Vol. 56, No. 4 April 21, 2023

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

‘We are witnesses of all that he did’

Father Emmanuel Missihu, who was visiting from Togo washes feet on Holy Thursday at St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines.

Fathers Jacob Epstein and Luis Mejia carry the Eucharist out of Corpus Christi/Queen of Apostles Church to the parish hall for all-night adoration on Holy Thursday.

Seventh grader Christopher Hernandez-Ruiz, a student at St. Patrick Catholic School in Perry, re-enacts the Stations of the Cross.

At left: Father Michael Amadeo, pastor of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, baptizes Sharissa Johnson at the Easter Vigil.

The Diocese of Des Moines welcomed 112 people into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. Some were catechumens, like Johnson, who had never been baptized into a Christian faith. Others were candidates, those who have been baptized but had not received their First Eucharist or confirmation.

Annual priest assignments announced

Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointments effective July 13.

Father Michael Berner

Father Michael Berner will be retiring after serving as pastor of Our Lady of Grace in Griswold, and St. Timothy in Reno/Cumberland.

Father Berner devoted his 37 years of priestly ministry primarily to serving rural parts of the Des Moines Diocese.

After attending St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs, he attended Creighton University and Notre Dame/Moreau Seminary. He was ordained in 1986 at St. Ambrose Cathedral by Bishop Gerald O’Keefe.

After ordination, he served for three years at Holy Spirit Parish in Creston; St. Edward Parish in Afton; and St. Patrick Parish in Lenox.

In 1989, he began two years of service at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, then served for a year at Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny.

He returned to serving rural areas of the Diocese including: St. Patrick in Audubon; Holy Trinity in Exira; St. Joseph in Earling; St. Peter in Defiance; St. Anne in Logan; Holy Family in Mondamin; St. Patrick in Missouri Valley; Corpus Christi in Council Bluffs; St. Peter and Paul in Atlantic; St. Mary in Anita; Our Lady of Grace in Griswold; and St. Timothy in Reno/Cumberland.

Father Raphael Masabakhwa

Father Raphael Masabakhwa will be going on sick leave.

Originally from Kenya, he attended high school, college and seminary in Kenya. He earned a master’s degree in sociology from Marquette University in Milwaukee, and studied theology at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis.

He was ordained in 1995 at St. Ambrose Cathedral by Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S.


In 2015, he began serving at St. Patrick in Missouri Valley and St. Anne in Logan.

Father Nicholas Smith

Father Nicholas Smith is moving from parochial vicar at Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, to parochial vicar at Christ the King Parish in Des Moines.

Father Smith attended Dowling Catholic High School, St.

Continued on page10
La última domingo de abril está designado como el Día Mundial de Oración por las Vocaciones. Aquí reflexionamos sobre el bautismo, el matrimonio, el sacerdocio, o a la vocación especial de mandar y orientar; muy inteligente y creativo, con cierto romanticismo, cariñoso y divertido, con un sentido de humor que despierta risas.

**Llamado a Rutas Salvajes**

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**Dubuque archbishop retires**

Dubuque Archbishop Michael Jackels' request to retire early for medical reasons was accepted April 4; Dubuque Bishop Emeritus Richard Pates was named apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Dubuque pending the appointment of a new archbishop.

Archbishop Jackels was appointed as Archbishop of Dubuque on April 8, 2013, and led the archdiocese through the Covid-19 pandemic, times of economic prosperity and uncertainty, global conflicts, societal struggles, and the One World War.

By grace and faith, we recognize that to suffer for love's sake, to release and give ourselves away, is our most profound source of joy. Yet, we also have the opportunity to serve in this way, to give thanks and grieve. For this to happen, we need men whose hearts are stirred and drawn by the power of the Holy Spirit, to give witness as a disciple of Jesus, to call others to do the same, and to give thanks and grieve.

**Official**

Bishop William Joensen made the following appointments effective July 13, 2023.

**Rev. Michael Berner**, from pastor of Our Lady of Mercy, Griswold, and St. Timothy, Reno/Cumberland, to retiure.


**Rev. David Fleming**, from pastor of All Saints Urban, Des Moines, Bluffs, to parochial vicar at Christ the King, Des Moines.

**Rev. Nicholas Stark**, from pastor of Our Lady of Mercy, Griswold, and St. Timothy, Reno/Cumberland, remaining pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul, Atlantic, St. Mary Parish, Aniva; Our Lady of Grace, Griswold; and St. Timothy, Reno/Cumberland.

**Rev. Nicholas Smith**, from parochial vicar at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish, Ankeny, to parochial vicar at Our Lady's King Parish, Des Moines.
Sacramental oils blessed, ready for parish use

During the annual diocesan Chrism Mass on March 31, Bishop William Joensen and all the priests of the Diocese called upon the Holy Spirit as they consecrated holy Chrism and blessed oils that will be used in sacraments throughout the year.

Chrism was consecrated. All those to be baptized, confirmed, or ordained as priests or bishops will be anointed with this oil. The Chrism, named for Christ the Anointed One, will also be used to anoint new church buildings and altars that serve the holy and anointed people of God.

Oil of the Catechumens is used for baptism, both for infants and adults.

Oil of the Sick is used in pastoral care of those who are ill or infirm from illness of mind or body, accidents or advanced age.

The Chrism Mass was held at Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Atlantic, a midpoint between the east and the west sides of the Diocese. The Mass rotates with one year in a rural parish and one year at St. Ambrose Cathedral. Next year’s Chrism Mass will be celebrated at the cathedral in Des Moines.

Sacramental oils blessed, ready for parish use

Photo by Julie Williamson

Oils in the above image have been blessed and are ready to be poured into individual containers for the 80 parishes in the Diocese of Des Moines.

About 30 people from three parishes came together to prepare the oils for distribution to parishes.

Several young people preparing for the sacrament of confirmation from Ss. Peter and Paul in Atlantic and St. Patrick in Massena helped prepare the oils for distribution.

At the conclusion of Chrism Mass, representatives from each parish could pick up their order of oils and bring it back to their parish for use throughout the year.

Catholic Charities is turning 100

Founded in September of 1924 by Bishop Thomas W. Drumm, Catholic Charities of Des Moines has grown and expanded in its 99 years of social ministry service to those in need within the Des Moines Diocese.

Were you a member of our team at some point in that journey?

Were you affected by our services as we expanded our programming over the years?

Have you supported our efforts to empower individuals and strengthen families by giving of your time, talents, or treasure?

We want to hear from you!

The centennial celebration in 2024 is sure to be one for the record books!

Help us prepare for this monumental occasion by sharing your stories of impact and inspiration with us.

1. What is/was your relationship with Catholic Charities?
2. Share a story or memory of your employment or engagement at Catholic Charities.
3. What one way should Catholic Charities celebrate its 100 year history/legacy?

Email your responses to bsmit@CatholicCharitiesdm.org.

Catholic Charities is turning 100
Faith family cheers for basketball star

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Caitlin Clark took her home state—and fans far beyond—on a thrilling ride to the University of Iowa women’s basketball team’s first appearance in the national championship game.

Though the Hawkeyes fell to Louisiana State University, Clark and her team demonstrated traits that her Catholic school alma maters—St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School and Dowling Catholic High School, both in West Des Moines—try to instill in all of their students: teamwork and good sportsmanship.

“Catholic education is about formation of the whole person, not just the mind,” said her pastor, Father Joe Pins, of St. Francis Parish. “Obviously athletics is a big part of that as well.”

In a postgame broadcast interview April 2, Clark talked about how her playing, which attracted national attention, affects the next generation of players.

“I want my legacy to be the impact that I have on young kids and the people in the state of Iowa,” she said. “I hope I brought them a lot of joy this season.”

Boy, did she!

“We’re just loving this,” said Shelley Goodell. She and a few dozen St. Francis parishioners gathered at St. Francis Parish March 31 to watch Clark’s Hawkeyes upset top-ranked South Carolina in the Final Four.

“There could not be a more perfect place to cheer her on than the place of her origin and the place where it all started,” Goodell said. “She’s confident. She’s a team player. She’s very humble. I think she represents what’s best about being raised in the Catholic faith. She really is the perfect role model for all the kids.”

Students at St. Francis School see Clark succeeding on the court and are amazed she walked the same halls they do, said parent Maggie DeWitte. Last Friday, the school celebrated their alums by lining the halls and clapping, which they typically do for graduating students.

“It was just a good memory for those kids,” she said.

Clark’s former coach at Dowling Catholic, Kristin Meyer, said Clark and a few other players worked with her to create the three Dowling Catholic Girls Basketball team pillars: tradition, love, and consistency.

“I think Caitlin lives out our team pillars at an extremely high level,” Meyer said. “Caitlin absolutely loved wearing a Dowling Catholic jersey when she was in high school, and representing our school and community. She grew up watching her older cousins and older brother play at Dowling Catholic and hearing stories from her mom and aunts and uncles who attended Dowling Catholic, and her grandfather who coached and was a school counselor here.”

Even in high school, Clark gave her time to positively influence younger players.

“Caitlin was always willing to give time and energy to work with younger players at our youth camps, visit with youth teams and promote Dowling Catholic and girls basketball in general,” Meyer said. “Caitlin knows she is in the spotlight and wants to inspire and encourage young athletes to dream big and then put in the work to achieve those dreams just like she has.”

Clark’s fellow St. Francis parishioners took note of her spending time after games signing autographs and posing for pictures.

“She’s so good about recognizing kids after games,” said Annette Wanek.

Clark has elevated the visibility of women’s basketball overall, said Jim Wanek.

“Quite a few people are following her and commenting on her skills and ability,” he said.

Father Pins said parishioners are just happy that the Clark family is a part of the parish faith family.

“I think we’re all very proud of the young lady whose made a great name for herself and worked hard and is dedicated,” he said.

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Photo credit: UI Athletics
Family joins in online prayer for 1,000+ days

By Elizabeth Elliott
Contribution Writer

For more than 1,000 days, Deacon Reinhold “Renny” Kunze, of St. Brendan Parish in Leon, family and friends have prayed the Divine Mercy chaplet every day online.

They reached 1,000 days on the third Sunday of Advent in 2022.

Deacon Kunze said he mentioned to his five sisters in North Dakota and four children about the chaplet when the coronavirus pandemic began.

“Together we decided to say the chaplet every day at 8 p.m.,” he said. “A different person leads the chaplet and responds from the same location every day. The rest of us silence our phones to eliminate noise and listen and pray.”

Joining each night include his five sisters in North Dakota and granddaughter in Beaumont, Texas, among others.

He said the leader might mention a special intention of the world in need or a personal intention.

“We have invited other people as this is a conference call free of charge,” Kunze said. “We ask them to silence their phone as well.”

The chaplet concludes with the Hail Holy Queen, the Memorial, and an additional prayer Deacon Kunze made up to St. Joseph during the year dedicated to St. Joseph.

“The other leaders had a prayer to St. Joseph as well,” he said. “Last year we prayed a prayer dedicated to the Eucharist. The leader chooses the prayer they may have for this intention. This year it is the same intention.”

Deacon Kunze said he ends with a special blessing for whatever the occasion may be to everyone who is on.

“Then we usually share any news we have with each other if you can get a word in edgewise as all phones come off silent after the final blessing,” he said.

Venerable Father Patrick Peyton, who used radio, television and film to promote the rosary, distributed a booklet on the rosary when Deacon Kunze was a child at home. The Kunze family had the booklet and prayed the rosary and night prayers together.

Father Peyton’s motto was: “A family that prays together, stays together.”

“Now with four children, 15 grandchildren, and 3 and a half great grandchildren, I am so thankful our family practices their faith and we still pray together in such a troubled world,” Deacon Kunze said. “Our son Troy, who is disabled, has never missed a night and Macson, our youngest grandson, loves to lead when it is his turn.”

Anyone is welcome to join their nightly Divine Mercy Chaplet. Dial into a conference number, 1-605-475-4000, a little before 8 p.m. every night. Follow the prompts and dial the access code of 618476# and 1 to confirm. It will ask to announce your name, which is optional.

“Most importantly when you have been connected, please press mute so there is no background noise during prayer,” Deacon Kunze said. “Also feel free to join the visit after prayer.”

Deacon Reinhold “Renny” Kunze, of St. Brendan Parish in Leon, has been praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy every day with his family for more than 1,000 days. Back row left to right: Mary Lindsey, Shelby Smith, Morgan Smith, Corey Lindsey, Tonya (Kunze) Lindsey, McKayla Herink, Troy Kunze, Zach Herink, Theresa (Kunze) Herink, Joe Herink, Tami (Kunze) Smith, and Brad Smith. Middle row, l-r: Tristan Herink, RJ Kunze, Macson Lindsey, Deacon Reinhold Kunze, Sandy Kunze, Phillip Kunze, and Eli (Smith) Vore. Front row, l-r: Trenton Herink, Tony Kunze, Lauren Smith, Maizze Lindsey, and Noah Herink.

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**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 growth;
- Willingness to bear together the yoke that Christ made light.

May your strategic visioning in the Diocese of Des Moines make us even 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.

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**CDA honors students**

Julia Marsh, of St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs, was honored for her essay in the category for grades 4-5. Looking on is Emmie Jen Brown, of Spirit Catholic Radio Network.

By Carol Hollenbeck

**Contributing Writer**

**Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court St. Anthony #330 of Council Bluffs, honored 71 award-winning students who participated in the court’s annual Education Contest.**

The court also presented a $400 scholarship to elementary school Principal Pat Ryan during the March 27 awards dinner at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Council Bluffs.

This year’s theme was “We Walk by Faith, not by Sight.” Award-winning students showed their work during the event. When young people demonstrate their deep faith in this way, it is moving and inspiring to all court members, staff, clergy, and parents who are present.

Members of the court presented awards to students in five categories: essay, computer art, photography, art, and poetry. There are three divisions: grades 4-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12. Three nonparticipant adults do the judging.

The program was emceed by Spirit Catholic Radio host Jen Ibrown, and awards were selected and distributed by past Regent Marzena Hildebrand.

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**Diocese of Des Moines Oración de Visión**

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

Como un pueblo de fe en el sur de Iowa, envía al Espíritu Santo para que encienda en nosotros:
- una sincera conversación para ver, oír, pensar y actuar como Jesús;
- una mayor unidad y lazos de paz;
- un afán misionero para compartir la buena nueva encendiendo al mundo con amor;
- un gran cariño unirnos con otros, especialmente con aquellos que se sienten perdidos o excluidos, y el deseo de cargar juntos con el yugo que se hace ligero con Cristo.

Que nuestra visión estratégica en la Diócesis de Des Moines nos haga aún más enfocados, discernentes 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 cuyos ejemplos esperamos habitar por siempre en común contigo,

-Padre Hijo, y Espíritu Santo- Amen.

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**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.
Longtime minister to the deaf community wins national honor

She retired from her diocesan Deaf Ministry position in June 2020 but continues to serve at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church.

Chicoine has seen an impact to her faith through her ministry. “I think the number one thing I started understanding the Mass,” she said. “I call upon the Holy Spirit to fill me and use me as a vessel and I do that a lot before I start interpreting Mass and other interpreting assignments outside of church.”

She prays to the Holy Spirit for guidance as she interprets.

“When I say that prayer, I can feel his presence and I know that I’m doing God’s work and allowing the priest’s homily, lectors, and the music to use me as an instrument of God’s word and love,” she said. “It’s just a joy and I love serving God’s people.”

“Never have I met someone who advocates for individuals more effectively than Peggy,” Gaffney said. “She’s really an inspiration, providing more opportunities for deaf community.”

St. Francis School gets new administrator

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School in West Des Moines announced new leadership for the 2022-2023 school year.

Jeffry G. Lynch will serve as the school administrator effective July 1. Lynch holds a bachelor’s degree in education from Simpson College and a master of Science degree in Educational Leadership from Drake University.

He brings nearly three decades of expertise in education to the role and a passion for Catholic schools.

“With his love for Catholic education and years of experience, we are excited to have Mr. Lynch lead St. Francis School for years to come,” said Father Joseph Pits, pastor of St. Francis Parish.

Lynch served as a high school teacher and a principal of a Catholic high school in Independence, Missouri. Prior to this, he served at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines as the assistant athletic director and a social studies teacher.

St. Joseph School gets new leadership

St. Joseph Catholic School in Des Moines announced new leadership for the 2023-2024 school year.

Lynn Ernst will be the school administrator effective July 1.

Ernst holds a bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Loras College, a Certificate in Catholic School Leadership, a master’s degree in educational leadership from Creighton University.

“Lynn is a gifted educator and leader,” said Donna Bishop, diocesan superintendent of Schools. “Her dedication to Catholic education is a blessing to the entire St. Joseph community and the Diocese as a whole.”

With nearly three decades of expertise in education and a passion for Catholic schools, Ernst has taught in the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the Diocese of Sioux City, the Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St. Paul, and is currently teaching at St. Anthony Catholic School in Des Moines. As a natural leader and collaborator, she has mentored new teachers while partnering with her peers to develop essential learnings, explore curricula, and promote growth for faculty and students.

Catholic Foundation names new development director

Jodi Halligan has been named the new director of Development for the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa effective July 5.

“We are thrilled to bring Jodi into our team and to tap into her strong educational and interpersonal relationship background,” said Sue McEntee, the foundation’s executive director.

“Jodi’s main focus will be to build planned giving within our Diocese and to work with individuals wanting guidance on how to best support their favorite Catholic entities beyond their lifetime,” McEntee said.

Halligan has been a faith leader and educator within the Diocese for more than 16 years. Most recently, she served as the administrator at St. Joseph Catholic School in Des Moines. She’ll use her skills in education, stewardship, and personal relationship areas to connect faith to philanthropy and investing.
Knights share programs, ideas at convention

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Ruth Archer had been up for 24 hours before Mass began April 16 to conclude the Iowa Knights of Columbus annual convention. She had attended the convention on Saturday, then drove to the community hospital in Perry where she worked a midnight to 6 a.m. shift before returning early Sunday to watch her husband, Jim, serve in the fourth degree honor guard at Mass. Jim is the Grand Knight for the council at St. Patrick Parish in Perry.

“I wanted to experience it with him,” she said.

The Archers were among the many families attending the successful Iowa Knights of Columbus convention held April 14-16 in Des Moines. Wives, children and various organizations such as Iowa Catholic Radio, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Trappist Caskets and Innervisions Healthcare were among those at the Knights convention.

It drew members wanting to visit with each other and learn what’s happening in parish councils and how they might be of better service to their fellow Catholics.

“We both think it’s a good, positive experience for any Knight to be here,” said Rick Brecht, Grand Knight of the council at St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale. “There’s plenty of things for us to learn as leaders in our council.”

His friend, George Cockayne, also of St. Pius X Parish, agreed.

“It’s wonderful to be in a group of like-minded believers in Christ who are all trying to help do the things that Father (Michael) McGivney had the Knights of Columbus on: Charity, fraternity, unity and patriotism.” It was the second convention for him.

Op William Joensen, to the Aid and Support After Pregnancy program. The car seat was passed around for donations. The national office will contribute, too.

Iowa Knights of Columbus State Advocate Jason Follett, of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, shows an infant car seat as an example of the kind of help the Knights offer mothers through the Aid and Support After Pregnancy program. The car seat was passed around for donations. The national office will contribute, too.

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There are a couple of changes in the Endow Iowa tax credit program, one of which encourages donors to give sooner rather than later.

The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa has four options for donors to select from so they can contribute by mid-summer for the broader Catholic community while earning tax credits.

Effective July 1, the Iowa Economic Development Authority will discontinue a waitlist process until the current waitlist is cleared, most likely sometime after Jan. 1, 2024.

It would be in the best interest of donors to make their gifts before July 1, said Maureen Kennedy, diocesan director of Stewardship.

Also, as of this past Jan. 1, there is a cap on the amount of tax credit available per taxpayer. The state lowered the 25 percent tax credit to a maximum of $100,000 per taxpayer. Therefore, no more than $400,000 gift per taxpayer qualifies for the tax credit.

“I encourage anyone who is calling you to priesthood or religious life, contact Father Ross Parker at 515-237-5050 or vocations@dmdiocese.org.

If you or someone you know is interested in discerning whether God is calling you to priesthood or religious life, contact Father Ross Parker at 515-237-5050 or vocations@dmdiocese.org.
Pedaling for religious life across America

By Renee Webb
Contributing Writer

The Diocese of Des Moines will be one of 22 dioceses where Biked4Vocations will be riding through this spring and summer. Fern Greenwell will make the trek through 13 states on her bicycle, pedaling her way across America to raise awareness about religious vocations. She will be accompanied by her husband, Geoffrey, in an RV – deemed the “Vocation Van” – with their two dogs, Zsoltan and Rubic. The couple hails from Tucson, Arizona.

The trek begins

The endeavor begins with Mass celebrated at the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche in St. Augustine, Florida on April 17 with the final destination of Seaside, Oregon in July.

In the Des Moines Diocese, they plan to stop at St. Mary Parish in Shenandoah and St. Peter Church in Council Bluffs on their route across the country.

“Geoffrey and Fern contact us and we agreed to host them,” Miller said. “And we love and support them.”

The Greenwells urge every- one to pray for vocations. They offered a simple suggestion: add- ing to the prayer before meals, such as “and from this table call forth the vocations that will pro- vide for the needs of the sacred ministry in the universal church sufficiently.”

The public is invited to fol- low the Greenwells on Twitter @canonlaw233. They selected that handle in reference to Canon Law 233 which states: “The duty of fostering vocations rests with the entire Christian community so that the needs of the sacred ministry in the universal church are provided for sufficiently. This duty especially binds Christian families, educators, and, in a special way, priests, particularly pastors.”

The Greenwells will also post regularly to a blog at bike4vocations.org/vocations. They can be reached by email at

Pedaling for religious life across America

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Every registrant in the 10th annual Mary’s Meals: Race to Feed Kids in downtown Des Moines will feed one child at a school for one entire year in Malawi.

Mary’s Meals is a non-profit founded by Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, a regular speaker at the biennial Christ Our Life Conferences.

After five years of receiving Mary’s Meals, children in Malawi were 4.4 times more likely to participate in class than those not yet receiving Mary’s Meals, according to website statistics.

Christ Our Life co-director and race volunteer Ellen Miller, a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis, has been volunteering with Mary’s Meals for over a decade. Her son Mike has worked full time for Mary’s Meals for years.

“I’ve seen firsthand the joy, hope and peace that a cup of porridge brings not only to the chil- dren of Mary’s Meals, but to the teachers, volunteers, cooks and their parents,” Miller said. “And we love and support them.”

The 5K walk / run begins at 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 13 at the Women of Achievement Bridge, at 700 Robert D. Ray Drive in Des Moines. The race will start and finish on the east side of the bridge.

Strollers, dogs on leashes and cheerleaders are welcome. Drinks and snacks will be avail- able after the race.

Registration is $35 per person for a family registration – two adults maximum. For those who can’t be there in person, sign up as a virtual runner/walker. Also new this year is a non-timed donation only way to participate. Register at RunSignUp.com and search Mary’s Meals Race to Feed Kids.

Participants from a previous Mary’s Meals run/walk fundraiser support the program that provides food to more than 2.4 million children every school day in some of the poorest communities in the world.

Walk/run supports Mary’s Meals

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Through the Bike4Vocations, Geoffrey said, “We are sowing seeds from Florida to Oregon – perhaps someone will be inspired. We don’t have any metrics in mind, just faith.”

“My terrestrial goal is pretty simple, to ride my bike from point A to point B,” said Fern. “My ce- stellar goal is also pretty simple, that is, to just be ‘out there,’ day after day in kind of a crazy way to express my zeal for Catholic vocations to religious life.”

Even though they have been dream- ing of this trek for years, she reflected on God’s perfect timing: “The church has been undergoing a period of reflection called synodality. The metaphor is that we are journeying together as a church. In this sense, this bike trip represents a personal opportu- nity to understand our church in this spirit of synodality. Between Florida and Oregon is a continent of wonderful Catholic history and experience. Hopefully we may discover something about what a consecrated life means to differ- ent people.”

How to get involved

The Greenwells urge every- one to pray for vocations. They offered a simple suggestion: add- ing to the prayer before meals, such as “and from this table call forth the vocations that will pro- vide for the needs of the sacred ministry in the universal church sufficiently.”

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Hibernians honor clergy, religious
Group presents gift to school

Above: The Hibernians held its annual St Patrick’s Day Dinner

Top photo: The Des Moines Chapter of the Ancient Order of
American College in Rome.

Priest assignments announced, effective this summer

Continued from page 2

ellos sostenían el cuerpo de su amado hijo.

Los últimos doce años han sido una montaña rusa de emociones para sus padres, alternando momentos de fe con incredulidad, pero se han mantenido juntos y han servido a Dios por medio de la sacerdotía a pesar de su dolor. Al final de nuestro aliento, me dieron dos artículos, personales, que habían sido de su hijo: un anillo de una década del rosario, y una piedra de cristal que había escrito con su nombre, “Christus” – la cual le dieron probablemente en un retiro de la universidad.

Aceptó los artículos como objetos sagrados consagrados al sufrimiento, la memoria, al amor inmortal – que se me entregaron como un acto de gracia y amistad – y como un signo de desprendimiento, de confiar su hijo a alguien más. Voy a atesorar ambos objetos, recordar a su familia, orar por ellos y por su hijo Christian. No es simplemente porque la piedra es circular, de color pálido, que parece como una pequeña hostia. Es porque lo que intercambiamos fue un acto Eucarístico, derivando de su significado y referencia de lo que hace Jesús cuando misteriosamente no se lleva al salón de la noche de la pasión de la Pasión cuando se presenta a sí mismo de manera radical al servicio de amor. En un mundo que algún día ha de terminar, su amor es algo que nunca terminará.

Jesucristo es el único Hijo y el don consumado que nos da el Padre. Al asumir la carne, Jesús se embarca en una misión de misericordia. El tiempo de sacrificio es el tiempo de un encuentro, en su palabra de amor, su Cuerpo y su Sangre. Jesús se convierte en un sacerdote sin precedentes, ni siquiera dentro de la historia judía de la salvación, ya que ambos son el sacrificio a nombre de otros, pero él es quien está siendo sacrificado. Jesús es la única persona que puede satisfacer nuestra hambre y sed en sus términos, llenándonos con su presencia y gracia, transformándonos en su Cuerpo. Nuestros corazones están al servicio del Santísimo Sacramento, nuestra participación en la conmemoración Eucarística de “coman esto, beban esto. Esto es unos con otros.” Como lo dijo San Bernardo de Claraval, “La medida del amor es el amor sin medida.”

Por la gracia y la fe, reconocemos que sufriremos por amor, el deber y nos daros a nosotros mismos, es nuestra fuente más profunda de gozo. Además, también símos honestos al confesar que si, en muchas partes de esta idea, misteriosa y referencia de lo que hace Jesús en ellos, sanando, fortaleciendo, liberándolos a sus ovejas perdidas. El tiempo de sacramento, nuestra participación, nos lleva al salón de la noche anterior, cuando Jesús, misteriosamente, se entregó a sí mismo en sacrificio a la cual se entrega a sí mismo de manera radical a la persona de Cristo, la cabeza de los Apóstoles.

“Este es mi Cuerpo, que será entregado por ustedes.” “Esta es mi Sangre, la Sangre de la Alianza Nueva y Eterna que será derramada por ustedes y por todos los hombres.” Nuestra participación en este santo acto, hombres quienes imitan al Buen Pastor quien sale a buscar la oveja perdida. El Cuerpo de Dios necesita sacerdotes que estén dispuestos a lanzarse “a ratas salvajes” en donde la en-
Students support fellow classmate

ICC offers legislative update

By Tom Chapman
Contributing Writer

Here’s an update on what’s been happening at the state Capitol.

Food stamps
After a four-hour debate on Thursday, Senate File 494 passed the House by a vote of 58-41. It goes to the governor for her signature. Five Republicans joined Democrats in opposing the bill. This bill makes significant changes to income verification systems for Medicaid and food stamps (SNAP) in Iowa. It’s our concern that the new requirements create unnecessary hurdles and will lead to some eligible persons losing benefits. The bishops of Iowa signed an interfaith letter opposing the bill.

Pregnancy centers
A subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee has passed Senate File 324, which contains an increased appropriation for the Iowa MOMS maternal support program and a fatherhood engagement initiative. The ICC supports the bill. The Iowa MOMS program provides assistance to crisis pregnancy centers.

Adoption support
The House unanimously passed a bill the ICC supports to double the tax credit for adoptive parents to $10,000 over the next two years. House File 351 goes to the Senate for its consideration.

Weapons
House File 654 passed the House and goes to the Senate. It relates to the carrying and possession of weapons by certain persons in certain locations. The Iowa Catholic Conference opposes the bill.

One of the bill’s provisions would legalize Iowans having a gun locked away in their car while in school driveways or parking lots if they’re dropping off or picking up a student or school staff member. Even though we are sure many people don’t take time to leave their gun at home now, technically this is a Class D felony under current state law. Lawmakers removed provisions that required an employer to allow guns locked away in their parking lot after receiving objections from the business community.

Timetable
Iowa legislators stop getting paid on April 28. That is usually a target date for the end of the legislative session. The biggest issues remaining are the resolution of the property tax cut discussions and the budget bills.

Save the date
The Iowa March for Life will be on Saturday, June 24. A rally will start at 1 p.m. outside the state Capitol on the steps of the west side of the building with the March for Life beginning at 1:45 p.m. The march is an opportunity to proclaim the value of all human life and advocate for the protection of life in state law. Gov. Kim Reynolds, Iowa Attorney General Brent N. Farrand, legislators and pro-life advocates have been invited.

Tom Chapman is the executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference, the official public policy voice of the bishops of Iowa.
Grandma made her life a work of art

By Christina Capechi

Twenty Something

your cheerleader. She saw your special gifts and believed in them.

She never sought the spotlight but preferred her supporting role – keeping books for her husband’s business, keeping house, keeping it all together. She never sang the melody but always found a harmony, enhancing the other singers.

She took certain fundamentals seriously — her Catholic faith, the sacrament of reconciliation, marriage, education — but wasn’t afraid to take her own approach on all the less-crucial stuff. Reverence and mischief.

Her O.H.G.Y.N was strict about weight gain, so she scheduled her appointments for first thing in the morning and then indulge in a hot fudge sundae on the way home. In her 70s and 80s, when she’d meet girlfriend for lunch, they’d ditch the main course and cut straight to dessert.

Grandma deferred to Grandpa but quietly wielded influence, calling to mind the quote in “My Big Fat Greek Wedding”: “the man is the head of the family, but the woman is the neck, and she can turn the head any way she wants.”

Grandpa preferred to drink 2 percent milk, but skim milk seemed healthier and cost less in the ’60s, so Grandma poured skim milk into 2 -percent cartons. The head doesn’t always realize when the neck subtly turns.

Her love of beauty led her to become an artist in her own right — the kind of quiet, German Shepherd type who makes memories and makes gifts: embroidering personalized shirts for her grandchildren, sketching family portraits, crafting whimsical Christmas cards, painting porcelain dolls for each granddaughter in the color of their birthdays.

Those twinking eyes never missed flashes of beauty. She’d relish a sunset or a pair of earrings or a beautifully wrapped gift, setting it on display for days before opening it and occasionally re-wrapping it afterwards.

In her final days, I gave her an early Easter gift wrapped in watercolor florals. She was near death and speaking very little, but she admitted as it only Grandma could.

Her Easter came early this year, skipping the second half of Lent and cutting straight to dessert, her heavenly home.

The rest of us honor her memory when we slow down and seek up the beauty of our midst, sensing — if not fully grasping — that it points us to God.

Grandma lived out the words from St. John Paul II’s letter to architects, who wrote that to build a house one must immerse oneself with the task of crafting their own life: in a sense, they are to make it of a work of art, a masterpiece.

She painted nine decades with such vibrance and joy. Masterpiece, indeed.

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

To be Eucharist like Christ

I love dogs. Not like I love my family, or like I love Jesus, but I really do have a strong affection for dogs.

A few months ago, I came home from teaching and was welcomed by an unfamiliar, rather unpleasant, smell in the convent. Entering our large dining room, I noticed the odor was pungent and indeed was being used! Little Charlie was about 5 months old and it was love at first sight. Although he really did stink.

Earlier that morning, my religious community was serving over 400 families at our weekly food pantry when — seemingly out of nowhere — Charlie showed up soaking up the sun on a cloudy and fully of friendly energy. Sister Kate noticed that this rather large Siberian Husky puppy was causing diners to examine our pantry guests and quickly put him on a leash.

When I met him some hours later, Charlie had already been given the first of several (it was necessary) baths and was making himself at home. He was all cuddles and kisses. Everyone was his friend, and he made sure you knew you were loved.

Through the neighborhood grapevine, I learned that Charlie had been abandoned by his owners. Caring for man’s best friend is not easy: It takes time, attention and resources. The people who had originally owned Charlie must have thought, “Surely the nuns will take care of him.” And we did.

But could we become his forever home?

In religious life (and really all Christian life), a great virtue to cultivate is discernment. Informed discernment for me, that wasn’t kicking in (nor was I really attempting to foster it) when it came to Charlie. All I wanted was to keep him. But with three German Shepherds, our little Claretian community already had our hands full, and for all of his positive character traits, there was not one drop of guard dog in Charlie. At the time we had a small renovation project going on in the convent, and not one “stranger” (construction worker) who entered was bereft of a kiss from him.

Six days after he came to us, we were able to locate a proper Husky rescue, and a few weeks after that, we received the good news that Charlie had been adopted — he had his forever home.

If you and I are honest, we really are looking for the same thing as Charlie, aren’t we? Don’t we have a deep, innate desire for home? And no matter how good it can get this side of heaven, that desire is just not fully satisfied.

During my theology classes, I was blessed to befriend Father Tom Norris, an Irish theologian and a visiting professor to Mundelein Seminary. He had a way of connecting with people and teaching — that is, he left one not only not stunned but speechless and immobile — as if he could open a wellspring of grace, and you couldn’t help but let yourself lovingly soak in the glory. One day, as he was describing the paschal mystery he stated: “Good Friday is when the ‘homeland’ enters exile so that the Church may enter the homeland.”

I was totally blown away; I began to realize in a new way that the paschal mystery wasn’t just something that happened 2,000 years ago.

What happened on Good Friday and what was viciously completed in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus is represented for us in the Eucharist at every Mass. In those moments of consecration, we crush our pride, submit, and say yes entirely to all that God asks of us.

Jesus obeyed the Father, and desires that we also obey God. As Jesus’ disciples, we too must repeat the words: “Here I am, I have come to do your will, O God!”

To be Eucharist-like, like Jesus, signifies being abandoned to the Father’s will. We, too, are broken people either by sin or the circumstances of our lives, and therefore are called to be vessels of his grace and healing.

May we, then, in the Eucharist, lay our brokenness before Jesus and ask that it be transformed in the manner of his death and resurrection by imitating him in being obedient to the Father and serving our brothers and sisters.


Father Livinus Anweting is the administrador of St. Patrick Church in Cornning, and St. Patrick Church in Lenox, Massachusetts.
Struggling to give birth to hope

Father Ron Rolheiser

After Jesus rose from the dead, his first appearances were to women. Why?

One obvious reason might be that it was women who followed him to his death on Good Friday, while the men largely abandoned him.

As well, it was women, not men, who set off for his tomb on Easter morning, hoping to anoint his dead body with spices when he first appeared.

The women in the Gospels who first met the resurrection of Jesus were the first to be given a true reason for hope and were the first to act as midwives of that new birth.

So too must we.

We need to become midwives of hope. But what is hope and how is it given in the resurrection?

Genuine hope is never to be confused with either wishful thinking or tempora
tional optimism. Unlike hope, wishful thinking isn’t based on anything. It’s pure wishing.

Optimism, for its part, takes its root either in a natural temperament (“I always see the bright side of things”) or on how good or bad the evening news looks on a given day. And we know how that can change from day to day.

Hope has a different basis.

Here’s an example: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a deeply faith-filled scientist, was once challenged by an agnostic colleague after making a presentation within which he tried to show how the story of salvation history fits perfectly with the insights of science regarding the origins of the uni
erse and the process of evolution. Teilhard went on to suggest, in line with Ephesians 1, 3-10, that the end of the whole evolu
tionary process will be the union of all things in one great final harmony in Christ.

An agnostic colleague challenged him to this effect: That’s a wonderfully optimistic little schema you propose. But suppose we blow up the world with an atomic bomb. What happens to your opti
mist schema then?

Teilhard answered in words to this ef
tact: If we blow up the world with an atomi
c bomb, that will be a set-back, perhaps for millions of years. But what I propose is going to happen, not because I wish it or because I am optimistic that it will hap
pen. It will happen because God promised it – and in the resurrection God showed that God has the power to deliver on that promise.

What the women who first met the risen Jesus experienced was hope, the kind of hope that is based on God’s promise to vindicate good over evil and life over death, no matter the circumstance, no mat
ter the obstacle, no matter how awful the news might look on a given day, no matter death itself, and no matter whether we are optimistic or pessimistic.

They were the initial midwives help
ing to give birth to that hope. That task is now ours.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-win
ing author. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com or facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Learning from my brother with Down syndrome

Guest Column

By Jacinta Hamilton

March 21 marked the observance of World Down Syndrome Day—a celebra
tion of the countless individuals that bless our world with this condition.

However, the truth is that Down Syndrome is not a death sentence, it’s a blessing.

I believe that we are at a moment of grace in this country where we can call deeper, and have deeper attention to hu
mankind with special needs.

Ultimately, I think the personal sto
dies and the faces attached to the diagnosis are how hearts will be changed.

Fourteen years ago, upon learning that my little brother was born with Down Syndrome and would do some things more slowly than his siblings, my eight-year-old self spontaneously responded with “It’s not a race!”

Words cannot express the blessing that Gabriel is to his parents, six siblings, and to his many other family members and friends.

This young man has had an over
whelmingly powerful influence on those who know and love him. He makes life fuller and richer in every way! Gabriel is the most loving and self-giving person I know, and I believe he has his finger on the
pulse of what life is truly about.

There is not a thing about him I would change. The fullness of Gabriel’s life is not measured by his external abilities, but rather his eternal value as a child of God.

When you entered his ward in hospital, my dad told my siblings and I that there was something extra special about our new brother, Gabriel. In his words, we had a beautiful and healthy baby brother who was truly a blessing to our family.

Dad told us that Gabriel had what is called Down Syndrome. He said that Ga
briel was perfect and needed lots of our love. He also said that it may take him lon
ger to learn how to do certain things. Dad said it was not really a big deal because we were all going to help Gabriel.

I distinctly recall telling him in a manner-of-fact way: “Well, it’s not a race, Dad!”

Where that came from, I cannot tell you. But I do know that this mantra that learning, and achievement are not di
minished by a “disability” still holds true today.

Not knowing what Down Syndrome was at the time, I can now undoubtedly say that my knowledge of it would not have mat
tered. Without being able to express it at the time, I somehow knew Gabriel’s Down Syndrome was only a small part of him, it was not his identity.

“I just felt blessed,” was my mom’s response to what she felt when she learned of Gabriel’s diagnosis at birth.

This was a grace.

This is not meant to indicate that oth
er responses are not genuine or appropri
ate.

However, my mom’s response shows that a special needs diagnosis does not need to be a moment of grief, but rather a celebration of life. My own experiences tell me that yes, a child with special needs will affect your family life, but in the best possible way! Even though Gabriel may not conform to the “ideals of society,” he clearly teaches me that life, learning, and achievement are not a race, and this has permeated all aspects of my life.

For far too long, persons with special
needs have been targeted as not worthy of life.

We were endowed by the Creator to reverence all human life. Seeing all life through a lens that celebrates the dignity, self-worth, and value of each individual and that the immortal soul of each person will en
able us to strongly defend all human life from conception until natural death.

The right to life is unproscriptible and is an exercise of our free will in de
fense of the most vulnerable.

I echo the words of St. John Paul the
Great who said, “Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.” (Apostolic Journey to the United States of America, 1995).

My hope is that Gabriel’s story will inspire others to see the infinite value of individuals with special needs in their own lives.

Jacinta Hamilton is a senior at the Univer
sity of Iowa majoring in elementary educa
tion. She’s a parishioner at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church in Iowa City.

The Catholic Mirror    April 21, 2023
Supreme Court temporarily blocks lower court rulings restricting abortion pills amid legal challenge

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — The U.S. Supreme Court said April 14 it would temporarily keep in place status quo federal regulations regarding the use of an abortion drug, giving the court additional time to consider a lower court's ruling to stay the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s approval of the drug.

The Justice Department and the pharmaceutical company behind the abortion pill had asked the U.S. Supreme Court earlier in the day to intervene in the case.

An order signed by Justice Samuel Alito stayed U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk’s previous ruling in the case until April 19. A coalition of pro-life opponents of misoprostol, the first of two drugs used in a medication or chemical abortion, sought for the FDA’s approval of the drug to be revoked, arguing the government violated its own safety standard when it approved it in 2000.

Proponents of the drug argue it poses no harm to women who use it for abortion, and claim it is being singled out for political reasons. In an April 14 statement, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said, “We hope that the final ruling will result in removal of chemical abortion from the market altogether. Abortion is never the right choice for a difficult or unexpected pregnancy, as it always ends one life and risks another.”

World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is July 23

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Francis has chosen “His mercy is from age to age,” a passage from the Gospel of Luke, as the theme for the 2023 celebration of the World Day for Grandpar- ents and the Elderly.

On the world day, which will be celebrated July 23, Pope Francis will celebrate Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica, according to the Diacony for Laiety, the Family and Life.

Catholic parishes, dioceses, movements and associations are asked to organize local celebrations as well, the dicastery said in a short note April 13.

Pope Francis chose the theme -- which is a line from Mary’s Magnificat in the first chapter of Luke -- to tie the celebration of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly to World Youth Day, which will be celebrated just over a week later, in Lisbon, Portugal, the dicastery said.

The theme for the youth gathering Aug. 1-6 is “Mary arose and went with haste” from Luke 1:39, the dicastery said, and it describes how Mary sets out to visit her elderly cousin Elizabeth and “proclaims, in the Magnificat, the strength of the alliance between…the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly to World Youth Day, which will be celebrated just over a week later, in Lisbon, Portugal, the dicastery said.

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Pope Francis celebrated the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly in 2021 and decreed that it be observed each year on the Sunday closest to the feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, Jesus’ parents and the Elderly in 2021 and decreed that it be observed each year on the Sunday closest to the feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, Jesus’ parents and the Elderly.

Heinlein influenced his ministry.

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Cardinal George biography prompts reflections on his legacy

By Maria Wiering OSV News

(OSV News) — Before he died in 2015, media often asked Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago about his legacy. It was a question he had answered along the lines of having “tried to be a good priest and a good bishop.”

It also was a question he had dis- mitted as “trying to make some of my years here by fitting me into a narrative, a story line.”

However, in 2014, at what would be his last public Mass, he gave the congregation a more robust answer.

“Different people, of course, will ask different questions — some in years here as archbishop,” he said in his homily. “Some of them I might appreciate and some not, but that’s the fate of anyone in a public post, a position of public trust. I have the question I have to ask myself is, ‘What have you done here with my people?’ Are they holier because of your ministry? Are they more gener- ous? More loving toward others?”

In short, you are my legacy.”

Author Michael R. Heinlein includes Cardinal George’s words in “In “Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I.” (OSV), available on Kin- dle and set to be released in paper- back March 6. The 425-page book is the first biography of the prelate, a Chicago native who re- turned to the city as its archbishop in 1997 and who died in 2015.

Cardinal George “filled a particular role in American Ca- tholicism by kind of being ‘thinker in chief,’” Heinlein said.

“He was someone who could step back, lose sight of what really is most important in our faith.”

“Anybody that suffers and offers up his suffering and trial has the polio made him holy.”

“He suffered,” she said.

“Anybody that suffers and offers it up to Christ, which he did, I think God hears. ... He didn’t think of himself, he thought of Christ and his church.”

Heinlein thinks the card-inal’s final witness lies in his choice of resting place. Rather than being interred in a mausoleum with most of Chicago’s other archbishops, including his prede- cessor Cardinal Joseph L. Bernar- din, he chose to be buried next to his parents in All Saints Catholic Cemetery in Des Plaines, Illinois.

Even in death, Cardinal George is accessible to his peo-
Pope Francis confirms trip to Mongolia in September

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis confirmed he will travel to Mongolia in September, becoming the first pope to visit the Asian nation, which is home to a cardinal and some 1,300 Catholics.

In an audience April 14 with executives and staff of IATA Airways, the airline that has taken the pope on his international trips since 2013, he said he will visit Mongolia, a country sandwiched between Russia and China, after traveling to Hungary in late April and France in September.

During an airborne news conference on his return flight from South Sudan in February, the pope told journalists there was a “possibility” that from Paris he will fly to Mongolia.

In August 2022, Pope Francis named Italian Bishop Giorgio Marengo, apostolic prefect of Ulanbaatar, Mongolia, to be the first cardinal based in Mongolia. The cardinal, 48, is the youngest member of the College of Cardinals.

Notre Dame cathedral repairing fire damage

PARIS (OSV News) — Notre Dame Cathedral will get its spire back by the end of 2023, more than four years after it was devastated by a fire.

But to reach its byline of Dec. 8, 2024, the cathedral, a beloved symbol of France, needs to meet three conditions, currently in the works. This includes cleaning and restoration of the interior of the building; restoration of masonry and collapsed vaults; and working to restore the missing spire and frameworks, which, according to the newest statement from the “Rebuild Notre Dame” committee, “is in progress, both on the Île de la Cité and in the workshop.”

More than 1,000 people, spread throughout France, are working simultaneously on the revival of the masterpiece of Gothic art that Notre Dame is, including nearly 500 workers, craftsmen and supervisors who are currently working on the building site, inside the cathedral.

Notre Dame also attracted an unprecedented surge of generosity in the history of French philanthropy, with 340,000 donors from 150 countries raising $929 million in donations.

Over 50,000 massacred in Nigeria for being Christian in the last 14 years

ABUJA, Nigeria (OSV News) — At least 52,250 people have been killed and 14 thousand injured in Nigeria just for being Christian, a new report published April 10 revealed the report, titled “Martyred Christians in Nigeria” and published by the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (InterSoc), says 20,250 of those killed were massacred since 2015, when President Muhammadu Buhari came to power.

The report blames what it calls Buhari’s radical Islamism for those killings. Approximately 34,000 moderate Muslims were also butchered or hacked to death within the same period.

The sheer number of Christians and moderate Muslims killed or displaced has sent chills down the spines of many, including Andrew Boyd, spokesman for Release International, which serves the persecuted church in some 30 countries. He described the report’s finding as “a staggering death toll.”

“It is absolutely appalling that so many Christians are being targeted for their faith and killed in Nigeria, while the Nigerian government seems to stand by and let it happen. It is no less appalling that the international community appears content to stay on the sidelines and watch,” he told OSV News. Meanwhile, Aid to the Church in Need, in its own report, has given voice to the thousands of Christians persecuted for their faith in Nigeria.

Synod’s North American phase concludes with a call to mission

By Gina Christian

OSV News

(OSV News) — The final document for the North American phase of the 2021-2024 Synod on Synodality was released April 12, capturing a process of dialogue and discernment that two participants described as “messy,” joyful and unifying — like the synod itself.

“It’s amazing what comes about when you invoke the Holy Spirit in the conversation,” Julia McStravog, a theologian and co-coordinator of the North American team for the synod’s continental phase, told OSV News.

“The synodal approach provoked a genuine appreciation and joyfulness on the part of the people of God to be able to engage in conversation, even if they were talking about difficult issues,” team co-coordinator Richard Coll told OSV News. Coll also serves as executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development.

Led by Catholic bishops from Canada and the United States, McStravog, Coll and their fellowship members have now synthesized the results of synod listening sessions throughout the two continents, producing a 36-page final document available for download at usccb.org/synod.

According to the USCCB, the Catholic Church in North America is participating in the global synod on the Latin American Episcopal Council, or CELAM, among its long partnership with that conference.

The North American synod team — consisting of eight bishops, three laywomen, two priests, two laymen and two women religious — provided a “report on silence and discussion to distill responses for inclusion in the text,” which forms a response to the Document for the Continental Stage issued by the Holy See’s General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops in October 2022.

The final document for the continental stage from North America, along with the contributions of the six other continental assemblies, will form the basis of the “Instrumentum Laboris,” the global synod’s working document, to be released by the General Secretariat in June.

Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Bishops on Doctrine, who leads the North American team with Canadian

an Bishop Raymond Poisson of Saint-Jérôme-Mont-Laurier, Quebec, presented the document at the Vatican April 12.

Launched by Pope Francis in October 2021, the multi-year synod of bishops — the theme of which is “communion, participation and mission” — seeks to cultivate an ongoing dynamic of discernment, listening, humility and engagement within the Catholic Church.

The North American report highlighted three key themes: the implications of baptism, communion with Christ and one another, and missionary discipleship as a living out of the baptismal call.

“Our baptismal dignity is inseparable from our baptismal responsibility, which sends us forth on mission,” the document stated.

“Every human person possesses the dignity that comes from being created in the image of God. Through baptism, Christians share in an exalted dignity and vocation to holiness, with no inequality based on race, nationality, social condition, or sex, because we are one in Christ Jesus.”

“By virtue of their baptism, participants in the synod’s North American phase expressed a desire for a greater recognition of, and opportunities for, co-responsibility within the church and her mission,” with greater collaboration among the laity and the clergy, including bishops,” said the document. It stressed “there can be no true co-responsibility in the church without fully honoring the dignity of women.”

An “authentic acknowledgment and respect for the gifts and talents of young people is another vital aspect of a co-responsible church in North America,” said the document.

Amid “polarization and a strong pull towards fragmentation,” synod participants in North America emphasized the need to “maintain the centrality of Christ,” especially in the Eucharist.

The document candidly acknowledged that a “signficant threat to communion within the church is a lack of trust, especially between the clergy and the laity, but also between the clergy in general and the lay faithful.”

The document also highlighted that the abuse crisis in particular has caused “major areas of tension in North America,” as have “the historical wrongs found in the residential (and) boarding schools for Indigenous people, which ... included abuse of all kinds,” said the document.

In their introduction to the document, Bishop Flores and Bishop Poisson noted the need to “(make) efforts to listen more effectively to those from whom we have not heard, including many who have been relegated to the margins of our communities, society and church.” They noted their “absence” in the synodal process was “not easily interpreted but was palpably felt.”

Among those often missing from synodal sessions were priests, with bishops acknowledging their responsibility to address that lack “by example and by conveying the transparency and spiritual/pastoral fruitfulness of synodality.”

Synod participants listed women, young people, immigrants, racial or linguistic minorities, LGBTQ+ persons, people who are divorced and civilly remarried without an annullal, and those with varying degrees of physical or mental abilities as marginalized within the church.

Outreach and inclusion of these groups is ultimately driven by the local church, which must actively living out their baptism, McStravog told OSV News.

At the same time, “the bishops really called us to a call ... to reach out to the periphery,” Coll told OSV News, who added that virtual synod sessions enabled broader participation.

Synod participants consistently articulated a longing for better formation in the faith and in Catholic social teaching, the document said.

As the synod process moves into its third phase, Coll and McStravog pointed to the need for humility and openness to God’s will.

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Michael Bormann
General Agent
563-689-5801
michael.bormann@kofc.org

Neil Pfeifer
General Agent
402-379-0180
neil.pfeifer@kofc.org

Walker Bormann
Assistant General Agent
563-216-5800
walker.bormann@kofc.org

Don Ginther
Field Agent
515-456-3411
daniel.ginther@kofc.org

Donnie Kenkel
Field Agent
712-975-9066
donald.kenkel@kofc.org

Rob Ryan
Field Agent
515-450-8753
robert.ryan@kofc.org

Pete Seuntjens
Field Agent
712-880-0044
peter.seuntjens@kofc.org

Gregory Waddle
Field Agent
515-218-3550
gregory.waddle@kofc.org

Justin Waddle
Field Agent
515-975-2688
justin.waddle@kofc.org

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