

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

Vol. 55, No. 5

May 20, 2022

## 1st Wave of the Ignite! Campaign kicks off

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus is one of eleven parishes that launched the first wave of the Ignite! Campaign earlier this month.

Just as the campaign seeks to fund projects that will grow the faith and Church throughout southwest Iowa, St. Theresa will use its parish share of funds for projects that will benefit all of its parishioners.

Detailed plans for St. Theresa's parish share funds were announced during kick-off weekend May 14-15. Plans include renovating the parish office and athletic fields as well as replacing the parish's heating and air conditioning system.

"We are excited about this campaign because it offers our parish the opportunity to address some long overdue projects while also investing in the future of our Diocese," said Father Raphael Assamah, pastor of St. Theresa. "And as a parish with a school, the endowment for tuition assistance will make a big difference for families who need financial support in sending their children to St. Theresa and the other schools throughout the Diocese."

The \$45 million Ignite! Campaign is a diocesan-wide effort that will have wide-ranging impacts for schools, parishes, priests, seminarians, and every family in southwest Iowa. Specifically, the campaign will:

- Ensure thriving and sustainable Catholic schools with the establishment of a \$25 million endowment for tuition assistance. Proceeds from the endowment will complement yearly funding from the Catholic Tuition Organization, significantly increas-

Continued on page 3

## Memorial Day Mass

An annual Memorial Day Mass in the Des Moines metro area will be celebrated at Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines at 10 a.m. on Memorial Day, May 30. If it rains, the Mass will be celebrated at St. Theresa Church at Merle Hay Road and University Avenue.

## Spring brings smiles to churches



Photo by America Duran

Second graders celebrate their First Holy Communion at St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale.



Photo by Kris Gaspari

On April 10, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny partnered with three other Ankeny churches to offer an ecumenical Easter egg hunt for children with disabilities and their siblings. It was an opportunity for the four churches to come together to better serve Ankeny families and for individuals with special needs to participate in Easter festivities in a safe, inclusive, and Christian setting.



Taylor and Cody Gray have their son, Emmett, baptized on May 1 by Father Philip Bempong at the newly renovated St. Patrick Church in Massena.

## Pope: Saints' lives show we can all attain holiness

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The lives of the saints prove that holiness is not an unreachable goal accomplished by a select few but comes from acknowledging and sharing God's love, Pope Francis said.

"Our Christian lives begin not with doctrine and good works, but with the amazement born of realizing that we are loved, prior to any response on our part," the pope said in his homily during the canonization Mass in which he declared 10 men and women as saints of the

Catholic Church.

"At times, by overemphasizing our efforts to do good works, we have created an ideal of holiness excessively based on ourselves, our personal heroics, our capacity for renunciation, our readiness for self-sacrifice in achieving a reward. In this way, we have turned holiness into an unattainable goal," he said.

An estimated 45,000 pilgrims from around the world gathered in St. Peter's Square at the beginning of the canonization Mass, and tens of thousands more

arrived in time for the recitation of the "Regina Coeli" prayer afterward, the Vatican said.

Carmelite Father Michael Driscoll, who lives in Boca Raton, Florida, was among the pilgrims who arrived early for the canonization Mass, which he said he has "been waiting for for 18 years" since his miraculous healing from advanced, metastatic melanoma. He had prayed for St. Titus Brandsma's intercession, and his healing was accepted as the miracle needed for the Dutch Carmelite's canonization.

Pope Francis said that the 10 new saints exemplified the Christian call "to serve the Gospel and our brothers and sisters, to offer our lives without expecting anything in return, or any worldly glory."

"They discovered an incomparable joy, and they became brilliant reflections of the Lord of history," the pope said. "May we strive to do the same, for each of us is called to holiness, to a form of holiness all our own."

# Demonizing, Dehumanizing, or Divinizing

I've been convicted in recent weeks during our Monday Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction at St. Ambrose Cathedral when we continue to pray the "Litany of Peace in Troubled Times" for the people of Ukraine and other war-stricken regions. One of the tropes of intercession is, "For courage to resist demonizing and dehumanizing others." My conscience tells me, "Guilty. That's exactly what you've done to Russian President Vladimir Putin in your previous Mirror column and in your general attitude."

However much I abhor the war Putin has instigated and the atrocities that his military



By  
Bishop  
William  
Joensen

forces have committed, I cannot consign him to the rank of Satan and his legion of evil spirits and cancel him from the human race, even if Satan must be pleased with Putin's loathsome behavior. I am called to be tenacious in hope and prayer not only for the peace of Ukraine and deliverance of its people, but that the irreduc-

ible goodness of every human being created by God might prevail, that sin would be cast out, and that all persons—including Putin himself—might be saved.

I think a similarly bracing test of hope, faith, and charity awaits us in connection with the official release of the final U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case (as of this writing, only the leaked version indicating a majority opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade* has been circulated; we'll see if that majority position holds firm). The cultural convulsions in reaction to the leaked version portend a long, hot, and ugly summer in

our country—particularly if *Roe* is overturned—that will make the national turmoil in the wake of George Floyd's death two years ago, or the demonstrations protesting the Vietnam War more than half a century ago, seem tame by comparison. Some pro-choice proponents have already indicated that they will stop at nothing—including the violent targeting of justices and pro-life organization offices, the disruption of religious worship services, the desecration of the Eucharist, and other violent acts of intimidation and blasphemy—to try to make those who uphold the basic right to life of every human person from conception to natural

death duck and run for cover.

The true champions of women's flourishing and freedom are not those who argue for the capacity to destroy nascent life in the womb. As with the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles, God has given us a mission and charge at this pivotal moment in our country's history—in salvation history. We are called to be undaunted in our witness to the truth that each and every human is created by God as a unique person of inestimable worth and dignity, and that Jesus died and rose again so that we might experience even now the "abundant life" that he desires to communicate from

Continued on page 15

## ¿Demonizando, Deshumanizando o Divinizando?

Me he sentido culpable en las recientes semanas durante nuestra Hora Santa de Adoración Eucarística y Bendición durante los lunes en la Catedral de San Ambrosio cuando seguimos orando la "Letanía por la Paz en Tiempos Difíciles" por el pueblo de Ucrania y las demás regiones azotadas por la guerra. Una de las antinomias de intercesión es, "Por valor para resistirnos a demonizar y deshumanizar a los demás." Mi consciencia me grita, "Culpable. Eso es exactamente lo que has hecho con el presidente ruso Vladimir Putin en tu anterior columna del Mirror y en tu actitud en general."

Por mucho que aborrezca la guerra que ha instigado Putin y las atrocidades que han cometido sus fuerzas militares, no puedo asignarle el rango de Satanás y su legión de espíritus malignos y cancelarle de la raza humana, incluso si Satanás debe estar muy satisfecho con el re-

pugnante comportamiento de Putin. Estoy llamado a ser tenaz en la esperanza y en la oración nos solamente por la paz en Ucrania y por la liberación de su gente,

pero para que pueda prevalecer la irreducible bondad de todo ser humano creado por Dios, por la expulsión del pecado y para que todas las personas – incluyendo al

mismo Putin – puedan salvarse.

Pienso que nos espera de una forma similarmente difícil una prueba de esperanza, fe y caridad con respecto a la promul-

gación de la decisión final de la Suprema Corte de los Estados Unidos en el caso de *Dobbs v.*

Continued on page 14



### OFFICIAL

**Bishop William Joensen has made the following priest assignments effective July 14, 2022, unless otherwise noted.**

**Monsignor Frank Chiodo** from Pastor St. Anthony, Des Moines, Iowa, to retirement

**Rev. Ray McHenry** from Pastor St. Francis of Assisi, West Des Moines, Iowa, to retirement

**Rev. Mike McLaughlin** from Metro Hospital Chaplaincy, Des Moines, Iowa, to retirement, effective March 1.

**Rev. Dean Nimerichter** from Pastor Holy Trinity Parish of SE Warren County, Lacona, Iowa, to retirement

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**Rev. Patrick Amedeka** from the Diocese of Cape Coast, Ghana, to Canonical Administrator, Holy Spirit, Creston, Iowa, and St. Edward, Afton, Iowa

**Rev. Ryan Andrew** from Teacher/Chaplain, Dowling Catholic High School, West Des Moines, Iowa to Parochial Vicar, St. Luke the Evangelist, Ankeny, Iowa

**Rev. Guthrie Dolan** from Associate Pastor, St. Anthony, Des Moines, Iowa, to Clinical Chaplaincy Formation

**Rev. James Downey** from Parochial Vicar, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart and St. Luke the Evangelist, Ankeny, Iowa, to Faculty, Dowling Catholic High School, West Des Moines, Iowa

**Rev. Reed Flood** from graduate studies, Rome, Italy, to Chaplain, Dowling Catholic High School, West Des Moines, Iowa, and sacramental assistance, St. Boniface, Waukee, Iowa

**Rev. Chris Fontanini** from Pastor St. Thomas Aquinas, Indianola, Iowa, and Immaculate Conception, St. Marys, Iowa, to Pastor, St. Joseph, Des Moines, Iowa

**Rev. James Kirby** from leave of absence to Pastor, St. Mary/Holy Cross, Elkhart, Iowa

**Rev. Reynaldo Hernandez Minero** from Hispanic Chaplain, Christ the King, St. Anthony and Basilica of St. John, Des Moines, Iowa, returning to home Diocese of Zacatecoluca, El Salvador, effective July 1.

*+ Wm. M. Joensen*

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

**Rev. Emmanuel Offiong** from Archdiocese of Calabar, Nigeria, to Metro Hospital Chaplaincy, Des Moines, Iowa, November 2021

**Rev. Sylvester Omon Okoh** from Administrator, St. Patrick, Neola, Iowa, and St. Columbanus, Weston, Iowa, to Pastor, St. Clare Parish, Clarinda, Iowa; Sacred Heart Parish, Bedford, Iowa; and St. Joseph Parish, Villisca, Iowa

**Rev. Augustin Clement Owusu** from Administrator, St. Joseph, Earling, Iowa; St. Peter, Defiance, Iowa; St. Michael, Harlan, Iowa, and Canonical Administrator, Shelby County Catholic School to Pastor, St. Michael, Harlan, Iowa, and Canonical Administrator, Shelby County Catholic School

**Rev. Joseph Pins** from Pastor, St. Joseph, Des Moines, Iowa, to Pastor, St. Francis of Assisi, West Des Moines, Iowa

**Rev. Chris Reising** from Pastor, St. Bernard, Osceola, Iowa; St. Patrick, Grand River, Iowa; and St. Joseph, Mt. Ayr, Iowa, to Pastor, St. Anthony, Des Moines, Iowa

**Rev. Tomson Thomas** from temporary sacramental assistance to Our Lady of Americas, Des Moines, Iowa, and Christ the King, Des Moines, Iowa, to Administrator St. Bernard, Osceola, Iowa; St. Patrick, Grand River, Iowa; and St. Joseph, Mt. Ayr, Iowa

**Rev. Eze Venantius Umunnakwe, C.S.Sp.** from Pastor, St. Clare, Clarinda, Iowa; Sacred Heart, Bedford, Iowa; and St. Joseph, Villisca, Iowa to Pastor, Holy Trinity Parish of SE Warren County, Lacona, Iowa, and Immaculate Conception, St. Marys, Iowa

**Rev. Adam Westphal** from Pastor Holy Spirit, Creston, Iowa, and St. Edward, Afton, Iowa, to Pastor, St. Thomas Aquinas, Indianola, Iowa, and Chaplain, Simpson College

**Rev. Andrew Windschitl** from St. Mary/Holy Cross, Elkhart, Iowa, to Pastor, St. Joseph, Earling, Iowa, and St. Peter, Defiance, Iowa

**Rev. Mr. Dennis Lovell** while remaining Director of Parish Life Holy Family, Mondamin, Iowa, appointed Director of Parish Life, St. Anne, Logan, Iowa, effective April 1

**Rev. Mr. Michael Carney** appointed Director of Parish Life, St. Patrick, Missouri Valley, Iowa, effective April 1

*Jason Kurth*

Jason Kurth  
Chancellor

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# Ignite! Campaign kicks off

Capital campaign supports schools, seminarians, retired priests, and parishes

Continued from page 1

ing the amount of aid available to families in need and reducing the burden on parishes and families to send children to Catholic schools.

- Support seminarian education by adding \$5 million to the current endowed Diocesan Seminarian Fund. The Diocese has been blessed with average class sizes of 22 seminarians over the last 10 years and anticipates future classes of similar size, but current sources of funding provide enough funding for 18 seminarians each year.

- Care for retired priests by infusing \$2 million into the Priest's Pension Fund, which supplements traditional retirement benefits that diocesan priests receive. With 45 retired priests and 18 more expected to retire in the next 10 years, this will bring the fund more in line with the projected annual need.

- Invest in parish renewal and vibrancy with the establishment of a \$3.5 million

endowed Parish Renewal and Vibrancy Fund to help people of all ages grow in their relationship with God and live as disciples of Jesus. This will provide parishes with funding for their own local ministries, technology upgrades to strengthen their digital presence at all levels, and continuing educational opportunities for our clergy, catechetical leaders, and families.

- Support every parish by returning a portion of the funds raised at each parish for their own needs. Parish projects can include capital improvements, significant maintenance needs, debt retirement, and more.

The campaign features a unique approach to ensuring the greatest local impact for parishes throughout the Diocese.

For example, for parishes with schools in urban areas such as Des Moines or Council Bluffs, 50 percent of what they raise will go toward the Catholic Education Endowment, while parishes in rural areas with little to no access to schools will keep 50 percent of what they raise for

their own local parish needs.

The campaign is being rolled out at churches across the Diocese in three waves, with a different group of churches in each wave. As of early May, the campaign has raised over \$15 million in gifts and pledges.

"While our parishioners will feel the impact of our parish projects the most, I think many understand the positive outcomes that the diocesan priorities will bring forth," Father Assamah said. "More children in our schools, more priestly and lay vocations, and more opportunities to live and grow in our faith will result in more people encountering Christ. These are worthy investments for the future of our greater faith community."

During the kick-off weekend, campaign committees had different ways of getting the word out to their parishioners. St. Theresa's kick-off featured lay witness talks during Masses, while the Basilica of St. John hosted a reception after Masses to launch its effort.

"Since February, our



Parishioners from All Saints review the Ignite! case statement and campaign video after kickoff Masses on May 1.

parish has been preparing volunteers and learning about the campaign in the bulletin and online. As the case statements arrive in homes this week, we know our parishioners will respond to the invitation," said Mary McConville, one of St. Theresa's campaign co-chairs leading a team of over 30 campaign volunteers at the parish. "Our volunteer team will be reaching out personally to as many parishioners as possible to discuss the needs in more detail, answer any questions they have, and hopefully secure their support."

She added: "There is something for everyone with this campaign. Personally, I'm passionate about Catholic education and want to see our schools flourish well into the future, but I also know we also need to invest in other areas. As Catholics we're part of something bigger than just

ourselves or our parish, and I'm grateful to be a part of it."

Other parishes kicking off in Wave One include the Des Moines parishes of All Saints, Basilica of St. John, Holy Trinity, Our Lady of the Americas, St. Ambrose Cathedral, St. Peter Vietnamese Catholic Community and St. Theresa. Parishes in West Des Moines in this wave include Sacred Heart and St. Francis of Assisi. Our Lady's Immaculate Heart in Ankeny and St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap are also a part of Wave One.

Parishes in Wave Two of the campaign will begin preparing in late spring followed by kick-off weekends beginning in late summer.

For more information about the campaign including the videos and frequently asked questions, visit [dmdiocese.org/ignite](http://dmdiocese.org/ignite).



Father Michael Amadeo, pastor of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart and vicar general of the Diocese of Des Moines, and members of his team show off their creative Ignite! centerpieces featured during kickoff at the parish.

## Prayers, support for Ukraine continue



A crowd gathered at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny on April 13 for an ecumenical prayer service for peace in Ukraine. The U.S. Catholic Church, through the bishops' Subcommittee on Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern Europe, has provided more than \$520,000 in support to church entities in Ukraine for humanitarian and pastoral needs. The Catholic Church continues to collect financial support for those suffering in Ukraine. Locally, individuals can go to [www.dmdiocese.org/giving/special-collection-giving](http://www.dmdiocese.org/giving/special-collection-giving) and under "designation" click "Collection to Aid the Church in Central and Eastern Europe."

Additional means to provide support are as follows:

- Aid to Church in Need <https://www.churchinneed.org/>
- Catholic Relief Services <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/where-we-work/ukraine>

## First permanent diaconate group ordained 50 years ago

Fifty years ago, the first class of permanent deacons was ordained to ministry in the Diocese of Des Moines.

The permanent diaconate came in response to a renewal of the ministry by the Second Vatican Council. The Des Moines diocese was among the first three or four dioceses to have a permanent diaconate formation program.

The applicants were

active in charity and in serving their parishes. Many of the men who applied for the new ministry had powerful, life-changing experiences with the Cursillo movement and hungered for more.

On June 4, 1972, nine men, accompanied by their wives, were ordained by Bishop Maurice Dingman. The men represented the diocese from the Missouri River to the Des

Moines River.

Today, the Diocese is served by 69 active permanent deacons and is blessed with 32 retired deacons.

The Diocese is grateful for all who have served as permanent deacons, for answering their vocation call, and for their work to bring people closer to God.

Get your message out to more than 30,000 homes in central and southwest Iowa by advertising in The Catholic Mirror. Contact Kelly at 515-237-5054 or [kcollins@dmdiocese.org](mailto:kcollins@dmdiocese.org).



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# Catholic schools wish fond farewell to all retirees

Two longtime Catholic school administrators and several educators are retiring at the end of this school year.

## Ellen Stemler

Ellen Stemler, principal at St. Theresa Catholic School, will retire at the end of this school year after more than 32 years in Catholic education.

Stemler grew up in Des Moines and is the product of Catholic education, having attended both Holy Trinity Catholic School and Dowling Catholic High School.

She earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Iowa State University and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Drake University.

During her tenure with St. Theresa Catholic School, she led several STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) initiatives to position the school as a leader in STEM education. Her efforts earned the school local, regional and national recognition for its PK-8 integrated STEM education.

"I have loved every moment of this amazing journey because of the people. I have been blessed to watch children learn, overcome obstacles, succeed, and soar! I have worked with the best educators and staff," said Stemler. "The opportunities given to me by St. Theresa and the diocese have been an important part of my life and for that, I am very grateful and humbled."

Stemler and her husband, Denny, are the proud parents of four children who attended Catholic schools in Des Moines. She is also the proud grandmother of nine - one of whom is the fourth generation student at Dowling Catholic.

Gretchen Watznauer will

be the new school administrator at St. Theresa Catholic School for the 2022-2023 school year.

Watznauer brings more than 25 years of experience in education, having served as an assistant administrator at St. Francis of Assisi, a classroom teacher for Des Moines Public Schools and Waukee Community Schools, and a program coordinator with the Iowa Department of Education.

## Mary Jo Kever

Also retiring is Mary Jo Kever, of St. Pius X School in Urbandale.

A product of Catholic education and a Dowling Catholic graduate, Kever has spent 38 years in Catholic education. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Iowa State University, a master's degree in Teaching and Learning from Drake University, and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Drake University.

Adept at curriculum design and faculty development, Kever promotes excellence at St. Pius X by integrating strong curriculum instruction into a Christ-centered environment for the benefit of all students.

"I have enjoyed getting to know so many wonderful students and families over the years," said Kever. "The friendships I have made with colleagues and families have enriched my life beyond the school walls. The Catholic school community in the Des Moines Diocese is very special."

Kever is the proud mother of two daughters who attended Des Moines diocesan Catholic schools and graduated from Dowling Catholic. She also has a school-aged grandson who currently attends St. Pius X, making him the third generation of her family to attend a Catholic

school in the diocese.

Alex Baranosky will be the new school administrator at St. Pius X Catholic School for the 2022-2023 school year. Baranosky brings more than a decade of experience in education as a classroom teacher at Dowling Catholic High School and as an assistant administrator at St. Pius X Catholic School.

"The Diocese of Des Moines is grateful for the many years of dedicated service to Catholic education by Stemler and Kever, and we wish them well in their future endeavors," said diocesan School Superintendent Donna Bishop.

The Diocese would also like to wish the following educators and staff well in their retirements.

## Holy Trinity Catholic School

Mary Riordan, middle school English teacher - 45 years

## St. Theresa Catholic School

Denise Clark, kindergarten teacher - 35 years  
Mary Hingtgen, fourth grade teacher - 27 years  
Mary Baker, office staff - 12 years  
Dennis Minard, custodian - 26 years

## St. Augustin Catholic School

Pam Moore, lunch director - 25 years

## St. Malachy Catholic School

Melody Stoner, music teacher - 41 years in education, 7 years at St. Malachy

## Sacred Heart Catholic School

Barb Baker, middle school math teacher - 25 years in education, 17 years at Sacred Heart  
Jay Flaws, physical education teacher - 41 years  
Michelle Duer, third grade teacher - 25 years in education, 7 years at Sacred Heart  
Becky Grenier, food service - 24 years

## St. Albert Catholic School

Ken Schreiber, athletic director - 40 years



# New president of Mercy College named

Mercy College of Health Sciences' Board of Directors has named Adreain M. Henry OD, EdD as the college's fourth president effective July 1.

Dr. Henry embodies the spirit of Mercy College and has many years of higher education and health sciences experience," said Paul Erickson chair of the Board of Directors. "We are thrilled to have selected Dr. Henry as the next leader of Mercy College. We trust that he will lead us into the future with compassion and excellence, guiding the college's important vision and mission for years to come."

Henry, an optometrist and author holds a doctorate in education. He comes to Des Moines from Hallmark University in San Antonio, Texas, where he served as at the chief academic officer and associate provost.

He earned his Associate of Arts in Music and Pre-Med from Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, where he attended as a first-generation college student. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Southern Mississippi, a Bachelor of Science and Doctor of Optometry from Salus University in Pennsylvania. He completed his residency in primary eye care at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas and Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

In addition, Henry earned a Master of Arts in Business from Webster University in Missouri, a Master of Business Administration from the University of Virginia, and a Doctor of Education in Higher Education Management from the University of Pennsylvania.

Before coming to Mercy College, Henry served on active duty in the U.S. Army and served in several leadership positions. Henry most recently served as the Chief Academic Officer and Associate Provost at Hallmark University in San Antonio, Texas.



Dr. Adreain M. Henry

# CTO names new executive director

Mark Reed will be the new executive director of the Catholic Tuition Organization effective June 1.

Reed will secure funding of \$4.5 million annually which provides tuition assistance to more than 2,000 students in the 16 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines. The tuition assistance provided by CTO allows two thirds of the student population to attend the Catholic schools; without which, tuition is out of reach for their families.

Reed currently serves as director of advancement for St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kansas. His name is familiar to many as he returns to the Diocese of Des Moines where he had been the founding executive director of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa.

"Returning to my roots, where I grew up and attended Catholic school, is a 'coming home' for me and my family. Giving back to a community that has given so much to me is an opportunity to pay it forward for generations to come."

Reed graduated from Drake University with a master's degree in Public Administration and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science.

Reed succeeds Jeanne Wells Thill, who will retire June 30. Thill served 14 years as executive director of CTO.

CTO was established in 2006 with the passage of the Educational Opportunities Act and provides 75 percent Iowa tax credits to donors who contribute to the organization.



Mark Reed

# CHI Health president commissioned

CHI Health President and CEO E.J. Kuiper was commissioned April 21 during Mass at St. John Catholic Church on the Creighton University campus with Omaha Archbishop George J. Lucas as the celebrant.

CHI Health, as a ministry of the Catholic Church, is guided by its mission to heal, care for the most vulnerable in our communities, and advance social justice for all. The commissioning Mass blessed Kuiper so that he can carry out the organization's mission, while fulfilling his role as servant leader.

Kuiper, who is Catholic, became the president and chief executive officer of CHI Health last January. He is providing strategic leadership and overall operational oversight to the health system's 28 hospitals, two stand-alone behavioral health centers, and more than 150 employed physician practices in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and North Dakota.

In Iowa, CHI has hospitals in Council Bluffs, Corning and Missouri Valley. It has clinics in Bedford, Corning, Dunlap, Glenwood, Lenox, Logan, Missouri Valley, Oakland, Woodbine and Council Bluffs.



E.J. Kuiper



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# A changed heart, a reversed abortion, a new outlook on life

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

There was a time when Sarah Hurm contemplated abortion.

Raised Catholic in Des Moines and a Sunday church-goer, she found herself at age 26 to be a single mom of three kids, with two different dads, living on government assistance and expecting her fourth child with a third dad.

"I knew how it looked. I knew how people would view me," she said.

She remembers telling the father of her fourth child that she was pregnant.

"When I told the father, he automatically said we had to take care of it like responsible adults and abortion was that responsible adult thing to do," she said. "I eventually gave in to his pressures of scheduling an abortion."

She did what he told her to do, then regretted it. With the help of a doctor, they reversed a chemical abortion.

Now, Hurm shares her story in hope that others might find value and dignity in life and get help during and after a crisis pregnancy.

Hurm will share her story at the annual Innervisions gala on June 2. She'll share how she experienced a change of heart, found help and is grateful today that there are people who supported her through her pregnancy and

after her child was born. They've helped her get job training so she could support her young family, and are helping her publish a book of journal entries to her unborn child.

In retrospect, she said, "I realized that God never left me and that it's allowed me to understand just how miraculous each person is."

Hurm remembers going to the abortion clinic, a cold, sobering and traumatic experience "because I was still struggling that it was not what I wanted to do but what I was led to think I had to do."

She also struggled with a promise she'd made to God with her third child: That if the baby had a heartbeat, she would keep it. The ultrasound at the abortion clinic showed her fourth baby had a heartbeat.

"All I could hear was the father's voice saying we need to be responsible," she said. She started the chemical abortion, went home and struggled. She hadn't finished the protocol when she decided to contact Vitae Family Clinic to see if there was anything she could do to reverse the abortion. They couldn't promise it would work.

"I don't need promises, I just need hope," she said. "I need to know I'm doing everything I can to reverse this decision I made."

On Jan. 11, 2019, Isaiah was born.

In 2020, Hurm learned about InnerVisions, which helped



Sarah Hurm and her family at St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale.

her get a scholarship so she could return to school for job training.

"They're a support," she said. "They help with so much as far as empowering me, supporting me."

InnerVisions is also helping her turn the journal entries she penned to her unborn child into a book that provides a glimpse into the mind of a young woman who feels she has no other option in a crisis pregnancy

than abortion.

Hurm's story illustrates that a conversion of heart does not happen in one moment.

"Every day, she's a more virtuous person, more faithful and a holier person," said Bryan Gonzalez, development director at InnerVisions.

Her story also illustrates that InnerVisions does more than preserve life but helps one live life to the fullest.

"We think it's important to be pro-birth but also help moms after they've had the baby," Gonzalez said. "Sarah was courageous to change her mind and so we want to help walk alongside her. It's a radical commitment InnerVisions has to help women after they've chosen life."

For more information on InnerVisions or the upcoming gala, go to [ivhcare.org](http://ivhcare.org).

## Bishops urge parishes to accompany women in crisis pregnancies

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

The U.S. bishops are rolling out nationwide a new process called Walking With Moms in Need, through which they encourage parishes, in cooperation with their bishops and pastors, to proactively take a step toward helping women in crisis pregnancies and young families or take the next step in growing an existing ministry.

It could be as simple as intentionally praying for women in need or listing local crisis pregnancy centers in the parish bulletin each week.

"What we have found through our research and expe-

rience is that very few Catholics know what's out there and available," said Katherine Talalas, assistant director for ProLife Communication at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"For a lot of Catholics, it's new to them that there's any kind of pregnancy ministry provided through the church. Four out of five Catholics have no idea this exists and those are people who attend Mass regularly," she said.

"We want a pro-life and pro-woman vision for the Church," Talalas said while explaining the program to representatives of the four Iowa dioceses recently.

The Catholic Church wants to show that it not only teaches about protecting life, but

walks the walk, she said.

"The Walking with Moms in Need initiative is perfectly timed with the Iowa Catholic Conference's legislative efforts this year on the Iowa MOMS bill," said Sara Eide, associate director of the ICC. "This pending legislation would provide state resources to bolster existing programs for pregnant women. We are hopeful it will also be a catalyst to start additional programs to support new moms and stabilize new families."

Walking with Moms in Need provides a range of resources that take parishes step-by-step through a process of evaluating what ministries and resources already exist, and what parishes might be able to do. It provides educational, pastoral and ac-

tion-oriented resources.

Success for Walking With Moms in Need will look different in each parish and in each Diocese based on resources and capacity, Talalas said.

"Allow the Holy Spirit to guide your efforts. Don't put limits on what the Holy Spirit can accomplish," she added. "How is God calling you to respond?"

The first step to implementing Walking With Moms in Need is contacting the Diocese of Des Moines to get the resources.

Talalas noted that the new process is not limited to

helping women in crisis pregnancies but also helping young families.

"It's not about just helping the mother have the baby and then bye-bye," she said. "Some ministries help moms through until their children reach ages three or five and some longer." They may include job training and childcare.

For more information, parishes in the Diocese of Des Moines should contact John Gaffney at 515-237-5026 or [jgaffney@dmdiocese.org](mailto:jgaffney@dmdiocese.org).

### Story idea?

Contact Anne Marie Cox  
at 515-237-5057 or  
[acox@dmdiocese.org](mailto:acox@dmdiocese.org)

### Rosary for the Unborn

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1000 E Army Post Rd

Jeff Pierick 515-778-6087  
Kathy Biederman 641-660-8446

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## Around the Diocese

### May 22 Sunday

#### Benedictine spirituality

DES MOINES – Oblates of Conception Abbey meet monthly in Des Moines to study the Rule of St. Benedict as a means of fostering their own spiritual growth. All are invited to join the May meeting, when Benedictine Father Daniel Petsche, our oblate director, will be here. Meeting is from 2:30-5 p.m. at the Basilica of St. John parish hall (1915 University Ave.) for a potluck, discussion, and vespers. For more information contact George or Barb Appleby at bappleby848@gmail.com.

### May 26 Thursday

#### St. Vincent de Paul Golf Outing

PLEASANT HILL – The 2022 Fight Food Insecurity Golf Fundraiser will be at Copper Creek Golf Course. Registration starts at 8:30 with a shotgun start at 10 a.m. All proceeds from this event will go towards keeping our healthy food pantries open. Registration is \$150 per person which includes hosted food and beverages. Sponsorship opportunities are also available. For more information contact Randi Radosevich at resourcedirector@svdpdsm.org.

### June 5 Sunday

#### Corpus Christi Processional

DES MOINES – St. Augustin Parish will begin with a musical with a prelude in the church at 2:30 p.m., a procession with bagpipes at 3 p.m., and dinner to follow in the parish hall. Everyone is welcome to join us as we process through the neighborhood. All area Knights of Columbus are invited to dress in their regalia and First Communion class-

es are invited to come in their First Communion attire.

### June 5 Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination

INDIANOLA – Father Chris Fontanini, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas, Immaculate Conception, St. Marys and chaplain for Simpson College would like to invite you to celebrate with him a Mass of Thanksgiving at noon at St. Thomas Aquinas in Indianola and a reception following in the hall for his 25th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. Please RSVP to St. Thomas Aquinas Office by Thursday May 26, 4 p.m. at 515-961-3026 or lcs3garr@yahoo.com.

### June 7 Tuesday

#### Young Catholic Network

DES MOINES – Kick-off summer with the Young Catholic Network on the rooftop of the Market One building in the East Village. Young professionals in their 20s and 30s across the Diocese of Des Moines are invited to a rooftop social and speaker panel beginning at 6 p.m. The evening features complimentary drinks and dinner and comments from Catholic professionals in the community on living our shared faith. See the list of panelists and register at onlinedmdiocese.org/ycn.

### June 12 Sunday

#### Charity Tea

WEST DES MOINES – Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court Ave Maria #302 (representing members from all Des Moines parishes) will hold their annual Charity Tea at St. Francis Hall, St. Francis of Assisi Parish at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door,

and can be purchased through any CDA Court member or by sending an email requesting more information to oxana.bedore@gmail.com.

### June 16 Thursday

#### House of Mercy Game Show Gala

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 have doors open 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. COVID-19 safety measures will be in place.

### June 25. Saturday

#### St. Timothy Parish Reunion

RENO – St. Timothy Parish will host a reunion at the church hall and grounds, 69488 Wichita Road, in Cumberland. A social hour will begin at 4 p.m. with barbecue supper at 5:30 p.m. Please bring a lawn chair. All former parishioners, neighbors and anyone interested in St. Timothy's are invited. Please join us to reminisce and reconnect. Contact 712-621-3583 with questions.

### Other

#### Bishop Drumm Guild Garage Sale

JOHNSTON – This garage sale will be held each Thursday morning through Sept. 1 on Bishop Drumm's campus located at 5837 Winwood Dr., from 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Donations are accepted on the Thursdays of the sale at the garages located on the campus or by calling Helen Thull at 515-669-4621. No computers, baby cribs or car seats, old electronics or TVs will be accept-

ed. Household goods, clothing and furniture welcome.

### Faith Journey Catechetical Institute

Are you a Catholic who wants to fall deeper in love with Christ and his Church? If you answered yes then the Catechetical Institute is for you! Contact John Huynh, 515-237-5006, to begin your faith journey into the heart of our Catholic tradition. More information can also be found at FaithJourneyCI.com

### Rosary For The Unborn

Join us in saying the rosary for the unborn each Saturday at 10 a.m. in front of Planned Parenthood, on East Army Post Road, on the public sidewalk.

### Cathedral Holy Hours

All are welcome to join Bishop William Joensen at St. Ambrose on Monday nights for an hour of Eucharistic adoration and evening prayer. These Holy Hours will be hosted from 5-6 p.m. each Monday. Evening prayer will be livestreamed at Facebook.com/dmdiocese.

### Friends, Romans, Iowans

Be sure to check out the diocesan young adult focused podcast "Friends, Romans, Iowans." Currently in the second season, this podcast aims to connect the Diocese by hosting casual conversations with Catholic leaders from around southwest Iowa. Episodes can be found wherever you get your podcasts

## Imogene's St. Patrick plans summer jubilee

IMOGENE – St. Patrick Parish in Imogene is planning its "Bless Our Heritage" jubilee on July 2.

Hoping the third time is a charm, the event was postponed in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.

Nestled in the lush green hills of southwest Iowa in the tiny town of Imogene, St. Patrick Catholic Church is a masterpiece of architectural beauty.

Although the population of the town is a mere 39 people, St. Patrick Parish boasts 111 families who travel from several counties.

The vibrant church family puts their faith and love of God into action in impactful, fun, and far-reaching ways, much like the Irish settlers who founded the church over 140 years ago.

The congregation's "Bless Our Heritage" jubilee is being held in conjunction with the Sons and Daughters of Imogene's Shamrock Days, a two-day softball tournament, which starts the evening of Friday, July 8, at the Imogene ballfield north of the church.

The festivities on July 9 are 9 a.m. until sundown on the church grounds, culminating with fireworks at the ballfield.

The highlight of the day will be the 4 p.m. Mass, celebrated by Bishop William Joensen of the Des Moines Diocese.

The Mass will be followed by the long-awaited dedication of the Heritage Garden, a shamrock-shaped courtyard made of over 800 engraved bricks and pavers, bordered by a walking rosary.

Erected in the center of the courtyard is a life-size statue of St. Patrick.

At one time, the church campus included a grade school and a high school.

Students were taught by nuns from the Mercy or Dominican orders for 60 years.

The youngest high school graduate is turning 78 this year and the oldest is in their 90s.

The final St. Patrick Academy All-Class Reunion is being held at the celebration from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Lay catechists continue to teach the children about their Catholic religion in "Sunday School."

Over 50 years of Youth Faith Formation is being honored. The church is also having a video tribute to its 260 known service members who served in any branch of the military from the Civil War to the present.

For an online view of the day's events or to make dinner reservations, visit stpatrickchurchimogeneiowa.weebly.com. Dinner reservations are needed by June 20. For questions, please email stpatsimogene@gmail.com or send a message on Facebook (St. Patrick Catholic Church-Imogene, IA).

## PRAY WITH US

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

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

### Diocese of Des Moines Visioning Prayer

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

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

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

Greater unity and bonds of peace;

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

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

Willingness to bear together the yoke that Christ makes light.

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

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

+Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen

### Diócesis de Des Moines Oración de Visión

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

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

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

una mayor unidad y lazos de paz;

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

un genuino cariño unos con los otros, especialmente con aquellos que se sienten perdidos o excluidos; y el deseo de cargar juntos con el yugo que se hace ligero con Cristo.

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

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

+Padre, Hijo, y Espíritu Santo. Amén.



## Local seminarians assist Pope Francis



Deacon Alex Kramer and seminarian Mike Mahoney assisted the Holy Father at the Easter Sunday Mass at the Vatican. In the top photo, Pope Francis incenses an icon of the resurrection. It is an icon opened by two deacons each year at the beginning of the Easter Sunday Mass of the Holy Father which concludes with his veneration of the image by means of incense. Deacon Kramer is in the upper two photos; Mahoney greets the pope in the lower photo.

## Bishop visits seminarians in Rome



Bishop William Joensen visited Diocese of Des Moines seminarians in Rome recently. He celebrated Mass at this altar of St. Pius X at St. Peter's Basilica. Left to right, seminarians Jonathan Arriola and Connor Lynch, joined during their study abroad semester. Next to them is Father Reed Flood, Bishop Joensen, Deacon Alex Kramer and seminarian Mike Mahoney. This altar has particular significance to the Des Moines Diocese in that St. Pius X is our secondary patron and it was he who erected the Diocese of Des Moines during his pontificate in 1911.

## Scripture, rosary and the True Presence lead seminarian to priesthood

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Jason Lee will experience the last major step before priestly ordination on June 10 when he is ordained a transitional deacon at his home parish of St. Boniface in Waukee.

Lee is a young convert, having been raised Methodist. He came into full communion with the Catholic Church when he was a senior in high school.

He could have stopped there and become a lifelong, faithful Catholic. But Scripture, the rosary and belief in the True Presence in the Eucharist led Lee to understand that God called him to serve people through ordained ministry.

He started reading Scripture and noted theologians back when he was preparing for confirmation in the Methodist church. The readings opened his eyes.

"I would credit the Holy Spirit to put on my heart to really sit down and read the Scriptures

and know what I was about to profess as a Methodist," he said. "I just started a journey of reading Genesis to Revelation.

"It was there that I would say I encountered, first in the Old Testament, God's love for his people Israel, but then when I started reading the New Testament, I encountered Jesus Christ. I started to see the whole role of the Son in the Trinity and how he came to redeem man and save man from sin and death, and that's when I really encountered God's love in a more concrete way."

Lee's pastor took note and started bringing him along to home visits and to leadership conferences.

"I would say that's what spearheaded this vocation or this call to ministry: encountering Jesus Christ in the Scriptures and desiring others to know the love of Jesus Christ as well," Lee said.

At this point, he was a sophomore in high school and encountered Catholic classmates. In one class, students had to bring in something that was important to

them. He brought sports gear and a Bible; a classmate brought a rosary.

He didn't know what it was, so he did a simple Google search, where he learned that it's a beautiful prayer used to meditate on the life of Jesus. He decided to get one.

Lee went to a local store, where he found a do-it-yourself rosary making kit and put it together. He started to pray with it.

"Praying the rosary was a different way to encounter Jesus outside of reading the Scriptures," he said.

Conflict within the Methodist Church, particularly the way it votes on theological principles, prompted Lee to consider other faith traditions.

"On a whim, I wanted to check out a Catholic Mass. I would say I was a little nervous walking in. I had no idea what you do in Mass," he said.

He was 17 at the time, sat in the back and was grateful for a couple next to him who gave him a card from the pew with responses to the prayers.



Seminarian Jason Lee

"The turning point for me at that Mass was noticing everyone kneeling during the consecration of the host and also the wine," he said. "Something in me told me that there was something more in what I was seeing on the altar. There was something more than bread and wine there, and that's what stirred my own heart. I think that's when I made the connection of what I learned about the Eucharist – that it was Jesus' body and blood – that's when it went from my head to my heart."

He attended Iowa State

University, got involved in the local Catholic church, and continued to feel a desire to preach and teach the gospel. He entered seminary while in college, attending the St. John Vianney Seminary at University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.

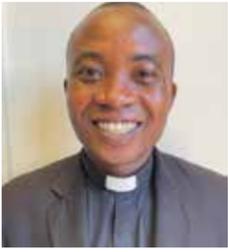
After his diaconate ordination, Lee will serve in the summer at St. Michael Parish in Harlan. As a deacon, he will be able to baptize, marry, preach and preside at a funeral service. He will not be able to celebrate a Mass until his priestly ordination, which is expected in the summer of 2023.

### Upcoming Ordinations

June 10 – To the transitional diaconate: Jason Lee

June 24 – To the priesthood:  
Deacon Alex Kramer  
Deacon Rodrigo Mayorga Landeros  
Deacon Nick Smith  
(Watch at Facebook.com/dm diocese)

# Priest reassignments announced



**Father Patrick Amedeka**



**Father Ryan Andrew**



**Father Guthrie Dolan**



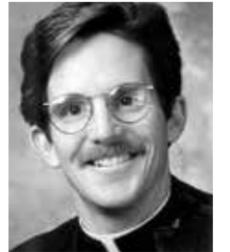
**Father James Downey**



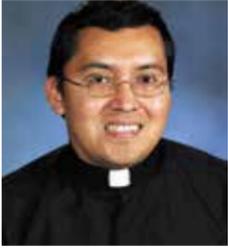
**Father Reed Flood**



**Father Christopher Fontanini**



**Father James Kirby**



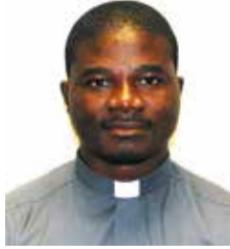
**Father Reynaldo Hernandez Minero**



**Father Emmanuel Offiong**



**Father Sylvester Omon Okoh**



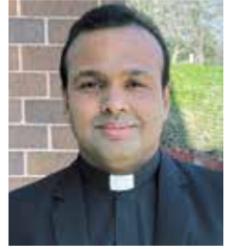
**Father Augustin Clement Owusu**



**Father Joseph Pins**



**Father Christopher Reising**



**Father Tompson Thomas**

The following priests have been reassigned by Bishop William Joensen effective July 14 except where otherwise noted.

## **Father Patrick Amedeka**

Father Amedeka, from the Diocese of Cape Coast, Ghana, has been appointed canonical administrator of Holy Spirit Parish in Creston, and St. Edward Parish in Afton.

Educated in Ghana, with post-graduate work at St. John University in Queens, New York, he was ordained in 2013 by Bishop Matthias Nketsiah in Ghana.

Father served in the Archdiocese of New York prior to coming to the Diocese of Des Moines. Since arriving last February, he has been assisting at St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs.

## **Father Ryan Andrew**

Father Andrew, who has been a teacher and chaplain at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, is going to be parochial vicar at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny.

Father Andrew was ordained in 2018 by Bishop Richard Pates.

## **Father Guthrie Dolan**

Father Dolan, who has served St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines as associate pastor, will be going to clinical chaplaincy formation.

Father Dolan was ordained in 2011 by Bishop Richard Pates. He has served at both rural and urban parishes including: St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines, St. Joseph in Earling, and St. Peter in Defiance.

## **Father James Downey**

Father Downey, who has served as parochial vicar at two

Ankeny parishes - Our Lady's Immaculate Heart and St. Luke the Evangelist - will be joining the faculty at Dowling Catholic High School, West Des Moines. Father Downey was ordained in 2019 by Bishop Richard Pates.

## **Father Reed Flood**

Father Flood, who has been completing graduate studies in Rome, will become a chaplain at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines while also offering sacramental assistance at St. Boniface Parish in Waukee. Father Flood was ordained in 2021 by Bishop William Joensen.

## **Father Chris Fontanini**

Father Christopher Fontanini, who has served as pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas in Indianola, and Immaculate Conception in St. Marys, will become the pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines.

Father Fontanini was ordained in 1997 by Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S.

After ordination, he served at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines for three years. Then he began serving primarily rural parishes including: St. Patrick in Audubon; Holy Trinity in Exira; St. Mary in Guthrie Center; St. Cecilia in Panora; St. Patrick in Bayard; St. Joseph in Jamaica; St. Joseph in Earling; St. Peter in Defiance; St. Thomas Aquinas in Indianola; and Immaculate Conception in St. Marys.

He also served as chaplain at the St. Thomas More Center and chaplain at Dowling Catholic High School. In addition, Father Fontanini served as diocesan Vocations director from 2005 to 2008 and Vicar for Newly Ordained from 2010 to 2017.

## **Father James Kirby**

Father Kirby returns from a leave of absence to serve as pastor at St. Mary/Holy Cross Parish in Elkhart.

Father was ordained in 1996 by Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S. After ordination, he served at St. Theresa Church in Des Moines, then began to serve Dowling Catholic High School as campus minister. In 2008, he served St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines, and in 2009, he became pastor of St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Carlisle, where he served until 2020.

## **Father Reynaldo Hernandez Minero**

Father Hernandez Minero is leaving his assignment as Hispanic chaplain at three parishes - Christ the King, St. Anthony and Basilica of St. John in Des Moines - to return to his home Diocese of Zacatecoluca in El Salvador, effective July 1.

Father was ordained in El Salvador in 2009 by Bishop Elias Samuel Bolanos, and served the Hispanic community in the Des Moines metropolitan area. After ordination, he served Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines until 2015. Since then, he has been serving Christ the King, St. Anthony and the Basilica of St. John as chaplain to the Hispanic parishioners.

## **Father Emmanuel Offiong**

Father Offiong, from the Archdiocese of Calabar, Nigeria, will serve the Des Moines metropolitan area's hospital chaplaincy program effective immediately.

Father Offiong was ordained in Nigeria in 2003 by Archbishop Brian Usanga. When he arrived in Des Moines in 2021, he began serving as chaplain at UnityPoint Hospital in Des Moines.

## **Father Sylvester Omon Okoh**

Father Okoh is moving from administrator at St. Patrick Parish in Neola and St. Columbanus in Weston to pastor of St. Clare Parish in Clarinda; Sacred Heart Parish in Bedford; and St. Joseph Parish in Villisca.

Father Okoh, who is originally from Nigeria, was ordained in 2008 by Bishop Joseph Edra Ukpo. He came to the Diocese of Des Moines in 2020 and began serving CHI Health - Mercy. In 2020, he was named administrator of St. Patrick Parish in Neola and St. Columbanus Parish in Weston.

## **Father Augustin Clement Owusu**

Father Owusu is moving from administrator of three Shelby County parishes - St. Joseph in Earling; St. Peter in Defiance; and St. Michael in Harlan - plus canonical administrator of Shelby County Catholic School to pastor of St. Michael Parish in Harlan and canonical administrator of Shelby County Catholic School.

Father Owusu, originally from Ghana, was ordained in 2011. In 2019, he came to the Diocese of Des Moines as chaplain of St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs. In 2020, he began serving the Shelby County parishes and school where he is today.

## **Father Joseph Pins**

Father Pins is moving from pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines to pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines.

After his 2006 ordination to priesthood, Father Pins began serving at St. Francis of Assisi Parish as parochial vicar for two years. In 2008, he became pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Creston and St. Edward Parish in

Afton. After four years, he was named diocesan Vocations director and chaplain of the St. Thomas More Center in Panora.

Pins served in this role for five years. In 2014, he also temporarily served as administrator of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola and Immaculate Conception Parish in St. Marys.

In 2017, he was named pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines.

## **Father Chris Reising**

Father Reising is moving from pastor of three parishes - St. Bernard Parish in Osceola; St. Patrick in Grand River; and St. Joseph in Mt. Ayr - to pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines.

After his 2006 ordination, Father Reising served Queen of Apostles and Holy Family Parishes in Council Bluffs plus Our Lady of Carter Lake in Carter Lake (now all three are Corpus Christi Parish) for one year.

In 2007, Father Reising went to Mexico to learn the Spanish language. When he returned in 2008, he began serving Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines first as parochial vicar, administrator and pastor. Eight years later, he became pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Perry, where he served for three years.

In 2019, he became pastor of his current parishes in Osceola, Grand River and Mt. Ayr.

## **Father Tomson Thomas**

Father Thomas is moving from providing sacramental assistance at Our Lady of Americas Parish in Des Moines and Christ the King Parish in Des Moines to administrator of three parishes: St. Bernard in Osceola; St. Patrick in Grand River; and St. Joseph in Mt. Ayr.

Father Thomas is originally from India, where he was ordained in 2013 by Bishop Joseph Karikkassery.

He arrived in the Diocese of Des Moines last month



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Continued on page 9

# Four priests retire after lifetime of service

## Monsignor used media to share Good News

Monsignor Frank Chiodo is retiring after having devoted his life to pastoral service in both rural and urban parishes; to evangelization through books and CDs; and to preserving history and expressions of faith.

Monsignor Chiodo attended Dowling High School, Immaculate Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, and St. Thomas Theological Seminary in Denver.

He was ordained in 1976 by Bishop Maurice Dingman, served Christ the King Parish in Des Moines for a year, then served on the faculty of St. Albert Catholic School for a year.

In 1980, he began five years of team ministry serving parishes to the south while based out of S. Brendan Parish in Leon, then Sacred Heart Parish in Chariton.

In 1985, Monsignor began a 16-year stretch of service to the Basilica of St. John Parish in Des Moines. During his years there, the church, designed in a Romanesque Revival style, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1987) and was elevated to a Minor Basilica (1989).

In 2001, he served St. Thomas More Church in Omaha, and returned to Des Moines in 2005 to serve Holy Trinity Parish.

In 2007, he moved to his home parish of St. Anthony,

which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2021. Monsignor wanted to preserve the history of the Italian immigrants and, more recently, Hispanic immigrants who built and served St. Anthony Parish. He pushed to have a history book on St. Anthony Parish printed.

"I am personally proud of the important significance of the parish to the city of Des Moines, the Diocese of Des Moines, and the entire nation," he said at the time the parish was added to the historic registry.

Monsignor Chiodo used contemporary media to bring the Good News out into the public square. He authored three books, had a radio program on Iowa Catholic Radio which was telecast weekly on a local cable channel, and produced a series of CDs featuring a variety of homilies and reflections.

He was also known for celebrating the Extraordinary Form of the Catholic Mass (also known as the traditional Latin Mass or Tridentine Mass).

In 1990, he was named a Prelate of Honor with the title of monsignor by St. John Paul II.



**Monsignor Frank Chiodo**

## Father McHenry grateful for years of ministry

Father Ray McHenry worked for his family business for 20 years before answering his vocation call to the priesthood.

Now, he's preparing to retire.

He attended Dowling High School, and earned a bachelor's and master's degrees from Creighton University. He earned his master's in divinity from Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, and was ordained by Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S. in 2000.

He began his ministry at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, in West Des Moines, where he served for three years. He also served Queen of Apostles Parish and Holy Family Parish, both in Council Bluffs, and Our Lady of Carter Lake in Carter Lake (those three are now Corpus Christi Parish).

He served St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola for seven years, Immaculate Conception Parish in St. Mary's for three years, and then returned to St. Francis, where he has been serving since 2013.

Since returning to the parish, he has taken seven groups of parishioners and others to see the outreach of Blessman International in South Africa.

Father McHenry contributed to the ongoing growth in faith among diocesan priests by serving as the director of Continuing Education for Priests in the Diocese of Des Moines. While

serving in that role, he also was the vice president of the National Organization for the Continuing Education for Roman Catholic Clergy.

"I am grateful for my call to priesthood and that I was able to begin my studies and service later in life," said Father McHenry. "I have many fond memories of these last 22 years and I thank all the many wonderful people I have met over the years. As I have always said during Easter Season,

I encourage you to boldly proclaim: 'Jesus Christ is risen!'"

A farewell and retirement celebration will be Sunday, July 10 at St. Francis Church with an open house reception from 1-4 p.m. and a short program at 3 p.m.



## Father McLaughlin served both rural, urban parishes

Father Mike McLaughlin's pastoral care has been experienced in rural parishes, city parishes and in hospitals throughout the Des Moines metro area.

He attended Martensdale-St Mary's Community High School, Iowa State University, Loras College and St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee before being ordained by Bishop Maurice Dingman in 1982.

Father McLaughlin, who is originally from St. Patrick Parish at Irish Settlement, was a seminarian and present when St. John Paul II visited this rural church community in 1979.

After ordination, he served at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines for three years, then joined team ministry in the Leon region, where he served from 1985-1988. He served St. Mary Parish in Portsmouth for five years, then served St. Mary Parish in Shenandoah and St. Mary Parish in Hamburg for three years.

Father McLaughlin served Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, and Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, St. Mary Parish in Guthrie Center, St. Cecilia Parish in Panora, and served as the chaplain at the St. Thomas More Center in Panora.

He also served St. John Parish in Greenfield, and St. Patrick Parish in Massena.

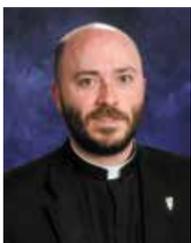
In 2011, he began 10 years of service to the non-Catholic hospitals within the Des Moines metropolitan area, a ministry from which he's retiring.



**Father Eze Umunnakwe**



**Father Adam Westphal**



**Father Andrew Windschitl**



**Deacon Dennis Lovell**



**Deacon Michael Carney**

Continued from page 8

### Father Eze Venantius Umunnakwe

Holy Spirit Father Umunnakwe is moving from pastor of three parishes in the southern part of the Des Moines Diocese - St. Clare in Clarinda; Sacred Heart in Bedford; and St. Joseph Parish in Villisca - to pastor of Holy Trinity Parish of Southeast Warren County in Lacona, and Immaculate Conception in St. Marys.

Father Umunnakwe, originally from Nigeria, was ordained in 1987 by Bishop Ephraim Silas Obot. He came to the Diocese of Des Moines in 2016 and began serving as administrator his current three parishes in Clarinda, Bedford and Villisca.

### Father Adam Westphal

Father Westphal is moving from pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Creston and St. Edward Parish in Afton to pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola and chaplain at Simpson College.

Father Westphal was or-

daind in 2013 by Bishop Richard Pates. After ordination, he served St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines for two years, and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines for one year.

He spent a year studying Canon law and, when he returned, he served St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny. In 2019, he began serving Holy Spirit Parish in Creston and St. Edward Parish in Afton.

### Father Andrew Windschitl

Father Windschitl is moving from St. Mary/Holy Cross Parish in Elkhart to Shelby County where he will become pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Earling and St. Peter Parish in Defiance.

Father Windschitl was ordained in 2015 by Bishop Richard Pates. He served St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines for one year and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines for one year. In 2018, he was named chaplain for the Polk County Jail and Polk County Juvenile Detention Center. He was also named pastor of St. Mary/Holy Cross Parish in

Elkhart.

### Deacon Dennis Lovell

Deacon Lovell, while remaining Director of Parish Life at Holy Family Parish in Mondamin, is also appointed Director of Parish Life at St. Anne Parish in Logan.

In this role, Deacon Lovell will be responsible for coordinating the business dimensions of the parish such as overseeing schedules, directing the Finance and Parish Councils and any other activity that is required for the smooth functioning of the parish.

### Deacon Michael Carney

Deacon Carney was appointed Director of Parish Life for St. Patrick Parish in Missouri Valley.

In this role, Deacon Carney will be responsible for coordinating the business dimensions of the parish such as overseeing schedules, directing the Finance and Parish Councils and any other activity that is required for the smooth functioning of the parish.

## Priest at home serving rural parishes

Father Dean Nimerichter was born in Omaha, but grew up on a farm in northern Missouri.

Although he was baptized Catholic shortly after his birth, he never attended a Mass until he was 26 years old. He took instructions under Father Donald Daleke at St. Brendan Church in Leon. Three years later, he entered the seminary.

He attended Mercer High School, and then helped his family on the farm before going to Trenton Junior College. He then went to Loras College, Cardinal Stretch College in Milwaukee and Sacred Heart Seminary in Hales Corners, Wisconsin.

He was ordained a priest by Bishop William Bullock in 1992.

Father Nimerichter's many years of service have centered on serving God's people mostly in rural areas of the Diocese of Des Moines.

After ordination, he served for a year at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, then moved to St. Patrick Parish in Missouri Valley. In 1995, he began seven years of service to the people of St. John Parish in Greenfield and St. Patrick Parish in Massena.

He also served St. Mark Parish in Orient from 1995 until 1999. When the parish closed, he walked the journey of grief with parishioners.

He served St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs for a year before going to Our Lady of Grace Parish in Griswold and St. Timothy Parish in Reno/Cumberland, where he served for six years until 2010.

Father Nimerichter experienced life as a hermit for a year in 2010, then returned to pastoral care for the parishioners of Holy Trinity of Southeast Warren County, where he has served since 2011, and from which he retires.

Congratulatory cards can be sent to Father Nimerichter, c/o Communications Office, Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309.



# Scouts reconized with religious awards for their work over the last two years



On April 10, the Diocese of Des Moines and the Catholic Committee on Scouting recognized 54 scouts who earned Catholic religious awards in the last two years. Young men and women spent time outside of regular scout meetings to grow in their faith as Catholics. This growth is recognized in a variety of awards directed toward certain age groups and interests. Some awards are completed in a family setting while others are completed in small groups of their scouting peers. This last year, COVID-19 limited the number of

scouts who pursued such awards, but we expect scouts will return in force to grow in their faith this next year.

The Girl Scouts can earn the 'I live my Faith' award and 'The Spirit Alive' award, while the Scouts can earn the Light of Christ, the Parvuli Dei, the Ad Altare Dei and the Pope Pius XII awards. Scouts who are interested in earning the Catholic religious awards should contact Deacon Kurt Heinrich at [kheinrich@dowlingcatholic.org](mailto:kheinrich@dowlingcatholic.org) for more information.

## Education awards draw parents, teachers, students

More than one-hundred parents, students and teachers from St. Albert Catholic Schools joined members of Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court St. Anthony #330 in Council Bluffs for their annual Education Contest Awards Dinner on March 28.

The student winners in attendance presented their creations in Essay, Poetry, Photography, Art and Computer Art, in three grade level divisions.

They also received certificates and gifts that were purchased in Italy and blessed by Father Chris Barak, who himself is a 1977 graduate of St. Albert Catholic Schools.

The emcee for the event was Jen Brown, from Spirit Catholic Radio, KVSS, 107.2FM.

The court gave Brown a \$100 donation for her Catholic Spirit Radio station.

The court presented a \$400 scholarship to Jonathan Quigley, director of Development at St. Albert, for the advancement of eighth graders entering their Catholic high school years. This year's C.D.A. Education Contest theme was;



Mariann Hilderbrand, Jonathon Quigley, and Jen Brown at the education award ceremony.

"With God All Things are Possible."

## St. Albert student honored for leadership

The Council Bluffs Region of the Des Moines Diocesan and National Council of Catholic Women awarded Ava Hughes, of St. Albert Catholic School, the John and Nancy Kilbride Science Scholarship, an honor for supporting, empowering and educating women in spirituality, leadership and service according to Gospel values.



Even being active and lettering in sports and along with working through the year and during her summer vacations this nominee has kept up with her school work.

Hughes is an officer of the National Honor Society. She helped put on blood drives with the American Red Cross twice annually. As student council member she organized many pep-rallies, homecoming and snow ball dances.

With her involvement in publications and manager for the past two years she created a middle and high school calendar to sell for profits to lower the cost of yearbook.

Her attitude and sportsmanship earned her The Nike Snow Valley Basketball Camp Spirit Award out of over 300 students.

Hughes plans to pursue a career in the science/healthcare field.

## The power of one

# Each person can change the world



On April 2, faith-filled women from across the Des Moines Diocese gathered in Atlantic at the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women conference to learn more about the "Power of One" or the importance of being the light for each person we meet.

Maureen Hoffmann of Walnut, in the far northwest part of the Diocese, began the morning program emphasizing each individual's ability to change the world for the better.

As an Iowa Teacher of the Year in the early 2000s, Hoffmann spent five weeks in Ukraine, mentoring teachers. She formed lasting relationships with several teachers and students and because of these ties has a special empathy for the citizens of Ukraine and ask for prayers and support for them.

Bishop William Joensen celebrated Mass along with Father Trevor Chicoine, pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic, Deacon Mike Carney, of Missouri Valley, and 120 women.

Bishop Joensen presented plaques to nine women honored for many hours of service and prayer for their communities. They are: Alice Buman of St. Michael Parish in Harlan; Jan Behrendsen of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs, honored post humously; Paula Fiebelkorn of Lady of Holy Rosary in Glenwood; Arlene Lindhorst of Corpus Christi/Our Lady of Carter Lake; Carol Smith of Our Lady of Grace in Griswold; Linda Pfenning of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs; Jann Reing of St. Mary Parish in Panama; Mary Jo Robinson of St. Peter and Paul in Atlantic; and Sherry Waddell of St. Mary Parish in Anita.

Janette Howe of St. Paul, Minnesota and founder of the Seven Sisters Apostolate, spoke about her mission to encourage prayer for priests.

## CARING ABOUT YOUR LOSS AND SHARING IN YOUR FAITH

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

*O blessed Joseph who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, obtain for me, I beseech you, the grace of a happy death. In that hour of dread and anguish, assist me by your presence, and protect me by your power against the enemies of your salvation. Into your sacred hands, living and dying, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.*

Amen

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

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# Sister Norma Pimentel accepts peace award

DAVENPORT, IOWA (CNS) -- Sister Norma Pimentel visualized the tear-streaked, weary faces of people she serves at the border during her acceptance speech for the Pacem in Terris Peace and Freedom Award April 21 in Davenport.

Davenport Bishop Thomas R. Zinkula presented the award at St. Ambrose University on behalf of the interfaith Pacem in Terris Coalition to Sister Norma, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley and a member of the Missionaries of Jesus.

Sister Norma is the 50th

recipient of the award, created by the Davenport Catholic Interracial Council and inspired by Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical, "Pacem in Terris" (Peace on Earth), which called all people to secure peace among the nations.

"The coalition recognizes your vision and commitment to providing direct humanitarian aid to immigrants at our southern border," Bishop Zinkula said.

"Your leadership to promote respect for the dignity of immigrants instructs and influences neighbors near and far, including in the halls of power. Sister Norma, you truly embody the

words of Pope John XXIII as 'a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven' to your brothers and sisters around the world," he added.

When she accepted the award, Sister Norma said: "By recognizing me with the Pacem in Terris award, you are honoring the hundreds of thousands of the most fragile and vulnerable and suffering human beings I have encountered at the border of south Texas. It is their lives, their pain and suffering that become visible to the world by honoring me."



CNS photo/Anne Marie Amacher, The Catholic Messenger  
Bishop Thomas R. Zinkula of Davenport presents the Pacem in Terris Peace and Freedom Award to Sister Norma Pimentel, director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, at St. Ambrose University in Davenport April 21..

## St. Albert Catholic shines with return of in-person benefit



Father Chuck Kottas, St. Albert Catholic School President Anne Rohling and Freddie Falcon Award winner Lisa Rosloniec.

After two years as a virtual event, St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs made a triumphant in-person return for its 41st Annual Benefit Auction on April 23.

The event, held on its Gleason Avenue campus, was titled "All That Jazz" and raised \$276,499.23 for the school, thanks to the generosity of its community. The families of the 2nd grade class – the Class of 2032 – served as chairs of the auction.

"Our 41st Annual Benefit Auction was a resounding success!" said St. Albert Catholic President Anne Rohling. "It was wonderful to be back live and in person at the school. People who had not seen the newly renovated gym and gym lobby area were in awe. The new sound system, which had been installed that week, was phenomenal."

Director of Alumni and Special Events Carrie Ashley said, "I am overwhelmed with gratitude for our deeply rooted community that came together to preserve the tradition of this auction, and to ensure the gift of Catholic education in Council Bluffs will continue to be top tier."

The coveted Freddie Falcon Award went to longtime volunteer Lisa Rosloniec. The award goes to those who have selflessly shared their gifts with Saint Albert Catholic, and in doing so, furthered its mission. Rosloniec runs Saint Albert's Spirit Store and also works diligently behind the scenes in many areas of auction preparation.



Empower Individuals | Strengthen Families



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Contact: Emily Klisares at [volunteer@catholiccharitiesdm.org](mailto:volunteer@catholiccharitiesdm.org)

### Donate Funds

- Donate online at [catholiccharitiesdm.org](https://catholiccharitiesdm.org) and designate Refugee Resettlement
- Mail to: Catholic Charities, Attn: Deb Powers, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309

Contact: Deb Powers at [dpowers@catholiccharitiesdm.org](mailto:dpowers@catholiccharitiesdm.org)

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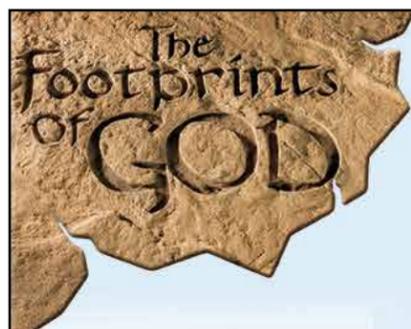
3 College Ave Des Moines, IA 50311

### Purchase Goods

- Purchase items from our wish list on Amazon Smile.

**Thank you to all of our volunteers and donors who helped us over the last six months! You made the difference in so many lives!**

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NOVEMBER 11 - 20, 2023



# One more door

## Guest Column

By Paul Milone

It is a Saturday night at 1130 p.m. I find myself in a precarious, yet very comfortable position in life.

I am at a SWAT briefing for a no-knock search warrant on a homicide suspect who just killed another man over nothing really.

And at the briefing, I get the assignment of “Ram One.” I’ll be the guy standing in front of a door, with a 60-pound ram, because my job is breaking down the door to a suspected killer’s house.

This is nothing new, as I have been part of this SWAT team for well over 16 years at this point. And I am the “ram guy” about 9.5 times out of 10. I have breached over 1,000 doors by now.

As the briefing continues, I am surrounded by 12 of my best friends. Soon, pictures of the homicide suspect and his

house are being passed around. The team is being briefed by the homicide lieutenant and our SWAT team leader.

We are given the details of the homicide, expectations of weapons, dogs, security cameras, barricaded doors, and family members. We take the information in like we are planning to go out to lunch. No real fear.

We listen, but being as this is a “normal day,” we also have sidebar conversations about our own little tasks in the bigger picture of the operation. It is simply what we do.

With the briefing complete, we gather our gear, then huddle up for a quick

team prayer before we set off into the dark of the night.

Yeah, a team prayer. We ask God to watch over us while we “do his work,” while going after the bad guys.

The prayer is something I instituted several years back as a way to alleviate any nerves about what we are going to face. It made a difference in the demeanor of the guys that was evident by all who witnessed what we did.

We ride in the van to the residence and disembark. I ram the door and we locate the suspect on the couch of the front room, gun on the couch with him. Successful mission. Nobody got hurt.

This is a true story, and one of many almost exactly like it. Between gang, narcotics & SWAT warrants, I have served about 2,300 search warrants in my career

and never really had any fear.

In fact, the reason for this reflection is this: I quite often relate this story or a similar one to people when they seem apprehensive to open a new chapter in their life.

When it’s time for them to make a change and “go through that next door” a lot of people can be hesitant.

They simply don’t know what is on the other side.

I would quite often tell them to trust that God has a plan, and to simply move forward.

*Paul Milone is a police officer, a confirmation class teacher, and a member of Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood.*

# The Eucharist – Wisdom of Catechists

The Old Testament introduces readers to a mystical divine figure known as Wisdom (*Sophia* in Greek). Sophia is remarkable. She was begotten by God, coming forth from the very being of God before creation (Prov 8:22; Sir24:3). Wisdom was with God during all of creation (Prov 8:27-30). She is the perfect image of God; the spotless mirror of God’s power (Wis 7:25-26). Sophia indwells human souls and thereby creates friends of God and prophets (Wis 7:27). She can do anything and understands everything (Wisdom 7:27; 8:28). God loves those who love her (Wis 7:28). She is the one who gives eternal life (Wis 8:17). Wisdom would come to dwell on the Earth (Sir 24:8-12). She is the one who feeds all those who come to her (Prov 9:1-5). In fact, her very being is food and drink for believers (Sir 24:19-21).

Does Wisdom sound like someone we would like to know? The author of the Gospel of John presents Jesus as Old Testament Wisdom incarnate. The identifi-

**Food for the Journey**



By Greg Samorajski

cation of Jesus with Wisdom is an excellent example of St. Augustine’s understanding that the New Testament lies hidden in the Old Testament and that the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus was in the beginning with God (John 1:1) and was his only begotten Son (John 1:14). When Wisdom was made flesh as Jesus at the incarnation, he made our invisible God known (John 1:18). The Son is the one who gives those who believe in him eternal life (John 3:16). As Sirach reveals about Wisdom, the evangelist reveals that Jesus feeds his people with his very own body and blood and that this food is what leads to eternal life (John

4:14; 6:32-61). These early Biblical writings first express our understanding that the Eucharist is life itself – the source and summit of our Catholic faith and the wisdom of catechists and of all believers.

Some years ago a young man, a Baptist, met a lovely Catholic young lady. As a Baptist, the young man had a great love for Jesus and for the Bible. At an early age, he heard the salvation story and came to believe in Jesus as his savior. Yet, something was missing for him. Despite what he confessed to believe; he could never gain the sense that Jesus was in his life – that he was a friend of God. The young lady had similar struggles. Though then a faithful Catholic, she had visited Protestant churches several times. She returned to the Catholic Church because, only there, could she receive the Eucharist, the Wisdom of God. The Real Presence of the Eucharist was missing in other churches. As their relationship progressed, the young man began to attend Catholic Church with his

beloved. He experienced the Eucharist and began to understand that this is how Jesus, Wisdom incarnate, becomes present and indwells believers. Over time, he joined the Church through the RCIA program, and later became an RCIA team leader in his parish in Alaska. It was the Eucharist, the food of Wisdom that drew him to full communion. You might have guessed that the young man is me, and that the young lady is my wife, Lindy.

Over the years of facilitating RCIA programs I continue to observe that it is the Eucharist, the food of Wisdom, which draws people to the faith. That is why catechists are so keen to introduce seekers to the food of Wisdom.

*Greg Samorajski is a recent graduate of the University of Dallas earning a master’s degree in theological studies. He is a new Iowa resident and now a regular at the Basilica of St. John. His day job is as an executive for the State of Iowa.*

# Neutralizing Negativity

**Let’s Get Psyched**



By Deacon Randy Kiel

our bodies, and damage our relationships. It can thwart careers and sabotage marriage and friendship. It can also distort our views of God and his love for us. It has a way to even make a person believe lies such as “I’m not loveable.”

Two of the more common negative self-talk patterns are limited thinking and perfectionism. Limited thinking is telling yourself that you can’t do something over and over so many times that you eventually come to believe that you can’t do it. Perfectionism is believing that good isn’t good enough because it isn’t great and great isn’t great enough because it isn’t perfect.

Eventually, all efforts reveal that perfection is not personally attainable for the self. Perfectionism devolves into a deep sense of chronic failure.

We can try to pretend this negative voice away, pray it away, push it away all we want but it will find a place to hide and rear its ugly head once again.

Then, we realize that it is here to stay. This is not a hopeless matter for any of us, so let’s look at what we can do, not only to stop it from growing, but actually reduce its strength.

## Catch your critic in the act.

Notice when you say things to yourself that you wouldn’t say to a good friend. Capture that voice. Give it a face. Throw it in the washer and hang it out to dry.

Seriously!

Since the thoughts are all coming from the imagination, let’s counter it with the imagination. Create an alternative image and use it as a new foundational mental format to begin breaking these negative emotional habits.

## Our feelings are always real, but they are not always based on reality.

Give yourself the chance to question the honesty of the internal message.

Objectively ask yourself, “Would my loved ones say this about me?” “Would God speak to me this way?” “Would I talk like this to anyone else?”

## Change your negativity into neutrality.

When a person engages in negative self-talk over a long period of time,

patterns develop that are quite hard to stop, therefore, neutralize the negativity.

Change the intensity of your inner language. For example, “I can’t stand this” becomes, “This is challenging.” “I hate...” becomes, “I don’t like...” and “I’m not ...” becomes “but I am...” When your self-talk uses more gentle language, much of its negative power is muted as well.

## Bring the darkness to the light.

To keep negative self-talk as a secret increases its power. Exposing it to someone, even simply by writing in a journal or addressing it in personal prayer, dispels its size and strength.

This is hopeful for all of us.

This internal negative talk is not honest; it is always a distortion! We need the source of truth to speak to our minds. We need God’s Truth.

“Lord, consume my mind, dispel the distortions, and lead me daily in your truth.”

And to you my readers, please know this, that I, as your deacon, affirm you all as loveable!

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

The month of May has been declared as the official national month for mental health awareness. Therefore, some might ask, “What’s that have to do with me? I’m not mentally ill.”

Well, maybe not - and I did say “maybe” - but we all can benefit from an increase in our personal mental health awareness because we all have mental health.

Playfully, I think that if we were to assess our own inner thoughts and negative self-talk, we just might deserve to have handcuffs slapped on our wrists and thrown in the old slammer.

We all have that little, mean, negative, self-harming critical inner voice incessantly nagging somewhere deep in the back of our minds. That negative voice tries to point out every perceived personal flaw and tries to turn every mistake into a life-catastrophe. It over compliments others as seemingly perfect, saying, “If only I could be like that person” and it can incite a fury of jealousy against the world. While one person could think, “I’m never good enough” another might think, “If people knew who I really was they would...”

Negative self-talk comes in many forms. It creates internal stress, which can easily flow to our loved ones. If we are not careful with this internal talk, it can even affect our minds, alter our moods, injure

# Digital detox: How to guard mind

It was time. Time to get away, to unplug, to finally write that novel. Time to prove he could resist the barrage of texts and tweets, news and notifications in order to focus his attention on a worthy endeavor. So the journalist Johann Hari booked a little room by the beach in Provincetown, on the tip of Cape Cod, and made plans to go offline for three months.

He left his electronic devices at a friend's, printed a map of his destination since he would no longer be able to use phone navigation and boarded a ferry. He felt a twinge of panic, but it vanished when he arrived and gazed into the ocean.

"I felt then a sudden certainty – you only get these feelings a few times in a lifetime – that I had done absolutely the right thing," Johann wrote.

He strolled along the beach and through the streets, wandering into a pub where a group was gathered around a piano singing showtunes.

They ended, fittingly, with the Aladdin song "A Whole New World."

It took a couple weeks to re-orient, for his mind to stop composing witty tweets and imagining their warm reception. Johann felt his "receptors" slowly open.

## Twentysomething

By Christina Capecchi



Then the words pored out of him. In three months, he wrote 92,000 words of his novel. He also finished "War and Peace," which he read for hours-long stretches on the beach.

"It came back!" he realized. "My brain came back!"

Johann's digital detox compelled him to dive into neuroscience, interviewing experts on attention and flow. He learned about the value of meandering, of play and of natural sleep rhythms. He compiled his findings into a new book called "Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention – and How to Think Deeply Again."

It is a cultural indictment and a call to action. And for Catholics who believe in the interconnection of body, mind and soul, the book is a spiritual summons.

When I think about these three

dimensions of self, one appears sorely neglected. Discussion of physical health and spiritual wellbeing – both mightily important – far outweighs the question of our mental health. Do we guard our minds? Do we understand the way screens are thwarting our ability to think, to contribute, to function?

We touch our phones on average 2,617 times a day – reaching around little ones on our lap, ignoring the people across from us at the dining room table to scroll pictures of other people's kids and dinner plates.

What does this mean for Catholics?

If we believe our mind is a gift from God, we honor him by guarding it. The Catholic Church should take the lead. Our teachers, our guidance counselors, our youth ministers and our priests must shine a light on mental health. They should provide guidelines for healthier habits and then make real changes: assigning less homework, rescheduling school days to allow for more unstructured outdoor play, restructuring programs to allow for earlier bedtimes, reminding teens how to interact face-to-face, urging us all to turn off our

phones.

When I ask Catholic school teachers how much sleep their teenaged students get, they tell me it's bad.

"Can you assign less homework?"

I ask.

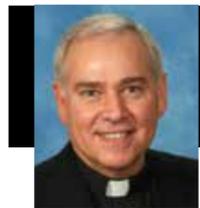
"It's not that simple," they say.

But we must make a leap, adjusting our screentime and the structure of our days to establish more natural rhythms.

Workplaces that make fundamental shifts, such as implementing a four-day work week, reap huge benefits. Their employees are more rested, more connected to their families and more productive.

I don't have all the answers. I'm as afflicted as the next person. But I know there is a better way. I bet you do too. We can start by asking the right questions, swapping strategies and holding each other accountable. The stakes are high.

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



## I've Been Wondering...

Father John Ludwig

(These questions are from the class of Dan Nieland at Sacred Heart School in West Des Moines.)

*Q. What is the most important thing in the Bible?* - Sam Scigliano

A. I suppose there could be a number of answers to your question. Jesus talks about the two great commandments – loving God above all things, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. In St. John's gospel (3:16), we find the words: "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish

but have everlasting life." Those are both pretty important.

*Q. When and why did people start praying and reading the Bible?* - Mel Lickteig

A. For a long time, many people didn't read or write. Even today, there are parts of the world where not everyone can read or write. The Bible stories began not as printed pages but stories that were passed along by teachers – Jesus being one of them. Today, we are lucky enough to have printed copies of the scriptures. From the middle of the fifteenth century, because of the printing press, more and more people

could read the scriptures for themselves.

*Q. Are God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit the same, or are those all different things?* - Avery Coppola

A. The mystery of God is something that we can never fully explain. In the Christian tradition we have come to know God as a Trinity of Persons, but one God. For us, God the Father sent Jesus his Son, and Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit. The reality of God is so awesome that we can't find adequate words or images to explain.

*Q. How old was Mary when she was taken*

*into assumption?* - Annika Halaczkiwicz

A. Short answer: we don't know. If Jesus was in his mid-thirties when he was crucified and raised from the dead, Mary must have been at least fifty years old. But it probably doesn't matter how old she was.

*Father John Ludwig is a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. Do you have a question for him? Send it to communications@dmdiocese.org or mail it to The Catholic Mirror, Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.*

# Fear of missing out

Father Ron Rolheiser



It's hard for a child to have to go to bed in the middle of an evening when the rest of the family is still celebrating. Nobody wants to go to bed while everyone else is still up. No one wants to miss out on life.

Remember how as a child, tired and unable to keep your eyes open, you still struggled against anyone who would try to put you to bed. Exhausted or not, you didn't want to miss anything. You didn't want to leave and go to sleep while so much life was going on.

We never really outgrow that. That resistance is congenital and still haunts us on our deathbeds.

One of our more painful anxieties is triggered by a sense that we are forever missing out on something. This is also one of our major fears about dying. For most people, the heaviness and darkness of dying come not so much from a fear of what they might meet in the next life, judgment and punishment, but from a fear of annihilation. Moreover, the fear here is not so much that their personal identity will be

snuffed out (though that is a real fear) but rather that they will be taken away from all the life of which they have been part. The sadness lies in the having to let go, in knowing that life will now go on without us, of being taken off to bed while the party continues. And, this is deep inside us, so deep, that we find it difficult to imagine how the world can even go on without us.

However, this is not a sign that there is something wrong with us, some neurosis that needs fixing or some moral or religious issue that needs attention. It's the human condition, pure and simple, and God is the architect of that. In short, we're built to be part of a fabric, not single threads content in their isolation.

I was 23 years old when I watched my dad die in a hospital room.

He was still young, 62 years old, and ideally should have had a number of years still ahead of him. But, he was dying, he knew it, and despite a faith that gave him some comfort, was deeply sad about it.

What he struggled with in his dying was not with some fear of the afterlife or some amends he still needed to make in this life. None of that. There was no unfinished business with God, nor religious and moral issues still to mend. Nor were there unhealthy fears of the afterlife. His only unfinished business had to do with this

life, and what he would now miss out on in terms of (figuratively) being put to bed early while the party was still going on.

In addition, for him, the party was in full swing. His adult children were just beginning to establish their lives and give him grandchildren, and the younger half of his family were actively preparing to enter into their adult lives. He wasn't going to be around to see how all of this turned out and he wasn't going to be around to see most of his grandchildren. More important still, he had a wife, a soulmate, whom he would be leaving. It wasn't a good evening to be sent to bed early.

Beyond all this, he still had his own siblings, neighbors, friends, a parish, civic involvements, sports teams, and countless other life-giving connections, and he was aware, not without huge heartache, that these were all about to end, at least on this side of eternity.

Why shouldn't he have been sad? Indeed, why shouldn't any of us be sad whenever we are facing a death of any kind, when we are being put to bed while the rest of life is still going on?

We are constitutively communitarian. As God himself said when he created the human family, it is not good for anyone to be alone. We are meant to be part of a family and a community, part of the

fabric of life, and a fabric is made up of multiple threads. Thus, it's understandably saddening whenever our single, fragile, lonely thread is being pulled away from the rest of the fabric. No wonder little children don't want to be put to bed while everyone else is still carrying on with the evening.

Moreover, this isn't just true for the sadness we experience when we face our deaths. The same dynamic is operative whenever we undergo the various mini-deaths that beset us as we age, lose our health, retire, get fired from jobs, lose people we love, lose marriages, are geographically dislocated, or in any other way are pushed out of the mainstream of life towards the margins.

So, it can be helpful to know that nothing is wrong here. Dying is hard. Letting go is hard. Being pushed aside is hard. Disappearing from life is particularly hard. That's why little children don't like being put to bed.

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website [www.rolheiser.com](http://www.rolheiser.com). Now on Facebook [www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser](http://www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser)*

# ¿Demonizando, Deshumanizando o Divinizando?

Continued from page 2

Jackson Women's Health Organization (al momento de esta columna, solamente ha circulado la versión filtrada que indica que habrá una opinión mayoritaria que revertirá *Roe v. Wade*; ya veremos si se mantiene firme la posición de la mayoría). Las convulsiones culturales que han reaccionado contra la versión filtrada presagian un verano feo, largo, y ardiente en nuestro país – particularmente si se revierte *Roe* – que hará que el caos nacional que causaron la muerte de George Floyd hace dos años y las manifestaciones en protesta de la Guerra de Vietnam hace más de medio siglo se vean modestos en comparación a lo que viene. Algunos proponentes en favor del aborto ya han dicho que no se detendrán ante nada – incluyendo la intimidación en oficinas de jueces y organizaciones provida, la interrupción de servicios de culto religioso, la profanación de la Eucaristía, y otros actos violentos de intimidación y blasfemia – para tratar de hacer que aquellos quienes sostienen el derecho fundamental a la vida de cada persona humana desde la concepción hasta

la muerte natural se acobarden y corran para salvar sus vidas.

Los verdaderos campeones de la prosperidad y libertad de las mujeres no son aquellos que argumentan a favor de la habilidad de destruir la vida naciente en el vientre. Como los primeros cristianos en los Hechos de los Apóstoles, Dios nos ha dado un encargo y una misión en este momento central de la historia de nuestra nación – en la historia de la salvación. Estamos llamados a ser imparables en nuestro testimonio de la verdad de que todo y cada humano es creado por Dios para ser una persona única y de inestimable valor y dignidad, y que Jesús murió y resucitó para que podamos vivir incluso ahora la “vida abundante” que él desea comunicarnos de su Padre en el Espíritu.

Debemos seguir haciendo las labores que expresan nuestra fe profundamente establecida, nuestro amor por los niños de todas las edades y apoyar a las madres que enfrentan todo tipo de presiones hostiles y que les acosan en el proceso de tomar decisiones. Retamos a los hombres a que “sean hombres de verdad” como padres y que se compro-

metan ellos mismo a nutrir, a estar presentes y a no abandonar a las madres de sus hijos. Debemos acompañar a todas las personas durante el caminar de la vida, incluyendo las primeras etapas por medio de centros de embarazos de crisis tales como Inner Vision en Des Moines y Gabriel's Corner en Council Bluffs, Mary's Helping Hands (todos estos con el apoyo de las campañas de becerones de nuestros Caballeros de Colón y otras formas de ayuda, incluyendo una muy querida y cercana a mi corazón: la rodada local de Biking for Babies el sábado 25 de junio, saliendo de la Parroquia de St. Luke's en Ankeny). Patrocinamos el Refugio Familiar de Emergencia y Despensa de Alimentos de Caridades Católicas en Des Moines, el Refugio de Violencia Doméstica y Asalto Sexual en Council Bluffs, el amplio rango de servicios de consejería para niños que ofrecen nuestras escuelas, así como consejería y terapia en persona y por telecomunicación a personas de todas las edades. Movilizamos recursos para Pulse Life Advocates y nos volvemos proponentes activos con innumerables organizaciones que no son completamente católicas,

pero en las cuales hay personas de buena fe que toman parte en solidaridad con todos los defensores de la dignidad humana.

Debemos ser impávidos para dejar a un lado la necesidad de recibir aprobación de los semidioses de la cultura popular – los eruditos, las celebridades y, sí, muchos líderes religiosos o de los políticos que incluso pueden atreverse a declarar su identidad católica como careta a su desviación de los principios más básicos de biología del desarrollo, más aún de la inquebrantable enseñanza de nuestra fe. Desde sus primeros periodos apostólicos, la Iglesia ha sostenido la santidad de toda vida humana – ya sean inocentes o sumidos en sus lamentables y pecadoras equivocaciones de lo que significa ser humano.

Y esta es la clave: debemos “voltear la otra mejilla,” para mantenernos firmes en nuestro amor por todas las personas, incluyendo al más rotundo manifestante proaborto, sin importar que tipo de improperios, escupitajos u otras sustancias que puedan lanzarnos a la cara. Sabemos que nosotros mismos tenemos la necesidad de una conversión, de llenarnos de la gracia de Dios para poder resistir la tentación de ignorar – o peor aún, demonizar a los demás – lo cual sería la forma más segura de enmudecer nuestro testimonio y ponerlo bajo una cesta, en vez de que sea el reflejo de la luz y la verdad que se nos ha dado a saber por el razonamiento humano y que se nos ha revelado más clara y convincentemente en Cristo.

Debemos ser mansos y humildes de corazón e insaciables en nuestra sed de justicia, la fundación básica de cualquier comunidad, cualquier país, de sobrevivir bajo la autoridad de la ley, en donde los más débiles y vulnerables disfrutan un lugar privilegiado con su preeminente derecho a la vida como la condición previa a cualquier otro derecho que pudiéramos reclamar.

Ustedes deben ya saber que tengo predilección por el filósofo católico Robert Spaemann, quien nos recuerda, “los derechos humanos dependen en el hecho de que nadie tiene la autorización de definir el círculo de aquellos que los merecen y de aquellos que no los merecen. Por lo tanto,

estos derechos, a pesar de estar fundamentados en nuestra naturaleza como persona, deberán concederse sin excepción alguna a cada ser nacido de una mujer, y esto desde el primer momento de su existencia puramente natural, siendo esto innecesario para sobre imponer otros criterios cualitativos.”

Debemos amar sin límite – hasta el punto de que entreguemos nuestras vidas por el bienestar de aquellos que nos desprecian y nos tratan con desdén en la corte de la opinión pública. Oramos para que permanezca la paz civilizada como resultado de la decisión de Dobbs, pero no podemos ser tan inocentes como para pensar que podremos pasar por encima de la restauración de una democracia americana más decente en una era posterior a *Roe* sin que se pierdan aún más vidas inocentes cuando regrese a los estados la lucha por el reconocimiento y la defensa de la dignidad humana. La sangre de los mártires es la semilla de los cristianos, y el mayor testimonio sobre el camino, la verdad y la vida que es Jesús. Queremos que se salven todas las personas, y por la gracia de Dios, los amaremos hasta el final. Somos preciados y valiosos no simplemente por ser nosotros mismos, porque – como lo dice Spaemann – si ese fuera el caso, la pérdida de cualquier especie, incluso de la raza humana, no sería un crimen de escala cósmica, sino una pérdida de ellos mismos.

Pero si cada vida humana importa en el esquema principal de las cosas, es porque sobrevivimos a la muerte por el aliento del Espíritu liberados del Señor Resucitado y somos conocidos y queridos por Dios sobre quien los salmistas dicen, “Tiene un precio a los ojos del Señor la muerte de sus fieles” (Sal. 116:15). Y si Dios desea que sus preciosos hijos – cada uno de nosotros – sea divinizado – el compartir plenamente su imagen y semejanza y en la comunión de amor que es el Padre, el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo – entonces nosotros, también, no debemos desear menos. No somos ángeles, para bien o para mal – sino seres humanos, ni más, ni menos y están son precisamente buenas noticias.

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## Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas

El Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas es un empleado de Polk County Victim Services. Ella ayuda a víctimas de abuso sexual por parte del clero durante el proceso de la queja y buscando servicios de apoyo y consejería. Pueden comunicarse al 515-286-2028 o en [advocate@dmdiocese.org](mailto:advocate@dmdiocese.org).

# Leaked draft of Supreme Court opinion indicates overturn of Roe

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The Supreme Court appears set to overturn its Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion for nearly 50 years, according to a leaked initial draft of a court opinion obtained by Politico and published online the evening of May 2.

Just minutes after the leak was published, reactions were fast and furious on social media, and barricades were erected around the Supreme Court. Many people gathered at the court in protest and some, including students from The Catholic University of America, were there to pray the rosary.

The draft opinion, written by Justice Samuel Alito, said Roe “was egregiously wrong from the start” and that “Roe and Casey must be overruled.” Casey v. Planned Parenthood is the 1992 decision that affirmed Roe.

Alito’s opinion said the court’s 1973 Roe decision had exceptionally weak reasoning “and the decision has had damaging consequences. And far from bringing about a national settlement of the abortion issue, Roe and Casey have enflamed debate and deepened division,” he wrote. He also said abortion policies should be determined on the state level.

Politico’s report says Alito’s opinion is supported by Justices Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and

Amy Coney Barrett and that Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan were working on dissents. It was not clear how Chief Justice John Roberts planned to vote.

The 98-page draft, which includes a 31-page appendix of historical state abortion laws, is an opinion in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization -- a case about Mississippi’s ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy with the potential to also overturn Roe.

The fact that the opinion was leaked also caused significant reaction, because this is unprecedented in the court’s recent history, especially with such a big case.

A May 3 statement by the Supreme Court verified that the draft opinion reported on “is authentic” but that it “does not represent a decision by the Court or the final position of any member on the issues in the case.”

Roberts, in his own statement, emphasized the significance of the leaked document, which he said was a “singular and egregious breach of that trust that is an affront to the Court and the community of public servants who work here.”

He also said that if this action was “intended to undermine the integrity of our operations, it will not succeed. The work of the Court will not be affected in any way.” He said he has



CNS photo/Jay Nies, The Catholic Missourian

More than 2,500 people in Jefferson City, Mo., attend a rally in the rotunda of the Missouri State Capitol April 20 in conjunction with the Midwest March for Life.

directed the Marshal of the Court to launch an investigation into the source of the leak.

Politico acknowledged that “deliberations on controversial cases have in the past been fluid. Justices can and sometimes do change their votes as draft opinions circulate and major decisions can be subject to multiple drafts and vote-trading, sometimes until just days before a decision is unveiled.”

“The court’s holding will not be final until it is published, likely in the next two months,” it added.

But that does not stop the firestorm of speculation and discussion.

Pro-life groups praised the court’s potential decision but some also questioned the motivation behind the leak and wondered if the court was being manipulated by this action.

A May 2 tweet by Jeanne

Mancini, president of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund, said her organization would “not be providing comment on an official decision of #scotus possible leak until a decision is officially announced.”

During oral arguments in this case last December, a majority of the justices indicate that they would uphold Mississippi’s abortion ban after 15 weeks of pregnancy, which was struck down by a federal District Court in Mississippi in 2018 and upheld a year later by the New Orleans-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit.

A 15-week ban is not a “dramatic departure from viability,” Roberts said.

The point of viability -- when a fetus is said to be able to survive on its own -- was key to the discussion because the Supreme Court has consistently ruled that states cannot restrict

abortion before 24 weeks or when a fetus is said to be able to survive on its own.

## Come Holy Spirit

Bishop William Joensen joined bishops around the country in calling for a day of fasting and prayer on May 13, the Memorial of Our Lady of Fatima.

“I also encourage the people of the Diocese to pray that, through the Holy Spirit, there will be a conversion of hearts,” he said. “As Pope Francis said, ‘Prayer is what opens the door to the Holy Spirit, who inspires progress.’ (General Audience, April 14, 2021) Come, Holy Spirit, and enkindle in us the fire of love for all human life!”

# Demonizing, Dehumanizing, or Divinizing

Continued from page 2

his Father in the Spirit.

We are to keep doing the works that express our deep-seated faith, our love for children of all ages and support of mothers who face all sorts of pressures that are unfriendly and prey upon their decision-making processes. We challenge men to “man up” as fathers and commit themselves to nurture, be present, and not abandon mothers of their children. We are to accompany all persons along the continuum of life, including earlier stages via crisis pregnancy centers such as Inner Vision Healthcare in Des Moines and Gabriel’s Corner in Council Bluffs, Mary’s Helping Hands (all supported by our Knights of Columbus bottle campaigns and other forms of outreach, including one near and dear to my heart: the Biking for Babies local ride on Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, departing from St. Luke’s Parish in Ankeny). We sponsor Catholic Charities’ Emergency Family Shelter and Food Pantry in Des Moines, the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Shelter in Council Bluffs, and the wide-ranging child counseling services provided to our schools and in-person and telehealth counseling and

therapy offered to persons of all ages. We mobilize resources for the Pulse Life Advocates, and become active proponents for countless other organizations that are not overtly Catholic, but in which persons of good faith take part in solidarity with all defenders of human dignity.

We are to be fearless in laying aside all need for affirmation from the demigods of popular culture—the pundits, celebrities, and yes, many religious leaders, or from the politicians who might even lay claim to Catholic identity as cover for their departure from the most basic tenets of developmental biology, let alone from the unswerving teaching of our faith. From its earliest, apostolic period, the Church has upheld the sanctity of all human life—whether innocent, or mired in its sorry and sinful mis-taking of what it means to be human.

And this is key: we are to “turn the other cheek,” to remain steadfast in our love for all persons, including the most vehement pro-choice protestor, no matter what sort of invective, saliva or other substance is thrown in our face. We know ourselves to be in need of conversion, to cast ourselves on God’s grace in order to resist the temptation to write

off—or worse, demonize others—which would be the surest way to muzzle our witness and place it under a bushel basket, rather than reflecting the light and truth made known to us by human reason and revealed to us most clearly and compellingly in Christ.

We are to be both meek and humble of heart, and insatiable in our thirst for justice, the basic foundation for any community, any country, to exist under the rule of law, where the weakest and most vulnerable enjoy primacy of place with the preeminent right to life as a precondition for any other rights to which we might lay claim.

You know by now that I’m fond of the late Catholic philosopher Robert Spaemann, who reminds us, “Human rights depend on the fact that no one is authorized to define the circle of those who are entitled to them and those who aren’t. Hence, these rights, though rooted in our personhood, must nevertheless be granted to each being born of woman, and this from the first more moment of his purely natural existence, it being unnecessary to superimpose other qualitative criteria.”

We are to love without limit—even to the point where

we lay down our lives for the sake of those who scorn us and hold us in contempt in the court of public opinion. We pray that civic peace will prevail in the wake of the Dobbs decision, but we are not so naïve as to think that we might pass over to the restoration of a more decent post-Roe U.S. democracy without further innocent lives being lost as the struggle to recognize and defend human dignity returns to the states. The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians, and the greatest testimony to the way, truth, and life who is Jesus. We want all persons to be saved, and by God’s grace, we will love them to the end. We are precious and valuable not simply to ourselves, for—as Spaemann posits—if that were the case, the loss of any one species,

including the human race, would not be a crime on a cosmic scale but a loss only to themselves.

But if each human life matters in the ultimate scheme of things, it is because we survive death by the breath of the Risen Lord’s liberating Spirit, and are known and cherished by the God of whom the Psalmist speaks, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Ps 116:15). And because God wills that his precious children—each one of us—is to be divinized—to share fully his image and likeness and the communion of love who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—then we, too, can will no less. We are not angels, whether good or bad—but human beings, no more, no less, and that is good news indeed.

## Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese’s Victim Assistance Advocate, Sam Porter, is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps victims of abuse of minors by clergy through a complaint process and in seeking support and counseling services. He can be reached at 515-286-2024 or [Sam.Porter@polkcountyia.gov](mailto:Sam.Porter@polkcountyia.gov).

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