

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## Glory to God in the highest

*Children learn about the nativity, the spirit of giving and love*



Photo supplied by Kristel Spike

When angels appeared outside the town of Bethlehem proclaiming the greatest news in the world, they didn't deliver their message to the high and mighty, but to the simple and lowly - shepherds. St. Augustin Catholic School third, fourth and fifth graders presented the nativity story Dec. 6.



Photo supplied by St. Joseph Catholic School

Father Chris Fontanini, dressed as St. Nicholas, shares the spirit of giving on Dec. 6 with first graders at St. Joseph Catholic School in Des Moines.



Photo by Martin Flaherty

At right: Holy Family School students Amanuel Temesgen, Layla Caranza, and Jonathan Lopez Estrada prepare for their roles as angels in the school Christmas play.

## Ignite! Campaign continues momentum Campaign closing in on \$35 million

In early November, the Ignite! Campaign surpassed the \$30 million milestone, and that momentum has continued as the end of the year approaches, with the campaign closing in on \$35 million in gifts and pledges.

The campaign, an extraordinary effort aimed at providing more financial aid to Catholic school families, supporting a growing number of seminarians, caring for retired priests, and bolstering parish renewal and vibrancy initiatives, has received widespread support throughout the Diocese of Des Moines.

"We are grateful, humbled by the generous support of over 6,000 families who have made a gift so far, and the many more

who are praying for the success of the campaign," said Maureen Kenney, director of Stewardship for the Diocese of Des Moines.

"This would not be possible without the partnership of pastors, staff, and nearly 1,000 volunteers whose efforts will truly change lives for the better in our Diocese," she continued. "As 2022 comes to a close, we pray that even more families will consider participating and help us finish strong."

The active phase of the campaign will continue through the first quarter of 2023.

To learn more, visit [dmdioocese.org/ignite](http://dmdioocese.org/ignite) for videos, frequently asked questions and how to give.

## Kindness begets kindness

*In helping the sick here, Kenyan sisters also help needy in their homeland*

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Nazareth Sister Rosehellen Karwirwa traveled nearly 8,000 miles from her home in Kenya to see her cousin, Father Lazarus Kirigia, be ordained a priest in Des Moines in 2007.

She promised she'd be back.

Indeed, six years later, she returned with Sister Joan Clare Njoroka, to begin a ministry of helping the needy through hospice and home care in Des Moines so that

Continued on page 8



Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation, pictured left to right, are: (top row) Sister Joan Susan Mwende and Sister Rosehellen Karwirwa; (bottom row) Sister Rosalia Njura and Sister Joan Clare Njoroka.

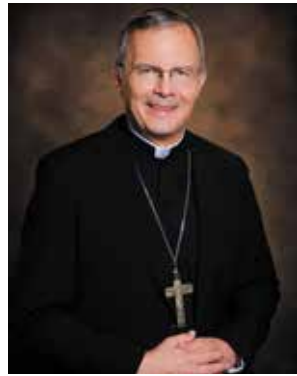


# OMG!

For folks ranging from baby boomers to Gen. Z'ers, the death of Fleetwood Mac songstress Christine McVie this November concluded a stellar chapter of pop music that for a while ruled the airwaves and was etched in the consciousness of many. For example, the soaring chorus of McVie's song, "Everywhere" has people humming their way along the road in a recent Chevy commercial, whether they know the words or not: "Oh, I . . . I want to be with you **everywhere**" [emphasis added].

Advent will soon deliver us an encounter with the Christ Child. I suggest there are deeper streams of music flowing between heaven and earth that should resonate in our souls and claim our attention long after these four weeks conclude. Grace-filled soloist and chorus link the "Oh" and "everywhere" long before McVie and company were inspired by their musical muse.

First, there is lead artist the Blessed Virgin Mary in her lyric appearance in 1531 to the indigenous St. Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac, in what is now modern Mexico. After reassuring the startled Juan of her tender maternal love, she identifies herself and the pervasive presence of her Son: "You should know, my beloved son, that I am the ever-virgin Mary, the mother of the true God, the Author of life, the Creator of all being, the Author of heaven and earth, who is **everywhere**."



By Bishop  
William  
Joensen

For a poor people dominated by their Spanish colonizers and feeling abandoned by the Aztec gods to whom their sacrifices were of no avail, these words were music to their ears.

They were an answer to prayers even for their first local bishop, Friar Juan de Zumárraga, who saw how the oppression and injustices visited upon the native people would pose a looming obstacle to the mission of spreading the Gospel. For why would men and women be drawn to a Church aspiring to enfold the whole world with the message of Jesus Christ, to be truly catholic, if the public profile of those who represent Mary's Son was so harsh and unattractive?

Mary miraculously impresses her image on Juan's tilma, and comes to be known as Our Lady of Guadalupe. She softens the severe and mistaken profile of a

God who merely traffics in power and politics. She shows herself to be the Mother who never forsakes her children, with a special place in her heart for those who have yet to embrace her Son in faith.

She carried the Author of life, the Creator of all being, in her womb, and hastened to her pregnant cousin Elizabeth. Even today, she speeds quickly along the desert way to those whose "Oh's" and "O's" are more cries of lament than of wonder. Their sentiments are captured well by the late Nobel laureate, Czesław Miłosz in his poem "O!", inspired by Edward Hopper's painting, "A Hotel Room":

O what sadness unaware that it's sadness!

What despair that doesn't know it's despair!

A businesswoman, her unpacked suitcase on the floor, sits on a bed half undressed, in red underwear, her hairdo impeccable; she has a piece of paper in her hand, probably with numbers.

Who are you? Nobody will ask. She doesn't know either.

The exclamation "Oh my God!" (OMG!)—and I'm not referring to last year's pop song by Adele, which is a recipe for despair—can convey different meanings: a spontaneous reaction

at being caught off guard; dismay at a disappointment that runs counter to our preferences; or appreciative wonder when something we experience exceeds all our hopes and dreams, to name a few. For persons steeped in weary disappointment, or worse, depression, Mary incorporates their sour groans and moans when they feel that mercy is far removed, and that God is either angry or unaware of their plight. Loneliness can seem so thick in the night, when the dawning daystar has yet to appear. But Mary helps transpose the minor keys of Advent into the major melodies of Christmas.

This year, with a full four weeks of Advent, let's be especially careful to not fast forward the soundtrack of the season to cheery pop holiday tunes that have little to do with the mystery unfolding before us. We accompany Mary as she composes our humanity with God's divinity by pondering, praying, and singing the proper "O's" the Church supplies: the "O" antiphons slotted for Dec. 17-23. Most of us know by heart the timeless tune, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," with its haunting strains capturing our longing for a Savior. But the six days' preceding antiphons help round out the full identity and gift of the One who comes to us: "O Wisdom; O Lord; O Root of Jesse; O Key of David; O Dayspring; O King of Nations." More complete versions of these antiphons

may be found at: <https://www.usccb.org/prayers/o-antiphons-advent>. Only a people who know the itch and ache that they themselves cannot relieve are properly prepared to receive the unexpected personal package sent from above to become God-with-us, God everywhere.

Now, thanks to his taking on our flesh in the womb of Mary, the pregnant woman cherished by so many under the title, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the author of heaven and earth, Jesus, is already everywhere among us in our mutual humanity. This kindly mother wants to be with us wherever we are in life, so that we might be drawn more fully into her Son's presence. Where Mary is, Jesus is. Where Jesus is, there is Mary—in Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and coming to a stable church community near you. We become part of the chorus of that long-awaited night who are filled with wonder, who can't help but exclaim: OMG! Or better yet, "O Come, All Ye Faithful"; "Vamos, Pastores, Vamos"; "O Little Town of Bethlehem"; "Los Pecces en el Río"; "O Holy Night"; "Cumbia de Navidad"—and the list goes on and on.

Wherever you are this Christmas and in the New Year of Grace 2023, O may God bless you and loosen your hearts and tongues in gratitude to sing his praises. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

# OMG!

Para todas las personas desde los Baby Boomers hasta los de la Generación Z, la muerte en este pasado mes de noviembre de la cantante de Fleetwood Mac, Christine McVie marcó la conclusión

de un capítulo estelar de la música pop que por un tiempo domino las ondas radiales y que quedó grabado en las consciencias de muchos. Por ejemplo, el poderoso coro de la canción de McVie "Everywhere" ("En Todas Partes") muestra en un reciente comercial de Chevy a la gente tarareando en la carretera, se sepan o no la letra de la canción: "Oh, quiero... quiero estar contigo en todas partes" [haciendo énfasis en la última frase].

El Adviento nos traerá pronto un encuentro con el Niño Cristo. Sugiero que hay unos flujos musicales más profundos transmitiéndose entre el cielo y la tierra que deberían resonar en nuestras almas y reclamar nuestra atención mucho más allá de la conclusión de estas cuatro semanas. Los coros y los solistas llenos de gracia conectan el "Oh" y el "todos lados" desde mucho antes de que McVie y compañía se inspiraran por su musa musical.

Primero, está la artista principal la Santísima Virgen María en su lírica aparición en 1531 al indígena San Juan Diego en el cerro del Tepeyac, en lo que hoy es el México moderno. Luego de asegurar al sorprendido Juan Diego sobre su tierno amor maternal, se identifica a sí misma y la omnipresencia de su Hijo: "Sabe y ten por seguro mi hijo mío el más pequeño, que yo soy la siempre Virgen Santa María, Madre del verdadero Dios, Aquel por quien vivimos, de El Creador de personas, del Cielo y de la Tierra, quien está en todas partes." Para un pueblo pobre dominado por sus colonizadores españoles y que se

sentían abandonados por sus dioses aztecas quienes no reconocían sus sacrificios, estas palabras fueron música para sus oídos.

Estas fueron una respuesta para sus oraciones incluso para su primer obispo local, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, quien veía como la opresión e injusticias que se imponían entre los nativos podrían ser un enorme obstáculo para la misión de predicar el Evangelio. Pesemos, ¿por qué motivo se sentirían hombres y mujeres atraídos a una que aspira envolver al mundo entero con el mensaje de Jesucristo, de ser verdaderamente católica, si el perfil público de aquellos que representan al Hijo de María era tan duro y poco atractivo?

María imprime milagrosamente su imagen en la tilma de Juan Diego y llega a conocerse como Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Ella ablandece el perfil severo e inequívoco de un Dios que solamente trafica en el poder y en la política. Ella se muestra a sí misma como la Madre que nunca abandona a sus hijos, con un lugar especial en su corazón para aquellos aun no acogidos a su Hijo en la fe.

Ella llevó al Autor de la vida, al Creador de personas, en su vientre, y se apresuró a visitar a su prima Isabel, que estaba embarazada. Incluso hoy en día, ella se apresura a través del camino vacío de aquellos cuyos "Oh's" y "Os" son más expresiones de llanto y no de asombro. Estos sentimientos los expresa el fallecido premio Nobel, Czesław Miłosz, en su poema "¡O!" inspirado por la pintura de Edward Hopper "Cuarto de Hotel":

¡O que tristeza sin saber que es tristeza!

¡Qué desesperación que no sabe que es desesperación!

Una mujer de negocios, su maleta sin desempacar en el suelo, se sienta en una cama semidesnuda, en ropa interior roja, su peinado irremprochable; tiene una hoja de papel en su mano, probablemente con número.

¿Quién eres? Nadie lo preguntará. Ella tampoco lo sabe.

La exclamación "¡Dios Mío!" (¡OMG!)—y no me refiero a la canción de pop de Adele del año pasado, que es una receta de deses-

peración—puede fácilmente tener diferentes significados: una reacción espontánea al ser sorprendido; desaliento en la decepción que corre contra nuestras preferencias; o en maravilla en aprecio cuando algo que vivimos excede nuestras esperanzas y expectativas, por nombrar solo algunas. Para las personas inmersas en gran decepción, o peor aún, en depresión, María incorpora sus lamentos y amargos llantos cuando sienten que la misericordia es inalcanzable, y que Dios está enojado o que ignora sus súplicas. La soledad puede ser muy densa en la noche, cuando aun no sale el lucero de la mañana. Pero María ayuda a trasladar las claves menores de Adviento en las melodías mayores de Navidad.

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## THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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## Official

Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointment effective Dec. 1, 2022 to August 30, 2026.

Rev. Mr. Robert Glaser, from the Diocese of Davenport, to Sacred Heart Parish, West Des Moines.

Faithfully in Christ,  
Most Rev. William Joensen, Ph.D.  
Bishop

Jason Kurth  
Chancellor



# NCYC prioritizes faith for teens



Photo supplied by Megs Howe

High school students from Des Moines and the Council Bluffs area went to the first National Catholic Youth Conference in California in early November. The youth deepened their faith, met new friends, and learned about Catholic colleges and religious communities on the West Coast.

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

About 20 teenagers from the Des Moines Diocese went to the first National Catholic Youth Conference in California last month for a life-changing experience.

“It really deepened my faith in a way that I didn’t know that it could. It was honestly a really, really good experience,” said Kalee Owens, of St. Patrick Parish and St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs.

“Before I went, I wasn’t super in touch with my faith,” she said. “On Sunday, I found myself wanting to go to Mass.”

Part of the change was from positive peer pressure.

“This is such a big deal for them and I looked at myself and thought this could be a big deal for me if I paid attention and I did. All together, it was just amazing,” Owens said.

Her mother, Stephanie Koch, decided to chaperone.

“The feeling you get there just rejuvenates the faith inside. It gets really emotional,” she said.

It was Sawyer Sheffield’s first experience with NCYC. The St. Patrick parishioner and St. Albert School student said the experience was more than he expected.

“It was really cool just being around so many people who are also trying to share their faith and get closer with God, which is what we’re all trying to do,” he said.

Since going to NCYC, he’s been trying to follow up with a suggestion of Father Max Carson to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, a prayer that priests pray daily.

“Heading into it, I wasn’t as strong in my faith as I have



Stephanie Koch and her daughter, Kalee Owens

been in the past and as I would have liked. Going to NCYC reset my mindset about that and really brought me closer in my faith,” Sheffield said.

Once Joe Wilwerding learned NCYC – which typically gathers every other year in Indianapolis – was trying a West Coast gathering in California, “there was no not going,” he said. He was one of six teens from Holy Trinity and six from St. Theresa Parish in Des Moines who went together.

“I really decided to go because I thought it would be a good opportunity to grow in my faith and I would get a chance to see a little more of the world while I was at it,” he said.

While the gathering was smaller than that of Indianapolis, there were still thousands of youth gathered in Long Beach, California Nov. 10-12 for one cause: growing in faith.

“It was so cool to see different people from all over the country,” Wilwerding said.

What was particularly memorable was a talk by New York Bishop Joseph Espaiilat.

He explained adoration to the youth in cool terms, he said.

“It taught us a different way to go about it,” Wilwerding said.

“It altered the way I look at adoration now, which is something I do fairly frequently at Dowling (Catholic High School).”

Lexi Narmi, of St. Patrick Parish and St. Albert School in Council Bluffs, was also struck by the bishop’s testimony.

“What he said was super good. I just felt like he really related to our age and just really made comments directed to us, especially during adoration,” she said. “He was like ‘Snap out of

it. You need to be focused on this right now.’ It was a different way to see it.”

Megs Howe, youth minister at St. Theresa Parish in Des Moines, said the New York bishop caught the attention of everyone at adoration when he said: “This is God here. Are you in or are you out?”

The Iowa youth had an opportunity to meet young people who live on Native American reservations, who came from Hawaii

and other West Coast communities. They met folks from religious communities based in the western part of the country and were introduced to Catholic colleges on the West Coast.

“It was awesome to see the young church alive and thriving. The kids were engaged in everything they were doing,” said Howe.

The NCYC 2023 will be Nov. 16-18 in Indianapolis.

## CARING ABOUT YOUR LOSS AND SHARING IN YOUR FAITH

### Prayer to St. Joseph for a Happy Death

*O blessed Joseph who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, obtain for me, I beseech you, the grace of a happy death.*

*In that hour of dread and anguish, assist me by your presence, and protect me by your power against the enemies of your salvation.*

*Into your sacred hands, living and dying, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.*

*Amen*

John & Mark Parrish,  
parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi

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# Family tree replaces parish directory

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Sometimes, great ideas come in the middle of the night.

One such idea came to Father Dan Siepker at 3 a.m. and it's completely changed the parish's approach to the traditional parish pictorial directory.

The last time Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood did a parish pictorial directory, Father Siepker was new to the parish.

That was nine years ago.

They tried to make a more current directory a couple of years ago, but the pandemic stalled all parish programs.

As parish activities resumed this year, Father Siepker tried to pick up where he left off by searching for a company that could help. He wasn't getting very far.

And then, in the dead of night, an idea occurred to him that he shared with the parish: "I said folks, rather than a parish directory, we're going to have a family tree."

In the gathering space of the church, parish staff created a tree on a wall. All parishioners were invited to send in a photo of themselves and/or their families. The photos were sized so they're all about the same and posted on



**Father Dan Siepker, pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Glenwood, decided to forgo the usual parish pictorial directory and instead have the faith-family pictures posted on the gathering space wall. It's been fun watching parishioners gather to find themselves and friends on the wall, he said.**

various branches of the tree with the names of those in the image.

There was just one small little snafu. For those who preferred to have their pictures taken, a small digital camera was used to snap images before Masses one weekend. Father Siepker accidentally deleted them from the camera.

So everyone was invited to

send in a "selfie" picture of themselves.

"Last Sunday was the first weekend when it was up. It was fun watching people," he said. "People were really noticing who's who in the parish."

Typically, 30-40 percent of parishioners participate in a parish directory, he said. Holy Rosary could approach 100 percent

participation with this family tree.

Since the images are pinned to the tree, they can be moved. Father hopes to create special areas by the tree, such as a heart with the pictures of couples he marries throughout the year. Or, there could be an area that honors First Communion children or youth who make their confirmation.



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 DCCHS 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](http://www.dowlingcatholic.plannedgiving.org)

## Catholic Charities could use help

Catholic Charities could use a hand helping others.

Volunteers and donations are always welcome as Catholic Charities strives to empower individuals and strengthen families through its five programs: Counseling; Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; Emergency Family Shelter; Food Pantry; and Refugee Services.

Catholic Charities serves 25,000 people each year in the Des Moines metro area and nine counties including and surrounding Council Bluffs.

"We thank our parishes and board members who have led many donation drives, especially during the holiday season," said Executive Director Barbara Decker. For example:

- St. Francis of Assisi Knights of Columbus donated boxes of socks and toothbrushes
- St. Joseph is holding a weekly donation drive during Advent for defined needs for the Emergency Family Shelter.
- St. Augustin is helping both the food pantry and local shelter through various donations.
- St. Theresa continues to offer funding for cab fares to shelter clients who need transportation to a doctor's appointment or other needs.

• Many other parishes have helped with refugee resettlement (including apartment set-up, contributions, and supply needs).

• Parishes, community and board volunteers are meal preparers (at the Des Moines shelter), food pantry, and in Council Bluffs.

"We're also grateful for the many businesses and community partners that offer their help through funding, in-kind goods and other support services as Catholic Charities approaches 100 years of support in Iowa," said Decker.

Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter could use meal providers and pillows. The Domestic Violence shelter could use nonperishable food items such as pasta and canned goods, said Emily Klisares, community relations manager.

Other needed items range from soap, toothpaste and towels to blankets, shower curtains, rice cookers, pajama sets and materials for refugees such as vacuums, bus passes, knife sets and more.

Find ways to contribute, donate or volunteer by going to [CatholicCharitiesDM.org](http://CatholicCharitiesDM.org) and click on "Contribute."

Family  
**FAITH**  
Resources

*The greatest gift the Church can give parents are the tools to help their children encounter Jesus and grow in friendship with Him and each other. Our Advent and Christmas Family Resources are designed to help children of all ages meet Jesus.*

Go to [dmdiocese.org/advent2022](http://dmdiocese.org/advent2022)  
or [dmdiocese.org/livingchristmas2022](http://dmdiocese.org/livingchristmas2022)

Use this QR code to go directly to Family Faith Resources





# Bishops: ESAs level the playing field for parents

The Catholic bishops of Iowa have released a statement in support of an Education Savings Account proposal, saying this “innovative idea would further level the playing field for parents who lack the resources to choose freely their children’s education setting or who are struggling to keep their children in the school of their choice.”

The statement is as follows:

Parents are the ones primarily responsible for the education of their children. We believe Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) are a tool that would empower parents across our state to choose the best and most suitable education for their children, regardless of economic standing. ESAs would allow parents who choose not to enroll their children in a public school to receive a deposit of public funds into a savings account set up by the state. This money could be used by parents for K-12 tuition and fees.

Iowa Catholic Conference, with the support of thousands of Iowans, asks the legislature to enact an ESA program during the 2023 legislative session. This innovative idea would further level the playing field for parents who lack the resources to choose freely their children’s education setting or who are struggling to keep their children in the school of their choice.

Iowans agree that access to a quality education is important. But there are some who ask: why should taxpayers pay for education outside of a public school?

In fact, state law already makes many provisions for parental choice. Current examples include state-funded preschool, the School Tuition Organization program, the Tuition Tax Credit and “open enrollment” for public school parents. We also have direct ways of funding private education, such as the Iowa Tuition Grant Program for students attending private colleges. Moreover, private school students receive the benefit of public support for textbooks, transportation, and meal programs. These efforts support parents and students and help level the playing field. ESAs are another effort of the same kind.

Nonpublic schools are a long-standing stabilizing force in communities and make a distinctive contribution to the common good. We believe nonpublic schools are among the best anti-poverty programs, offering a first-rate education, enduring moral truth, and discipline that speak to the development of the whole person. Research has shown that robust parental choice in education results in improved academic outcomes both for public schools in general and for student-participants.

ESAs are also a relatively



Dubuque Archbishop Michael Jackels, Davenport Bishop Thomas Zinkula, Des Moines Bishop William Joensen, and Sioux City Bishop R. Walker Nickless

inexpensive and efficient means to support parents and children. We estimate that for no more than an additional five percent of the current government spending on K-12 education, the state could offer comprehensive choice in education for all nonpublic school students. This would empower parents (no less than schools) to make decisions about their children’s education more freely with more certainty as they plan for the future.

From mutual solidarity and our shared commitment to the common good, all Iowans should be committed to providing real choice in education, not only for those with the means to choose, but for all. For example, an Iowa

family wrote the following:

“We have chosen Catholic education for our kids and are extremely happy. Our kids are thriving in the system not only through their faith life, but with the rigorous academic curriculum that our school provides. We will soon have three kids in high school which adds much financial stress to our family. We do everything we can to decrease the tuition. We have sacrificed so much so our kids can be part of such an amazing system. Our kids have worked many hours through the work-study program to decrease some of the tuition costs and we are active in fundraising through our parish. But that is just not enough. That is why we

are such strong supporters of the ESA. The ESA would make such a difference and alleviate so much financial burden for our family.”

More than 25 years ago, we warned that parents of school age children were finding it more and more difficult to pay school tuition and still make ends meet. Even more so, this is the case today. The state should respect and support the right of parents to choose the most appropriate education for their children and, as far as possible, make such choosing fair and unimpeded. Education Savings Accounts will help give parents the freedom to make a real choice in education.

## New webinar offers guidance on end-of-life issues

By Lindsay Steele  
Contributing Writer

Catholic teaching requires respect for life from womb to tomb but many Catholics are unsure how to apply this belief to end-of-life issues, such as whether to undertake medical treatments.

Deacon Dan Freeman has observed this quandary while assisting people in the Diocese of Davenport with advance care directives.

“A person who is struggling and suffering still has value,” he said. “There’s a lot of confusion on the other end of life, a lot of things people don’t understand.”

He recently shared his thoughts and experiences in an Iowa Catholic Conference webinar on advance care directives, now available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-2XttBbDlG>.

The webinar includes an explanation of the Church’s perspective on using or forgoing life-sustaining treatments as well as information about palliative care.

Janine Idziak, chancellor and consultant for Health Care Ethics for the Archdiocese of Dubuque, said these guidelines aim to help people as they make difficult decisions about using or forgoing treatments.

Morally, one ought to undertake medical treatment that offers a reasonable hope of benefit without excessive burden, she explained.

Conversely, if realistic hope

of benefit to the patient does not exist or the burdens of treatment outweigh its benefits, it is morally permissible to forgo life-sustaining treatment.

The benefits and burdens principle should be applied on a case-by-case basis.

Idziak also discussed the ethics of palliative care, which fo-

cus on the management of pain and distressing symptoms. In the past, Christians thought they were expected to “tough it out and offer it up,” but that is no longer the case. She quoted the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ document, “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,” which states that

effective management of pain in all of its forms is critical in the appropriate care of the dying.

The ICC suggests people complete a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care form and, if appropriate, an Iowa Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment. Go to [iowacatholicconference.org](http://iowacatholicconference.org) or contact Tom

Chapman at [tom@iowacatholicconference.org](mailto:tom@iowacatholicconference.org) for more information.

*This story is reprinted with permission from The Catholic Messenger, Diocese of Davenport.*



## Around the Diocese

### Dec. 21 Wednesday The Longest Night:

URBANDALE – Grieving a loved one, retiring or losing employment, or a change in health or relationships can make the holidays feel like anything but “the most wonderful time of the year.” Join us 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Emmaus House for a contemplative evening, reflecting on whatever is weighing on your heart this season. Cost is \$20 (scholarships available). April Young will facilitate the evening of prayer and reflection. For more information visit themmaushouse.org.

### Dec. 19 Monday Cathedral Holy Hours

DES MOINES -- All are welcome to join Bishop William Joensen at St. Ambrose Cathedral for an hour of Eucharistic adoration and evening prayer beginning at 5 p.m. Evening prayer will be livestreamed at Facebook.com/dmdiocese.

### Dec. 26 Monday Cathedral Holy Hour

DES MOINES -- All are welcome to join Bishop William Joensen at St. Ambrose Cathedral for an hour of Eucharistic adoration and evening prayer beginning at 5 p.m.

### Jan. 6 Friday Epiphany Concert

DES MOINES -- Come enjoy the sounds of the season with St. Augustin Parish's inaugural collaboration of local musical talent under the direction of music director Dr. Marion Scott starting at 7 p.m. at the church. A reception will follow in the parish hall.

### Jan. 15 Sunday Sarah Hart Concert

WEST DES MOINES – St. Francis of Assisi Parish is hosting a concert by Sarah Hart, Catholic artist and composer at 6:30 p.m. in the church. It is open to people of all ages and perfect for families.

# 'Tis the season of giving

## Knights of Columbus provide warm winter clothing



Photo supplied by Todd Roecker

The Atlantic Knights of Columbus Council #1164 donated \$500 worth of winter clothing items that included snow boots, snow pants, coats, and gloves to Washington Elementary School. KC members Lee Gray and Phil Hascall, and school counselor Val Stickler show some of the donations.

## Catholic Daughters give gifts of Christmas joy



Photo supplied by Carol Hollenbeck

Council Bluffs Catholic Daughters Court St. Anthony #330 prepare gifts for the holiday season. Front row: Recording Secretary Angie Shea, Debbie Wheeler, Sharon Orton, and Monica Sciortino. Back row: Financial Secretary Dola Mehsling, Rita Hughes, Mary Morrow, Kathi Markel, Jan Swift, Susie Van Voltenburg, Matalyn Sebetka, Kris Reicks, Mary Sealock, Linda Spencer, Carol Andress and Regent Carol Hollenbeck.

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## PRAY WITH US

For the last year, Bishop William Joensen and the Diocese of Des Moines have been praying to renew Eucharistic faith and worship among God's people and to ask the Holy Spirit for inspiration and guidance for the Diocese of Des Moines. As a strategic visioning process

continues, Bishop Joensen invites everyone to join him in praying that we will fulfill our share of God's mission in Southwest Iowa, so that every person might encounter Jesus Christ and experience his call to friendship and communion.

### Diocese of Des Moines Visioning Prayer

O God, you share with your people, your church, the mission to be the saving love of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

As a people of faith in southwest Iowa, send the Holy Spirit to ignite in us:

Sincere conversion to see, hear, think and act as Jesus;

Greater unity and bonds of peace;

Missionary zeal to spread good news that will spark a world aflame with love;

Genuine care for each other, especially those feeling lost or left out; and

Willingness to bear together the yoke that Christ makes light.

May our strategic visioning in the Diocese of Des Moines make us ever more focused, discerning, and free to fulfill our calling as a people made whole by the Heart of your Beloved Son.

Accompany us along the Way that leads to heaven, surrounded by Holy Mary, Joseph, and all the saints with whom we hope to dwell forever in communion with you,

+Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen

### Diócesis de Des Moines Oración de Visión

Oh Dios, tú compartes con tu pueblo, tu Iglesia, la misión de ser el amor salvador de tu Hijo y nuestro Salvador, Jesucristo.

Como un pueblo de fe en el suroeste de Iowa, envía al Espíritu Santo para que encienda en nosotros:

una sincera conversión para ver, oír, pensar y actuar como Jesús;

una mayor unidad y lazos de paz;

un afán misionero para compartir la buena nueva encendiendo al mundo con amor;

un genuino cariño unos con los otros, especialmente con aquellos que se sienten perdidos o excluidos; y

el deseo de cargar juntos con el yugo que se hace ligero con Cristo.

Que nuestra visión estratégica en la Diócesis de Des Moines nos haga aún más enfocados, discernientes y libres para cumplir con nuestro llamado como pueblo que encuentra plenitud por el Corazón de tu Amado Hijo.

Acompáñanos en el Camino que nos lleva al cielo, rodeados de la María Santísima, José y todos los santos con quienes esperamos habitar por siempre en comunión contigo,

+Padre, Hijo, y Espíritu Santo. Amén.

## CDA gift boxes

Catholic Daughters Court St. Anthony #330 of Council Bluffs filled 17 shoe boxes with toys, coloring/activity books, crayons, colored pencils, stickers, hard candies, dolls, trucks, puzzles, and other items to delight young children.

Each box also included a rosary made by the Corpus Christi Parish Rosary Makers. The members filled all the boxes ordered from Cross Catholic Outreach ministry of Florida.

The organization will forward the boxes at Christmastime to needy children in Latin America and the Caribbean. For just \$25 per box, plus \$9 for shipping, members of the court shopped individually and then packaged their gifts at their Oct. 24 meeting.

## Got a story idea?

Who inspires you with the way he/she lives their faith? Who goes the extra mile or has overcome the odds strengthened by their faith?

Contact Anne Marie Cox at 515-237-5057 or acox@dmdiocese.org.





# Early roots hold up enduring legacy of faith



Parishioners of St. Patrick Church in Dunlap celebrated the completion of interior renovations in time to celebrate the Feast of Christ the King with Bishop William Joensen.

St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the seeds planted for the Catholic faith to grow.

Local Catholics would gather when a priest would occasionally visit for Mass and the sacraments. In 1872, the parish was assigned its first resident pastor who would cover 50 miles from Missouri Valley to Denison.

“We have had a resident pastor from 1872, during times of drought, depression, world wars, good times and bad times,” said Father Joel McNeil, the pastor.

The parish is grateful for the legacy it has received. A large parish hall was built in 1975.

Two decades later, an addition to the hall was built to provide space for religious education.

The parish recently completed an interior renovation and beautification of the church built in 1929. Bishop William Joensen celebrated the parish’s accomplishments with Mass on the Feast of Christ the King.

“Many generations worked hard for us to have this beautiful campus,” said Father McNeil. “It’s up to us to carry this forward for generations to come. It’s our responsibility to preserve it, expand it, and hand it on to the future.”



St. Patrick Church in Dunlap at left before the most recent renovation, and at right with the new renovation completed in time to celebrate 150 years of faith in the community.

## Get your message out

Get your message out in front of 30,000 Catholic households in central and southwest Iowa by advertising in The Catholic Mirror. Contact [communications@dmdiocese.org](mailto:communications@dmdiocese.org) for details.

## Immerse in the Spirit

Immerse will offer two evenings of adoration, praise and worship, reconciliation, and teaching. Join on Jan. 6 at 7 p.m. at St. Pius X in Urbandale or Jan. 19 with 6:30 p.m. Mass at Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. Immerse’s mission is to empower people to experience the love of God and Jesus through an encounter with the Holy Spirit. Find Immerse on Facebook and Instagram @ImmerseDSM.



## Have you started making plans for year-end charitable giving?

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If not, now is the time to make your donation to the Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO) and secure a 75% Iowa tax credit. Iowa taxpayers, who contribute CTO receive an Iowa tax credit equal to 75% of their contribution. The amount contributed may also qualify as a charitable donation on federal tax returns.

The CTO accepts contributions from Iowa taxpayers and allocates those funds in tuition grants to eligible students to attend schools in the Diocese of Des Moines. During the current school year, 37% of the students received an award. With rising inflation, many of our families must choose between basic necessities and Catholic education. Please **DONATE NOW** and help families keep their children in our Catholic schools.

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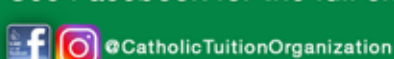
Reserve your Iowa tax credits either online at

[www.CTOIowa.org](http://www.CTOIowa.org)

or call Mark at 515-237-5010.

This example is for comparison purposes only and does not constitute tax advice. Please contact your tax advisor for information on the impact of any charitable contribution.

See Facebook for the full chart



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



# Kindness begets kindness

Continued from page 1

they could help the needy in their homeland.

Sisters Rosalia Njura and Joan Susan Mwendu came and together since 2016, the four Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation have been working at MercyOne to provide both pastoral care and medical care to the sick as certified nursing assistants to patients.

The sisters live in an austere manner, paying only for the necessities, so that they can send the rest of their paychecks to their religious community in Kenya to support the work of feeding and educating orphans, caring for the disabled and providing medical aid to the poorest of the poor.

The new year will bring changes to Sister Rosehellen's mission. She will move to New York, where she'll oversee young Kenyan sisters getting a theology degree so they can teach in the United States and send part of their income back to help the poor in Kenya.

At the same time, she'll be learning how to fundraise in New

York to continue to send money to her religious community to help their ministry there.

The sisters are gaining support for their effort from the local Catholic community in Des Moines.

The sisters attend St. Pius X Church in Urbandale, where fellow parishioner and Iowa Catholic Radio Show host Jon Leonetti learned of their mission. He brought together a group that created a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization called Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation USA to fund specific projects for the sisters.

"They asked what they can help us with because we have many problems," said Sister Rosehellen. "The mother superior sent a list of things which need to be done."

The Des Moines area supporters saw pictures of a medical clinic that the sisters operate in Tunyai, a rural community in Kenya.

"They saw pictures of sisters evaluating patients and administering medications outside. There's no roof and nowhere to

store medications and supplies," Sister Rosehellen said. Clinic services can be rained out when patients are waiting to be seen.

The local group made the Tunyai Health Center its first project. The group has raised \$48,000 toward a \$62,000 goal and hopes to finish raising the funds in 2023 so construction on a medical clinic building can begin in 2024.

"They came to the Diocese to raise as much money as they could to send back to support the work of the sisters," said Steven Craig, a board member and supporter of the sisters.

Their effort to look to central Iowa for help, has been beneficial both to the mission of the sisters and Iowans.

"Having these sisters, who are so reliable and such good workers and so positive, I think has been a blessing for Mercy," Craig said.

To support the building project, gifts can be made through the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa.

## New director named for St. Thomas More Center, home of CYC

Jason Anderson, a Madison, Wisconsin area nonprofit executive with more than two decades of experience, has been named executive director of the St. Thomas More Center, home of Catholic Youth Camp, based in Panora, Iowa. He began Dec. 5.

Anderson brings a wide skill set to the center, including executive leadership, youth development, program development, staff training, risk management, financial and operations management. He also has experience with outdoor camps and programs.

"His experience in both child and youth development plus his ability to manage the business side made him an excellent choice," said Kerry McGuire, chair of the St. Thomas More Center's Advisory Board.

Anderson recently led a capital campaign and multi-million dollar building project at Red Caboose Child Care, which provides childcare, after school and summer camp opportunities in Madison, Wisconsin.

Anderson holds a master's degree in education from National Louis University specializing in experiential and environmental education. He earned a bachelor's degree in sociology of organizations and social psychology from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

He takes the place of Alex Kautzky, who moved back to her home state of Montana.

## Deacon Houston named director of the Permanent Diaconate Office

Bishop William Joensen has appointed Deacon Jim Houston, of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale, as the director for the new Permanent Diaconate Office effective Nov. 28.

"I'm delighted and humbled by this appointment," said Deacon Houston. "A deacon's ministry is to teach the truth with charity, and this is what I will hope to do in the context of my role both as leader and servant to the diaconate community of the Diocese. Please pray for the diaconate in our Diocese and for me to be a worthy servant."

In his new role, Deacon Houston will be responsible for the overall direction and administration of the permanent diaconate including in the areas of ministry and continued formation of all of our deacons in the Diocese.

"Deacon Jim is an outstanding choice for the Director of the Permanent Diaconate," said John Huynh, director of the diocesan Faith Journey program and a member of the selection committee. "With his experience in leadership and desire to serve, we are convinced that he will be fruitful in collaborating with his brother deacons towards enhanced growth in their diaconal ministries."

Deacon Houston serves St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale as the pastoral care coordinator. He has held numerous leadership roles within the diaconate community, most recently as a member of the diaconate formation team and a committee member of the diaconate audit implementation team. He is a fourth degree knight in the Knights of Columbus.

Ordained in 2010, he has been involved in multiple ministries including: Marriage Ministry, Faith Formation, RCIA, baptism preparation, MercyOne volunteer and the St. Thomas More Center.

## Deacon Halbach named director of Diaconate Formation

Bishop William Joensen has appointed Deacon Matt Halbach, of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny, as the Director of Formation for the Permanent Diaconate effective Nov. 28.

"I am both honored and humbled to be chosen to serve in this role," said Deacon Halbach. "I am following in the footsteps of a tremendous legacy, thanks to Deacon Ron and Tammy Myers. Please pray for me and for the diaconate in our Diocese."

In his new role, Deacon Halbach will be responsible for the overall direction and implementation of the diaconate formation program in the Diocese.

"Not only does he have an impressive academic and theological background, he has also successfully integrated his diaconal ministry to his vocation as a husband and father," said John Huynh, director of the diocesan Faith Journey program and a member of the selection committee. "We are confident he will guide others who are discerning the permanent diaconate towards the same path."

Deacon Halbach previously served as the executive director of the St. Joseph Evangelization Center in West Des Moines. He earned his Ph.D. in Catechetics from the Catholic University of America in 2014 and was ordained a permanent deacon in 2018. He is the executive director of catechesis for publisher, William H. Sadlier, and an author and national speaker on the topics of mercy, accompaniment, evangelization and catechesis. He has a podcast and is a reviewer for the Catholic University of America's International Journal of Evangelization and Catechesis.

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# Fueled by faith, advocacy for children pays off

In collaboration with churches and the community, two women push for change in mental health response for children.

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Two parishioners from Our Lady's Immaculate Heart in Ankeny collaborated with others to move bureaucratic mountains to create a plan that helps children suffering mental health crises.

Jan Brown and Sue Murphy said their faith plus a passion for helping people in pain fueled their drive to fill a gap in health care in the Des Moines area.

Neither woman had a loved one dealing with a mental health crisis. They got involved simply because they cared.

"It wasn't charity, it was justice," Brown said. "It was trying to address a problem that other people maybe could not resolve on their own."

Murphy's memories as a teacher spurred her on. "I think of certain individuals who have come through my classroom who needed help, couldn't find it or waited," she said.

The problem: Parents didn't want to call police when their child was having a mental health crisis. Emergency rooms weren't the right place to go. And it could



Guided by faith, Jan Brown and Sue Murphy of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, led a multi-year effort to change for the better the way the community cares for children in mental health crisis.

take weeks or months to get an appointment with a counselor.

Today, if a family calls 9-1-1 about a child having a mental health crisis, there's a process in place to help. At the 9-1-1 call center, there are counselors who can dispatch a mobile team of mental health professionals to

come to the home or school. Children who need more intensive support can go to Easter Seals for up to a week to stabilize their situation. There, they can get connected to ongoing support.

"It's less intensive than in-patient but more than a mobile response," said Courtney Dufford,

an organizer with A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy, also known as AMOS. Our Lady's Immaculate Heart is a member institution of AMOS, which Brown and Murphy worked through to collaborate with various groups in the broader community.

They "were really at the heart of all this, but in relationship with African American congregations and refugee nonprofits. A diverse collective could get something done that everyone thought was impossible," Dufford said.

The Des Moines Police Department heard the need of the community and responded with a new service that started July 1 called Crisis Advocacy Response Effort, or CARE. Callers to 9-1-1 or the non-emergency number can ask for the CARE representative, and child mental health professionals will help, said Sgt. Lorna Garcia.

"We're very excited about this program," Garcia said. "It is definitely a response to the community demand that we heard."

Coincidentally, a nationwide hotline number for suicide and mental health crisis, 9-8-8, has become available.

The genesis of Brown and Murphy getting involved has to do with their faith.

Murphy had attended a Christian Experience Weekend retreat, and asked herself: What's next? How could she put her faith into action?

"I'm called to go out and make a difference," Murphy said. "For me, this was the next step. I can lend my voice and add to the group."

Brown and Murphy along with representatives of AMOS did make a difference; did research, talked to families, visited with hospital officials and legislators and built the political will to figure out a new system, Dufford said.

The work isn't done. Now they're trying to ensure that it has long-term funding and that there are counselors who can meet the need of the community including refugees and immigrants who call central Iowa home.

The work of improving the community will never be done.

Brown said: "That's our goal is to listen to concerns of families and improve the communities we live in."

## Kick off the New Year with a vow to volunteer

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Janice Megel's biggest fear was to be homeless.

Her father left her and her mother when she was 15. Her mother worked low-paying jobs.

They struggled.

Later in life, she said she married and worked. Now a widow without children, the Holy Trinity parishioner is still haunted by the thought that one day, she might not have a roof over her head. She knows there are people who do find themselves homeless.

And that's why she volunteers at a unique homeless shelter called Family Promise.

"When I meet with someone at Family Promise, I just talk to them," she said. "It's easy for me to talk to people from all walks of life."

Family Promise Greater Des Moines provides emergency shelter to homeless families with the help of area faith institutions. Volunteers from over a dozen congregations including Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Des Moines, Ss. John & Paul in Altoona and Our Lady's Immaculate Heart in Ankeny provide and serve evening meals and help provide safe overnight shelter to guest families.

The organization gets results, said board member Jim McWeeny. Sixty-eight percent of the families moved into permanent or transitional housing after leaving the program last year. Sixty-eight percent of the families have at least one parent employed when they leave the program.

Coming out of the pandemic, the organization is facing a dilemma. Church participation is down, a situation exacerbated by

the coronavirus, McWeeny said. The organization's volunteer pool has dwindled and longtime helpers are getting older and wearing out. Meanwhile the number of families becoming homeless and needing shelter remains large.



Jim McWeeny

"The rewards (of volunteering) are that you're helping families. You're providing shelter for folks who are in dire straits," said Family Promise board member David Morse. "We help people who, for the most part, are down on their luck for whatever reason. You'd be surprised how many people are a paycheck away from problems."

Family Promise takes in up to three families at a time, provides them with care and meets

their needs so they can get back on their feet. The group is looking for volunteers to help with meal preparation, transportation, staying overnight with the families and providing for some of their needs.

"I can't give them money and I can't cook. But my mother taught me to work. I said I could stay overnight with them," said Megel.

She first learned of a need for Family Promise volunteers

through her parish bulletin. Anyone interested in becoming involved with Family Promise can contact McWeeny at 515-223-0044 or jgmcwney@gmail.com.

"I think Family Promise has got God watching over it," Megel said.

Volunteering is important, she added: "I think it makes a big difference. When we die, God is going to say, 'Did you love me and did you love your neighbor?'"

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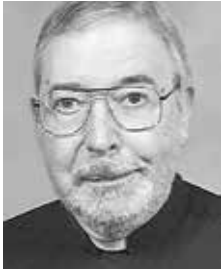
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## Social worker priest dies at 87



Father John Maier

Father John Maier, a retired priest of the Des Moines Diocese, died Nov. 18 at the age of 87.

Born in Leavenworth, Kansas, Father Maier was ordained in Des Moines to the priesthood when he was 55 years old in 1990 by Bishop William Bullock.

He had earned a bachelor's degree in history at St. Mary's College in Leavenworth and earned a master's of social work at the University of Kansas at Lawrence.

Father Maier was a social worker in Des Moines, before he entered the seminary.

Father Phillip Kruse, the diocesan Vocations director told *The Catholic Mirror* then that when Father Maier was ordained that his background in social work and counseling would "give him a good background for the priesthood."

After ordination, he served at the following parishes: Our Lady's Immaculate Heart in Ankeny, St. Joseph in Des Moines, St. Anne in Logan, Corpus Christi/Queen of Apostles in Council Bluffs, St. Patrick in Audubon, Holy Trinity in Exira, Holy Spirit in Creston and St. Edward in Afton.

Father Maier retired in 2003 and returned to his hometown of Leavenworth where he continued to serve part-time at parishes and minister to prisoners.

His Mass of Christian Burial was Nov. 23 in Leavenworth. Burial was at Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

# Cheerful, compassionate pastor believed in people

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Father Robert "Bob" Schoemann, one of many vocations to have come from Shelby County, was authentic, compassionate and connected with people well.

The beloved pastor and friend died Nov. 28 at age 84.

Born in Harrison County, he received his sacraments at St. Mary, Our Lady of Fatima Church in Portsmouth in Shelby County. He attended the local country school through fifth grade, then attended St. Mary School in Portsmouth and spent 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades at St. John Vianney Seminary in Elkhorn, Nebraska.

He attended Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri and St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque before being ordained a priest in 1966.

He served Mercy Hospi-

tal in Des Moines as a chaplain and taught and was chaplain for two years at St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines.

The bulk of his years of service were focused on parish ministry in both rural and urban areas. He served St. Patrick and Queen of Apostles (now Corpus Christi) in Council Bluffs, Sacred Heart in Woodbine, St. Anne in Pisgah, St. Boniface in Waukee and the Des Moines parishes of Visitation (now Our Lady of the Americas), and All Saints.

In 1990, a parishioner asked him to get involved in a grief and bereavement ministry for the divorced and widowed. He served the Beginning Experience minis-



Father Robert Schoemann

try for more than 25 years.

"There is such a need for people to find healing and forgiveness, being accepted and understood," he said in 2016 in *The Catholic Mirror*.

"He was a gift to everybody here," said Mike Losee, of Beginning Experience.

Father Schoemann used humor to help those who were grieving. He was good at offering personal invitations to people suffering in silence who could benefit from the healing that comes from a Beginning Experience open house or retreat, Losee said.

"He's a great guy. He's going to really be missed," Losee said.

During the funeral homily, Father Ken Gross reflected on his long friendship with Father Schoemann, saying he was authentic, compassionate and a great friend to many people.

"He spoke the truth. He was a great pastor. Why? Because

he loved people," said Father Gross. "He wanted to connect. He desired to learn about you. He believed in the Second Vatican Council, believed in the desire to build community, to grow in understanding."

Both Father Schoemann and Father Gross grew up on farms, and Father Gross said they understood the Gospel passage about a seed dying in order to produce fruit.

"That image speaks very clearly about our lives, dying to self in order to rise with Christ Jesus and this is true of a lifelong process," he said. "Bob did it well, very well."

Father Gross said Father Schoemann picked the readings for his funeral Mass, which centered on friendship, thanksgiving and service.

"Hopefully, each one of us can continue our ministry in this way: in friendship, in thanksgiving and in service."

## Book Review: Must-read tome focuses on mission

By Dan R. Ebener  
Contributing Writer

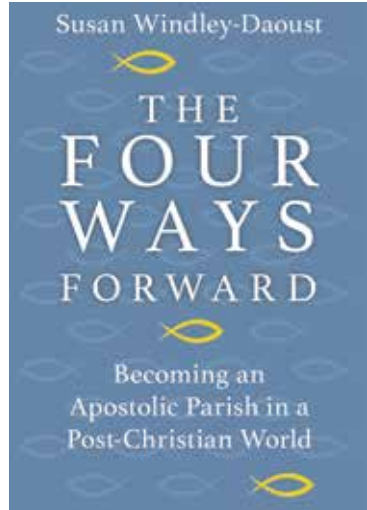
*The Four Ways Forward: Becoming an Apostolic Parish in a Post-Christian World*

By Susan Windley-Daoust (2022). Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor

If you want to read one book on the new evangelization, make it this one. It is a synopsis of everything else that is being said, and then some.

Susan Windley-Daoust writes as a teacher, a scholar, a mom, a parishioner and a diocesan director of missionary discipleship. But mostly, she writes as a missionary disciple herself.

Reading her book is like waking up to a bucket of cold water. It is the wake-up call that the average parishioner in the pew needs to awaken to: the fact that the world has moved from Christendom (a time when it seemed that everyone was a practicing



Christian) to an Apostolic Age (a time that is similar to the first four centuries of the early church).

The fact is that, as a church, we need to focus much more on mission and less on maintenance. This book provides not only the rationale for that paradigm shift, but also four models of how to make that shift as a parish. The four models that Windley-Daoust describes in detail provide specific ways for Catholic parishes to

focus on evangelization.

The four models include:

- (1) Radical hospitality and first proclamation,
- (2) Spiritual multiplication small groups,
- (3) Organizational mission (re)focus and
- (4) Signs and wonders.

Windley-Daoust draws from Scripture, every recent Pope, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the saints and scholars of the past. She also quotes extensively from the literature of the present, from recent authors such as Sherry Weddell, Father James Mallon, Julianne Stanz, Monsignor James Shea, Father John Riccardo and many others. (Don't miss the Footnotes, it might be the best part of the book.)

In the process, she touches on the best practices and contributions made by the many organizations who can facilitate and assist with parish evangelization, including Divine Renovation, Alpha, ChristLife, RENEW, Weekend Away, FOCUS, Rebuilt,

SEEK, Encounter Ministries and Amazing Parish.

This book is a must-read for anyone working in evangelization in the church. It would also make a good study guide for small groups of lay people who are trying to grasp the current reality we find ourselves in as a church. The book helps us understand that evangelization is not only the work of the clergy, but it is the calling of every baptized Christian to respond to the Great Commission to go and make disciples.

While Windley-Daoust does provide some data signaling the changes in church attendance and participation, she does not dwell on those facts, but moves rather quickly to provide hope that we can and must adapt as a church. As I reflect on what I was reading, I became convinced that she was indeed inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this book.

Dan Ebener is a consultant in the Diocese of Davenport.

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## Dream come true



Bishop William Joensen blessed the new faith formation education building at St. Mary Parish in Hamburg on Nov. 27.



# Priests cultivating souls and soil

Given the Diocese of Sioux City is a rural diocese, it's no surprise that many parishioners are either part of an agricultural community or have close ties to someone who is.

Several priests in the Diocese have firsthand experience in fieldwork and raising livestock as they come from farming backgrounds. Some remain directly involved in the industry today in various capacities.

By Renee Webb  
Contributing Writer



Father Andrew Galles says there's a connection between farming and ministry. "You are an instrument of God that puts in the labor," and the Lord does the rest.

On his days off – especially during harvest and planting seasons – you can usually find Father Andrew Galles on the family farm near Remsen working with his parents and brother.

The work doesn't stop with fieldwork such as combining and tillage, though, as he assists with feeding cattle, hauling manure, maintenance of equipment and a number of "random jobs" on the farm.

"Farm work has always been a part of my life for as long as I can remember," said Father Galles, who is the diocesan director of worship. "Even as a young child, there are many memories of getting into trouble with the dog and heading out to the field to be with dad in the tractor. When I was a teenager, I was old enough to start taking on some more responsibilities and became comfortable enough to begin running machinery and farm equipment."

The priest not only helps out on his days off, but he'll even take some vacation days during fall and spring to help with seasonal work or special projects.

"I do this because I really enjoy it and I also feel the same responsibility that my parents feel to be good stewards of the gifts that have been given to them," said Father Galles. "The life of the farm has always been in my blood because it's the way I grew up and the work has always struck me as being honest."

In going back to the farm, it grounds the priest in where he came from and how he was raised.

He does believe there is a connection between farming and ministry in the sense that "you are an instrument of God that puts in the labor," and the Lord does the rest.

"Both in farming and ministry, there are many ways in which we are not in control. As a priest, you plant the seed of faith and hope that it comes to be fruitful – a priest faithfully relies upon God to bring completion the good work that is begun in the soul," said Father Galles. "It is the same with farming, in which we can do our best to be dutiful stewards of the land, but the fruit of our work is ultimately a gift from God."

Harvest can be a time when feelings of gratitude take hold, he noted, "because everything we receive from the land is a gift."

Father Galles said it's easy to relate to farm work in a spiritual way as Scripture is full of agricultural imagery of harvests, vineyards and shepherds. He mentioned that Adam was charged with tilling the Garden of Paradise and cited parables of Christ using agricultural imagery.

"Even the liturgical calendar of the church revolves, in many ways, around the cycle of planting, growing and harvesting," he said. "Jesus himself was a carpenter who did manual labor with his hands, along with St. Joseph. There is something that is both very human and very divine about working with our hands – it's how God created us."

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Father Randy Schon says working join the farm helps him connect with parishioners. "People like to talk to me about farming," he said. His parishes will merge in January, taking on the name, Parish of Ss. Isidore and Maria, who are the patron saints of farmers.

Father Randy Schon works with his brothers Danny and Glenn and the trio raise pigs in Carroll County as part of a network of 740 U.S. family farmers and ranchers that raise livestock humanely and sustainably.

"We raise feeder pigs the old-fashioned way so it is very labor intensive," noted Father Schon, who is pastor of the parishes in Merville, Kingsley and Anthon. 2

"It's for a special meat market – a niche market called Niman Ranch. We raise them without antibiotics or hormones and without farrowing crates," he said.

His brother Danny lives on the family farm and does the day-to-day work with his brother Glenn of Carroll and Father Schon helping when they can. The acreage consists of 20 acres of crops and some pasture.

"We use the corn for feed, the hay for bedding and we sell the soybeans," noted Father Schon, who said the pigs are the main source of income as they sell about 400 a year.

The priest runs the business side of the venture, handling the financials, paperwork, record keeping and the selling of the pigs.

On his days off, he works on the farm helping clean the buildings, give vaccinations and other chores.

"I've always liked livestock," he said. "We used to raise a few cattle but we stopped that back in the 1980s. I think all of us like raising and taking care of pigs."

Father Schon mentioned he has always had an interest in caring for God's creation. Even as a

high schooler for speech contest he would select topics such as soil conservation.

Given that Niman Ranch works with family farms and has a motto of "Raised with Care" makes it a good fit for the Schon brothers.

He pointed out that a majority of the pig farmers associated with this network are in Iowa.

"The demand comes from people who want good tasting meat that is raised without drugs and antibiotics and not in confinements," said Father Schon. "The meat has more marbling in it and that provides for greater taste."

And while working with the pigs is enjoyable for him, ultimately he noted it's a lot of physical work and is a business that helps to support the family.

An added bonus to this work is that it helps him connect and bond with parishioners.

"People like to talk to me about farming," said Father Schon, whose parishes will merge in January to form the Parish of Ss. Isidore and Maria, patron saints of farmers.

At this time of year, he noted it is not only a time for thanksgiving but know "our dependence on God is evident."

"Our dependence on productive soil and sufficient rain is evident. We all have a concern about the drought we are in."

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# Family bonds teach us about unity

One of the things I love most about the Christmas season is the chance to gather with extended family.

As Kara and I prepare to join my parents and siblings in Chicago, a few things are certain. There will be good food, lots of laughs, and invariably some drama. The drama comes from a house full of opinionated people, who have different convictions and experiences, and yet a common disposition for debate.

Still, I'm excited for our gathering, because even knowing there will be arguments, I have an even more certain, and deeper conviction. All of us, without exception, love each other fiercely.

I've been thinking of this truth while

## Marriage and Family Life

By Adam Storey



reflecting on the Church's definition of marriage as a "Sacrament at the Service of Communion" which "confer[s] a particular mission in the Church and serve[s] to build up the People of God" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1534).

What a beautiful mission married couples have received, to serve commu-

nion and build up the People of God! Every couple and every family has a unique contribution to make, but I'd like to propose a particular witness that families can give to unity.

We live in an economy that profits off division, and so much of the media we consume is designed to incite fear and anger, and to find convenient scapegoats. This problem is compounded when we lack a common vision of reality, and subsequently are missing a common framework to think through challenges together.

The Church is not immune to these challenges, and with the deck seemingly stacked against us, where can we turn for hope?

This Christmas, my proposal is to look toward our families, imperfect yes, but saturated with love. Families are messy and can drive us crazy, and yet they are a witness to bonds that go deeper than politics, and communities that break out of echo chambers.

May our Church, the family of God, recognize this witness and build unity in a world that so desperately needs it.

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

## What I celebrate at Christmas

The single greatest gift of my life is my Catholic Faith. Fr. Riccardo has a radio program called "Christ is the Answer." Christ is the answer. He is the answer to everything... He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life... He is the source of all the Life and Love that I desire.

The more I follow Christ, inviting Him ever more deeply into my heart and life, the richer my life becomes. My Catholic Faith doesn't necessarily take away the chaos and suffering of my life although it can and in many cases it has. What it does do is allow me to find peace in the midst of the chaos and to find joy in the midst of my suffering. Christ is the answer.

I can't follow someone I don't know... so, how do I know Christ that I

## Guest Column

By Bob Hallgren



may follow Him more closely? I spend time with Him in His Church by going to Adoration Chapels, by going to Mass, by carving out time every single day to be with Him in silence. I listen to our Priests; I examine my conscience and go to confession, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis. This has changed my life and it continues to change my life

so I can become all that I desire to be... all that others need me to be... all that God created me to be... and all that He continues to call and invite me to be.

Christ is the answer. The more I surrender my life to Him, the more I let go and really place my Trust in Him, the more He can do in me and through me. He is with me always; I ask for His help and guidance throughout everyday... and He responds. He loves me so much and He has blessed my life beyond what I could have ever imagined.

The reality is I am so very limited in having the life I desire without Christ, and Christ is so very limited in what He can do in my life without my permission, without my cooperation. With Christ all things

are possible... and so I believe, I say Yes, I give Him permission to let His will be done, not mine... for His ways are so far above my ways.

The last Sunday of the Church year just before Advent begins is the feast day, Christ the King of the Universe. This is my favorite feast day, and the power of this feast comes alive when I invite Christ to be the King of my heart and Lord of my life.

This is what I celebrate at Christmas. These are the gifts I share with you; Christ is the gift. Christ is the Answer.

Merry Christmas!

*Bob Hallgren is a parishioner of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale.*

## My Christmas Wish

Jesus – the center of it all.

Despite what department stores and secular Christmas movies may be selling, this time of year – at its core – is still Jesus.

And though this ancient story begins with a baby – it first began with a "yes." Mary's yes. When greeted by the Archangel Gabriel, our Blessed Mother was offered a proposal to accept God's will with her "yes."

It did not necessarily come easy. Mary was "greatly troubled" at the angel Gabriel's greeting. (Luke 1: 29)

So the angel said to her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus" (Luke 1: 30-31.)

"He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High..." the angel Gabriel continued. "And of his Kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1: 26-38)

Mary questioned how this could be, since she had no relations with a man. But the angel Gabriel promised her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." (Luke 1: 25.)

With great faith and trust, Mary responded: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1: 38)

Her "yes."

And so it is with us. God does not force his will upon us, nor force himself into our lives. He longs for the door to open, awaiting our yes – to accept his son Jesus into our hearts.

God's love; a personal relationship with Jesus, is the only thing that will fill the void in our hearts – one we try filling with distractions, sports, fashion and entertainment. Despite our best efforts,

## Faith that Conquers

By Kelly Mescher Collins



these things will never fill the space God has reserved for him alone.

My Christmas wish: to grow even deeper in love and relationship with Jesus. I've given Jesus my "yes" many times over. And each time, my prayer is very similar: "Please, Lord, come into my heart, permeate my being and help me become the person you want me to be."

"Lord, please help me to do your will. Please use me as your instrument."

When busy, tired, and distracted, I pray even more fervently that I will give Jesus my "yes" – particularly with my time. "Lord, please increase in me the desire to know and love you better, and give you my time that you so deserve," I pray.

I say these prayers before moments of weakness strike. After a long day at work, for example, when I'm tempted to watch Netflix or mindlessly scroll through my phone while planted on the couch. A night wasted with no thought or attention given to Jesus, who has been waiting all day for time with me – for time with you.

Jesus, I long to know and love you. Please help me continue to give you my "yes" this Christmas and every day in the new year.

*Kelly Mescher Collins is a multimedia journalist for the Diocese of Des Moines. She can be reached at kcollins@dmdiocese.org or 515-237-5054.*

## The first notes: When music and prayer converge

By Christina Capecchi

From the beginning, there was music. It signaled the parade of life — comings and goings, mornings and evenings. The chirping of birds. The clatter of dishes. The croaking of frogs.

Guido Monaco, an 11<sup>th</sup> century Italian, loved it all — especially the chanting of monks. It confirmed what he had always sensed: Sometimes, music isn't simply music. It is more. It is prayer.

The passionate Catholic was drawn to religious life, studying to become a Benedictine monk at the Pomposa Abbey on the Adriatic coast.

But learning the hymns and harmonies that stirred his soul was hard. They had to be memorized — there was no written system for musical notation — and it often took months.

He wondered: Why couldn't music be written down and read like the words in a book?

One day, while practicing his hymns, Guido realized he was singing six basic tones. No matter the melody, no matter how high or low he sang, the same tones repeated themselves. He took a piece of parchment and drew six marks — each one stacked higher than the one before.

Now to name them.

Guido used the first syllable of each Latin word — ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la — to name the six tones. He sang them out loud, raising his voice step by step. If every song could be written down in this way, people could learn to read

music! They could know the correct melody to sing even if they had never heard it before!

His heart raced.

His fellow monks were less excited. One reprimanded him: spend less time thinking up silly ideas and more time praying.

But Guido's dream of sharing music more readily never left him. Bishop Theobald of Arezzo heard about Guido's passion for music and invited him to come train the choir at his cathedral. Within days, they had mastered hymns they had never heard before.

It worked!

The bishop urged Guido to share his revolutionary idea in a book. Pope John XIX summoned the monk, eager to see it himself.

The pope recognized what was before him: the invention of a music notation, what was and would remain the only language common to all humanity. A love of music that sprang from a love of the Lord.

Eventually the first note was changed to do and a seventh note, ti, was added. But Guido's system endured.

As we sing Christmas carols this month, may we remember the earnest monk who embraced the transcendentals of our Catholic faith: truth, goodness and beauty. They come from God and spill over into everything he created.

*Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.*



# Food for the beggar

## Food for the Journey



By John Huynh

The sight of folks around the metro standing on street medians, freeway exits, and stop light corners begging strangers for materials that they need to live is familiar to me.

I grew up in Vietnam and this was very much a reality there.

If I've got any cash or change on me, I give it away as I was once reminded that the altar of the Lord is in the hands of the poor.

But more importantly I give because I know that what I have is purely gift. I've done nothing to deserve even my own existence, much less the loving people in my life and the material belongings I possess. Everything that is mine is truly a gift that I have received, some by pure passivity and some by cooperating with God's grace through discernment.

I'm reminded of this most often when I attend Mass. When we come to the Mass,

it is not that we have gathered to do something, but that we have gathered because something has been done for us and will be done for us.

Christ's death and resurrection has rebuilt a bridge once completely destroyed and restored our entry into the divine life; this is what has been done for us. Our reception of the body and blood of our Lord under the appearances of bread and wine transforms us into people of the Good News. We leave the Mass and enter our daily living proclaiming Jesus' redeeming

love and peace by our actions and words.

This is what the Eucharist does to us.

But what the Eucharist does to us can only be fully realized if we come to the Eucharistic feast as beggars and not buyers.

In my younger years, I found myself choosing this or that Mass to attend because of how much shorter one Mass was than the other. I, and I suspect many others, have found ourselves wondering if we should switch up parishes because of a certain homily, or the way the Mass is "done," or if we don't like the priest, or if some people in the parish are bothersome. The list goes on and on.

This way of thinking is the buyer's way of thinking: "If they don't have what suits me, then I'll just find another place that has it."

Yet, when we come to the altar of the Lord, we are beggars who have done nothing to receive such lavish mercy. The ques-

tions we should consider when we come to Mass are:

1. Am I willing to be gathered outside of my comfort so that the Lord may comfort me?

2. Am I willing to abandon my own thoughts to take on the mind of Christ?

Truly, my friends, in order to abandon our worldly home and inherit the Kingdom of God we must become beggars who rely on the boundless generosity of an ever-loving God made most real to us in the Eucharist.

Let us come and beg for this heavenly food weekly, if not daily.

*John Huynh is the diocesan director of Faith Journey. He can be reached at jhuynh@dmdiocese.org or 515-237-5006.*



## I've Been Wondering...

Father John Ludwig

*Q. In September, Pope Francis created some new cardinals for the Church. We don't have a cardinal in Iowa, so who would be our cardinal? - Paul, West Des Moines.*

**A. IT'S TRUE, THERE IS NO CARDINAL** for Iowa. It's important to remember that the main purpose of cardinals in the Church is to elect the new bishop of Rome, the pope. Some of the cardinals are archbishops; and some are bishops; but not all of them have been ordained to the episcopacy. Cardinal John Henry Newman who was canonized a saint several years ago, was named a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII, and Newman specifically asked the Pope that he not be ordained a bishop. The Pope honored his request. Archbishops and bishops are in charge of their own dioceses, nothing more. So, even in Iowa, where there is an archbishop in Dubuque, the bishops of Des Moines, Davenport, and Sioux City are each in charge

of their respective dioceses. The archbishop or the metropolitan can convoke a meeting of the bishops in his province (the State of Iowa), but he has no power or authority within those other dioceses.

*Q. I've heard a number of references to the Mass. Some people say that the priest "says" Mass; others say that he "reads" Mass; still others say that he "offers" Mass. What's the correct way to refer to this? - Lori, Council Bluffs.*

**A. WHEN YOU HEAR THAT** a priest "reads" Mass, you're probably hearing a reference from long ago. More commonly we see the verb "says" or "offers." The most appropriate verb seems to be "celebrates" Mass. The priest is the presider of the Eucharistic sacrifice. It's certainly true that the whole congregation and all the ministers, deacon(s), lectors, cantors, etc. celebrate the Mass along with the presider. The Consti-

tution on the Liturgy from the Second Vatican Council charges the whole community of believers to celebrate with "full, conscious, and active" participation.

*Q. Sometimes at Mass during the Prayer of the Faithful, I hear what I consider inappropriate intentions. One prayer intention prayed for a particular candidate that he be converted. I was shocked. Can you comment? - Tom, Indianola.*

**A. THE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS** or Universal Prayer has its roots in the Liturgy of Good Friday. After the Vatican Council, it was decided that the universal prayer or the prayer of the faithful should be part of every Mass, even weddings and funerals. The intentions are supposed to be "general" not specific. That means that while we may pray for someone who has died, we also pray for all the dead who go before us. If we pray for the people of Haiti or the peo-

ple of Florida or the people of Sudan, we pray for all who are suffering from natural disasters or famine. We certainly don't use this general prayer to get in digs about a candidate or a party or an institution.

*Q. We are used to seeing the pope on the loggia in front of St. Peter's Basilica. He wears a white cassock. Has the pope always worn a white cassock? - Julia, Creston.*

**A. NO. MANY SCHOLARS THINK** that it began during the papacy of Pius V (1566-72). He was a Dominican friar before being elected pope, and he wanted to continue wearing white as the Dominicans still do. In the centuries since then, it's been the custom for the bishop of Rome to wear white. Could that change? Of course, but there seems to be no groundswell for any other color or garment.

# God's anger, and our feelings of guilt and shame

Father Ron Rolheiser



My early religious training, for all its strengths, placed too heavy an emphasis on fear of God, fear of judgment, and fear of never being good enough to be pleasing to God.

It took the biblical texts about God being angry and displeased with us literally.

The downside of this was that many of us came away with feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred, and understood those feelings religiously, with no sense that they might have more of a psychological than a religious origin. If you had feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred, it was a signal that you were not living right, that you should feel some shame, and that God was not pleased with you.

Well, as German philosopher Georg Hegel famously taught, every thesis eventually spawns its antithesis. Both in the culture and in many religious circles today, this has produced a bitter backlash. The current cultural and ecclesial ethos has brought with it a near-feverous acceptance

of the insights from contemporary psychology vis-à-vis guilt, shame, and self-hatred. We learned from Sigmund Freud and others that many of our feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred are really a psychological neurosis, and not an indication that we are doing anything wrong. Feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred do not of themselves indicate that we are unhealthy religiously or morally or that God is displeased with us.

With this insight, more and more people have begun to blame their religious training for any feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred. They have coined the term "Christian neurosis" and have begun speaking of "being in recovery" from their churches.

What's to be said about this? In essence, some of this is healthy, a needed corrective, though some of it also suffers from its own naiveté. And, it has landed us here. Today, religious conservatives tend to reject the idea that guilt, shame, and self-hatred are mainly a neurosis (for which our religious training is responsible), while religious liberals tend to favor this notion. Who is right?

A more balanced spirituality, I believe, combines the truth of both positions to produce a deeper understanding. Drawing on what is best in current biblical scholarship and on what is best in contemporary psychology, a more balanced spirituality makes these assertions.

First, that when our biblical language tells us that God gets angry and unleashes his fury, we are dealing with anthropomorphism. God doesn't get angry with us when we do wrong. Rather what happens is that we get angry with ourselves and we feel as if that anger were somehow "God's wrath." Next, most psychologists today tell us that many of our feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred are in fact unhealthy, a simple neurosis, and not at all an indication that we did something wrong. These feelings only indicate how we feel about ourselves, not how God feels about us.

However, that being admitted, it is too simple to write off our feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred as a mere neurosis. Why? Because even if these feelings are completely or largely unmerited, they may still be an important voice inside us, that is, while they don't indicate that God is displeased or angry with us, they still can be a voice inside us that won't be silent until we ask ourselves why we are displeased and angry with ourselves.

Here's an example. There is a wonderfully enlightening exchange in the 1990s movie, *City Slickers*. Three men are having a conversation about the morality of having a sexual affair. One asks the other, "If you could have an affair and get away with it, would you do it?" The other replies: "No, I still wouldn't do it." "Why not?" he is asked, "nobody would know." His response contains a much-ne-

glected insight regarding the question of guilt, shame, and self-hatred. He replies, "I would know, and I would hate myself for it!"

There is such a thing as Christian "guilt neurosis" (which incidentally is not limited to Christians, Jews, Muslims and other religious persons, but is universal among all morally sensitive people). However, not all feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred are neurotic. Some are trying to teach us a deep moral and religious truth, that is, while we can never do a single thing to make God angry with us for one minute, we can do many things that make us angry with ourselves. While we can never do anything to make God hate us, we can do things that have us hate ourselves. And, while we can never do anything to make God withhold forgiveness from us, we can do things that make it difficult for us to forgive ourselves. God is never the problem. We are.

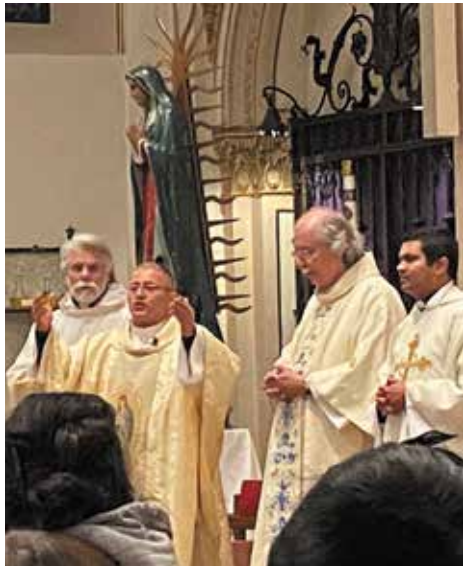
Feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred do not of themselves indicate whether we have done something wrong, but they do indicate how we feel about what we have done – and that can be an important moral and religious voice inside us.

Not everything that bothers us is a pathology.

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author.*



# Patroness of the Americas honored on feast day



Photos by Anne Marie Cox

Celebrations honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe occurred throughout the Diocese around her feast day of Dec. 12. Above, the faith community at Our Lady of the Americas in Des Moines celebrated with dances, treats and prayer. The faithful paraded from Our Lady of the Americas Church to St. Ambrose Cathedral on Dec. 11, prayed the rosary and then welcomed the feast day with midnight Mass celebrated by Father Fabian Moncada, Father David Polich, Father Nipin Scaria and assisted by Deacon Randy Kiel.

## Indiana parish uses Christmas light display to share the Gospel message

BRIGHT, Ind. (CNS) -- As dusk turned into darkness Nov. 25, the day after Thanksgiving, colorful Christmas lights began illuminating 19 acres on the campus of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright.

The 100,000-plus lights weren't there just to light up the night sky. The purpose of the "Bright Lights" display is to let the light of Christ shine in the souls of the people who view it.

"So many people follow secular Christmas, and Christmas lights are secular Christmas," Father Jonathan Meyer told *The Criterion*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

"People who don't believe in Jesus will spend thousands of dollars decorating their yards with lights. So, my whole thing was, 'Hey, I would like to somehow reach out to those people,'" he said.

In what could be described as drive-thru catechesis, signs next to the various features of the display explain how ordinary holiday images are rooted in the Catholic faith.

Lighted images of an angel and Mary have a sign that explains the Annunciation.

Signs by large lighted plastic candles tell visitors these are a reminder that the Christ Child is the light of the world.



CNS photo/Sean Gallagher, *The Criterion*

Signs and lighted figures of Mary and an angel present the Annunciation message Nov. 25, as part of "Bright Lights," a Christmas light display at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright, Indiana.

## National Eucharistic Revival preacher comes to central Iowa



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Father Craig Vasek, of the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota, is helping the U.S. bishops share the Church teaching and enthusiasm for the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Father Vasek spoke in mid-November at several places in the Des Moines metro area including St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale; (above) Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines; and St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines. Father Vasek is a national Eucharistic Revival preacher, and a specialist on evangelization and catechesis for the U.S. bishops. You can find his talks at the Sacred Heart parish mission by going to <https://youtu.be/pvYzVpv7XdQ>.

### Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese's Victim Assistance Advocate, Sam Porter, is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps people who are or were minors when they were victims of abuse by the clergy through a complaint process. He also helps them seek support and counseling services. Porter can be reached at 515-286-2024 or [Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov).



# Pope: Nothing is impossible for God

*Not even peace in Ukraine*

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Francis asked Catholics around the world to join him in entrusting to Mary “the universal desire for peace, especially for the martyred Ukraine, which is suffering so much.”

Reciting the Angelus prayer at midday Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Francis noted the Angel Gabriel’s words to Mary that “nothing will be impossible for God.”

“With God’s help, peace is possible; disarmament is possible,” the pope told people gathered in St. Peter’s Square. “But God wants our goodwill. May Our Lady help us to convert to God’s plans.”

The pope also invited people to join him late in the afternoon at the Spanish Steps in the center of Rome, where he planned to pay homage to Mary at a statue of the Immaculate Conception after visiting the Basilica of St. Mary Major. The COVID-19 pandemic had forced the cancellation of the public ceremony at the Spanish Steps in 2020 and 2021.

In his Angelus talk at noon, Pope Francis said that while Catholics talk a lot about original sin, they often overlook the “original grace” of baptism, when “God came into our lives and we

became his beloved children forever.”

The feast of the Immaculate Conception, which celebrates Mary having been conceived without original sin, is a good time to remember that “we sinners, too, have received an initial gift that has filled our life, a good greater than anything, an original grace, of which often, however, we are unaware.”

The feast day is a time to listen to God who says, “‘Son, daughter, I love you and I am with you always, you are important for me, your life is precious,’” the pope said. “When things do not go well and we are discouraged, when we are downcast and risk feeling useless or wrong, let us think about this, about this original grace.”

And, he said, it is a perfect day to remember that Mary will be with each person as he or she tries to fight temptation and to live in the fullness of their baptismal “original grace.”

“We who struggle to choose what is good, we can entrust ourselves to her,” the pope said. “Entrusting ourselves, consecrating ourselves to Mary, we say to her: ‘Take me by the hand, lead me: with you I will have more strength in the battle against evil, with you I will rediscover my original beauty.’”



CNS photo/Paul Haring

Pope Francis becomes emotional as he prays for Ukraine in front of a Marian statue at the Spanish Steps in Rome Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

## Ukrainians seek blessing for rehab center

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The mayor of Lviv, Ukraine, and a team of doctors treating those injured in the war gave Pope Francis a cross with an embedded piece of shrapnel removed from the body of a young girl.

“Giving the pope the cross, we hope he will pray each day for the injured children,” the mayor, Andriy Sadovy, told reporters Dec. 7 after meeting the pope at the end of his weekly general audience.

Pope Francis asked everyone at his audience to pray that Mary would comfort every person living under the brutality of war, especially the people of Ukraine.

The pope also noted the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of “Operation Reinhard,” the Nazi plan to kill the Jews of German-occupied Poland, a plan that succeeded in murdering some 2 million Jews.

“May the memory of this horrible event arouse in all of us resolutions and actions for peace,” the pope said, before adding that “history repeats itself. We see what is happening today in Ukraine. Let us pray for peace.”

Dr. Oleh Samchuk, general director of a Lviv hospital, the First Territorial Medical Association, accompanied the mayor and other officials seeking not only Pope Francis’ prayers, but also his blessing for the Unbroken National Rehabilitation Center, a facility they hope will bring physical and psychiatric healing



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis touches a piece of shrapnel removed from a child injured in the Russian-Ukrainian war. The shrapnel was presented by Andriy Sadovy, the mayor of Lviv, Ukraine, at the pope’s general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican Dec. 7.

to the victims of Russia’s war on Ukraine.

“We showed the pope our project, and he blessed it,” Sadovy said.

Since Russia launched its war in late February, the mayor said, more than 5 million Ukrainians fleeing the fighting have come to Lviv, a major city in Western Ukraine. While most continued on to safety in neighboring European countries, Lviv became a major hub for assisting those displaced by war and for organizing aid to cities and towns in need in the East.

The displaced, he said, have included 11,000 injured people, “mostly women and children,”

who required surgery.

Samchuk’s hospital is always full, he said, but staffers keep doing everything possible to heal the injured, including by setting up a workshop to make prosthetics.

To send financial aid to those helping victims of war in Ukraine, go to [dmdiocese.org/giving](http://dmdiocese.org/giving).

## OMG!

Continued from page 1

Este año, en que tenemos cuatro semanas completas de Adviento, tengamos un cuidado especial de no acelerar la música de la temporada a las alegres melodías de pop que no tienen nada que ver con el misterio que se descubre ante nosotros. Acompañamos a María cuando ella compone nuestra humanidad con la divinidad de Dios al meditar, orar, y cantar los “Oh’s” apropiados que nos da la Iglesia: las antífonas de “O” programadas del 17 al 23 de diciembre. La mayoría de nosotros nos sabemos de memoria la histórica melodía, “¡Oh ven!, ¡Oh ven, Emanuel!” con sus cautivantes compases en nuestro deseo de un Salvador. Pero las antífonas de los seis días antes de la navidad nos ayudan a capturar la identidad plena y el don de Aquel que viene a nosotros: “Oh Sabiduría; Oh Señor; Oh Raíz de Jesús; Oh Llave de David; Oh Amanecer; Oh Rey de las Naciones.” Pueden encontrar las versiones completas en español de las antífonas de adviento en <https://www.aciprensa.com/noticias/las-7-antifonas-de-adviento-que-se-rezan-la-semana-previa-a-navidad-28967>. Sólo aquellas personas que conocen a detalle el dolor que ellos mismos no pueden aliviar, pueden decirse preparados a recibir un paquete personal inesperado, enviado de las al-

turas para convertirse en Dios con Nosotros, Dios en todas partes.

Ahora, gracias a que tomó nuestra carne en el vientre de María, esta mujer embarazada y querida por tantos bajo su título de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, el autor del cielo y de la tierra, Jesús, ya está en todas partes entre nosotros en nuestra mutua humanidad. Esta madre amorosa quiere estar con nosotros donde quiera que estamos en la vida, para que podamos acercarnos más plenamente a la presencia de su Hijo. Donde está María, allí está Jesús – en Belén, en Egipto, Nazaret, Jerusalén, y próximamente a una comunidad parroquial estable cerca de usted. Nos convertimos en parte de los coros de la tan esperada noche que nos llena de maravilla, como no podemos expresar: “¡OMG!” o mejor aún: better yet, “O Come, All Ye Faithful”; “Vamos, Pastores, Vamos”; “O Little Town of Bethlehem”; “Los Peces en el Río”; “O Holy Night”; “Cumbia de Navidad”; “Noche de Paz” —y una interminable lista de villancicos.

Donde quiera que se encuentren esta Navidad y en el Año Nuevo de Gracia 2023, que Dios les bendiga y ablande sus lenguas y corazones en gratitud al cantar sus alabanzas. ¡Feliz Navidad y Feliz Año Nuevo!





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