One year ago, Bishop William Joensen invoked the Holy Spirit and enlisted a diverse group of lay faithful and clergy to envision and discern the direction the Diocese of Des Moines should pursue in the coming months and years.

The process that was initiated has made great strides.

Together with the bishop, the Strategic Visioning Steering Committee has begun to focus upon themes that have emerged among 38 focus groups, 40 one-on-one interviews, and nearly 2,600 survey responses in English and Spanish.

Feedback has been offered by a host of persons with diverse experiences and points of view, ranging from priests, lay parish staff and leadership, youth and young adults, people in the pews, as well as non-practicing Catholics and others who belong to other faith traditions or no organized religion at all.

The synthesizing and interpretation of data continues to be a revelatory and Spirit-led process. The top themes that emerge will have an impact upon diocesan outreach, programs and resources for the next three-to-five years.

A key element of the visioning process involves listening to members of the faithful. Bishop Joensen and the Steering Committee are grateful for the many folks who completed the online survey or the alternate version that appeared in the January edition of The Catholic Mirror. Everyone who wanted to be heard had an opportunity to share his or her thoughts, said Dan Ebener, of Quad City Leadership Consulting.

He is the primary facilitator for the Diocese’s visioning process.

Listening was a critical factor contributing to the success of this effort, said Dan Kinsella, co-chair of the Strategic Visioning Steering Committee.

He’s seen the benefits that schools have realized by working more closely together through regionalization or the creation of school systems for multiple schools. There is a reduction in duplicated tasks, centralized purchasing and a broadening of the support for the ministry of Catholic education.

“The pastor is very involved in Catholic culture, religious education and all the things that make a Catholic community what it is, the charism,” Marshall said.

“ar the church isn’t burdened with all the administrative aspects of running a school: central warehouse purchasing, accounts receivable, etc. You don’t need someone in the parish doing all of that.”

Plus, by including area parishes without Catholic schools, “you can ask for the larger group to keep that school viable and everybody else in the whole Catholic community is participating in keeping Catholic education alive and strong,” he said.

The Diocese of Des Moines has seen regionalization in Shelby County, where parish schools came together to form Shelby County Catholic School, and in Council Bluffs, where five elementary and two high schools eventually came together under one roof “up on the hill” to create St. Albert Catholic School.

Father Chuck Kotzas, canonical administrator for St. Albert School, said the Des Moines community will find benefits once a school system is established. The Council Bluffs Catholic schools regionalized out of necessity and found the benefits include a stronger community supporting the mission of Catholic education.

“It was ingenious,” said St. Albert President Ann Rohling. “We wouldn’t have Catholic schools now if we hadn’t done that.”
It’s not just a Lenten thing, but a Gospel imperative by the awareness of suffering humanity both remote and near to us. Sometimes we see things especially heavy and dark. The enormity of evil wrought by the monstrous dictator, Vladimir Putin of Rus-

sia, is an inevitably horrific outcome in Ukraine, regardless of what disjunctive measures world leaders adopt. We pray in particular that Our Lady of Fatima and St. Michael the Archangel will bind the hands of Satan and his min-
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sort his just punishments, and that Ukraine and the world be restored to peace.

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And nearer to home, the staccato sound of gunshots shattering a normal March Monday afternoon in downtown Des Moines was school was dismissed at East Side was intended to provide shade and peace. The prospect of World War III is no fantasy video game, but looms ominously before us, and so we mobilize all the humanitarian aid, all the economic and political solutions, and most im-
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Hamburg parish breaks ground

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

On a sunny Sunday morning, the parishioners of St. Mary Parish in Hamburg broke ground for a new religious education center, a dream come true.

The resiliency, determination and faith of the people have been tremendous.

“I’m totally amazed at what they’ve done,” said Monsignor Ed Hurley.

Three times, the parish of 70 families in the far southwest corner of the Diocese of Des Moines tried to replace a 125-year-old rectory that served as a religious education center. A flood, the pandemic, and then sky-high building costs set them back. Over the years, the parish raised significant funding, but in light of the cost increase, it wasn’t enough.

The new building will have five classrooms for the parish’s 42 religious education youth. Two of the classrooms can be made into larger areas, an opportunity never before available.

“Every parish has struggled in one way or another,” said Cheryl Phillips. “Had the price stayed where they were, it would’ve covered the cost of the building when we added the savings we had invested.”

The Diocese of Des Moines launched the Parish Solidarity Fund, a means for parishes in the diocesan family to help each other. Several parishes were asked to pledge to the effort, and others were asked to take up a second collection.

The goal was to raise $400,000. To date, a total of $413,122 has been raised, said Maureen Kenney, diocesan director of Stewardship. This includes a $100,000 commitment from the parish and five-figure commitments from some parishes totaling $256,925.

“We are so pleased that more than 50 parishes and their parishioners have participated in this effort so far, standing in solidarity with their sister parish, St. Mary Parish in Hamburg,” Kenney said.

Funds raised over the goal for St. Mary will go into the Parish Solidary Fund to be used the next time a parish is in need of help.

On March 13, the parish broke ground for its new religious education center.

The aid that came to St. Mary Parish is a story of a family of parishes helping one of its own. There have been times when neighboring parishes helped each other. As St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines was getting off the ground, Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines and St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale helped.

And when St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny was getting started, Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish, also in Ankeny, helped.

In the case of St. Mary Parish in Hamburg, the broader diocesan family of parishes came together to provide financial assistance.

“I think that’s a concept that would be great for us going forward,” said Monsignor Hurley. “I think it’s important here that one of the overall consequences of this is that we realize that we are all in this together, whether you’re urban or rural, that we’re willing to help each other.”

Find creative ideas, prayer suggestions and more to help you and your family live Lent.

dmdiocese.org/lent

Camosy coming to Des Moines

Well-known theologian and author Charles Camosy will be in Des Moines April 6 to speak as the inaugural research fellow of the new Center for Human Flourishing at Mercy College of Health Sciences.

“It’s not only a privilege to have Charlie back, but it’s been an honor to have him here at the beginning of creating the center because so much of what his research reflects is what we hope to do and provide for people,” said Bo Bonner, the director of the center.

Universities and colleges have two main goals, Bonner said. They exist to educate and to produce knowledge.

In a faith-based environment, Mercy College educates students for health care careers.

The college created the Center for Human Flourishing for producing knowledge. The best of the colleges and universities produces knowledge that is reflective of their mission, Bonner said.

“For us, founded by the Sisters of Mercy, our concern is about human flourishing, a broad concept that entails the whole person blossoming into the fullness of who they are,” he said. This is addressed through healing but also through education, economics and religion.

“To be flourishing, to be truly healthy, is a holistic concept,” Bonner said. “For us, the knowledge we should produce is rooted in practical wisdom.”

Camosy will talk about applying that practical wisdom to “on the ground” work of the college, Bonner said.

A professor at Fordham University, Camosy has been instrumental in helping the Center for Human Flourishing get off the ground. His recent books focus on bioethics; one in particular centers on the “throw-away culture.”

“It embodies that terminology by Pope Francis about what a Catholic medical ethic will look like,” Bonner said.

Camosy, a prolific author, has written about elder care and what we’ve learned since the pandemic. A new book will be coming out on Christian nursing ethics. He mentions Mercy College several times and talks about the Sisters of Mercy and their role in Catholic nursing.

To hear Camosy, come to the Catholic Pastoral Center in Des Moines on April 6 at 6 p.m. The discussion will be videotaped for future viewing. For more information, go to mchs.edu/flourish.
Young adults offer outreach to peers

The following young adults from the Diocese of Des Moines are serving others through the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, otherwise known as FOCUS.

Stories by Kelly Mescher Collins

Cristina Bañuelos
Home Parish: St. Ambrose Cathedral, Des Moines

Born and raised into a devout Catholic family, Cristina Bañuelos experienced a deepening of her faith while attending Iowa State University.

“My freshman year, I just felt it was a group and that was the Newman Center and I encountered Christ in the Eucharist,” said Dowling Catholic High School.

“I became involved in the Newman Center in every way I knew how.”

She attended Bible study, lead a Bible study and became friends with the FOCUS missionaries, “Sometimes we discusssed religion, sometimes we talked about my sport and faith.”

“I'm very grateful,” Putbrese said. “There’s so much investment in my personal life and spiritual life. They want us to be the best people we can be so we can better serve.”

Charles Putbrese
Home Parish: St. John Parish, Norwalk

While attending Loras College in Dubuque, Charles Putbrese’s older sister Marie told him he should get involved in FOCUS on his campus.

He did get involved and attended FOCUS Bible study, events and conferences.

“It was good to come together as a group of men and build up the fraternity,” Putbrese said. “We’re not alone in this faith.”

“The FOCUS missionaries just encouraged me to walk with other men and they encouraged group sharing, but also accountability for going to Mass, going to Bible studies and having these discussions and growing in the faith – challenging each other’s ideas,” Putbrese added.

It was while attending a FOCUS conference in Arizona that he felt the impact of the missionaries had on his life.

“I knew I wanted to do something within the church.”

Putbrese said. “I wanted to give back to others. I would not be the person I am today without the missionaries that walked before me and walked with me.”

Putbrese became a FOCUS missionary and began his first assignment in June 2020 at Carroll College in Helena, Montana.

“I’m very grateful,” Putbrese said. “It’s so beautiful and the people here are so kind and welcoming.”

He’s appreciative of the college’s perpetual Eucharistic adoration and 14 Bible studies up and running. Earlier this month, they hosted the FOCUS Seek retreat, where nearly 200 young people from Carroll College, the University of Montana, Montana State and Western Montana were in attendance.

“I love being a missioner,” Putbrese said. “There’s so much investment in my personal life and spiritual life. They want us to be the best people we can be so we can better serve.”

John Bishop
Home Parish: St. Theresa Parish, Des Moines

John Bishop has nothing but praise for the Fellowship of Catholic University Students.

Bishop was introduced to FOCUS in his early beginnings at college, and stuck with it as he moved across the country earning his bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

Bishop was a FOCUS student leader during his time at both Benedictine College and Baylor University, where he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees. He also was a campus missionary at the University of Maryland. He earned his doctorate in theology from Catholic University in Washington D.C.

He currently serves as a director of formation at the FOCUS headquarters in Colorado, where he oversees a number of initiatives and writes curriculum for FOCUS Bible studies. He also teaches and forms missionaries.

“I think FOCUS is answering one of the biggest needs of the church today, and that is spreading the faith amongst young people – especially on college campuses,” Bishop said. “College campuses are probably the biggest place in the United States where we are losing Catholics. FOCUS is trying to turn that tide.”

Anne Gradoville
Home Parish: Holy Trinity, Des Moines

“I grew up in a really good Catholic family,” said Dowling Catholic High School graduate Anne Gradoville. “We went to Mass, did all the right things.”

Attending Mass and participating in conferences and being a leader were things she enjoyed.

“But it was often successful,” added Gradoville, who likes to compete and win. “The personal side was missing.”

After graduating from Dowling Catholic, she attended the University of Northern Iowa and played golf at the collegiate level.

“I knew I wanted to go where a group was and the Newman Center, but I was also living a separate life with athletes,” Gradoville said. “I was in a Bible study, yet super immersed in athletic culture and living this double standard, this double life.”

“When she was a junior, four FOCUS missionaries arrived at UNI. “FOCUS came and radically transformed our campus and transformed my life,” Gradoville said. “I became friends with the missionaries – one played a sport. I didn’t realize I could combine my sport and faith.”

She agreed to start a Bible study for athletes, but was concerned that no one would come. While attending a FOCUS winter conference, she came to the realization that a prayer relationship with God has to come first.

“I basically just had a radical realization that I wasn’t praying very consistently,” Gradoville said. “And so I asked the female missionary to walk with me.”

Gradoville learned how to pray and grow in intimacy with the Lord. Today, he takes center stage in her life.

Before graduating college she felt called to become a FOCUS missionary, and now serves at The Ohio State University.

“My favorite part of being a FOCUS missionary so far has been being able to run towards holiness with the students and my teammates,” Gradoville concluded. “It has been beautiful to witness transformation and growth in my own life, along with the lives of so many of the girls I spend time with.”
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

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

Photo by Mayra Moriel de Banuelos

Deacon Randy Kiel led a bilingual rosary and prayer vigil Saturday, March 12, at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Des Moines for all those affected by the fatal shooting at East High School.

Preferred burial options are listed in the index at the back of the book. For more information, contact your local funeral home.

Diocese of 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 sureste de Iowa, envías a 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 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, discípulos fieles 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 continua.

+Padre, Hijo, y Espíritu Santo. Amén.
March 19 Saturday Feast of St. Joseph EARLING – Everyone is invited to celebrate the feast day of St. Joseph at the St. Joseph Church at 9 a.m. Blessing of a St. Joseph statue will be held in St. Joseph Parish Hall immediately following Mass. Coffee and cookies will be served.

March 19 Saturday Lunch With St. Joseph EARLING – “Lunch with St. Joseph” is a program held on the first Tuesdays in March to promote devotion to St. Joseph. Each session begins at 11:30 a.m. with a rosary, prayer, and Litany of St. Joseph. A presentation on specific titles of St. Joseph found in his litany is given. A luncheon provided by the Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court St. Katherine concludes the program. For more information contact Betty Fosheim 712-747-2611.

March 26 Saturday Mardis Gras DUNLAP – Come and join us for some Mardi Gras Fun in Dunlap. The fun will start with a rosary, prayer and Litany of St. Joseph. A presentation on specific titles of St. Joseph found in his litany is given. A luncheon provided by the Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court St. Katherine concludes the program. For more information contact Betty Fosheim 712-747-2611.

March 26 Saturday St. Michael’s spring retreat DES MOINES – St. Augustin Parish is hosting the St. Michael’s spring retreat with a Eucharistic and Marian focus from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Mass will be at 5 p.m. The retreat is open to all Catholic boys in its 8th grade and above. Cost is $25.00 and scholarships are available. The retreat is led by high school boys and local priests with fun activities and games, talk, a trip to Urban Air in Ankeny (adults, pizza) and pizza included. Register by March 21. For more information or to register contact Kim Pierrick at Kimpiarck@gmail.com or 715-776-6087.

Greece and the Greek Isles In the Steps of St. Paul, the Apostle 11 days November 1-11, 2022 Hosted by Rev. Robert E. Harris All Saints Catholic Church Visiting: Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Syra, Santorini, Delphi, Kalavakia, Thessaloniki Including a 4-day cruise to the Greek Isles & Turkey $3999 PER PERSON FROM DES MOINES (Air/land/taxi price) $3479 plus $520 government taxes/airline surcharges For information & a brochure contact, Fr. Robert Harris: 515-263-5021 ext. 202 / Email: uh303012@iowal.com SPACE IS LIMITED AT THIS SPECIAL PRICE!!

March 29 Tuesday Young Catholic Network DES MOINES – Young professionals in their 20s and 30s are invited to the next Diocese of Des Moines Young Catholic Network event. Join us at 6 p.m. for an evening of networking and fellowship at the Catholic Campus Ministry Center in downtown Des Moines. Dr. Jon and Ramona Thompson will be speaking on the topic of “Faith, Family, Formicides, and Frozen!” Dr. Jon Thompson is the deputy state medical examiner and Dr. Ramona Thompson is a pathologist at MercyOne. Register at www.dmdiocese.org/ycn

April 1-3 Friday-Sunday Book sale DES MOINES – Christ the King annual book sale is back. Books and media of all kinds for all ages. This is a “donation sale” so you determine the price. Mark your calendar: April 1, from 5 - 9 p.m. (during the KC fish fry); April 2, 12 - 7 p.m. and April 3, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

April 2 Saturday DCCW Conference DES MOINES – All Catholic women are invited to join the 93rd annual conference of the Diocese of Des Moines Diocesan Council of Catholic Wom- en at St. Peter and Paul Hall. Featured speaker is Maureen Hoffmann. Bishop William Harris will be join- ing us for Mass. Register at the link on our website or Facebook page. Information on this event has been sent to each parish. We are looking forward to learning and sharing with other Catholic women around the di- ocese. For more information contact Connie Sampers 712-623-2369 Des Moines, Iowa. All Catholic women are invited to join us.

April 9 Saturday Pro-Life Event DES MOINES – Holy Trinity’s Respect Life Committee is sponsoring a retrospective concert at 7 p.m., Saturday, April 9, in Holy Trinity Church. The event will feature a selection of songs from the musicals “Godspell” by Stephen Schwartz and “The Music Man” by4-11/2 p.m. at the Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center in downtown Des Moines.

June 16 Thursday House of Mercy Game Show DES MOINES – The 2022 MercyOne House of Mercy Game Show Gala presented by Community Choice Credit Union and produced by MercyOne Des Moines Foundation, will start with doors opening at 5:30 p.m. and program starting at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center in downtown Des Moines. The following are parish Lenten fish dinners on Fridays during Lent, March 4 to April 8 except where oth- erwise noted.

Lenten Fish Fry Dinner Calendar

All Saints Catholic Church

Dinners will be served from 5-6:45 p.m. Cost is $10/person. Alternate: Mac and cheese.

Basilica of St. John Dinners will be served from 5-6:45 p.m. Cost is $10/adults, $5/children ages 4-10; $40/family maximum.

Christ the King Dinners will be served from 5-6:45 p.m. Cost: $10/adults, $5/children. Alternate: Cheese pizza

Holy Trinity Dinners will be served for dine in or drive up on March 4, 25, April 8, and April 15 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Cost: See Holy Trinity website.

St. Anthony Dinners are available for dine in or drive up from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $10/person. Alternate: Mac and cheese.

St. Mary of Nazareth Dinners are available for person dining on March 4, 11, 25 and April 1 from 5-6:30 p.m. and for dine in or drive up on March 4, 25 and April 1 from 5-6:30 p.m. Cost is $10/adults, $5/children ages 4-10; $40/family maximum. Alternates: Mac and cheese.

St. Theresa Dinners are available for drive through only from March 4-6:30-4:45 p.m. Cost is a free will offering. Alternate: Cheese pizza and mac and cheese.

Granger, Assumption Dinners will be served dine in or drive through from 5-6:30 p.m. Cost is free will donation. Alternate: Cheese pizza

Harlan, St. Michael Dinners will be served from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $15/adults; $5/children ages 4-10; free/children under age 3 and under. Alternate: Mac and cheese.

Indianaola, St. Thomas Aquinas Dinners will be available for dine in or take from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $12/adults; $5/children ages 6-12; free/children age 5 and under.

Neola, St. Patrick Dinners will be served from 5-7 p.m. Cost is $12/adults; $6/children ages 5-10; free/children un- der 5. Alternate: Grilled cheese sandwich.

Norwalk, St. John the Apostle Dinners will be served from 4-6 p.m. Cost is $10/adults; $5/children ages 4-10; $6/seniors; $3/children ages 12 and under. Alternate: Cheese pizza

Perry, St. Patrick Dinners will be served 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $10/adults; $15/children ages 4-10; $6/seniors; $3/children ages 12 and under. Alternate: Cheese pizza

Red Oak, St. Mary Dinners will be served 5-7 p.m. Cost is $12/adults, $7/children ages 3-10; $45/family

West Des Moines, Sacred Heart Dinners will be served from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $10/adults; $15/children ages 3-10; free/age 3 and under; $40 family maximum. Alternate: Cheese pizza.

West Des Moines, St. Francis of Assisi Dinners are served from 5:30-7:15 p.m. Cost is $15/11-adults; $5/children ages 5-11; free/children under 5.

Winterstet, St. Joseph Dinners will be served from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Cost is $12/adults; $6/children; $35/family.

Dinners are served for dine in or drive through from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $10/person. Alternate: Mac and cheese.

Dinners are served for dine in or drive through from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $10/adults, $5/children; free/children under 6.

St. Mary of Nazareth Dinners are available for person dining on March 4, 11, 25 and April 1 from 5-6:30 p.m. and for dine in or drive up on March 4, 25 and April 1 from 5-6:30 p.m. Cost is $13/adults; $6/children ages 6-12; free/children under age 3 and under. Alternate: Mac and cheese.

Dinners are available for drive through only from March 4-6:30-4:45 p.m. Cost is a free will offering. Alternate: Cheese pizza and mac and cheese.
Confessions 2-3 pm  ***  Divine Mercy Chaplet 3 pm  ***  Mass celebrated by Bishop Joensen 3:30 pm

Sign language interpretation at Mass

Reception to follow Mass

"I desire that the whole world know My infinite mercy. I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in My mercy." (Diary 687)
Welcome

The Catholic Church warmly welcomes all those who will come into full communion with the Church at the Easter Vigil.

Family took a deep dive into the Catholic Church and liked what they found

Justin Williams grew up a Jehovah’s Witness until his teenage years, when his parents divorced and he turned his back on organized religion.

But something tugged at him to learn more about faith and God. He studied comparative religions in college and considered himself a Buddhist for a time.

He met his wife, Nicole, who also wasn’t in a faith tradition, but who wanted to forge a connection to God and a church.

They moved frequently and, with three boys, it was hard to find time to settle into a church community. Justin kept his fingers in faith, though, through long conversations with friends who are faith-filled people.

“I consider myself a seeker of knowledge but I feel very spiritual and very in touch with maybe more the mystic sides of things,” he said. “I always felt a calling to pursue that more. I guess the influence of my very, very good friends linked up with something personal experience. I tried meditating and praying for the first time in a very, very long time and I had a miracle of an experience. It was very clear to me that I needed to explore a relationship with God more.”

When the pandemic began, the couple decided to move their children to a Catholic school and chose St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines.

Justin and Nicole decided to go to Mass at St. Francis.

“St. Francis is a good place with good values, surrounded with like-minded individuals and part of a good community,” he added. “We took a deeper dive and found a lot of positivity and welcome. I didn’t know what to expect, but people were nice and they were not pushy.”

The couple’s children were learning about faith in school, and Justin and Nicole start the RCIA process.

“I just love going to church,” Nicole said. “It makes me feel good. It helps me to be a better person.”

An incident last New Year’s Eve highlighted for Nicole how much the family was beginning to rely on faith.

They decided to spend New Year’s Eve at the Mall of America. A shooting occurred, and they were separated with Justin and the toddler in one area and Nicole and their boys, ages 10 and 7, huddled with others in a store.

“I could see their stress start to rise up and I said, ‘Boys, let’s pray.’ It was interesting because neither of my boys even hesitated for a second because they’d been going to Catholic school now,” said Nicole.

“We got down on our knees in a super crowded store and started praying. We prayed out loud. It wasn’t weird and it wasn’t awkward and we really got peace from it,” she said. “When we were done, we felt better. A year ago, we would never have done that. We would have just sat there scared.”

The faith they found in the midst of the chaos brought them security and peace.

The RCIA has been a win for Justin and Nicole.

“I like coming together and studying and learning,” he said. He appreciated Father Ray McHenry sharing the symbolism and history of the faith, and Father John Brobbey’s presence.

“Father Brobbey is a really spectacular person,” Justin said. “I like his energy and his approach, and you can tell he’s a man of conviction and has a lot of joy to share.”

As the family prepares to enter the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, they take comfort in the faith.

“It feels good,” said Nicole. “I’m giving (the boys) something that will last the rest of their lives.”

### Lenten Fish Fry

SS John and Paul Parish
1401 First Ave. S, Altoona
Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus

**Dates:** Feb. 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8

**Time:** 4:30-7:00 p.m.

**Cost:** Dine in and carry out is $13 for adults; $6 for children (ages 6-12); free for children 5 and under.

**Menu:** Fried and baked fish, baked potato, green beans, coleslaw, mac & cheese, cheese pizza.

### How does one become Catholic?

Each year, parishes welcome new Catholics through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, also known as the RCIA program. Those who have not been baptized into a Christian tradition are known as catechumens. Those who have already been baptized and seek full communion with the Catholic Church by receiving confirmation and Eucharist are called candidates.
Bishop William Joensen greets Cesar Martínez of Our Lady of the Americas Parish.  
Bishop Joensen signs the Book of the Elect with St. Anthony Deacon Larry Kehoe.  
Sacred Heart parishioners celebrate after the Rite of Election at St Francis Parish in West Des Moines.  

Photos by Rev. Jim Kirby  

Rite of Election welcomes candidates, catechumens

Man’s “ah-ha” moment changed trajectory of his life

Deep inside Brad Floden, there has always been a connection to God. But alcohol clouded his judgment and he strayed from faith.

Baptized and raised Presbyterian, his parents divorced when he was young. During summer visits to see his father, he became acquainted with the Church of Christ. 

During his 20s and 30s, alcohol kept him from “firing on all cylinders” and something always seemed to take precedent over going to church, he said. He was spiritual and saw God in nature, but didn’t practice any particular faith tradition.

Over time, he eased back into religion.

About 15 years ago, friends took him to a Lutheran church. “I kind of enjoyed it. I felt moved every time I was there. I went more frequently than not,” he said. “I felt it was something I could identify with. It was so uplifting.”

About six years ago, he began dating an Irish Catholic girl who took him to Mass. He felt lost, not knowing the ritual, the prayers and what was happening. He would attend Mass with her while still going to his Lutheran church.

It was the summer of 2019 when he had his “ah-ha” moment. “I quit drinking one day. I almost had an epiphany and thought: This isn’t the way I want to live my life anymore. I quit cold turkey,” he said.

Diagnosed with heart failure, his priorities changed: “I started talking to my girlfriend’s mother, who is very faith-driven and very meaningful and so is my father. I’m hearing and I feel closer to God because I feel informed,” he said.

Floden contacted RCIA director Mary Sue Lone. He was more concerned that the church would reject him. “My big concern was that the Catholics wouldn’t want me,” he said. Lone explained that the RCIA process is more about his discernment about the Catholic Church rather than the other way around.

“As the RCIA process progressed, he said he’s fallen in love with the faith.”

Jen McLeran called her husband, John, in the middle of the day after visiting a Catholic church.

“She’s been hugged by God,” she said with tears rolling down her face. “I knew, right then, that’s where we needed to be,” said John.

Jen, who grew up Catholic, had married John, who did not grow up in a faith tradition but always believed in God. She fell away from practicing her faith, but in recent years had been longing to go back. She and her son, also named John, had been visiting churches, looking for the right fit.

“Even though we weren’t practicing, she grew up that way and still believed,” said her husband. “We have had a lot of conversations over the years about how much she believes in God.”

John and Jen decided their 6-year-old daughter, Jaley, would attend a private school and, during a tour of St. Francis Catholic School in West Des Moines, Jen asked if she could see the church. It was at that visit to the church when Jen felt the strong embrace of God that led her to tears of joy.

“I knew it was absolutely the place I wanted our daughter to go to school,” Jen said and even more so that St. Francis was the parish she was longing for, missing and needing.

“It was the visit for Jaley that moved the whole family. I dropped the check off for the deposit. I immediate-ly went into the parish hall office, registered the family, and asked what I needed to do to get re-en-

gaged in the faith,” Jen said. She inquired about the process for her and Jaley and options for her hus-
band and son. She then took the material provided by the parish office and discussed it with the family.

She went to reconcilia-

tion, and Jaley was baptized this past December.

John said if his daugh-

ter was going to be Catholic, he would, too.

“Family is important and very meaningful and so is family support. The older I’ve gotten, the more heartfelt that has become, and the more seriously I take it. Time is precious, we need to make the most of it,” he said.

He made the decision to join the RCIA program.

Son John independently decided to join his father in the RCIA process to become Cath-
olic. Together, they will be bap-
tized, confirmed and receive the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

“We figured as a fami-
ly it would be a good idea to get into church, as we had already been discussing it,” said the son.

“What a better place to come than where my sister goes to school.”

Once he went to St. Francis, he knew that was his faith home. “People were so accept-

ing of us not knowing anything,” he said of the open, friendly envi-
ronment.

He’s joining the Cathol-
lic Church for himself, but said it was nice to come into the faith with his family.

“I actually enjoy going to my class on Thursdays. I enjoy the people. I also enjoy how it’s very well put together. It’s just a really good feeling,” he said.

Finding faith has changed the McLeran family.

“We never used to pray before dinner or meals. We pray at mealtimes now,” said the fa-
ther. “I also never used to make an effort to pray when waking up or going to bed. Those are things we do now, and we pray as a fam-
ily. With our son being almost 19, to see him put forth the effort and make a choice for his faith jour-
ney and to be with us as a family, when he doesn’t have to be but chooses to, is joyous. It’s brought us together, and completely clos-
er as a family. We share this jour-
ney now and beyond and we’re sharing it together. It’s been absolu-
ately amazing for us.”

Shared faith journey has been “absolutely amazing for us”
Three St. Albert seniors earn top awards

Alex Gast
Joe Goltl
Allison Narmi

St. Albert Catholic School, in Council Bluffs, congratulates three seniors for earning prestigious awards from the Hawkeye Ten Conference. Allison Narmi and Joe Goltl were two of only 22 seniors selected from the more than 1,400 in the conference to be named to the Hawkeye Ten Conference All-Academic Team. Seniors needed an ACT score of at least 29 to complete a application form. Selection to the team was based on academics, leadership, character and school/community service. Alex Gast was one of 11 in the conference to receive the Hawkeye Ten Character Award. Selection was based on the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Each school could nominate only one senior. The students will be honored at a banquet in Atlantic on April 6.

Des Moines Catholic Region Schools formed from a position of strength

Wisconsin has seen a number of successes with its school system created in 2012, said President Philip Riley, Jr.
A central office handles budgeting, enrollment, technol- ogy and administrative tasks. Financially, a foundation bene- fits all the schools in the system. The school system’s annual gala brought in a record amount of fundraising dollars. Like Rohling and Groos, Riley said: “I don’t think we would be where we are now had we not done that. Change is hard, but it’s good.”
Holy Family Schools in Dubuque, formed in 2001, re- gionalized to take advantage of economies of scale, said Brian Kane, chair of the board of edu- cation. “I think it was the right direction,” he said.
The Omaha Catholic School Consortium has seen an enrollment increase since it was launched in 2012 with 1,400 students. Today, it has 1,700 stu- dents. Successes include a cen- tral office that handles common tuition, pay scales for staff, con- tracts and human resources for all team members. The system was created “at a time when you started look- ing around and you see Catholic schools competing against each other for students and out bidding for personnel,” he said. It was decided “if we keep Catholic schools open, we need to come together to leverage re- sources, use economy of scale.” His advice: Be patient. “It’s a long journey, but the fruits of this will bear out.”
Schools Office, continuing with the diocesan Catholic education practices saw enrollment into five due to shrinking enroll- ment,” she said.
The centralization of business and best faith and edu- cation practices saw enrollment grow in the first two years. “Enrollment increases occurred at the level of re- opening one of the schools that was closed. The consortium of schools became the pilot schools for best education practices that were then shared out to the other 49 elementary schools within the Archdiocese of Omaha,” she said.
The consortium schools provide an excellent education at the lowest per pupil cost among the 50 elementary schools, Bish- op op said. “I am excited to see sim- ilar results with the Des Moines Region Catholic Schools from the proactive stance versus the reactive stance,” she said. “We must run our schools with successful business management to stay in the education business for gen- erations to come.”
The Diocese of Des Moines has looked to school systems already set up to learn from them.

Director of Child & Family Faith Formation, St. Boniface Catholic Church, Waukee, Iowa

Do you have a passion for helping children and fami- lies grow in faith? Are you called to guide and support parents as they introduce Jesus to the kids in their lives?
St. Boniface is seeking a Director of Child & Fam- ily Faith Formation for our growing parish of 1,800 households. The position will plan, lead, implement, and evaluate formation programs for families with children ages PreK through 8th grade, as well as oversee family-based preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.
This position will work collaboratively with other team members in the parish Evangelization & Faith Formation Office, as well as with all parish staff and our outreach ministry leaders.
The ideal candidate will have a depth of reflective spirituality, as well as proven experience inviting and forming parents and other adults as catechists and core team members. Must be a practicing Catholic, have a degree in Theology or certificate in religious education or Diocesan catechetical training/certification, or have experience in a related field with a minimum of three years coordinating parish child and family formation.

The Catholic Mirror is looking for story ideas from around the Diocese. If you have a suggestion, email us at communications@dmdiocease.org.

Ryan to be president of diocesan school system

Continued from page 1
Joensen.

In a letter to Dowling Catholic High School parents, Ryan focused on a collaborative approach between the high school and the 11 elementary schools that will comprise the new school system.
“Much of the work in my current role is focused on advancing the mission of Dowling Catholic and planning for the future,” he said. “This requires a strategic approach and recog- nition of the shared mission and interconnectedness of all Catholic schools in Des Moines.”
The regional school model addresses efficiencies that can be found on the business side of running the schools. However, the schools will remain diocesan schools. Faith formation and ac- ademics will remain in collabo- ration with the diocesan Catholic Schools Office, continuing with diocesan initiatives for best prac- tices in education. They also will continue to follow the Diocese’s strategic plan in faith formation.

Ryan was named after a national search lead by diocesan Schools Superintendent Donna Bishop and Steve Lacy, former CEO and executive chairman of Meredith Corp.
Ryan, who is originally from St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs and a graduate of St. Al- bert Catholic School in Council Bluffs, served as superintendent of the Catholic schools in the Di- ocese of Sioux City prior to com-
Ehm honored for “fantastic job” at Serra Club

Honored recently for his work with the statewide Serra Club is Bill Ehm, of Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines. Ehm was honored with the “Face of Serra” award at a recent U.S. Serra Council rally in Dallas. The award recognizes current and former district governors in U.S. Serra for exemplary performance of their duties in this leadership position.

“He did a fantastic job in this role, visiting all the clubs and encouraging them in their Serra work for vocations,” said Mike Downey, president-elect of the United States Serra Club.

Ehm served as district governor from about 2017 to 2021, when he retired. Susie Flood, mother of Father Reed Flood, took his place.

The Iowa district includes six Serra Clubs with a total of more than 320 members.

Local man to serve Serra Club on a broader scale

Nineteen years ago, Mike Downey agreed to help former high school teacher and then diocesan Vocations Director Father John Acrea with marketing efforts to support priesthood and religious life.

“I decided I kind of liked this work,” he said.

Today, Downey is president-elect of the U.S. Council for Serra International. Following June 1, he’ll serve a two-year term as president of the largest of the 10 worldwide Serra Councils that foster and encourage vocations. Through their work, members grow in their own holy vocation. They do this through prayer, service and fellowship.

“It was the service side that impressed me when I worked with Father Acrea,” said Downey, a member of St. John Parish in Adel. Father said he needed 2,500 envelopes stuffed and the Serrans were there. Father needed help setting up tables and chairs, and serving pizza for sixth grade vocation days at schools. Serrans were there.

At one point, he remembers the administrative assistant for the diocesan Vocations director being out sick and Serrans answering the phone just to make sure, if a call came in, there was someone there to answer it. Serrans also offer prayer opportunities and appreciation events for the priests, seminarians, sisters and the bishop.

“All the Masses, all the rosaries you pray, all the hours in adoration, you might not see the fruits of that for a year, a decade, or ever,” Downey said. “You just have to go on faith and do what you can to create a culture of vocations in a diocese so a call can be heard.”

Downey looks forward to using his gifts to help vocations to priesthood and religious life on a broader scale.

As president of United States Serra Club, he’ll be helping 7,500 members in 200 clubs across the country. There are about 12,500 Serra Club members worldwide.

The Serra Club is the only lay apostolate officially aggregated to the Vatican.

Positions Open - St. John Parish, Adel

Business Manager - Full time: Administers the day-to-day business functions of the parish and provides support for special events and projects. Visit our website for full a job description at www.stjohnsadel.org. Please email a resume and cover letter to Rev. Remigius “Remi” Okere at okere.remi@gmail.com by March 31, 2022.

Secretary - Part-time: The parish secretary provides administrative and related office services to the parish staff, councils, committees, and parish members. Visit our website for full a job description at www.stjohnsadel.org. Please email a resume and cover letter to Rev. Remigius “Remi” Okere at okere.remi@gmail.com by March 31, 2022.
Spiritual house cleaning prepares us for new life

Later this month my wife is due with another child, and she’s entered into the “nesting” phase of pregnancy, where all house cleaning takes on a new level of urgency.

We’ve lived in our home for eleven years, and so our closets have had plenty of time to build up clutter, and dust has been undisturbed for almost a generation in various hard to reach places. But in this eleventh hour, I’ve been told that all needs to change, and now!

I’m trying to convince my wife that unfolded laundry will not in fact hinder the baby’s arrival, but on some level I do understand her impulse, and I also find nesting particularly appropriate during Lent.

Are the days of referring to people as crazy truly gone? For real?

Somewhat, but not so long ago “gone” that we cannot touch the history of this word through the stigmatisms against those suffering from a mental health condition.

Crazy! What a painful word this has been for so many people.

Psychologically, it is a word that no longer exists nor was it ever a viable condition.

Yet, why do words such as this exist, even to this day?

We came by the struggle of stigmatizing people who experience psychological issues quite naturally when mental health became the “business of institutionalization” in the mid-1800s.

Consider the following: In America, the last mental, “insane,” asylum to close was in 1994. It was built to house 250 patients and during its heyday it housed over 2,600 patients. A New York asylum housed as many as 13,500 at one time giving it the title of the world’s largest mental asylum. At one point in the 1950s, more than half a million people were institutionalized around the world.

So, what has happened to the word “crazy”?

It still is a frequently used word in our vocabulary. “That’s crazy!” or “I’m having a crazy hair day!” At our times of being overwhelmed with emotion, one can think “I’m about to go crazy!” Those are most often “bad” days due to the intensity of stress and emotion, not related to mental illness.

So why was it that so many were institutionalized with diagnoses of crazy or insane? Mostly because we were so young in the knowledge of psychiatry. As we reflect on this history, sadly we see that most were hospitalized for depression, anxiety, reactions to trauma, addiction, and grief. Now, with the help of medications and various therapeutic options, the numbers of people needing hospitalization have been greatly reduced. When hospitalization is needed, it is not because someone is crazy. Verses from the song, “Gee, Offi- cer Krupke!” from the musical “West Side Story”, depict this historic yet current tension of stigmatism as well:

Officer Krupke, you’re really a square.

This boy don’t need a judge, he needs an analyst’s care! It’s just his nervousness that oughta be curbed.

He’s psychologically disturbed! Gee, Officer Krupke, we’re very upset.

We never had the love that ev’ry child oughta get.

We ain’t delinquents, we’re misunderstood.

Deep down inside us there is good!

The struggle for these young men, known in this musical as hoodlums, is to figure out if they were psychologically disturbed or somehow yet any of good. This song epitomizes the tension of stigmatized identity.

One of our founding Church fathers, St. Justin Martyr, taught us that deep inside of all of us there is good. He gave us a new task to help us know that we are fundamentally good, not corrupt. The term is called logos spermatikos.

This theology is taught by our Catholic Church. It is a Greek phrase which means that deep inside of every person lives a seed of the Divine Word of God. It came from God’s having breathed his very own nature inside of us at the creation of man. It is thus our responsibility, as Catholics, to bear this witness unto others in all we do.

With today’s understanding of mental health, it is evident that the continued need to release stigmas of mental health from a person’s character as some sign of weakness. Through logos spermatikos, may we see that strong people can experience depression, weak people can have anxiety, well-motivated people can develop an addiction, and those who are gripped are profoundly sad.

May we continuously remain aware that the human is not able to be perfect, but in this earthly life we are all wounded. And with those wounds, we are invited the daily opportunity to follow our perfectly wounded Savior. So, we pray,

“O God, come to my assistance.”

“Lord, make haste to help me.”

Deacon Randy Kiel is the founder of Kar- dia Counseling and serves Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. To connect with him, email randy@kardiacounseling.com.

Freedom to serve: Religious liberty

Nina Rosenstand, in her book The Human Condition, contends that, among other characterizations, the human person can also be characterized as the story-telling animal.

Rosenstand elucidates her argument by bringing historical events as well as a natural anthropological need in the human person to communicate by speech, written words, signs, drawings, etc. through the form of stories.

God, of course, is the author of the greatest love story in all of creation: the story of love, fall, and redemption.

Our story began in a beautiful garden created out of love just for us. Alas, temptation entered: “Take and eat,” the serpent said to the woman, “For you surely will not die.” (Gen. 3:4)

The woman and the man then consumed from the forbidden tree and their eyes were opened to find shame in their bodies where there should have been no shame.

But the author of our story is Mer- cy and Love. The disastrous consequence of ‘the fall’ which reduced humanity to bleak nihilism was eradicated a little more than half a million people were institutionalized with diagnoses of crazy or insane. “O God, come to my assistance.”

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Our story began in a beautiful garden created out of love just for us. Alas, temptation entered: “Take and eat,” the serpent said to the woman, “For you surely will not die.” (Gen. 3:4)

The woman and the man then consumed from the forbidden tree and their eyes were opened to find shame in their bodies where there should have been no shame.

But the author of our story is Mer- cy and Love. The disastrous consequence of ‘the fall’ which reduced humanity to bleak nihilism was eradicated a little more than half a million people were institutionalized with diagnoses of crazy or insane. “O God, come to my assistance.”

“Lord, make haste to help me.”

Deacon Randy Kiel is the founder of Kar- dia Counseling and serves Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. To connect with him, email randy@kardiacounseling.com.
A limited number of seats are available but you may sign up at iafreedomtour.eventbrite.com.

This will be a great opportunity to gain some vital insight on this essential freedom from academics, faith leaders, students, and each other in the interactive afternoon sessions and evening panel discussion.

Food for the Journey

By John Huyhn

Q. How do we know we will get to heaven? - Ame-
lar take the Gospel to places that haven’t
day, all of us are happy that Jesus was
hour, as the spirit that I leave behind.

For example, I enter a room and my person and presence radiate positive energy; trust, stability, gratitude, concern for others, joy in living, wit, and humor, that energy will affect everyone in the room and will remain with them after I have left the room, as the spirit that I leave behind. Conversely, even though my words might try to say the contrary, if my person and presence radiate negative energy: anger, jealousy, bitterness, lying, or chaos, everyone will sense that, and that negative energy will remain with them after I leave, coloring everything I have left behind. The reason I say this is that once suggest-

Q. How many saints are there in total? - Carlos Garcia

A. GOOD QUESTION. Lots of saints – most of them never canon-

Q. Where are there different types or ver-

The new Testament, but the one we ven-

Q. What is the most important corporal work of mercy? - Saray Martinez

A. I THINK THAT ALL OF them are important. We should be able to live up to all of them rather than choosing one and ignoring the others. The spiritual works of mercy are also important. We can try to be there for the whole year of mercy some time back. If we live lives of mercy and compassion, we will have fulfilled the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Q. Do we know for sure what Jesus looked like? - Maureen Lawler

A. No. It would be nice to know, but we don’t know. Over the centu-

turies, lots of artists have done paintings of the Virgin Mary to express Jesus, so that will have to suffice for us.

Q. In Mass why do we sing after the first reading? - Kennedy Klein

A. Music has long been an important part of our liturgical prac-
tice. Some of it is instrumental, and some of it is vocal. We sing the Psalms Response both to praise God in song and to give voice to our yearning when the two read-

ings. Also, we sing a Gospel acclamation (“Alleluia” or “Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ”) before the Gospel is proclaimed.

Q. What is going to happen to the people that have never heard of Jesus? - Addis-
syn Ross

A. Well, we wouldn’t know about Jesus unless someone else told us about him. That’s been going on for two thousand years. Missionaries in particu-
lar take the Gospel to places that haven’t heard of Jesus. We all can be missionar-

ies in our own day. Sharing the love and compassion of Jesus is the best way. We can do that every day. As for those who haven’t heard of Jesus, we believe that God’s goodness is given to them too.

Q. Were people happy or sad when Jesus was born? - Haley Peterson

A. We can be sure that Mary and Joseph were more than happy. To-
day, all of us are happy that Jesus was born. But we can imagine what our world would be like without other people at the time when Jesus was just a toddler, so we simply don’t know.

Father John Ludwing is a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. Do you have a question for him? Send it to com-

ments@diocese.org, or mail it to The Catholic Mirror, Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

In his farewell speech in John’s Gospel, Jesus tells us that he is going away but he will leave us a parting gift, the gift of his peace, and that we will experi-
ence this gift in the spirit he leaves behind.

How does this work? How do we leave peace and a spirit behind as we go?

This is not something abstract, but something we experience (perhaps only unconsciously) in all the time in all our relationships. It works this way. Each of us brings a certain energy into every rela-
tionship we have, and when we walk into a room, that energy in some way affects everything else in the room. Moreover, it will stay with them after we leave. We leave a spirit behind us.

For example, if I enter a room and my person and presence radiate positive energy: trust, stability, gratitude, concern for others, joy in living, wit, and humor, that energy will affect everyone in the room and will remain with them after I have left the room, as the spirit that I leave behind. Conversely, even though my words might try to say the contrary, if my person and presence radiate negative energy: anger, jealousy, bitterness, lying, or chaos, everyone will sense that, and that negative energy will remain with them after I leave, coloring everything I have left behind. The reason I say this is that once suggest-

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Charitable giving provides tax benefits

By Jeannie Wells Thill
Contributing Writer

Once upon a time, many charitable gifts were linked with the benefit to the deduction of taxes as much as the benefit of the dollars contributed to the charity. Regardless of the motivation of the donor, the recipients of the program, scholarship or food pantry initiatives recognize with gratitude the financial gifts of the donor and the direct impact on their spiritual or educational growth, and the welfare of their family.

Tax benefits are still tax benefits; and whether a tax deduction or a tax credit, the contribution from the donor benefits many others far beyond the tax benefits received.

The best charitable contribution, in terms of tax benefits, is to the Catholic Tuition Organization. A donor receives 75 percent of their contribution back in the form of tax credits reducing the total amount paid to the state at tax time. Some donors calculate their total Iowa tax liability, then donate to CTO and totally wipe out their Iowa tax liability.

“I’d rather support our Catholic school students than pay Iowa taxes,” they say. How does that work? First, look at line 38 on your Iowa income tax return. If your income on line 38 is $76,450, you will owe $4,513 in Iowa taxes. Consider giving CTO $6,000 and you will receive $4,500 in tax credits. Do the math: $4,513 - $4,500 = $13. If you have already paid Iowa taxes through your regular paycheck, you will receive at least $4,500 back.

Gifts of grain have their own additional tax benefits as do gifts of appreciated stock. When you donate appreciated stock, you do not pay capital gains tax either. As always, ask your tax advisor about the benefits available to you when giving to the Catholic Tuition Organization.

Contributions to CTO provide tuition assistance to families who want to send their children to Catholic schools, and who just cannot afford to do so. For this current school year, $3.2 million in tuition assistance was provided to 2,000 students at our sixteen schools in the Diocese of Des Moines. Since the inception of CTO, total tuition assistance has been $34.7 million!

“I am so grateful, I can’t even put into words how grateful I am that my daughter goes to this Catholic school,” said one mom.

“Shé’s loved here. They are all a part of her family and I know Jesus wants…for us all to be loved.”

Jeannie Wells Thill is the executive director of the Catholic Tuition Organization.

Triptico de Testimonios

Continued from page 1

que no os paralicen el miedo y no os impidan el “sábado del edificio” de un mundo al que los humanos parecen in- capaces de manejar. En un breve orden, propongo tres fuentes de esperanza para mí personalmente – un “triptico de testimonios” – que pueden fortalecer sus espíritus.

El primero es el pueblo mismo de Ucrania. Aunque mil- llones han escapado, y continúan huyendo como refugiados del ardiente aliento de la bestia de oriente buscando razonablemente proteger a sus hijos, dependientes y a sí mismos, cuántos más han permanecido firmes e incluso han regresado para ayudar a cualquiera que puedan. Los esfuer- zos de asistencia, la convicción heroica que han mostrado el Presi- dente Zelensky y sus colegas, la resistencia popular en las calles y, más que nada, nos inspiran mar- cadamente la incesante fe de la gente y de sus líderes religiosos en estos días de oscuridad. La Iglesia Ucraniana Griega Católica, bajo el liderazgo de su pastor el Arzobispo Sviatoslav Shevchuk de Kyiv-Galicia, la Iglesia Ortodoxa Ucraniana y otros pastores cristia- nos que han mostrado firmeza en la guía de sus rebeldes a través de su valle de tinieblas, resistiendo la tentación de sucumbir al odio y a la dureza de corazón haciendo in- cesante oración por el enemigo y manteniendo encendida la lámpa- ra de confianza plena en la provi- dencia de Dios.

Me emociona el relato del Padre Mateusz, un sacerdote parroquial católico romano en Kyiv, quien junto a un grupo de aproximadamente 30 de sus parroquianos se han mantenido en vigi- lancia en adoración ante el Santísimo Sacramento en su refugio subter- ráneo antiaéreo. En contraste a la “habitación superior” en donde Cristo cenó con sus apóstoles, en esta “habitación inferior” el espacio se llena con el sentimiento intenso de la presencia de Dios. El Padre Mateusz relata la experien- cia que sintió al orar ante Nues- tro Señor Eucarístico: “Le dije al Señor, ‘estoy listo para cualquier cosa, y te agradezco por toda mi vida’.”

En comuniones unidos con otros, las personas fortalecen su creencia en que su Padre celestial desea el bien para ellos y que nos esfuerzos a su Hijo, no un alcalde, en respuesta a sus incesantes ora- ciones. Ellos están, por raro que parezca, felices en el sentido que Jesús mencionó en la Bienaventu- ranzas: “Bienaventurados los que lloran… los que son perse- guidos por causa de la justicia.” Si cada uno de nosotros puede decir a Dios, “estoy listo para cualquier cosa, y te agradezco por toda la resistencia que muestran” y cómo podríamos ser más los unos a los otros y a Jesús como emisarios de paz que puedan regresar a la violencia y a la maldad a su salvo.

El segundo testigo es San Oscar Romero, cuyo aniver- sario este 24 de marzo de su mas- tirio en 1980 en San Salvador nos recuerda que solamente por me- dios pacíficos y por el poder de la proclamación de la palabra de Dios se pueden derrumbar los ne- fastingos desigualtad de los regímenes humanos para que el Reino de Dios siga brillando. A pesar de las presiones políticas que buscaron amordazarlo desconectando su mensaje poderoso por radio y con amenazas contra su vida, el Arzo- bisp Romero no se dejó intimi- dar por las amenazas de terroristas y permaneció firme a su vocación hasta el final, para que su gente pudiera hacer lo mismo.

Meses antes de ser asesinado, este buen pastor recomendó a su rebaño: “El mejor microfón para Cristo es la iglesia y los humanos para que el Reino de Dios se puedan derrumbar los ne- fastingos desigualtad de los regímenes humanos para que el Reino de Dios se puedan derrumbar los ne-

La sangre de Romero se mezcló con la propia sangre de Jesús cuando la bala de su ases- ino lo derribó mientras celebraba la Misa, magnificando el misterio que se representaba ante él: “Esta es la Eucaristía: proclamación de la muerte del Señor, proclamación de su vida, optimismo de hombres y mujeres que saben a quién están siguiendo, incluso en medio de la oscuridad y confusión de nuestra historia, la luz brillante de Cristo, vida eterna.” Esta es la fe de vida por la que hoy hacemos oración para que brille incesantemente en el rostro de José David López ahora que se dirige a aguas tran- quilitas en compañía de Jesús y sus santos, tales como el Arzobispo Romero.

Finalmente, y aunque aún no es un santo oficialmente (!), recibí una inspiración personal- al con el ejemplo de mi tío quien es el hermano de mi mamá, Mon- seor Ralph Simington de Water- loo, IA. Estuve presente para ayu- dar en la celebración del 60

Continued on page 15

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**Cardinals go on mission of hope**

Continued from page 1

e the cities to cemeteries.”

“With pain in my heart,” I unite my voice to that of ordi-
nary people who implore an end to the war,” he said. “In the name of
God, listen to the cry of those who are suffering and stop the
bombings and attacks.”

Negotiations to end the war must begin seriously, he said, and the humanitarian corridors
agreed upon to evacuate civilians and to bring basic necessities to people in besieged towns must be
respected and secured.

With the U.N. Refugee Agency reporting March 13 that
almost 2.7 million refugees had fled Ukraine since Feb. 24, Pope
Francis thanked all the individ-
uals and agencies in the neigh-
boring countries who have wel-
comed them, and he encouraged
continued generosity.

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Two cardinals arrived at sepa-
rate destinations on one mission
entrusted to them by Pope Fran-
cis: to bring relief, hope and en-
couragement to suffering Ukrai-
nians.

Polish Cardinal Kon-
rad Krajewski, papal almoner,
arrived in the western Ukrainian
city of Lviv March 8 and met with Archbishop Sviatoslav
Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church,
and Archbishop Mieczyslaw
Mokrzycki, head of the Latin-rite
Archdiocese of Lviv.

Father Andry Soleczyk, a spokesman for Archbishop
Shevchuk, told Catholic News
Service March 9 that Archbishop
Shevchuk traveled from Kyiv to
Lviv the day before specifically
to meet with Cardinal Krajewski
and help him fulfill the mission
Pope Francis had entrusted to
him. That may include helping
the cardinal get to Kyiv “if possi-
bale,” Father Soletsky said.

Lviv has not been
shelled, “thanks be to God,”
Father Soletsky said, but the
city in Western Ukraine is being
overwhelmed with displaced peo-
ples gathering there to try to find
rides, trains or buses to Poland,
Hungary or Romania. People are
sleeping in line at the train station
and every church has opened as a
shelter.

But with Lviv’s popu-
lation having doubled in the past
two weeks, he said, the ability to
shelter and feed everyone is be-
coming critical.

Prior to his arrival in
Ukraine, Cardinal Krajewski met
with Caritas volunteers helping
refugees in several Polish cities
near the border with Ukraine.

According to the Polish Catholic weekly Gosc Niedziel-
ny, the Polish cardinal was asked
by journalists if he was afraid of
entering a war zone.

“I am afraid, as everyone is
afraid, but I went to confession before leaving: I have no debts, I
wrote a will,” he said. “I go freely
to bring the Gospel. I want to be
with these people.”

Canadian Cardinal Mi-
chael Czerny, interim president of the Dicastery for
Promoting Integral Human Development, arrived in Budapest, Hungary,
March 8 and visited the Keleti
railway station where he met with
Caritas volunteers and thanked
them for their work.

The cardinal met March
9 with Zsolt Semjen, Hungary’s
deputy prime minister, who as-
sured him Hungary would wel-
come all refugees from Ukraine
“without limits.”

He also asked Catho-
lic parishes and religious orders
around the world “to increase
moments of prayers for peace.”

“God is the God only of
peace, he is not the God of war,”
he said. “Those who support vio-
ence profane his name.”

Pope Francis led the
people in the square in a moment
of silent prayer that God would
“convert hearts to a firm desire
for peace.”

Tom Chapman
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Neil Pfeifer
General Agent
Northeast Nebraska/ Western Iowa
402-379-0180
neil.pfeifer@kofc.org

Mike Bormann
General Agent
563-689-6801
michael.bormann@kofc.org

© Knights of Columbus, 1 Columbus Plaza, New Haven, CT 06510