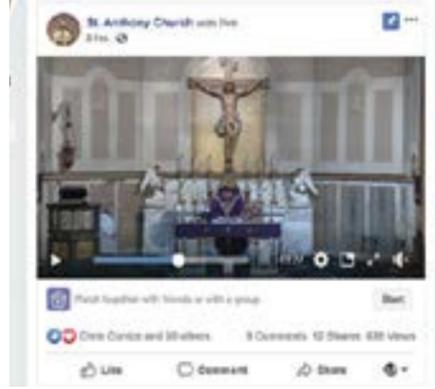




St. Francis of Assisi Church,
West Des Moines



St. Pius X Church
Urbandale



St. Anthony Church
Des Moines



Holy Trinity Church
Des Moines

Unprecedented

What now? Focusing on common good, solidarity, care for each other in the face of health crisis

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Bishop William Joensen announced extensive, unprecedented protective measures to shield the faithful from the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19.

The bishop took action after learning of Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds' call late March 14 to halt events and gatherings that would draw more than 250 people, including places of worship. The Center for Disease Control has since recommended limiting gatherings to 50 or fewer.

This spiritual sacrifice stretches and tests the faith community, said Bishop William Joensen. It is not something that is

wanted nor desired.

"During Lent, practices of prayer, fasting and the works of charity remain available to us, even if they are carried out on a different scale," he said.

Use this time to draw close to the Lord.

— Bishop William Joensen

He also called on Catholics to observe a special day of fast, abstinence and prayer on March 27. This voluntary observance is for those ordinarily bound to fast and abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

In a letter to the faithful,

he wrote: "We further magnify our prayers for the sick as priests offer Masses in the Roman Missal 'for the sick,' and as all of us join with Mary, the Mother of God, in praying the Rosary, knowing that is a powerful instrument to overcome oppressive forces in the world, including disease.

Use this time to draw close to the Lord, he said. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide governmental leaders and health care experts to uphold the common good.

And ask Our Lady, Comfort of the Sick, "to guide us and bless us."

Spiritual resources, links to Masses and more information is available at dmdiocese.org/coronavirus.

Precautionary measures enacted

In a letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Des Moines, Bishop William Joensen announced the following measures to protect the community from the coronavirus COVID-19. The changes went into effect on Monday, March 16 and will remain until further notice.

Weekend Masses are suspended until further notice. Parishes that can broadcast the Mass are allowed to have present only the priest and assisting ministers.

- Churches can remain open with increased hygienic practices at the discretion of the pastor for individual devotional prayer.

- Parish meetings and events such as fish fry dinners, confirmation preparation, etc. are cancelled unless there is an electronic means of communication available.

- Funeral Masses can be celebrated with family and close friends only with attendance capped at 50 people. Nuptial Masses already scheduled may be celebrated with a small group of attendees, though ideally they will be rescheduled for a time after government leaders give the "all clear."

- Parish priests can continue to celebrate daily Mass as they usually do, but must use rigorous discretion on whether to do so without a congregation present or with a limited number of faithful present (to less than 50 assuming adequate social distance is maintained). Previous precautionary measures must be observed (such as no physical contact at the sign of peace and no distribution of the chalice. No daily or weekend public Masses are to be celebrated in hospitals or health care institutions.

- Sacraments such as baptism, confession and anointing of the sick may not be celebrated in common, but only individually at the priest's discretion. There will be no general absolution because gathering for this wouldn't help minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe

Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, president of the U.S. bishops' conference, invites the faithful in this time of need to seek together the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe.,

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.
We fly to you today as your beloved children.
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,
as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother,
and gain for our nation and world,
and for all our families and loved ones,
the protection of your holy angels,
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.

For those already afflicted,
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing,
teach all of us in the Church to love one another
and to be patient and kind.
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and
to our hearts.

We come to you with confidence,
knowing that you truly are our compassionate
mother,
health of the sick and cause of our joy.

Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,
keep us in the embrace of your arms,
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus.
Amen.

Virgen Santísima de Guadalupe,
Reina de los Ángeles y Madre de las Américas.
Acudimos a ti hoy como tus amados hijos.
Te pedimos que intercedas por nosotros con tu Hijo,
como lo hiciste en las bodas de Caná.

Ruega por nosotros, Madre amorosa,
y obtén para nuestra nación, nuestro mundo,
y para todas nuestras familias y seres queridos,
la protección de tus santos ángeles,
para que podamos salvarnos de lo peor de esta enfermedad.

Para aquellos que ya están afectados,
te pedimos que les concedas la gracia de la sanación y
la liberación.
Escucha los gritos de aquellos que son vulnerables y
temerosos,
seca sus lágrimas y ayúdalos a confiar.

En este tiempo de dificultad y prueba,
enséñanos a todos en la Iglesia a amarnos los unos a
los otros y a ser pacientes y amables.

Ayúdanos a llevar la paz de Jesús a nuestra tierra y a
nuestros corazones.
Acudimos a ti con confianza, sabiendo que realmente
eres nuestra madre compasiva,
la salud de los enfermos y la causa de nuestra alegría.

Refúgiamos bajo el manto de tu protección, manténnos
en el abrazo de tus brazos,
ayúdanos a conocer siempre el amor de tu Hijo, Jesús.
Amén.

Schools close to minimize virus spread

All Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines are closed to stop the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. Schools are scheduled to reopen April 14.

The closings include all educational programming, childcare, athletics, and other co-curricular activities.

The diocesan Schools Office stressed that this is a time to stay at home, not to spend time in the mall or movies, so the community can mitigate any further spread of the virus.

"Our goal is to continue the educational process as that is best for students and families," said diocesan Schools Superintendent Donna Bishop.

Each school sent families details on the plan for children's education during the coming weeks. Technology, as well as traditional methods, will be shared so students are able to continue their learning.

Each school will communicate with their families about what those educational opportunities look like and how they can access all the information and resources.

"We want you to know we are keeping you in prayer as you address the challenge, immediacy, and whirlwind of the COVID-19 situation among our schools, churches, communities, and families," Bishop said.

Undaunted Trust

This month, the March 25th Feast of the Annunciation marks the 25th anniversary of the release of St. John Paul II's encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae* [EV], *The Gospel of Life*. If you've already finished or haven't yet found your Lenten spiritual reading, I commend it to you. I think it may help us keep our bearings and not succumb to paralyzing panic or despair as we cope with the coronavirus COVID-19 unfolding all around us.

The real threat posed by this virus—whatever the mortality rate actually is—has raised in relief our instinctive love for life as something both sacred and yet fragile. God has shared his very own life with us, and we have been given a supernatural vocation that only eternal life can fulfill (EV n. 2). We love our earthly existence, yet “the divine origin of this spirit of life explains the perennial dissatisfaction which man feels throughout his days on earth” (EV n. 35). As the late Catholic philosopher Robert Spaemann observes, to love someone means we want them to live forever. Against the horizon of eternity, earthly existence is appreciated as a relative, and not absolute reality (n. 2). Given this lens on life, it is our sense of responsibility to one another and the call to give ourselves to God and one another that takes precedence.

The God of the covenant, the God who sends his Son to suffer and die for us (n. 24), with us, has given us to one another. Our life finds “its meaning and fulfillment when it is given



By
Bishop
William
Joensen

up” (n. 51). We are entrusted to one another, giving and receiving, accepting one another in our respective vulnerabilities in a way that reflects the love and self-giving of the Holy Trinity.

Viruses can pose grave threats to the human community—but persons themselves are not threats or enemies, unless we succumb to a survival-of-the-fittest mentality that is beneath our dignity. If self-interest eclipses the sense of human solidarity rooted in the recognition of life bestowed by God, then we are set against each other in a way that the household of faith, let alone our larger civil society, cannot stand. The Adversary seeks to splinter the ark of faith and trust in God which carries us beyond the deluge of anxiety and fear that this disease incites. God wills to help us pass through this crisis to purify and perfect our love.

The late St. John Paul II is not particularly prescient in noting the fact of pandemic diseases; he refers to the “ancient scourges of poverty, hunger, endemic diseases, violence and war,” and goes on to detail the more serious emerging threats on a vast scale that are more spiritual and moral in nature (n. 2). These threats represent the “culture of death” that is opposed to the “culture of life” where love germinates and

nurtures, and shines all the more brightly in the face of hostile conditions. Regarding the culture of death, I will not recount the “usual suspects” of ethical relativism or the “network of complicity” in international institutions and associations that trample upon the unborn, the elderly, and those with special needs (n. 59). One

“Jesus unseals the power of life over death, and continues to draw us as pilgrim people to the abundant life he promises.”

might add the deleterious role played by those who regard conscience as independent arbiter of good and evil apart from a discerning community in which choices are enacted (evident in persons who know themselves to be exposed carriers of COVID-19 and refuse to observe self-quarantine limits; see n. 4). And we are soberly brought to our senses in our engagement with other species and the environment, for “when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity” (n. 42).

In contrast, the culture of life represents the network of spiritual solidarity that awakens our freedom (cf. n. 96) to draw ever closer to one another as members of a human community. Physical separation or isolation cannot erode that bond of decency and dignity that sustains

our unceasing prayer for people we know and those we've never met, and the willingness to risk care and healing presence to the sick among us (as we witness the nobility of countless health care professionals who are steadfast in harm's way). We lift our heads and bear the yoke of suffering with Jesus and one another in the belief that God alone can draw meaning and glory from that which appears most traumatic: suffering and death itself. The great pope cautions us against a cultural climate dismissive of religious faith that “fails to perceive any meaning or value in suffering” and instead sees suffering as the epitome of evil (n. 15).

Perhaps one of the graces that might emerge from the darkness of this pandemic, with all the economic downturn it has caused, is that we might again appreciate the “priority of being over having” as our lifestyles have undergone a decisive change (n. 97). To BE human is to BE-LONG to someone whom God has placed in our paths, sometimes by choice, and sometimes imposed upon us. The luxury of coming-and-going as we please, to freely assemble with whomever we want, has temporarily—we pray—been curtailed. And yet, with the peeling away of sports events and many other entertainments, and most painfully, our capacity to commune with our Eucharistic Lord, we are afforded the chance to be ever more intentionally present with our families and our intimate circle of life, including those we tend to ignore or take for granted. To simply live

with someone is not necessarily to share a culture of life with him or her, unless we truly make mutual gifts of ourselves in a habitual way. St. John Paul II appreciates that “there is an everyday heroism, made up of gestures of sharing, big or small, which make up an authentic culture of life.” Whether these acts involve tending to those who have fallen sick or simply listening and caring for other persons for whom God has made us responsible, we activate resources of Spirit that will vaccinate us against callous indifference or malignant fear (EV nn. 86-87).

COVID-19 has further unmasked an ongoing struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, the culture of life and the culture of death. We do not know how this pandemic will play out, how many lives will be claimed, or whether our societies and markets will ever be reset to what they were just a few weeks or months ago. What we do know is that Jesus is Lord, the Lamb of God who, as the late pontiff reminds us, is “master of all the events of history.” Jesus unseals the power of life over death, and continues to draw us as pilgrim people to the abundant life he promises. And so we are not afraid, but undaunted in trust, as we press on toward the new world where “death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4; EV n. 105).

Confianza Determinante

Este mes, el 25 de marzo es la Fiesta de la Anunciación, marcando el 25to aniversario de la

publicación de la encíclica de San Juan Pablo II, *Evangelium Vitae* [EV], el “Evangelio de la Vida.” Si ya terminaron su lectura espiritual para la Cuaresma o aún no encuentran una, se las recomiendo. Creo que puede ayudarnos con nuestras preocupaciones y a no caer ante el pánico paralizante o la desesperación al lidiar con el COVID-19/coronavirus que se desarrolla a nuestro alrededor.

La verdadera amenaza que representa este virus – sin importar el nivel de mortandad que representa – ha levantado en proporción nuestro amor instintivo por la vida como algo sagrado y a la vez frágil. Dios ha compartido su propia vida con nosotros, y nos ha dado una vocación supernatural a la que solamente puede alcanzar su plena realización en la vida eterna. (EV n.2). Amamos nuestra existencia terrenal, pero “el origen divino de este espíritu de vida explica la perenne insatisfacción que acompaña al hombre durante su existencia” (EV n. 35). Como lo observa el filósofo católico Robert Spaemann, el amar a alguien significa que queremos que viva para siempre. Ante el horizonte de la eternidad, la existencia terrenal se aprecia como relativa, y no como una realidad absoluta (n. 2). Dada esta perspectiva de vida, tiene precedente nuestro sentido de responsabilidad de unos con otros y el llama-

do a darnos a nosotros mismo a Dios y a los demás.

El Dios de la alianza, el Dios que envía a su Hijo a sufrir y a morir por nosotros (n. 24), junto a nosotros, se nos ha dado en los unos a los otros. Nuestra vida encuentra “su significado y plenitud cuando se entrega” (n. 51). Estamos confiados los unos con los otros, dando y recibiendo, aceptando nuestras respectivas vulnerabilidades de una forma en que refleja la mutua entrega de Dios en la Trinidad.

Los virus pueden representar serias amenazas a la comunidad humana – pero las personas mismas nos son ni amenazas ni enemigos, a menos que caigamos en la mentalidad de la supervivencia del más fuerte, la cual está por debajo de nuestra dignidad. Si nuestro interés propio logra eclipsar el sentido de solidaridad humana que tiene su raíz en que la vida es un don de Dios, entonces nos ponemos los unos contra los otros de una forma que ni los hogares ni la fe, y mucho menos la sociedad civil en general, pueden sobrevivir. El Adversario busca fragmentar el arca de la fe y de la confianza en Dios lo que nos lleva más allá de un torrente de ansiedad y temor provocados por esta enfermedad. La voluntad de Dios es ayudarnos a superar esta crisis para purificar y perfeccionar nuestro amor.

El Papa San Juan Pablo II no es particularmente profético al hacer hincapié en enfermedades pandémicas; él se refiere a las “tradicionales plagas de pobreza, el hambre, las enfermedades endémicas, la violencia y las guerras,” y entra en detalle sobre otras más amenazas emergentes más serias y de gran escala que tienen una naturaleza más espiritual y moral (n. 2). Estas amenazas representan la “cultura de la muerte” que se opone a la “cultura de la vida” en donde el amor germina y nutre e ilumina con un mayor brillo al enfrentarse a condiciones hostiles. Respecto a la cultura de la muerte, no voy a mencionar a la “sospechosos habituales” del relativismo ético o a la “red de complicidad” de las instituciones y asociaciones internacionales que denigran a los no-nacidos, a los ancianos y a aquellos con necesidades especiales (n. 59). Uno podría añadir el dañino papel que juegan aquellos que consideran la conciencia como como un árbitro independiente entre el bien y el

mal, más allá de una comunidad discerniente sobre la cual se implementan decisiones (lo que es evidente entre las personas quienes saben que son portadoras por haber estado expuestas al del COVID-19 y se rehúsan a imponerse límites asilándose a sí mismas; ver n. 4). Y sobriamente nos concientizamos al interactuar con otras especies y con el medio ambiente, porque “ante la naturaleza visible, estamos sometidos a las leyes no sólo biológicas sino también morales, cuya transgresión no queda impune” (n. 42).

En contraste, la cultura de la vida representa la red de solidaridad espiritual que despierta nuestra libertad (cf. n. 96) de acercarnos más aún los unos con los otros como miembros de la comunidad humana. La separación física o el aislamiento no pueden erradicar ese lazo de decencia y dignidad que sostiene nuestra incesante oración por la gente que conocemos y por aquellos a quienes nunca hemos

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Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas

El Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas es un empleado de Polk County Victim Services. Ella ayuda a víctimas de abuso sexual por parte del clero durante el proceso de la queja y buscando servicios de apoyo y consejería. Pueden comunicarse al 515-286-2028 o en advocate@dmdiocese.org.

Glenwood couple saw God working through others during last year's epic flood

Parts of western Iowa and Nebraska were devastated by life-altering flood in 2019

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Len and Naomi Nieland were glued to their television the evening of March 14 last year, monitoring news reports about the Missouri River's rising water levels.

"Let's get up early [tomorrow]," Naomi said.

She wanted to make the short drive from their acreage outside Glenwood over to check the river levels before getting ready for work.

They were shocked at what they saw when crossing the Highway 34 bridge into Nebraska.

"We could see that the water was going over the levee on the Nebraska side," Naomi said. "It was flowing over the top of the levee and carving a channel into the levee."

They both felt panic, as the Missouri River was less than one mile from their house and acreage.

"And so we rushed home and called our kids," said Naomi, who also called her work, letting them know she would not make it in because they'd be prepping for a flood.

Len and Naomi frantically began packing up as much as they could.

"We started moving things as high as we could get them," Naomi said. "Len got his two tractors and drove them to another high place close to our area."

He loaded their dogs and lawn mowers into a stock trailer and brought them to a safe place. They quickly loaded items from their house into their van.

The couple thought they'd probably get a few inches of water in their house at most. No one could have imagined how bad it would actually be.

In fact, in 2011 they had prepared for a flood of epic proportions that never materialized.

"In 2011 we were told to evacuate," Naomi said, recalling how they completely packed up and emptied their house. "We packed up the furnace, water heater. We packed it all out and had a lot of help, and it never flooded. We thought this would be a repeat."

They also didn't have much time.

"At 6 p.m. the police came and said we needed to be out by 10 p.m.," Naomi said. "And by 10 p.m. the levees were breaching on the Iowa side. So we went to our daughter's basement in Glenwood."

It would be a month before the Nielands could get into their house. But news reports and drone footage told them everything they needed to know – it would be bad.

"There was three feet of water in the house and six feet of water in the barn," Naomi said.



Len and Naomi Nieland of Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood lost almost everything in last year's flood.

"And everything was covered in stinky mud. The sewer treatment plant is directly across the river from us and it flooded on the Nebraska side."

Their belongings were caked in dirty river water and sewage.

Though Naomi had placed family heirlooms and valuables on top of shelves and dressers, the floodwater had lifted almost all of their furniture off the ground, toppling everything into the water.

She had also placed important items on the bed, which had been completely submerged in water.

"Everything was gone," she said. "I was sad and depressed and shocked."

The Nielands felt fortunate they had flood insurance – something 96 percent of the people they knew did not have.

It was difficult seeing and hearing stories of people who lost horses, cattle, homes – and even a few who lost their life.

"How could this happen to so many people?" Naomi said. "Old people – they lost everything. Debris was on top of their house. I just did not understand how this could happen."

After the waters receded, a second flood came in May, lasting all summer, she continued.

Though a lifelong Catholic who had sent her kids to Catholic schools, Naomi admits to questioning God and his goodness.

"I asked God – 'So where were you?'" Naomi said.

"He pretty much said, 'Didn't you see me out there? I was in every one of those people helping you,'" Naomi added, before being overcome with emotion.

Thousands of people did help – even travelling from several states away to offer assistance.

Volunteers prepared and served meals – three times a day, every day – for months for those unable to go home, said Father Dan Siepker, pastor of Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood where the Nielands are parishioners.

Huge amounts of clothing, food, personal items and cleaning supplies were gathered for those in need. Gas cards and Visa gift cards were also distributed.

Father Siepker and vol-

unteers made themselves available to anyone who needed to talk.

"A lot of it was just sitting and listening to people," Father Siepker said. "A lot of people were just stressed out and trying to get answers. There was a lot of misinformation out there and trying to figure out what was factual...and help them sort through everything and where to go for help."

Len said the whole experience positively impacted his faith.

"I think it made it stronger in the sense that so many people came together and helped us," he said. "Even though it was a tragic, Mother Nature type of

thing, the response was amazing from all over the town and county. We got so many calls and letters asking us if we needed help and offering support. It was good to see so many people come together."

Things will probably never go back to normal in some of the communities – particularly Pacific Junction, where many businesses and homes have been abandoned.

"It looks like a ghost town with trash all over," he said. "There are curtains blowing out the windows. It's quite the sight to see."

The couple bought a

trailer house in Glenwood last year – their new home.

The federal government is purchasing the Nielands' acreage so that no one can ever build there again. What's left of the house and barn will be demolished later this spring.

The flood has forever changed Len's perspective.

"When I do an hour of adoration, it seems to have a different meaning," Len said. "I took everything for granted prior to that. [The flood] made us firm believers."

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Bishop Joensen wants to hear from you!
How has your faith been impacted recently?
Text us at 515-223-1150 using #Bishop and he may talk about it on an upcoming show!

OPINION

St. Joseph a model for men

On March 19 we celebrated the feast of St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary.

This solemnity is a beautiful reminder of the role that a husband and father plays in a family, and St. Joseph is a powerful example for those of us who are fathers and husbands.

Pope Francis highlights the importance of fathers in *The Joy of Love* (*Amoris Laetitia*), when he writes that along with mothers, men play a “decisive role in family life” (55). He rejects ideologies that “den[y] the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and woman” (56) and he invites all of us to further appreciate and honor the differences that are a part of our very creation.

In my work, I often come across

Marriage & Family Life

By
Adam Storey



sociological research that confirms what Pope Francis points to: Fatherhood is vital for the health of our families and communities.

While we know that good husbands and fathers are vital, it can also be confusing to know what that looks like. One temptation is to ignore the differences

between men and women, but an equally harmful temptation is to caricature masculinity in a form that is better described as machoism. Masculinity is not defined by the number of push-ups a man can do!

St. Joseph invites us not only to honor husbands and fathers, but he is an example of masculinity to be imitated.

Here is a man who is strong because he relies not on himself, but on the strength that comes from the Father.

He is able to protect his family, leading them to Egypt, because he is warned in a dream.

He is a leader of his family only after being obedient, taking Mary into his home (against his own impulse). I imagine that his humility helped resolve a pretty

tense parenting moment when he finds Jesus in the temple after losing him for three days! (Lord, grant me that patience!)

St. Joseph's feast day is an invitation to me to grow as a husband and as a father. He's a reminder of how important men are, so I hope you'll join me in praying for all the men in our lives, that they might follow the model of St. Joseph. May they be strong leaders, whose strength comes not from themselves, but from the Lord.

Adam Storey is the diocesan director of Marriage & Family Life. He can be reached at astorey@dmdiocese.org or 515-237-5056.

The fast and the spurious

Fasting is an ancient discipline, and one that Israel took up order to show the Lord its people's faithfulness. But the readings at the beginning of Lent tell us the hypocritical attitude that the Israelites had when it came to fasting.

They supposedly fasted for the Lord but they were unhappy when he took no notice of their fasting – they treated their fast not as a gift but as a service they were offering the Lord. As a result, they charged the Lord with impartiality when he found no pleasure in their fasting (Isaiah 58:1 – 9a)

The Lord told Isaiah not to mince his words with the Israelites when calling out their offenses. He called them out for afflicting themselves in show but sought no relieve for those who were afflicted. They fasted in order to provide an external image of discipline and love for the Lord, but their interiority was filled with disorder and chaos. Yes, they performed the right

Faith Journey

By John Huynh



“acts” but they persisted in their sins. They demanded forgiveness from the Lord and yet refused to forgive others. They fasted in order to accuse others of not fasting.

This was their hypocrisy and the Lord hated it: “You cannot fast as you do today, and expect your voices to be heard from on high” (IS 58:4).

One thing worth noting is that in ancient times a public display of fasting in order to seek praise was common because almost all – if not all – people were reli-

gious. In our own time, this is not the case. In fact, the rise of the ‘nones,’ the ‘spiritual but not religious,’ the ‘nominally religious’ – i.e. religious in name only and not in practice – and the ‘agnostics’ have demonstrated that any religious act in the public square will more than likely be shamed and mocked.

One needs but only do a google search to find plenty of stories.

Thus, I think that in our own time a public display of our fasting might actually be a good idea, if we are doing so in order to draw attention towards the Lord and his lavish mercy on us as sinners. This, of course, is a matter between each person and God, as God searches the depths of every heart. Let us pray that the Lord may be pleased when he searches our hearts as we fast and pray.

Isaiah and our Lord (MT 6:1-6, 16-18) provide us with a good measure for our own Lenten practices:

- Why are we doing the things that we are doing?

- Why are we giving up the things that we are giving up?

- Is it so that we can change, or is it so that others may take notice?

- Are we doing it for the sake of growth in our own relationship with the Lord, or to enlarge our own ego?

- If we are fasting for the right reasons, then let our fast be known from the coffee shop to the dinner table, from the gym to the office, from Twitter to Facebook, especially in a time when the Gospel needs to be preached by actions more than words.

John Huynh directs the Faith Journey program and the Catechetical Institute. He can be reached at jhuynh@dmdicese.org or 515-237-5006

Bearing a grudge?

Over the years, there have been many variations of the popular quote, “We are shaped by our experiences,” but Franciscan Friar and author Thomas Merton helped us understand this concept further when he wrote, “We are shaped by the ends we live for; we are made in the image of what we desire.”

As Catholics, we desire to be shaped into the image and likeness of Christ himself.

We may not realize it, but we also will be shaped by our resentments and grudges.

How do you feel when someone holds a grudge against you? It hurts, doesn't it?

Reflect upon these few questions: Are you holding a grudge against someone? Who is it against? Why are you attached to it? Will you let it be over?

At some point in life, most of us will carry a grudge. Some will leave it unresolved. Can you feel how holding a grudge affects you? It hurts doesn't it?

Be assured, holding a grudge will turn into a type of sickness that will spread. It will infect our emotions, relationships, character, and our spiritual life.

Let's Get Psyched!

By Deacon
Randy Kiel



Often, I hear people ask how to get over a grudge; they usually want some form of resolve that is not possible, an apology that will never come. The only way to “get over” a grudge is to decide to abandon it, totally.

This is not easy to do. This is forgiveness. If we don't abandon it totally, it will wound others as well as ourselves. It is impossible to heal a wound while still trying to wound another.

A grudge is not an emotion but rather a decision that is toxic, which dwells within the will of each person that holds it. In order to get over a grudge, it must be released as a willful decision to forgive.

In the book of I John, we are told that if we confess our sins we will be

healed from the fate of sin. But conversely, if we suppress and hide our sin, we will become sick. This sickness is most commonly called “unhappiness.” Our world around us communicates so many ambiguous and conflicting messages about how to be happy. Most of these messages will lead us further down a path toward unhappiness because they are based on idols such as: personal power, social prestige, intellectual prowess, and societal prominence. These ideologies are all false images, thus the bearing of false witnesses.

Our true image to bear is to be that of the Father who created us, not that of a grudge. God himself is all-powerful, omnipotent. He himself is all prominent, omnipresent. He himself is above all IQ standard of measure; He is omniscient. And he is the name above all names; He is the Almighty!

A grudge is not the only source for unhappiness, but it is impossible to have peace and happiness while bearing a grudge.

A grudge resides within a person as an emotional disturbance based upon unforgiveness and resentments derived from hurts due to injuries from other peo-

ple, circumstances, and failed expectations. Grudges are festering resentments intended purposely for retaliation and/or punishment.

Grudges will eventually infiltrate into one's soul causing spiritual damage and division. Unforgiveness is not compatible with the image in which God created for us to live.

Forgiveness is in the image of God. Unforgiveness is from the image of the evil one.

Whenever we find that we are holding a grudge, let's remember that we are flirting with The Prince of Thieves. He will steal all happiness and peace from us without hesitation.

If we sincerely desire to be willful followers of Christ, we cannot be passive followers of a grudge.

Prayerfully, may Jesus be the ultimate image of our heart's desire.

Deacon Randy Kiel is the founder of Kardia Counseling and serves Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. To connect with him email randy@kardiacounseling.com.

OPINION

Ask a Priest

Q. I have read a book on "Examination of Conscience" by Father Robert Altier, and under the Fifth Commandment "Thou Shalt Not Kill" it states that if a person knowingly votes for someone who is pro-abortion, it is a serious matter. Are our Catholic/Christian people aware of this grave sin? –Blanche Ann Matera TOC

A. I WISH IT were that easy.

Can we vote for a candidate who takes us into war?

Can we vote for a candidate who opposes immigration for refugees?

Can we vote for candidates who support the death penalty?

Can we vote for candidates who recklessly distort the truth?

Can we vote for those who sell weapons of war to other countries?

Can we vote for people who ignore the health care of citizens?

Important questions. Voters are asked to choose from among imperfect candidates. Every four years, the U.S. bishops issue a statement called Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship. It's intended to help American Catholic voters in making decisions about issues and candidates running for public office. No governor, representative, senator or president embodies all of the correct answers to the statement. All of them fall short in one way or another. Democracy is not an "all or nothing" process. We may agree with a candidate on some issues and disagree with that candidate on other issues. We don't ever get everything that we want.

Representative government relies on "the art of the possible."

No political party has all the answers for us in our journey of faith. If we ask voters to choose only one of those issues, we're not paying much attention to our bishops. The statement is available on the USCCB website: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/The-Challenge-of-Forming-Consciences-for-Faithful-Citizenship-Part-1.pdf>

Q. How has the Church evolved over time? – Youth group, Holy Trinity, DM

A. WE'D NEED PAGES and pages to answer your question adequately. The message of Jesus has been adapted to the times and places where the gospel has been announced.

Church structures have varied from age to age and place to place. We often refer to St. Peter as the first pope, but you never would have found him dressed in a white cassock and riding in a pope-mobile. Rather, Peter was an outlaw (according to the Roman emperor). The early believers wanted to share what the Lord had shown to them.

Jesus didn't give the apostles the outline of how the Church would develop. Eventually, bishops (overseers or supervisors) developed geographical units called dioceses, and within dioceses, parishes.

Even today, the Church continues to evolve with councils and synods, with "ad limina" visits to Rome, and to national bishops' conferences. While the externals and the details have changed from age to age, the message of the Lord behind those externals remains unchanged.

Q. How do we respond to people who are not fully educated on the Catholic faith?

A. WELL, I'VE BEEN at this for a long time, and I don't think I'm even fully educated in the Catholic faith.

It's a lifelong process.

There are many people who are hungry to learn more about the Church, the Scriptures, the outreach of the Church to the poor and lonely. That's why we have study groups, weekend retreats, faith formation programs and Catholic schools.

What is more distressing for me is to witness some people who have no hunger to learn more about their faith. Cardinal John Henry Newman, an Englishman who was recently canonized a saint, said: "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."

Q. How do you, as a priest, deal with the hate and accusations that you're getting?

A. I MUST SAY that I haven't gotten much in the way of hate or accusations (that I know of!).

There isn't anything rational about hate. Accusations may or may not be true, and they should be investigated to find the truth.

Whenever possible I try to look at disputes as calmly as I can. What is most helpful is to engage in dialog and conversation with those who disagree with us. Speaking, and more importantly, listening, often helps us to understand one another better.

Got a question for "Ask a Priest" and its author, Father John Ludwig? Send it to: communications@dmdiocese.org.

Our congenital complexity



By Father
Ron Rolheiser

The renowned spiritual writer, Ruth Burrows, begins her autobiography with these words: "I was born into this world with a tortured sensitivity. For long I have puzzled over the causes of my psychological anguish."

Unfortunately, to our loss, too many spiritual biographies don't begin like this, that is, by recognizing right at the start the bewildering, pathological complexity inside our own nature. We're not simple in heart, mind, and soul, nor indeed even in body. Each of us has enough complexity within us to write our own treatise on abnormal psychology.

And that complexity must not only be recognized, it needs to be respected and hallowed because it stems not for what's worst in us but from what's best in us. We're complex because what beguiles us inside and tempts us in every direction is not, first of all, the wiliness of the devil but rather the image and likeness of God. Inside us there's a divine fire, a greatness, which gives us infinite depth, insatiable desires, and enough luminosity to bewilder every psychologist. The image and likeness of God inside us, as John of the Cross writes, renders our hearts, minds, and souls "caverns" too deep to ever be filled in or fully understood.

It's my belief that Christian spirituality, at least in its popular preaching and catechesis, has too often not taken this seriously enough. In short, the impression has too much been given that Christian discipleship shouldn't be complicated: Why all this resistance within you! What's wrong with you! But, as we know from our own experience, our innate complexity is forever throwing up complications and resistances to becoming a saint, to "willing the one thing". Moreover, because our complexity hasn't been recognized and honored spiritually we often feel guilty about it: Why am I so complicated? Why do I have all these questions? Why am I so often confused? Why is sex such a powerful impulse? Why do I have so many temptations?

The simple answer: Because we are born with a godly fire within. Thus the source of so many of our confusions, temptations, and resistances comes from as much what's best in us as from the wiles of the Satan and the world.

What should we do in the face of our own bewildering complexity?

Some Counsels for the Long Haul:

- Honor and hallow your complexity: Accept that this is a God-given gift inside you and, at the end of the day, it's what is best inside you. It's what separates you from plants and animals. Their nature is simple, but having an

immortal, infinite soul makes for lots of complications as you struggle to live out your life within the finitude that besets you.

- Never underestimate your complexity – even as you resist massaging it: Recognize and respect the "demons and angels" that roam freely inside your heart and mind. But don't massage your complexity either, by fancying yourself as the tormented artist or as the existentialist who's heroically out of step with life.

- Befriend your shadow: It's the luminosity you've split off. Slowly, with proper caution and support, begin to face the inner things that frighten you.

- Hallow the power and place of sexuality within you: You're incurably sexual, and for a godly reason. Never deny or denigrate the power of sexuality – even as you carry it with a proper chastity.

- Name your wounds, grieve them, mourn your inconsummation. Whatever wounds that you don't grieve will eventually snakebite you. Accept and mourn the fact that here, in this life, there is no finished symphony.

- Never let the "transcendental impulse" inside you become drugged or imprisoned. Your complexity continually lets you know that you're built for more than this life. Never deaden this impulse inside you. Learn to recognize, through your frustrations and fantasies, the ways you often imprison it.

- Try to find a "higher love" by which to transcend the more immediate power of your natural instincts. All miracles begin with falling in love. Hallow your spontaneous impulses and temptations by searching for that higher love and higher value towards which they're pointing. Offering others your altruism and the gaze of admiration will feel so good and right that it will bring to fulfillment what you're really yearning for.

- Let your own complexity teach you understanding and empathy. By being in touch with your own complexity you will eventually learn that nothing is foreign to you and that what you see on the newscasts each day mirrors what's inside you.

- Forgive yourself often. Your complexity will trip you up many times and so you will need to forgive yourself many times. Live, knowing that God's mercy is a well that's never exhausted.

- Live under God's patience and understanding. God is your builder, the architect who constructed you and who is responsible for your complexity. Trust that God understands. Trust that God is more anxious about you than you're anxious about yourself. The God who knows all things also knows and appreciates why you struggle.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com. Also at [Facebook.com/ronrolheiser](https://www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser).

We welcome Letters to the Editor

The Catholic Mirror welcomes Letters to the Editor written by parishioners of the Diocese of Des Moines. Letters should pertain to issues of faith. Please keep letters to 300 words or less.

Send to communications@dmdiocese.org or

The Catholic Mirror

601 Grand Ave.

Des Moines, IA 50309

Around the Diocese

A Note From the Editor:

We will not be printing calendar events this month. Government and health experts advise people to avoid gathering in groups as the world grapples with the pandemic caused by coronavirus COVID-19.

Also, several of the events have been cancelled or involved a Mass that has been cancelled.

We hope to bring this feature back to The Catholic Mirror soon.

Priest honored posthumously



Father Tan Tran, who died Dec. 10, was honored posthumously by Mercy Hospital in Council Bluffs with the ROSE Award for serving as a role model and going above and beyond. Receiving the award on behalf of Father Tan's family was Father Chuck Kottas.

Hibernians support students



The Father James Kiernan Polk County Division (number 1) of the Ancient Order of Hibernians recently awarded two \$500 scholarships to students at Dowling Catholic High School. The group sponsors a ticket raffle annually for two plane tickets to Ireland to support this fund and other charities. Presenting the award to Dowling Catholic President Dr. Dan Ryan are Marc Danford, treasurer; Mike Fleming, president; and John Langin, financial secretary.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians is a Catholic, Irish-American fraternal organization founded in New York City in 1836.

The order can trace its roots back to the parent organization which has existed in Ireland for over 300 years.

The order evolved from a need in the early 1600s to protect the lives of priests who risked immediate death to keep the Catholic faith alive in occupied Ireland after the reign of England's King Henry VIII.

Similarly, the Ancient Order of Hibernians of America was founded May 4, 1836 at New York's St. James Church, to protect the clergy and church property from the "Know Nothings" and their followers.

Active across the United States, the order sought to aid the newly arrived Irish, both socially and po-

litically. The many divisions and club facilities located throughout the United States traditionally had been among the first to welcome new Irish immigrants.

Here, the Irish culture – art, dance, music and sports - were fostered and preserved.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians came to Iowa sometime previous to 1879, a year in which they were represented at the national convention.

Division One, Polk County, Iowa was established in the fall of 1992. Among its objectives is the active support of Holy Family School. This support includes monetary donations to the teachers which have reached \$58,000 as of 2019. They also provide money for scholarships to Dowling Catholic High School and funds to a seminarian while in school. Since 1992 they have also hosted a St. Patrick's Day Dinner for members, priests and religious women.



Christian Family Movement

National board members of the Christian Family Movement, Rick and Sandy Hoenig, of St. Joseph Parish in Winterset, recently attended the winter board meeting held at Redondo Beach, California, Jan. 24-26.

One of 10 couples serving on the board, they want to share how CFM is like the salt of the earth; it helps preserve mar-

riage and family life in a contemporary world.

The mission of the Christian Family Movement is following Jesus at home, at church, and in the world.

For more information about the Christian Family Movement go to CFM.org or contact the Hoenigs at 515-231-5653.

Woman uses nativity items to create Easter display

By Carol Lee Riekenberg
Contributing Writer

Despite the enchantment of the Easter Bunny's visit, his baskets of colored eggs and other treats that seem to magically appear on Easter morning, this season of remembrance is not just about bunnies and baskets and baby chicks.

The true meaning of Easter, the true Easter story, is of our Lord's love, his sacrifice and an awesome promise he made to each and every one of us.

And so, with this in mind, using dyed cotton batting, artificial greenery, sand over burlap and figures from my Christmas nativity, I attempt to capture the true meaning of Easter by creating a miniature resurrection scene on our dining room buffet

each year.

Three crosses, high on a hill, represent Jesus' great sacrifice for us and his mercy, the Blessed Mother figure becomes Mary Magdalene kneeling before the rolled-away stone, while the Joseph figure represents one of our Lord's disciples on his way from Jerusalem to inspect the empty tomb.

This has become a place of quiet meditation and I often find myself standing at this resurrection scene in prayer, as I reflect on the true meaning of what lies before me.

In doing so, I also remember our Lord's Jewish roots



which are represented on a nearby table with a brass menorah, a Star of David, two tiny pieces of matzo crackers and a small glass of wine.

For Jesus and his disciples originally gathered together to celebrate the Passover, and in every Jewish community throughout the world, Passover is an honored fast which commemorates their ancestors' much longed-for flight from Egyptian bondage into freedom.

We Christians now gather together to commemorate the Passover as the Last Supper, which is when our Lord changed bread into his body and wine into his Precious Blood as he instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament we venerate each and every time we celebrate Holy Mass.

My little resurrection scene, humble as it may be, brings

home the events that changed the world.

I take great joy in sharing my faith in this way with others, who like me dare to believe, and with those who may still be searching for the inspiring truths

and peace that faith can bring to them.

Carol Lee Riekenberg is a parishioner of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale.



Diocese's newest priest serving hospital ministry

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer



Father John Owusu

Father John Owusu is one of the newest international priests serving our diocese. He will be serving as a hospital chaplain throughout the Des Moines metro area.

Father Owusu was born into a large Catholic family in a small town in Ghana. He has eight sisters and six brothers, one of whom is also a priest.

Their Catholic faith was a cornerstone of the family's life.

"We were constantly at the church and church activities," Father Owusu said.

"Many of us can sing a little," Father Owusu continued. "I have a brother who is an organist. Either we were in the Mass choir or a server or lector."

Father Owusu first felt called to the priesthood when he was just 12 or 13 years old.

"After secondary school I told my father I wanted to become a priest," Father Owusu said.

His father offered encouragement and support, and he joined the Immaculate Heart Congregation.

Father Owusu was ordained in 2015 in the diocese of Konongo-Mampong, Ghana.

Drought ends



St. Albert Saintes went to the Girls State Basketball Tournament quarterfinals, the first round of the state tournament on March 3, making it 20 years since the team went to state. The team played at Wells Fargo Arena and were led by Coach Dick Wettengel.

CDA awards honor student work



Pictured are the first, second and third place and honorable mention award winning students attending the Catholic Daughters Education Contest awards dinner at St. Albert School in Council Bluffs on March 2. Catholic Daughters Court St. Anthony #330 sponsors the annual contest in the areas of art, essay, computer art, photography, poetry and music.

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 March 23rd in The Blessed Mother Room, 820 Porter Ave, Des Moines, on the Christ the King Campus. Cost of \$30 per person includes a "Personal Survival Guide" and all materials for 12 weeks. Find comfort and counsel consistent with Catholic teachings. For more information call Deacon Tony Valdez at 515-979-2301 or email him at t.valdez@me.com Visit www.catholicsdivorce.com



ITALY PILGRIMAGE October 20-29, 2020

Join Fr. Dan Kirby (departing from Des Moines) in Assisi, Siena, Orvieto & Rome, including a private, after-hours tour of the Vatican Museums & Sistine Chapel.

Visit magitravelinc.com for more information and to register.

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O blessed Joseph who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, obtain for me, I beseech you, the grace of a happy death. In that hour of dread and anguish, assist me by your presence, and protect me by your power against the enemies of your salvation. Into your sacred hands, living and dying, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.

Amen

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If not now, when?

Catechist shares faith for 53 years



Donna Conn, and her husband of nearly 60 years, Don, have supported each other as they served others through parish leadership roles, Marriage Encounter and religious education.

Donna Conn walked into her parish to register her son for religious education.

She offered to be a volunteer. The catechist looked incredulous and asked why.

"I have a 3-year-old son who will be old enough to go to religious education preschool," Conn said. "I said, 'I want to be part of it.' She said nobody's ever done this before."

Conn went home and prayed.

"I said, 'Okay, do I really believe what I'm going to tell these kids?' It was really a metanoia for me because I had to decide. If I don't believe it, they're not going to."

She decided she did believe and she's been teaching religious education since that day 53 years ago.

Conn's four children went to religious education while attending Catholic schools in the Omaha area. ("I hope they never hated me for making them go," she said. "They never complained because they had friends in both places.")

Why does she still do it?

"I get more out of it than the kids do," she said.

She's currently teaching teens.

"Every once in a while there's a little response from one of them and I think, 'They got it!'" she said with a grin. "It doesn't take much to keep you coming back."

Conn passed on the faith to youth at St. Bernard and Holy Name parishes in the Archdiocese of Omaha and continued at Corpus Christi Parish when she and her husband, Don, moved to Council Bluffs in 2005.

"When I started volunteering for this, I got to thinking: If not me, who? I was capable. I could talk. I could communicate and I believed. If not me, who? If not now, when?" she said.

"The Conns approach things with a great sense of cheerfulness and sensitivity. It's just lovely to know them," said parent Lisa Milbrath, whose daughters Emma and Mary were taught by Donna and Don.

The Conns were confirmation sponsors for Emma, and Mary chose Donna to honor at her school as an inspirational woman of faith.

"The two of them have been very influential in terms of my children's faith and even faith community development," Lisa Milbrath said.

Though she described herself as an introvert, Conn said she's comfortable talking to kids and in one-on-one situations.

"Right now, if you put me in a room with people I don't know, I'll be in the corner," she said. "If I have a job, I can do it. Teaching faith formation is a job so I can do it."

Despite her longtime service, she said she still takes it one year at a time.

"I don't commit right at the end of the school year," she explained. "I have to think about it and pray about it all summer. If I don't do it, who will? If I don't do it now, when? God has given me a gift of faith and I think it's a strong faith."

"You don't have to be a theology scholar" to pass on the faith through religious education, she said. "You just have to believe what you're going to tell them and they'll know. If you believe it, they'll know it."

Retreat centers offer get away and get close to God

The Emmaus House Des Moines

by Kelly Mescher Collins

Slowing down and focusing on our relationship with God are key for Lent, said Kevin O'Donnell, co-director of The Emmaus House in Des Moines.

"Lent is an invitation to grow deeper [in faith] and leave behind anything that holds us back from receiving God's love," O'Donnell said. "During Lent we are highlighting that we need that time – and it's ongoing – it doesn't end at Lent."

Carving out time to converse with God is important.

"We need those spaces to hear God's voice – to attune our spiritual senses to how God is inviting us," O'Donnell said.

Emmaus House has a variety of opportunities for quiet time with God.

During Lent, the Catholic spiritual center is offering a small group morning retreat on Saturday, April 4 called "A Song and a prayer:

A dark night of the soul." The class will help people grow "beyond the clarity and comfort of 'head knowledge' to the loving, yet often disorienting, realm of 'knowing with the heart.'"

On May 9, Emmaus House is offering "A Taste of silence: Integrating silence and centering prayer into daily living."

The Emmaus House is also encouraging people to take advantage of their long-held staples – spiritual direction and private retreats.

"In the contemplative space of spiritual direction, a spiritual director attentively listens to our stories and invites us to explore the ways in which God is always and intimately present with us and speaking to us, even in the most seemingly ordinary and desolate moments," O'Donnell said.

"On the road to Emmaus, Jesus' presence is revealed to the disciples as they share their stories and listen to him," O'Donnell continued. "In a similar way, God's presence in our own lives is revealed to us in the sacred sharing of our stories."

Learn more at TheEmmausHouse.org.

Spiritual Direction: Connecting to God with a spiritual companion

Creighton University Retreat Center Griswold

By Anne Marie Cox

Looking for a way to grow your personal relationship with God?

Spiritual direction might be the answer.

Having a spiritual director means having someone who walks with you on a journey to "become more attentive to those inner movements, the voice of God," said Amy Hoover, of the Creighton University Retreat Center in Griswold.

The number of Catholics doing spiritual direction is small but growing, she said.

"We haven't helped the masses recognize the grace of being a reflective people," she added.

There are opportunities. About a third of those who come to the retreat center in the woods near Griswold are from Creighton University, another third from various high school groups and a third from church groups or people looking for silence.

Spiritual direction there is offered by Jesuit Father Bob Dufford and Hoover at the former Boy Scout camp. The late Father Lavern Wingert purchased the property in the 1970s and made it into a retreat center, where he hosted primarily people in addiction recovery.

Today, retreats such as Kairos, Christian Experience Weekend, Christ Renews His Parish and similar encounters invite people to enter into a relationship with Jesus, Hoover said.

"As that grows, the need and the desire for spiritual direction grows," she said.



Spiritual direction is deeply rooted in the Catholic faith tradition, she added, suggesting the mystics such as St. Catherine of Siena, St. Theresa of Avila, St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. John of the Cross advocated for a personal relationship with God.

How does one start a personal relationship with God?

Hoover compares it to dating.

"When entering into a relationship with your spouse, you start with that first date, you're attentive to each other, sharing about yourself and listening," she said. "It doesn't go anywhere unless you continue to do that. That's how I imagine it."

She recommends people find a quiet place and imagine Jesus sitting across from them.

"In your imagination, what is Jesus sharing with you

and what do you want to share with Jesus?" she said. "God is in us. The words of God will come out. The key is to sit in silence" and be mindful, appreciate the beauty in the surroundings.

Hoover sees spiritual direction as a ministry of being a companion. She asks what's going on in a person's prayer, where have they encountered God, what's their struggle with God "so that we can together listen for where God is working and moving in our lives," she said.

It takes courage to seek out a spiritual director because it suggests vulnerability, Hoover said.

"If there's a stirring in your heart or you sense you're being called to different, or deeper relationship with God, a spiritual director can walk that with you," she said. "It might be helpful."

WELCOME!

144 people will come into full communion with the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. Here are some of their stories.

Joey Stauffer

St. Francis Parish
West Des Moines

Growing up in Seattle, Washington, Joey Stauffer's faith community changed frequently.

"My parents switched churches a lot," said Stauffer, now a member of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines.

Though never baptized, he was brought into Christ in the Calvary Chapel at age 3. They switched to a Baptist church for two years after that and he was enrolled in a Lutheran school until sixth grade.

But then Stauffer faced some major life changes.

"My parents got divorced and my mom moved us to

Iowa," Stauffer said.

The turnover in churches continued.

"We joined a small Baptist church until some problems arose with the pastor there," Stauffer said. "We switched to a Presbyterian church [after that]. We briefly went to a Methodist church in town, then finally back to an Evangelical Free church before I went off to college at Iowa State University."

His mother seemed to value the community and leadership over the denomination, Stauffer said.

"This showed me a wide range of different beliefs, but I also felt it lacked structure," he said.

In college, Stauffer set

out on his own journey of faith.

"Because I had never been an official member of a denomination, I didn't really know where I ought to go, so I tried The Salt Company and quickly realized this would put me on the same path as what you might call my 'free-spirited parents,' and never went back," Stauffer continued. "This put me in a bit of a strange free-agent sort of place in my faith. Nonetheless, I held close to the Lord."

A few years later Stauffer met a young Catholic girl named Taylor at college, who started bringing him to Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Ames.

"As you can guess, things between me and Taylor

went quite well – as in, we're getting married," Stauffer said. "I had begun to love the Catholic Church and decided that I wanted to officially join. I'd finally have a church to call home amongst some of the best Christians I'd ever known."

Stauffer looks forward to being baptized and receiving the Eucharist most.

"While I've always been Christian, I cannot wait to proclaim my faith and



officially become a member," Stauffer concluded.

A long road to peace, love

Nikki Kurtzuba

Corpus Christi Church
Council Bluffs

Nikki Kurtzuba hit bottom "thousands of times."

The Council Bluffs woman dropped out of school after eighth grade, began using and selling drugs and by age 23 found herself facing a 13-year sentence in federal prison.

"Nobody was in my life to say, 'Hey, why don't you go to school?' There was no encouragement to do the right thing," she said. "So if nobody cares, why would I care?"

For the first five years in prison, she rebelled.

"My first five years there, I was wreaking havoc. I didn't want to be there but I couldn't accept the fact that I was still there," she said. "After my fifth year there, and being in so much trouble, I thought: 'I can't go home like this.'"

Prison gave Kurtzuba the structure she never experienced growing up and her life began to change.

"For the first time in my life, I couldn't control anything I did. I had to do what prison says and I achieved so much. I had to sit down with myself sober. No drugs. And I'm with 2,300 other women just like me."

She heard singing at the prison church and went because she was looking for something, though she didn't know what that something was.

People were "singing the presence of the Lord is here and you could feel it. I could feel it inside of me and it scared me," she said. She wasn't ready for God.

She earned her GED. She earned an apprenticeship, achieved Firefighter 1 and 2 status, and became certified for dealing with hazardous materials.

After serving 10 years of her sentence, she was released. There was no one there to greet her. She received not one letter from her seven siblings. Her mother died before she went to prison and her dad died while she was in prison.

"I had nobody. I had



nothing: no money, no clothes, no transportation," she said.

Kurtzuba went to a federal halfway house in Council Bluffs for six months, found a job in a packing plant and worked as much as possible. She saved for her first car, bought clothes and got her first apartment.

Her introduction to the Catholic Church came through her husband, who is Catholic and has been supportive.

"I know we had a courthouse wedding, but I want to be blessed," she said.

She started the Rite of Christian Initiation, better known as RCIA, in 2018 but quit after a while; she wasn't ready for it. Then her sponsor texted her last fall and said it was starting again. She went.

"She's a very warm person and very open," said her sponsor, Ann Bryen.

She has been impressed with Kurtzuba's commitment to the process.

"It's just been a real blessing to watch her," Bryen said. "Everything that comes out of her mouth has absolutely come from God. She's had no other guidance or direction in her life. It just all comes from God. She's so committed and so at peace with herself, which I think is for her really saying something."

Kurtzuba said there are still challenges: One week before the Rite of Election she suffered a miscarriage. But she experienced a love from her church friends that she hadn't known before.

"I know God does everything for a reason. I had to learn to let go and let God," she said.

Kurtzuba will be baptized at the Corpus Christi Parish Easter Vigil and celebrate her first Communion and confirmation.

Then, Kurtzuba and her husband will begin to prepare for marriage in the Catholic Church.

"I want it in the church. I want it in front of God."

'A family that prays together, stays together'

Lilian Miller

St. Patrick Church
Council Bluffs

Lilian Miller admits when her father told her last August that they were on their way to their first RCIA meeting at St. Patrick Church in Council Bluffs, she wasn't happy.

"At first, I was close minded," said the seventh grader.

Her father, Ross Miller, was planning to marry and he wanted the whole family to be of the same faith.

"I wanted to be equally yoked in a marriage," he said. "That was one of the main driving factors."

So she went along.

"Father James (Ahenkora) always says, 'A family that prays together, stays together,' and I feel that is very true" Lilian



explained.

Initially, she had a hard time paying attention.

"And one day, I said an answer, and everybody loved it," she said. "It was an epiphany for me. It was like I actually think I should do this. I think it's the thing for me."

"I liked being Christian, but now I'm Catholic. I feel my

faith has grown stronger than it ever was before," she added. "I just let the Lord speak through me."

One way she does that is through the poetry she pens.

"I try to help (people) get through tough times. I let everything just leak out into a poem," she said.

Ross said it's been fun going through RCIA with his daughter.

"Honestly, I didn't even know I had a strong faith," said the 13-year-old. "I just knew it was my everyday life."

Her advice: "Take a few moments to look inside you and say, 'Is my faith with God really strong?' Because I've heard it's good to question your faith. I try to have a strong relationship, a strong bond with God all the time and, like, never let it go."

FAITH

*What is faith to me
this is hard you see
But I'll try my best
To answer you*

*Faith to me isn't what you
See on the outside
It's not all the mansions, clothes.
It's in you and me.*

*Faith to me isn't what you see, it's not
Bragging or stealing.
It's the Lord in you and me.*

*Faith is doing anything for
what you believe.
It's from the Lord to you and me.
It's the Christ in you and me, even everyone you
see.*

- By Lilian Miller

Prayers during coronavirus outbreak for the sick, caregivers & the world



Pope Francis prays in front of a crucifix at the Church of St. Marcellus in Rome on March 15. The crucifix was carried through Rome in 1522 during the “Great Plague.” The pope prayed as coronavirus deaths peaked at 368 in a 24-hour period, bringing the total number of deaths to 1,809 out of 24,747 cases.

WASHINGTON- Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has issued the following regarding coronavirus COVID-19:

With the worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus, we are confronted once more with the fragility of our lives, and again we are reminded of our common humanity — that the peoples of this world are our brothers and sisters, that we are all one family under God.

God does not abandon us, he goes with us even now in this time of trial and testing. In this moment, it is important for us to anchor our hearts in the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Now is the time to intensify our prayers and sacrifices for the love of God and the love of our neighbor. Let us draw closer to one another in our love for him, and rediscover the things that truly matter in our lives.

United with our Holy Father Pope Francis, let us pray in solidarity for our brothers and sisters here and around the world who are sick. Let us pray for those who have lost loved ones to this virus. May God console them and grant them peace.

We pray also for doctors, nurses, and caregivers, for public health officials and all civic leaders. May God grant them courage and prudence as they seek to respond to this emergency with compassion and in service to the common good.

WASHINGTON— El arzobispo José H. Gomez de Los Ángeles, Presidente de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos emitió un comunicado y un llamado a la oración con respecto al coronavirus COVID-19:

Con el brote mundial del coronavirus, nos enfrentamos una vez más con la fragilidad de nuestras vidas, y nuevamente recordamos nuestra solidaria humanidad y que los pueblos de este mundo son nuestros hermanos y hermanas, que todos somos una sola familia al cuidado de Dios.

Dios no nos abandona, él va con nosotros incluso ahora en este tiempo de prueba y dificultad. En este momento, es importante para nosotros anclar nuestros corazones con la esperanza que tenemos en Jesucristo. Ahora es el momento de intensificar nuestras oraciones y sacrificios por el amor de Dios y el amor a nuestro prójimo. Acerquémonos unos a los otros en nuestro amor por él y redescubramos las cosas que realmente importan en nuestras vidas.

Unidos a nuestro Santo Padre, el Papa Francisco, recemos en solidaridad por nuestros hermanos y hermanas que están enfermos en todo el mundo. Oremos por aquellos que han perdido a seres queridos a causa de este virus. Que Dios los consuele y les conceda paz.

Oremos también por los médicos, enfermeras y cuidadores, por los funcionarios de salud pública y todos los líderes cívicos. Que Dios les conceda coraje y prudencia al tratar de responder a esta emergencia con compasión y al servicio del bien común.

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

God our Father
we come to You in our need
to ask your protection against the coronavirus
that has claimed lives
and has affected many.

We pray for Your grace
for the people tasked with studying the nature
and cause of this virus and its disease
and of stemming the tide of its transmission.
Guide the hands and minds of medical experts
that they may minister to the sick
with competence and compassion
and of those governments and private agencies
that must find a cure and solution to this
epidemic.

We pray for those afflicted.
May they be restored to health soon.

Grant us the grace
to work for the good of all
and to help those in need.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son who lives and reigns with You,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever. Amen.

Dios Padre nuestro
venimos a Ti con nuestra necesidad
de pedir Tu protección contra el corona virus
que ha cobrado vidas
y ha afectado a muchos.

Oremos por Tu gracia
por las personas encargadas de estudiar la naturaleza
y la causa de este virus y de esta enfermedad
y en detener la marea de su transmisión.
Guía las manos y mentes de los expertos médicos
para que puedan servir a los enfermos
con profesionalismo y compasión
y por aquellas agencias gubernamentales y privadas
para que puedan encontrar cura y solución a esta epidemia.

Oremos por quienes han sido afectados.
Que recuperen su salud pronto.

Concédenos la gracia
de trabajar por el bien de todos
y de ayudar a quienes lo necesitan.

Te lo pedimos por nuestro Señor Jesucristo, Tu Hijo, que vive y reina contigo, en la unidad del Espíritu Santo, y es Dios, por los siglos de los siglos. Amén.

Pope Francis prayer asking Mary to protect Italy and the world during of the coronavirus pandemic.

O Mary,
you always shine on our path
as a sign of salvation and of hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who at the cross took part in Jesus' pain, keeping your faith firm.
You, Salvation of the Roman People,
know what we need,
and we are sure you will provide
so that, as in Cana of Galilee,
we may return to joy and to feasting
after this time of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform to the will of the Father
and to do as we are told by Jesus,
who has taken upon himself our sufferings
and carried our sorrows
to lead us, through the cross,
to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.
Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God.
Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

PRAYER OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

(For those who may wish but for whatever reason are unable to receive holy communion.)

My 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. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

ORACIÓN POR UNA COMUNIÓN ESPIRITUAL

(Para aquellos que desean pero que por cualquier razón no pueden recibir la sagrada comunión)

Creo, Jesús mío, que estás real y verdaderamente presente en el Santísimo Sacramento.

Te amo sobre todas las cosas, y deseo vivamente recibirte dentro de mi alma.

Pero no pudiendo hacerlo ahora sacramentalmente, ven al menos espiritualmente a mi corazón. Y como si ya te hubiese recibido, te abrazo y me uno del todo a Ti. Señor, no permitas que jamás me aparte de Ti. Amén

Chaplains focus on spiritual health

If you watch people on the front lines of defense – doctors and nurses, police officers and firefighters – you’ll notice a common thread.

They stay calm so that they can do the work that is necessary, said hospital chaplain Dennis Shea.

“That’s good advice for the rest of us,” said Shea, of CHI Health Mercy Hospital in Council Bluffs.

As schools, businesses, sporting associations and others take precautionary measures to prevent or minimize the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19, Shea reflected on a message in the Bible.

Jesus said “Peace be with you” often, and when an angel appears, it says “Peace be with you” and “Do not be afraid,” said the chaplain at CHI Health Mercy Hospital in Council Bluffs.

“I think we need to continually remind ourselves of that,” said Shea, of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs. Shea said.

Deacon Dave O’Brien, director of the chaplaincy program at MercyOne Medical Center in Des Moines, said he doesn’t get caught up in hype but takes it one day at a time. He’s focusing on prayer.

“My attitude is, we’re always going to bring the peace through the prayer that we try to promote to the people and

our staff,” he said.

When people are hospitalized, or a loved one is hospitalized, there is an opportunity for the patients, family, friends and caregivers to reflect and grow closer to God. The hospital is mission field, Deacon O’Brien said. There, the focus is on the body, mind and spirit.

“The presence of God is right here with us through this crisis,” he said. “He is walking with us.”

The chaplains help people see that God is working in their lives, even if they may not be actively participating in that.

Shea said he helps them “re-awaken that God spirit in their hearts so they can draw on that and find some strength.”

Chaplains take the coronavirus crisis seriously.

“We take the precautions just as serious as anybody does, but we know that God’s with us,” Deacon O’Brien said. “He’s got us in the right place at the right time because we have the faith to do that.”

He’s going to keep praying.

“I’m going to pray a little more and ask God to help us persevere through it and help as many people as we can,” he said. “We’re going to deal with what we have to deal with and we’ll include God.”

Tips on controlling anxiety during the coronavirus outbreak

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Staying calm in these ever-changing times may be easier said than done.

Father Ray McHenry, pastor of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines – the largest Catholic congregation in the state – points to the Bible.

“Fear not is the most used phrase in scripture,” Father McHenry said. “Fear not, do not be afraid – I’d stick to that.”

“It’s not that there’s no worry – something is going on,” he continued. “But fear not – that’s over and over again in scripture. We’re not to fear. I’d ground it there.”

Scott Caldwell, a licensed independent social worker and director of programs

at Catholic Charities in Des Moines, said it’s important to maintain perspective and avoid catastrophizing.

“Bad things happen, but keep perspective [by looking back] over the course of your life,” Caldwell said. “If you look over the events in your life, things usually work out pretty well, generally speaking.”

Pay attention to your thoughts – particularly irrational ones, Caldwell added.

“Someone might say, ‘Bad things always happen to me,’” Caldwell said. “Again, you keep that in check by examining that thought and saying, ‘Realistically, has that always been the case?’”

Taking inventory of your life may prove that’s not been the case.

“Sometimes you can just tell yourself [during a neg-

ative stream of thoughts], ‘Stop. Knock it off. This is not helpful,’” said Caldwell, which can help prevent a downward spiral.

He advises people to start thinking about alternate, more positive outcomes.

“Offering yourself positive affirmations and thinking about the times things went well is important,” Caldwell continued.

Practicing good self-care is also imperative during times like this.

“Taking care of your body, take care of your mind,” Caldwell said. “Have a holistic approach of eating well, sleeping and exercise – even if it helps you decompress.

“There’s always going to be challenges in life and usually people get through them,” Caldwell concluded.

Find spiritual resources, the latest news
and information at
www.dmdiocese.org/coronavirus

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The bottom line? It's for the KIDS...
and their futures!

Christ's Love Beyond Academics

Ann Bobo doesn't say being a single mother is challenging. She describes a rewarding experience that even though is difficult at times—especially financially—is so worth the struggle. “Where did these three kids come from?” Ann asks. “I don’t deserve them.” She feels blessed to send her children to St. Pius X. They’ve all attended since kindergarten, and her oldest is preparing to transition to Dowling Catholic this fall. She never imagined the rich, familial bond she and her kids would develop with classmates, teachers and other parents. “We really feel like it’s one big family,” Ann said.

She works two jobs to afford the cost of Catholic school, and provides transportation to and from school every day. While this is a struggle, Ann doesn't mind. Between the quality education they receive and all the other benefits of attending Catholic school, she wouldn't trade it for anything else. “I can't explain how thankful we are to receive CTO to help with tuition. Without it, my kids would attend a school that I would not be comfortable with.”

Growing in knowledge and faith

Not only are the children receiving excellent preparation for high school and college, Ann marvels at the faith formation they receive. “They teach them how to study and stress that education is essential. But, I love they receive a faith-based education and attend mass each Wednesday.”

Ann says her eighth grader, Jaiden,



Ann Bobo and her Children

has a deeper sense of the entire Catholic faith than she did at that age—all thanks to her Catholic education. She remembers Jaiden's first communion with the beautiful white dress and all the frills. But, what was truly beautiful was Jaiden's rich understanding of what the Eucharist meant. Growing up, for Ann the Eucharist was just something that Catholics did every Sunday. To see her children, at such a young age, going through the Sacraments and knowing what they truly mean is so inspiring for her own faith journey. “I anticipate learning so much from my kids. I am glad they are going to Catholic school because I'm learning right along the way with them about my faith.”

On top of that, Ann truly believes her children are receiving an unbeatable education. When her youngest, Ben, began to struggle with math, Ann immediately reached out to his teacher for extra help. She was met with a response she didn't expect. Her son's teacher had already

noticed Ben struggling and began giving him extra help. She was e-mailed almost daily with progress reports and updates. Ben is now excelling in math.

Stepping up

All of Ann's children are close knit with their classmates and teachers, but she says her middle son, Ryan, has an especially tight group in his sixth grade class. Her son is the only one with divorced parents. But, since their community and friendships are so strong, other families embraced him as their own. They all work together to make Ryan feel supported and loved. She recalls a time when a fellow dad wanted to meet Ryan's dad. Since he no longer attends games, the other parents have started cheering Ryan on at sporting events. It's easy to love the other families, she says.

Ann has heard frightening stories from families in her neighborhood regarding experiences at other schools. It makes her grateful for the Catholic experience. She is confident her children's future is bright thanks to their Catholic education. As Jaiden prepares to attend Dowling Catholic High School, Ann reflects on her educational experience so far and knows how fortunate she is to attend Catholic school. She hopes one day, she can give back to CTO to gift other children with the priceless experience of Catholic education.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.” 1 John 4:11

Iowa State's head football coach gives keynote

Matt Campbell talked about faith, heroes and service at Iowa Catholic Men's Conference

**By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer**

When Iowa State University head football coach Matt Campbell took the stage to keynote the Iowa Catholic Men's Conference on Feb. 22, he spoke about his Catholic faith, heroes and serving others.

But he first spoke of his vulnerability.

"I'll be honest with you – it's slightly intimidating to be with this group today," Campbell said. "I think this is a really, really powerful group that is extremely strong, obviously in your belief and your faith, and it's just an honor for me to be able to be in your presence and be with you."

Campbell only wished he could have spoken to the large Catholic crowd sooner to inspire more prayers for ISU before they faced off (and lost) to Notre Dame on Dec. 28 in the bowl game.

Campbell said God is an important part of his life.

"[My faith] has been powerful in my journey," said Campbell, who knows all too well that growth and change often revolve around great diversity.

During his keynote, Campbell highlighted the importance of heroes, who helped shape his faith journey and offered support and guidance through life's trials.

"Who are those people that inspire you and empower you in your own faith journey?" Campbell asked the crowd.

"One of the greatest heroes in my life is my [late] grandmother," Campbell said, noting her love, strength and character.

"She lived it every day of her life and she actually taught

me faith..." Campbell said, recalling her actions that reflected care and concern for others. "She had one of the most forgiving and caring hearts of anybody that I ever saw.

"That's who I miss – this amazing woman that had this power and love and charity..." Campbell continued.

Campbell reflected on the adversity he faced growing up in a small Ohio town.

"On the outside we looked like the perfect family..." Campbell said. "My story as a seventh and eighth grader...there were some really hard days."

He recalled countless evenings spent listening to his parents argue.

"There were nights where I remember things got so bad that I would take my [younger] brother out of our second story window and we would sit on the roof for hours [to avoid hearing what was going on downstairs.]"

Unfortunately, Campbell and his brother did not have a faith to cling to during difficult times.

"We weren't a family that had a lot of faith around us," he said. "We were the family that occasionally went to church on Christmas."

Things got even worse for Campbell and his brother when their parents – two very public figures in their small Ohio town – went through a very public separation and divorce.

"It was one of those situations that went from living in our dream home to living in a one-bedroom apartment and being ashamed to go to school each and every day," Campbell said.

God sent people into Campbell's life during those difficult days who offered guidance, care and support. One of them

was his future wife, Erica.

"I think she saw I was going through a really dark and tough time and was able to give me some light into a lot of areas," Campbell said. "Probably the greatest area was this character that comes from a big Catholic family. And one of the things I was so amazed at is that this family had such a strong, strong, strong relationship and such a strong commitment to faith.

"And I couldn't figure it out and I couldn't understand it, but I was also drawn to her family and the strength that they gained from their faith," Campbell added.

Another one of Campbell's heroes was Father Patrick Manning, who taught his college sophomore religion class.

"Father Patrick Manning is one of the most amazing men in my life, because he had the ability to bring this unknown of what faith really is," Campbell said. "And he had the ability to come into my life and teach me the power of faith, God's will, the journey that this can have in this powerful time in my life and answering the powerful questions of why."

Two years later, Campbell entered into the Catholic Church under the guidance of Father Manning.

"Going through the conversion process and becoming Catholic – and thank goodness I did what I did – because it allows me to understand and appreciate the faith," Campbell said.

Being of service to others – particularly the young men in his football program – also

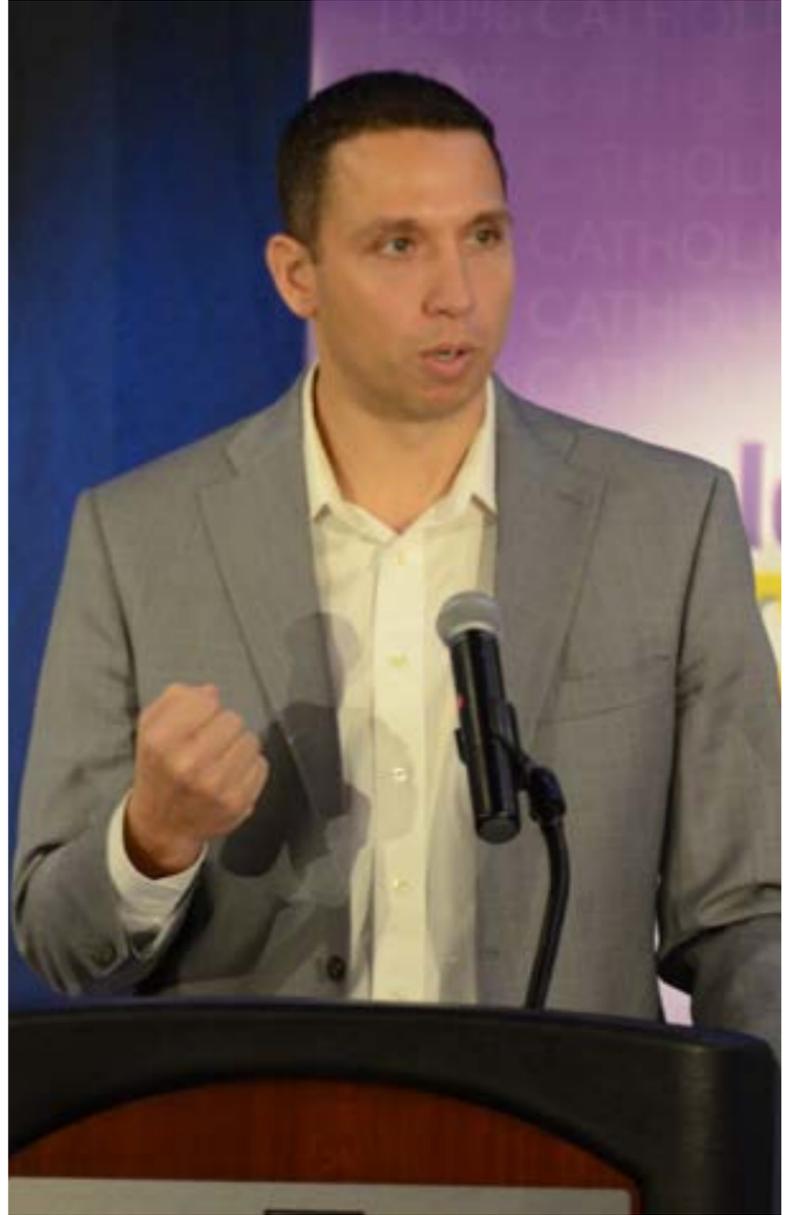


Photo by Kelly Mescher Collins

ISU head football coach Matt Campbell gave the keynote address at the Iowa Catholic Men's Conference held last month.

brings Campbell great joy.

He's been amazed by their "powerful" witness, watching the football team's Friday night Bible study group grow from 20 to 60 guys.

"There's no greater joy for me to watch the young men leave our football program and

feel like that young man became the absolute best version of himself that he could be," Campbell said.

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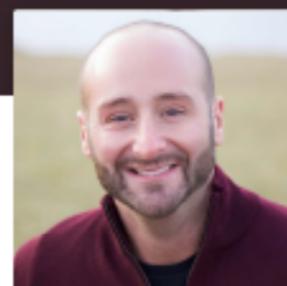
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Iowa Prayer Rally for Life message:

Encourage your legislators to support the Protect Life Amendment

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

The 2020 Iowa Prayer Rally for Life was held in the rotunda at the Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines on Monday, March 2, organized by the Coalition of Pro-Life Leaders.

Gov. Kim Reynolds, Repr. Steve Holt and Sen. Jake Chapman shared remarks about the sanctity of life, as did Maggie DeWitte, executive director of Iowans for LIFE, and Bob Vander Plaats, president of The Family Leader.

The rally focused on the importance of the Protect Life Amendment passed through the Senate. The amendment, along with other legislation, awaits the return of legislators. At press time, the Iowa legislative session was suspended for at least 30 days due to the coronavirus.

It's crucial for people to contact their legislators and urge them to pass the pro-life amendment, said Tom Chapman, executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference, which represents the four bishops of Iowa as the official public policy voice.

The creation of the pro-

life amendment is in response to a 2018 ruling by the Iowa Supreme Court, stating "a woman's right to decide whether to terminate a pregnancy is a fundamental right under the Iowa Constitution."

That ruling makes abortion a right on par with freedom of speech and freedom of religion, said DeWitte, of Iowans for LIFE.

"If you have a fundamental right, you can't restrict it or limit it in any way," DeWitte said.

"The only way to undo this is a constitutional amendment," DeWitte said. "In order to pass that constitutional amendment it has to pass two consecutive legislative sessions. We have to get it passed in 2020 and [next year's] session and then a vote goes to the people. So this is a multi-year process and really our only option."

The four bishops of Iowa – Dubuque Archbishop Michael Jackels; Sioux City Bishop Walker Nickless; Davenport Bishop Thomas Zinkula; and Des Moines Bishop William Joensen – signed a letter supporting the Protect Life Amendment.

"The dignity of the human person is the foundation of

our moral vision for society," the bishops stated. "We recognize that each person is created in the image and likeness of God. Hence, direct attacks on innocent persons are never acceptable. This is why abortion is such an important issue.

"We believe it is important to make this amendment to the Iowa Constitution," they continued. "This is a question of the common good. We can help pregnant women in need, the men who fathered those children, and families in distress without recourse to the violence of abortion."

At the rally, Father Mark McGeary, associate pastor of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines, led the crowd in prayer.

"Loving and gracious Father... we thank you for your love and generosity – you formed us out of nothing – that before we were formed in the womb, you knew us and called us each by name," Father

McGeary said.

"Lord, we pray on this day that you will be in the hearts and minds of all the public officials in office, who have been entrusted with the responsibility of guiding and influencing our cultural milieu," Father McGeary continued. "Give to them the gift of wisdom, give them the virtue of courage, give them integrity and give them above all the virtue of charity. Give us the ability to feel deep within our hearts the dignity of the human person and rouse us to act on behalf of our brothers and sisters whose voices

cannot be heard."

The rally was positive and prayerful, Chapman said.

"I think that's what we need first of all is prayer – prayers for the unborn, but also prayer for the legislators," Chapman said. "They have a tough job being up here and away from their families. Just keep the whole process in prayer."

Take action and contact your legislator about the Protect Life Amendment today at www.votervoices.net/icc/home.



Photo by Kelly Mescher Collins

Father Mark McGeary, associate pastor at St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines, led the crowd in prayer at the Iowa Prayer Rally for Life earlier this month.

Coronavirus affects legislature

By Tom Chapman
Contributing Writer

The Iowa legislative session is suspended for a minimum of 30 days.

The decision was made by state leaders in consultation with the Iowa Department of Public Health and the governor's office based on recommendations from the Center for Disease Control related to mass gatherings to protect vulnerable populations.

The House and Senate were to convene March 16 to consider resolutions regarding continuity of governments to ensure delivery of essential services to Iowans. Previously scheduled subcommittee and committee meetings have been cancelled.

All scheduled events, tours and receptions at the Capitol are cancelled until further notice.

Resources

The Iowa Department of Public Health and 211 are working together to provide resource referrals for the COVID-19 outbreak. If individuals have concerns about COVID-19, they can call 211.

Congress response

Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, chair of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, encouraged lawmakers as they consider measures to provide relief and aid to those suffering from coronavirus, as well as those affected by workplace closures and other disruptions.

He called for several specific forms of relief, including:

- Increased food security measures
- Paid sick leave
- Adequate care for immigrants regardless of status and non-enforcement at hospitals and

clinics

- Greater assistance for low-income workers, the unemployed, and homeless
- Affordable health care for those seeking treatment
- Additional resources for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.



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Oils blessed, consecrated at Chrism Mass will touch souls throughout the diocese

Priests are sent forth to bring Christ in word and sacrament to the people

**By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer**

This year's annual diocesan Chrism Mass will be a small, scaled down event to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It will be invitation only.

During the Chrism Mass, oils will be blessed and consecrated by Bishop William Joensen and distributed to parishes throughout the diocese.

The oils include:

- The oil of the sick, used in the rite of the anointing of the sick. This has special significance right now, given the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, said Father Trevor Chicoine, worship director at the Diocese of Des Moines.

- The oil of the catechumens, used in the sacrament of baptism and

- The Sacred Chrism, which is used in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Holy Orders, as well as the consecration of altars and dedication of churches.

The Chrism Mass has deep and ancient meaning, said Father Chicoine.

"There's a clear link be-

tween how this oil gets used in these particular moments in the lives of our people and the mission and role of our priest," Father Chicoine said. "He becomes the bridge between Christ and the people.

"Ideally, it's a gathering of the baptized, if you will, to pray and celebrate the presence of Christ," Father Chicoine added. "The oils will be used to touch their souls throughout the course of the next year. In a normal and ideal year, it's a beautiful gathering of the diocese."

The ancient tradition of the Mass includes the bishop breathing over the oils.

"The breath is a harkening back to Genesis, where God breathes on the water," Father Chicoine said. "And later Christ breathes on the disciples after his resurrection. That breath calls down the Holy Spirit and there's a sort of consecration that happens there."

Bishop Joensen said the Chrism Mass is the beginning of healing.

"We think of the sacrament of the anointing of the sick as the primary healing sacrament," Bishop Joensen said. "We're also conscious of the

sacred Chrism, the anointing of baptism, healing us from the wounds of original sin and of the priest in the ceremony of ordination. The priest is to be an agent of healing in the world and in the church and, in particular, in his local parish community. Just as Jesus makes the two of us one, a priest is an ambassador between humans and Christ's heavenly Father."

Monsignor Larry Beeson, retired diocesan priest, said he never misses the Chrism Mass, which has special meaning for him.

"The priest administers the sacraments, but it's Christ who uses the priest in the sacraments," Monsignor Beeson said. "It's not just our own doing, but we do have that special commission from the bishop to be the shepherd of the flock in the parish. And so when you're called upon to administer the sacraments in a very special way you realize your own priesthood."

During the Chrism Mass, priests are "sent forth in the diocese to bring Christ to the people, both in word and in sacrament," Monsignor Beeson concluded.

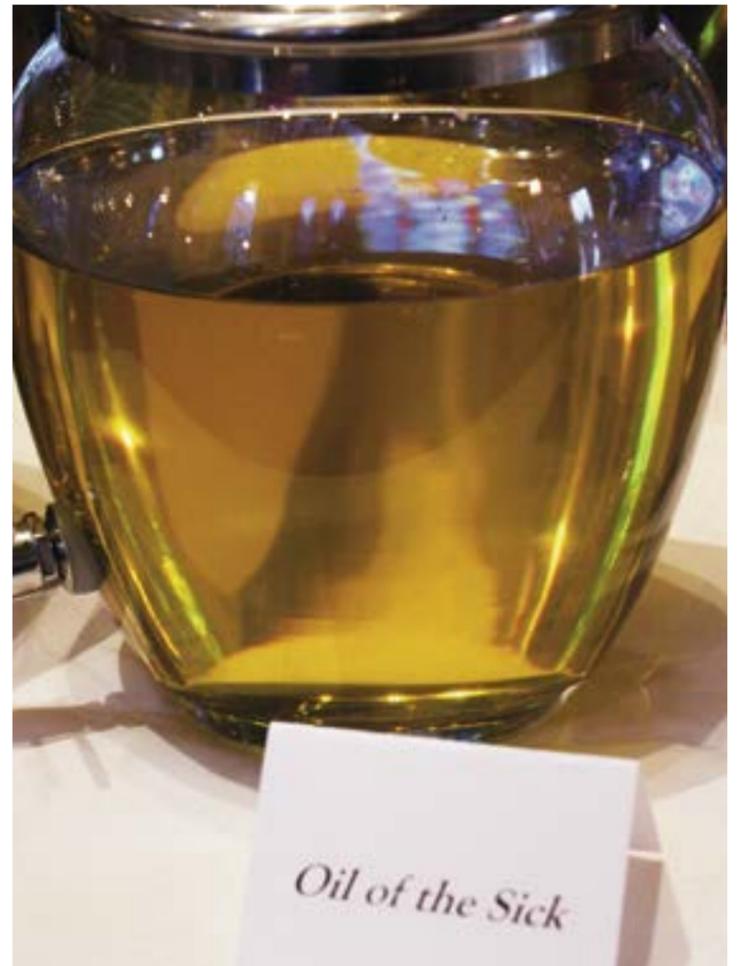


Photo by Kelly Mescher Collins

The oil of the sick and oil of the catechumens will be blessed by Bishop William Joensen during the Chrism Mass. He will also consecrate the Sacred Chrism.

Confianza Determinante

Continúa de la página 2

conocido, y el deseo de arriesgarnos con presencias de riesgo y sanación ante los enfermos entre nosotros (como vemos en la nobleza de innumerables profesionales de la salud quienes permanecen firmes ante los riesgos). Levantamos nuestras cabezas y cargamos el yugo del sufrimiento con Jesús y unos con los otros con la creencia de que Dios mismo puede traer significado y gloria de aquello que parece ser la más pesada: el sufrimiento y la muerte misma. El gran papa nos advierte sobre un ambiente natural que es despectivo contra la fe religiosa y

que "que no ve en el sufrimiento ningún significado o valor" y que por el contrario ve al sufrimiento como la síntesis del mal (n. 15).

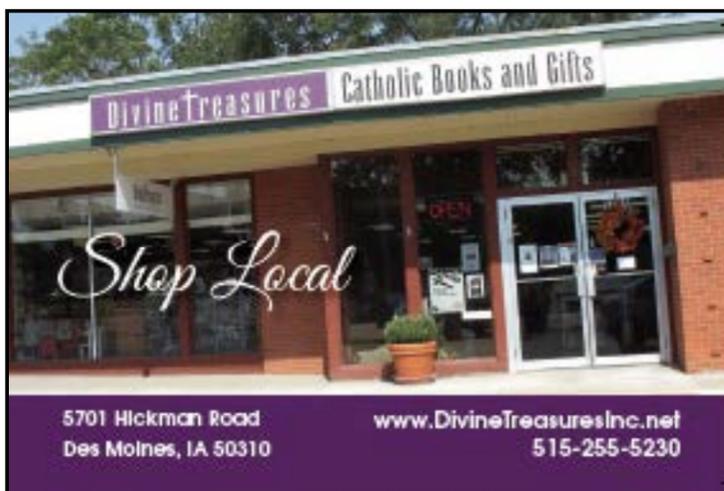
Tal vez una de las gracias que puede emerger de la oscuridad de esta pandemia, con toda la crisis económica que ha provocado, es que podamos nuevamente apreciar la "prioridad del ser sobre la de tener" conforme nuestros estilos de vida hayan pasado por un cambio decisivo (n. 97). El SER humano es el PERTENECER a alguien, a otros, a quienes Dios ha puesto en nuestros caminos, a veces por elección

nuestra, a veces por imposición. El lujo de ir y venir cuando nos plazca, el de poder reunirnos libremente con quienquiera que deseemos, ha sido afectado de manera – esperamos – temporal. Y aún así, cuando se nos quitan los eventos deportivos y muchos otros medios de entretenimiento y, más dolorosamente, nuestra capacidad de tener comunión con nuestro Señor en la Eucaristía, se nos ofrece la oportunidad de ser más intencionales en el estar con nuestras familias y con aquellos en nuestro círculo íntimo de vida, incluyendo aquellos a quienes frecuentemente ignoramos o a quienes damos por hecho. El simplemente vivir con alguien no es necesariamente para compartir una cultura de la vida con él o con ella, a menos que nos entreguemos verdaderamente como

regalos mutuos de una manera habitual. San Juan Pablo II reconoce que "hay un heroísmo diario, que se forma de gestos de compartir, en pequeña o en grande escala, que crean una auténtica cultura de vida." Ya sea que estos actos consistan en cuidar a aquellos que han caído enfermos o simplemente escuchando o cuidando a las personas a quienes Dios ha puesto bajo nuestra responsabilidad, activamos los recursos del Espíritu que nos vacunará en contra de la despiadada indiferencia o el maligno temor (EV nn. 86-87).

El COVID-19 ha desmascarado más aún una constante batalla entre el bien y el mal, la luz y la oscuridad, la cultura de la vida y la cultura de la muerte. No sabemos cómo va a desarrollarse esta pandemia, cuántas vidas va

a cobrar, o si nuestras sociedades y mercados podrán regresar a lo que eran hace apenas unas cuantas semanas o meses. Lo que sabemos es que Jesús es el Señor, el Cordero de Dios, como nos recuerda el difunto pontífice, es "el amo de todos estos eventos en la historia." Jesús libera el poder de la vida sobre la muerte, y continúa atrayéndonos como un pueblo peregrino a la abundante vida que nos promete. Por lo tanto, no tenemos miedo, sino una confianza determinante, al avanzar hacia el nuevo mundo en donde "no habrá ya muerte, ni habrá llanto, ni gritos ni fatigas, porque el mundo viejo ha pasado" (Ap. 21:4, EV n. 105).



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 515-286-2024 or Sam.Porter@polkcountyia.gov.

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“And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” — Colossians 3:17



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