“All I try to do is make Jesus smile.”

For decades, a humble farmer’s faith has spurred him to feed thousands of hungry people.

Holy Days

Christmas Day, a holy day of obligation, falls on a Monday this year. This means the faithful will need to satisfy their Sunday obligation at a Saturday vigil or any Mass on Sunday AND satisfy the Christmas obligation with a Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. One Mass will not cover both obligations. Please note that parishes may have altered their weekend Mass schedule for the Fourth Sunday of Advent to accommodate the Christmas Vigil Sunday evening. Check your local Catholic church for Mass times.

We celebrate the Solemnity of Mary on Monday, Jan. 1. It will not be a holy day of obligation.

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Andy Conner is on a quiet quest.
For about 30 years, this farmer has cultivated a few acres of his land, located a short drive outside Des Moines, to give away its bounty: eggs, meat, potatoes, squash, and vegetables.

Why?
“We all have something to do until God takes us home,” he said. “I feel my job is to feed people.”

Conner doesn’t like the spotlight.
But now, in the season of giving, he is sharing why he gives generously in the hope that others might also feel moved to help people.

The spark for his passion to alleviate hunger is rooted in his faith.
“I fell head over heels in love with the good Lord through my Bible,” Conner said. “I read the Bible for 30 years. Everything in it, to me, is we should never have a hungry human being, and that’s what I strive for.”

He believes all of God’s children should be treated with respect.
“The first step is just realizing they’re people,” he said. “They’re not ‘the homeless’ or just ‘the hungry.’ They’re men, women and children. They need love and shelter. If I have more than I need, why not share?”

Conner grew up on a farm and farmed about 320 acres with his brother. He worked in the wholesale meat business and became an electrician.

“He used to see a lot of hungry people,” he recalled. “I couldn’t understand how someone like me – raising five kids and not having a lot of money – wasn’t hungry and those folks were. The good Lord put it on my heart: If you have extra, do something with it.”

And do something he has. He grows hundreds and sometimes even thousands of pounds of potatoes. He takes truckloads of apples and dozens upon dozens of eggs from his farm to area pantries.

“For a while, we were getting close to 50 dozen eggs every two weeks that I was taking to the shelters for him,” said his child.

Continued on page 10

Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Farmer Andy Conner is a man of few words but many blessings. He avoids the spotlight but shines Christ’s light on hungry people. Moved by the image of Jesus on the crucifix, he often wondered how he could repay Jesus for his suffering. Then he realized he could use his gift for farming to share his bounty with others.

Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Two diocesan priests died

Two gifted preachers, who served the Diocese of Des Moines for many years, died. See the stories on Monsignor Frank Chiiodo and Father James Laurenzo on page 5.
I haven’t bought a Powerball ticket in a long time. That’s no boast; I simply haven’t been paying attention. I don’t think the times I did buy tickets were primarily motivated by greed; I thought about all the sorts of things I would do to benefit family members and the institutions I serve with one exception: I would buy myself really, really nice bike.

I’ve never won the lottery. And chances are, neither have you. But this dynamic of becoming aware of an immense good joined to a person seems to be a common thread of all that is unfulfilled is not simply a twice/week, spin the cylinder affair. This movement of the heart underlies and expresses the whole of our human lives. Even before we are fully aware of it, the God who is a holier of God—loving kindness, is the premise and expression of the life of Rabbi Nelson Glueck’s covenant. For us a people who repeatedly seem to lose our way, who wander into exile by forgetting the covenant promise. In the evangelist Matthew’s opening genealogy that charts salvation’s generations from Abraham to David, followed by the fourteen generations leading to the Babylonic exile of the Jewish people. Yet to recognize our exiled state, our forced relocation to a city, a world, where believers often feel rootless, a forsakenness is one itself of the fruits of the promise.

This generation more generations are needed after the Babylonian exile to overcome our stubborn refusal of God’s promise and bring our existence to the question of what is the promise…The core of life is a promise.

Again, in the spirit of Msgr. Giussani, we affirm that faith is to recognize a Presence that is certain. The Christ Presence was certified over 2,000 years ago by the shepherds, by angels, by Mary, by seniors such as Simeon and Anna as they go in peace, by the martyred Holy Innocents and by any of us who are willing to witness to Jesus. And it follows that hope is to recognize certainties for the future that is born of this span the great chasm between creature and Creator by giving us hearts that can receive and return the faith, hope, and love that God supplies to us. The late Rabbi Emeritus Dr. Louis Finkelstein, founder of the Catholic Community and Liberation movement, reflects, “Man is born with this hope; man is born with a heart which corresponds with the promise. . . . The core of life is a promise.”

The eulogy of Robert Gannaway of northwestern Arkansas, on the last day, the promised day of God transforms all into a new heaven and a new earth.

In eternity, the Son and the Father have no need to make promises to one another, since they are wholly of one will. In the Incarnation, as part of the flesh, the mystery of God’s prophetic plan is revealed: a perfect human will is joined in Jesus’ divine will, and the possibility of his prophesying on our behalf is initiated. Only if the Father and the Son agree to fulfill this promise one for another for our sake will we have hope of salvation of the Messiah who descends in the line of David.

For we are a people who are...
The Catholic Mirror  December 15, 2023

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

One of the best gifts you could give your spouse!

Join our free marriage enrichment program, *The Third Option*, which meets the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Mercy College, 928 6th Ave, Des Moines, IA 50309.

Participants should use the north parking lot.

Couples can join at anytime!

This program is for all couples whether they are facing obstacles in their marriage or just trying to make a good thing better! Couples will walk through 14 skills-based workshops, listen to a couple who has overcome comparable frustrations, and provides support group discussions on suggested exercises / tools.

If you have questions, or would like to register contact Julie Burdt at 515-201-4766 or julie.burdt@gmail.com.

You can also contact Adam Storey at astorey@dmdiocese.org

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NCYC earns high marks from youth

About 475 teenagers and chaperones from across central and southwest Iowa boarded buses in the early morning hours of Nov. 16 for the long trek to Indianapolis for the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference.

They were filled with energy and faith.

“I assure you, our 15 along with 12,000 other hearts were fully alive and forever changed from this encounter,” said Tammie Dixon, of St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines.

“What made me feel fully alive this weekend was either the Eucharistic adoration or the end of Mass last night after listening to the bishop’s talk and singing the closing song with everyone in (Lucas Oil) stadium,” said Addison Murdock, of Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine.

“Young Adult Evangelization. While the conference was good, carrying the message home and into the community is important, said Dixon.

“What is important is taking Jesus with us as we go, body and blood, soul and divinity. We bring Jesus through the Eucharist to his people by the Holy Spirit through prayer.”

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Time is running out!

Help students receive a Catholic education

Take advantage of the 75% Iowa tax credit by donating to the Catholic Tuition Organization

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Fulfill Your Pledge by December 15, 2023

$4.5 million

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

One of the best gifts you could give your spouse!

Teenagers from Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine (top photo) and St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines (above) celebrate their faith with thousands of other youth at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis Nov. 16-19.
By Jennifer Willems
Staff Writer

At this time of year, many of us are working on two lists, one for Christmas shopping and the other for New Year’s resolutions.

The latter usually doesn’t change much from year to year with better health — physical, mental, and spiritual — figuring prominently among the goals.

But what if you could do one thing that would check all the boxes?

Pietra Fitness is one way to accomplish that, giving people an opportunity to walk away feeling whole, the way God calls us to be, according to certified instructors Julie Dohrmann and Joy Nobles.

They offer seven classes for a variety of ability levels at five parishes in the Des Moines area: St. Joseph, St. Mary of Nazareth and St. Theresa in Des Moines; St. Pius X in Urbandale; and Sacred Heart in West Des Moines.

What is it?

Pietra Fitness is a stretching and strengthening program that incorporates Christian prayer in the Catholic tradition, said Dohrmann. She described it as the Christian alternative to yoga, which is based on Eastern religion and philosophy.

She completed her yearlong training in January 2020, and Nobles followed in 2021. Since then, they have been pro certified and trained to teach chair classes.

Developed according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, the program is consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. A San Damiano Crucifix graces each class space, not only providing focus but encouraging participants, as it did St. Francis of Assisi, to “rebuild the church.”

“Pietra Fitness wants to rebuild the church by bringing people closer to Christ,” said Dohrmann, a member of Christ the King Parish who works in the childcare program at Sacred Heart School in West Des Moines.

Prayer woven throughout

Each class begins and ends with the Sign of the Cross. Before working out, there is a prayer for the pope, bishops, priests and religious, as well as a prayer for a healthy body, sharp mind, joyful heart, and faithful and loving soul.

Participants also prepare by hearing a passage from Scripture. There are short breaks for bodily prayer throughout the warm-up and workout, and while winding down.

Instructors have access to 300 meditations provided by Pietra Fitness, which was founded by Karen Barbieri and is based in Cincinnati, Ohio. There are about 80 instructors around the world — four of them in Iowa.

While Pietra Fitness in Des Moines started with classes in a studio, the move to the parish setting has been important, said Nobles, a member of St. Theresa Parish and a surgical nurse at Unity Point Health — Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines.

“I felt there were more people to teach,” she explained. “Community is a huge part of our faith and people want to get together with their church community.”

Grace flows from that, making people more patient and compassionate, she said.

“At one of my classes, I have an 87-year-old. The entire class is patient, waiting for her because naturally, by age, it takes her a little bit longer,” Nobles said. “But they’re so thrilled she is coming and doing this and they are doing it with them and wants to stay active.”

Joy Nobles leads a Pietra Fitness class at St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines. Pietra is a stretching and strengthening program that incorporates Christian prayer in the Catholic tradition. Nobles and Julie Dohrmann offer the classes at Des Moines metro area Catholic churches.

THE FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

HISTORY OF THIS DEVOTION

In 1917, in the remote village of Fatima, Portugal, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared on six different occasions to three shepherd children with an urgent message for the world, which concerned the salvation of souls and peace in the world. On July 13, 1917 Our Lady showed the children a vision of hell and said, “You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace...I shall come to ask for...the Communion of reparation to be made on the first Saturdays...” Our Blessed Mother fulfilled her promise eight years later on December 10, 1925, when she appeared with the Child Jesus to Sr. Lucia in her convent cell and said, “Have compassion on the Heart of Your Most Holy Mother, covered with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them.”

THE INTENTION

The requirements of this devotion are to be fulfilled with the intention of consoling and making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for our own sins, for the blasphemies and ingratitude of unrepentant sinners, and for peace in the world.

You are invited to morning Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in West Des Moines to celebrate this devotion at 7:15 a.m. on Jan. 6

Paid Advertisement

Our Lady’s Promise

Then Mary held out her thorn-scarred Heart and said, “See, my daughter, my Heart enicted by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. Do you, at least, strive to console me, to tell them that I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, in order to make reparation to me, on the First Saturday of five successive months, go to confession, receive Holy Communion, say five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for a quarter of an hour, meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary.”

In pastoral letter dated Oct. 13, 1930, Leiria (Portugal) Bishop Jose Alves Correia da Silva said the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three young children between May 13 and October 13, 1917 were credible and he encouraged devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. The bishop also said the Blessed Virgin Mary’s appearances were a great source of joy and the faithful had a duty to "reciprocate her goodness.”

They could do this by:
- Living a pure life
- Observing the 10 Commandments and precepts of the Church
- Respecting and submitting to the instructions of the Apostolic See (Pope).

In addition, the bishop recommended the faithful:
- love God in a special manner through the Eucharist,
- practice a devotion to Mary,
- practice a devotion to St. Joseph,
- pray for the souls in purgatory,
- pray at least 5 decades of the rosary daily,
- avoid sin, particularly sins of the flesh
- avoid immorality
- avoid immoral readings
- do penance, and
- show charity to all particularly the sick and the poor.
Diocese loses two gifted preachers
Pastor followed his call to preach fearlessly

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Monsignor Frank Chiodo was a gift to his family, friends and the people he so faithfully served for 46 years. He died on Thanksgiving Day.

The Dec. 4 Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at St. John the Baptist Cathedral.

He died on Thanksgiving Day.

A great preacher who was an expert on the Old Testament, and a compassionate man of God served the people of the Diocese of Des Moines for 40 years before retiring.

Father James Laurenzo, died Dec. 5 at age 82. His Mass of Christian Burial will be Saturday, Dec. 16 at Holy Trinity Church in Des Moines with a visitation at 9 a.m. and the funeral at 10 a.m.

He lived in a small Des Moines house filled to the brim with books – more than 3,000 – that fed his insatiable desire to learn. Nestled there with a German shepherd (he’d had five during his life), he studied the Old Testament, the Jewish faith, and poetry.

“He was a very complex man with simple means,” said close friend Margaret Cavanagh.

In 1941 and raised in Perry, Father Laurenzo was one of four brothers. He was educated at St. Joseph College in Collegeville, Indiana, and Immaculate Conception in Conception, Missouri. He also attended Mt. St. Bernard College in Dubuque.

He was ordained a priest in 1969 by Bishop Maurice Dingman.

Father Laurenzo was a parish priest, serving at St. Pius X in Urbandale, along with St. Ambrose Cathedral, St. Peter, Holy Trinity and St. Catherine of Siena Parishes in Des Moines, and St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Carlisle. He oversaw the renovations at Holy Trinity and St. Ambrose Cathedral.

He was also a chaplain, serving at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center from 1980 to 1985.

Father Laurenzo took a year sabbatical to earn a master’s degree at Notre Dame University, studying the Old Testament and learning Hebrew.

Father Laurenzo led formation efforts in the Des Moines metro area through the St. Joseph Educational Center in West Des Moines. He led adult education from 1994 to 1997, then served as director from 1997-2001. He also taught theology for a number of years at Drake University.

Father Laurenzo will be remembered for his preaching. “I think he was the best preacher in the Diocese,” said Father Tim Fitzgerald. “He was very concise and would reach very deeply for words.”

“He was an uncommonly good preacher,”

Monsignor Frank Chiodo
1989.

He served four years at St. Thomas More Parish in Omaha and then returned to Des Moines, serving two years at Holy Trinity Parish before going to his home parish of St. Anthony.

While at St. Anthony Parish, the church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2021.

Chiodo was a front runner in seeking technology as a means of evangelization. He used this interest at both the Basilica of St. John and St. Anthony Church by installing video equipment.

At St. Anthony, Msgr. Chiodo had a part-time job working for the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. “That was a gift to his family, friends and the people he so faithfully served for 46 years.”

He served as pastor for 15 years before retiring.

At Msgr. Chiodo’s first Mass as a priest, he was commissioned “to preach the word of God fearlessly and courageously and without concern,” said Father Carl Sodoro, a friend from their seminary days. “He certainly did that.”

Educated at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, Immaculate Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, and St. Thomas Theological Seminary in Denver, Msgr. Chiodo was ordained a priest by Bishop Maurice Dingman in 1976.

He served at Christ the King Parish in Des Moines, on the faculty at St. Albert High School in Council Bluffs, and joined team ministry based at St. Brendan Parish in Leon.

Msgr. Chiodo continued in team ministry at Sacred Heart Parish in Chariton, where he first met Rev. Dr. Gregory Nelson Davis, a Lutheran pastor also serving in Chariton.

“He was a great friend,” said Rev. Davis, who joined Msgr. Chiodo for a weekly lunch and two tours of the Holy land.

“He had a great ecumenical heart,” said Rev. Davis.

From team ministry in the southern part of the Diocese, Msgr. Chiodo went to the Basilica of St. John Parish in Des Moines, where he served for 15 years. Through his effort, the church joined the National Historic Registry (1987) and was elevated to the rank of a minor basilica in

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Parish continues longstanding relationship with community in Africa

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish in Des Moines has a longstanding relationship with the parishioners of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in the village of Nyassivé, Togo, West Africa.

The relationship started almost 20 years ago when a young woman from Des Moines who was a member of St. Theresa, Nina Weisenhorn, was assigned to Nyassivé as a Peace Corps volunteer. Inspired by that initial connection, the parishioners of St. Theresa in Des Moines have supported the children of Nyassivé in their pursuit of education, starting with 20 of the most disadvantaged children, primarily orphans.

Today, the Iowa parish provides funding for four teachers and scholarships for more than 250 students in Nyassivé and 10 surrounding villages. Today, the Iowa parish provides funding for four teachers and scholarships for more than 250 students in Nyassivé and 10 surrounding villages. The village chief is interested in building a priest's house. Although the chief is not Catholic, he says we worship the same God and building up the Catholic Church benefits the whole community.

Another issue is childhood hunger. Many of the students are too hungry, too tired, or too sick to return to the school’s afternoon sessions. Directed by UNESCO, the Togolese government instituted a school feeding program through a grassroots support agency and the World Bank. During the August trip, the group visited a neighboring school that has been using this government feeding program for five years. The program volunteers and teachers from the school all indicated that the program has been successful, resulting in significantly higher rates of attendance and students passing. The committee is continuing to explore options here and working with the support agency and the Nyassivé school.

The people of Nyassivé have never forgotten the courageous Peace Corps volunteer who started this program years ago, when Weisenhorn championed projects to support girls' education. To this day, 18 years after she left Togo, her name still resonates with the people of this small, rural village. Through education and Christian teaching, these most vulnerable children can rise out of poverty and be in a better place to contribute to their communities.

To keep our students on the road to success, Dowling Catholic High School relies on the generosity of those who support the We Are Maroons Annual Appeal. The Annual Appeal helps ensure our students and teachers have the resources they need to be successful and impacts every aspect of the DCDS experience, including faith and academic programming, student activities, athletics and the arts.

Now is the perfect time to make a gift to DCDS. As we approach the end of the year, we are seeing more and more supporters choose to donate:

- Shares of stock
- Donor Advised Funds
- Qualified Charitable Distributions from your IRA (donors 70 1/2 and older)

These options may provide favorable tax benefits with the flexibility to support DCDS!

Victim Assistance Advocate

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

InnerVisions HealthCare has a staff nurse opening. Qualifications include a passion for the mission and values, excellent verbal and written communication skills, and a team player. The ability to manage crisis and challenging situations professionally, calmly and effectively is critical. A bachelor’s degree is preferred, 3-5 years of nursing experience is desired, and IA RN Licensure must be in good standing. Limited OB Ultrasound training provided. Compensation commensurate with experience.

Please email resume to info@innervisionshealthcare.org.
Eucharistic inspiration sparks painting

Gene McKelvey felt a nudge. The St. Mary of Nazareth parishioner was sitting in Mass when he felt called to create a painting.

“It caught me off guard,” he said. “I may have shrugged it off.”

A longtime artist, he developed his gift into a career for a while. Life took him in another direction and he’d been out of painting for about 30 years when he felt that nudge at church.

“My response was: ‘Ok, God, how are we going to do this?’”

The resulting creation now hangs in a hallway outside St. Mary of Nazareth Church and has its own Facebook page as a way of teaching people about the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. The timing couldn’t be better given the nation is in the midst of a Eucharistic Revival effort focusing this year on parish projects.

After nine months and about 350 hours, McKelvey produced “Source and Summit,” a series of 24 panels that, when displayed together, show a perspective of the Eucharist. Every dab of paint represents someone who may see the painting directly or indirectly, he said.

“I was praying for them as I was painting.”

McKelvey said the blue and green colors in the panels are inspired by the stained glass window behind the altar at St. Mary of Nazareth Church. The crucifix in the painting was inspired by an image he’d seen. But in that image, Jesus’ eyes were closed. McKelvey wanted Jesus’ eyes to be open so Christ in the painting is looking at those who pause to appreciate the message.

“The message I got was that Jesus wanted to have a conversation with everybody who saw the painting,” McKelvey said.

Flames in the foreground represent souls going to receive communion. “As they get closer to Christ, they burn brighter. If you look at the edges of the painting, some flames turn away, some don’t burn as bright,” he said. “Some flames are different colors, some are blue, some yellow and red. They represent the diversity of believers.”

He thought the painting was done and had arranged to show it at an exhibit with a friend who creates free-form water color paintings. “The night before the show, I woke up in the middle of the night and just had this feeling I couldn’t shake that something was missing,” he said. He added small flames coming from the Blessed Mother’s robe; the flames represent the children who have died either through abortion or were stillborn.

It’s been a few years since the painting was completed and it’s now on display for parishioners and visitors to ponder. “I like to think the timing was God’s timing,” McKelvey said. How appropriate that the depiction of Mass be on display as the nationwide Eucharistic Revival renews emphasis on God’s love for his people through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

“There’s a lot of times when we think we know how things should work out but it may not be God’s timing,” McKelvey said.

His image has its own Facebook page at Facebook.com/sourceandsummit.art as a means of teaching the truth about the Eucharist.
As Advent began this year, I was struck by the collect, also called the “opening prayer,” from the First Sunday of Advent:

The prayer asked the Father for the grace to “run forth to meet your Christ.” This longing to meet Christ, and an exhortation to be watchful as we await his coming, was a theme throughout the prayers of the Mass, and in fact is a theme of Advent.

Now, I am as excited about Christmas as the next guy, but I am mostly excited about seeing my kids open presents, good food, and family time. While I do truly love this liturgical season, I do not know how ready I am to run forth to meet Jesus. This made me think a bit more about my desires, because while I can often feel longing in marriage and family life, I do not know if I had often connected it to a desire for Christ. Most often, my desires are much more mundane—like a desire for my children to be successful, or for sibling squabbles to be resolved peacefully, or for financial security. Amid all these desires, I am forced to ask myself how deeply I desire Jesus’ Incarnation in my life.

These mundane desires are not bad, and in fact Pope Benedict XVI spoke of them in his Encyclical Spe Salvi, where he described them as the “greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day” (SS 31).

However, he goes on to remind us that these hopes are never enough without “the great hope, which must surpass every desire” (SS 31). In fact, the daily highs and lows are meant to orient our hearts to Jesus, who answers the deepest desires of our hearts, and who transforms all the ordinary circumstances of life into a grace encoun-
ered with his own life!

As we wrap up Advent and head into the Christmas season, my prayer for myself and all of us is that our hearts may truly long for Jesus. When he comes, may we all run forth to meet him!

Father Adam Storey is vice chancellor of the Diocese and mission lead in the Evangelization & Mission team. He can be reached at 515-237-5056 or astorey@dmdiocese.org.
Andy Conner shows where his garden grows. He keeps his generosity simple: “We grow things in the ground, and we give them away. Real simple.”

Continued from page 1

friend, Al Sieren.

Conner’s food has been distributed to people like a single mom with two kids, a man working two jobs and trying to make ends meet, and a homeless person trying to get out of poverty, said Steve Havemann, executive director of the St. Vincent de Paul in Des Moines, which operates two food pantries.

Conner’s generosity is inspiring, Havemann said.

“One of the beautiful things about Iowa is when someone like Andy steps up, other people follow,” he said. Conner and others at St. Patrick at Irish Settlement have provided food for some of the nearly 22,000 people who came to the pantries seeking a meal this year.

Conner keeps rooted in his faith as he gardens. He built a wooden cross that stands about 8 feet tall by what he calls his “labor of love garden.”

“He’s so generous with his resources,” Sieren said. “He feels blessed that God has given him a good life and he just wants to help other people. He’s really inspired me.”

Conner has just one condition for the pantries that get his bounty: The food must be given away. No charge.

“I’ll give it to a millionaire or a poor man, but it won’t be sold,” he said. “That’s not what the good Lord wants me to do. It never gets sold.”

Conner’s brother, Tom, helps distribute his sibling’s bounty to the Catholic Charities Food Pantry in Des Moines.

“The people who ultimately receive it are appreciative,” said Tom Leto, program manager for Catholic Charities Food Pantry. “We have a lot of grateful guests. They’re excited to see freshly grown produce.”

He invites anyone who might want to help to come take a tour and volunteer for an hour or two to see the need.

“We appreciate what the Conners do for us and we appreciate all the local gardeners and farmers,” Leto said.

“I think sometimes people will come, see the volume of need, see the appreciation everybody has, and I think that inspires them. They think ‘I’m going or get more and bring it back to them,’” he said.

Sieren takes Conner’s produce to the St. Vincent de Paul pantries. A friend who is a Pentecostal minister in Perry offers his harvest to the Catholic Charities Food Pantry. Conner distributes his sibling’s bounty to the Catholic Charities Food Pantry. A friend who is a Pentecostal minister in Perry offers his food door-to-door to the needy, and another takes some to a pantry in Osceola.

In years past, Conner would fill up his pickup with watermelons and other produce and park across the street from MercyOne hospital in Des Moines and give the food out for free. When someone would ask how much they could take, Conner said he’d invite them to take as much or as little as they needed.

Just a few weeks ago, Conner continued a tradition of taking 50-75 pumpkins to House of Mercy in Des Moines for the children.

“This year, the kids all drew and colored little pictures for us, thanking us,” Conner said. “I damn near cried on the way home. A little pumpkin no bigger than a softball made those children so happy. It makes you know we can all do something.”

As he’s grown into middle age and coped with periodic health issues, Conner has scaled back his farm to about 16 acres. His garden is smaller, too. He still works the land, and he still prefers to stay out of the limelight.

“I think Andy has a very deep faith. He doesn’t draw attention to himself,” said his pastor, Father Tom Dooley. “He just quietly lives the Gospel by sharing the goodness of the land with folks who go to bed hungry or need a little assistance.”

Conner refers to the story of Jesus multiplying the fish and the loaves to feed thousands as a call to action for himself and others. As humble as Conner is, it’s a simple truth that he has likely fed tens of thousands of people over the decades.

“All I try to do is make Jesus smile,” Conner said. “It warms my heart a million degrees if I think I made him smile today.”

CAREING 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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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@dmdioocese.org.

Parishes across the Diocese had events leading up to Dec. 12 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This display was set up at Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines.

La Promesa

posición fetal. Hay personas en medio de nosotros cuya paciencia y sufrimiento nos ayudan a poner en perspectiva nuestros propios retos de vida, haciendo más amplio nuestro punto de vista y ayudándonos a ver lo tanto que hemos sido al pensar que Dios nos ha dejado a nuestra suerte.

Sigamos los movimientos de los conductores de santidad y devoción, los pastores y aquellas que han ido de las periferias al corazón de los misterios de Dios, hombres y mujeres cuya humanidad es plena y son conocidos por su amistad con Dios.

Nosotros nos atrevemos a decir, “Cumple la promesa,” tanto como peticion al Dios que es plenamente fiel a su Verbo, Y como una antífona de Adviento que resuena dentro de nuestros propios corazones. Somos elevados para vivir como el tipo de personas que debemos ser, quienes deseamos ser. Por la gracia de Dios, se vuelve a encender en nosotros nuestro deseo de dejar que Dios haga su obra dentro nuestros una vez congelados corazones, cuyo mensaje está inscrito por el Espíritu en fuego y fe. De acuerdo con el llamado de Dios, al igual que María y José, en Navidad viajamos a la ciudad (o, mejor aún, a la iglesia) que creimos haber dejado para siempre, solo para encontrar en paz y en la presencia del Niño que nos ha nacido a todos.

Continued from page 2

Bishop blesses new school addition

Bishop William Joensen blessed a new addition at St. Joseph Catholic School in Des Moines on Dec. 3.

Concert to benefit Ghanian seminarians

St. Francis of Assisi Parish is hosting a concert of American Spiritual music featuring opera singer Patricia Bach on Jan. 21 to raise funds for seminarians in the Diocese of Techiman in Ghana.

The Diocese of Techiman was created in 2007 by Pope Benedict XVI. Now the second largest diocese in Ghana, it has 1.2 million people living within it, with a Catholic population of 193,747. It has 30 parishes, each serving about 13 stations or communities.

The Techiman Diocese has about 80 seminarians studying at five seminaries with one in Rome. Blessed with seminarians, the young Diocese is challenged with the cost of seminarian formation.

Patricia Bach Janet Bradford

Some of the seminarians will serve their home Diocese while others may go to other dioceses like Fathers Brobbey and Nyarko.

“Any kind of help which you can individually and collectively give our bishop/Diocese will be greatly appreciated,” said Father Brobbey in a flyer explaining the effort.

The one-hour concert from 4-5 p.m. features Bach, a dramatic soprano who has performed all over the world and in many languages including Russian, Hungarian, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

She will sing 18 American Spirituals, each preceded by a Scripture reading on which the Spiritual is based.

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Wishing you a Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving

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