Beacons of Hope

Nurses receive letters of appreciation from local pre-schoolers.

MercyOne nurses hold up a sign they received from local pre-schoolers.

Bishop announces new priest assignments

By Anne Marie Cox

Bishop William Joensen has made the following clergy appointments effective July 9.

The assignment for Monsignor Frank Chiiedo, pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, is extended until July 2024.

Monsignor Chiiedo, whose home parish is St. Anthony, was educated at Dowling Catholic High School, Immaculate Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, and the St. Thomas Theological Seminary in Denver.

He was ordained a priest on June 4, 1976 by Bishop Maurice Dingman and given the honor of monsignor in 1990.

He served primarily in parish ministry, having served Christ the King, the Basilica of St. John, Holy Trinity and St. Anthony in Des Moines, and in team ministry at St. Brendan in Leon and Sacred Heart in Chariton.

He also taught at St. Albert High School and served at St. Thomas More Parish in Omaha. He has served as pastor of St. Anthony Parish since 2007.

Father James Downey, is moving from studies in Rome, to parochial vicar at Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish, Ankeny and St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, Ankeny.

Father Downey studied at Dowling Catholic High School, St. John Vianney Seminary in St. Paul Minnesota, and the Pontifical North American College in Rome. He was ordained last summer by Bishop Richard Pates.

After ordination, Father Downey returned to Rome for another year of studies focusing on moral theology.

Father John Frost is moving from pastor at St. Michael Church, Harlan, to become pastor at St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines.

Father Frost attended Dowling Catholic, William Penn College St. Ambrose College in Davenport and St. John’s Seminary in Collegeville, Minnesota.

He was ordained a priest in 1987 by Bishop William Bullock. Since ordination, he has served primarily in parish ministry. Father Frost has ministered at St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines, Queen of Apostles in Council Bluffs, St. John and Paul in Altoona, Immaculate Conception in St. Marys, Assumption in Churchville, St. Patrick in Irish Settlement, St. Bernard in Osceola, St. Patrick in Grand River, St. Mary in Avoca, St. Patrick in Walnut, and most recently St. Michael in Harlan. He has also served as Canonical administrator of Shelby County Catholic School for the past 10 years.

Father Enrique Garcia-Elizalde is moving from serving as an instructor at Conception Seminary College in Conception, Missouri, to become parochial vicar at Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs.

Ordained in 2001 in Ecatepec, Mexico, Father Garcia-Elizalde was incardinated

Continued on page 7
When Moses gathered seventy elders of the Israelite people near the tent where he would speak with God, and all the Israelite people who dwelled in his holy tabernacle, the Spirit of God was calmly distributed upon all of them, and also displayed the same prophetic spirit even though they were absent from the larger gathering. Moses had no problem with the fact that the prophetic spirit had sought out his seventy companions who had been left behind, but he had a problem with the fact that God had left them behind in his absence, and helps others to believe and others to view them as believers even when they have been left behind by God. They were still a vital part of the community where God’s presence was manifest (Num. 11:24-26).

For these weeks of pandemnic self-discipline practices, we may have at times felt left out or left behind from the larger community where sacraments are celebrated and God’s presence and abundant life are shared.

Yet hope is that we all have come to deeper belief that God’s Spirit—the Spirit of the Jesus risen from the dead who is seated at the right hand of God, and who from God, we are. We have had the chance to invite God’s word into our daily lives and introduce God’s will and Spirit into the pores of space where love is far from perfect and acute need is known.

Mother Maureen McCabe observes, “To live through darker times faithfully is to grow in our capacity to receive God in all situations, for as our receptivity becomes less dependent on circumstan ces and feelings, an interior door opens to us, a deepening of our di- vine” One thing that’s accurate of what it means to be a prophet— someone who places God’s word where it is absent, and helps others to believe God has come to them when they would otherwise feel God has left them behind in his absence.

The coronavirus con tainment has afforded us plenty of chances to give witness that we are a prophetic people in Christ. But let’s be honest: the live-streaming Masses, even more than the Zoom and Face Time encounters with loved ones, are tedious and fully unsatisfying. If God’s Spirit has touched our hearts where we are, then that same spirit urges us to move in ways that will touch our homes— our “domestic church”—to unite ourselves with God and each other as completely as possible. We long for the whole Christ: the Eucharistic Body who suffered and died for us, and is raised in the Spirit to become the nucleus of an organic community that is glorious, graceful, and soul-filling. By baptism, we are made prophets of the Word who is Christ, and we are made priests who tend our holy desires like tender sheep. We gather and shore up the tent of trust that allows our respective vulnerability and our reception of grace to be fully valuable and not a drain on the larger whole, for they evoke the mysterious, sacrificial love of Jesus embodied and present in the Eucha rist. When we are attuned to the Spirit pulsing among us, nothing less than actual reception of Holy Communion in the common Mass is both source and summit of Christ’s abundant life, can allow us to sit and say, “Ah, home at last!” Before he became pope, Joseph Ratzinger recalled what happened in concentration camps and Russian prison camps, where people had to do without the Eucha rist for extended periods yet did not take matters into their own hands. He observes how they made a Eucharistic cele bration of their longings, waiting with yearning upon the Lord. “In such a Eucharist of longing and yearning they were ready for a gift in new way, and they received it as something new,” that glorious day when they could participate in Mass again.

At this writing, and with the Feast of God’s Spirit at Pentecost approaching on the last day of May, it remains uncertain when that glorious day when we are able to regather and participate in public Mass—and celebrate bap tisms, weddings, funerals, con firmations, and all other sacraments as a full community—will occur. God willing, it will arrive very soon. Our regathering task force, which includes both priests and lay people, has been hard at work to help outline the preparations and procedures necessary to open our churches where we must prudently observe in order to protect as much as reason ably possible the physical and spiritual well-being of all who enter our Des Moines Diocese family. As with the Israelites who confronted Moses about Eldad and Medad, there’s been some grumbling about whether we’re going too slowly or too hastily in reassembling for wor ship. I get it. As I noted in my Weeknight Homily the night before I was ordained your bishop, there are times when authority is enlist ed to make decisions not based on our own conversations or direction from God, but to guide the community as prudently, reasonably, and faithfully as possible—to limit and then liberate sacred a tion for the sake of the salvation of souls. As Fr. Thomas Joseph White, OFM notes, priests are not obliged to believe that every decision of bishops comes from God, but they are obliged to obey because they are the representatives of authority is rooted in the Spirit of the Risen Christ to bind and to loose.

And so I challenge us all—myself included—to seek the grace to let charity prevail as we continue our pilgrimage back home. This charity makes us face the problem with the fact that we so readily succumb to the bitterness and rancor that are the fingerprints of the unholy spirit who seeks to divide us and set us against each other.

And this charity will also manifest in embracing the gradual manner in which we reassemble a Eucharistic rhythm of life, for reasons of necessary so cial distancing and due diligence in cleaning and restoring our churches to a safe environment each time we gather for Mass. And yet, as time allows, we must do so, we cannot all rush the al tar at the same time, heedless of our neighbor whose holy long ing is equal to our own. We re call St. Paul’s challenge to the church at Corinth after hearing that there were divisions among them, factions that were breaking rather than building commun ion. “When you meet in one place, then it is necessary for you, the head of the Lord’s supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while anoth er gets drunk” (1 Cor. 11:21-28).

Paul is referring to the preliminary meal that precedes the Eucharist, but I think his counsel obtains for us as well as we all long to come home to Mass in our parish churches. We have come to see the sacrifice of charity and abundant life, the Spirit of a prophetic, priestly people who are called to be the hol vinous conduit through whom God will have us united as One Body, more than ever before.

When Moisés reunied a setenta ancians del pueblo de Is rael cerca de la tienda donde él se reuniría usualmente y en donde habitaría el Señor en su sant o tabernáculo, el espíritu se había dispersado rápidamente entre todos los presentes. Pero en un par de lo pers, Eldad y Medad, quienes se habían quedado en el campamento, también mostraron el mismo espíritu profético a pesar de no haber estado presentes en la reunión. Moisés no instituyó ese problema con el hecho de que el espíritu profético habría tam bién buscado a estos otros que de cierto modo "se habían quedado atrás" en casa. Eran el una parte vital de la comunidad en donde se manifestó la presencia de Dios (Números 11:24-26) En estas semanas de pruebas de autocuidado por la pandemia, podemos preguntarnos si habemos sentido frente a ellos sentidos de alguna otra forma que Dios los haya dejado fuertemente y a nosotros.

La enfermedad del coronavirus nos ha presentado no solo oportunidades de dar testimonio de que somos una Iglesia institución, sino también la necesidad de autónomo, una Iglesia institución. Pero seamos honestos, las Mí sas transmitidas en línea, aún más que los encuentros por Zoom y Face Time, se han convertido en nuestras "iglesias domésticas" a unirnos con otros, y a compartir en nuestras "iglesias domésticas" a unirnos con otros, y a compartir la presencia de Dios y la vida abundante.

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Corazón companero de todos, este escribimos para recordar a todos cómo es qué significa que pedimos a Dios que nos siga a nuestro lado y que nos guíe. Pero siamos honestos, las Mías transmitidas en línea, aún más que los encuentros por Zoom y Face Time, se han convertido en nuestras "iglesias domésticas" a unirnos con otros, y a compartir en nuestras "iglesias domésticas" a unirnos con otros, y a compartir la presencia de Dios y la vida abundante.

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Bishop Joensen made the following appointments, effective July 9, 2020:

- Monsignor Frank Choico, Pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, assignment extended until July 16.
- Father James Downey, from studies in Rome, to Parochial Vicar, Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish, Ankeny and St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, Ankeny.
- Father John Frost, from Pastor, St. Michael Church, Huxton, to Pastor, St. Mary of Nazareth Parish, Des Moines.
- Father Enrique Garcia-Eizalde, from Instructotec Seminary College, Conception, MO., to Parochial Vicar, Corpus Christi Parish, Council Bluffs.
- Father Daniel Gehler while remaining Pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Earling and remaining Pastor of St. Patrick Church, Corning, and St. Patrick Parish, Eldridge.
- Father Charles Kottas, Pastor of St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs and Canonical Administrator of St. Albert Catholic School, assignment extended until July 2024.
- Father Gregory Leach, from Pastor, St. Mary of Nazareth, to retirement.
- Father Sylvester Omok Osok, from Chaplain CH/ Mercy Hospital, Council Bluffs, to Canonical Administrator of St. Patrick Parish, Coho ba Parish, Weston.
- Father Augustine Clement Osawa, from Chaplain, St. Albert Catholic School, to Parochial Vicar of St. Michael Parish, Harlan, St. Joseph Parish, Earling and St. Peter Parish, Des Moines.
- Father Michael Peters, from Pastor, St. Patrick Church, Com ing, and St. Patrick Parish, Lenox, to retirement.
- Father Litto Thomas from Parochial Vicar, Corpus Christi Parish, Council Bluffs, to Canonical Administrator of St. Patrick Parish, Com ing, and St. Patrick Parish, Lenox.
que es Cristo, Y somos nombrados sacerdotes que prestamos nuestros santos deseos al Cuerpo general, quienes sirven de mediadores y que levantan la tienda de la confianza que permite que nuestras respectivas vulnerabilidades y necesidades sean consideradas como algo valioso y no como algo que desgasta al grupo en su totalidad. Aunque los sacerdotes que se han ordenado son los ministros adecuados de los sacramentos, cada uno de nosotros recibimos el misterioso y sacrificial amor de Jesús implantado en la Eucaristía. Cuando estamos a tono con el Espíritu que se mueve entre nosotros, nada más que en la actual recepción de la Sagrada Comunión en el contexto de la Misa es tanto fuente y encuentro con la vida abundante de Cristo, que puede permitirnos suspirar y decir, “¡Al fin en casa!”

Consideremos en papa, Joseph Ratzinger recordaba lo que sucedió en los campos de concentración y en los campos ratos de prisioner- os, en donde la personas tenían que sobrevivir sin la Eucaristía por largos períodos de tiempo pero que aún así no tomaban el asunto en sus propias manos. Él observa cómo ellos hacían una celebración Eucarística de cómo extrañaban y esperaban con gran deseo al Señor. “En tal Eucaristía de extrañar y de- señar, ellos se ataban para este don de una nueva forma, y lo recibían como algo nuevo,” cuando el día llegaba finalmente y podían nuevamente participar en la Misa. Al escribirles esto, y con la llegada de la Fiest de Espíritu de Dios en Pente- costés el último día del mes de mayo, seguimos con la incerti- duem de cuándo llegará ese día glorioso en que podremos reunirnos nuevamente y partic- ipar en Misas públicas – y celebrar bautismos, bodas, fune- rales, confirmaciones y demás sacramentos con la proximidad de la Fiesta de Espíritu de Dios. Cuando es prácticamente lo cor- recto, no podemos todos apre- surarnos hacia el altar al mismo tiempo, sin considerar a nuestro prójimo cuyo sagrado apetito es sanagático, por razones de la necesidad del distanciamiento social y la diligencia necesaria para lim-piar y hacer de nuestras iglesias un ambiente seguro cada vez que nos reunimos para la Misa. Cuando es prácticamente lo cor- recto, no podemos todos apre- surarnos hacia el altar al mismo tiempo, sin considerar a nuestro prójimo cuyo sagrado apetito es sanagático, por razones de la necesidad del distanciamiento social y la diligencia necesaria para lim-piar y hacer de nuestras iglesias un ambiente seguro cada vez que nos reunimos para la Misa. Cuando es prácticamente lo cor- recto, no podemos todos apre- surarnos hacia el altar al mismo tiempo, sin considerar a nuestro prójimo cuyo sagrado apetito es sanagático, por razones de la necesidad del distanciamiento social y la diligencia necesaria para lim-piar y hacer de nuestras iglesias un ambiente seguro cada vez que nos reunimos para la Misa. Cuando es prácticamente lo cor- recto, no podemos todos apre- surarnos hacia el altar al mismo tiempo, sin considerar a nuestro prójimo cuyo sagrado apetito es sanagático, por razones de la necesidad del distanciamiento social y la diligencia necesaria para lim-

The Serra Club of Des Moines got creative in how it honored women in religious life this year since its annual event was shelved due to the coronavirus. The organization that prays and supports semi- narians for the diocese honors religious women with an annual dinner and stipend. Members of the Serra Club delivered gift baskets and flowers to religious sisters in lieu of the Sisters Appreciation Dinner.

“The pandemic made it impossible for us to have our Sisters Appreciation Dinner, which was scheduled for Sunday, April 26,” said Jerry Murphy. Members donated what they would have spent for their dinner, which was added to the stipend and used to honor the women. Members delivered gift bags, flowers and stipends to the 42 sisters in the Des Moines diocese. “It turned out to be a splendid way to thank our sisters for their vocation of doing God’s work in our dio- cese,” Murphy said.

Appreciation effort takes a different path

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For more infor- mation about the club, go to serra.org.

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Relief fund comes to aid of those in financial peril

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Three months ago, a Des Moines single mother supported her three children and grandchild by cleaning hotel rooms.

Since mid-March, she has been without a job. The hotel closed after government restrictions were put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The mother is not eligible for unemployment and is worried about paying rent.

She is just one of many worried about paying rent. The mother is not eligible for unemployment and is worried about paying rent.

The spread of COVID-19 contributed to the lack of work and put individuals and families through Catholic Charities and the most pressing needs in parishes and schools through the diocese.

Catholic Charities can help people like the hotel cleaner with essential services such as utilities, rent, transportation and other immediate needs.

Since the launch of the relief fund on Holy Thursday, more than $104,000 has been raised thanks to the generosity of individuals and organizations. The fund was part of the national Giving Tuesday Now effort on May 5, a national response to the unprecedented crisis.

Giving Tuesday Now helped grow the fund by $6,500 in online contributions, said Maureen Kenney, diocesan director of Stewardship.

To make a donation, go to dmarchive.org/giving. Questions can go to Deb Powers at dpowers@catholiccharitiesdm.org.

Preparing for return of public Mass

Continued from page 1

The diocese’s committee of clergy and laity, which suggested guidelines for when parishes can publicly worship, indicated that all parishes are not likely to resume public weekly Masses at the same time. COVID-19 infection rates in each county vary, and some parishes may not be able to meet all of the required safety guidelines simultaneously.

In general, the committee’s procedures require that parishes:

• Maintain social distancing throughout the Mass
• Disinfect the worship space between every Mass
• Make the Mass as hygienic as possible while respecting the integrity of the liturgy

Even when publicly celebrated Masses resume, the elderly, people in high-risk groups, people who live with vulnerable individuals and those who are ill or have been exposed should not attend.

Mass only at their own parish instead of traveling to neighboring parishes. Such traveling creates a health risk for all and hinders diocesan efforts to make the sacraments publicly available in the safest way possible.

In his May 9 letter to the faithful, Bishop Joensen said: “For these weeks of pandemic self-discipline practices, we may have at times felt left out of the community where sacraments are celebrated. Yet my hope is that we all have come to deeper belief that God’s Spirit – the Spirit of the risen Jesus – seeks out where we are, as we are.”

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 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

John & Mary Parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi

Caldwell Parrish Funeral Home & Crematory

Des Moines’ only Catholic-owned & operated funeral home.

Beacons of Hope

Parishioners find ways to be light to others in the dark days of the pandemic.

Kathy Campbell, of St. Michael Parish in Harlan, brings light to others by grocery shopping for those who call in their orders.

Robert, Paul and Donna Schmidt use their trucks to deliver “to-go” bags of food for Harlan Community High School.

Shelby County parishioners joined together to coordinate food donations for each family receiving school meals during the coronavirus quarantine.

“It’s been very fulfilling to be like the hands of God and able to help out during this time of hardship and uncertainty and fear,” said Donna Schmidt.

Christine Petersen and Ellen Rosmann, a parishioner at St. Boniface Parish in Westphalia, put the word out for food and volunteers making “to-go” bags for families.

“It is nice to alleviate everyone’s fear acts of kindness and give hope and even joy and trust in God’s calling and presence,” Schmidt said.

The effort produced 60 bags for families initially but is now up to packing about 200 bags weekly.

Jodi Dozier helps unload trucks of food at the high school in Harlan.
Schools find ways to celebrate graduates

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Though social distancing is the new normal, schools across our diocese have found creative ways to celebrate their graduates.

Families were appreciative of the way St. Malachy Catholic School in Creston celebrated its eighth graders moving on to high school, which includes front-yard signage for all the graduates.

“They were so excited,” said principal Kandice Roethler. “And we personalize them and have their name on them.”

They also surprised students the week of May 10 with a slideshow on their YouTube channel, featuring photos of the graduates growing up with their senior picture.

Normally the eighth grade graduates receive a clasp-out from all of the grades in the school. But since that’s not physically possible this year, the graduates will be shown a video montage of all the grades clapping them on with Google Class Meets. Teachers will also be clapping.

“We’re hoping to have their graduation ceremony this summer – that’s our goal,” Simmons said.

Despite these challenging es, she hopes students hold their faith in God close and stay optimistic.

“I think there’s a big future ahead of them and they will get to fulfill their dreams,” the principal said. “I know some of them are worried about that.”

Perry has been a hotbed of COVID-19. But that hasn’t stopped St. Patrick Catholic School from celebrating its 8th grade graduates, said principal Tucker Rohrig.

“We’re doing full-page bulletin inserts, senior style, that shows where they are headed to high school and their favorite memory,” Roethler said.

This will be posted to the church and school website and Facebook page.

St. Patrick plans on celebrating a Mass for the eighth grade graduates in the fall when social distancing requirements have hopefully decreased.

St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs has found a number of ways to make graduates feel special. The fifth and eighth graders will each have a recognition event with a virtual meeting, prayer service and awards.

St. Albert will celebrate its seniors with a virtual awards ceremony and virtual baccalaureate Mass. The school celebrated its seniors on social media as well.

On May 7 they surprised seniors with a yard signs, delivered by faculty, staff and coaches.

“One the cap and gowns arrive, we will send out a sign-up sheet for the graduates and their families to come to school to take a photo,” said Katie Grudle, director of campus mission. “We’ll have one individual photo and one with their family.”

On May 22, tentatively planned a commencement ceremony for July 23, depending on social distancing guidelines at that time.

“Our teachers have gone above and beyond the call of duty to make the best of a bad situation,” said Deacon Vernon Dobelmann, executive director. “Their dedication has been inspiring to me. Faith in God is our community of prayer,” Deacon Dobelmann continued. “Our teachers have demonstrated that being an educator at Saint Albert is a calling that requires not just a job.”

Deacon Dobelmann has impressed the work of St. Albert’s academic leadership team.

“In the midst of the struggles, we have remained a community of prayer,” Deacon Dobelmann continued. “Whether it has been virtual prayer services, or social distancing ourselves during a student’s funeral procession, we have found ways to be a community of faith at St. Albert.”

Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines is celebrating seniors with a Last Day Celebration on May 15. Seniors will drive through campus while parents, faculty and staff line the drive.

This celebration will also include a food drive to benefit Catholic Charities. Upon departing campus, students will receive a grab-and-go catered lunch, which was generously donated by DCHS families.

Senior recipients of year-end awards will be celebrated via social media daily during their last week of classes beginning on May 11. A recognition video will also be shared on May 22, the original date of the graduation ceremony.

Dowling has tentative reserved June 26 and July 17 to hold a graduation ceremony. Tentative plans also include celebrating the baccalaureate Mass the night before graduation.

Dr. Dan Ryan, president of Dowling Catholic, said these past few months have been a journey for students, teachers and staff.

“The circumstances surrounding the coronavirus have both challenged and strengthened our students’ faith,” Ryan said. “Like all of us, our students have grown accustomed to certain routines such as praying in the chapel at lunch, attending Mass, and visiting with a chaplain. Without these options, students have been forced to create new routines, and our staff has done an outstanding job of showing the students how to create a prayer routine in this new environment. This is a good test run for our seniors as they prepare to leave the halls of Dowling Catholic and independently continue on their faith journey.”
Sister Beeson celebrates 70th anniversary of religious life

Humility Sister Rachel Beeson is celebrating her 70th anniversary of religious life this year. She has devoted most of her years of ministry to education in both teaching and administration.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in education from Marycrest College in Davenport and a degree in education from Marymount University in Minneapolis and Missouri. She also completed a corporate ministry program at St. Louis University in Missouri.

In the Diocese of Des Moines, she served at St. Joseph School in Dunlap, St. Anthony School in Des Moines, was a teacher, assistant principal and principal of St. Pius X School in Urbandale, principal at St. Albert School in Council Bluffs and principal at St. Anthony in Des Moines.

She also served schools in the Iowa towns of Okaloono, Centerville, Davenport, Albia, Clinton and Muscatine. Outside of Iowa, she served at schools in Minneapolis and Missouri.

In addition to education, she served as plant coordinator at Ottumwa Heights in Ottumwa, coordinator of retiring and teaching administration from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. She also completed a corporate ministry program at St. Louis University in Missouri.

In the Diocese of Des Moines, she served at St. Joseph School in Dunlap, St. Anthony School in Des Moines, was a teacher, assistant principal and principal of St. Pius X School in Urbandale, principal at St. Albert School in Council Bluffs and principal at St. Anthony in Des Moines.

She also served schools in the Iowa towns of Okaloono, Centerville, Davenport, Albia, Clinton and Muscatine. Outside of Iowa, she served at schools in Minneapolis and Missouri.

In addition to education, she served as plant coordinator at Ottumwa Heights in Ottumwa, coordinator of retirement and teaching administration in both diocesan ministry who is not a bishop, such as priests, deacons, religious or laity. CBAR was designed to respond only to complaints against bishops for issues related to sexual misconduct.

The reporting of sexual misconduct by anyone in diocesan ministry who is not a bishop, such as priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, or lay persons working or volunteering for the Church should continue to be handled in accordance with the diocesan or eparchial bishop’s child protection policy (dmdioce.se.org) and with appropriate civil authorities. For more information on the reporting service for bishops and how it works, please visit ReportBishopAbuse.org.

While the mandate by Pope Francis in Vos estis echoes the worldwide Catholic Church, making clear the pope’s concern of the issue of sexual abuse in the Church at a global level.

Bishop Pates named apostolic administrator for Diocese of Joliet

WASHINGTON — Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop R. Daniel Conlon from the Diocese of Joliet in Illinois and has appointed Bishop Richard Pates as the Apostolic Administrator sede vacante.

The appointment was publicized in Washington, D.C. on May 4 by Archbishop Chris-
Bishop announces new priest assignments

Continued from page 1 into the Des Moines diocese in 2014. Since then, he has served as a senior priest in Hispanic Ministry. For the past year, he has served as weekend spiritual director. For the past year, he has served as weekend spiritual director.

Father Daniel Gehler, while remaining pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Earl ing and St. Peter Parish in Defiance, he will become pastor of St. Michael Parish in Harlan, and Canonical administrator of Shelby County Catholic School. Father Gehler attended Iowa State University, St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota, Creighton University in Omaha and Conception Seminary in Missouri before being ordained a priest in 2016 by Bishop Richard Pates.

Since ordination, Father Gehler has served at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, and the Shelby County parishes of St. Peter in Defiance and St. Joseph in Earl ing.

The assignment for Father Robert Harris, pastor of All Saints Parish in Des Moines, is to Defiance and St. Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S. Since ordination, his ministry has been in parishes. He has served as pastor of St. Anthony in Des Moines, St. Patrick in Missouri Valley, St. Mary/Holy Cross in Elkhart and has been at All Saints Parish in Des Moines since 2008.

Father Gregory Leach is retiring after 40 years of priesthood ministry. He is the pastor of St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines.

He attended Dowling Catholic High School in Des Moines, Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee and Sacred Heart Seminary in Hales Corner, Wisconsin. He was ordained in 1996 by Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S.

Father Sylvester Omon Okoh is moving from chaplain CHI/Mercy Hospital in Council Bluffs to become the Canonical administrator of St. Patrick Parish in Nolia and St. Columbanus Parish in Weston. Father Okoh was educated at Hope Waddell Training Institution in Nigeria and the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. He did post-graduate work at Cross River University of Technology in Nigeria. He was ordained in 2008 by Bishop Joseph Edra Ukpo in Nigeria.

Father Okoh came to the Des Moines diocese in February and has been serving as a chaplain at CHI Health-Mercy in Council Bluffs.

Father Augustine Clement Owusu is moving from chaplain at St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs to parochial vicar of St. Michael Parish in Harlan, St. Joseph Parish in Earl ing and St. Peter Parish in Defiance.

Ordained in 2011 for the Diocese of Konongo-Mampong, he served as an associate pastor for one year and a pastor for three years before being assigned to a Marian grotto, where people go for retreats and spiritual direction. He served there for three years before being assigned to the Diocese of Des Moines.

Father Michael Peters is retiring after 32 years of priestly ministry.

He attended D owling Catholic and Iowa State University and St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota before being ordained in 1988 by Bishop William Bullock. After ordination, he served in urban and rural parishes: St. Theresa and St. Anthony in Des Moines, St. Peter and Paul in Atlantic, St. Patrick in Massena, Holy Spirit in Creston, St. Edward in Afton, St. Mary in Panama, St. Boniface in Westphalia, St. Mary in Guthrie Center, St. Cecilia in Panora, St. Patrick in Bayard, St. Patrick in Com ing and St. Patrick in Lenox.

Father Otto Thomas is moving from parochial vicar at Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs to Canonical administrator of St. Patrick Parish in Corning, and St. Patrick Parish in Lenox. Educated at St. Sebastian High School and Union Christian College in India, and the Pontifical Urban University in Rome, Father Thomas was ordained in 2014 by Bishop Mar Mathew Vattuckuzhy in India.

He came to the Diocese of Des Moines last year to serve as parochial vicar of Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs.

Deacon Dennis Lovell, from Canonical administrator, at Holy Family Parish, Mondamin, to Di rector of Parish Life, Holy Fam ily Parish, Mondamin.

20 year anniversaries will be highlighted in the June Catholic Mirror.

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The Catholic Mirror May 15, 2020

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Father Gehler
Father Harris
Father Leach
Father Litto Thomas
Father Omon Okoh
Father Peters
Father Owusu
Father Thomas
Deacon Lovell

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*The CARES Act allows an above-the-line deduction of $200 resulting in approximately $111 in tax savings.

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Celebrating 50 years of priesthood

Father Charles Kottas

Almost half of Father Kottas’s life has been in service to the people of the St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs. A planned June celebration for his golden anniversary of priesthood was delayed by COVID-19.

When parishioners can gather again, there will be a celebration in honor of the 50th name day of this priest. He will re-echo the words of the apostle Paul: “May you have your name on a building, but it’s more important that your name is in the hearts of your people,” he recalled saying, and he agreed.

“Father is the highlight of your priesthood, that the people who you minister to are far better prepared for the life before they met you,” he said.

“It’s probably the most important thing as I think of the priesthood. From a brick and mortar point, Father Kottas shepherded the parish through the building of a social hall and the 2004 conversion of St. Francis School into a retirement home and more. From a spiritual perspective, he’s proud of the foundation he’s set for young people in the parish.

“I’m very proud of the fact he has been so involved in youth ministry and a phonological job in preparing youth for confirmation,” he said. “Our kids are more centered in our church and they’re very well knowledgeable about the church.”

Father Kottas, originally from Lincoln, Nebraska, was ordained June 1970. He began serving in the Des Moines diocese in 1986 at St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines and Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines.

In 1989, he began serving parishes in Shelby County: St. John in Greenfield, St. Peter in Defiance, St. Mary in Panama, and St. Mary in Portsmouth.

He was ordained at Des Moines diocese in 1991. He served St. Patrick in Dunlap and Sacred Heart in Woodbine, then St. Patrick in Massena and St. Peter and Paul in Atlantic before settling in at St. Peter in Council Bluffs.

Looking back, he thinks of all the lives he’s touched.

“I like living here. I enjoy these people. I think they’re just phenomenal,” said Father Kottas. “Father John, the dearful vocation if what’s the good Lord calls you to. I love our diocese.”

Congratulations notes can be sent to him at parish, 1 Blair St., Council Bluffs, IA 51503.

Father John Dorton

Father Dorton’s anniversary plans were shelved as a result of the coronavirus, but he says maybe he can have a 51st anniversary celebration instead. He’s looking forward to being of service to others that drew him to the priesthood.

“One of the things that Monsignor Lawrence Beeson

This is a special year for Monsignor Beeson for not only is he celebrating 60 years of religious life, his sister, Humility Sister Rachel Beeson, is celebrating 70 years of religious life. The siblings had planned a joint celebration but have postponed it due to the coronavirus.

Several events stand out as highlights of his priesthood. He was from 1962-1965 at the Second Vatican Council directing ballots, materials and messengers; the merging of five schools to one at St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs; and his ordination to the priesthood.

“Being a pastor, that was my greatest love,” he said. “I never expected to work in the Second Vatican Council. It was amazing to work merging the schools. But being a pastor, that’s where you do funerals, but I tried to do all of that parish work. That’s what I loved to do most.”

Originally from Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, Msgr. Beeson, was ordained June 5, 1960 by Bishop Edward Daly, O.P. He has served St. Boniface Catholic High School in Atlantic and St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque and Angelicum in Rome. He served in administration for many years as the secretary to the bishop, vice chancellor, vocation director, vicar general, vicar for canonical affairs and chancellor of St. Albert Schools, councilor and vicar for retired priests. He has also assisted the Tribunal with announcements and other Canonical issues.

His parish ministry took him to St. Patrick Parish Settlement, St. Patrick Parish in Neola, St. Peter Parish in Defiance, St. Mary Parish in Maryworth, St. Peter, St. Anthony and St. Ambrose Cathedral Parishes in Des Moines, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic and St. Patrick Parish in Massena.

Monsignor retired in 2004 but continued serving as vicar for retired priests until last year. He was honored with the title of monsignor in 1989.

Congratulations messages can be sent to him at 1390 W. 65th Street, West Des Moines, 50265.

Father Paul Monahan

Much of Father Monahan’s 60 years of priesthood was dedicated to pastoral care and parish life.

“The best times were the times that I spent with students,” he said. “I’ve talked with a lot of students regularly and I still stay in touch with many of them.”

He moved from St. Albert School to prepare in seminaries and enjoyed it.

“Told that I spent a lot of time, the photographing of things that bring back fond memories,” he said.

He was ordained June 5, 1960 by Bishop Daly at St. Patrick Parish in Portsmouth, he attended Loras College, Mount St. Bernard Seminary and the Dominican post-graduate work at Creighton University in Omaha.

He spent nearly 20 years in education at Dowling Catholic High School and St. Albert High School, where he also served as principal. In 1979, he moved to parish ministry, serving at St. Mary in Avoca, St. Patrick in Walnut, Holy Family in Council Bluffs, St. Mary in Portmouth and Holy Rosary in Glenwood. He retired in 2004.

These days, he can be found reading, writing short summaries of articles and sending them to friends who may have an interest in that topic.

Congratulations notes can be sent to him at Primrose Retirement Community, 1801 E. Woodland Blvd., Council Bluffs, IA 51503.

Father James Klefmann

Longtime military chaplain Father James Klefmann also comes from St. Mary Parish in Portsmouth and was ordained June 5, 1960.

Like Father Monahan, he attended Loras College, Mount St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque. After ordination, he served a few years in the Armed Services: SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic, St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines, St. Mary’s Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines.

In 1968, he became a chaplain at Dowling Catholic High School and St. Albert High School. He was never more church than when he was a family priest.

“I always used to say the church is the Lord’s hobby and the Lord’s work and I always tried to be there at important crossroads in people’s lives. I think that served me well.”

He has also assisted the Tribunal of Annulments and other Canon laws.

Father John Dorton’s 60 years of religious life and service can be sent to him at his parish, 1 Blair St., Council Bluffs, IA 51503.

Ordained May 30, 1970 by Bishop Maurice Dingman, Father Dorton attended Dowling Catholic, Immaculate Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, Aquinas Institute in Dubuque, St. Meinrad Seminary in St. Meinrad, Indiana and Loras College in Dubuque.

After ordination, he served at the Basilica of St. John and St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines before beginning 20 years of ministry at Dowling Catholic.

Subsequently, he served at several parishes including St. Peter and St. Anthony in Des Moines, St. Mary in Panama, St. Mary in Portmouth and St. Boniface in West Des Moines.

In retirement, he serves as co-vicar for retired priests. He looks after his dog, Oscar, and enjoys filling in for priests in parishes through the Des Moines metro area.

Congratulations notes can be sent to Father Dorton at Dowling Catholic High School, At Father Dorton’s house at 1460 Bul - falo Road, West Des Moines, IA 50265.

Monsignor Edward Hurley

Father Hurley is surprised at how fast 50 years flew by.

“It’s gone awfully fast. It’s just amazing, it’s absolutely amazing.”

He anticipated teaching at Dowling Catholic High School after ordination. His path took him in a different direction, to parish life and serving as principal. His work has been, he said, “to be a part of that action. It’s very rewarding.”

His acumen in accounting, learnt on the job, served him well as he oversaw a $5 million fund for 33 years and served as the diocese’s vicar of finance for many years.

“For me, the best thing I had was really good adventures over the years, none of which I really anticipated. I was always kind of surprised where I went next,” he said. “I always found the people good and enjoyed where I was.”

Father Hurley attended Dowling Catholic, Loras College and Aquinas Institute in Chicago, and Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He was ordained May 30, 1970 by Bishop Dingman.

His first assignment was at All Saints Parish in Des Moines, followed by 14 years at St. Albert as a teacher and president/executive coordinator. In 1987, he retired as principal of the monastery, serving as principal in Massena, St. Timo thy in Reno/Camberland, St. Pius in Oregon/Indianapolis, St. Francis Assisi in West Des Moines, and St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines.

He was given the honor of title of monsignor in 1989 and retired in 2015.

In retirement, he helps at St. Joseph’s monastery where he celebrates about 15 weddings and some funerals each year and helps a few, he said, “to kno it’s time.”

Father Hurley had thought of celebrating his anni versary in June but says it’s too risky with the coronavirus now. Maybe in August or September he will have a public celebration. Congratulatory messages can be sent to him at 280 S. 79th St., Unit 1308, West Des Moines, IA.

Father Leonard Kenkel

Father Kenkel was ordained a priest in 1960. He served the following Des Moines parishes: Christ the King, Holy Trinity and St. Peter. He also served St. Boniface Parish, St. Patrick, Holy Spirit Parish in Creston and St. Edward Parish in Atlin.


He served in 2008, and is no longer expected to offer public priestly ministry.

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He served in 2008, and is no longer expected to offer public priestly ministry.
Father Greg Leach

Father Greg Leach accompanied people on their life journey in and out of church. He spent 40 years on a ballfield. “I enjoyed baseball and I didn’t have the skill to be a good player so I worked at being a good umpire,” he said. Kids would point to him and say: “That’s our priest!”

“They’re seeing you in a whole different light other than just in church and that brings out the humanity of the pastor,” he said.

He also spent about 20 years as a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician, or EMT. He was persuaded to join the local department when he was in Earling.

“A different face of the church to a small rural community was the priest who was going to show up on the firetruck or ambulance when you have needs,” he said. Whether on the ballfield, on a firetruck or in church, he’s been able to connect with people at important times of their lives.

“You’re able to bring the face of the Lord to all sorts of different situations,” he said. Sometimes, he figures out how he’s been an instrument of God, and sometimes it’s much later when someone tells him how he’s touched their life.

Father Leach was educated at Dowling Catholic, Creighton University in Omaha, Loras College in Dubuque, St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corner, Wisconsin.

Ordained on Sept. 12, 1980 by Bishop Maurice Dingman, he served at Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines, St. Joseph Church in Earling, St. Bernard Church in Osceola and assisted with team ministry, St. Patrick Parish in Grand River, Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart in Ankeny, All Saints Parish in Anadarko, St. John Parish in Adair and St. Mary of Nazareth Church in Des Moines, where he has been since 2008.

Father Leach had planned a combined retirement and 40th anniversary party for the end of June but is pushing that back September.

Congratulations notes on his retirement and anniversary can be sent to him at 6811 Oakwood Drive, Urbandale, IA 50322.

Father Aquinas Nichols

Father Aquinas Nichols’ ministry has taken him around the world, giving him the chance to work with a saint, and settled him in Des Moines, where he has served for the past 20 years.

Born in 1952 in Duluth, Minnesota, he was educated there and in Las Vegas, where his family moved. He attended a minor seminary run by the Verona priests, then went to Conception, Missouri as a postulant for the Benedictine abbey. After two years of college, he entered the novitiate in 1972 and professed simple vows a year later.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in theology and served in various roles at the abbey.

In 1975, he began to serve a parish in Missouri and after a year, he wanted to try monastic life at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, California, where he made solemn profession in 1978.

He studied at St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana and was ordained a priest on June 29, 1980 by San Diego Bishop Leo T. Maher, D.D.

Father Nichols served the abbey for three years and then went to Rome for monastic studies at Sant’ Anselmo. In 1985, he was appointed novice and junior master for the Oceanside abbey, where he served for six years in a number of roles. He was assigned pastoral work in Reno-Las Vegas, returned to the abbey briefly and then went to Rome.

In Rome, he worked for the Pontifical Institute of Liturgy Foundation and then as secretary to the Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order beginning in 1996. In that role, he was head of the order’s curia at Sant’ Anselmo. He accompanied the primate on travels to see Benedictines all over the world. He also had frequent encounters with St. John Paul II.

In 2000, Father Nichols was asked by the Abbot Primate to form a new community in Des Moines, St. Gabriel Benedictine Priory. He served the Basilica of St. John while trying to build the priory until 2008 when the priory closed. Father Nichols continued his assignment at the basilica.

He was appointed pastor of the parish in 2010.

In 2012, he was inaugurated into the Diocese of Des Moines and legally changed his first name to Aquinas after St. Thomas Aquinas, a cherished patron. He is the Censor Librorum for the diocese.

Father Nichols served a parish in Missouri and planned a combined retirement celebration of his 40 years as a priest on June 29, but due to the pandemic, he moved it to Sept. 13 at the 10:30 a.m. Mass at the Basilica of St. John with reception following in the parish hall.

Congratulations notes can be sent to him at the Basilica of St. John, 1915 University Ave., Des Moines, 50314.
Seminarians experience God’s graces amid quarantine

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

When news of the coronavirus pandemic began in January, seminarians didn’t think it would directly impact them.

“I remember sitting in one of the floor lounges sipping on some coffee with Father James Downey and we could see just the very earliest news of coronavirus,” said seminarian Reed Flood, who was studying in Rome. “At that point, classes had just been canceled… and that’s when I thought, ‘I wonder how bad this will get?’”

As Flood was preparing to leave for class in late February, he received a notification from the Italian government that all schools in the country would be canceling classes for a designated period of time. Not too long after, all public worship was suspended.

Soon Flood and the rest of the seminarians were confined to the walls of the college. Shortly thereafter, about half of the men packed up and left, returning to their home diocese.

“That was my first taste of loss – the loss of my friends and you’d never see some of them again,” Flood said.

Despite the loss, there was a two-week grace period, Flood added, as the men still remaining at the college became a tight-knit fraternity where friendships blossomed.

“For me, it was a huge blessing with tons of time to study and time to interact and hang with our brothers,” Flood said. “It was a good healing moment.

“Normaly, men are so busy coming and going with classes and study that they don’t have much time for interaction.

“The whole monastic lifestyle of being cloistered within the walls of a community, like what we experienced in Rome was a blessing,” Flood said.

Seminarian Alex Kramer, also on lockdown in Rome, said they looked out for each other, making sure no one was feeling alone. They spent time praying for those in the Diocese of Des Moines no longer able to receive the sacraments.

After two weeks of lockdown all remaining seminarians were sent home when the college was forced to close.

“It was great to be back in the great state of Iowa,” Kramer said. “We love our state and our diocese and look forward to serving the people.”

Thanks to the Diocese of Sioux City, the group spent two weeks in quarantine at a house near Lake Okoboji with a few priests before returning home.

“It made me think twice about the great gift I’ve had in the last six almost seven years of daily Mass and confession available,” Kramer added. “I’ve kind of taken that for granted until it was taken away.”

Seminarians studying in St. Paul, Minnesota were also placed on lockdown.

Seminarian Lake Epstein said living a cloistered lifestyle has involved many graces, including daily Mass.

“What a tremendous privilege when so many people are fasting – and that’s not lost on us by any means,” Epstein said.

“One of the beautiful things about being cloistered here together is being really intentional about that life of prayer, specifically for the world and people with the coronavirus,” Epstein said.

“They’ve also been praying for the intentions of others, which are on slips of paper and kept in a basket at seminary.

“And so getting to remember so many people in prayer has been a huge blessing, and really an experience of the body of Christ,” Epstein added. “I’ve kind of taken that for granted until it was taken away.”

The new living situation has given the men a chance to grow deeper in relationship with each other.

“Since we’re locked in together, that requires some fraternal charity, as you can imagine,” Epstein said. “Which is of course a growth opportunity as well, to bear with your brothers – there’s no escaping them now.”

They all pulled together, using their unique gifts and talents for the Easter vigil, which was a beautiful sight, Epstein added. That included one’s gift for decorating the chapel, and two others’ talents in catering and brewing beer, which were used for their reception.

Flood and Epstein will be ordained with Brad Robey to the transitional diaconate on June 12.

“Even in the midst of a plague, God can still bring out tremendous graces,” said Flood, whose ordination was originally scheduled for October in Rome.

“And I point to the ability to be ordained early as one of them.”

Seminarians Alex Kramer, Reed Flood, Mike Mahoney and Father James Downey were evacuated from Rome when the Pontifical College of North America was shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Above: Seminarians Alex Kramer, Reed Flood, Mike Mahoney and Father James Downey

Right: Seminarian Brad Robey receives a haircut from a fellow seminarian at St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, where they are in lockdown.

Priest returns from Rome with new degree, begins serving in Ankeny

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Father James Downey, a priest from our diocese who was ordained last June, completed his studies in Rome, returning with his licentiate in moral theology with a focus on bioethics.

“I will be acting mostly as a resource to the bishop and other priests when questions come up,” he said. “I will also act as a resource to the people of the diocese.”

He sees the possibility of working with Dowling Catholic High School, Mercy College of Health Sciences and the Faith Journey Catechetical Institute.

Additionally, Father Downey has been assigned parochial vicar at Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart and St. Luke Parishes in Ankeny.

He is excited to be back home and serving the people of the Diocese of Des Moines.

“This is the first time in about nine years that I can say Iowa is now my main residence,” he said.

Seminarians Alex Kramer, Father James Downey, Reed Flood and Mike Mahoney have been studying in Rome and were staying at the Pontifical College of North America before it was shutdown due to the coronavirus.
Three men eager for June 12 ordination

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Vocations Staff Writer

Three seminarians are eagerly awaiting their June 12 ordination at St. Ambrose Cathedra in Des Moines, when they will become transitional deacons.

Brad Robey, Jake Epstein and Reed Flood are excited about the next step of their long journey toward priesthood.

This is when I make my promises of obedience and celibacy and chastity, and so that’s important in that way,” said Epstein, comparing it to the sacrament of marriage. “I’ll be entering a vocational state in life—the way that I’m convinced God has called me to serve him in this life, and so that’s awfully exciting.”

The three men are excited about many things, including baptisms. “Deacons baptize, and that just makes me so excited, because baptism conforms us to Christ,” said Epstein, who is currently studying at St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. “[Baptism] makes us adopted sons and daughters of God. To…receive such a great sacrament is something I’m very excited about.”

Epstein will be spending the summer serving at St. Boniface Parish in Waukee. Brad Robey, also studying at St. Paul Seminary, said he looks forward to preaching, ministering and learning how to be a deacon in preparation for his ordination to the priesthood in June 2021. He’ll be serving at St. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic and St. Mary’s Parish in Anita this summer.

Seminary has positively impacted his faith and he looks forward to the next part of his journey. “Throughout seminary I’ve learned how to trust the Lord and trust the wisdom of the church and trust the seminary formation,” Robey said.

Reed Flood, who has been studying at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, originally planned on being ordained at St. Peter’s Basilica in the fall. He has since requested to join his brother seminarians in Des Moines for their ordination to the transitional diaconate.

“I’m just excited,” Flood said. “I think we are living in an extraordinary time of the Church and we are called to live extraordinary lives during this time.”

He already has his first baptism planned with his nephew, Coy Flood. “It has been such a long journey in seminary,” said Flood, who will be serving at St. John Parish in Norwalk this summer. “I’m coming up on eight years. I just keep thinking of the song by Semisonic and the lines, ‘Every new beginning comes from a beginning’s end.’”

Flood will return to Rome in the fall for his final year of studies before his ordination to the priesthood next June 2021. “I look forward to the awesome conclusion of my seminarian adventure,” Flood said. “But I am so excited for the beginning of this way of being—to be a man of the sacraments, a man of the church and for the church.”

The ordination will be livestreamed on the Diocese of Des Moines Facebook page at Facebook.com/DMDiocese. Time of ordination will be announced in near future.

God calls young Indianola native to seminary

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Vocations Staff Writer

The first time Connor Lynch considered becoming a priest was when he was just a sophomore in high school on a parish mission trip.

“This struck me in an odd way, and that thought stuck to me for a while.”

He confided in his friends, who shared Lynch’s uncertainty about someone his age being called to the priesthood.

“So I dismissed it,” Lynch said. “But for the next two years of high school as I was touring colleges and pursuing different options of careers, priesthood would always pop up. My goal was to become an engineer or a nurse and to raise kids of my own, but that is what I wanted—just not God.”

Two years later—at graduating high school with plans full steam ahead to study engineering—Lynch was on another parish mission trip in El Paso, Texas in late August.

“The theme of the trip was ‘God’s Plan for You,’” Lynch said. “This really got me thinking about the priesthood because I was about to enter college and pursue the path that I wanted. “One day on the trip I prayed to God and asked, ‘If you want me to be a married man, then please send me a sign; if you want me to be a priest then please send me a sign,’” he said.

The next night at Mass he had an ‘unearthly feeling of joy and peace.’ “I was shaking and sweating. I then knew that this experience was my sign and that he wants me to be a priest,” Lynch said.

The experience lasted about 15 minutes. Mass was followed by a video they watched on receiving signs from God.

Afterwards, they convened in small groups for discussion. “[Seminarian] Reed Flood was in my small group and he helped me figure everything out and he answered all of my questions,” Lynch said. “God put me in good hands!”

After attending Des Moines Area Community College for one semester, Lynch started studying at St. John Vianney Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota in January. Because of the pandemic, his semester was cut short and he finished remotely. But Lynch loved everything he has experienced so far. “It’s everything in one,” Lynch said. “You get a bunch of guys together who are so smart, so faithful, so masculine, but also like kids at heart. The same guys who would be going out playing basketball or doing hard core workouts are the same guys who would watch Frozen 2.”

There’s a great deal of fraternity and brotherly trust amongst the seminarians. “The vulnerability allows for connection and shows where you’re weak,” Lynch said. “But your brothers are there to support you 100 percent. It’s truly just amazing.”

Three men eager for June 12 ordination

Brad Robey

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Vocations Staff Writer

Jake Epstein

Reed Flood

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Vocations Staff Writer

Think you may be called to priesthood or religious life? Contact 
Vocations Director
Father Ross Parker at 515-237-5050 or email vocations@dmdiocese.org.
Father Ed Pfeffer passes away

Father Edward Pfeffer, who served the diocese in education, administration and parish life, died March 18 at the age of 89. Originally from Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, he attended Dowling Catholic High School, Loras College in Dubuque, and Mount St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque. He was ordained by Bishop Edward C. Daly in 1956. Following ordination, he spent two years studying Canon law in Rome. He served as assistant pastor of Holy Trinity Church in De Moines and was on the faculty of Dowling Catholic, assistant pastor of St. Ambrose Cathedral and vice chancellor of the Diocese of Des Moines. In 1964, he was appointed chancellor of the diocese, a position in which he served four bishops. Beginning in 1976, he served as pastor over the next 20 years in three parishes: Sacred Heart in West Des Moines, St. Patrick in Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Church in Winterset. He retired in 2000 and began serving as a volunteer at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women at Mitchellville. He served there for 13 years before retiring again. Father Pfeffer prided himself on never having had an unhappy year in his active ministry. His fellow priests coun- tered that the happiest of his years were during and after Vati- can Council II.

He leaves behind his brother, Jim (Lynn); sister, Janet Fiala; nine nieces and nephews and 22 great nieces and neph- ews. He was preceded in death by his father, Brother Tom Pfeff- er, a baby brother and his par- ents. A funeral will be celebrated at a later time.

Memorials may be made to the Priests Pension Fund c/o the Diocese of Des Moines 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines 50309.

Schools superintendent made her mark

Before completing high school and at the age of 16, a young girl was received into the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and grew to become a leader, an inspiration and a trusted friend to many.

The girl, known as Sara “Sally” Agnes McHugh, became Sister Dolores Marie McHugh, BVM. She died on her 87th birthday on April 24 at Caritas Center in Dubuque.

In her early years of ministry, she served as a teach- er in Chicago, in Glendale, California and in Kansas City. She had the courage to do a lot of difficult things and survived some very difficult challenges.

“Her passion for Cath- olic education, her work ethic – 110% all the time – her honesty, and ability to build relationships made a mark,” said BVM Presi- dent Sister Teri Hadro in a eulo- gy penned by Sister Mira Mosle, former Des Moines diocesan communications director.

Sister Dolores began serving in leadership for her religious community as vice president for eight years, then as president for eight years. She handled her love of God, passion for religi- ous life, intense love for each sister, compassion and caring,” said Sister Teri. She affirmed people and empowered them to become their best selves.

A virtual visitation and funeral rite of committal for Sister Dolores was April 30 with burial in the Mount Carmel Cemetery in Dubuque.

Deacon with gentle soul dies

Deacon William Schroeder, a husband of 60 years, father to six and longtime hospital chaplain, died April 27 at age 85.

“He was such a gen- tle soul,” said Deacon Dave O’Brien, head of the chaplain- cy program at MercyOne Des Moines. He and Deacon Schroed- er were ordained together in the Diocese of Davenport in 1988. “He was my mentor. I just loved him.”

Deacon Schroeder was born in Arcadia, Iowa in 1935. A former seminarian, he met his wife, Janis, at The Starline Ballroom in Carroll, Iowa, and married in 1959. He worked for Conel for 30 years, was a 4th Degree Knight with the Knights of Co- lumbus, served in the National Guard, was a volunteer firefight- er, a city council member and taught first aid.

He was ordained to the permanent diaconate by Bish- op Gerald O’Keefe. In the Di- ocese of Davenport, he served at St. Anthony Parish in Knox- ville and Sacred Heart Parish in Newton. He served Holy Spirit Parish in Carroll in the Diocese of Sioux City and at MercyOne West Lakes in West Des Moines.

“When he’d go in a room he’d be there to listen to them and pray with them,” said Deacon O’Brien. Deacon Schroeder won praise from both patients and nurses and other staff for his gentle ways.

“He had a great way with people who were going through a difficult time,” said Deacon O’Brien.

Due to the current coronavirus conditions, a cele- bration of life will be held at a later date. Memorials can be made to the family and sent to Caldwell Parrish Funeral Home in Urbandale.
Q. What is the process for decommissioning a church building?

A. We live in a world of recycling. Many religious and care facilities are emerging in the midst of old church buildings. It’s important to remember that a physical building is simply the “home” of the church in its religious and worshiping faithfulness. We have not found a specific procedure for decommissioning a church building.

Q. Can you explain what the Liturgy of the Hours is?

A. For many years, priests have been obligated to pray the Divine Office, now often called the Liturgy of the Hours, since the Vatican Council of the Canons of Canon Law. Many dioceses have reduced the number of parish churches because the population no longer sustains the use of a building which once served a lively parish community. We have to remember that the church is not in the business of maintaining museums. Sad as it may seem to some, even a once well-loved church building can outlive its usefulness.

Q. Have any popes visited nations during time of war?

A. In medieval times, when there were still the “Papal States” popes actually led troops into battle. Thank God that’s no longer the case. In more recent times, Pope Pius XII was in Rome during World War II, Italy was aligned with Germany and against the Allies. So Pius didn’t have to make a visit anywhere else. He was in the midst of the war. Happily, popes today try to prevent war in whatever ways they can. St. John Paul II commented, “When we go to war, everyone loses.”

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A. For many years, priests have been obligated to pray the Divine Office, now often called the Liturgy of the Hours. Believing in the teaching of the Vatican Council of the Canons of Canon Law, priests needed to complete those prayers every day. Since they were in Latin, very few ordinary Catholics took part in that prayer. Now, however, the Liturgy of the Hours is prayed in vernacular languages, and ordinary Catholics of all ages are encouraged to take part. There are a number of popularizations of this prayer available, which are available each month. One of them is called “Magnificat”. Another is called “Give Us This Day”. There are free apps available for tablets and smart phones. “Thy word” is another; “Laudato”. The church says that we observe the rising of the sun with morning prayer and the setting of the sun with evening prayer. Included in these popularizations and in the official texts are psalms, gospel and epistle readings, Old Testament sections, and suggested prayers of the faith. You might want to check out some of the offerings.

Got a question for “Ask a Priest” and its author, Father Ron Rolheiser? Send to rrolheiser@mdmocese.org.

By Father Ron Rolheiser

John Updike, after recovering from a serious illness, wrote a poem he called, Fever. It ends this way: But it is a truth long known that some secrets are hidden from God.

Deep down we already know this, but as a personal truth this is not something we appropriate in a classroom, from professors or mentors, or even from religious teaching. These just tell us that this is true, but knowing it does not itself impart wisdom. Wisdom is acquired, as Updike says, through a personal experience of suffering and success; and maybe in some instances they do. However, as a psychiatrist, I all can say is that in 40 years of clinical practice I have never seen it. I have only seen people transformed to higher levels of maturity through the experience of breaking down. Jesus, it would seem, agrees. Take, for example, the story of the little child in the Gospel when James and John come and ask whether they might be given the seats at his right hand and left hand when he comes into his glory. It is significant that he takes their question seriously. He does not (in this instance) chide them for seeking their own glory; what he does instead is redefine glory and the route to it. He asks them: “Can you drink the cup?” They, naïve as to what is asked, respond: “Yes, we can!” Jesus then adds to them something to which they are even more naïve. He assures them that they will drink the cup, but not necessarily in the way they desire. He tells them that they will still not receive the glory because being seated in glory is still contingent upon something else.

What is “the cup”? It is the path to glory and the route to it. Why might we not receive the glory even if we do drink the cup? Let me suggest two reasons. First, Jesus is also saying that deep suffering will not automatically bring wisdom. Why not? Because, while it is true that deep suffering can make us deep in bitterness, anger, envy, and hatred just as easily as it can make us deep in love, forgiveness, empathy, and wisdom. We can have the pain, and not get the wisdom.

Fever! The primary symptom of being infected with the coronavirus, Covid-19, is a high fever. Fever has now beset our world. The hope is that, after we have been infected with our bodily and psychiatric troubles, it will also reveal to us some of the secrets that are hidden from health. What are they? We don’t know yet. They will only be revealed inside the fever.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is pastor of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

Guest Column

By Deacon Randy Kiel

But the quickest expressions of love all to be internally interpreted are those of anger and disapproval. As children, we learned these emotions so quickly because, to our little minds, they were what we experienced whenever angi and disapproval were exhibited.

These begin all children’s sense of insecurity. The sense of security of many of us began with the simplicity of a smile. This is why we long to see an authentic smile as it communicates more than any smiles, relationships are impaired.

As the father of four children, I have sat for hours, long ago and even still, and stared at the babies in my arms and even now the adult children in front of me. Sometimes I just smile at them, not needing anything in return but just to be present.
Divided court reexamines insurance coverage of contraceptives

By Carol Zimmerman

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The justices of the U.S. Supreme Court seemed divided May 6 over Trump administration rules that give employers more ability to opt out of providing contraceptive coverage in their health plans.

The argument, part of a handful that will take place by teleconference during the coronavirus restrictions, took another look at an issue that has come before the court already and again, as in previous terms, it highlighted the Little Sisters of the Poor, the order of women religious who care for the elderly poor.

“There are very strong interests on both sides here,” Kavanaugh said in the May 6 argument, which lasted 40 minutes. “And the institutions who care for the elderly poor and ensuring women’s access to health care and preventive services.

“So the question becomes: Who decides how to balance those interests?” he asked. The Little Sisters of the Poor, who have been down this road before, were represented by Becket, a religious liberty law firm.

To recap their journey: In 2013, religious groups and houses of worship were granted a religious exemption by the Supreme Court from the government’s mandate in the Affordable Care Act to include coverage of contraceptives in their employees’ health plans. Three years later, religious nonprofit groups challenged the requirement that they comply with the mandate and the court sent the cases back to the lower courts with instructions for the federal government and the challengers to try to work out a solution agreeable to both sides. Then in 2017, religious groups were given further protection from the contraceptive mandate through an executive order issued by President Donald Trump requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to write a comprehensive exemption to benefit religious ministries, including the Little Sisters of the Poor, from the contraceptive mandate.

HHS provided this exemption in 2018, but several states challenged it, including California, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, saying HHS didn’t have the power to give this exemption.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey obtained a nationwide injunction against the rules protecting religious objectors from the contraceptive mandate; that injunction was then upheld by the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Philadelphia.

This is where the Little Sisters come back because they appealed the circuit court’s ruling and asked the Supreme Court to step in.

Three U.S. bishops condemn racism in context of COVID-19 pandemic

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The chairmen of three boards of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have issued a joint statement expressing their deep concern about incidents of racism and xenophobia against Americans of Asian and Pacific Island heritage amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The May 5 statement was released by Archbishop Nelson J. Perez of Philadelphia, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Cultural Diversity in the Church; Bishop Oscar A. Solis of Salt Lake City, chairman of the USCCB’s Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs; and Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.

“The pandemic resulting from the new coronavirus continues to sweep across the world, impacting our everyday behavior, practices, perceptions, and the way we interact with one another,” the statement said.

“While we have been heartened by the countless acts of charity and bravery that have been modeled by many, we are also alarmed to note the increase in reported incidents of bullying and verbal and physical assaults, particularly against Americans of Asian and Pacific Island heritage,” the bishops said.

They pointed out that “a high percentage of Asian Americans work in the health care sector -- risking their own health to save lives” and that “some have experienced rejection and requests to be treated ‘by someone else.’”

The bishops also emphasized that “way before state and local ordinances brought to a halt almost every economic sector in the country, communities across the country -- from Oakland, California, to New York City -- reported a sharp decline in the patronage for businesses owned and operated by Asian Americans,” adding that these are only “a few painful examples of the continuing harassment and racial discrimination suffered by Asians, Pacific Islanders and others in our country.”

The bishops said they find those actions unacceptable and called on Catholics, fellow Christians and all people of goodwill to help them combat such acts of racism and xenophobia.

“They are attacks against human life and dignity and are contrary to Gospel values,” the statement said. “As we wrote in our (2018) pastoral letter ‘Open Wide Our Hearts,’ racism is ‘a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God.’”

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**Pope encourages people to rediscover the need for prayer**

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The coronavirus pandemic is a "favorable time to rediscover the need for prayer in our lives; let us open the doors of our hearts to the love of God our father, who will listen to us," Pope Francis said.

At his weekly general audience May 6, the pope began a new series of audience talks about prayer, which is "the breath of faith, its most appropriate expression, like a cry arising from the heart."

The pope's audience began with reading the story from the Gospel of Mark about Bartimaeus, the blind man, who repeatedly cries out to Jesus for healing. The pope said that all of the Gospel characters who ask Jesus for help, he finds Bartimaeus "the most likable of all." "At the top of his voice," Bartimaeus cries out, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And he does so over and over again, annoying the people around him, the pope noted.

"Jesus speaks to him and asks him to express what he wants -- this is important -- and so his cry becomes a request, 'I want to see,'" the pope said.

Faith, he said, "is having two hands raised (and) a voice that cries out to implore the gift of salvation."

Humility, as the Catholic Church says, is essential for authentic prayer, the pope added, because prayer arises from knowing "our state of precariousness, our continual thirst for God." Obviously, the pope said, Christians are not the only ones who pray because every man and woman has within themselves the desire for mercy and aid.

"As we continue on our pilgrimage of faith, may we, like Bartimaeus, always persever in prayer, especially in our darkest hours, and ask the Lord with confidence: 'Jesus have mercy on me. Jesus, have mercy on us!'"

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**Atlanta's new archbishop installed in quiet ceremony**

By Andrew Nelson & Samantha Smith

ATLANTA (CNS) -- In the silence of the Cathedral of Christ the King, Archbishop Gregory J. Hartmayer was installed May 6 as leader of the 1.2 million Catholics in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, telling believers they must care for each other without limit.

Speaking for the first time as the seventh archbishop of Atlanta, he said: "This cathedra is empty. And yet it is filled with the presence of the guiding force of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised his disciples he would send them to give them the gifts they needed to continue to guide his flock. And so, the tradition continues."

The installation Mass looked unlike any other in the 64-year history of the church in Atlanta. It over-turned what's typically a ceremony of ancient prayers, attended by throngs of people spilling out of pews, with civic and interfaith leaders meeting the new spiritual leader. Amid the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 1,300 people and infected some 30,500 in Georgia, the group in the cathedral was limited to a dozen people, keeping apart from each other, replacing handshakes and hugs with bows, with one participant wearing a mask.

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**Fischer celebrated 100th birthday**

Dolores Marie Berens Fischer, born April 25, 1920, was born in Dunlap, Iowa and moved to a farm in Neola at the age of seven. She started school at St. Joseph in Neola where she met her husband, Con, who will turn 99 in July. Dolores lived a half mile west of Neola and walked every day to school. Con lived four miles south of Neola and rode his horse to school. They graduated in 1938, 82 years ago.

After graduating, Do-
lores worked in Omaha as a nan-
ny for two years, then attended Van Sant School of Business in Omaha for one year. Con also attended Van Sant and became an accountant for Internation-
al Harvester, giving him the op-
portunity to work in many states. While in Chicago he would take the train on Friday night and get off in Bentley, Iowa, to see Do-
lores, then back to Chicago on Sunday night.

In September, 1943, Con returned to the family farm near Bentley and became engaged to Dolores in 1946. Dolores continued to work in Omaha at Paxton and Gallagher Coffee Company. They wed at St. Patrick Church in Neola on Aug. 9, 1947.

They lived on the fam-
ily farm until 2013 when they moved to Underwood. They are liv-
ing at Bethany Heights, Coun-
cil Bluffs, Iowa. They have three children, Mary Jo (Frank) Dobbyneth, Dorothy (Michael) Mauro and John (Mary Martin), 8 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren.
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Supporting the camp’s Annual Funds provides ongoing support for many areas, including camper sponsorships, medical supplies, specialized camper meals, and camper transportation. Gifts to these funds will help fund a contagious amount of smiles each year as children and adults with disabilities participate in adaptive programs.

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SCAN to learn more about the Knights

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