Lent 2021: Here’s what you need to know

Living this Lent
The Diocese of Des Moines is offering practical ideas and aids for how to live individually and as families during Lent. The 40 days of Lent invite Catholics to grow closer to God and learn his mission for each person as followers and witnesses of his love.

At dmdioocese.org/Lent click on the Living this Lent link for practical suggestions range from activities with children to meat-less soup recipes and more.

Prayer
The U.S. bishops have created a prayer guide for Stations of the Cross with the intention of overcoming racism. Also, the Diocese has produced prayer aids and reflections for use during Eucharistic Adoration. These can be found at dmdioocese.org/Lent.

Almsgiving
One way to help others is by supporting Catholic Relief Services’ annual Operation Rice Bowl. Get your bowl at your parish or Catholic school.

Fasting
As of Feb. 2, he lifted the suspension on social gatherings and extended the requirement for masks.

Dioecesan updates measures to prevent spread of COVID-19

La Diócesis de Des Moines ha suspendido la prohibición de reuniones sociales, pero ha extendido la obligatoriedad de las mascarillas

Luego de volver a evaluar las medidas de protección establecidas para mitigar propagación del COVID-19, la Diócesis de Des Moines ha suspendido la prohibición de reuniones sociales, pero ha extendido la obligatoriedad de las mascarillas.

"Conforme seguimos viviendo en medio de la pandemia del coronavirus, hay muchas señales esperanzadoras en el horizonte, incluyendo un constante decrecimiento en los casos positivos y en las hospitalizaciones, una casi inexistente temporada de influenza, así como un aumento en la disponibilidad de vacunas contra el COVID," dijo el Obispo William Joensen.

"Aunque las condiciones están mejorando, estamos conscientes de que aún no hemos salido de esta pandemia, y que necesitamos seguir alertas y tomando precauciones", dijo.

A partir del 2 de febrero, el obispo eliminó la suspensión de reuniones sociales, pero estableció un límite de asistencia de 100 personas. Aunque se permitan las reuniones sociales, las parroquias siguen manteniendo la discusión de discernir el tipo de eventos que es prudente llevar a cabo, si se requiere un límite máximo menor, dependiendo del tamaño del espacio para las reuniones y otras razones que consideren necesarias.

El requerimiento de las mascarillas seguirá hasta el 11 de
Finding His Face: Honoring health care personnel

By Bishop William Joensen

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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Encontrando su Rostro: en Honor del Personal de Salud

A inicios de este mes, el 11 de febrero, la Iglesia recordó la aparición de nuestra Santa Madre a Santa Bernadette en Lourdes, Francia, en 1858; esta fecha tiene más de un siglo y media, esta fecha ha sido tam-
bien designada como el Día Mundial de los Enfermos. El pequeño 
momento de la aparición, señaló la 
universidad de cada uno de los 
personajes que dio tan suyo tiempo y sus servi-
cios, a los fieles que peregrinan a este santo oasis durante el año 
pasado. Sin importar cuán las gracia personales que se reciben, 
todos se acercan a una alianza de cuidado, compasión y expe-
riencia renovada. Los enfermos y aquellos quienes les rodean se 
observan unos a otros con una mí-
ra de ternura; enredados en su interacción, muestran una 
solidaridad que ha sido testigo de los grandes 
rostros a lo largo de la historia. Nuestro Papa actual 
los se ve en el rostro del mismo 
hermano, del traje de nuestro, la cara, su siente

health care providers represent medicine’s remarkable capacities to intervene and as-
sist us in our most vulnerable, life-threatening 
shortcomings, those in pediatrics, perinatal, 
and pediatrics care and staff other members of the 
team remain mediators of health care person 
health care personnel bear hope that 
whatever wees us down or 
would envelop us in our finitude 
but never of their, to be 
that they can never be spent or 
trapped—or in memory and in 
our country, and around 
the world, that whatever we lose, we lose 
for all we do, all we are.

So many seeds of hope have been 
sewn, leaving us to ponder 
what other spiritual fruits God has in 
store for us. As we continue to seek 
and find God’s face in one 
other, and strengthen 
the bonds of fraternity and community 
that sustain us, let us grow 
and relationships we hold, 
we may deepen, the Eucharist 
that is a foundational 
for all we do, all we are.
New mental health services help fill gap

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

One in five adults, or about 600,000 Iowans, live with some form of mental illness, according to NAMI Iowa (National Alliance on Mental Illness). Either you have it, or you know someone who does, said Peggy Huppert, executive director of NAMI Iowa.

“There’s a huge need in Iowa for more mental health services across the continuum that includes outpatient community-based as well as inpatient” care, she said.

MercyOne Central Iowa announced the expansion of its behavioral health care services to help fill that gap in two ways.

Last month, the new Joseph and Dorothy Schuster Behavioral Health Center opened its doors, boosting the outpatient behavioral health services offered at House of Mercy in Des Moines by 50 percent. Where the House of Mercy served parenting women with children, the new center makes the location one of a few in central Iowa to offer treatment to men, women and children with mental health and substance abuse disorders.

And this month, MercyOne Central Iowa, in partnership with Universal Health Services and MercyOne believe in the opening of Clive Behavioral Health, a $32 million facility adding 100 beds to what MercyOne has already had available. Universal Health Services is a national health system that operates both acute medical, surgical and behavioral health hospitals.

Clive Behavioral Health will offer men, women and children both inpatient and outpatient services.

Other facilities are opening up around the state.

A 75-bed behavioral health facility recently opened in Bettendorf.

Last week, Gov. Kim Reynolds was at the opening of GuideLink Center in Iowa City, which will offer mental health, substance abuse and comprehensive services to men, women and children.

The new MercyOne/Universal Health Services hospital is an investment in the health of the community, said Sandy Swanson, director of business development for Clive Behavioral Health.

“Universal Health Services and MercyOne believe passionately that mental health is a matter of dignity for our community and we certainly can do better in terms of providing a comprehensive system of care for mental health,” she said.

Mary Neubauer and her husband, Larry Loss, shone a spotlight on the needs of those suffering mental illness in 2017 when they wrote a heartbreaking and honest obituary about their son Sergei’s struggle before he died at age 18. They’ve become advocates for increased services for others.

“Mercy deserves incredible praise and credit for stepping up for making these services and this new space available,” Neubauer said. “This new hospital with the space that it will have available for children and teenagers is absolutely critical and it’s going to make a difference.”

The Catholic Mirror is now available as a digital version. Download the new Digital Edition of The Catholic Mirror and be a part of the new digital experience!

To sign up for the Digital Edition, visit

www.dmdiocease.org/Catholic-Mirror/Digital-Version

En Honor del Personal de Salud

La pandemia ha hecho brillar una luz sobre la noble y abnegada dedicación de los profesionales de la salud en nuestra comunidad, nuestro país, en todo el mundo. Los reconocemos en nuestros corazones y en las oraciones, honores y gratitud que les ofrecemos. La pandemia también ha demostrado la aún más luminosa dimensión del servicio de salud cuando éste se lleva a cabo en un ambiente de fe cristiana. En una consciencia centrada en Cristo, las experiencias de la relación humana, corporeidad, vulnerabilidad, cuidado y comunión se elevan enfrentando la posibilidad y realidad de la muerte. Estos aspectos de nuestra experiencia participan, y nos ponen a disposición, hacia lo bueno que es Dios mismo. Éstas son partes de una conversación entre Dios y nosotros mismos, y entre nuestros hermanos y hermanas quienes están sujetos a la misma mortalidad, la misma “pasión” final como nosotros mismos.

Ante este año la distribución de cenizas podrá ser diferente este Miércoles de Ceniza, las palabras opcionales son las mismas: “Recuerda que eres polvo y que en polvo te convertirás.”

Tarde o temprano todos enfrentarán la muerte; pero aún estamos invitados a un tipo de “muerte espiritual” en nuestras obras de fe y esperanza, anticipando que
Bishops affirm opposition to death penalty

Iowa bishops affirmed their opposition to the death penalty in a statement Jan. 19 after a bill was introduced that would reinstate it.

The bill was eligible for consideration by the Senate Judiciary Committee at pretime (Feb. 15).

The Iowa legislature abolished the death penalty in 1965.

Iowans can send a message to their state senator on the Judiciary Committee in opposition to the death penalty by going here: votervoice.net/ICC/campaigns/79598/respond.

Here is the statement by the Iowa bishops.

We speak in opposition to the use of the death penalty in any form and to its possible reinstatement in Iowa.

It is a duty of the state to punish offenders and defend the common good. Nonetheless, in a modern society, “More effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2267).

Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.”

Small word change in prayer

The Catholic Church has asked English-speaking countries to change one word in the Mass prayers to be consistent with the translation used worldwide.

In the prayer that concludes “… in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever” there is no mention of “one” in the Latin. The correct translation will drop the word “one” so the prayer is “… in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.”

The Church is always reviewing translations in an ongoing effort to ensure that, as one Body of Christ, the Mass is celebrated with the same prayers in all languages. Occasionally, there is a word interpreted differently in another language.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments wrote to bishops of English-speaking countries to call this issue to their attention so that all in the Church are using the same translation of the prayer is “…in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.”

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In addition, the application of the death penalty has been deeply flawed in our country.

More than 160 persons have been found innocent while on death row. It is likely that innocent persons have been executed.

There is racial bias.

More than three-fourths of death row defendants have been execut- ed for killing white victims, even though African-Americans make up about half of all homicide vic- tim.

The use of the death pen-

ality is a long and costly process, more expensive than life without parole.

We know there is a spe-

cial need to offer sympathy and support for the victims of violent crime and their families. Howev-

er, we oppose reinstatement of the death penalty in order to send the message that the cycle of violence can be broken without taking life.

We ask the people of Iowa, and especially members of the Catho-

lic Church, to join us in opposing capital punishment out of respect for our common human dignity, and in light of the teachings of Je-

sus about vengeance.

Most Rev. Michael Jackels
Archbishop of Dubuque
Most Rev. R. Walker Nickless
Diocese of Sioux City
Most Rev. Thomas Zinkula
Diocese of Davenport
Most Rev. William Joensen
Diocese of Des Moines

The Iowa Catholic Con-

ference, the official public policy voice of the bishops of Iowa, ad-

 vocates for policies that respect the life and dignity of the human person and apply the principles of Catholic social teaching to critical issues of the day.

Here is an update on legis-

lation followed by the ICC.

Pro-life

We recognize that each person is created in the image and likeness of God.

That’s one reason it was so disappointing in 2018 when the Iowa Supreme Court found a funda-

damental right to abortion in the state constitution, making abor-

tion difficult if not impossible to regulate by the legislature.

As a result, the Iowa Catholic Conference has been working alongside many others to correct that decision and clarify that there is no right to abortion to be found in the state constitution.

A proposal to amend the Iowa Constitution has already passed the Iowa House. It passed a subcommittee in the Senate and is eligible for consideration by the full State Government Commit-

tee.

The amendment would not end abortion in Iowa as some claim.

Education

The ICC continues to support expanding options for parents in the education of their children.

Senate File 159, among many provisions, contains a pro-

posal to allow a small number of public school students in so-called “failing” schools to get a scholar-

ship to attend a nonpublic school.

The bill also contains an increase to “failing” schools to get a scholar-

ship to attend a nonpublic school.

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ship to attend a nonpublic school.

However, some bishops have expressed concerns about the use of the death penalty.

For example, the bishops of the Diocese of Des Moines have been outspoken in their opposition.

“We know there is a special need to offer sympathy and support for the victims of violent crime and their families,” the bishops said in a statement last year. “However, we oppose reinstatement of the death penalty in order to send the message that the cycle of violence can be broken without taking life.”

The bishops went on to say that the death penalty is a long and costly process, more expensive than life without parole.

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He will collaborate with diocesan department directors, Catholic Charities leadership and parishes. Part of his work includes articulating and sharing a broad vision of Catholic Social Teaching and applying those teachings to the issue of racial justice.

“Mark provides a unique perspective on racial justice,” said Dr. Barbara Decker, executive director of Catholic Charities. “His background in social work with studies in Church, liturgy and Black Catholic history will foster a meaningful review, as well as, provide varied resources on this important need.”

Catholic Charities looks forward to working with Schmidt to further assess and advance social justice initiatives in support of the Catholic Social Teachings, Decker added.

“I am thankful to Barbara Decker, head of Catholic Charities of our Des Moines Diocese, for her commitment and collaboration in bringing Mark onboard,” Bishop Joesen added. “I expect that he will call us all to greater self-reflection, conversation and solidarity as we respect the dignity of all persons regardless of race or nationality.”

Adam Storey, vice-chancellor, agrees.

“Mark Schmidt’s work will be a great blessing for our Diocese, as he’ll help us do what Jesus did, drawing close to the marginalized and listening to voices we don’t always hear,” said Storey. “Mark is passionate about following the Gospel wherever it leads, and I am excited about the ways his work will enrich our Diocese.”

Schmidt’s prior work included serving as director of Respect Life and Social Justice for the Archdiocese of Dubuque, as well as parish ministry as a pastoral associate.

Eight local organizations that address hunger and poverty were awarded grants through the CRS Rice Bowl program.

The grants totaling $6,805 stem from the local 2020 Catholic Relief Service (CRS) Rice Bowl Grants.

Four organizations received grants from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development: Southwest Iowa charitable organizations received funding for their programs that help those in need in the community.

Those receiving grants through the CRS Rice Bowl program are:

- Catholic Charities Outreach Center: Food Pantry program
- Children and Family Urban Movement: food for Breakfast Club
- DMARC: supports food pantry network
- Good Samaritan Fund – Perry: food, referral service, hunger-awareness
- New Visions Homeless Services: Mohn’s Place (feeding homeless families)
- Perry Area Emergency Food Council: food, referral service, hunger-awareness
- Caring Hands: Backpack Food Bags to students in the SE Polk School District
- St. Michael’s Charity Fund – West Central Community Action and Shelby County Community Outreach

The CRS Rice Bowl annual campaign supports programs that prevent hunger and poverty around the world. The local grant funding is 25 percent of the total amount raised through the CRS Rice Bowl campaign in the Diocese of Des Moines during Lent (40 days leading to Easter) in 2020.

The remainder of the funds was distributed to over 40 countries overseas where CRS operates humanitarian response and development programs. The grant committee consisted of: Dan Werner, Tim McIntire, Janet Elwer, Bill Komnath, Holly Ackermann.

CCHD grants were awarded to four organizations in the metro area and Council Bluffs totaling $5,733.

- Center for Social Ministry: educational programs
- Christ’s Hands Outreach Re-treat: annual week long summer program for 6-8 graders
- Faith in Action: spring break service experience
- Inter-Faith Alliance: assistance for rent, medical, & utilities

CCHD, a program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is committed to supporting organizations led by low-income individuals as they work to break the cycle of poverty and improve their communities.
Fry Days: Lenten fish dinners heating up

The following are parish Lenten fish fry dinners on Fridays during Lent, Feb. 19 to March 26 except where otherwise noted. Also all dinners are drive through only unless otherwise noted.

Outside the Des Moines metro area

Adair, St. John — 515-523-1943

Dinners are available Feb. 26, March 12 and 26 from 5-7 p.m. Cost is $10 per meal. Please approach from the west through the alley north of the parish hall. Alternate: shrimp

Granger, Assumption — 515-999-2239

Dinners are available from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is a free-will donation. Alternate: cheese pizza, dessert is included.

Carlisle. St. Elizabeth Seton – 515-898-0659

Dinners are available from 5-7 p.m. Cost is $10 per meal. Alternate: mac & cheese. Pie will be available for a free will donation.

Council Bluffs, Corpus Christi – 712-323-2916

Dinners are available on Feb. 19, March 5 and 26 from 4:30-7 p.m. Cost is $10.

Harlan, St. Michael — 712-755-5244

Dinners are available on from 5:30-7 p.m. for dine-in as well as drive thru. Cost is $10 for adults, $5 for ages 4-10 and free for children under 3 with paid adult. Alternate: fish taco (dine-in only), mac & cheese.

Ankeny, Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart - 515-964-3038

Dinners are available on Feb. 26, March 12 and 26 from 5-7 p.m. Cost is a free will donation. Alternate: grilled cheese.

Indiana, St. Thomas Aquinas – 515-961-3026

Dinners are in the parish center from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $10 per meal.

Atlantic, St. Peter & Paul – 712-243-4721

Dinners are available from 5:30 – 7 p.m. Cost is $10 per meal.

Inside the Des Moines metro area

Des Moines, All Saints — 515-265-5901

Dinners are served from 5-7 p.m. Cost is $10 per meal

Des Moines, St. Theresa — 515-279-4654

Dinners are served from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Cost is a free-will offering. Drivers are asked to enter the parking lot directing traffic. Alternate: fish & chip dinner with coleslaw or gourmet macaroni and cheese or a 7” cheese pizza and mac and cheese

West Des Moines, Sacred Heart — 515-223-6414

Dinners are served from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $10 meal. Alternate: cheese pizza and mac & cheese. There will be a “walk thru” to pay and pick up meals in the parish center.

For more information on Lenten activities for families, prayer, fasting and service, go to dmdioce.org/Lent

Around the Diocese

Cathedral Holy Hours

All are welcome to join Bishop William Joensen at St. Ambrose Cathedral on Mondays 5-6 p.m. for an hour of Eucharistic Adoration and evening prayer! Evening prayer will be livestreamed on Facebook.com/dmdioce.

Registration for Catholic Youth Camp open

Campers driving up to the St. Thomas More Center in Panora in June, July and August for Catholic Youth Camp will find new cabins, a renovated Dingman Lodge and double the number of paid summer staff hired to ensure safety procedures are followed so everyone can have a safe experience. For information on how to register or apply for sponsorship, go to stmcenter.com.

March 26

Charm Mass

The faithful are invited to watch the annual Diocesan Mass at which oils and sacred Chrism and blessed sacramental use throughout the diocese. Chrism Mass can be seen from St. Patrick Church in Iowa City by watching a livestream beginning at 2 p.m. on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/stpatrickโมแกเนโวสова

April 10

Saturday

DCCW Conference

All Catholic women are invited to join a virtual encounter to Renew and Refresh. Our featured speaker is Barbara Heit, a former Pentecostal minister and now a dynamic and inspirational Catholic speaker. Bishop William Joensen also will be speaking. It will be a morning only event and it is free. You are invited to a Zoom meeting – DCCW Annual Convention. Register in advance for this meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYqf--tqTIjEtZSgwMk-tOVNrSBz7aFSYA9v

DIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY – ST. JOSEPH JOB POSTING

The Catholic Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph is seeking to fill the Superintendent of Schools position effective July 1, 2021. The Superintendent position will oversee all diocesan schools, and in partnership with each Pastor, all parish schools and early childhood centers, as well as the Diocesan Catholic School Office. This position is full-time, reports to the Moderator of the Curia of the Diocese and includes ground travel to schools as needed.

For more information, and to apply, please visit Employment Opportunities at kcsj.org

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Director of Worship

St. Thomas Aquinas Church and Catholic Student Center, Ames

St. Thomas Aquinas Church and Catholic Student Center, Ames, IA, is actively seeking a full-time Director of Worship (start date July 1, 2021) to energize and engage parishioners through music and liturgy for all parish celebrations. Key responsibilities include directing and planning seasonal and regularly-scheduled weekend liturgies; recruitment, formation, and scheduling of all liturgical ministers, including readers, extraordinary ministers of holy communion, sacristans, mass coordinators, hospitality ministers, cantors, pianists, and adult and youth music volunteers; serving as pianist/organist at weekend masses and on Holy Days; organizing music for the faith formation program; supervision of audio-video equipment; coordination of music for funerals and weddings; and regularly-scheduled weekend liturgies. Full position description and application instructions are available at goSTA.link/worship.

Beyond the Book is a monthly opportunity for parishioners to engage in play and conversation on some aspect of social justice and how we might live them out. Each two-hour session is led by a Des Moines community member who is actively engaged in the featured social justice work. The program is free of charge, but a free will donation will be taken.

Participants are responsible for acquiring, reading, and regularly-scheduled weekend liturgies; recruitment, forming, and scheduling of all liturgical ministers, including readers, extraordinary ministers of holy communion, sacristans, mass coordinators, hospitality ministers, cantors, pianists, and adult and youth music volunteers; serving as pianist/organist at weekend masses and on Holy Days; organizing music for the faith formation program; supervision of audio-video equipment; coordination of music for funerals and weddings; and regularly-scheduled weekend liturgies. Full position description and application instructions are available at goSTA.link/worship.

The Catholic Mirror is looking for stories of faith and inspiration.

Contact Kelly Mescher Collins at kcollins@dmdioce.org with a story idea in the Diocese of Des Moines.

The next book is The Book of Unknown Americans by Christina Henriquez. The event will be 6:30-8:30 p.m., with So- nia Reyes-Snyder, of the Office of Latino Affairs. Go to https://csm.coursesstorm.com/ for more information, or to register. Learn more about all our programming at https://csm.coursesstorm.com/.

2021 Spring Care-A-Thon!

Monday, Feb. 22 - Friday, Feb. 26

Help us connect Iowans to Christ through the airwaves!

Tune in for our 2021 Spring Care-A-Thon!

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Renew your Journey with Christ

Wherever you are in your faith journey, Iowa Catholic Radio can meet you there!

Bring Christ into your home, car, or phone this Lent by listening to Iowa Catholic Radio for 15 minutes a day.

Listen live or catch an old show on our app or online at IowaCatholicRadio.com.

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News & Events for Faithful Listeners

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Retired priests, teachers get vaccinated

Popes Francis, Benedict receive their first doses of vaccine

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Both Pope Francis and retired Pope Benedict XVI have received the first dose of the vaccine against COVID-19 after the Vatican started vaccinating its employees and residents Jan. 13.


While it was reported widely that Pope Francis received the vaccine Jan. 13, the retired pope’s secretary, Archbishop Georg Gänswein, told Vatican News that Pope Benedict received his shot the morning of Jan. 14.

The archbishop had told the German Catholic news agency KNA Jan. 11 that the 93-year-old pope, who lives in a converted monastery in the Vatican Gardens, and his entire household staff wanted to be vaccinated as soon as the vaccine was available in Vatican City State.

He told Vatican News that the retired pope has been following the news on television, and he shares our concerns about the pandemic, about what is happening in the world, about the many people who have lost their life because of the virus.

There have been people he knows who have died because of COVID-19, he added.

Archbishop Gänswein said the retired pope is still very sharp mentally but that his voice and physical strength have weakened.

“He is very frail and only can walk a little with a walker,” he rests more, “but we still go out every afternoon, despite the cold, in the Vatican Gardens,” he added.

As soon as the vaccine was available, Pope Francis visited his brother Fr. Marcello, who lives in a monastery nearby.

In the midst of uncertainty and fear, we know that even in our weaknesses we can get everybody vaccinated the first dose of vaccine against COVID-19 after the Vatican started vaccinating its employees and residents.

We remain vigilant and find consolation in various ways, and at this stage of the pandemic COVID-19 prevention measures Medidas de Prevención contra el COVID-19 should be followed.

St. Albert Catholic School teachers Jayne Applegate, class of 1998 (5th grade), Lergy Burgan (1st grade), and Kim Gorman, class of 1979 (4th grade) received their vaccine for COVID-19.

COVID-19 prevention measures

Continued from page 1

the Phase III stage of reopening parishes. Details can be found at dmdioce.se.org/coronavirus.

“I believe these decisions prioritize our ability to continue to worship God as Christ’sBody, and best serve the common good,” said Bishop Joensen.

“We have all been challenged in various ways, and at this stage of the pandemic COVID-19 prevention measures can set in. While all mitigation efforts require sacrifice, we remain vigilant and find consolation and strength in the essentials of our faith,” he said.

“We meet Jesus in the Eucharist, who calls the weary and burdened to himself and offers us spiritual rest (Matthew 11:28). We know that even in the midst of uncertainty and fear, God’s providential care accompanies us, for his love never ends.”

The bishop concluded: “May we continue to be agents of unity, peace, and hope to our parishes and to our local and larger communities. Let us continue to lift up one another in prayer and soli-

Denise McNitt got a call last November from someone offering help to CHI (Catholic Health Initiatives) Hospital in Council Bluffs.

A retired head nurse from the hospital, Dixie Kavars, was watching the news about the pandemic and wanted to help.

She knew other retired nurses who could be of service, too.

McNitt, the vice president of patient care at CHI, was thrilled with the offer.

But at that point in the pandemic, she didn’t know when vaccines would be arriving or how they’d be distributed.

Still, she said, “I’m sure we’ll be able to use you.”

In December, she had more information and called Kavars, who had assembled other retired nurses in a crew called the Reruns.

Kavars arranged a spreadsheet with names of more than 25 retired nurses, shifts and jobs they’d do.

“He thought we were all willing to help out,” said Marcia Dung, of St. Patrick Parish.

“It’s a nice way to give back. The sooner we get everybody vaccinated the sooner we can get back to what we used to know.”

“Everybody was anxious to help,” said Mary Shaughnessy-Swisher, of Corpus Christi Parish.

The hospital provided two staff nurses for the shots. The Reruns did just about everything else from welcoming people, making sure they were lined up appropriately, offering directions, cleaning the chair and table after every use and monitoring an area the newly vaccinated went to ensure they experienced no side effects.

“The thing that got me the most was when one of the nurses who works in critical care came in,” said Shaughnessy-Swisher.

The nurse received her vaccine and went to the waiting area.

“Her eyes welled up. I said, ‘Are you okay?’ She said, ‘These are tears of joy.'” It was kind of emotional, Shaughnessy-Swisher added.

McNitt came over and praised the nurse for her devotion and service, saying she worked extra shifts and was an excellent care nurse.

Everyone applauded, Shaughnessy-Swisher said.

“That’s the highlight. She was just so, so happy that she had finally gotten one.”

By Anne Marie Cox Staff Writer

Nurses continue serving

Retired nurses Marcia Dusing, Nancy Orth, and Dixie Kavars, all of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs, are serving the community by helping with the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

By mid-February, the Reruns had helped inoculate about 800 people at CHI. Thanks to them, the hospital could keep staff in their assignments serving those who were sick.

Once the hospital staff received vaccines, the Reruns offered to help with the Pottawattamie vaccination clinics for teachers and first responders in the Council Bluffs community.

“A lot of these nurses have kept their nursing license so they really felt like it was an obligation to find a way to contribute,” McNitt said.

Many of the retired nurses felt a calling to serve, either because of their careers in health service or their faith. Several are involved in Legion of Mary.

“I think all the nurses that are helping, all the Reruns, have that sense of community,” Kavars said. When God gives a person the gift of being able to go to school and learn how to be of service through nursing, it feels like they should be giving back even if they’re retired, she added.

Once the pandemic wanes, McNitt is sure she’ll find more opportunities for the Reruns.

“We just discovered a whole new volunteer pool for the hospital,” she said.

Reruns did just about everything, McNitt said.

“They are serving the community by helping with the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. Currently they are serving the community by helping with the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

“Encontramos a Jesús en la Eucaristía, quien llama hacia sí a los cansados y a los agobiados ofreciéndoles reposo espiritual (Mateo 11:28). Sabemos que en medio de la incertidumbre y del temor, la providencia y el cuidado de Dios nos acompañan, porque su amor nunca termina.”

El obispo concluyó: “Que continuemos siendo agentes de unidad, paz y esperanza para nuestras parroquias y para nuestras comunidades locales y generales. Sigamos animándonos unos a otros en oración y en solidaridad en el Espíritu.”

“Creo que estas decisiones ponen como prioridad nuestra posibilidad de seguir al abrigo de Dios como Cuerpo de Cristo, y la mejor forma de servir el bien común,” dijo el Obispo Joensen.

“Todos hemos sido afectados en varias formas, y en esta etapa de la pandemia del COVID podemos sentirnos fatigados. Aunque todos los esfuerzos de mitigación requieren sacrificios, debemos permanecer alertas y encontrar consuelo y fuerza en lo esencial de nuestra fe,” dijo. “Encontramos a Jesús en la Eucaristía, quien llama hacia sí a los cansados y a los agobiados ofreciéndoles reposo espiritual (Mateo 11:28). Sabemos que en medio de la incertidumbre y del temor, la providencia y el cuidado de Dios nos acompañan, porque su amor nunca termina.”

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By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

One of the many uses of Annual Diocesan Appeal funds is supporting the parishes throughout the Diocese.

One example was a streaming workshop, held Jan. 28 via Zoom. All parishes throughout the Diocese were invited to attend to learn more about how to create a sense of inclusion and community through livestreaming worship and other church activities.

Speakers included Father Ken Halbur, pastor of St. Luke Parish in Ankeny; and Wilfrido Matamoros, business and communications manager at Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines. They established livestreaming at their parishes and understand the benefits and challenges.

Kerry Graffunder and Dave Pfeiffer, from Audio Video Electronics, also offered tips and advice. Their company installed the audio system at St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines several years ago and will soon be installing new cameras and equipment to achieve a professional livestream for Masses at the cathedral, including Bishop William Joensen’s 12:10 p.m. Mass and special events, such as ordinations, and more.

Nearly 60 people from around the Diocese tuned in for the workshop and participated in a Q&A session at the end.

“I think it was good to share our resources and give others ways of doing things,” Father Halbur said. “We have a number of parishes that are doing very professional [livestreams] and others that are kind of winging it and are struggling.”

It was beneficial to share information with those less experienced to give them help and recommendations so they can better serve their parish community, he said.

“I think this is important because we are all part of a parish family,” Father Halbur added. “While you can go online and watch Mass at EWTN or at the Vatican or other things, it’s good to have that connection to your own church and see your own pastor. You see the people you know and it’s familiar, and we like the familiar. It gives you a connection.”

Father Mark Neal, pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, said attending the workshop was beneficial.

“Just before Christmas, we were able to install a permanent live streaming system in our church,” Father Neal said. “The workshop helped confirm that we are on the right track and gave some ideas for how we might upgrade the quality of our streams. It was helpful to hear what other parishes are doing.”

Diane Nitzel, information technology support at St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines, said “It was nice to see what other parishes in the dio-

SHEPHERDING THE FAITHFUL

The Annual Diocesan Appeal is three-fold: word, sacrament and charity, said Deacon Ron Myers, who is co-director of the diocesan diaconate formation program at his wife, Tammy.

“The ministry of the diaconate is three-fold: word, sacrament and charity,” said Deacon Myers, who also serves Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines. “These ministries can commonly be seen through assisting at the altar, proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, performing baptisms, witnessing marriages, and presiding at wakes and funerals.”

During formation, each candidate also develops an Icon of Christ ministry — a ministry that continues after ordination through works of charity. Considering the number of active deacons, ministries are wide-ranging.

The work of the diaconate - ordained deacons and their wives, if married - strengthens the overall mission of the Church.

“Sharing Scripture, building up the faithful through evangelization and reaching out to those most vulnerable in the world” are part of the mission, Deacon Myers said. “The diaconate community is the increasing army of the Lord, continually touching more lives, reaching more hearts, saving more souls.”

The critically important formation is funded through the Annual Diocesan Appeal.

“The formation process involves formal seminary education and pastoral studies,” Deacon Myers said. “The expense of four and one-half years of college level study and formation activities would be beyond the reach of most men and/couples discerning the call to serve the people of the diocese. The monetary and prayerful support of fellow Catholics is essential to encouraging someone to respond positively to the call and successfully move through the journey to ordination and a life of service to the people of the Diocese.”

Dan and Kelly Macey, of St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines, are going through diacconate formation.

“The couple appreciates the support of their formation team, a group of deacons and their wives who guide them from the very beginning through the process, Kelly said. They also appreciate the monetary support of the faithful.

“We’re so lucky that the support we get from the ADA gives us the capability to go to formation not only here in town, but formation in seminary, so we can take the knowledge, pastoral learning, and bring that back to the people,” Dan said.

The Diocese of Des Moines Streaming Workshop was hosted for Catholic parishes to help them better reach their parishioners.

Dan and Kelly Macey of St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines are currently in diacconate formation and are grateful for the support of the ADA.

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Deacons serve the Diocese of Des Moines in a variety of ways, said Deacon Ron Myers, who is co-director of the diocesan diaconate formation program with his wife, Tammy.

“The ministry of the diaconate is three-fold: word, sacrament and charity,” said Deacon Myers, who also serves Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines. “These ministries can commonly be seen through assisting at the altar, proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, performing baptisms, witnessing marriages, and presiding at wakes and funerals.”

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Young people who gave to ADA receive letter of appreciation from Bishop

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

When the priest talks about the needs of the parish and the importance of giving at Mass, even tiny ears are listening.

Ethan and Audrey Trettin, ages 14 and 11, heard Father Chris Harthorn, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines, asking for people to give to the Annual Diocesan Appeal during his announcement.

Both kids decided giving to the ADA was worth it.

“I decided to do it because I know that they needed the money,” said Audrey. “And Father Chris has been talking about it a lot and asking for money and how we were so close to reaching our goal. I just really wanted to help.”

Audrey has her money split into three different categories: church, savings and spending. “And so I took all of the money that had been in my church container [and gave it to the ADA].”

“I try really hard to help the church and [it] brings me closer to God,” Audrey said. “And I thought that would be good to help.”

She gives not just her treasure, but her time and talent as altar server (when we are not in a pandemic).

They were pleasantly surprised when they received a letter of gratitude from Bishop William Joensen for their donations. The Bishop thanked Ethan and Audrey for their gifts, said he would be praying for them and encouraged them to pray as well.

“It was really good,” Audrey said. “I knew I didn’t need a letter, but the fact that he went out of his way to write us felt really good.”

Maren Trettin said she and her husband Michael were proud of the kids for giving back.

“We try to involve them when we donate money to different places,” Maren said. “We just want to be in the habit of giving and for them to see how important it is. We are really blessed to be born in the situation we are in and to be able to give. It’s a blessing from God and we just want them to carry [giving] into adulthood and they can make their own decisions.”

Ethan and Audrey Trettin of Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines received a letter of appreciation from Bishop Joensen after giving to the ADA.

The Annual Diocesan Appeal provides more than $4.5 million in essential support and 64% of ministry and operational needs on an annual basis. Visit dmdiocease.org/giving for more information on the ADA and charitable giving.

The Church proclaims the Good News of God’s vision for marriage and family life in all its integrity and beauty, he said. At the same time, it extends God’s mercy and healing to all who live out God’s invitation imperfectly.

“The Marriage and Family Life Office and the Tribunal both have vital parts to play in this work,” Storey added.

Father Christopher Pisut, judicial vicar for the Tribunal, works on the canonical annulment process.

“Divorce or separation is like a wound that, if it is not addressed, will fester,” he said. “It needs to be cleaned out in order for it to heal. It is important for them to understand that feelings of anger, betrayal and grief are all part of this process.”

Deacon Tony and Eileen Valdez hope the process leads people to understand that forgiveness is the key to healing. They help people work through their many questions about receiving communion, handling the kids, finances and more. Deacon Tony and Eileen also point them in a positive direction if they would like to visit with a priest or feel ready to start the annulment process.

The ADA is critically important for walking with those who have suffered through a divorce.”

“Many people can fall into the trap of thinking there’s hoops you have to go through, but that’s because of the Church’s ultimate respect for marriage,” Father Pisut continued. “We don’t want to be in a position of being dismissive of the previous marriage... We take this so seriously. We presume that they are valid, until proven otherwise, and go through the steps to ascertain that and show respect for previous marriages.”

“The ADA is critically important for walking with those dealing with the hurt and pain of a divorce and annulment." Without ADA support, our Diocese would not be able to assist people petitioning for annulments at no cost,” Storey said. “Also, ADA support is what allows us to provide opportunities for education, support, and accompanying for married couples and for those who have suffered through a divorce.”
The Vatican says plenary indulgences will be granted to Catholics not only through prayer and penance, but also through acts of justice, charity and piety dedicated to the foster father of Jesus during the Year of St. Joseph.

Among the conditions for receiving an indulgence are a spirit detached from sin, receiving sacramental confession as soon as possible, receiving Communion as soon as possible and praying for the Holy Father’s intentions, according to the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal that deals with matters of conscience.

There are several ways to obtain the indulgence throughout the year. One can “meditate on the prayer of the ‘Our Father’ for at least 30 minutes or take part in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on St. Joseph.”

In his apostolic letter, “Patris Corde” (“With a father’s heart”), Pope Francis declared this the Year of St. Joseph. He said that as a “just man” who guarded “the intimate secret that lies at the bottom of the heart and soul,” St. Joseph practiced the virtue of justice in “full adherence to the divine law, which is the law of mercy.”

“Therefore, those who, following the example of St. Joseph, will perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy, will also be able to obtain the gift of the plenary indulgence,” it said.

Indulgences will also be granted to families and engaged couples who recite the rosary together and thus imitate the “same climate of communion, love and prayer lived in the Holy Family.”

Other acts of devotion include entrusting one’s daily activities and prayers for dignified employment to St. Joseph, reciting the litany or any “legitimately approved” prayer to St. Joseph.

During this time of pandemic, the Apostolic Penitentiary also decreed that special indulgences will be granted to the elderly, the sick and all those who “for legitimate reasons are prevented from leaving their home” by “reciting an act of piety in honor of St. Joseph and committed to fulfilling the conditions as soon as possible.”

Prayer to Saint Joseph

To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our tribulation, and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also.

Through that charity which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; O our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness.

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God’s Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven.

Amen.

Prayer to Saint Joseph

A ti, bienaventurado San José, acudimos en nuestra tribulación; y después de invocar el auxilio de tu Santísima Esposa solicitamos también confiados tu patrocinio.

Por aquella caridad que con la Inmaculada Virgen María, Madre de Dios, te tuvo unido, y por el paterno amor con que abrazaste al Niño Jesús, humildemente te suplicamos vuelvas benigno los ojos a la herencia que con su Sangre adquirió Jesucristo, y con tu poder y auxilio socorras nuestras necesidades.

Protege, Providentísimo Custodio de la Sagrada Familia, la escogida descendencia de Jesucristo; aparta de nosotros toda mancha de error y corrupción; asistenos propicio, desde el cielo, fortísimo libertador nuestro, en esta lucha con el poder de las tinieblas.

Así como en otro tiempo librasteis al Niño Jesús del inminente peligro de la vida, así ahora, defende a la Iglesia Santa de Dios de las asesanzas de sus enemigos y de toda adversidad, ya cada uno de nosotros protégamos con el perpetuo patrocinio, para que, a tu ejemplo y sostenidos por tu auxilio, podamos santamente vivir y piadosamente morir y alcanzar en el cielo la eterna felicidad.

Amen.

Opportunities for grace abound in the Year of St. Joseph

By Junno Arocho Esteves

Catholic News Service

Prayer to Saint Joseph

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Oración a San Jose

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Amen.
Family lifted by prayers, support from parish community

Kristi Allison’s trust in God inspires others

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Last year was tough. But an unfortunate few had it even worse than most. Kristi Allison of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny and her three children—two in junior high and a special-needs daughter—watched helplessly as their husband and father Matt suffered a terminal illness and untimely death in 2020.

Those who know Allison saw just how strong her faith was when her husband, Matt, 50, passed away.

In March 2019 he went in for his 50-year-old colonoscopy and doctors found a “massive tumor that had metastasized his entire abdominal cavity,” Allison said. “In early April of 2019 they did a 12 hour surgery where they moved the tumor and tried to remove as much as they could because it was so invasive through his abdomen,” she continued. “He went into chemo. And [the cancer] was so aggressive that one person could be in the building at a time to visit.

“We had to get special permission for my sons to come in and say goodbye,” Allison said.

The parish community rallied around the family, offering up prayers, dropping off food and sending cards and messages of hope. “Father Michael [Amadeo] was wonderful at that time,” she continued. “He came out to the funeral home and did Mass there [because of COVID-19 restrictions]. We livestreamed it on Facebook.”

Father Amadeo spoke with them about their loss. “Kristi persevered [through] that loss...,” Father Amadeo said. “But also what I saw within her was this faith...” Sadness because her spouse was gone, but also consolation in knowing there’s more. “To see her persevere with the kids, her focus was on the resurrection...,” Father Amadeo added, though knowing full-well death could not be avoided. “But it gave them some hope, instead of the gloom and doom of ‘dad’s not here...’ Now their dad is with God; dad is embraced in God’s love.”

Though the pandemic created a number of challenges, it also offered a silver lining. “There was a blessing with the COVID – we were home together,” Allison added.

Her strength in the face of adversity has made an impact on the people around her. “I have so much admiration and respect for Kristi. I consider her one of my friends and... a symbol of God’s strength to me,” said Mary Sankey, associate director of faith formation at OLIH. “Kristi’s trust in God blew her away.”

Allison’s impact is not limited to the church community. Nicole Ryan of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines is a co-worker and good friend to Allison. They both serve special needs kids in their jobs. “Kristi is a wonderful co-worker,” Ryan said. “She is very upbeat, gentle, patient, humble, smart, loving and has a witty sense of humor. She really is always focused on others – even when it comes to all the issues she has had to deal with this past year. She lives her faith by her actions and the way she lives her life. Her words are always upbeat and loving.”

Kristi and Matt clearly made peace with his diagnosis and lived life to the fullest right up to the end. Ryan added. “Kristi’s faith was evident in her attitude as she went about her day working with kids with special needs and then going home and taking care of her family without one complaint...,” Ryan continued. “Kristi is showing us her faith by her actions and attitude – she doesn’t need to use words as her actions speak volumes. I am blessed to call her friend and to have witnessed true sacramental love,” Ryan concluded.

Sister Susan Widdel, pastoral minister at OLIH, connected Allison with a Stephen Minister and kept the family in her prayers. “We have an All Souls Day special Mass to remember people that have died in the past year. She had all of the kids there,” said Sister Widdel, recalling how she saw daughter Anna looking through the memorial photos in search of her dad. “But this isn’t the end. “We didn’t lose him, we know where he is – in heaven, and to remember that,” Allison said. “And so I’m not sad necessarily for him, he’s no longer in pain. I’m more sad for us, because we miss him. But we’re doing ok.”

www.dmdiocece.org
Recently I have been thinking about the story of the unclean spirit, who, after leaving an afflicted person, returns later and brings back seven other spirits, making the new condition worse than before (Matthew 12:43-45). This strikes me because in some ways I think the pandemic has cast out certain unclean spirits that once infected my family life. It has forced me to face the common busyness of our lives and has opened the door to reconsider the way we spend time with each other. The pandemic has disrupted my illusions of control and has drawn me outside of my narrow focus of my own agenda and myself. I have felt like our family life, if not our kitchen floor, could be described as “empty, swept clean, and put in order” (Matthew 12:44).

This spring, as vaccines are becoming more accessible and the pandemic is slowly starting to abate, our family has started to come back together once again. While it’s a great relief to see hope on the horizon, I also want to make sure I do not take this time for granted. It will be a work in progress for sure, imperfectly lived, and yet there is hope!

As we emerge from the pandemic, it will be tempting to think we can finally get back to the important things. Pope Francis reminds us that marriage and family life is one of the most important things we can attend to, with the love in our homes being “a perennial source of strength for the life of the Church” (Amoris Laetitia 88).

No matter what the last year has looked like for you, this Lent let’s all pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and to grow in intentionality about our time together with our families, even when we don’t have to.

By Adam Stoehr

OPINION

The living Jesus is waiting for you

Faith that Conquers

By Kelly Mescher Collins

Can love really change everything?

As Lent begins I am grappling with how we, as the Church, respond to these challenging times and faithfully proclaim the Gospel to Catholics and to the world.

A core facet of Jesus’ mission and ministry is that he is entirely other. He is utterly and entirely radical: it is never necessary to hate. Or, put more aptly in the positive: Always and entirely to love, so that anything grounded in love flows from God’s love, conversion of hearts and the repair of social fabric will result. Can it be so simple? Isn’t it ridiculous naively to think that love can change everything?

By Tom Quinlan

Love does not mean abandon- ing values and accountability. Love is not the absence of hatred or mere indifference or acceptance. Love is active, constructive, courageous-against-hysteria. It reaches across chasms to offer reconciliation in families and communities. Love becomes possible only when we take the time to get to know another. Love is a complicated holy mys- tery and it is demanding! Now is a great time to revisit Paul’s simple-yet-powerful treatment of love: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

I’m in You!

By By Kelly Mescher Collins

Kelly Mescher Collins is a multimedia journalist and the director of the St. Joseph Educational Center in West Davenport. She can be reached at kcollins@dmndio- cese.org.

Blessed Carlo Acutis died in 2006 at age 15 from leukemia, but his legacy remains. Learn more at carloacutis.com.

By Adam Stoehr

Marriage and Family Life

By By Kelly Mescher Collins

Just one-third of U.S. Cath- olics say they believe that “during Cath- olic Mass, the bread and wine actually be- come the body and blood of Jesus.” I complacency, secularism or simply forget- ting the lessons learned before making our First Commu- nion at the root of this lack of Eucharistic faith?

I do not know for sure. But I do know that spending time with the living Jesus in Adoration and consuming his Eu- charistic body at Mass will make you like him. And the results? Burdens lifted, hearts afire and spirits soaring.

By Tom Quinlan

Love is not the absence of hatred or mere indifferent accep- tance. Love is active, constructive, courageous-against-hysteria. It reaches across chasms to offer reconciliation in families and communities. Love becomes possible only when we take the time to get to know another. Love is a complicated holy mys- tery and it is demanding! Now is a great time to revisit Paul’s simple-yet-powerful treatment of love: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

I judge us well. If we choose to love, by our tenaciously-held supernatural worldviews, even when we don’t have to! Adam Stoehr is the diocesan director of Marriage and Family Life. He can be reached at astoehr@dmndio-cese.org or 515-327-5036.

By By Kelly Mescher Collins

Marriage and Family Life

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Can love really change everything?

As Lent begins I am grappling with how we, as the Church, respond to these challenging times and faithfully proclaim the Gospel to Catholics and to the world.

A core facet of Jesus’ mission and ministry is that he is entirely other. He is utterly and entirely radical: it is never necessary to hate. Or, put more aptly in the positive: Always and entirely to love, so that anything grounded in love flows from God’s love, conversion of hearts and the repair of social fabric will result. Can it be so simple? Isn’t it ridiculous naively to think that love can change everything?

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The triumph of good over evil

By Father Ron Rolheiser

A colleague once challenged Pierre Teilhard de Chardin with this question: Do you believe that good will ultimately triumph over evil? And Teilhard answered this way. If we blow up the world with an atomic bomb, what happens to goodness then?

Teilhard answered this way. If we blow up the world with an atomic bomb, that would be a 2-million-year setback, but goodness will triumph over evil in the long run, not because we wish for it, but because God promised it and, in the resurrection, God showed that he has the power to deliver on that promise. He is right. Except for the resurrection, we have no guarantees about anything. Lies, injustice, and violence may well triumph in the end. That is certainly how it looked the day Jesus died.

Jesus was a great moral theologian and his teachings, if followed, would transform the world. Simple things—some of those are all we lived the Sermon on the Mount, our world would be loving, peaceful, and just; but self-interest is often resistant to moral teaching.

From the Gospels, we see that it was not Jesus' teaching that safeguarded the powers of evil and ultimately revealed the power of God. Not that. The triumph of goodness and the final power of God were revealed instead through his death, by a grain of wheat falling in the ground and dying, and bringing forth lots of fruit. Jesus won victory over the powers of the world in a way that seems antithetical to all power. He is the power toower anyone with some intellectually superior muscle or by some worldly persuasion. No, he revealed God's superior power simply by holding fast to truth and love even as lies, hatred, and malice were flourishing.

The powers of the world put him to death, but he trusted that somehow God would vindicate him, that God would have the last word.

God did. God raised him from the dead as a testimony that he was right and that the world was wrong, and that truth and love will always have the last word. That is the lesson. We too must trust that God will give truth and love the last word, irrespective of what things look like in the world. God's judgment on the powers of this world does not play out like a Hollywood film where the bad guy gets shot in the end by a morally superior muscle and we get to enjoy a catharsis. It works this way: everyone gets judged by the Sermon on the Mount, albeit self-interest generally rejects that judgment and seems to get away with it.

However, there is a second part of the story that everyone will submit to, the resurrection. At the end of the day, which is not exactly like the end of a Hollywood movie, God raises truth and love from their grave and gives them the final word. Ultimately, the powers of the world will all submit to that definitive judgment.

Without the resurrection, there are no guarantees for anything. That is why St. Paul says that if Jesus was not resurrected then we are the most degraded of all. He is right. The belief that the forces of untruth, self-interest, injustice, and evil will eventually convert and give up their worldly dominion can sometimes look like a possibility on a given night when the world news looks better. However, as happened with Jesus, there is no guarantee that these powers will not eventually turn and crucify most everything that is honest, loving, just, and peaceful in our world. The history of Jesus and the history of the Church tell us the fact that we cannot put our trust in worldly powers even when for a time they look trustworthy. The powers of hatred and violence crucified Jesus. They were doing it long before and have continued doing it ever since. Cynicism and despair will not be vanquished by some superior moral violence, but by living the Sermon on the Mount and trusting that God will roll back the stone from any tomb in which they bury us.

Many years ago, I attended a men's retreat at my parish in Sylvania, Ohio. One of the speakers was an adoptive dad. He spoke about adoption, and how it changed his life for the better. One comment changed my life forever: “The person you love the most is not related in blood of any type, your wife. So why can’t you love an adopted child the same?”

I was struck, and I spoke to our parish priest who directed me to an attorney in Toledo who worked in the adoption field. When my wife, Jeanne (Kelley) and I went to the attorney’s office, there were pictures of many children with dark complexions on her windowsill. They were pictures of many children with dark complexions who lived in Paraguay and they all lived in the Toledo area. We decided to adopt.

Halfway through the process, our attorney called me when Jeanne was at the grocery store, and told me “Mark, you need to sit down. There are twins!”

We had many roadblocks during the adoption process: Paraguay’s government was overthrown, the Immigration and Naturalization Department lost our paperwork twice, our van was stolen in Paraguay in a boating accident, and we were down to our last cent (it seemed). Being 29, I had not considered the “cost” aspect of adopting for my age as a sales manager at an automotive parts company, but just one adoption was overthrown, the Immigration Department took all our savings, and what I could pull out of my 401K.

When we found out about twins, I went to the president of my pension, I truly had no idea this could not be done.

He arranged for me to obtain the funds that we needed. After one year of paying him back, he said “We found a mistake in our accounting where we owed you some money on your transfer. You no longer owe anything. The slate is clean.”

God works in mysterious ways, and this was truly a miracle for Jeanne and me. We had God on our side, and we had faith to get the process moving.

In late 1989, Jeanne and I headed to South America for a month, and we adopted Emily, who was born exactly four years after the day we arrived in the United States, and came to Bluff City to be with our family.

Fast forward to 1995, our daughter Emily married, and they moved out of the house. In 1995, Brian came along! We were a multi-racial family, but I never realized it nor did our kids as everything was treated equally. Now I have four successful grown adults (and two grandchildren).

I wanted to share our family story to encourage others to support life from conception to death. Actions taken do make a difference in the world.

Since Roe vs. Wade, more than 50 million babies have been aborted in the United States.

I have been to Washington, D.C. and participated in the annual March for Life with fellow parishioners, other dads, our son, and friends.

As a Catholic, it may seem like you are attending a strange and anathema life issues, but there are many people who support life. Have courage.

James 2:26 says “Faith without works is dead.” I invite you to make a difference in your own way in someone’s life in 2021!

The triumph of good over evil

The triumph of good over evil

Father John Ludwig

Q. Is it disrespectful to refer to a priest as pastor instead of father? –Jeff, Norwalk

A. No. “Pastor” is the Latin word for “shepherd.” Many priests are pastors of parishes, but not all priests serve in that role. Rather they can be chaplains or chancellor officers of dioceses. Many Protestant clergy are referred to as “pastor.” The term “father” should be limited to Catholics and Episcopalians.

Q. What is the is the deal with the eva being created after Adam, and from his rib at that?! -Jeff, Norwalk

A. The second and third chapters of the book of Genesis give us the story of the “man” and “the woman” (they don’t say Adam and Eve). It’s one of two stories in Genesis that speak of God’s relationship to creation. The other story can be found in chapter one. Neither story is intended to be an historical account. Rather, they both speak of the goodness of creation and how God is at the center of it, and how evil and goodness are part of the experience of human beings. The people who first heard these stories already had a conception of the roles of males and females, so the descriptions in this first book of the bible don’t deal with that conception. Instead, they build on it. If we take the story in a rigidly literal way, we can get hung up on details that are not all that important.

Q. If God’s plan will always prevail in the end, and if we’re supposed to have faith in and trust his plan, why even bother praying? And what good is our own free will, if God’s will is what always happens anyway, and if we pay a heavy price for not choosing what God wants?

A. Prayer is not an avenue to change God’s mind about something. Prayer is intended to place us in the presence of God and to communicate with God with all our lives. We try to “figure it out” by using our human intellect, but we know that God is so much bigger and incomprehensible than we are. The Jewish and Christian traditions can bring us into closer union with the Creator of the universe. For Christians, Jesus is the very human face of God. St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits gives us a prayer of abandonment. Sometimes it’s referred to as the Suscipe Prayer. It goes like this: Take, Lord, Receive, all my liberty. Take my mind, my understanding, and my entire will. Whatever I have or hold, You have given me; I give it all back to You and surrender it wholly to be governed by Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace, and I am rich enough and ask for nothing more.

Got a question for “Ask a Priest” about marriage, ant life issues, but there are many people who support life. Have courage. Many people, perhaps most people, believe there is a moral arc to reality, that reality is bent towards goodness over evil, love over hate, truth over lies, and justice over injustice, and they point to history to show that, yes, we are making a difference, a while, eventually reality rectifies itself and goodness wins out in the end, always.

Some call this the law of karma. There is a lot of truth in that belief, not just because history seems to bear it out, but because when God made the universe, God made a love-oriented universe and so God wrote the Sermon on the Mount both into the human heart and into the very DNA of the universe. So, while we as humans know how to heal itself, to too does moral creation. Thus, good should always triumph over evil but, that being said, freedom, there are no guarantees except for the promise given us in the resurrection.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a writer and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com. Now on Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser
U.S. bishops’ react to recent federal actions

The following is a brief summary of reactions by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on a range of federal government actions.

Climate Change

President Joe Biden signed executive orders during his first week in office addressing climate change and the care for our common home.

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, expressed support for several of the new administration’s environmental priorities.

“In his encyclical Laudato Si’ Pope Francis presented Christians and all peoples with an integral ecology oriented towards the common good, drawing on the longstanding tradition of Catholic social teaching and rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” Archbishop Coakley said. “He warned us of the danger of a ‘green rhetoric’ that often coexists with economic privilege and comfort, emphasizing the need to ‘bear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.’”

President Biden’s environmental executive orders resonate deeply with an integral ecology that listens to the ‘least of these’ (Mt 25:40)” said Bishop Coakley.

Immigration

President Joe Biden issued three migration-related Executive orders related to removing barriers and restoring due process in the legal immigration system.

The actions include orders to: (1) address root causes of migration from Central America and expand opportunities for legal migration; (2) create a task force to reunify families separated during the prior administration; and (3) strengthen integration and inclusion efforts for new Americans.

Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration, said: “We welcome these Executive Orders on migration, which will help to ensure that immigrants and refugees are treated humanely and in accordance with their God-given dignity. Actions implemented by the prior administration on these issues have directly impacted and harmed immigrants and refugees, in many cases needlessly instilling fear and creating or perpetuating family separation. The Catholic Church teaches that each person is created in the image and likeness of God and that we must uphold the inherent dignity of each person.”

Abortion

President Joe Biden released a statement announcing his intention to rescind the current regulation governing the Title X family planning program. The current regulation follows federal law by ensuring that abortion cannot be part of a Title X family planning program either by using the same office space, sharing financial, or mandating referrals for abortion.

Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City in Kansas, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said: “Although the Catholic bishops have grave concerns about government promotion of contraceptives, we have long supported efforts to ensure that the provision and promotion of abortion is kept physically and financially out of the pre-pregnancy family planning services provided through the Title X program.”

“Abortion takes the life of an already-conceived and growing child, and most Americans agree that abortion should not be used as a method of family planning or as a ‘back up’ for failed family planning” said Bishop Naumann, therefore, draws a bright line between abortion and family planning. In addition to the program explicitly withholding taxpayer funds for abortion, its authors further emphasized this intent by stating that, “the funds authorized under this legislation [shall] be used only to support preventive family planning services, population research, infertility services, and other related medical, informational, and educational activities.” By rescinding this rule, the Administration will be forced to abandon the pro-pregnancy program specifically designed to avoid abortion; a move which is immoral, impractical, and may also be unlawful.”

New York (CNS) -- At least 10 U.S. Catholic bishops have signed a statement supporting the Tyler Clementi Foundation in standing up for at-risk LGBT youth in the United States and speaking out against bullying directed at them.

“As we see in the Gospels, Jesus Christ taught love, mercy and welcome for all people, especially for those who felt persecuted or marginalized in any way,” the bishops said in a statement released by the foundation Jan. 25.

The New York-based foundation is named for Tyler Clementi, a victim of anti-gay cyberbullying, who committed suicide Sept. 22, 2010, at age 18. After his death, his family created the foundation to end online and offline bullying in schools, workplaces and places of public gathering.

“All people of goodwill should help, support, and defend LGBT youth – who attempt suicide at much higher rates than their straight counterparts, who are often homeless because of families who reject them, who are rejected, bullied and harassed, and who are the target of violent acts at alarming rates,” the bishops said.

“The Catholic Church values the God-given dignity of all human life and we take this opportunity to say to our LGBT friends, especially young people, that we stand with you and oppose any form of violence, bullying or harassment directed at you,” they said.

“Most of all, know that God created you, God loves you and God is on your side.”

Signing the joint statement were: Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey; Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico; Bishop Steven R. Biegler of Cheyenne, Wyoming; Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego; Bishop John E. Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky; Bishop Edward J. Malesic of Dayton, Ohio; Auxiliary Bishop John P. Dolan of San Diego; retired Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of Las Cruces, New Mexico; and retired Auxiliary Bishops Denis J. Madden of Baltimore and Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit.

“Jane Clementi, Tyler’s mom, who is co-founder and CEO of the Tyler Clementi Foundation, said: “This is a great beginning.”

“I am very grateful to the Catholic bishops who have signed the declaration and are courageously adding their voices to an effort to show God’s love by opposing any violence, harassment or bullying behavior against the most vulnerable among us,” she said in a statement.

“This is a great beginning.”

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“As neighbors, we are there when needed most. With a warm and comforting atmosphere. With answers and options few funeral homes can offer.
Priest: Learning about his baptism was a blessing in disguise

UTICA, Mich. (CNS) — Last August was a roller coaster for Father Matthew Hood, who was ordained to the priesthood — some might say for the second time, but in reality, for the first time — Aug. 17, 2020, for the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Hood’s world turned upside down Aug. 6, when the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a doctrinal note ruling that baptisms using an altered formula — specifically, those using the phrase, “We baptize you ...” instead of the church’s ancient prayer, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” — are invalid.

Thirty years ago, that was the formula a deacon used to baptize Father Hood as an infant at St. Anastasia Parish in Troy.

“It was devastating for me to find that out,” Father Hood told Detroit Catholic, the online news outlet of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Father Hood has now received his sacraments — he was baptized, confirmed and received the Eucharist on Aug. 9 and was ordained to the transitional diaconate Aug. 15 and a priest on Aug. 17.

Even though it felt like little had changed, Father Hood knows that, sacramentally, he is a whole new person now than he was at the beginning of August. Whether he felt it or not, he became a Christian for the first time on Aug. 9.

He said he is not angry at anybody, including the deacon who baptized him as an infant. “I don’t think he acted in bad faith. I don’t think there might have been mistakes using words that are not the essential sacramental formula, or if a parishioner has witnesses who can verify that words other than the essential sacramental formula were used, they should contact the Diocese of Des Moines at worship@dmdioocese.org or 515-243-7653. For more information, go to dmdioocese.org/baptism.

Father Matthew Hood thumbs through the missal at the altar of St. Lawrence Parish in Utica, Mich., Aug. 21, 2020. Finding out he wasn’t a priest was a painful realization, but it also came with the grace of knowing God’s providence, he said.

The Diocese of Des Moines is ofering pastoral care for those with concerns in central and southwest Iowa about baptism.

A baptism is conferred by pouring or washing of water, the use of the essential sacramental formula, and with the intent to baptize. Baptism is the basis for the whole Christian life, the gateway to the life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to sacramental grace.

The Catholic Church presumes all baptisms are celebrated validly. However, if a parishioner has video of a baptism in which the celebrant can be heard saying words other than the essential sacramental formula, or if a parishioner has witnesses who can verify that words other than the essential sacramental formula were used, they should contact the Diocese of Des Moines at worship@dmdioocese.org or 515-243-7653. For more information, go to dmdioece.org/baptism.
The Knights of Columbus invite you to please consider participating in the 40 Cans for Lent program as part of your Lenten journey. Simply donate one can of food or a non-perishable item for each of the 40 days of Lent. Drop off your donations at your local parish or food pantry. This donation will benefit those in your parish and in your community. Lent provides an opportunity for each of us to live generously — to show gratitude for God’s gifts to us and to share those gifts with others.

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

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