When a young priest from Ghana, Father Clement Owusu, traveled to the United States in order to serve God’s people, another missionary priest and Iowa native, Father Paul Koch, warmly welcomed him.

“Father Paul helped me to transition into a new environment,” he said.

With tears streaming down his face, Father Owusu shared at Father Koch’s Nov. 27 funeral that the retired priest had befriended him, shared books with him, and in a lovingly and grandfatherly way, helped him settle into his new ministry in western Iowa.

“We grew fond of each other,” said Father Owusu. “I stand here today to thank God for making you a channel of his grace and mercy in the lives of many people.”

Father Paul Koch died Nov. 23 at age 86.

Born in the Shelby County town of Panama, from which many religious vocations came, Father Paul Koch followed his inspiration and big brother, the late Father Eugene Koch, into religious life. He graduated from Loras College and St. Bernard’s Major Seminary, both in Dubuque, and was ordained a priest in 1961.

He taught at Dowling High School in West Des Moines for two years before joining the St. James Society to work in Latin America in parishes without priests. He served in Peru and Bolivia, where he was a pastor of a parish with 35 missions.

“It was challenging and, of course, it was just fantastic,” Father Koch recalled earlier this year.

At age 75, he returned to the Diocese of Des Moines to retire, but was asked to assist the Hispanic community in Council Bluffs, where he served for five years. He later moved to Harlan, where he helped with Masses and celebrated Sunday Mass in Mondamin.

Earlier this year, he celebrated his 60th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood.

“I’m not famous for having founded anything or any big idea,” he said. “I was just a simple parish priest who loved it dearly.”

But the humble pastor will be remembered for more, said Father Owusu.

“He was honest and kind. Father Paul lived a life of modest poverty. He was a down-to-earth person who had a big heart for the poor. He was an apostle to the poor,” Father Owusu said of his friend.

Father Koch was devoted to the Mass.

“The sacrifice of the holy Mass was at the center of Father Paul’s life as a priest,” said Father Owusu. “Father Paul united his suffering with Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass and he drew lots of strength from the holy Mass.”

Concluding the homily at Father Koch’s Mass of Christian Burial, Father Owusu said to his friend: “I appreciated the wisdom you have passed on to me. May the angels of God joyfully lead you to the kingdom where there will be no pain. Rest well until we meet again.”
Pope Francis concluded the Year of St. Joseph this month on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in typically understated fashion. He made a private visit to the Good Samaritan Home in Rome, a community dedicated to supporting women and mothers in crisis, including those exposed to violence, and with women who may have no place to lay their head. He encouraged them not to be afraid of their own misery: “Jesus likes reality as it is, undisturbed; the Lord does not look for people who cover their soul, their heart with makeup.”

The Holy Father will not renegotiate St. Joseph to a back shelf of saintly statues; he continues to teach about the role of Jesus’ adoptive father in the mystery of salvation, locating his paternal presence to those within our own households. Joseph shows us the unvarnished truth about who we are called to be: men and women who are not afraid to let their hearts and souls be exposed in our own vulnerabil- ity. In the same vein, Joseph is our source of refuge, protection, and encouragement for others. Joseph continues to be an example for men and women who are called to offer steadfast presence to those within our own households. At the same time, men are to weave a source of refuge, protection, and encouragement for others. Joseph continues to be an example for men and women who are called to offer steadfast presence to those within our own households.

Fabrice Hadjadji (to whom I am indebted for some of my inspiration here), distinguishes St. Joseph’s presence versus absence in the Christmas Season. In the parable of the shepherds, Joseph is absent from the scene with the baby Jesus, yet he is present with Mary and the child in the manger (Luke 2:14). If Joseph is absent, surely it is not because he has gone off to the local waterhole to watch sheep; it is not because he has released cause his pride has been wounded by the appearance of so many noble guests. Why was Joseph absent? He was gathering the more information supplies to make the tempo- rarily lodging more habitable, or hunting for more food to supply their family and new friend. Natural and spiritual fathers are called to make unus- a habitable place for others and their looking for reassurance and support their default mode of living. They take leave only to earn and gather the resources that will help others flourish, or to respond temporally to the needs of individuals who hold greater claim on their attention and skills. They do not seek to impose their will or to make their presence felt, but with daily integrity and consis- tency of life, with sparse words that convey the most profound visi- bles affection and delight in simpl- ly “being with,” they represent God as unflagging witnesses to the story of salvation, offering their offspring and those entrusted to their care. They practice and are present, acting as a com- panion, which is to be the sig- nature feature of the domestic and larger church family.

I recently interviewed for my radio show Kendall Gen- esser of Assumption Parish in Granger, Iowa. I commend to you his words: “Let this be your invitation to groups who are Groups: A Different Kind of War, to be that available elec- tro-nic booker on Jan. 1, and in print March 2 (2026). Kendall is very transparent and self-exposing he was a Navy fighter pilot who nobly chose to serve his country, but who at the same moment deeply and profoundly and who was forced to face his own weaknesses, and who had no choice but to do his job to do his job not in the workshop, but by choosing to be present, day in, day out, to lend his voice to the story God was writing with their lives. St. Joseph’s special year has conclud- ed, but with the encouragement of St. Joseph, we can be present in and to God’s house, Christ’s Church. He has not let the build- ing down.

Kendall describes espe- cifically the challenges he faced. He had no shortage of ego, even as he describes himself as an average pilot. But he also acknowledges that his own will took precedence over God’s will to the dream of glory and the next adrenalin rush. Effectively, for much of his son’s upbringing, he was an absent dad who chose not to speak to single-parent status. Only the “grounding” that came in the wake of his multiple sclerosis brought him back to his senses. Through the long road of treatment and further professional setbacks, he eventually discov- ered God’s mercy and his true vo- cation to help guide his family to heaven.

Kendall poignantly de- scribes how his son Nick benignly absolved him for his prolonged absences; nonetheless, despite the wisdom gained through weakness Kendall’s past choices may have exacted a cost on his son’s sense of identity. But this same God is patient, and Kendall’s now fervent faith and his renewed commitment to Jesus will not doubt be a great source of grace for his family, parish, and larger community that might heal many wounds, even in the end result in his own recovery from MS.

Kendall’s story has been grafted into the narrative of Jesus, who is God, and the fervent faith of Kendall, so that his Son, who is revealed to us at Christmas. Kendall is now free to offer witness as God asks all earth-ly fathers and sons (and mothers and daughters). He calls things by name, opens himself to conver- sion, suffers whatever it costs to become God’s will as the dreamer of salvation, and of whom God has entrusted him. When good news is proclaimed and God’s proposal is accepted as a gift, we are no longer our own personal way, then others can likewise locate their own stories and shape their own God’s saving plan for all humanity.

The drama of birth, life, and death has countless connec- tions that we only come to per- ceive in time, all of which take on new luster as a child is born. Bishop William Joensen is a kind shepherd by whom the souls are guided and Magi, and eventually settles down for what appears to be a rather unremarkable life in the home of Nazareth. Jesus and Mary radiate holiness that attracts hearts and makes the angels sing. And through all, there is the un- likely role of a guy called Nick, le- vel just man who would serve as husband, father, and protector of his family, a role that he chose to do so, to do his job not in the workshop, but by choosing to be present, day in, day out, to lend his voice to the story God was writing with their lives. St. Joseph’s special year has conclud- ed, but with the encouragement of St. Joseph, we can be present in and to God’s house, Christ’s Church. He has not let the build- ing down.

The Catholic Mirror
December 17, 2021

El Papa Francisco con- cluyó el Año de San José este mes en la Fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción de una forma típicamente modesta. Hizo una visita privada al Hogar del Buen Samaritano en Roma, expresó apoyo a los jóvenes que están viviendo situación de crisis, de abuso de sustancias o que simplemente no tienen un lugar donde recostar su cabeza. Ellos exhortó a que no tuvieran miedo de su propia miseria: “A Jesús le gusta tal vez un poco más de simplicidad y un poco más de maquillaje,”

El Santo Padre no va a relegar a San José a la repisa tras- tesa de estrellas inatas; él continúa emermandóse sobre el papel del padre adoptivo de Jesús en el mis- terio de la salvación, colocando su lugar paternal en el hogar de la fe. José se convierte en causa de este momento sobre lo que estamos llamados a ser: hombres y mujeres que no tememos miedo de dejar que sus corazones y sus almas estén ex- puestos dentro de nuestra propia vulnerabilidad. En el proceso, podemos aprender de su estilo de vida: “como un piloto promedio. Pero él también reconoce que su propia forma personal, entonces el costo que tiene el estar presente, day in, day out, to lend his voice to the story God was writing with their lives. St. Joseph’s special year has conclud- ed, but with the encouragement of St. Joseph, we can be present in and to God’s house, Christ’s Church. He has not let the build- ing down.

St. Joseph has not left the building.
Alpha offers small-group, faith-sharing experience

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Alpha is taking root and growing in and beyond St. Mary Parish in Avoca.

An international program, Alpha consists of a series of eleven gatherings that explore Christianity. Each two-hour session begins with a group meal, then a video focusing on questions of faith followed by small group discussions.

Parishioners at St. Mary Parish in Avoca have seen fruit from the seeds they’ve planted with Alpha: non-Catholics fostered rich discussions with parishioners; participants joined from Canada and Trinidad; one participant’s cousin joined and has since returned to the faith and brought Alpha to her parish; and Alpha may be offered at a county jail for the incarcerated.

Pat Martin participated in Alpha with his daughter and son-in-law.

“We shared a lot of different things. We seemed to get closer,” he said.

Mary Pearson said it was rewarding to see the support participants shared with each other, and their openness in asking for prayers.

“It’s a blessing to see that,” she said.

Jon Poore, a detention supervisor at a county jail who is in charge of programming and training, participated in an Alpha series and then led one. Now, he’s working on making it available to the incarcerated.

There are already some faith-based programs established there and the videos include people who have been incarcerated and share their stories.

“I think there’s a lot of value to it. You could start it in the jail and then you could go find it out in the community,” Poore said.

“We’re going to plant the seed here, but we want it to grow out there. That’s my big push for programming. What can we start here that they can find outside as well?”

Parish hopes to build invitational culture

Alpha is returning to St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines after a year’s suspension due to the pandemic.

Beginning in January, anyone in the community can come to a series of small-group gatherings, where they’ll have a meal, watch a video and discuss faith.

“It’s kind of a big hug from Jesus,” said Alison Zirbel, Alpha coordinator at St. Francis.

“We felt this was something that offered head knowledge but a lot of heart, too. It’s a good reminder and refresher about how much Jesus loves us.”

It’s hoped that the program builds community at the state’s largest Catholic parish.

“This is a big parish and there are lots of Masses. There are people who don’t know each other,” said Vivian Day, the parish’s Adult Faith Formation director.

“I think Alpha provides that opportunity for people to become friends.”

Zirbel hopes Alpha helps her parish create an invitational culture where people are invited to each other to all kinds of activities.

“The ultimate goal would be through that invitational culture, we are missionary and we are reaching out and introducing people to Jesus who have not been introduced to him yet,” she said.

Anyone interested in joining the program should email alpha@stfrancischurch.org or call 515-440-1030.

On-ramp provides safe space for open, honest dialogue

Alpha is kind of like an on-ramp to learning more about Christianity.

“No matter where you are in your faith journey, you will learn something,” said Amy Thorson, Alpha USA/Iowa Network director.

More than 100 churches of varying faith traditions are running Alpha in Iowa, and about a third of them are Catholic, she said.

Some run the program for adults, while some use it for their youth.

Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny uses Alpha for its ninth grade confirmation preparation, where it represents the basics of the Catholic faith “with an emphasis on heart knowledge that leads to head knowledge,” said Tom Primmer, director of Faith Formation.

“This way, we’re proposing an invitation to a personal relationship with Jesus and his Church to the youth, rather than imposing or conferring the faith upon them,” he said. “It is our hope that each individual youth takes ownership of her or his own relationship with Jesus as they understand and meet him in their daily lives.”

Thorson hopes every parish tries Alpha.
Retired farmer discovers a passion for making rosaries

Nearly 8,000 rosaries donated in multiple countries

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Raised on a farm in Carroll County near Willey, hardly a day went by when Leon Kennebeck wasn’t involved in helping his dad with the family farming operation.

“When I was a sophomore in high school, [my dad] got sick and I stayed home from high school and helped him farm after that,” Kennebeck said on the Dec. 3 episode of Bishop William Joensen’s weekly radio show.

But at about age 60, Kennebeck’s hips began causing him problems.

“I couldn’t get my work done,” Leon said, despite help from his sons.

Leon and wife, Donna, shifted gears, focusing on retirement. They moved to Lake Panorama and became members of St. Cecilia Parish in Panora. They spent their days enjoying the beauty of nature. Leon also took up fishing crappies, something he couldn’t partake in before — they bite in the spring and fall when he was previously busy with planting and harvest.

But Leon was faced with a new reality in retirement.

“I had nothing physically to take up my time and develop anxiety,” he said.

The doctor had given Leon pills for anxiety, but he didn’t like taking them.

Donna suggested he start making rosaries to keep his hands and mind busy in a positive way.

Initially, Leon dismissed the idea because he thought his hands were too big for such work. But Donna went ahead and ordered a rosary-making kit anyway, which included beads and pliers.

“And once I got started, I just can’t quit,” Leon admitted.

It wasn’t easy at first. It took him nearly six hours to complete his first rosary. But finally, he found his groove and nailed the technique. It now takes him just one hour and 20 minutes to complete one rosary. Each rosary has a miraculous medal attached and the centers feature the Divine Mercy image.

His rosaries have been donated to people living in Haiti, India, Ghana and the Holy Land. During his radio interview, Leon told Bishop Joensen he had made more than 7,700 rosaries to date.

“I have a calendar right on the side of my desk,” Leon said. “When I finish, I’ll mark it down. So from 2005 to now I have all those calendars and I can go back and [see dates of completion]."

He donates almost all of his rosaries. He even created a special rosary — the purgatory rosary.

“It’s made like an ordinary rosary with different colored beads,” Leon said. “Think of a certain kind of rosary, they pay for the parts.”

As owners Ryan and Garrett Burchett faced tough decisions along the way, they chose to put customers and staff first at every point. Their strategy helped itatas retreat center, which they sell to raise money for the costs of expansion and upkeep.

“Jesus [told St. Gertrude] he would release 1,000 souls every time you prayed that prayer,” Leon said. “That’s very powerful.”

The purgatory rosary has gained interest.

“I had a request from a priest from Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He wanted 1,000 purgatory rosaries,” Leon said. “I was able to get those made in 11 months. That’s the most I’ve ever made in one year.”

Though the Kennebecks have been living in the Diocese of Des Moines for nearly 18 years, they still frequently return to Carroll County. Leon helps his sons farm, and they stop in at the Catholic retreat center, Dominus Trinitatus, located on 33 acres of land the Kennebecks donated to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity.

Leon donates his purgatory rosaries to the Dominus Trinitatus retreat center, which they sell to raise money for the costs of expansion and upkeep.

“I let God pay me,” Leon said. “I’ve never charged to make a single rosary. The only time I charge is if someone requests a certain kind of rosary, they pay for the parts.”

The Catholic Mirror  December 17, 2021

It takes about 80 minutes for Leon Kennebeck to make a rosary. Most of them he donates to various places including the Dominus Trinitas retreat center that sits on land he used to farm in Carroll County. Hear his story on Making it Personal with Bishop Joensen at iowacatholicradio.com/personal.
Youth, chaperones give NCYC high marks

Youth from Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine shared time with Bishop William Joensen.

The faithful will go to Catholic Youth Camp – home of Catholic Youth Camp – received an early Christmas present.

Thanks to a $30,000 gift, children going to the camp and retreat center will see an old playground replaced with a new sand volleyball court, a large pergola and a seating area where they can gather for yard games, enjoy the shade or have small group discussions.

The donor, who wants to remain anonymous, wishes to see the community respond in kind and is challenging STM to see their donation matched dollar for dollar by Dec. 31.

"In the midst of this, we were so uplifted by the youth at St. Ambrose Cathedral," said "I was anxious that I wouldn't connect with NCYC like I did in 2019. The feeling of peace I felt as I let go of everything except being there re-assured me that I still have God looking out for me."

A 10-year-old nephew died around Thanksgiving two years ago.

"We were looking to fund a project that could help us express the memory of both nephews. They both loved Jesus."

- Anonymous Donor

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary parishioners sported their Blessed Gorgio Frassati hats upon arrival. The youth prayed to him for eight Our Lady of the Holy Rosary parishioners sported their Blessed Gorgio Frassati hats upon arrival.

The group took Blessed Frassati as its patron to prepare for the trip. The youth prayed to him for eight months of fellowship and fundraising to journey to NCYC.

Maria Haas, of St. John and Paul Parish in Altoona, chaperoned 14 teenagers at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis in November, a fun experience given she first attended as a teen herself.

"I was going through the motions of being a good Catholic and I'm so grateful for this opportunity," said one youth from St. John and Paul Parish.

Rossalyne Johansen, of Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood, said she’d love to go again.

"I learned a lot from there and I definitely got closer to God and that came home with me," she said.

Her father, chaperone Eric Johansen, said 14 kids from their parish enjoyed the trip.

"It’s a very unique, energizing experience," he said.

Since returning home, "I’ve really seen more of a commitment," he said.

Laura Hansen, of Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine, enjoyed watching the youth she chaperoned realize that "life isn’t just about them. It’s a bigger picture, being surrounded by that many Catholic individuals."

One of her students, John, said, "My heart felt ablaze during the songs. You could feel everyone’s energy singing and dancing to songs for Jesus. Hearing the words and feeling the energy lit a fire in my heart. I hope to carry that fire throughout the next year."

Another student, Tal, said "I was anxious that I wouldn’t connect with NCYC like I did in 2019. The feeling of peace I felt as I let go of everything except being there re-assured me that I still have God looking out for me."

FEARLESS REMINDER

With Dec. 25 falling on a Saturday, there are two Mass obligations to satisfy on Christmas weekend: Christmas and Sunday. One Mass satisfies one obligation. The faithful will go to two Masses to fulfill the obligations.

Also, Jan. 1, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, is not a holy day of obligation.

Questions? Go to dmdioce.org/worship for details.

Creating a will is one of the most impactful ways to support the people and causes that are most important to you. We hope you will consider Dowling Catholic High School as you think about your legacy.

To learn more about simple and tax smart ways to help DCHS continue to develop Leaders for Life, Centered on Christ long into the future, please contact Julie Bell, Advancement Director, at 515.222.1048 or visit our website: www.dowlingcatholic.plannedgiving.org
Jan. 15 Saturday
Prayer Rally for Life

DES MOINES -- Join Pulse Life Advocates (formerly Iowans for LIFE) on sidewalk outside Planned Parenthood, 1000 Army Post Road, Des Moines for Prayer Rally for Life and Liberty at 11 a.m. Speakers include pro-life advocates and community faith leaders. Please do not park in Planned Parenthood’s parking lot.

Jan. 25 Tuesday
Young Catholic Network

WEST DES MOINES -- All young adults are invited to come to the next gathering of the Young Catholic Network in downtown Des Moines. You can look forward to networking, complimentary drinks and appetizers, and always a guest speaker with tremendous insight into living our Catholic faith in the professional world. For more information contact Justin White at 515-237-5098 or jwhite@dmdiocese.org.

Alpha is coming

WEST DES MOINES -- St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines is beginning Alpha in January, open to anyone in the Des Moines metro area. Coming together once a week for 12 weeks, people from every walk of life explore the big questions in a friendly, open and non-judgmental environment. Plenty of care goes into creating a comfortable and welcoming space, open to all. Each week includes a time to connect with others, hear a short talk on an element of the Christian faith and a chance for each person to share their own questions with the group. Alpha builds community and opens our doors to our neighbors. Alpha isn’t so much a course, but an experience! For more information or to register call 515-440-1030.

Cathedral Holy Hours

All are welcome to join in an hour of Eucharistic adoration and evening prayer on Mondays from 5-6 p.m. Prayer will be livestreamed on the Diocesan Facebook page at Face book.com/dmdiocese.

Adoration at St. Augustin

St. Augustin Parish is looking for people to help with adoration in its chapel. To assist at the perpetual adoration chapel, which is open to people of all parishes, contact Janis Falk at janis@staugustin.org, or call the parish at 515-255-3175 to learn more or sign up.

Friends, Romans, Iowans

Be sure to check out the Diocesan young-adult focused podcast “Friends, Romans, Iowans.” Currently in the second season, this podcast aims to connect the Diocese by hosting casual conversations with Catholic leaders from around southwest Iowa. Episodes can be found wherever you get your podcasts, or at our website at dmdiocese.org/FRIpod.

Center for Social Ministry

Faith & Racial Equity: Exploring Power & Privilege

DES MOINES -- This online program starting at 3 p.m. on Feb. 6 guides you on a personal journey of exploring your attitudes, assumptions, and choices about racial equity. The group meets Sundays through March 27 from 3-5 p.m. with a retreat on Jan. 30. Facilitators are Jane Alderman and Dixie Webb. Cost is $30. Register online at centersocialministry.org.

Happy anniversary

Parishioners of Immaculate Conception Church in St. Marys, Iowa celebrated their parish’s 150+1 anniversary on Oct. 17 with Bishop William Joensen. In 1870, a deed was obtained and land secured for the construction of a small wooden Catholic church first named “The German Church.” In 1899, the current church building was constructed across the street from the original worship site. In 1911, when the Diocese of Des Moines was established, the incorporation papers for the church referred to it as the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

CFM honors longtime music minister with gift to their parish

Members of the Christian Family Movement on Nov. 28 donated a portrait of St. Cecilia in memory of Marsha Sparks, organist at St. Joseph in Winterset for 45 years. They were joined for the dedication by members of the Spark family and choir members of St. Joseph. Marsha and her husband, Jim, were members of the first CFM group in the parish.

Our Lady of Guadalupe honored across the Diocese

Thousands of Hispanic Catholics celebrated Our Lady of Guadalupe in the days leading up to Dec. 12. At left, St. Ambrose Cathedral was filled with the faithful, who walked from Our Lady of the Americas Parish for the rosary and midnight Mass.

St. Albert athletic director honored

Longtime St. Albert Catholic School athletic director Ken Schreiber was named the 2022 High School Athletic Director of the Year for the state by the Iowa High School Athletic Directors Association. He will be honored during the state wrestling tournament Feb. 19 and at the state athletic directors’ convention in late March.

Schreiber graduated from St. Albert in 1974 and has served the Council Bluffs school since he began teaching there in 1987.
Endowment is a high priority for those who worship at parishes close to Catholic schools and a lower priority when distanced from a Catholic school. Bishop Joensen and his campaign leadership team, which is comprised of lay and clergy leaders from every region in the Diocese, listened to this feedback and took these responses to discernment.

As a result, the campaign will feature “regionalized case statements” that allow for funds raised at each parish to be allocated to campaign initiatives based on parish proximity to a Catholic school. For example, 50% of funds raised at an urban parish with a school will go toward the Catholic Education Endowment versus 10% of the funds raised at a rural parish with no access to a school.

To make this possible, a large portion of the funds for the Catholic Schools Endowment need to be raised during the silent phase. Thanks to the support galvanized around Catholic Education Endowment in this phase, thanks to the support, the Catholic Education Endowment versus 10% of the funds raised at a rural parish with no access to a school.

“Jumpstarting the Catholic Schools Endowment in this way is a testament to the work of the Holy Spirit within our Diocese,” Bishop Joensen said. “We are blessed to have so many enterprising leaders who share in our mission to sow the seeds of faith, especially among our children.”

Bishop Joensen and the campaign leadership have been working on the silent phase all of 2021. They will continue approaching more of the Diocese’s closest supporters through the rest of the year. Their focus remains on bolstering the funds going toward the Catholic Schools Endowment.

Parish phase to begin in January

The parish phase of the campaign will unfold throughout 2022 in three staggered “waves.” Thirteen parishes will begin preparations for the first wave in January. Parishes in waves one and two will begin preparations in April and July, respectively.

Pastors and leaders from nearly all 80 parishes attended in-person and virtual campaign orientation meetings in October and November. The meetings introduced how the campaign will be run at the parish level. The meetings also outlined the steps parishes will need to take ahead of their wave.

For additional information about the campaign, visit the campaign website: dmdiocese.org/ignite.

Prayer Rally for Life & Liberty

Defending the Pre-born and Praying for God’s Healing For Our Nation

ALL FAITH TRADITIONS WELCOME!

Prior to the rally, people are encouraged to gather in their own faith communities for prayer and worship before coming together as the one family of God at 11am.

Signs will be provided or you may bring your own.

Prayer Rally for Life & Liberty

Endorsing the Pro-Life and Praying for God’s Healing For Our Nation

JOIN US:

• Saturday January 15, 2022
• 11:00am-12:00pm
• On the sidewalk in front of Planned Parenthood of Planned Parenthood
• 1000 East Army Post Road, Des Moines. (Just north of Southridge Mall)
• Saturday January 15, 2022

Speakers include Pro-Life advocates and community faith leaders.

ALL FAITH TRADITIONS WELCOME!

By Alejandro Morales Contributing Writer

The “Ignite!” Campaign reached $11 million this month, a fundraising milestone that gives the $45 million effort great momentum ahead of its public roll-out in January.

Bishop William Joensen extends a warm thank you to everyone who has given generously to the $45 million Catholic Schools Endowment campaign, $3.5 million for parish retirement, $2 million for priest retirement, $25 million to create an endowment for those who have given generously to the Catholic Church in Southwest Iowa,” he said.

Campaign goals include $25 million to create an endowment that will support families who need financial aid to send their children to Catholic schools, $5 million for seminarian education, $2 million for priest retirement, $3.5 million for parish vibrancy and renewal, and $7.5 million for parish share. Parish share funds will be returned directly to parishes for local projects.

A unique approach

Prior to moving forward with the “Ignite!” Campaign, the Diocese conducted a comprehensive campaign planning study. Over 1,200 clergy and lay leaders were involved in the planning study revealed that the campaign goals and structure.

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Adoption is the answer to unplanned children

By Maggie DeWitte

Guest Column

Dear Editor:
The rosary is a powerful prayer. The four sets of mysteries portray a meditative walk into Jesus’ life. One way to concentrate while praying is to consider a virtue when picturing the Mystery. For the first Joyful Mystery, the Annunciation, reflect humility and great moral courage.

I heard about a different way to pray the rosary and thought I’d pass it on. Simply stated, read the passage in the Scriptures that relates to the Mystery. (Look those up in your Bible and mark them before you start your rosary.) The reading will give you a clearer idea of what took place.


Some people claim that it is unfair to bring a child into this world who would be unwanted, and that abortion is the answer. Why would someone think that violent death (what is abortion is) is preferable to an opportunity to live life to the fullest?

Some well-known adoptees have had a big impact, such as: the founder of Apple Computer, Steve Jobs; John Lennon andYoko Ono; Prime Minister Boris Johnson; Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg; and President Donald Trump. On the other hand, there has been no negative impact from a child who was adopted.

Guest Column

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I could never be a literary crit-
ic, not because I can’t tell good literature from bad, but because I lack the hard edge. If I dislike a book, I hesitate to say so.

Conversely, if I like a book, I tend to be more its cheerleader than its criti-
cal assessor. Be that as it may, I want to strongly endorse Ashlee Eiland’s new book, *Human(Kind) – How Reclaiming Human Worth and Embracing Radical Kindness Will Bring Us Back Together*.

There is not some sentimental, feel good book on how we need to be kind to each other. It’s more like a Sermon on the Mount for our time, or at least how we might receive grace where there’s been grievance.”

For example, one of her stories recounts an incident in which she went out to a restaurant with some Asian friends for a Korean specialty of pork dumplings. The evening went well and driving back from the restaurant and laughing with each other, she felt “on an even longer wave” from her. “For the first time, I didn’t feel as if I had to qualify the conversation with a reminder to my friends – or to myself – of my actual race. … Before that day, I felt I had to tip toe out of one world into an-
other. But that kind of posture, I realized, is laced with shame. It allows the ‘not ful-
til’ narrative and the rampant tendency to per-

erizing what is oftentimes the best part

about sharing our lives with one another.”

We need her narrative. We live in a time of bitterness and division, when civ-
ily discourse and respect have broken down, where we demonize each other, where in-
justice, inequality, and racism still define us more than their opposites, and where kind-

ness is often seen as a weakness. Moreover, others doesn’t work out the way we want. But maybe it’s worth showing up anyway.”

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theolo-
gian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his web-
site ronrolheiser.com. Now on Facebook: facebook.com/ronrolheiser
Victim Assistance Advocate
The diocese’s Victim Assistance Advocate is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps victims of abuse of minors by clergy through a complaint process and in seeking support and counseling services.
He can be reached at 515-286-2024 or Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov.

Human dignity invites listening, accompaniment, unconditional love
By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer
We live in a culture that can broaden our understanding of issues and yet be a source of myopia which reduces our view of one another and limits us, said Bishop William Joensen.

Our call then, he said, is to stretch ourselves to enter the mystery around us, “hopefully always accompanying each other, finding those with whom we feel a kindred spirit.”

Having accepted the invitation to speak to the First Friday Breakfast Club, a group for gay, bisexual and transgender men, Bishop Joensen referred to Pope Francis’ 2020 encyclical Fratelli Tutti (On Fraternity and Social Friendship). In it, Pope Francis said no one should function as an isolated unit or “monad.” To bear the image of God means that we are inherently in relation to others. To be a person means to be part of a people.

“No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love,” Pope Francis wrote. “This is part of the mystery of authentic human existence.”

Recognizing the human dignity of each person is the basis of genuine community, Bishop Joensen said.

“What does the inalienability of human dignity entail?” he asked. There are two polar interpretations: the maximal version supports an individual’s claim that the state owes one everything. The minimal version upholds one’s “right” to be left alone, honoring subjective decisions that cannot be judged right or wrong by the community, even if it means the termination of life.

A Christian view of the human person does not concur with either view. To participate in the common good means the community has a claim over us to offer ourselves and our gifts to others, rather than focusing on what is owed us. It also means that every decision we make impacts others, and so our sense of what it means to possess human dignity involves both rights and duties.

Recognizing human dignity and all that it entails requires conversion of heart, he said. “Where does that begin? Dialogue, engagement, and listening to one another,” said Bishop Joensen. We must communicate a sense of unconditional acceptance and love in order for trust to be established that will make dialogue possible.

He shared that, as a digital “immigrant,” he’s been told that for young people who are digital “natives” sharing about themselves online, there has to be some form of story, a personal narrative that engages them.

“The subjective story carries its own ‘truth’ but at the same time we are called, then, to see if there’s something shared among us if there is to be genuine empathy, solidarity of spirit,” he said. “Is there something fundamentally human that we can identify with and see ourselves at home with one another?” Fratelli Tutti speaks of a truth that transcends each of us as the ultimate source of fraternity.

In the brief question-and-answer period that followed his talk, one breakfast attendee resonated with the need for unconditional acceptance. Another asked if Bishop Joensen thought the Catholic Church would ever change its teaching on same-sex marriage. “The Church sees marriage as intimately tied to God’s plan for humanity’s salvation. Marriage implies a form of generativity that is essential. All persons are called to intimate friendship with God that endures beyond marriage in heaven. But, unlike some other Christian communities who have changed their teaching, the Catholic Church will always see marriage as something that occurs between a woman and a man.”

As Christmas nears, Bishop Joensen reflected upon how God “stepped into our world, our murkiness, the messiness that is here. He allowed himself to become vulnerable. Yes, he knew it all from his perspective as God, but now the human feelings and experience Jesus bears to us allows us to identify completely with God, which in the watches of a night half-spent, is a message of silent hope.”

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Victim Assistance Advocate
The diocese’s Victim Assistance Advocate is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps victims of abuse of minors by clergy through a complaint process and in seeking support and counseling services.
He can be reached at 515-286-2024 or Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov.
San José No ha Salido del Edificio

Continued from page 1

manner colocar sus propias histo-
rias dentro del plan de salvación de
Dios para toda la humanidad.

El drama del nacimiento, vida y muerte tiene innumerables
conexiones que solamente po-
demos percibir con el tiempo, y
que todos éstos toman nueva for-
ma con el nacimiento de un niño
en Belén, quien es adorado por
pastores y por Magos, y que even-
tualmente se establece en lo que
parece ser una vida nada mera-
mente ordinaria en el hogar de
Nazaret. Jesús y María radian una
vida y muerte que tiene innumerables
días tras días y teniendo la
vulnerabilidad suficiente para
prestar su voz a la historia que
Dios estaba escribiendo en sus
vidas. El año especial de San José
ha concluido, pero el permanece
presente dentro y en la casa de
Dios, la Iglesia de Cristo. El no
ha salido del edificio.

Pope Francis did some
traveling, visiting Iraq in March,
Hungary and Slovakia in Septem-
ber and Cyprus and Greece in De-

cember, just two weeks before his
85th birthday Dec. 17. He also
hosted a visit by U.S. President Joe
Biden in late October.

Pope Francis promul-
gated two documents that made
headlines around the world: Tra-
ditionis Custodes (Guardians of
the Tradition), restricting limits on
the celebration of the pre-Vatican
II Mass; and the revision of the
Code of Canon Law’s Book VI:
Penal Sanctions in the Church
particularly to incorporate chang-
es made over the past 15 years to
protect children, promote the
investigation of allegations of
clerical sexual abuse and punish
offenders.

Communications Coordinator
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church of West Des Moines, IA, is seeking
a full-time Communications Coordinator. This position facilitates the day-
to-day communications which includes the bulletin, website, social me-
dia, e-newsletters and marketing materials. The ideal candidate will have
a demonstrated success in marketing communications, digital and social
media, and media relations; with strong writing, editing, communications,
and project implementation skills. Candidates should hold a Communications,
Marketing, or Journalism degree with a minimum of 3 years of relevant
experience. Must have strong computer skills with proficiency in Microsoft
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Please submit Resume and Cover Letter to: Human Resources Coordinator,
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Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas
El Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas es un empleado de Polk County Victim Services. Ella ayuda a víctimas de abuso sexual por parte del clero durante el proceso de la queja y buscando servicios de apoyo y consejería. Pueden comunicarse al 515-286-2028 o en advocate@dmdiocese.org.
Wishing you a Blessed and Merry Christmas from the Knights of Columbus.