy this 2020 holiday season

“I’ve seen people who restored their faith during this, and I’ve seen people abandon faith during this,” said Deacon Randy Kiel.

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Brightening spirits this holiday season amidst the COVID-19 “new normal” will be more difficult.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends social distancing and avoiding large gatherings as a way of protecting others from contracting the virus.

“For many people, this is the first time they have been confronted with empty chairs at the table because loved ones cannot or are unwilling to attend family gatherings,” said Carol Mensink, mental health therapist at the Catholic Charities Counseling Center.

“Cherished traditions and religious events may have been canceled due to the virus, with no clear end in sight due to social distancing restrictions,” she said. “People who live alone or far from family, or who have lost loved ones, may find holidays especially difficult.”

People have been struggling to cope – COVID-19 has been associated with mental health challenges. According to the CDC, last June 40 percent of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance abuse.

COVID-19 is an unnoticed guest at the table this holiday season, said Deacon Randy Kiel, founder of Kardia Counseling in Clive. But we have to make room for it, whether we like it or not, for the health and safety of ourselves and our loved ones.

This pandemic has had such a strong impact that the American Psychiatric Association has even identified a new syndrome – the COVID Stress Syndrome.

“We have been charged as clinicians to be watchful for people’s mental health,” he said. Five indicators of COVID Stress Syndrome are:

• Fear of danger from COVID-19 and getting infected by different means e.g. touching contaminated objects, breathing contaminated air.
• Worry about the social and financial impact of the virus.
• Marked concern that foreigners spread the disease.
• Related symptoms of traumatic stress.
• Compulsive checking and seeking reassurance.

People react differently to the COVID-induced upheaval in their lives.

“I’ve seen people who restored their faith during this, and I’ve seen people abandon faith during this,” Deacon Kiel said.

Accepting that COVID-19 is here versus a refusal to accept it comes in stages, Deacon Kiel added.

That means grieving the way life used to be in order to move forward into our new reality, he added.

“We really have to grieve the way life used to be in order to accept the way life is becoming,” Deacon Kiel said. “And fortunately, God created the brain to always find normal. We will stabilize with it.”

Knights serve Central Iowa Shelter & Services

Reach 35,000 households by placing an ad in The Catholic Mirror.

Contact Kelly at kcollins@dmdiocese.org or call 515-237-5054 to learn more.

Creative ways to be together for the holidays

Carol Mensink’s family gathers around the computer every Saturday evening. They also plan to be together at Thanksgiving virtually.

Continued from page 1

laugh and we can’t change it, we can’t control it. So I know it’s hard to be optimistic, but it’s going to help you get through it.”

On the bright side, their virtual Thanksgiving celebration will include many more relatives than one of their houses would typically be able to handle if they gathered in person. Eighteen relatives from Clear Lake, Clive, Waterloo, Texas, Nebraska and Minneapolis will all be together virtually. The bonus: zero hours spent driving to their destinations.

“We are going to be able to connect with a lot more people than we were able to last Thanksgiving,” Mensink said. “Everybody gets to be included.”

Sue McEntee is bummed their house won’t be filled with family at Thanksgiving or Christmas, but understands precautions need to be taken for the safety of everyone.

“This is my favorite time of the year – and to have everyone in one place – there’s just nothing like that,” said McEntee, who is executive director of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa. “It’s just a really fun time and we usually do things like bowling and go to Christmas concerts. There’s all kinds of things we do together and silly games we play.”

In lieu of the in-person gathering, McEntee has already planned out a day of virtual Christmas festivities for their large family.

“It’s going to be a virtual Zoom Christmas,” said McEntee, who created secret boxes to ship to families members, filled with surprises and activities that they’ll do together on December 12. “What they know now is that they are all have to dress Christmas-y!”

The secret box will include a Christmas scavenger hunt, Christmas bingo, cookie decorating and more. Prizes will be mailed out to the winning teams after the family’s virtual Christmas.

Though 2020 has been a tough year, there’s still reason for hope.

“I think it’s made [my faith] much stronger…,” McEntee said. “We just have to be strengthened in order to accept the way life is becoming.”

The Catholic Mirror November 20, 2020 9
Memorial honors victims of COVID-19

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

One by one, Pam Douglas folds a colorful piece of paper into an origami crane. Each crane represents one Iowan who has died from COVID-19. More than 1,600 paper cranes have been created and hung like banners in the sanctuary of Sacred Heart Church in West Des Moines. Two banners, each about 10 feet long, flank a sculpture of Jesus on the cross.

The art installation, put up Oct. 16, illustrates the toll the virus has taken in Iowa.

"This is a beautiful tribute at Sacred Heart to those that we have lost this year in the state of Iowa to Covid-19," said Father Chris Hartz, the pastor. "There has been so much loss and so much grief upon grief this year. These are not just numbers, they are people. Let us hold them in prayer."

Douglas chose the crane for her artwork because the bird, with its broad wing span, carries much symbolism in some cultures. A victim of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 began a tradition of paper crane folding to encourage healing and hope.

Douglas created a sculpture with cranes several years ago and has incorporated it in her church’s décor for All Saints Day and All Souls Day since then. She adapted her artwork when she read about a Californian who was attempting to create a paper crane art installation that represents each person in the United States who lost his or her life to the virus.

With a prayerful heart for the men or women who died and for their families, she recently added another 100 cranes representing the number of Iowans who died of the virus in just eight days. Each crane is colorful, representing the victims’ unique personalities, and about 200 have names on them for the people she could identify who have died.

"It makes people think about other families and what they’re experiencing," said Douglas. "People are dying from this terrible pandemic. There are people left grieving and they’ve never had to grieve this way before."

Many of the victims have died without their families at their side because of the risk of contracting the illness. The thought of a loved one dying alone creates an added dimension to the grief, she said.

"We have to figure out different ways to reach out to them," she said. "Grieving is a difficult process for some people and they just need someone to listen to them and befriend them."

Douglas plans to keep adding to the banners until the end of November, when the art installation comes down so that the church can be prepared for Advent.

After that, she’ll continue making the cranes.

"I will continue to make the cranes, even if they’re boxed up because the pandemic is still going on. We’re still losing people. They still need to be remembered. Prayers still need to be said for the families."

Anyone in Iowa who would like to have the name of someone who died from COVID-19 written on a crane in the memorial can call the church office at 515-225-6414 to give the name to the receptionist.

The art installation can be seen at Sacred Heart Church in West Des Moines between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and before and after weekend Masses. Go to the main church of contracting the virus during the week to gain access to the sanctuary.

By Stanley Asjes
Staff Writer

Father Raphael Assamah has been serving St. Mary Parish in Shenandoah and St. Mary Parish in Hamburg since Oct. 7, 2016. He arrived with a fellow priest from the Diocese of Accra in Ghana, Father James Ahenkora.

Father Assamah is a priest of broad cultural experience. His story begins in Accra, the capital of Ghana. His mother played an important role in nurturing his faith.

"I went to church with my friends, and not specifically the Catholic Church, but I joined them at other churches," he said. "Then my mom started encouraging me to go to the Catholic Church. I remember I was in the church close to where we lived, but because of my friends, I didn’t pay attention. My mom saw that and she took me to a church far away. So when I went there, I had no friends so I had to be attentive. That is how the whole thing started."

As his faith grew and he received the sacraments, Father Assamah started to hear a call to the priesthood through the example of his parish priest, who later became the archbishop who ordained him.

"I started going to church, I was very active in the altar serving," said Father Assamah. He used to make a humble, which holds incense, at home out of an empty can with charcoal and say his own "Mass" at home with incense.

"When we had the altar servers’ rehearsal, I always played the role of the priest in teaching them how to serve so people started alluding to the fact that I looked like a seminarian because of how I behaved, and the way I was very influential among the youth," he said. "That was when I started nurturing the call, even though I had it in mind, but it wasn’t concrete."

Before he made the decision to enter the seminary, Father Assamah first went to technical school to build on his background in plumbing and construction. During this time, he was a lay member of the Society of the Divine Word missionaries. After completing some prerequisite studies, he entered seminary studies, he entered seminary where he studied with Father James Ahenkora and Father Philip Bempong.

He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Accra on Aug. 23, 2008, and served in parishes for six years.

Celebrating Mass is his special encounter with Christ, he said.

"The mystery for me is that these feeble hands with my weaknesses can transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ," he said.

When a need arose for priests in Jamaica, he and Father Ahenkora volunteered, serving there for three years.

"Jamaica has really added to my liturgy and to my perception about life and spirituality and growth. It helped me to appreciate people and how to relate to them," he said.

Fathers Ahenkora and Assamah then came to Iowa. Father Ahenkora described the warm welcome he received in Hamburg and Shenandoah, where he has been serving since 2016.

His parishioners check in on him frequently, bringing a bounty from their gardens.

"They all show the love they have for you. It is the love that keeps me going," he said.

Father Raphael Assamah with a parishioner.
Thankful and blessed

Parishes and schools around the diocese are expressing gratitude for their educators and faith formation volunteers and staff who’ve experienced a challenging year.

Donna Huehold began helping at St. Theresa Catholic School many years ago. “Though she is not back with us yet this year due to COVID, she has been integral to the development of our backpack program,” said principal Ellen Stemler. “Donna also volunteered every morning as a primary classroom aid.”

Donna Huehold began helping at St. Theresa Catholic School when she retired.

St. Albert Catholic School is grateful for Lisa Rosloniec, mother of Lena ’23, Mollie ’26, and Michael ’30. “Lisa is a regular volunteer in our building running the St. Albert Spirit Store, which has raised thousands of dollars for the school,” said Katie Fischer Grudle, the school’s director of mission. “Lisa also is the head of the Falcon Family Connection, the elementary parent support group. She greets students every day and also assists in the cafeteria.”

Lisa Rosloniec and her son, Michael, wear the blackout for childhood cancer shirts that raised more than $2,000 for Angels Among Us, an organization that assists children with childhood cancer including two of St. Albert Catholic School students.
One way we pray for... 

...and me.

...to meditate, and pray.

...where I used social media and YouTube to connect with others, to explore where I am in my life and faith.

Especially in these times, don’t we all need... 

...I don’t know of any better or deeper way to experience a God that was poured on us.

...and work responsibilities that consume most of my time.

...the holy hands of Christ, taught me this back in my time.

...the Holy Spirit reminds us that in our baptism we received the three theological virtues - faith, hope and charity - and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are equipped to face the hardness of life.

...and work responsibilities that consume most of my time.

...the Holy Spirit reminds us that in our baptism we received the three theological virtues - faith, hope and charity - and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are equipped to face the hardness of life.

...It’s forming unfair and unfavourable ideas about others based on our own insecurities and ignorance.

...that things in life are getting complicated every day.

...it matters. I ask each pastor to consider this.

...to embrace the stranger while keeping six-feet distance.

...to broaden the path we tread and our understanding of it.

...the most beautiful thing is that the Lord’s love and mercy never quit.

...even remotely, listen and feel, affirming others, praying for them, and work responsibilities that consume most of my time.

...they bond with their mother. Our wiring system comes with their mother.

...All the senses become further experienced through physical touch, therefore broadening the path we tread and our understanding of it.

...but also so how we define the level of significance within a relationship.

...A sense of assurance was given to me.

...and manifestations, the derecho, the political elections, and U.S. Supreme Court nomination.

...the manifestation of pandemic, Emily pointed out. It does not require uncluttered space, not as impressing people but as loving people, it’s easier to let go of all the extras that make our home look trendy, clean, or expensive,” the Pittsburgh mom told me.

...the manifestation of pandemic, Emily pointed out. It does not require greater creativity and greater courage.

...belonging to the people in their home, this bond is not easily thwarted.

...the manifestation of pandemic, Emily pointed out. It does not require bravery or the greatest creativity.

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...It's forming unfair and unfavourable ideas about others based on our own insecurities and ignorance. This means hospitality is not so much an action or a disposition. It is the recognition of the opportunity to be Christ to others and to receive Christ from others.

...It's forming unfair and unfavourable ideas about others based on our own insecurities and ignorance.

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times, after we’ve made a decision, we decide to go on another way. Some important questions you can ask yourself when trying to decide: What do I like to do? What have people told me that I’m good at? Do I have patience to undertake the task? It’s also important to ask advice from people you trust.

Q. How old was Jesus when He died?
A. We don’t know for sure, but most estimates put his age in his early thirties. Thirty-three is the most common answer.

Q. Who wrote the Bible?
A. No, it wasn’t John Grisham — although he has written many books. Rashi, Maimonides, and lots of other rabbis are responsible for the sections of the bible over several centuries. The bible is a collection of writings that then were put together in one volume for convenience. It would almost be like asking “Who wrote the library?” What’s more, not all the material in the bible is of the same type. There are songs, letters, histories, etc. Read a gospel all the way through — not as long as you might think. Or read the book of Genesis and see the wonderful stories it contains. Don’t try to read the whole bible all at once.

Q. Are we all related?
A. I believe we are. That’s the reason that wars and conflicts and racial hatred and slavery and greed are so shocking to us. We are all human family with lots and lots of differences.

Got a question for “Ask a Priest” and its author, Father John Ludwig? Send it to “Ask a Priest” and its author, Father John Ludwig? Send it to: askpriest@mdndoocese.org

Q. What was the Bible written?
A. It’s something else to be Dorothy Day. To live for a season and serve meals to the homeless, to stay woke and fight for our prison system (that has many inadequacies) is often seen as the definition of love. Who else? If you should do something for someone, it’s another to be in marriage and sustains you. It’s one thing to have a honeymoon with someone, it’s another to be in a marriage over many years. It’s one thing to be an enthusiast of a spiritual journey, it’s another to be a faithful servant of God. It’s one thing to have two homes, one in our family, the other in the world. It’s another to be married, a friendship, a faith community, or a vocation to serve others, will need more than initial enthusiasm, bare-fisted sincerity, affective energy, and good resolutions to sustain himself or herself on that road. It’s one thing to have a honeymoon with someone, it’s another to be in a marriage over many years. It’s one thing to be an enthusiastic supporter of a spiritual journey, it’s another to remain faithful inside that journey for seventy or eighty years. And it’s one thing to go out for a season and serve meals to the homeless, it’s something else to be Dorothy Day.

So the question is: how do we sustain our initial enthusiasm, since it’s affective energy, and good resolutions through the boredom, heartbreak, misunderstanding, tiredness, and temptations all of us will undergo in our lives, whether that be in our marriage, our vocation, our church life, our prayer life, or our service to others?

That question was put to me recently, speaking to a group of young seminarians, I shared that I had just celebrated forty-eight years of ministry. The seminarians peppered me with questions: What’s the secret? How do you get through the tough years? How do you sustain our initial enthusiasm, good intention, good will, and good energy year after year? How do you sustain your prayer life over forty or fifty years? I answered with an insight from Dietrich Bonhoeffer who, whenever he officiated at a wedding, would tell the couple: Today you are very much in love and think your love will sustain your marriage. It can’t. But your marriage can sustain your love. I advised the seminarians in the same way: don’t trust your present enthusiasm, but sustain your yearning, that you have your vocation, that you let your personal life sustain your enthusiasm and energy. What’s at stake here?

A genuine commitment in faith, love, or service becomes a ritual container, like Noah’s, that essentially locks you in. And the fact that you’re locked in is exactly what makes the commitment work. You enter naively, believing that your good feelings and affective energies will sustain you. You won’t. Inevitably they will be worn down by time, familiarity, boredom, misunderstanding, tiredness, wound, and new obsessions that come with the passing of time. So how can you sustain yourself in a commitment through periods of dryness? David Brook’s an answer is good one — by building a structure of behavior for exactly those moments.

How do you do that? Through routine, ritual, and habit. Anchor your person and your commitment in rituals that steady and honor and build your best feelings of the day. Set rituals for yourself, certain ritual behaviors, which you will do regularly no matter how you feel.

For me, as a priest, some of these are pre-set. As a priest, you are to daily pray the Office of the Church as a prayer for the world, no matter how you feel. You might choose to become a charist for others regularly, irrespective of whether or not this is personally meaningful to you on any given day. You are to do some private prayer daily, particularly when you don’t feel like it. The list goes on. These rituals give you structure and healthy routines, and they are needed because in the priesthood as in every other vocation, there are times of fervor when feelings are enough to sustain you; however there are also desert times, bitter times, angry times, times when love falters. It’s then that a structure of behavior can steady and sustain you.

The same holds true for marriage. Couples have to build a structure of behavior for those times when love falters. To name one such ritual a wife and husband need to have some ritual expression of affection when they wish each other a good day as they each part morning, no matter their emotions and feelings on a given day. This ritual is a container, an ark, which locks them in and holds them together until a better season and better feelings return. Ritual can sustain love when it falters.

In understanding this, we need to be aware of “Job’s friends,” that is, beware of the various books and gurus on spirituality, prayer, and marriage that give you the impression there’s something wrong with you if your enthusiasm and emotional affectivity are not the glue that daily sustains you in your commitment. Simply put, these are books written by spiritual novices and marriage manuals written by someone confusing a honeycomb for a marriage.

Enthusiasm and good feelings are wonderful, but they can’t sustain you through a marathon. For a marathoner, there are training prac- tices to carry you through the long tiring miles in the middle and at the end.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website Ronrolheiser.com.
Watch Bishop Joensen’s reflections ...plus, his Wednesday Mass livestreamed at 12:10pm on Facebook

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McCarrick report continues Church’s action toward accountability, transparency

Then-Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington speaks with the media at the White House in Washington in this Dec. 1, 2005, file photo. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

By Cindy Woodsen Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Although dogged for years by rumors of sexual impropriety, Theodore E. McCarrick was able to rise up the Catholic hierarchi- cal structure based on personal contacts, protestations of his in- nocence and a lack of church of- ficials reporting and investigating accusations, according to the Vat-ican report on the matter.

In choosing then-Arch- bishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark in 2000 to be arch- bishop of Washington and later a cardinal, St. John Paul II likely overlooked rumors and allega- tions about McCarrick's sexual misconduct because of a long re- lationship with him, McCarrick's own strong denial and the pope's experience with communist au- thorities in Poland making accu- sations to discredit the church, the report said.

But, in fact, rumors of McCarrick's conduct led the Vat- ican to decide it would be "im- prudent" to promote him when looking for candidates to become archbishop of Chicago in 1997, New York in 1999-2000 and, initially, of Washington in July 2000, the report said.

The text of the report makes clear that because the al- legations involved behavior with adult men, not minors, both di- ocesan and Vatican officials did not consider McCarrick's actions abusive, made excuses for Mc- Carrick based on his lack of real family ties and were overwhelm- ingly concerned with the church's reputation, not the health or safe- ty of his alleged victims.

The "Report on the Holy See’s Institutional Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to Former Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick" was released Nov. 10.

During his general au- dience on Nov. 11, Pope Francis said: "I renew my closeness to all the victims of this great evil." After reading his brief comment on the report, the pope bowed his head and closed his eyes in silent prayer.

In February 2019, after a canonical process found Mc- Carrick guilty of "solicitation in the sacrament of confession and sins against the Sixth Command- ment with minors and with adults, with the aggravating factor of the abuse of power," Pope Francis dismissed him from the priest- hood.

I welcome the report of the Holy See’s investigation into its knowledge and decision-mak- ing regarding Theodore McCar- rick during his long career as a priest, bishop and cardinal," said Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"We are studying these findings, and we are grateful to our Holy Father Pope Francis for his pas- toral concern for the family of God in the United States and his leadership in calling the Church to greater accountability and transparency in addressing issues of abuse and the mishandling of abuse claims at every level.

In a statement issued with the report, Cardinal Piet- ro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said the contributions of survivors were "fundamental."

Over the course of the two years it took to complete the investigation and compile the re- port, "we have taken significant steps forward to ensure greater attention to the protection of mi- nors and more effective interven- tions to avoid repeating errors of the past," he said.

Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori said the long-awaited Vatican report on former cardinal Theodore E. Mc- Carrick "brings us to another mo- ment of painful awareness of our church’s past failures."

But "it also marks a new era of transparency in our church, which the lay faithful have rightly demanded," he wrote.

Got a story idea?

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Email Kelly at kcollins@dmdiocese.org or Anne Marie at acox@dmdiocese.org.

Giving Tuesday

Tuesday, December 1, join the rest of America in a national day of giving.

Support for Iowa Catholic Radio on Giving Tuesday helps us reach our annual operational goal to keep us on the air and bringing local and national Catholic programming to Iowa.

Visit our website for more information.

Iowa Catholic Radio’s annual Dinner in December has been postponed.

Rescheduled date to be announced at a later time.

If you have purchased tickets and would like a refund, please email contact@kwky.com.

Happy Thanksgiving!

All of us here at Iowa Catholic Radio would like to offer our thanks to our wonderful listeners and supporters. May you have a joyful Holiday with your loved ones.

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Cardinals-designate facing quarantine, trip cancellations due to pandemic

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- As the consistory to create 13 new cardinals approached, the coronavirus pandemic forced two cardinals-designate to cancel their trips to Rome while one was placed in quarantine upon arrival.

According to the Philippine bishops' news service Nov. 11, Father Emilio Arbatin, spokesman for Archdiocese of Capiz, confirmed that given the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Italy, the apostolic nunciature in Manila gave Cardinal-designate Jose Advincula "the option not to go to Rome for the consistory."

The consistory is scheduled to take place at the Vatican Nov. 28.

Father Arbatin said that although Cardinal-designate Cornelius Sim of Brunei canceled his trip to Rome due to the pandemic.

Pope Francis congratulates president-elect

WILMINGTON, Del. (CNS) -- Pope Francis called President-elect Joe Biden early Nov. 12 to congratulate him on winning the U.S. presidential election.

"The president-elect thanked His Holiness for extending blessings and congratulations and noted his appreciation for His Holiness's leadership in promoting peace, reconciliation and the common bonds of humanity around the world," said a readout on the call released by Biden's transition team in Wilmington.

Biden will be the nation's second Catholic president, after John F. Kennedy, who was elected to the nation's highest office 60 years ago, on Nov. 8, 1960.

On Nov. 7, the media declared Biden the winner of the Nov. 3 election, but as of press time President Donald Trump had not conceded.

Game show host Alex Trebek dies at 80

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- When the death of Alex Trebek -- beloved longtime host of "Jeopardy!" -- was announced, celebrities and fans around the country took to social media to express their grief.

Trebek, a Canadian-born American who was educated in Catholic schools, died of pancreatic cancer at his home Nov. 8. He was 80.

He was consistently described as calm, reliable, intelligent and personable with a dry sense of humor. He was known as a comfortable presence in America's family rooms with a show that always stayed with its simple format.

In an interview last year with ABC's "20/20," he said: "Laughter is one of the greatest cures that we can possibly have. It's right up there with prayer, believe me."

He also said he wanted to be remembered as a "nice man" who "helped people through his charity work" and was "kind to everybody he encountered."

Trebek was born in northern Ontario, Canada, and attended Jesuit schools there until age 12 when he went to a boarding school run by a missionary religious congregation.

Italian dioceses celebrate 190th anniversary of Marian apparition

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Mike Bormann
General Agent
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