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 fasting, 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.

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 Americans. 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.

Unprecedented

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

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 would help to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

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, child-care, 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, immediately, and whirlwind of the COVID-19 situation among our schools, churches, communities, and families,” Bishop said.
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 marked a turning point in public life and continues to draw us as pilgrim people to the abundant life he promises.”

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

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 changed and our values have been challenged (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, the aspersions cast upon ‘selfish’ or ‘extravagant’ wants we want, temporarily—we pray—was borne. And yet, with the peeling away of sports events, concerts, festivals, dreams, and most painfully, our capacity to commune with our families, friends, and neighbors has been splintered. It remains to be seen if the chance to be ever more intentionally present with our families and our intimate circle of life, in the coming and going, is a foretaste of things yet to come for granted. To simply live

by Bishop William Joensen

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

Bishop William Joensen
Publisher
wjoensen@dmdiocese.org

Anne Marie Cox
Editor
aco@bdiocese.org

Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer
kmcollins@dmdiocese.org

Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer
kmcollins@dmdiocese.org

Este mes, el 25 de mar- zo es la Fiesta de la Anunciación, marcando el 25º aniversario de la

Conciencia de la dignidad

El Papa San Juan Pablo II no es particularmente profeti- ca al hacer hincapié en enferme- dades que representan el rechazo a las “tradicionales plagas de pobreza, el hambre, las enfer- medades endémicas, la violencia y el asesinato, la violencia urbana, el hambre y la guerra e ilumina con un mayor brillo el futuro de la gente que aprende a tratar la miseria y la violencia endémica con humanidad y respeto; con la esperanza de que el futuro sea un mundo más justo y más amoroso.”

La gente que enfrenta las “persecuciones humanitarias” debe ser considerada como una sociedad más justa y amorosa. Aunque la gente que sufre estos problemas puede ser menos que los demás, ellos tienen derecho a ser comprendidos y a ser tratados con dignidad.

En resumen, la conciencia de la vida representa la verdadera sociedad, la sociedad que valora la dignidad humana y la vida humana en todas sus formas.

El Consejo sobre Asistencia de Víctimas es un empleado de Polk County Victim Services. Ayuda a víctimas de abuso sexual, violencia-doméstica y otros crímenes. Cada año, su personal atiende más de 10,000 consultas de víctimas que buscan apoyo, servicios de asistencia y consejo. Pueden comunicarse al 515-285-0282 o en advocate@dmdiocese.org.
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 preparing 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.

“Ted,” 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.”

The couple bought a trailer house in Glenwood last year - their new home.
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 of 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 their offenses. He called them out for the health of their families and communities.

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 machismo. 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 impulses). 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!

(St. Joseph, grant me that patience!)

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.

St. Joseph a model for men

By Adam Storey

Faith Journey

By John Hayn

“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 religious. 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 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.

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.

Fasting a type of sickness, and one that can be treated. But the kind of treatment we need is one that involves prayers of repentance and forgiveness.

The fast and the spurious

Bearing a grudge?

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 resolution 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 for 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 wilful decision to forgive.

In the book of 1 John, we are told that if we confess our sins we will be healed from the fate of sin. But conversely, if we suppress an emotion, our sin will also 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 IQs and all measures of measurement. 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 people, circumstances, and failed expectations. Grudges are fostering resentment 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.
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 given sin? —Blanche Ann Materia TOC

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. Catholic apologist 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.

Q. What is the Church’s history of involvement with refugees?

A. 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 the 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, Des Moines

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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.

Get a question for “Ask a Priest” and its author, Father John Ludwig? Send it to: communications@dmdiocese.org
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 politically. 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 1892. 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 marriage 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 515-521-5653.

Woman uses nativity items to create Easter display

By Carol Lee Riekenberg

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 bur- lap and figures from my Christ- mas 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 which 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.

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.

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.
By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

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.

Father John Owusu

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 Koforono-Mampong, Ghana.

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

Drought ends

St. Albert Saints 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 Wettingel.

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.

Caring About Your Loss and Sharing In Your Faith

Prayer to St. Joseph for a Happy Death

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 death 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 confirmation. The Conns were confirmation sponsors for Emma, and Donna Conn went home and prayed.

"I said, 'Okay, do I really believe what I'm going to tell these kids?' It was really a scary idea 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. The Conns' 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 communicate and I believed. If not me, who? If not now, when?" she said.

Teaching approaches 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."
Iowa, Stauffer said.

The turnover in churches continued.

"I 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 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

"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.

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.

“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 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.

“After my five years there, I was still growing up and my 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.”

"I want it in front of God."

“I want it in the church. I want it in front of God.”
Prayers during coronavirus outbreak for the sick, caregivers & the world

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.

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.

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 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.

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

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.

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.

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, vengo al menos espiritualmente a ti corazon. 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” 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 as many people see that God is working in their lives, even if they may not be actively participating in it.

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.

“She’s got it 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

Tips on controlling anxiety during the coronavirus outbreak 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 the case.

“Sometimes you can just tell yourself [during a negative 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.

“That’s good advice for your body, take care of your mind,” Caldwell said. “Have a holistic approach of eating well, sleep- ing and exercise—even if it helps you decompress.

If you watch people on the front lines of defense, you’ll always get up to face 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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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.

“When did those three kids come from?” Ann asks. “I don’t deserve them.” She feels fortunate to send her children to St. Fiax X. They’re 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, she wouldn’t trade it for anything else.

“I can’t explain how joyful and happy our kids are to receive CTO to help with tuition,” Ann continued. “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 college 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, noticed Ben struggling and began giving him extra help. She was overjoyed 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 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
Matt Campbell talked about faith, heroes and service at Iowa Catholic Men’s Conference

By Kelly Mescher Collins

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,” Camp- bell 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 diversi ty.

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 these people that inspire you and empower you in your 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 [young er] 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 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 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.
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 March 2, organized by the Coalition of Pro-Life Leaders.


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 McGearry, 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 McGearry said.

McGearry 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 McGearry 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 our 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.votervoice.net/icc/home.

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.

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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 between 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.

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 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. n. 86-87).

El COVID-19 ha desencadenado 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, cuantas 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 continuía atrayéndonos como un pueblo peregrino a la abundante vida que nos promete. Por lo tanto, no teníamos miedo, sino una confianza determinante, al avanzar hacia el nuevo mundo en donde “no habrás ya muerte, ni habrá llanto, ni gritos ni fatigas, porque el mundo viejo ha pasado” (Ap. 21:4, Ev. n. 105).

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.

Confiando Determinante

Continúa de la página 2

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The Knights of Columbus invite you to please consider participating in the 40 Cans for Lent program as part of your Lenten journey. Simply donate one can of food or a non-perishable item for each of the 40 days of Lent. Drop off your donations at your local parish or food pantry. This donation will benefit those in your parish and in your community. Lent provides an opportunity for each of us to live generously — to show gratitude for God’s gifts to us and to share those gifts with others.

“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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Eastern Iowa

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(402) 651-7813
Council Bluffs, Glenwood, Red Oak & Shenandoah

Dan Ginther
(515) 400-3411
Carlisle, Altoona, Elkhart and Des Moines

Donnie Kenkel
(712) 579-8666
Council Bluffs, Missouri Valley, Atlantic & Avoca

Neil Pfeifer
General Agent
Northeast Nebraska, Southwest and West Central Iowa
402-379-0180
neil.pfeifer@kofc.org

Jeromy Brockelsby
(402) 651-7813
Council Bluffs, Glenwood, Red Oak & Shenandoah

Walker Bormann
Assistant General Agent
(563) 219-5800
Eastern Iowa

Rob Ryan
(515) 400-3723
WDM, St. Francis & Sacred Heart, Grimes, Clive, Johnston & Ankeny

Pete Seuntjens
(712) 880-0044
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