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.

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.

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.

“The active phase of the campaign will continue through the first quarter of 2023. To learn more, visit dmdiocese.org/ignite for videos, frequently asked questions and how to give."

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“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.”

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Kindness begets kindness
In helping the sick here, Kenyan sisters also help needy in their homeland

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Nazareth Sister Rosahellen Karwirwa traveled nearly 8,000 miles from her home in Kenya to see her cousin, Father Lazarus Kiriga, 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
El testimonio de la vida de Juan de la Cruz: un homenaje

Por Anne Marie Cox

El testimonio de la vida de Juan de la Cruz es un homenaje a un hombre que vivió su camino espiritual en el desierto y que dejó un legado de sabiduría y amor que aún hoy nos conmueve. Juan de la Cruz, conocido también como el Poco Oso, fue un poeta y santo que nació en la ciudad de Toledo, España, el 27 de marzo del año 1542 y que murió el 30 de enero de 1591.

Juan de la Cruz nació en una familia de la alta sociedad y fue educado en el Colegio de los Jesuitas en Valladolid. Aunque su vida espiritual comenzó de manera regular, pronto se dio cuenta de que su corazón deseaba una experiencia más profunda de Dios. En 1568, Juan fue enviado a la ciudad de Sevilla, donde se unió al monasterio de los Carmelitas Descalzos, conocido como la Real Casa de Santa María de la Encarnación en Sevilla.

En este período, Juan comenzó a experimentar lo que él llamó la "dispersión", un estado en el que sintió que se alejaba de Dios. Sin embargo, esta experiencia fue el primer paso hacia su conocimiento profundo de Dios en el "desierto", un período de soledad y privación que duró casi 20 años.

Durante los 20 años en el desierto, Juan tuvo una serie de visiones y experiencias espirituales que le ayudaron a crecer en su relación con Dios. Estas experiencias fueron descritas en sus obras poéticas, especialmente en "La divina comedia" y "La cascada de amor", que son consideradas obras maestras del arte espiritual.

Juan de la Cruz es conocido como el doctor de la Iglesia y es venerado como santo por el catolicismo. Su vida y obra han inspirado a numerosos escritores, poetas, y artistas a lo largo de los siglos.

Por favor, siga leyendo en el The Catholic Mirror para ampliar esta historia y otras noticias de interés. Su apoyo nos ayuda a continuar ofreciendo este servicio.

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Para todas las personas des de los Baby Boomers hasta los de la Generación Z, la muerte en este pasado mes de noviembre ha sido un sentimiento de pérdida que ha tocado la conciencia de muchos. Para las personas de la Generación Z, la muerte de Chris McVie, la vocalista de Fleetwood Mac, es un recordatorio de que la vida es precaria y que debemos hacer lo que queremos mientras aún tenemos la posibilidad de hacerlo.

McVie fue conocida por su voz poderosa y su habilidad para interpretar canciones que abarcan una variedad de géneros, desde el pop hasta el rock. Sus canciones como "Everywhere" y "Hold Me" han sido una inspiración para muchas personas a lo largo de los años.

McVie nació en 1951 en Liverpool, Inglaterra, y comenzó su carrera musical en los 70s como miembro de la banda de rock de la época, Fleetwood Mac. En 1997, formó su propia banda, Nanna, con la que lanzó su primer álbum en solitario en 2000.

McVie se casó con el músico y productor delantero de Fleetwood Mac, Neill Macaulay, en 1975, con quien tiene una hija, Sarah. McVie también es conocida por su compromiso con el trabajo benéfico y ha colaborado con varias organizaciones a lo largo de su carrera.

La muerte de McVie es un recordatorio de que la vida es precaria y que debemos hacer lo que queremos mientras aún tenemos la posibilidad de hacerlo. Es un recordatorio de que la vida es un regalo que debemos valorar y disfrutar.

Para obtener más información sobre McVie y su legado musical, te recomendamos visitar el sitio web oficial de Fleetwood Mac o el de McVie. También te recomendaría buscar videos de sus canciones en plataformas de streaming como Spotify o Apple Music para escucharla y apreciar su trabajo.

The Catholic Mirror es el semanario oficial del Diócesis de Des Moines, Iowa. Ofrece noticias y eventos del catolicismo en el área de Des Moines, Iowa. Su objetivo es ofrecer una perspectiva católica en un mundo que a menudo tiende a ignorar o desestimar la fe católica.

El The Catholic Mirror es una herramienta para proporcionar una visión católica del mundo y para ofrecer una voz para los que buscan una fe católica en un mundo que a menudo tiende a ignorar o desestimar la fe católica. Su objetivo es ofrecer una visión católica del mundo y para ofrecer una voz para los que buscan una fe católica en un mundo que a menudo tiende a ignorar o desestimar la fe católica.

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NCYC prioritizes faith for teens

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 suggestion of Father Max Carson.

“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.
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.

So everyone was invited to send in a “selfie” picture of themselves and/or their families.

There was just one small lit- tle snafu. For those who preferred to have their pictures taken, a small digital camera was used to snap images before Masses one weekend.

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 the wall. It’s been fun watching parishioners gather to find themselves and friends on the wall, he said.

“People were really noticing themselves,” he said. “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.”

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.

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.

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

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

Catholic Charities could use help

Catholic Charities could use a band helping others.

Volunteers and donations are always welcome as Catho- lic 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 surround- ing 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.

• St. Francis of Assisi Knight of Columbus donated boxes of socks and toothbrushes.

• St. Joseph is holding a weekly donation drive during Advent for defined needs of the Emergency Family Shelter.

• St. Augustine is helping both the food pantry and local shelter through various donations.

• St. Theresa continues to of- fering 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, contribu- tions, and supply needs).

• Parishes, community and board volunteers are meal pre- parers (at the Des Moines shel- ter), food pantry, and in Council Bluffs.

• We’re also grateful for the many businesses and communi- ty 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 Emergen- cy Family Shelter could use meal providers and pillows. The Do- mestic Violence shelter could use nonperishable food items such as pasta and canned goods, said Em- cly Klisares, community relations manager.

Emergency Family Shelter.

Advent for defined needs for the week.

Boxing Day and other supplies.

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

Find ways to contribute, donate or volunteer by going to CatholicCharitiesDM.org and click on “Contribute.”

Use this QR code to go directly to Family Faith Resources

The greatest gift the Church can give parents are the tools to help their chil-

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Directly to Family Faith Resources

Resources are designed to help children of all ages meet Jesus.

Go to dmdioceise.org/advent2022 or dmdioceise.org/livingchristmas2022

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Bishops: ESAs level the playing field for parents

The Catholic bishops of Iowa have released a statement in support of an Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) 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 nearly $2,000 into a savings account set up by the state. This money could be used by parents for their child’s education in a variety of ways.

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 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 curricu- lum 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

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 as a parishioner in the Diocese of Davenport. Freeman explained.

“A person who is struggling and suffering still has value,” he said. “There’s a lot of confusion on the other side 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 focuses 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 or contact Tom Chapman at tom@iowacatholicconference.org for more information.

This story is reprinted with permission from The Catholic Messenger, Diocese of Davenport.
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;
- Willingness to bear together the yoke that Christ makes light.

May our strategic visioning in the Diocese of Des Moines continue to make us 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.


PRAY WITH US

Catholic Daughters 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.

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 theemmaushouse.org.

Dec. 19 Monday
Cathedral Holy Hours
DEC. 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.

Jan. 6 Friday
Epiphany Concert
DEC. MOINES -- Come enjoy the sound of the season with St. Augustine 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
Epiphany 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

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 Haskell, and school counselor Val Sticker show some of the donations.

Catholic Daughters give gifts of Christmas joy

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 Mehling, Rita Hughes, Mary Morrow, Kathi Markel, Jon Swift, Susie Van Voltenburg, Matalyn Sebetka, Kris Reicks, Mary Seelock, Linda Spencer, Carol Andress and Regent Carol Hollenbeck.

Pulse for Life Advocates

Defenders of the Defenseless Since 1972

www.PulseForLife.org
515-255-4113

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 Oración de Visión

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

Como un pueblo de fieles en el seno de Iowa, envía al Espíritu Santo para que encienda en nosotros una sincera conversación para ver, oír, pensar y actuar como Jesús;

una mayor unidad y lazos de paz,

unánime en compartir en la buena novedad del mundo con amor,

un ganarse cariño unos a 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 estática en la Diócesis de Des Moines nos haga aún más enfocados, disciplinados y libres para cumplir con nuestro llamado como pueblo que encuentra plenitud por el Corazón de tu Amado Hijo.

Acompañamos en el Camino que nos lleva al cielo,

rodeados de la María Santosísima, José y todos los santos con quienes esperamos habitar por siempre en comunión eterna.

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.”

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.

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 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.
Kindness begets kindness

Continued from page 1

they could help the needy in their homeland.

Sisters Rosalía Njura and Joan Susan Mwende 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 paycheck 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 mission. She will move to 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 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 waived 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.

He brought with 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 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 to provide a changing ministry in this new phase of diaconate ministry.”

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 diocesan 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 other men who are discerning the permanent diaconate towards the same path.”

Deacon Halbach previously served as the executive director of 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 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.
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.

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 crises.

By Anne Marie Cox

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.

“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, St. 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 coronavi-
rus, McWeeny said. The organization’s volunteer pool has dwindled and longtime helpers are getting older and wearing out. Mean-
while the number of families becoming homeless and needing shelter remains large.

“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, pro-
vides 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, stay-
ing 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 the parish bulletin. Any one interested in becoming in-
volved with Family Promise can contact McWeeny at 515-223-
0044 or jgmcwny@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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DOWLING CATHOLIC CLASS OF 2027
Incoming Freshman Placement Test
Cheerful, compassionate pastor believed in people

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Father Robert “Holt” 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 county school through fifth grade, then entered St. Mary School in Portsmouth and spent 11th and 12th 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 Hospital in De Moines as a chaplain and taught and was chaplain for two years at St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines.

He 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 ministry 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 Begin 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 parable 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

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 text 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 in small groups
3. Organizational mission
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, Rebuild, SEEK, Encounter Ministries and Amazing Parish.

This book is a must-read for anyone who is trying to understand 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.
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 have a longer block of time 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.

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.

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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 a pastor of the parishes in Moville, Kingsley and Amherst, 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 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” it 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 confinement,” 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 Sts. Isidore and Maria, patron saints of farmers.

At this time of year, he noted it is not only a time for thanks giving but knows “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 family.

As Kara and I prepare to join our par- ents and siblings in Chicago, a few things are certain. There will be good food, lots of laughter, and inevitable moments where the drama comes from a house full of opinion- ated people, who have different convictions and are uneducated and yet a common disposition for debate.

Still, I’m excited for our gathering, because even knowing there will be argu- ments, I have agreed to a more connected and deeper conviction. All of us, without ex- ception, love each other fiercely.

I’ve been thinking of this truth while

The single greatest gift of my life is my Catholic Faith. Fr. Ricardo has a ra- dio 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 we need in our extended family.

The more I follow Christ, inviting Him ever more deeply into my heart and life, the richer my life becomes. My Cath- olic 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 can do in my life without my permission, with- out 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, Church design 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 Haglren is a parishioner of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale.

My Christmas Wish

Jesus – the center of it all.

Despite all the 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 Angel 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 Gabri- el’s greeting. (Luke 1:28)

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 become a baby – 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 Ga- briel continued. “And of his Kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:26-28)

Mary questioned how this could be, since she had no husband and began with a “yes.”

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 re- sponded: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38)

He did.

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 fill- ing with distractions, sports, fashion and entertainment. Despite our best efforts, this time of year – at its core – is still Jesus.

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

Guido Monaco, an 11th 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 than just music.

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

But hearing 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, he thought, 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 the song before.

He then added a second syllable. 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 a language common to humanity. A love of music that sprang from a love of the Lord.

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

Guest Column

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

 Marriage and Family Life

By Adam Storey

reflecting on the Church’s definition of marriage as a “Sacrament at the Service of Communion” which “conf[er]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! Ev- ery couple and every family has a unique calling to make, and as Christians we should all take a look at what we pose 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 so ingrained that we have a lack of common vision of reality, and subse- quently are missing a common framework to think through challenges together.

The Church is not immune to these challenges, and with the help of a deeper faith, we can stand together for hope!

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Reflections

By Bob Haglren

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 confes- sion, receiving the Sacrament of Reconcil- iation 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 contin- ues to call and invite me to be.

Christ is the answer. The more I sur- render my life to Him, the more I let go and realize my true identity, 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 bless- ed my life beyond what I could have ever imagined.

The reality is 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, with- out 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.

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

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

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 Je- sus. 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 be- come 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.” 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.

By Kelly Mescher Collins

These first notes: When music and prayer converge

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 a language common to humanity. A love of music that sprang from a love of the Lord.

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

The first notes: When music and prayer converge

By Kelly Mescher Collins

The fourteenth note added a seventh note, ti, was created. This gave Guido the ability to sing even if they had never heard the song before.

He then added a second syllable. 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 a language common to humanity. A love of music that sprang from a love of the Lord.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Height, Minnesota.
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 pure 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’ve 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 has already been done for us. Our reception of the body and blood of God under the appearances of bread and wine transforms us into people of the Good News. We have done nothing to deserve it. Our daily living proclaiming Jesus’ redeeming love and peace by our actions and words. But what the Eucharist does to us can only be fully realized if we come to the Eucharistic feast as beggars and not buyers.

This is what the Eucharist does to us. But why do we do it? I find myself choosing this or that Mass to attend because of how much shorter one Mass is 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 why the Mass is “dull” or if we do fitting 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 that suits me, then I’ll just find another place that has it.”

Yet, when we come to the altar, the Lord, the beggars, have done everything never requiring to receive such lavish mercy. The questions 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 Eucharistic sacrifice.

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

John Huyhn is the diocesan director of Faith Journey. He can be reached at jhuyhn@dmdioocese.org or 515-237-5006.

Questions on the Mass

Q. In September, Pope Francis created some new cardinals for the Church. We don’t have a cardinal in Iowa, do we? Would our cardinal be 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 convene 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 “read” Mass; still others say that he “offers” Mass. What’s the correct way to refer to this?

A. WHAT YOU HEAR when a priest “reads” Mass, you’re probably hearing a reference from long ago. More commonly we see the verb “say” 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, deacons, lectors, cantors, etc. celebrate the Mass along with the presider.

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 not doing enough good to please 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. We left with the false feelings religiously, with no sense of ourselves as a mere neurosis. 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 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 plagued us here. Today, religious conservatives tend to reject the idea that guilt, shame, and self-hatred are mainly a neurosis (for which training is responsible), while religious liberals tend to favor this notion. Who is right?

A more balanced spirituality, I believe, is seeking to rest in the faithful truth of both positions to produce a deeper understanding. Drawing on what is best in current biblical scholarship and 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.”

Second, most psychologists today tell us that many of our feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred are not of themselves indicate that we are unhealthy religiously or morally or that God is displeased with us.

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The downside of this was that many of us came away with feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred. We left with the false 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. Ever since German philosopher Georg Hegel famously taught, every thesis eventually spawns its antithesis. Both in the Hegel famously taught, every thesis eventually spawns its antithesis. Both in the
Patroness of the Americas honored on feast day

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.

National Eucharistic Revival preacher comes to central Iowa

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.
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.”

Receiving 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 plan.”

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 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, 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.’”

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 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.

The mayor of Lviv, Andriy Sadovy, told reporters accompanying the mayor and the bishop that “history repeats itself. We commemorate the 80th anniversary of ‘Operation Reinhard,’” the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the day that succeeded in murdering some 2 million Jews.

Sadovy said that since the beginning of the war in late February, the mayor and doctors have treated more than 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 dmdioceze.org/giving.
Discover your mission. Become a Knight.

Empowering men to live their faith at home, in their parish, at work and in their communities.

For more information visit: kofc.org/join

Wishing You and Your Family a very Blessed Christmas