

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

Vol. 55, No. 6

June 17, 2022

**Passion for  
Catholic schools  
drives capital  
campaign  
co-chairs**



Catholic education has long been a big priority for Sharon and Kyle Krause and their family.

In addition to their philanthropic support, they have invested a considerable amount of their time and leadership to ensure that Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines continue to thrive.

So when Bishop William Joensen asked them to serve as General Co-Chairs for the Ignite! Campaign, it was an easy “yes.”

“All five of our children went to Catholic schools, and our daughter taught in one, so we were closely following the strategic planning process for the schools,” said Sharon. “The resulting vision for the future not only aligns with our values but will ensure that the schools in our Diocese will be able to flourish. We want future generations of kids to have the same opportunity that ours had, so this was a natural fit for us.”

As General Co-Chairs, the Krauses played a critical role in leading a successful silent phase for the Ignite! Campaign, helping to secure over \$12 million in lead gifts and providing momentum for the diocesan-wide effort currently underway.

“Starting with Kyle’s father, Bill, our family has been very involved at Holy Family School. In volunteering his time at the school, he witnessed firsthand how much the kids and their families valued the gift of an outstanding Catholic education. Without the support of the Catholic community, that opportunity would not be available. The endowment for tuition assistance established through the Ignite! Campaign is going to help many more families across our 16 diocesan Catholic schools realize that dream. With the blessings we’ve

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Following in Jesus’ footsteps

## “Let the children come to me..”



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis greets a boy during an audience with some 160 children in the San Damaso Courtyard at the Vatican June 4. Most were visually impaired youngsters and their siblings, but they also included a group of children from Ukraine. At the audience the pope said he’s still considering traveling to Ukraine but wants to make sure such a trip would not make anything worse.

## Iowa bishops share their response to leaked U.S. Supreme Court draft

*Note from the editor: As of print time, a final decision from the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health*

*Organization had not been released.*

The Iowa bishops addressed

the leaked draft opinion on the U.S. Supreme Court decision of Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health Organization in a statement released May 23 by the Iowa Catholic Conference. Here is the statement.

Guided by science and faith, Catholics are praying fervently that the U.S. Supreme Court will overturn the claim to a constitutional right to abortion in its ruling on Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization. A draft opinion leaked from the Court would seem to indicate majority support for a reversal of Roe v. Wade. This would have the effect of allowing many states to determine their own abortion policy.

But not Iowa. In 2018, a Supreme Court decision created a fundamental right to abortion in

Iowa. That’s why we advocate for the “Protect Life Amendment,” so Iowans can once again debate abortion and perhaps even pass laws protecting preborn children.

In the meantime, as we affirm the dignity and value of every human life, we welcome the possibility of saving countless unborn children as well as sparing women and families the pain of abortion.

We exhort our nation to prioritize the well-being of women, children, and families so that no woman ever feels forced to choose between her future and the life of her child.

Through its charity agencies, and the independent efforts of its members, the Cath-

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Left to right: Dubuque Archbishop Michael Jackels; Davenport Bishop Thomas Zinkula; Des Moines Bishop William Joensen; and Sioux City Bishop R. Walker Nickless.



# Feast of freedom and hope

Even if we are not formally under siege in our country, the spate of horrendous shootings in recent weeks leaves us saddened, mortified, and at risk of losing hope in our fellow human beings. Ordinary venues of life—a school, a grocery store, a hospital, and even a church practically in our own backyard, among other places—have become sites of bloodshed and brutal human sacrifice. It's no longer a matter of merely taking our freedoms for granted; wherever we go, our daily lives can seem at risk, so vulnerable do we find ourselves. And even on rare occasions, those charged to protect us and uphold the public peace seem to fail us. Shock and awe can turn into indignation and anger—this should not be! Yet sadly, how often our collective desire for justice, accountability, and heightened safety seems to devolve into reinforcing the status quo. And so we sigh as the great sucking sound of our waning hope drowns out the



By  
Bishop  
William  
Joensen

murmuring voices populating our society.

Two late monsignors of Italian heritage, Lorenzo Albacete and Luigi Giussani, refer to Dostoevsky's words in *The Brothers Karamazov* in response to possible consolations about suffering and death, which I cite at length:

I must have retribution, or I shall destroy myself. And retribution not somewhere in the infinity of space and time, but here on earth, and so that I could see it myself. I was a believer, and I want to see for myself. And if I'm dead by that time, let them resurrect me, for if it all happens without me, it

will be too unfair. Surely the reason for my suffering was not that I as well as my evil deeds and sufferings may serve as manure for some future harmony for someone else. I want to see with my own eyes the lion lie down with the lamb and the murdered man rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly finds out what it has all been for.

How astutely the novelist captures the cosmic cries lurking within our hearts, our bowels: I want to see! I want to see justice! I want to make sense of sacrifice! I want to see human beings freely make things right without a gun or a prison sentence hanging over their heads! I want to see people reaching out for help when they are hurting, and have someone there to answer them before they melt down and take others with them. I want a God who doesn't turn away in exasperation in the face of evil—whether that

of others or my own—and who doesn't wait until the human race gets its act together to make peace with the messiness of it all.

While manure may be the “smell of money” for our farmers, I want humans to stop making a stench that stems from denying each other's dignity, their right to exist on this planet. More than retribution, I want reconciliation, and barring that, I want a reason to get up another day rather than stay crawled up in a fetal position in bed. I want heaven and earth to be in closer communication, so that maybe trust will rise again, and hope will live among us.

With all these unrequited desires, there's one thing above all else that enables me to go on: the Eucharist. The Eucharist is God's decision to bend down and remain with us no matter what. The Eucharist is divine vulnerability, Jesus placing himself into our hands to do whatever we will—and we will love

ourselves more if we venture love of others, regardless of how they respond to us. Jesus lowers himself into human airspace at the appointed time, which is whenever we remember at our local Mass who he is and what he did at the Last Supper, so that we can recall who we are when we're tempted to lose it. As my brother bishops and I reflected on the Mystery of the Eucharist, “At the Last Supper, Jesus reveals himself to be the Paschal Lamb . . . whose sacrifice brings liberation from slavery to sin and who blood marks out a new people belonging to God” (n. 15).

Jesus doesn't let his body and blood be composted; he consecrates bread and wine so that we can see him and consume him and become more like him. And if I let my gaze linger on him for even a few moments, let alone an hour, I catch a glimpse of heaven, where I believe at last

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## Fiesta de la Libertad y la Esperanza

Incluso si no estamos formalmente sitiados en nuestro país, la serie de horrendos tiroteos en las últimas semanas nos deja tristes, mortificados y en riesgo de perder la esperanza en nuestros prójimos. Los lugares ordinarios de la vida —una escuela, una tienda de comestibles, un hospital e incluso una iglesia prácticamente en nuestro propio patio trasero, entre otros lugares— se han convertido en lugares de derramamiento de sangre y brutales sacrificios humanos. Ya no se trata simplemente de dar por sentadas nuestras liber-

tades; dondequiera que vayamos, nuestra vida diaria puede parecer en riesgo, tan vulnerables nos encontramos. E incluso en raras ocasiones, los encargados de protegernos y mantener la paz pública parecen fallarnos. La conmoción y el asombro pueden convertirse en indignación y enojo, ¿esto no debería ser así! Sin embargo, lamentablemente, con qué frecuencia nuestro deseo colectivo de justicia, responsabilidad y mayor seguridad parece convertirse en un refuerzo del status quo. Y así suspiramos mientras el gran sonido de succión de nuestra esperanza menguante ahoga las voces murmurantes que pueblan nuestra sociedad.

Dos monseñores fallecidos de ascendencia italiana, Lorenzo Albacete y Luigi Giussani, se refieren a las palabras de Dostoevski en *Los hermanos Karamazov* en respuesta a posibles consuelos sobre el sufrimiento y la muerte, que cito extensamente:

Debo tener retribución, o me destruiré a mí mismo. Y la retribución no en algún lugar en la infinidad del espacio y el tiempo, sino aquí en la tierra, y para que yo mismo pudiera verlo. Yo era un creyente, y quiero ver por mí mismo. Y si estoy muerto para ese momento, que me resuciten, porque si todo sucede sin mí, será demasiado injusto. Seguramente la razón de mi sufrimiento no fue que yo, así como mis malas acciones y sufrimientos, puedan servir como abono para alguna futura armonía para otra persona. Quiero ver con mis propios ojos al león yacer con el cordero y al hombre asesinado levantarse y abrazar a su asesino. Quiero estar allí cuando todos des-

cubran de repente para qué ha sido todo.

Con qué astucia capta el novelista los gritos cósmicos que acechan en nuestros corazones, en nuestras entrañas: ¡Quiero ver! ¡Quiero ver justicia! ¡Quiero darle sentido al sacrificio! ¡Quiero ver a los seres humanos hacer las cosas bien libremente sin un arma o una sentencia de prisión pendiendo sobre sus cabezas! Quiero ver a las personas pedir ayuda cuando están sufriendo, y tener a alguien allí para responderles antes de que se derrumben y se lleven a otros con ellos. Quiero un Dios que no se aleje con exasperación ante el mal, ya sea el de los demás o el mío propio, y que no espere hasta que la raza humana se recupere para hacer las paces con el desorden de todo.

Si bien el estiércol puede ser el “olor a dinero” para nuestros agricultores, quiero que los humanos dejen de producir una pestilencia que proviene de negar la dignidad de los demás, su derecho a existir en este planeta. Más que retribución, quiero reconciliación, y salvo eso, quiero una razón para levantarme otro día en lugar de quedarme en posición fetal en la cama. Quiero que el cielo y la tierra estén en comunicación más estrecha, para que tal vez la confianza resurja y la esperanza viva entre nosotros.

Con todos estos deseos no correspondidos, hay una cosa por encima de todo lo que me permite continuar: la Eucaristía. La Eucaristía es la decisión de Dios de inclinarse y permanecer con nosotros pase lo que pase. La Eucaristía es vulnerabilidad divina, Jesús poniéndose en nuestras manos para hacer lo que queramos— y nos amemos más a nosotros mismos si nos aventuramos amar a los demás, independientemente de cómo nos respondan. Jesús desciende al espacio aéreo humano en el mo-

mento señalado, que es cada vez que recordamos en nuestra Misa local quién es él y qué hizo en la Última Cena, para que podamos

recordar quiénes somos cuando tengamos la tentación de perder-

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### OFFICIAL

Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointment effective May 20, 2022.

Rev. Ross Parker, Director of the Vocations Office, Director of Seminarians, Vicar for the permanent Diaconate to Canonical Administrator of Corpus Christi Parish, Council Bluffs, while continuing to serve as Director of the Vocations Office, Director of Seminarians, Vicar for the Permanent Diaconate.

### DECREE

The civilly incorporated or secular entity in the State of Iowa, United States of America, known as “The Des Moines Region Catholic School Corporation,” having been civilly incorporated to operate within the Diocese of Des Moines in accord with the norm of its Bylaws, is hereby erected as a public juridic person in accord with the norms of canons 113 §2, 114 §§1–3, 115 §2, 116 §§1–2 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*. Moreover, pursuant to canon 117 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, I hereby approve the attached statutes as the statutes of the public juridic person now being erected. The attached statutes of the public juridic person are the Bylaws of the civilly incorporated entity known as “The Des Moines Region Catholic School Corporation,” with appropriate modifications, so as to be in accord with the norms of the canons of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* regulating the practical consequences flowing from the acquisition of public juridical personality in ecclesiastical/canon law. In particular, the attached approved statutes provide, among other things, for the proper governance of the hereby erected public juridic person and for the administration of its temporal goods pursuant to canons 94 §1 and 1279 §1.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given this 8th day of June in 2022.

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

Jason Kurth  
Chancellor

### THE CATHOLIC

## MIRROR

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The Catholic Mirror (ISSN 0896-6869) is published monthly for \$25 per year by the Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50309. Periodicals postage paid at Des Moines. POSTMASTER: Send changes to THE CATHOLIC MIRROR, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

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# Couple, moved by Holy Spirit, become foster parents

By Liam Dale  
Staff Writer

When asked what love means to them, Jeff and Mindy Schechinger's answer could be boiled down to one word: sacrifice.

Jeff and Mindy are residents of Portsmouth and attend Holy Mass at St. Mary Parish. In a short sentence, they can be described easily as people who want to love.

About a year ago in 2021, they began to pray seriously about becoming foster parents.

The decision wasn't taken lightly, but Jeff and Mindy eventually felt moved by the Holy Spirit. Jeff recalled Mindy saying, "If we can do it, then we should."

From that moment on, their minds were made up.

In a matter of months, they received and adopted their first foster placement, saying, "When we first received him, we knew we had no real qualifications to take him in, but after a little while, we knew he was in the right home."

Just shy of a year later, their house is bustling with kids of all ages.

"We've had four kids of our own, adopted another, and are in the process of adopting four more," said Mindy. "It can get a little crazy in the house with kids from four years to 16, but it always pans out."

They want to continue to love children.

"Like Mindy said, if we can, then we should," said Jeff. "Love is loving even when it's hard; you just have to keep going. And how can we expect that in our kids if we don't live it out ourselves?"

The mom and dad hope that by sharing their story, others will be inspired to do what they can, too.

"Being a foster parent is an incredible privilege, but it's certainly not for everyone," said Mindy.

A person doesn't have to become a foster parent to help families.

Supporting family shelters, volunteering to watch the kids for an hour or two, or even



Jeff and Mindy Schechinger, of St. Mary Parish in Portsmouth, felt called to grow their family through the foster care system and adoption.

dropping off a pack of juice boxes goes so far," she said.

Most importantly

though, this couple wants people to know that they are just your average Joes, doing what they can to

show their kids that they're loved and they're taking it one day at a time.

## Iowa bishops address leaked draft on Dobbs case

Continued from page 1

olic Church is supporting all women in addition to the child in the womb. We accompany women and couples who are facing unexpected or difficult pregnancies, and during the early years of parenthood, through initiatives such as Walking with Moms in Need.

The Church provides abortion healing ministries, most often called Project Rachel Ministry, so that women and men receive forgiveness,

healing, and spiritual renewal through Christ's infinite mercy.

We also encourage those of good will to contact their legislators in support of the "Iowa MOMS" bill, which will ensure that every pregnant woman in Iowa has better access to quality prenatal and postpartum care.

In all these ways and more, the Catholic Church witnesses to the sanctity of all human life, from conception to natural death, and works to

build a true culture of life in our nation. No matter how the Dobbs case turns out, we have a responsibility and opportunity to take action to support the dignity of the human person and the common good.

Please help in these efforts and pray for a favorable ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court, which will lift up the sacredness and dignity of all human life.

## Ride, raise funds for pregnancy centers

Everyone is invited to Biking for Babies early morning Mass and bike ride to raise funds and awareness for crisis pregnancy centers.

The ride – it's not a race – is intended to connect young adults with local pregnancy resource centers to raise awareness and resources for pregnant women and their families. Organizations benefiting from the rides will be Agape in Des Moines and Martha's House Maternity Home in Ames.

On Saturday, June 25, the 7 a.m. Mass begins at St. Luke the Evangelist Church in Ankeny, followed by registration, a few speakers and then the ride; a 48-mile ride (\$45) leaves at 9 a.m. and a 23-mile ride (\$25) leaves at 9:10 a.m. A 5-mile ride children and family option leaves at 9:20 a.m.

The link to register for the local ride is: <https://bikingforbabies-bloom.kindful.com/e/ankeny-local-ride>

# Congratulations, Fathers!



The newest joyful, Catholic leaders  
ordained in the Diocese of Des Moines

Rodrigo Mayorga (Saint Paul Seminary)  
Nick Smith (Saint Paul Seminary, Saint John Vianney College Seminary)  
Alex Kramer (Saint John Vianney College Seminary)

 SAINT PAUL  
SEMINARY

 SAINT JOHN VIANNEY  
COLLEGE SEMINARY



# Banners available to help parishes, schools kick off national revival

By Liam Dale  
Staff Writer

In an effort to help kick-start the U.S. bishops' Eucharistic Revival initiative, Iowa Catholic Radio Network has begun offering a new resource for local parishes, schools, and other faith-based organizations.

Beyond providing radio programming for the faithful of the Diocese and beyond, ICR has also obtained several educational panels depicting Eucharistic miracles from around the world. Based on its resounding worldwide success, The Vatican International Exhibition: *Eucharistic Miracles of the World* has proven to be a powerful tool in the effort to foster authentic devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

So what are these panels and where did they come from? These 40 panels are part of a much larger collection of 180 designed by Blessed Carlo Acutis

before his death at age 15, said Matt Willkom, ICR's executive director.

"The panels selected for ICR's display were chosen in order to represent not only the most astonishing miracles throughout history, but also to show that this is indeed a worldwide phenomenon that continues to this present day," Willkom said, adding that, "the ultimate goal is to communicate God's love for each and every one of us, that he would humble himself and make himself so vulnerable...so approachable."

The display, which ICR lends out free of charge, has already been hosted at several parishes within the Diocese since the project's launch this past December. In fact, Christ the King in Des Moines has used them on two separate occasions. Nationwide speaker Steve Ray recently gave a talk at Holy Spirit Parish in Creston using the display as a backdrop, saying at one point, "You are what you eat."

The station recommends that parishes with schools attached invite the students to do research projects on one or several of the panels.

"This sort of exposure at such a young age to the reality of Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist is absolutely priceless for the future of the Church," said Willkom. "A parish mission featuring a speaker (like the one in Creston) would also be invaluable for drawing people more deeply into the Mass."

The staff at ICR understand that putting together an event like this can have its challenges. That's why the station is more than willing to help a parish, school, or faith-based organization locate an appropriate speaker, as well as assist with setup and breakdown of the panels. For more information about the display and how to reserve it, visit [www.Iowacatholicradio.com](http://www.Iowacatholicradio.com).



Students at St. Malachy Catholic School in Creston reflect on the miracles explained in banners provided by Iowa Catholic Radio.

## Students reflect on miracles attributed to the Eucharist

St. Malachy Catholic School in Creston, along with Holy Spirit Church in Creston and St. Edward Church in Afton, hosted the Eucharistic Miracles of the World banners shared by Iowa Catholic Radio Network.

Seventh and eighth grade students spent some time during religion class reading about the different miracles depicted in the banners on display throughout the school building.

Students reflected on why they thought God would produce the miracles.

"Some of their reflections are so deep," said Principal Jennifer Simmons. "We've really enjoyed having this display in our building."

The banners, which can easily be folded up for transportation, show a variety of Eucharistic miracles researched by Blessed Carlos Acutis.

The following are some reflections from students at St. Malachy Catholic School in Creston after having spent some time with the Eucharistic banners.

Kurtis: "Carlos can be an inspiration to all the graphic designers and filmmakers to create and spread the word of God to the whole world."

Adyson: "I think God is trying to make himself known, and trying to show us that he will protect us throughout our lives."

Adyson: "I think this miracle shows that God is seen through the most pure."

Jayson: On the miracle of Avignon, "Jesus is trying to show us his miracles and powers he has. Jesus wants is to protect his host and when we can't he will. Jesus is leading us to him."

Ayden: "Carlos did so much and walked so close to God in his short time. We all can be close with God and help the church thrive. We should contribute what we have with our talents just like Carlos."

Ayden: On the miracle of Sokolka, "The Eucharist is really transformed into Jesus' body and the wine is his blood. If the bread can be turned into heart muscle, what other signs does anyone need?"

Ayden: On the miracle of Avignon, "God shows us his strength and shows what his grace can do. If he can push the waters for the Eucharist, he can do it for us."

To get more information on the Eucharistic banners or to reserve a time to borrow them for a parish, school or organization's event, go to [Iowacatholicradio.com](http://Iowacatholicradio.com).

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### St. Jude's Novena

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us; St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us; St. Jude, help of the hopeless, pray for us.

Say this prayer 9 times a day, by the 8th day your prayers will be answered. It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised.  
Thank you, St. Jude.



we are  
maroons



Thank you for making a difference in the lives of students at Dowling Catholic High School. With generous support of the We Are Maroons Annual Appeal, we are able to fulfill our mission of preparing Leaders for Life, Centered on Christ.

"Thank you so much for helping me grow in so many ways at Dowling Catholic. I can't wait to take these experiences with me throughout my life." – Maddie M. '23



# Three men to be ordained priests

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

## Deacon Alex Kramer Holy Trinity Parish, Des Moines

Deacon Alex Kramer was just a young boy when the Catholic Church made its first impact on his life.

While watching television at five or six years old, a documentary about St. John Paul II's visit to Iowa came on the television.

"Who is the guy in white?" Deacon Kramer asked his parents before deciding that he too wanted to be the pope someday.

This interest in the Holy Father evolved.

"The Lord was calling me to be a priest," Deacon Kramer said.

Serving at the altar during Mass in his formative years was a "blessing."

"To be close to the holy mystery – close to the sacrifice of the Mass and serving at the altar kindled in me a desire to be a priest," he continued.

Attending Dowling Catholic High School also offered many blessings, including the opportunity to participate in events that strengthened and nurtured his faith journey, as well as friendships with other young men who wanted to be priests.

These last eight years of seminary have given Deacon Kramer the opportunity to grow deeper in his relationship with God while learning about the priesthood. The world has changed a lot though – even in these past few years.

He looks forward to joining his brothers and sisters in Christ in bringing the light of God to today's secular world.

"One of the things I look forward to doing most is celebrating Mass, bringing people the Eucharist and being a Christ-like witness to the world," he added.

"I am so thankful to be a priest and serve the people of God here," Deacon Kramer said. "Please pray for me and my brother seminarians."



## Deacon Rodrigo Mayorga Landeros St. Bernard Parish, Osceola

Deacon Rodrigo Mayorga Landeros credits his mother's devotion to the Catholic faith as the strongest influence on his faith today.

Born and raised in Mexico, his mother taught Deacon Mayorga Landeros and his siblings how to pray. She also made sure they made it to catechism classes every Saturday and Mass every Sunday.

She regularly brought the kids to confession, standing with them in line, awaiting her own turn to "dispel any fears around the sacrament and just plainly and serenely go with us and teach us that it's a beautiful sacrament."

As a child, Deacon Mayorga Landeros enjoyed celebrating "Mass" in his room with his siblings.

"I would even lead small pilgrimages around our house with my brother," Deacon Mayorga Landeros said. "I remember clearly and vividly making a wooden cross with my brother and I would process around the house. I think that's when the idea of becoming a priest first showed up."

During his high school years in Osceola, Deacon Mayorga Landeros had a restless heart before returning to a deeper prayer life.

"I remember building a relationship with Mary," he continued. "This was a beautiful relationship where she lead me to her son again and to the idea of priesthood."

During his senior year of high school Deacon Mayorga Landeros made a few seminary visits, fully expecting to encounter "young but boring seminarians stuck in the books and in prayer."

"I went to St. John Vianney seminary back in 2014, and one of the nights we were there the seminarians organized a game of dodgeball. But the following morning they had a holy hour," Deacon Mayorga Landeros said.

He saw the balance seminary offered: prayer, study, fraternity and games. He was sold – seminary was for him. Deacon Mayorga Landeros is excited to serve the people of the Diocese of Des Moines.



## Deacon Nick Smith St. Augustin Parish, Des Moines

Deacon Nick Smith of St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines said his vocation story began with his family.

"I would say my vocation is the result of a lot of small seeds of faith being planted throughout my life – starting, of course, in my family – in the home where my siblings and I were taught the Catholic faith," he said.

The Smith family attended Mass every Sunday and learned from a very young age to see the world through the lens of faith.

"One of those seeds that was planted early on was to be able to serve at the altar in the fifth grade..." Deacon Smith continued. "That was a real eye-opener for me. I was able to participate in the liturgy and Mass more actively – even at a young age."

"I think at a certain level I knew that what was happening at the altar during Mass was really, really important," he said. "That the words the priest said to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus were life-changing. It was a miracle."

This was one of many times when the seed was planted that maybe the priesthood was something God was calling Deacon Smith to consider.

"But it wasn't until later in high school that I really started to think seriously about priesthood..." he said. "I continued to engage in opportunities to engage with my faith, including serving at Mass, going to adoration, praying a little more often."

As a senior in high school, he realized that the next step had to be seminary.

"I moved on to St. John Vianney College seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, where I really began to dive into a life of prayer – studying philosophy, being around other young men who were also serious about their faith and serious about following the will of God," he continued. "And it really was in the seminary where I think my vocation was truly confirmed and where I began to really love the priesthood as a life given over to God completely."



Watch Deacons Kramer, Landeros and Smith share their vocation stories at [dmdiocese.org](http://dmdiocese.org). They will be ordained to the priesthood on June 24 at 5 p.m. Their ordination will be livestreamed at [Facebook.com/dmdiocese](https://www.facebook.com/dmdiocese).

## Congratulations to Deacon Jason Lee

Deacon Jason Lee was ordained by Bishop William Joensen to the transitional diaconate on June 10 at his home parish, St. Boniface in Waukee. This is Deacon Lee's last major step before his ordination to the priesthood next year. Deacon Lee will be serving St. Michael Parish in Harlan this summer.



Photo by Kelly Mescher Collins



Photo by Mike Nass



## Around the Diocese

### June 25. Saturday Mental Health First Aid

URBANDALE – St. Pius X Parish is hosting in-person trainings for Mental Health First Aid from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Learn to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. Program includes a 7.5-hour highly interactive training in a group in-person setting. Some virtual pre-work is required. There is no cost due to generous Amerigroup funding through Catholic Charities. To register go to <https://go.iastate.edu/HGEYQX> or call St. Pius X at 515-276-2059. For questions about the topic, contact Dr. David Brown at [dnbrown@iastate.edu](mailto:dnbrown@iastate.edu).

### NAMI Ride 4 Recovery

COUNCIL BLUFFS -- NAMI Southwest Iowa's Ride 4 Resilience and Recovery is its annual signature fundraiser for free programs in southwest Iowa all year. Catholic Charities, in partnership with Amerigroup, are proud sponsors of the event. There is a 9.6-mile Family Route and a 44.4-mile Challenge Route from Wabash Trace. Registrations taken online until June 22. Walk-in registrations are welcome at the event! For registration and event details, go to: <https://namisouthwest-iowa.com/ride-4-resilience-and-recovery>

### Biking for Babies

ANKENY – Join prolife advocates and bike riders for one of three bike rides that raises funds and awareness for crisis pregnancy centers. Biking for Babies is offering a 48-mile ride, a 23-mile ride, and a 5-mile children and family ride at staggered times that follow a 7 a.m. Mass at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish.

The link to register for the local ride is: [bikingforbabies-bloom.kindful.com/e/ankeny-local-ride](https://bikingforbabies-bloom.kindful.com/e/ankeny-local-ride)

### St. Timothy Parish Reunion

RENO, IA – St. Timothy Parish will host a reunion at the church hall and grounds, 69488 Wichita Road, Cumberland, IA. A social hour will begin at 4 p.m. with barbecue supper at 5:30. 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.

### July 9 Saturday

#### St. Patrick Celebration

IMOGENE – St. Patrick Parish will celebrate "Bless Our Heritage" jubilee, a celebration that was postponed in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Festivities run from 9 a.m. to sundown on the church grounds culminating with fireworks at the ballfield. Historical displays, a self-guided cemetery walk, carnival, catered dinner, variety show and more are on the agenda. Bishop William Joensen will celebrate Mass at 4 p.m. followed by the dedication of the Heritage Garden, a shamrock-shaped courtyard made of more than 800 engraved bricks and pavers bordered by a walking rosary.

### July 21-Sept. 8 Thursdays

#### Sacred Land: Food and Farming

This JustFaith Ministries program explores our connection with the land and our responsibility for it. Together, small groups learn how food and farming practices affect the climate crisis, marginalized communities, and their own health and

spiritual wellbeing. The group meets online Thursdays from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Cost is \$80. <https://csm.coursestorm.com/course/sacred-land-food-and-farming>

### Oct. 1 Saturday

#### Memorial Mass for the Unborn

DES MOINES – St. Anthony Parish Respect Life Ministry is hosting a diocesan wide Memorial Mass for the Unborn at 10 a.m. at St. Anthony's Grotto right next door to the church. If we have inclement weather, it will take place in the Church.

### Other

#### Bishop Drumm Guild Garage Sale

This garage sale will be held each Thursday morning May 5 - September 1 on their campus located at 5837 Winwood Dr. in Johnston. Hours are 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 accepted. Household goods, clothing and furniture welcome.

#### Cathedral Holy Hours

All are welcome to join Bishop 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](https://facebook.com/dmdiocese).

## Hibernians celebrate priest's anniversary



The Ancient Order of Hibernians, Polk County Chapter, celebrated their chaplain, Father Frank Palmer, who marked his 60th anniversary of priestly ordination. The Hibernians presented Father Palmer with gift cards. Pictured in the first row, left to right are: Shannon Maher, Tom Sacco, Jim Watts, Father Palmer, and Jeff Ibbotson. In the second row left to right are: John Langin, Denny O'Grady, Bob Quinn, Mike Fleming, Jim Duffy, and Bill Henry.

## The Catholic Mirror subscription appeal

Help us continue to provide news and inspiring stories of faith to you each month by taking a subscription for *The Catholic Mirror*.

Each year, all registered and active parishioners within the Diocese of Des Moines are asked to support *The Catholic Mirror* monthly newspaper with a \$25 voluntary subscription.

Funds raised help offset the cost of producing and distributing *The Catholic Mirror* – a cost of about \$140,000 annually.

Subscriptions can be purchased by check payable to *The Catholic Mirror* (601 Grand Ave. Des Moines, IA 50309) or online [dmdiocese.org/giving/special-collection-giving](https://dmdiocese.org/giving/special-collection-giving).

Your support is instrumental in bringing important news and inspirational stories of faith to central and southwest Iowa and beyond. Thank you!

## 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.



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# On the move: Five longtime leaders retire

## Finance director's steadfast, calm nature guided Diocese during challenging times

Dan Kinsella and Paul Carlson have spoken countless times late in the evenings and over the weekend on urgent diocesan finance matters.

It's that dedication, integrity and poise during tough times that exemplified what a gift Carlson has been to the Diocese as he prepares to retire after 20-plus years.

Carlson, of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny, has addressed overall accounting and financial reporting and analysis functions to ensure that diocesan assets and liabilities are properly safeguarded. His service extended to 80 parishes and 16 schools within the Diocese.

He addressed challeng-

ing situations and supported parishes in their moments of glory said Kinsella, who serves as the chair of the diocesan Finance Council.

As an example, Carlson assisted Kinsella's parish of St. Patrick in Imogene through a grant process and helped the parish with other grant successes.

"Not only is Paul a strategic thinker, he took the time to understand the details and was not beyond simply taking notes



Paul Carlson

and managing relationships," he said.

Carlson guided the Diocese through the pandemic, one of the most trying of times.

Bishop William Joensen praised Carlson's steadfast leadership.

"Paul has been a trustworthy, knowledgeable and vigilant steward of our resources," he said. "During the start of the pandemic and when I was a relatively new bishop, Paul steadily guided us through a variety of creative options to help the Diocese navigate one of the most trying times in recent memory."

Kinsella added: "His demeanor is always the same. He is an absolute rock and pillar to

lean on regardless of what is happening around him."

Diocesan Stewardship Director Maureen Kenney said Carlson has been collaborative.

"Paul has an unassuming nature about him that fosters the leadership and participation within the large diocesan network he's served so faithfully. You could count on his decision making to be consultative, responsive and transparent – a precedent that will serve the Diocese for generation to come."

Carlson has helped other Catholic organizations such as Catholic Charities with their finances.

"Throughout the years, Paul has provided wise counsel

and guidance in achieving financial sustainability in support of Catholic Charities. We will miss Paul's expertise and, in particular his friendship and collegiality to all he has mentored and helped," said Catholic Charities Executive Director Barbara Decker.

Carlson is grateful for his years at the Diocese.

"The years flew by and I feel honored to have worked with so many talented, dedicated, wonderful people throughout the Church of southwest Iowa. I look forward to the next opportunity God provides me," he said.

Robert Larson, of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines, has been named the new Finance director.

## 'It's all for the kids' motivated woman to raise millions for Catholic education

Jeanne Wells Thill's passion and persistence has resulted in raising more than \$42 million used to help families give their children a Catholic education in the Diocese of Des Moines.

After 14 years as the executive director of the Catholic Tuition Organization, Thill is retiring.

The CTO was established in 2006 with the passage of the Educational Opportunities Act in Iowa and Thill became its first leader. The legislation provides

75% Iowa tax credits to donors who contribute to the organization. The funds are then given to families that need financial assistance to educate their children in Catholic schools



Photo by Chelsea Dellaca  
Jeanne Wells Thill

in the Diocese of Des Moines.

Thill raises \$4.5 million annually for more than 2,000 students in the 16 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines.

"I would credit a lot of the success of the program to her," said board chair Sergio Loch. "I don't think we could have done so many years of meeting our goal if we didn't have such a dynamic person as Jeanne."

"We are so blessed to have someone with her background, experience and passion," said

board member Jim Hagenbucher. "She really has done a wonderful job over the 14 years that she developed the CTO program. We have a great donor network. She coordinated with the school administrators. She encouraged families to apply for school awards. She did all this with passion for the kids and their future."

Catholic education has become financially attainable for families of all backgrounds as a result of Thill's vision and leadership, said board member Joe

Narmi.

"In the bigger picture, through her determination, more children will graduate from Catholic schools and become leaders that contribute positively to their church, families, and communities," he said.

Mark Reed, a longtime fundraiser for Catholic and other nonprofit entities, will become the new executive director of the CTO on June 30.

## Sister retires after serving as a hub for homebound, RCIA, Stephen Ministry

Mercy Sister Susan Widdel has a gift for being able to talk to just about anybody about just about anything.

And if the topic is the Chicago Cubs, all the better. She can talk baseball with the best of them.

Sister Susan is retiring from Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish after serving 22 of her 55 years in ministry in the Ankeny church.

She has provided pastoral outreach to the homebound and grieving, guided folks on their faith journey in the RCIA program, and provided counseling training with the founding of Stephen Ministry at the parish.

"People who were homebound loved to have her in their home. She could chat about anything," said former pastor Monsignor

Steve Orr. "The men particularly loved having her come during baseball season. She's a fanatic Cubs person. She could talk baseball with someone, compare scores and talk about the players."

Richard Jacavino was a volunteer on the parish's RCIA team with Sister Susan.

"It was an honor and privilege to work with her," he said. She would often meet with people outside of the RCIA meeting times if that worked better for their schedule, all for the purpose



Sister Susan Widdel

of bringing people closer to God. She became a friend to many.

"I owe her a huge debt of gratitude," Jacavino said. "She walked with me at some times when I didn't know where I was going. As they say, she loved me until I could love myself."

Friend Rosemary Hutchinson said it's not unusual to be talking to Sister Susan and have many people passing by stop to say hello to her.

"She's very easy to get to know and get to be friends with," said Hutchinson. "I think a lot of people connected with her."

In addition to homebound ministry and RCIA, Sister Susan was in on the ground floor of establishing Stephen Ministry, a ministry of the laity who accompany and pray with people

who want to talk with someone.

The ministry needed someone who connects those who seek someone to speak with to someone who is trained to listen in a confidential way and pray with them, said Deacon Steve Udelhofen. That organizer for many years was Sister Susan.

"She could marry up a person with the appropriate caregiver," he said.

Sister Susan, the oldest of 12 children grew up in Waterloo. She entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1967 in Cedar Rapids, making her perpetual profession in 1975.

All but three years of her ministry has been in Iowa, when she served for three years as a pastoral minister in Crystal Lake, Illinois.

In Iowa, Sister Susan

taught in Cedar Rapids, Ames, Evansdale and Waterloo. In 1981, she became a pastoral minister, serving in Independence and Cedar Falls. In the Diocese of Des Moines, she served at Christ the King Parish from 1990 to 1997 and has been at OLIH since 2000.

"My time at OLIH has been a great experience," she said. "The parishioners were very supportive in my ministry. I enjoyed journeying with the people in RCIA and watching them grow in their faith. It was a pleasure taking communion to the homebound and listening to their stories. I'm looking forward to continuing these relationships after I retire."

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish will celebrate Sister Susan's retirement after Masses on June 18 and 19.

## Deacon couple retires after 20 years of growing seeds of diaconate vocation

For about 20 years, Deacon Ron and Tammy Myers have led the formation of candidates considering a vocation to the permanent diaconate.

They spent two weekends every month for 11 months of the year in Missouri or Iowa with the latest class of candidates, then a week of summer school, time on retreats, completing paperwork and all that goes into accompanying couples on the formation journey.

With 10 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and the realization that it was time to re-focus on family, they're stepping down.

Deacon Myers "had been just about every Protestant faith" when he met Tammy at their work. She invited him to go to Sacred Heart Catholic Church with her, she served as his sponsor, he became Catholic and they married.

"I just had this feeling that I was at home," he said when they sat near the tabernacle in church for the first time. "I was here. I belonged. I didn't understand why, it was so serene, quiet and relaxed. I was at peace."

After some time, Deacon Myers felt called to be a permanent deacon and was ordained in 2001.



Tammy and Deacon Ron Myers

About that time, there were new guidelines from the U.S. bishops on diaconate formation and Bishop Joseph Charon, C.P.P.S. was having the Des Moines Diocese's program reviewed. Deacon Myers served on the committee, saw the job

description for the coordinator of the revised program, applied and got the job.

He and Tammy set up a core team of deacon couples that provide the support for those in formation.

"It's the lifeblood of the formation," he said.

As co-leaders of the diaconate formation process, Deacon Myers said he and Tammy were inspired "to see couples who thought they were totally immersed and in touch with their faith develop and flower into a whole new, broader, stronger relationship with God and each other and with those around them."

"It helped me grow, too," he said. "It was good for our relationship, also."

It's been a gift to accompany couples through the formation process, Tammy said.

Each member of the team brings different experiences to the table, which can help those experiencing formation.

"I think every woman and every man has such an individual journey in the formation process," she said. It was a blessing to see "how you're able to let go and let God work, how you can trust and take that larger leap of faith."



## Regional schools planning update

Progress continues on the collaborative planning initiative for the new Des Moines Regional Catholic Schools.

The regional board of directors will be comprised of lay members and clergy who will exercise authority in the following areas: compensation planning, tuition rates, tuition assistance management, business operations, communications, governance and policy.

Dr. Dan Ryan, president of the regional schools system, announced the following lay members. The names of the clergy will be announced as they are appointed by Bishop William Joensen.

- Steve Lacy, regional board chair, former CEO and executive chairman of Meredith

- Corp.
- Mary Coffin, former executive vice president with Wells Fargo
- Miquel Hadsall, vice president of Finance at Beal Derkenne Construction
- Brian Johnson, senior vice president for Casey's General Stores
- Mark Schaul, former president and chief financial officer of SNI Companies
- Luis Valdes, former president and CEO and current chairman of Principal International

In the area of business operations, it has been determined that St. Joseph Catholic School will be the first to pilot the regional business model, which will include a common chart of

accounts and joint budgeting process.

Staff members from St. Joseph have been meeting with the regional business operations committee to begin planning for the upcoming fiscal year. Additional schools may also be engaged during the pilot period. Budgets and school operations will remain the same for the 2022-2023 school year.

Another important step underway is development of the agreement between the region and each parish. This agreement will reflect that parishes will retain ownership of each school building and will address key categories including educational materials, technology, maintenance and grounds, utilities, insurance and others.

## Conference for African priests, women religious to be in Des Moines

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Twice postponed because of the pandemic, a gathering of African Catholic priests and religious women will be held in Des Moines July 27-30.

The African Conference of Catholic Clergy and Religious in the United States, will bring together missionary priests and religious women from across the country for two purposes.

"This is an opportunity to meet our own African brothers and sisters, priests and religious," said St. Paul Father Alphonsus Enelichi, president of ACCCRUS and a missionary priest serving the Great Falls-Billings Diocese in Montana. "We can meet each other, interact with each other and it gives us a sense of belonging as Africans, as one."

The convention is also an opportunity for attendees to hear speakers and learn.

"We can engage in conversations on the topics that are relevant to cultural institutions in America," said Father Enelichi. "By listening to topical presentations, it prepares us to be more effective and more competent in our various ministries in our various apostolates. Also, we get more information on how to respond to the social challenges, cultural challenges, ecclesial challenges that we experience since we all come from a different place."

The priests and religious women coming to the conference have a variety of backgrounds. Father Enelichi, for instance, is a missionary priest from Nigeria who served eight years during civil war in Liberia before going to Canada, then serving in Texas prior to going to Montana.

Within the Diocese of Des Moines, there are African

priests from Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya.

"As African clergymen and women religious, our individual presence and services sometimes fall through the cracks unrecognized within the multicultural and multiracial dynamics of American society," said Father Enelichi. "Our annual convention gives us not only a sense of belonging but provides us with the opportunity for our collective presence as African missionaries to be visibly recognized and our voice to resonate more audibly within American socio-cultural and ecclesial environment."

Theology professor Daniel McGuire, Ph.D., of the University of Providence in Great Falls Montana, will provide the keynote centered on the theme "Called to be Witnesses of Christ in a Wounded World."

ACCCRUS was established in 2004 by the U.S. bishops to provide spiritual and social support to African priests and religious working in the United States. The group is grateful to Bishop William Joensen and the Diocese of Des Moines for hosting the convention.

The public is invited to celebrate the concluding Mass on Friday, July 29 at 5 p.m. at St. Ambrose Cathedral. Bishop Joensen will be the celebrant.

"This convention, by God's grace, could be very remarkable and a memorable event," said Father Enelichi. "With that in mind, I would like to say on behalf of ACCCRUS our profound gratitude to Bishop Joensen for keeping the doors open to receive us back to the diocese after two years and for his generous sponsorship and all of the resources. He has met us at every level to assure the success of his convention."

### St. Michael's Boys Group enjoys summer outing



The St. Michael's Boys Group had their summer outing in June. The group included 16 boys. The group participated in morning Eucharistic adoration and benediction at St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines, Mass at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, followed by the rosary at the Planned Parenthood on Army Post Road. The rest of the day was spent at Adventureland. This is a diocesan-wide group for boys grades 3-8 and led by high schoolers. The leaders are Dowling Catholic graduates, two of whom are seminarians.

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# Iowa Catholic Conference offers a roundup on legislative session

By Tom Chapman  
Contributing Writer

The following is an update on issues of concern to the Catholic Church in Iowa that arose in the Iowa legislature this past session.

## MOMS bill

The Iowa MOMS bill (More Options for Maternal Support) was approved, meaning pro-life agencies will receive \$500,000 to support pregnant women and new moms with baby essentials and counseling. Unfortunately, however, funding was not included for the expansion of coverage for mothers who receive Medicaid from two months post-partum to a year.

## Education

The Students First/Education Savings Accounts proposal from Gov. Kim Reynolds, Senate File 2369, did not get brought up for a vote in the House before adjournment. We don't know how all of the representatives would have voted on the issue. Voters

can ask their legislators and candidates what they think.

State support for nonpublic school students received status quo funding for next year, including \$852,000 for textbooks, about \$9 million for transportation services and \$1 million for concurrent enrollment (college classes).

## Gambling

The House and Senate approved a compromise gambling expansion bill, House File 2497. The good news is that it was amended to take out the legalization of gambling on e-sports (video games).

The bill legalizes "cashless gambling," which makes it possible to transfer money from a bank account to a phone app to the machine, rather than walking to visit an ATM. The app will be required to show the "800-BETS-OFF" number for problem gam-



Tom Chapman

blers. The bill also places a moratorium on licensing new casinos until June 30, 2024.

## Pro-life Action

Gov. Reynolds signed Senate File 577 which provides the opportunity to receive a birth certificate following a miscarriage and hopefully will assist in a family's healing.

The governor also signed House File 2372, which clarifies a loophole in Iowa law. It provides that it is a Class D felony to attempt to terminate a pregnancy without the consent of the woman.

The Senate completed work on House File 2420, which extends the time period in Iowa's Safe Haven law from 30 days to 90 days. This enables parents to drop off an infant at a safe place if the parent feels they cannot care for the child. It has been used more than 50 times since it came into effect about 20 years ago.

## Support for Children

The U.S. bishops support an expansion of the child tax credit to reduce child poverty.

Last year, more than 36 million families received a monthly payment through the expanded Child Tax Credit program. The expanded credit proved to be extremely effective at reducing child poverty, lifting 3.7 million children above the poverty line.

Unfortunately, the expansions expired at the end of the year. According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the current credit is not structured to serve the children who need it the most. The poorest children are not eligible to receive the full value of the credit because their parents don't earn enough money.

Contact members of Congress now to strengthen the Child Tax Credit, including by making it fully refundable so that the full credit is available to the lowest-income families. Go here for the action alert and more information: [votervoice.net/USCCB/Campaigns/95200/Respond](https://votervoice.net/USCCB/Campaigns/95200/Respond)

*Tom Chapman is the executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference.*

## Passion for Catholic education spurs couple to help lead capital campaign

Continued from page 1

received, it is an honor to do as much as we can to help."

This spirit of gratitude has led Sharon and Kyle to invest their considerable energy and talents into similar endeavors that align with their Catholic values. Sharon is owner of Dalla Terra Ranch, Iowa's only organically certified sheep ranch in Booneville, which recently gifted 70 acres of the ranch to establish a new non-profit called In Harmony Farm. The farm provides land access to socially disadvantaged farmers so they can build regenerative farming and business skills, scale operations to support themselves and their families, and build wealth in their underserved communities. The farmers come from all over the world where farming was once their livelihood.

"I believe the work we are doing at In Harmony Farm closely aligns with Catholic teachings," said Sharon. "When Pope John Paul II visited Iowa in 1979, he said 'You are stewards of some of the most important resources God has given to the world. Therefore, conserve the land well, so that your children's



Sharon and Kyle Krause are general co-chairs for the Ignite! Campaign.

children and generations after them will inherit an even richer land than was entrusted to you."

"There are so many parallels but, the main takeaway is that it is our responsibility to use our gifts to make things better for those who follow. We hope and pray that many will see the Ignite! Campaign in the same way."



## Job Opening: Director of Religious Education St. Mary in Grinnell, Iowa

We are seeking a full-time DRE to lead PreK-12th faith formation, organize adult Bible studies, and engage families in parish life. Benefits available. Applications will be accepted through March 31st. Job description can be found at <https://www.stmarygrinnell.com/> or by emailing [grinnellstmary@diodav.org](mailto:grinnellstmary@diodav.org)

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## Sacred Rituals for Every Day

June 25, 2022, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Schuyler, NE



Our sacred rituals help us experience each day with its special quality and to begin it in such a way that we are embraced by God's blessing. **Father Anselm Gruen, OSB, PhD**, monk, from Germany, world-renowned speaker, spiritual guide and author. His books have been translated into 35 languages; 20 Mill copies sold.

Register now at [www.StBenedictCenter.com](http://www.StBenedictCenter.com)

## Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: Personality and Prayer

July 15, 7:30 p.m. – July 17, 1 p.m.  
Schuyler, NE



We will pray with the various ways we resist Jesus' relating with us. The goal of working with the Myers-Briggs types is to understand personality preferences, career likes and dislikes, power and intimacy. **Fr. William J. Jarema, MS, MDiv, MAS**, from Colorado Springs, CO, presents workshops and retreats nationwide.

Register now at [www.StBenedictCenter.com](http://www.StBenedictCenter.com)

## Praying with Icons

July 23, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Schuyler, NE



Come, let the gaze of our loving God and the glory of icons touch you and teach you. We shall explore the work and wonder revealed in these holy images, even learning the amazing process of applying gold leaf that glistens, to reveal the light of holiness. **Margie Walker** has been a spiritual director and retreat leader for 30 years.

Register now at [www.StBenedictCenter.com](http://www.StBenedictCenter.com)

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# Graduates abound as families celebrate faith, academic success

Andrew Robey was chosen by fellow students to receive the esteemed Pax Christi award at Dowling Catholic High School's graduation. This a shortened version of the speech he shared. Read his presentation in its entirety at [dmdiocese.org](http://dmdiocese.org).

By Andrew Robey

As I was preparing this speech, thinking about this award, I came to a realization: Pax Christi is a title I will never be able to live up to.

The peace that Christ can provide us is unmatched, and any reflection of that peace you saw from me was not my own doing, but rather Jesus working through me.

I had a lot of help along the way, especially from my parents. Dad, thank you for converting to Catholicism 22 years ago, and bringing the joy of the faith into our home. Mom, thank you for taking me to daily Mass in the summers as a kid, and showing me an example of how to pray well.

Without you two I wouldn't be standing up here today.



When I was a sophomore preparing for Lent, I was thinking about what I wanted to give up. I wanted to begin taking my faith more seriously, so I wanted something that would be a real challenge, something that would impact my prayer life. So instead of giving something

up, I promised that throughout Lent that year, I would go to Eucharistic adoration for an hour once a week. I had been before with my mom, but never really made an effort to spend time in prayer there on a regular basis.

I went to St. Joseph Church (in Des Moines), to the side chapel devoted to our Lady of Sorrows, and there began adoring our Lord in the Eucharist.

It was in this small room that my life would change. It wasn't a big change that happened right away, but rather a small, gradual shift.

I had always found my faith to be important, but it felt hard to stay true to it at times. I enjoyed going to Mass, but I didn't truly understand it. As I prayed in this chapel I began to be more convicted in my faith.

This sacrament on the altar isn't just a piece of bread, in fact, it's no longer bread at all, but rather something much greater: the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord. The more I understood this, the more enthralled in it I became. I found a deep sense of peace and happiness there, something I had never felt before.

I found I had a desire to go to Mass.

I also came to a deeper understanding of the beauty of the faith. If there is anything I hope you have learned from Dowling, it's not how to analyze the theme of a book, how to balance chemistry equations, or how to find the derivative of a function, but rather the beauty and richness of our faith.

I encourage all of us next year to go to Mass. Receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Surround ourselves with people who want to be closer to Jesus.

Teachers and administration, this applies to you as well. It can be difficult to display our faith, even within the walls of Dowling Catholic. We look up to you to set the example, and you need to set an example of fervent love for the Lord.

Parents, pray for your children. Take them to Mass this summer. The most important thing a parent can do for their child is to raise them in the faith.

Class of 2022, take advantage of this summer. Devote some time every day to Jesus, and prioritize him above all else. The habits you form now can follow you for the rest of your life, so make sure they are good habits.

I want you to be happy and fulfilled. I want you to feel the joy I felt in that adoration chapel. I want you to know that the God who made you and loves you wants to spend time with you.



Father Luis Mejia congratulates an eighth grade graduate of St. Patrick Catholic School in Perry.



Above, a pre-kindergarten student celebrates graduation from Holy Family Catholic School in Des Moines.



Students from Holy Trinity of Southeast Warren County Parish are honored by fellow parishioners.



Graduating seniors at St. Mary Parish in Avoca are congratulated by Father Seth Owusu and the parish.

Below, graduation day was celebrated for eighth graders at St. Joseph Catholic School in Des Moines.



St. Albert Catholic High School senior Joe Goltl delivered this speech at the graduation for the Class of 2022.

By Joe Goltl

"And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music." – Friedrich Nietzsche

Now sadly, this quote does not refer to Lane Sundberg blowing his knee out after busting it down to Apple Bottom Jeans at prom, though his dancing was something to behold. No, this quote refers to each person in this gymnasium today, especially my graduating Class of 2022.

I'm not going to stand up here and pretend to know what happens next in our lives. I can't tell you what college is like or how being out in the world feels. I've never been. I could tell you about protein synthesis, or Chekhov's gun, or how to find the second derivative of  $(x^2-3)/(x^3-x)^2$ , please don't ask me about that last one. But really, I have no words of wisdom for your next steps forward because I have not taken those steps yet. And it's scary. I am scared. Ever since we have been little, we have been told that we are going to do incredible things! We are going to change the world! What if we don't? Millions of people don't. It's a really scary question that shrouds every step forward in fear and doubt. It makes it hard to move forward. But it's only through this fear that we find ourselves.



From the minute you entered this school, every single one of your coaches, teachers, friends and family has been helping you construct your symphony. A grandiose melody is created from every single lesson, every single experience and every single memory. From the crescendoing peaks of a Friday night spent in the student section or the anxiety of preparing for a Wiederin Science Final, to the de-crescendoing lows of a bad grade on a Mrs. Morris test or just hanging with friends after a concert or game. The good and the bad, the rough and the easy, the joys and the heartbreaks, each and every moment is a part of our individual and unique songs. Each of you present today has a song in your heart, who you truly are.

And now, Class of 2022, as the people who helped you create this tune slowly move away from the center of your life, I present you with a question. Will you let the music fade? Or, will you dance to the song that no one else can hear? Not all of us are going to do incredible things. But I promise you this: If you keep doing your thing, then incredible things will come from it. If you stay true to that song in your heart, you will find happiness. And what is more incredible than being happy and alive? We are on the precipice of our adult lives and this is our first choice.

"And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music." Please, never lose that music, Class of 2022. Never stop being incredible.



Refugee milestone:

# A lease for a new life in Iowa

By Beth Gibbins  
Contributing Writer

As of June 10, all of Catholic Charities' Afghan clients have a pathway to permanent housing.

This is a significant accomplishment to celebrate for Afghan clients and the Refugee Services team at Catholic Charities.

Housing more than 300 Afghans in central Iowa within a defined period of time was both challenging and rewarding, knowing that self-sufficiency is a primary objective for all refugee resettlement activities.

Due to scarcity of available housing in the area, as well as the number of dwellings needed for arrivals, clients and refugee staff worked together to identify the best housing arrangement for each family.

This month, housing is now a reality for all clients.

In August of 2021, many Afghans had to flee from their native country to seek refuge and re-settle in a new country. While many were already affected by trauma and loss, those individuals who were evacuated and flown to U.S. military bases for a few months also needed to resettle in a new state, seeking a new home with new customs and cultural norms.

This humanitarian evacuation was fast-paced and required diligence, commitment and mutual understanding by all.

This time-sensitive and distinctive resettlement also impacted refugee resettlement agencies across the United States.

For example, in the past few years, Catholic Charities and U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), another local resettlement agency, were resettling only a small number of refugee arrivals due to the pan-

demical and decreased refugee arrivals.

Staff at both agencies had dwindled, with Catholic Charities employing only four employees in the refugee office. Other refugee resettlement agencies had made the decision to discontinue services.

In the first two weeks of October 2021 and with six days' notice, Catholic Charities received 31 cases of Afghans, totaling 85 individuals. On average, 20 Afghan arrivals would arrive each week for the rest of the month.

With a brief reprieve in November, Afghan arrivals resumed in December 2021 through spring 2022. Compared to regular resettlement placement in a year, these numbers were a significant increase. During this same period, refugee resettlement staff numbers, including case managers, also increased to meet this growth of refugee arrivals.

The pace was unprecedented for all central Iowa resettlement agencies, along with their community partners.

Refugee resettlement means certain standards and needs are met for clients, including airport reception, housing, employment, school enrollment, medical appointments, public benefits, cultural orientation, bus training, English language classes and other services.

Agencies have 90 days of funding and resources to complete these activities.

Local partners include hotels, law enforcement, hospitals, school districts, parishes, donors, government officials, as well as volunteers.

"Arrivals from Afghanistan were incredibly different from the refugees we normally serve," said Catholic Charities Refugee Services Manager Kelyn Anker. "This was a humanitarian effort on a huge scale. I am

so grateful for our Catholic Charities team and our community partners who worked tirelessly to meet the need."

One client recently shared his experience. He worked with the U.S. military as a soldier for 12 years in Afghanistan. He arrived in February 2022 with his wife and three teenage children. They were housed in temporary housing and provided a case manager who spoke their language.

He expressed gratitude for his case manager's support and availability.

"When we called our case manager, she either responded, or sent someone else to meet our needs," he said. He commented that the pace of life is much faster in America, but indicated that his family was happy and comfortable.

They have since moved to an apartment in West Des Moines. He is working and his children are registered for school for the fall semester.

"We are honored to help the people of Afghanistan during this challenging time," said Scott

Caldwell, director of programs at Catholic Charities. "Our refugee staff and volunteers, under the leadership of Kelyn, have been responsive and taken seriously the varied and many needs of our clients. Working with our funding partners, including the USC-CB (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops), we have consistently communicated and addressed

any unique circumstances as they have been presented."

When client housing is secured, the refugee transportation staff coordinates pick-up and delivery of furnishings, including donated items. To learn how you can help the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement program, visit catholiccharitiesdm.org.

Total Afghan arrivals in the  
Des Moines metro:

• Approximately 700

Catholic Charities clients:

• 111 cases totalling  
308 individuals

From  
October  
2021 to  
present.



One of several information sessions for Afghans in Iowa regarding immigration options at the Drake Legal Clinic.

## Prayerful icon painting



An icon workshop organized by Sharon Gleich, of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines, was held May 20-22 at St. John and Paul Parish in Altoona. Master iconographer Drazen Dupor of Madison, Wisconsin guided participants through a step-by-step process of painting an icon of Jesus in the Byzantine style. Meals were donated and provided by Women In God's Service, also known as WINGS. The icons were blessed by Father Mark McGeary. Another class in the Diocese of Des Moines is planned in fall 2022 with the same instructor.

## 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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# Retired officer trusts God in retirement

This is part two of Paul Milone's reflection. The first part can be found in the May edition of *The Catholic Mirror*.

## Guest Column

By Paul Milone

Prior to being a police officer, I was a counselor of sorts.

And given the positions I attained on the police department, I have found myself being the counselor to other cops when life deals those curve balls, dangers, pain, suffering, and unknowns.

My go-to discussion was to tell them that going through the next door of life was easier than they thought. Just knock, and God shall open the door for you. Matt 7:7 (*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*)

I was confident in telling them that all of us go through dozens of doors every day: Bathroom doors, bedroom doors, main doors, garage doors, doors at work, quick shop, grocery store. Doors are everywhere. We almost never fear what is on the other side.

So why is this next door of life so

hard to open? Just knock and go through it, have no fear.

Well it all sounded good in my head and really cool when it came out of my mouth over the years. But at the time, the doors I was going through were like the one described in the first part of this reflection.

And to me, those are the easy doors. But when it came time for me to retire from the SWAT team last year, that next door I had to open was the hardest door I had come into contact with.

I felt like when I went through it, it slammed behind me and it was instantaneously and permanently locked. No going back. I also felt like it was a door to nowhere, like walking into a massive, dark, empty room.

No signs of where to go from here, no receptionist, no lights leading

the way. Just me in a dark silent room. So much for being confident in the words of Matthew 7:7

I found myself wondering if my faith was fraudulent. If I was a big talker but not a believer. Heck, I teach faith formation at my church. I attend weekly Mass. I pray daily. I give witnesses to my faith in front of large groups. I have accepted Jesus Christ as my savior.

But this door I went through kicked my butt, so to speak. And to top it off, I just went through another door, one that led to retirement. It was the final door of my career.

I wonder if my reaction will be the same so I am praying about this door. Not praying that God has chosen a good path for me, but rather praying that I can lift up my will to that of God's will. Praying that he can help me follow the path laid out before me. Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

I do know that God has always been with me. He has led me to where I am now. Just 13 years ago, he grew tired of waiting on me to come to Him, so God came to me. He took this broken down, self-absorbed, callous, impatient control freak and made me new.

I can't say that I waited patiently for him though. He came to me when I was not even looking. Now I follow him, even though I sometimes try to go back to the old Paul and be in control of everything. It is yet another learning point, that when we give our lives to Christ, it is not the end of our journey, rather it is simply the beginning.

Remember, when we fear about going through our next door, it is generally just fear of the unknown. And therefore we can overcome that fear by simply trusting in the Lord our God that He has already seen where we are going because to him, the future is already a memory.

Paul Milone is a parishioner at Holy Rosary Parish in Glenwood.

# The Eucharist – Food that transforms us

We hear them so often that they have now become either prosaic, poetry, or quotidian.

What are they?

They are the words of consecration at every Mass: *"Take this, all of you, and eat it. This is my body, which will be given up for you... Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me."*

What are we to make of these words if we give them some closer considerations?

First, it's important to know that the word "body" does not mean a part of the human being which, with other parts, form the human person.

The word "body" refers to the

## Food for the Journey

By John Huynh



totality of the human person. So in Jesus giving us his body, he is giving us his entire person from the very beginning of when he first incarnates in Mary's womb to his ascension into Heaven, everything that made up his life: joys, hardships, tears, laughter, struggles, victories, etc.

Second, "blood" in the Bible is most often understood in context of an event or experience: death. Genesis 9:4 gives us a good indication that blood is synonymous with life.

Thus, in giving us his blood, Jesus directs us towards the event and experience of his death by which we are restored to proper relationship as daughters and sons of God to himself.

But what are some practical conclusions we can draw from these words that make real the body and blood of our Lord for our consumption?

Once we receive the Eucharist we are transformed into "walking Christs," called to give our body and blood. We give our body, our whole lives, to others by giving up our time, our energy, and our treasure to those who need us. We must be mindful to give not only to those who deserve these things from us, but to give especially to those who we think least deserving of them; for Christ calls us to love even our enemies (Lk 6:27).

In imitating Christ to shed our

blood, we offer our death events to God: our physical and/or spiritual sufferings, our humiliations, our physical and/or mental illnesses; our failures in trying to live our calling to love.

We offer them in hope so that we may remind ourselves that no suffering is meaningless, and neither is God indifferent to them.

We offer them to know that our sufferings matter to God and we hope to find redemption in them.

In other words, the Eucharist transforms us into a living sacrifice.

John Huynh is the director of the diocesan FaithJourney program and coordinates the Catechetical Institute. To reach him email [jhuynh@dmdiocese.org](mailto:jhuynh@dmdiocese.org) or call 515-237-5006.

# If it hadn't been for that sister

More than 50 years have gone by since I was touched by the smile of a Dominican nun. That smile remains in my memory to this day. It was because of that smile that I eventually became a convert to the Catholic faith.

I was raised in the non-denominational (basically Baptist) faith. My mother instilled a great love for God in those early years and for that I am forever grateful. Even so, I always knew that I wanted more - I wanted to be like that "lady in the black dress" who lived next door to our own pastor and his family.

This is what happened.

One afternoon, while we were playing softball in the vacant lot behind our pastor's house, adjacent to the convent next door, one of our batters slammed the ball into the backyard of the convent. We - because we had been taught then, back in the mid-1960's, that Catholics were not Christians - were in horror, because at that very moment, two of those ladies in black dresses came out of their house. We ran for the trees along the edge of the vacant lot and hid in the trees. What were we going to do now?

We needn't have worried. One of the sisters strolled over to the errant softball, picked it up, tossed it back to us...and smiled. There was that smile!

We eventually came out from hiding and continued the game. But my

## Guest Column

By Brenda Wedemeyer



thoughts went to her. Her smile. "There's someone who lives her faith every day," is what I thought. "I want to be like her!" Well, as you can guess, becoming a nun is not really an option for a young Baptist girl.

Almost 40 years had to go by before I could realize that what I was searching for was in fact my conversion to the Catholic faith. And all through those years, I always wondered what happened to that nun and would I ever be able to meet her to thank her for her testimony.

My prayers were answered in 2015 when I traveled to my hometown of Racine, Wisconsin, for a family funeral. I stayed at the Sienna Center there. It is a retreat center and home for retired Racine Dominican sisters. I shared my story with them about the sister who smiled at me. Soon after that conversation, another sister came riding toward me on her scooter. She said, "Come on! I think I found her!"

Sister led me to the cafeteria where lunch was being served. She pointed

me toward the table where a few of the other sisters were having their lunch. I introduced myself. What a blessing to find the actual person whose smile meant so much to me so many decades ago!

Even before my conversion, I always held in high respect those men and women who stuck to their faith and provided role models for others, especially sisters. That's why, to this day, I enjoy spending any time I can with the sisters of our Diocese. I was privileged to accompany the international sisters of the Diocese

of Des Moines to a morning retreat at the Domus Trinitatis Contemplative Center for Retreat & Renewal in Willey on May 21.

For more information on the Center, or the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT), email [homeofthetrinity@gmail.com](mailto:homeofthetrinity@gmail.com) or call 712-292-3011. Facebook: [facebook.com/homeofthetrinity](https://www.facebook.com/homeofthetrinity). Web: [www.homeofthetrinity.com](http://www.homeofthetrinity.com); [www.solt.net](http://www.solt.net).

Brenda Wedemeyer is a member of St. Mary Parish in Guthrie Center.



Religious women from other countries who are serving in the Diocese of Des Moines gathered May 21 for a retreat at the Domus Trinitatis Contemplative Center in Willey, Iowa.



## Summertime: a season of milestones

Summertime marks a lot of milestones.

The last day of school, followed by the first day of summer.

The first watermelon of the season. The first cookout or bonfire. The first time at camp.

Growing up on a farm, we had unofficial milestones around crops. The first day of walking beans. Corn that's knee-high by the Fourth of July. Husking the first homegrown sweetcorn of the season. Baling hay for the first time. Picking the first batch of strawberries from the garden.

Summer is filled with graduation parties, a time marked by closing one chapter of life before venturing out to start a new one.

Summers are also filled with weddings – a joyous occasion celebrating the milestone of two lives joining as one.

Excitement builds as major summer events begin, reaffirming my love of

### Faith That Conquers

By Kelly Mescher Collins



the season. The first day of vacation. The first day of the Downtown Farmer's Market. The first day of the Des Moines Arts Festival. The first day of RAGBRAI. The first day of the Iowa State Fair.

Summer once again offers us new opportunities. The first day hitting the bike trail. The first time sitting on a rooftop patio. Appreciating beautiful flowers in our yard that looked dead for so long.

Of course, good things come to an end at some point – even if just temporarily.

The joy of winning a blue ribbon

at fair is joined by the sorrow of saying goodbye to animals you may have helped raise, show and sell.

The joy and relief of detasseling your last corn field. But also the dread and sadness in saying goodbye to friends attending a college different than yours.

As summer comes to a close, graduates move away from home for the very first time. Their excitement is paired with parents' grappling with a flood of mixed emotions.

Celebrations are familiar. Warm. Comforting.

New chapters and major life changes can feel scary. Unfamiliar. And sometimes solitary.

But these moments offer us the opportunity to lean on God and his promises.

"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

When tempted to believe that we alone are responsible for the outcome of our future, I return time and again to one of my favorite Scripture passages.

"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

In what seems like the blink of an eye, we will soon be closing the books on another summer season.

But a new chapter is just around the corner, filled with new opportunities.

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



## I've Been Wondering...

Father John Ludwig

*Q. What does it mean in the Apostles' Creed that Christ descended into hell? Did Christ actually go to hell before ascending into heaven? Why? Why was "descended into hell" removed from the Nicene Creed that we now say at Mass? When was this changed?*

**A. A LITTLE BACKGROUND.** The Nicene Creed is not the same as the Apostles' Creed. The Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. first formulated a Creed which was then affirmed and edited by the council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. On the other hand, the Apostles Creed was once thought to have been formulated by the Apostles themselves. This legend was later overturned, though it does contain the basics from the early Church's belief. The Nicene Creed is similar to the Apostle's Creed,

and at Mass, the Apostles' Creed may be used in lieu of the Nicene Creed. So, you see, "descended into hell" was not in the Nicene Creed. Rather it was in the Apostles' Creed. Neither of the creeds has been changed. When these creeds were first introduced, it was common to think of the earth as flat – heaven up and hell down. Of course, we know that the earth is round and is a small part of the universe. No doubt, the phrase refers to the fact that Jesus in fact died and was raised up. Some translations use the term "descended to the dead" rather than "descended into hell."

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

*Q. I have been wondering why Jesus is known as a lamb? - Bridget Branstad*

## Questions on the creed, heaven

**A. JESUS IS COMPARED** to the sacrificial lamb that was part of the ritual before Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. We believe that Jesus, crucified and risen, leads us from death to new life.

*Q. Does Heaven last forever? Or is there some other place that you can go to? - Griffin Grabe*

**A. WE REFER TO OUR LIFE** with God as eternal life or life in the kingdom or heaven. But we have to remember that these terms refer not to a physical place (like Boston or Paris) but to a spiritual place that God has yet to reveal to us.

*Q. I've been wondering why God didn't*

*go down to Earth instead of sending his Son Jesus? Also couldn't God just show/teach people instead of sending his beloved Son? - Alexander Kavlock*

**A. WELL, WE COULD ONLY KNOW** that if God told us why. There are probably all kinds of ways that God could have taught us and redeemed us. In fact, Jesus came to us as one of us, and offered us the privilege of following in his way. If we are smart, we'll do just that.

*Father John Ludwig is a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. Send your questions to him at communications@dm diocese.org or Communications Office, Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309.*

## God's sense of humor

Father Ron Rolheiser



If we genuinely trust scripture, our own experience, and our own sanity, we can only conclude that God has a sense of humor, and a robust and sneaky one at that. Where's the evidence?

A generation ago, Peter Berger wrote a remarkable little book entitled, *A Rumor of Angels*. Unlike Aquinas, Anselm, Descartes, and a number of renowned philosophers, he didn't try to "prove" the existence of God through logic and argumentation. Rather, he simply examined a number of very ordinary human experiences and pointed to what's hidden inside and behind the walls of those experiences. For instance, when a mother soothes and calms a frightened child at night, assuring the child that there is nothing to fear, she does this in good faith only because at some deep level she intuitively understands that everything is all right. In effect, unconsciously, she is praying a Creed.

Now, one of the experiences Berger highlights is the experience of humor. Here's his thesis: no matter how oppressive and dire the circumstance, human beings always have the capacity to make light of it, to view it through the prism of irony and humor. For example, martyrs

have joked with their executioners and, no doubt, there was some banter, sarcasm, irony, and bitter humor at times inside extermination camps. The fact that people can do this, and do in fact do it, shows that there is always something transcendent inside us, something over which no human oppression has power, something that sets us above any situation within which we find ourselves. Our sense of irony and humor manifests that something in our soul sets us above anything that can beset us.

And, this can have its source in only one place, inside of the Creator who made us. Thus, not only must God have a sense of humor, humor must be something inherent within the nature of God, since humor is good and God is the author of all that is good.

There's a school of classical philosophy that believes God has four transcendental properties. God, it teaches, is One, True, Good, and Beautiful – to this we can add, Humorous. Moreover, this can be inferred from more than just the fact that sometimes we sense that humor manifests our transcendence within a given situation. More importantly, we can infer that humor has some godliness from examining the component parts of love. God is love, and humor is undeniably an important part of love.

When the classical Greek philosophers defined love, they highlighted a number of components within it, namely, erotic

attraction, obsession, friendship, pragmatic arrangement, and altruism. However, they also highlighted another component, playfulness/banter/humor. How insightful. Humor, along with healthy banter and playful teasing, are part of the grease that enables us to sustain relationships long term, despite the inevitable over-familiarity, hurt, disappointment, and boredom that beset even the most loving relationships. Humor helps make it all work. Thus, since it is an innate part of love, it is an innate part of God.

Sadly, we don't often picture God that way. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have this in common. We all picture God as male, celibate, solemn – and humorless. How might we picture God differently?

If you were to draw up a composite face representing God, whose face would you include in this picture? The pious face of the gentle, blond-haired Jesus with a lamb on his shoulder we see in our holy pictures? Images of a serenely composed and quiet Mary that we see depicted in our statues of her? The face of Mother Teresa? The face of Therese of Lisieux? The face of Dorothy Day? Of Martin Luther King? Of Oscar Romero? Of Billy Graham? Of Henri Nouwen? Of Rachel Held Evans? The face of your mother or father? Would you also include the face of your favorite comedian or favorite wit? Jerry Seinfeld? Bette Midler? Rowan Atkinson? The mischievous face of your col-

orful uncle telling a joke?

Any picture of God's face needs to manifest an inner soul that is One, True, Good, Beautiful, but also Humorous and Mischievous. Funny, while I believe that God is the author of humor, I've never been enamored by the various artistic depictions of Jesus as laughing uproariously. Good idea, good intention, good theology, but to my taste, lacking the right nuance. That kind of laughing face has an ephemeral quality that too easily gives way to something else after it's had its moment. God's face, I suspect, has a quieter, sneakier, more permanent mischievousness to it.

If this is true, if God not only has a sense of humor but is also the author of humor itself, then humor is an important quality within sanctity and holiness. What makes for wholeness, maturity, holiness, love, and for the kind of person you want beside you at the table, here and at the eternal one in heaven? Certainly, you want someone who manifests the qualities that Jesus asked for in the Sermon on the Mount – along with a warm, playful, and mischievous sense of humor.

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



# Bishops call for broad response to address violence

WASHINGTON (CNS)

-- In response to the multiple mass shootings in recent weeks, the chairmen of four U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' committees sent a letter to Congress urging lawmakers to "stop the massacres of innocent lives"

"We urge all members of Congress to reflect on the compassion all of you undoubtedly feel in light of these tragic events and be moved to action because of it," the bishops wrote in a June 3 letter.

They said finding a way to stop ongoing acts violence as demonstrated in Ulvade, Texas, and Buffalo, New York, to name just a few examples, requires a broad response that examines "mental health, the state of families, the valuation of life, the influence of entertainment and gaming industries, bullying and the availability of firearms."

And although they see a need for broad reform, they focused on guns in particular, stressing that "among the many steps toward addressing this endemic of violence is the passage of reasonable gun control measures."

The letter was signed by Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of



CNS photo/Evelyn Hockstein, Reuters

**Elaine Arndt, with Moms Demand Action, attends a rally outside the U.S. Capitol in Washington June 8 with fellow members of gun violence prevention organizations, survivors of gun violence and hundreds of gun safety supporters demanding gun legislation.**

San Francisco, chairman of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth; Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities; and Bishop Thomas A. Daly of Spokane, Washington, chairman of the Committee on Catholic Education. "We urgently call on members of Congress to work together in a bipartisan fashion to make these horrific attacks less likely to happen again," they wrote.

In 2018, the Iowa Catholic Conference issued a statement encouraging state legislators to

consider the passage of a law providing for gun violence restraining orders, support for programs addressing mental illness and addictions, requiring background checks anytime a weapon is sold, and the repeal of the "Stand Your Ground" law.

The Iowa bishops opposed legislation that would restrict the state's ability to regulate weapons in the future. To read the statement go to [iowacatholic-conference.org](http://iowacatholic-conference.org) and look under "Statements."

## Sister Keehan honored for her years of advocacy of health care reform

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Sister Carol Keehan, who led the Catholic Health Association of the United States for 13 years as president and CEO and was a longtime advocate of health care reform, received the Spirit of Francis Award from Catholic Extension.

Pope Francis was among several church leaders who commended Sister Keehan, a nurse and Daughter of Charity, during an awards banquet May 25 at the Library of Congress sponsored by the Chicago-based papal mission society that supports ministries in poor dioceses.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, conveyed the pope's congratulatory message, which was read by Archbishop Christoph Pierre, papal nuncio to the United States.

The pope recognized Sister Keehan, who leads the Health Task Force of the Vatican's COVID-19 Commission, for "her many years of dedicated leadership in continuing the healing ministry of Jesus Christ" in delivering and advocating for quality health care for all people, especially the poor and vulnerable.

The message also said the pope appreciates Sister Keehan's "generous service to the Holy See and her fidelity to the charism of St. Vincent de Paul, carrying out the apostolate of charity in 'the consciousness that we are responsible for the fragility of others as we strive to build a common future,'" the message said, quoting his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.



Sister Carol Keehan

## People are not islands, they need each other, pope says at Angelus

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Holy Trinity shows how to be open to others and to be good, generous and gentle, Pope Francis said.

"The Trinity teaches us that one can never be without the other. We are not islands, we are in the world to live in God's image: open, in need of others and in need of helping others," the pope said June 12 before reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square.

He also led prayers for the people of Ukraine, who remain "afflicted by war" and whose situation "remains vivid in my heart." He urged that the world "not grow accustomed" to the tragedy in Ukraine.

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## Fiesta de la Libertad y la Esperanza

lo. Como mis hermanos obispos y yo reflexionamos sobre el Misterio de la Eucaristía, "En la Última Cena, Jesús se revela como el Cordero Pascual. . . cuyo sacrificio trae la liberación de la esclavitud del pecado y cuya sangre marca un nuevo pueblo perteneciente a Dios» (n. 15).

Jesús no deja que su cuerpo y su sangre sean abonados; consagra el pan y el vino para que podamos verlo y consumirlo y llegar a ser más como él. Y si deo que mi mirada se detenga en él aunque sea por unos momentos, al menos una hora, vislumbro el cielo, donde creo que por fin todo tiene sentido, y el sufrimiento nunca es en vano.

Entonces, en lugar de contraerme en el rigor mortis de las actitudes auto-protectoras y santurronas, me encuentro más flexible y receptivo en lugar de reaccionar de manera instintiva. En definitiva, quedo libre para elegir ser prójimo, hermano, amigo cívico; Soy voluntario de Dios para ir con la gracia en lugar de la corriente y, sobre todo, para mantener viva la esperanza. Me inspira imitar a personas como Jesús de la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de las Américas en Des Moines, quienes con un grupo de 16 o más feligreses pasan una buena parte

de sus jueves por la noche recorriendo los vecindarios tocando puertas. Si les abren, intentan involucrar a los residentes para ver si hay rastros de fe en su historia de vida, si tienen preguntas o problemas de los que les gustaría hablar y si están abiertos a mantener la conversación abierta para futuras visitas. Jesús y sus amigos han ayudado a reparar corazones y esperanzas rotas, a revivir la fe católica en algunas de las personas que han visitado que regresan a la comunión con su parroquia y la Iglesia universal. ¡Necesito ser como Jesús!

El 19 de junio de este año, la Fiesta del Corpus Christi, el Santísimo Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo, marca el comienzo oficial de un renacimiento eucarístico de tres años promovidos por los obispos católicos de nuestra nación. Hay una gran cantidad (¡juego de palabras!) de iniciativas inspiradoras y oportunidades de reflexión y materiales en línea e impresos, que culminarán en una asamblea nacional en 2024 en Indianápolis. Todo esto está muy bien, pero así como se dice que toda política es local, también lo es la fe. A menos que elijamos libremente estar presentes en la Presencia, dejar de lado el dispositivo móvil y abrazar la "inconve-

nencia" de poner nuestros cuerpos en movimiento y reposo ante el misterio del Santísimo Sacramento y de las personas sentadas a nuestro alrededor, cualquier seguridad sentida o la autosuficiencia será falsamente comprada a bajo precio. Sólo en Jesús tienen sentido la vida, el sufrimiento y la muerte. Solo en Cristo Encarnado la vida humana se vuelve sagrada, independientemente de las apariencias, desastres naturales o tragedias provocadas por el hombre. Una vez más, los obispos de los Estados Unidos: "San. Juan Crisóstomo predicaba que cuando veas el cuerpo de Cristo 'puesto delante de ti [en el altar], di para ti mismo: Por este Cuerpo ya no soy tierra y ceniza, ya no soy prisionero, sino libre: por eso espero el cielo, y para recibir cosas en él, la vida inmortal, la porción de los ángeles, [y la cercanía] con Cristo" (n. 19).

El 4 de julio puede ser el único día festivo en el que celebremos la libertad de nuestra nación, pero el 19 de junio es una ocasión distintiva que comunica e inspira cada día que nos levantamos del sueño y nos deleitamos con la libertad y la esperanza disponibles para nosotros cada vez que celebramos la Santa Misa. Nos encontramos con Jesús en

la Eucaristía, obtenga una vista previa de para qué ha sido todo, y descubra que junto con el pan y el vino, nosotros también somos transformados. Como describe la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia, nos convertimos en "personas capaces de llevar la paz donde hay conflicto, de construir y cultivar relaciones fraternas donde hay odio, de buscar la justicia donde prevalece la explotación del hombre por el hombre. Sólo el amor es capaz de transformar radicalmente las relaciones que [los seres humanos] mantienen entre sí" (n. 4). El Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo: ¡Amén!

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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).



## Knee pain causes change of plans for the pope



CNS photo/Vatican Media

On his doctors' advice because of ongoing problems with his knee, the pope will not travel to Congo and South Sudan in early July, the Vatican announced June 10. Pope Francis has canceled several events since mid-January and has begun using a wheelchair or a cane. Pictured above, he visits with visually impaired children and their families and children from Ukraine.

### *Pope: Health care must be accessible to all, not select few*

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Health care is a fundamental right for all and not a privilege for the rich while the poor and disadvantaged are left to the wayside, Pope Francis said.

"When a country loses this wealth that is public health care, it begins to make distinctions within the population between those who have access, who can have paid health care, and those who are left without health care services," the pope said June 4 to representatives of the Italian health care association, Federsanit .

According to its website, Federsanit  is a confederation of local health care facilities and hospitals that seek to promote policies "strongly oriented toward a new concept of 'taking care' of patients based on proximity, proactivity, personalization and participation."

In his address, the pope said closeness to patients is "the antidote to self-referentiality" that "breaks the chains of selfishness" and allows health care professionals to view patients "as brothers and sisters, regardless of language, geographical origin, social status or health condition."

Being close to others also means breaking down distances, making sure that there are no first- and second-class patients, and committing energies and resources so that no one is excluded from receiving health care," he said.

## Bishop: Freedom, hope available to us when we meet Jesus in the Eucharist

Continued from page 2

it all makes sense, and suffering is never in vain.

Then, rather than contract in the rigor mortis of self-protective and self-righteous attitudes, I find myself more flexible and responsive rather than kneejerk reactive. All in all, I remain free to choose to be a neighbor, a brother, a civic friend; I am God's volunteer to go with grace rather than the flow, and above all, to keep hope alive.

I am inspired to imitate people like Jesus, a member of Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines, who with a group of 16 or so fellow parishioners spend a good portion of their Thursday evenings going around neighborhoods knocking on doors. If they open, they try to engage residents to see if there are traces of faith in their life story, if they have questions or issues they would like to talk about, and if they are open to keeping the conversation open for further visits. Jesus and his friends have

helped to mend broken hearts and hopes, to revive Catholic faith in some of the people they have visited who return to communion with their parish and the universal Church. I need to be like Jesus!

This year's June 19 Feast of Corpus Christi, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, marks the official beginning of a three-year Eucharistic revival sponsored by our nation's Catholic bishops. There are a host (pun intended!) of inspirational initiatives and reflective opportunities and on-line and print materials, culminating in a national assembly in 2024 in Indianapolis. This is all well and good, but just as all politics is said to be local, so is faith. Unless we freely choose to be present to the Presence, to set aside the mobile device and embrace the "inconvenience" of setting our bodies in motion and at rest before the mystery of the Sacrament and of the persons seated around us, any felt security or self-sufficiency will be falsely, cheaply purchased. Only in Jesus do life, suffering, and death make

any sense. Only in Christ Incarnate does human life become sacred, regardless of appearances, natural disaster, or humanly induced tragedy.

Again, the U.S. bishops: "St. John Chrysostom preached that when you see the body of Christ 'set before you [on the altar], say to yourself: Because of this Body I am no longer earth and ashes, no longer a prisoner, but free: because of this I hope for heaven, and to receive things therein, immortal life, the portion of angels, [and closeness] with Christ' (n. 19).

July 4 may be the one holiday we celebrate our nation's freedom, but June 19 is one signature occasion informing and inspiring every day we rise from slumber and feast on the freedom and hope available to us each time we celebrate Holy Mass. We meet Jesus in the Eucharist, gain a preview of what it all has been for, and find that along with bread and wine, we, too, are transformed. As the Social Doctrine of the Church describes, we

become "people capable of bringing peace where there is conflict, of building and nurturing fraternal relationships where there is hatred, of seeking justice where there prevails the exploitation of man by man. Only love is capa-

ble of radically transforming the relationships that [humans] maintain among themselves" (n. 4). The Body and Blood of Christ: Amen!

### World Youth Day

The Diocese of Des Moines is going on pilgrimage to Portugal! World Youth Day is a gathering of young adults from around the world. In 2023, it will be in Lisbon, Portugal. For more information, go to [dmdiocese.org/wyd23](http://dmdiocese.org/wyd23). See you in Lisbon!

### 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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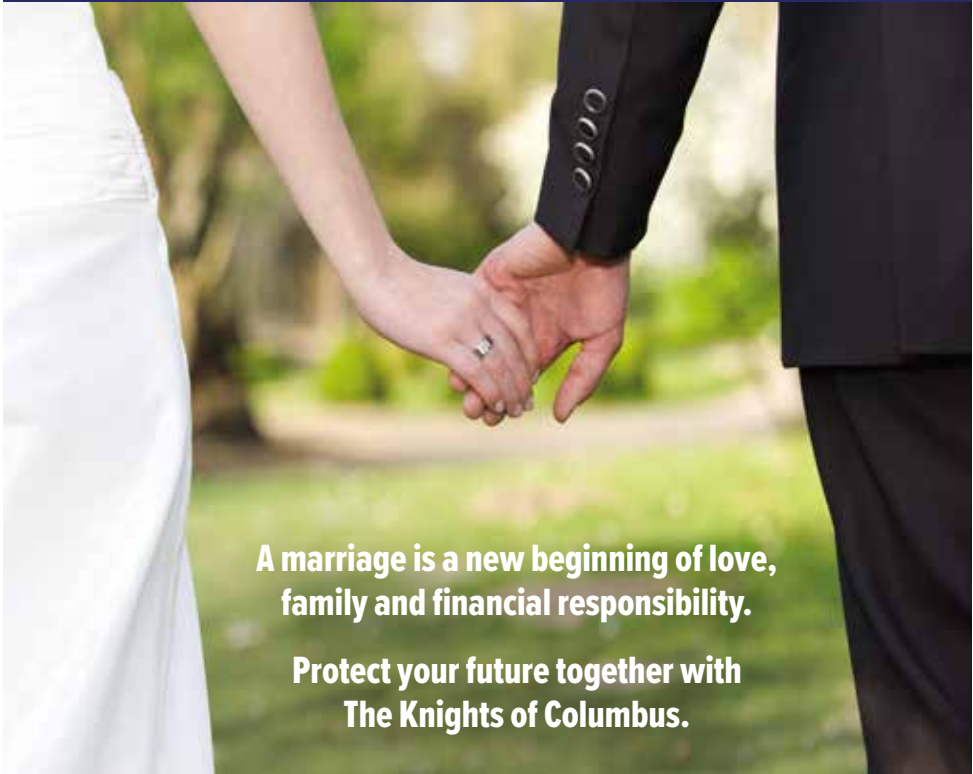


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