

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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Journey with Jesus

Hundreds of faithful braved the heat Aug. 19 to celebrate the Eucharist with Mass at the grotto at St. Anthony Church and a Eucharistic procession from St. Anthony to St. Ambrose Cathedral. The event symbolized life's pilgrimage to heaven with the Body and Blood of Jesus as nourishment on the journey.

The diocesan Eucharistic procession also illustrated that the faithful are to bring Jesus into the community through their words and actions.

Pope Francis explained the role of the Eucharist in a 2013 celebration of Corpus Christi by encouraging us to ask ourselves: "Do I let myself be transformed by him (Je-

sus)? Do I let the Lord who gives himself to me, guide me to going out ever more from my little enclosure, in order to give, to share, to love him and others?"

Bishop William Joensen, pictured bottom center, carried the monstrance holding the Eucharist at the start and at the conclusion as the crowd filled the cathedral for prayer.



Photo by Anne Marie Cox



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

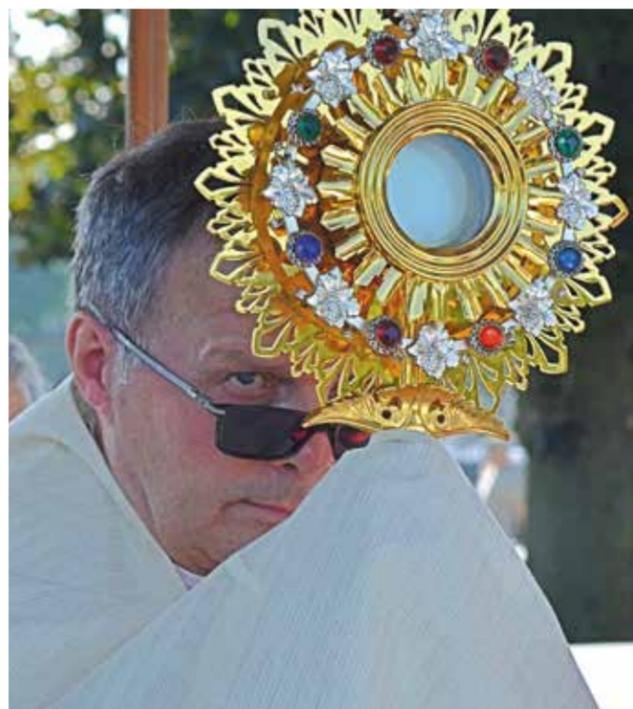


Photo by Robert Nandell



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Catholic Charities kicks off centennial celebration

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Des Moines, is celebrating 100 years of providing care and compassion.

On Thursday, Sept. 14, the organization embarked on its yearlong celebration leading up to its 100th anniversary. It also shared its vision for the future, launching a fundraising effort to

enhance and expand the services provided in all of its programs.

Since 1924, Catholic Charities has been committed to caring for those in need. This last fiscal year, the organization supported more than 25,000 individuals across the Diocese of Des Moines through five vital program areas including: counseling, domestic

violence and sexual assault programming, an emergency family shelter, a food pantry and refugee services.

Catholic Charities has many exciting things planned to celebrate this momentous achievement. The organization encourages people to get involved throughout the year. In addition

to financially supporting the Centennial Fund, you can join the "Catholic Charities 100 Challenge" by collecting 100 personal care items to help alleviate the immediate needs of those currently being served.

For more information on how to get involved in this challenge, contact Catholic Charities

Community Relations Manager Emily Klisares at 515-237-5078 or eklisares@catholiccharitiesdm.org.

To keep informed on all the excitement and for information on upcoming centennial events, follow Catholic Charities on social media at [@CCDesMoines](https://twitter.com/CCDesMoines) or visit catholiccharitiesdm.org.

Women of influence

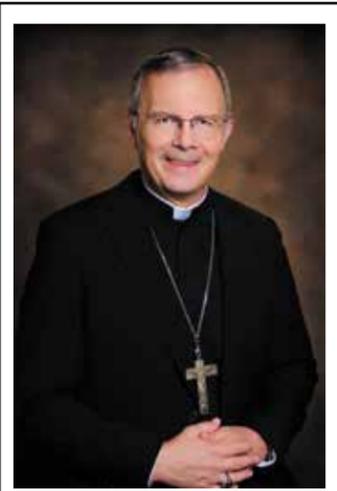
“Influencers” are very popular in our culture these days, and depending on one’s vantage point, that may or may not be a good thing. The term “influencer” has taken on a very commercial sense, as in, “the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience.” It seems this sort of influencer has a vested interest in flexing such power, even if done so with full disclosure, in order to profit or gain recognition and power that comes with amassing even more “hits” on social media.

Ah, for the more original, less transactional form of “influencer”—someone who inspires, guides, and maybe even graces us by devoting herself, himself, primarily to our flourishing, in which she or he then finds joy and satisfaction. Someone for whom self-interest takes a back seat to self-offering. Someone who cares enough to make personal sacrifice on our behalf.

Marketplace influencers are in competition with one another as there is only so much “share” to go around. Spiritual influencers lead us to something beyond themselves; they are mediators of a message and a mystery that transcends any tension between “my good” versus “your good.” They point us by their very person, their beautiful bearing, to goods that are not depleted in being shared. Such goods are “common” in the sense of fostering community on a natural, social level, and communion on an elevated, eternal plane. They draw us closer to God and to others who willingly allow themselves to be influenced in similar ways.

Marketplace influencers can trigger wariness in accord with the old Roman maxim: “caveat emptor”—let the buyer beware. Spiritual influencers, in contrast, evoke trust, generosity, solidarity, charity, hope.

Mary, the mother of Jesus,



Bishop William Joensen

is the exemplar of a spiritual influencer. In these weeks of September rolling into October, we process through what might be referred to as minor Marian celebrations (Mary’s Birthday, The Most Holy Name of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Rosary). We span the spectrum of Mary’s whole life, from the joy given Joachim and Anne at her birth, through the heart-piercing moments at Jesus’ side on Calvary, to the whole array of mysteries that encircle the mission and mystery of her Son. Mary hardly speaks in the Scriptures, but we do well to ponder what her traits were as child, bride, and Mom. How did she affect and move the people around her?

Were her parents spurred to greater observance in their own faith as they saw how their daughter was like a sponge for God’s word? Were her peers playing in the streets, going to synagogue, doing chores for their families or simply hanging out, moved to greater dignity and decency in their speech and attitudes toward one another? Were they inspired to greater devotion and prayer during the whole day beyond simply saying a quick word of thanks

at meals? Did they pay greater attention in their appointed tasks that then allowed them to more fully relax when the day’s tasks were done—and not fall prey to foolish forms of entertainment that left them even more drained?

Mary tells the servants at Cana’s wedding feast, “Do whatever he tells you.” Remarkably, they listen to her, when they might have actually ignored her Son, for then he was pretty much a nobody to them. (Haven’t we all felt at some point like the waiter at our restaurant table is either too busy or are outright ignoring us? But we don’t quite possess Mary’s same compelling influence.)

God the Father, in offering his Son through the mediation of Mary his mother to us, equips special people in our lives to become his influencers. Those who invoke Mary’s intercession and aim to imitate her are given the grace to set aside competition and strive for communion rooted in charity and respect for the dignity that is God’s prior gift to us. We resist the tendency to flex our own powers of attraction and persuasion primarily for our own benefit.

I would like to shine a light on one woman among many in our Diocese who is such an influencer in our own local culture. Barbara Quijano Decker, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Des Moines these past five years, was recently recognized by the Des Moines Business Record as a “Woman of Influence.” The honor is well-deserved, but falls short of capturing the spiritual potency and influence this woman and daughter of the Church exerts upon many in our community, including myself.

A child of Italian and Mexican parents, Barbara witnessed the respect and dignity her parents tendered to her children and to others in the community that surpassed their own sometimes seem-

ing small-minded attitude toward mixed ethnic marriages. She embraced the emphasis on education and hard work gained from her family to the living faith and devotion conveyed by the Sisters of Humility in her parochial school education. She advanced through various degree opportunities at Drake University, culminating in a law degree that enhanced her ability to listen and then offer counsel and wisdom to those above her administration at the Des Moines Register & Tribune, in the corporate sector, in the President’s cabinet at Drake University, and at Mercy Hospital. Eventually, her appointed moment to flex leadership at Mercy College of Health Sciences came. As President of Mercy College, her high-octane professional standard was blended with her grace, equanimity, and self-effacing commitment to the Mercy charism of healing and restoring hope, especially where poverty seems to have a vise-grip on people’s life prospects and perception of self.

Barbara moved on from Mercy after honoring her late parents and humbly accepting the Lord’s call to take on the leadership role at Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Des Moines. We should all be grateful that this woman of exceptional gifts, when many options to “cash in” on her professional achievements lay before her, opted to cast her lot toward the “preferential option for the poor” that is at the heart of the Gospel.

Barbara is so simultaneously graceful and compelling in her presence that she stirs persons to focus their attention and muster their mercy and most generous selves for the sake of something greater—call it the Kingdom of God. Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Des Moines has been God’s work among us for now a century of Spirit and grace brought

to bear on the lives of those who are hurting and at risk of losing hope. Our Diocese now embarks on a yearlong celebration recognizing Catholic Charities’ presence among us under the theme: “A Century of Care and Compassion: Fulfilling Christ’s Promise of Help and Hope.”

Building upon those who preceded her, Barbara oversees efforts to support immigrants and refugees, single moms and their children, and victims of domestic abuse. She has weathered local tension among the initiatives to remedy food insecurity. She and her team tirelessly strive to ensure that adults and children who are struggling with their mental and spiritual health have someone to accompany them toward peace and renewed confidence that life itself and the God who gives life is their ally.

Barbara Decker is a woman of unflagging faith. She is committed to her St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish where she prays and worships, and where she benignly flexes her leadership as she offers her insights and wisdom among parish groups. She lives and breathes the charity of Christ. When I am blessed to engage her in meetings and more casual moments, I come away more committed to my mission as a Diocese, to my own vocation as priest and bishop.

Like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Barbara Decker is an influencer in the best sense of the word.



Barbara Q. Decker, J.D.

Mujeres de Influencia

Los ‘Influentes’ son muy populares en estos días en nuestra cultura y, dependiendo del punto de vista personal, pueden ser o no algo bueno. El término ‘influyente’ ha tomado un sentido muy comercial, como “el poder de afectar las decisiones de compra de otros debido a su autoridad, conocimiento, posición o relación con su audiencia.” Parece que este tipo de influyentes tienen un interés creado en ejercer tal poder, incluso si lo ejercen abiertamente, para poder obtener lucro o para obtener el reconocimiento y poder que conlleva el acumular un mayor número de “vistas” en las redes sociales.

Ah, pero tenemos la forma más original y menos transaccional de ‘influyente’ – alguien que inspira, guía e incluso nos agracia dedicándose a sí mismo buscando principalmente nuestro bienestar, con el cual esta persona encuentra gozo y satisfacción. Alguien que pone en segundo plano su interés personal ante a su entrega. Alguien que se preocupa lo suficiente para hacer sacrificios personales para nuestro beneficio.

Los influyentes mercantiles

compiten unos contra otros ya que solo hay una cantidad limitada de lo que pueden ‘compartir.’ Los influyentes espirituales nos guían a algo más allá de sí mismos; ellos tienen mediadores de un mensaje y de un misterio que trasciende cualquier tensión entre ‘mi bienestar’ contra ‘tu bienestar.’ Ellos nos señalan por medio de su persona misma, su hermosa consideración, a bienes que no se agotan al compartirse. Tales bienes son ‘comunes’ en el sentido de un acogimiento de la comunidad a un nivel natural, social, y una comunión elevada a un plano eterno. Ellos nos acercan más a Dios y a los demás que voluntariamente permiten ser influenciados de maneras similares.

Los influyentes mercantiles pueden activar desconfianza de acuerdo con la antigua máxima Romana: “caveat emptor” – advertencia al comprador. Los influyentes espirituales, por el contrario, evocan confianza, generosidad, solidaridad, caridad, esperanza.

María, la madre de Jesús, es el modelo ejemplar de un influyente espiritual. En estas semanas

de septiembre que nos llevan hacia octubre, pasamos por las que pudiesen considerarse como las celebraciones Marianas menores (el Cumpleaños de María, el Santísimo Nombre de María, Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, Nuestra Señora del Rosario.) Pasamos por todo el espectro de la vida de María, desde el gozo de Joaquín y de Ana en su nacimiento hasta los momentos en que su corazón se destrozaba al lado de Jesús en el Calvario, hacia el conjunto de misterios que encierran la misión y el misterio de su

Hijo. María apenas y habla en las Escrituras, pero hacemos bien en cuestionarnos cuáles eran sus características personales como niña, como esposa, como madre. ¿Cómo impacto y motivó a la gente a su alrededor?

¿Se motivaron sus padres a una mayor observación de su propia fe al ver cómo su hija era algo así como una esponja de la palabra de Dios? ¿Motivó a sus compañeros de juego en las calles,

Continued on page 10

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Official

Bishop William Joensen made the following appointment effective October 9, 2023.

Rev. Guthrie Dolan, from clinical chaplaincy formation to chaplain of the Bishop Drumm Community in Johnston.

Wm. Joensen

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

Guthrie Dolan

Chancellor

Hobby is a 'jar of sunshine' for retired priest

By Ryan Johnson
Contributing Writer

When Father Tim Fitzgerald retired two years ago, a parishioner gave him a unique gift: bees.

A priest for the Diocese of Des Moines for 48 years, Father Fitzgerald recalled how a parishioner generously offered him a beehive upon his retirement.

His final parish where he served as an active priest, Ss. John and Paul Parish in Altoona, boasted several members who were skilled beekeepers. With such experienced pros guiding him, he felt in capable hands.

"We had a beehive when I was growing up in Polk County, and I have always been fascinated by them," said Father Fitzgerald. "One of the parishioners said, 'I'll set you up with the hive, and you need to take an online beginners' course,' which I did. It was very helpful. This year, I have three hives, which is plenty for me, and it's been absolutely fascinating."

During the peak of the season, typically around the summer solstice, each hive can house between 30,000 to 50,000 bees. Just the thought of so many bees might scare away many people, and Father Fitzgerald admitted to feeling a bit timid initially. He quickly overcame his fears and grew to appreciate the bees, their lifecycle and their tireless work ethic.

"It's astounding, they'll die back and will reduce in numbers considerably in the fall," he said. "The lifespan of the bees is only about six weeks."

One aspect of raising bees that has amazed Father Fitzgerald is the connection to nature.

"You're face to face with Mother Nature, and I think it's what I have enjoyed because it's a real collaboration with nature," he said. "It's what Pope Francis talks about ... caring for all creation and more of a partnership with creation rather than seeing ourselves owning creation or above creation. In good St. Francis fashion, he talks about seeing



Photos by Jackie Sparks

Father Tim Fitzgerald collaborates with nature and cares for creation through his beekeeping. Above, he checks his honeybees. At right, he shows a fresh batch of honey.

ourselves as belonging to creation and coming to a far different disposition than that mindset."

Father Fitzgerald is one of approximately 10,000 beekeepers in Iowa. During August, he visited his hives east of Des Moines to harvest the honey. Wearing protective gear, he removed the frames from the hives to collect the nectar.

"The bees are such great engineers," he said. "On the frames, they build little cells that they store the nectar in and dry it."

He collected about 100 pounds of liquid honey from his three hives.

"I'm not too adventurous with making things with honey right yet," he said. "I bottled up what I extracted and strained. It's so bright, it's like a jar of sunshine, especially if you see it in the sunlight. If the sunlight hits

the jar, it's just golden."

The Bible features numerous references to honey. One notable instance is found in the book of Exodus (3:8), where God promises to lead the Israelites to a land flowing with milk and honey, symbolizing abundance.

Did you know that honey served medicinal purposes in ancient times?

"Traditionally, honey possessed medicinal qualities, and honey was used to dress wounds due to its antiseptic [properties] and it's a great sealant," Father Fitzgerald said.

Who could forget the diet of John the Baptist when he resided in the wilderness? The Bible recounts that he subsisted on locusts and wild honey.

No offense to John the Baptist, but Father Fitzgerald prefers his honey on fresh fruit.



We are pleased to announce that St. Francis of Assisi has been chosen as a stop on the three-year world tour of St. Jude's relics.

THE ARM OF ST. JUDE THE APOSTLE
is visiting the United States and is coming to
THE DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

Tuesday, September 26

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
7075 Ashworth Road, West Des Moines, IA 50266

Veneration begins at 1:00 p.m. | Mass begins at 7:00 p.m.
Veneration Ends at 10:00 p.m.

Check www.ApostleOfTheImpossible.com for other locations



THE APOSTLE OF THE
IMPOSSIBLE
TOUR OF THE RElics OF
ST. JUDE THE APOSTLE



Enrollment up as school begins

By Nicole Evans
Contributing Writer

As the autumn breeze starts to rustle the leaves, an unmistakable air of excitement and anticipation envelops the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools.

Total enrollment across the Diocese grew by more than 400 students compared to last year and the schools are abuzz with activity, new possibilities, and an overwhelming sense of growth and community.

The 2023-2024 school year and this influx of young minds promise to enrich the educational experience for all students across the diocese.

A Flourishing Community

The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools have long been known for their commitment to academic excellence and holistic development.

The increased enrollment speaks volumes about the trust parents and students have in the system, knowing that their children will receive a well-rounded education that prioritizes faith, character, and knowledge, according to diocesan Schools Superintendent Donna Bishop.

Teachers and administrators were excited to welcome new students into their classrooms in mid-August, eager to share their passion for learning and dedica-

tion to nurturing each child's potential, she said.

Enhanced Opportunities

With the enrollment growth, the diocesan schools can now expand their offerings and enhance student opportunities.

The increased resources allow for new programs, extracurricular activities, and equitable teacher pay. From STEM initiatives and art clubs to sports teams and community service projects, students have various choices to explore their interests and passions.

Even with this added enrollment, the Diocese empowers its teachers to provide personalized attention to each student. This



Christ the King Parish in Des Moines blessed children's backpacks before school began.

fosters a deeper connection between teachers and their students, creating an environment where questions are encouraged, talents are nurtured, and individual progress is valued. As a result, diocesan schools are better equipped to prepare students for academic success, leadership roles, and responsible citizenship in the wider community, Bishop said.

Cultivating Diversity, Inclusion

Catholic schools in the Dio-

cese have always embraced diversity and sought to build inclusive communities where students from all backgrounds can flourish. The enrollment growth reflects the commitment of diocesan schools to create an environment that celebrates individual differences and fosters mutual respect.

The addition of new students brings a wealth of cultural, ethnic, and experiential diversity that enriches the learning experience for everyone.

CARING ABOUT YOUR LOSS AND SHARING IN YOUR FAITH

Prayer to St. Joseph for a Happy Death

*O blessed Joseph who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary,
obtain for me, I beseech you, the grace of a happy death.*

*In that hour of dread and anguish, assist me by your presence,
and protect me by your power against
the enemies of your salvation.*

*Into your sacred hands, living and dying,
Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.*

Amen

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

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pancake breakfast

please join us!

The 62nd Annual Pancake Breakfast will be held on Sunday, October 29th at the Varied Industries Building at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Please join us for this great DCHS tradition which brings the community together and raises money to support student activities.

To volunteer, donate baked goods, purchase tickets and learn about sponsorship opportunities, please visit www.dowlingcatholic.org/pancake-breakfast

Two new spiritual directors want to help folks find God in their lives

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

The Diocese has two newly trained women who can help others see how God works in their lives through spiritual direction.

Cathy Jordan, of St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines, completed a program at the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La-Crosse, Wisconsin.

April Young, of St. Theresa Parish in Des Moines, completed a program at Creighton University in Omaha.

Both Jordan and Young had visited with spiritual directors for years. Through prayer, discussion and discovery they came to see how God is present in their lives. They were so touched by the depth their own spiritual lives had reached through spiritual direction, they want to help others find that peace and love.

Father Dan Krettek, who assists at Emmaus House in retirement after having been on staff there, encouraged both Jordan and Young to be trained as spiritual directors. He wanted to support lay women in their ministry. And, he said, spiritual direction is not reserved for priests or professed religious. Rather, “real life regular people do spiritual direction as well.”

Cathy Jordan

Jordan’s experience with spiritual direction carved out a space in her life that allowed her to pay attention, to slow down, and see how God was active in her life.

“Through my spiritual director’s deep listening and questions, I was encouraged to continually go deeper and through that I experienced a greater capacity for love for God, love for myself, love for others, and really love for all of creation,” she said.

Over time, Jordan could see a change in herself.

“I thought this gift was given to me and I should see if I could give it to others,” she said.

She found a program through the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and began about the same time the pandemic changed everyone’s lives.

“I think that was another catalyst” in the decision to become a spiritual director, she said. “When that happened, I thought I need to look at this more closely because I can see how important it is for us to listen to each other.”

Spiritual direction is “an act of deep listening of one person to another. It is not fixing. It’s not therapy,” Jordan said. “It’s allowing a person to tell their own story and hear their own story for the first time. They realize where God is present in their lives where maybe they didn’t realize it be-

fore.”

She’s not sure how God will lead her to use her talent as a spiritual director, but she’s sure it’s needed in society.

“If everyone was in spiritual direction, I can’t imagine what the world would be like. I just think it would be a more compassionate and kind place,” she said.

April Young

Young was in her 20s working as an administrative assistant and wondering what she ought to do with her life when someone recommended she get a spiritual director. She was thinking God might be calling her to religious life.

Turns out, he wasn’t.

But Young kept going for spiritual direction because it was so much more than she thought it would be.

“It opened up way more than I ever expected. I thought spiritual direction was, like, pray these three prayers and call me in the morning,” she said. “It helped me begin to understand and listen to the movements in my life and understand how God was working within my own gifts and where I really felt like I was in the right place at the right time, and where I was feeling consolation and desolation.”

Her path to fulfilling her vocation was circuitous.

She thought she would be a



Cathy Jordan



April Young

hospital chaplain and volunteered at Mercy Hospice to get a flavor for that ministry. She became a pastoral minister at St. Theresa Church in Des Moines and spent time at UnityPoint Hospital to get experience while returning to school to earn a master’s degree in pastoral care.

Along the way, she discovered she preferred pastoral care because she liked developing longer-term relationships than hospital chaplaincy allowed.

After working a couple of years at St. Theresa, she served at Bishop Drumm, where she continued to examine what she really liked to do.

All along this route, she was still talking with a spiritual director.

“That’s when I began, again, to listen to what I felt would be the best fit for me” and she applied to Creighton University’s spiritual direction formation program.

“It was transformative beyond my wildest imagination,” Young said. “In the last year, I’ve experienced an absolutely phe-

nominal amount of transformation and healing.”

Inspired by an image of Mary meeting her cousin, Elizabeth, Young says this is the scriptural foundation for her ministry.

“It’s a privilege and an honor to hear how God is working in people’s lives and allow myself to be a vessel, to have God work through me in that relationship,” Young said.

Young, who works at Emmaus House in Urbandale, now accompanies others through spiritual direction while continuing her own journey with her spiritual director.

She said: “Who is a good candidate for spiritual direction? Anyone who wants to grow in their relationship with God.”

Resource

To find a spiritual director in the Des Moines Diocese, go to dmdiocese.org/spiritualdirectors.

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 the 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 Oct. 7.

OUR LADY’S PROMISE

Then Mary held out her thorn-wreathed Heart and said, “*See, my daughter, my Heart encircled 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 month, 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.*”

All of the following facts, statements, or prayers are from a book “Fatima For Today” by Father Andrew Apostoli, CFR.

- Our Blessed Mother in all six appearances to the children advocated the recitation of the rosary daily.
- God wants to establish a devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as a way to save souls from hell.
- Mary’s Immaculate Heart will triumph.

Blessed Mother to Sr. Lucia

• “I am the Lady of the Rosary” (p 123, Oct. 13, 1917)

Prayers of Fatima

Pardon Prayer

My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You! I beg pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love you.

Angel of Peace, Spring 1916

Angel’s Prayer

O Most holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly. I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He is offended. By the infinite merits of the Sacred heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg the conversion of poor sinners.

Angel of Peace, Fall 1916

Eucharistic Prayer

Most Holy Trinity, I adore You! My God, my God, I love You in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Our Lady of Fatima, May 13, 1917

Around the Diocese

Quinceañera celebrates life, passage to adulthood

Sept. 17-19 Sunday-Tuesday Parish Mission

WEST DES MOINES – Alive in Christ with Eucharistic Amazement will be held at St. Francis of Assisi Parish. Come for three spiritual talks from Dominican Sister Joseph Andrew Bogdanowicz. Holy Hour begins at 6 p.m. with adoration. The presentation begins at 7 p.m. All are welcome.

Oct. 1 Sunday Breakfast

INDIANOLA – The Indianola Knights of Columbus will be hosting a breakfast with pancakes and egg bake and more after the 8 a.m. Mass in the multi-purpose room next to the worship area from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Your free-will donation will be used to fund our scholarship program.



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Six girls enjoyed their quinceañera, a traditional celebration for 15-year-old girls thanking God for life and noting the passage from childhood to adulthood. Bishop William Joensen celebrated a Mass Sept. 2 at St. Ambrose Cathedral for the girls and their families. The celebration is common in Mexico, Central and South America and the Carribean.

Sept. 22-23 Friday-Saturday Parish Retreat

COUNCIL BLUFFS – Corpus Christi & St. Patrick Catholic Community are hosting a parish retreat with talks given by the Knights of the Holy Eucharist. We will be hearing about “Life in Providence,” “Eucharistic Miracles,” and “God’s Divine Life of Mercy.” All are welcome to join! Retreat will be held at St. Patrick Catholic Church, 4 Valley View Dr. Retreat schedule is as follows: Sept. 22, 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. supper provided; and Sept. 23, 8 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. breakfast and lunch provided. Cost is free. To sign up call 712-323-2916 or email secretary@corpuschristia.com.

Oct. 12-14 Thurs. - Sat. Called & Gifted Team Training

DES MOINES -- Want to be part of our team to help others discern their charisms? If you’ve previously completed the Called & Gifted workshop, gifts interview and discernment, you can apply. Training will be Oct 12-14 and Oct 20-21, both online and in person. To apply, visit siena.org/des-moines-ia-virtual-team-training Questions? Contact Vivian Day at 515-440-1030 or vday@saintfrancischurch.org

Sept. 26 Tuesday St. Jude Relic

WEST DES MOINES – A relic of St. Jude Thaddeus will be available for veneration at St. Francis of Assisi Church starting at 1 p.m. Veneration will pause for 7 p.m. Mass, then resume until 10 p.m. Go to saintfrancischurch.org/ for details.

Oct 20, 27 Nov 3, 10 Fridays Fish & Chicken dinners

INDIANOLA – The Indianola Knights of Columbus will be hosting their annual Fall Fish & Chicken dinners at St. Thomas Aquinas parish hall. Adults & carry-outs are \$13, children (6 to 12) are \$6, children 5 and under are free. Watch the October edition of The Catholic Mirror for more details.

Sisters strengthen bond with Council Bluffs parish



A relationship between the Missionary Sisters of the Divine Spirit and Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs began in 2018. Two sisters from Colombia visited Corpus Christi Parish in mid-September. Left to right: Sister Cindy Rodriguez; Betty Vargas, Corpus Christi Parish secretary; Sister Cielo Patino Castro; Monika Carroll, parish communications coordinator; Peggy McClellan, Sister Parish chairperson.

Sept. 28 Thursday Bishop Drumm Garage Sale

JOHNSTON -- This is the last day for the summer garage sale Questions? Call Helen Thull at 515-669-4621.

Nov 4-5, Sat – Sun Fall Craft Show

DES MOINES – Christ the King Parish is holding its annual fall craft show Saturday from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sunday from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Christ the King parish hall, 5711 SW 9th St. Interested vendors/crafters can contact Rita Holtz at 515-971-6771.



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Local advocate chapter supports Catholic Relief Services

By Ryan Johnson
Contributing Writer

You may not recognize the name Catholic Relief Services, or CRS, but there's a good chance you remember the CRS rice bowls during Lent that encourage solidarity with the needy in other countries.

Starting in 2021, a group in the Diocese of Des Moines formally organized a local chapter of Catholic Relief Services. Started just before the pandemic, the group only recently got going full steam.

Paulette Chapman is a member of the new advocacy group, collaborating with other individuals from the Diocese to promote the efforts of Catholic Relief Services.

"Catholic Relief Services is the overseas development branch of the Catholic Church in the United States," Chapman said. "CRS works to eliminate poverty and hunger overseas. That comes in the form of trying to assist people in developing countries to become self-sufficient ...

addressing natural disasters and providing assistance and recovery afterward."

This summer, Chapman and other members of the group met with staff for U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley and U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst to speak about portions of the farm bill. Since then, the group also met with U.S. Rep. Zach Nunn to advocate for a humanitarian program called Food for Peace.

"Food for Peace is funded through the farm bill that provides funding for helping folks in developing countries become self-sufficient with their farming practices," Chapman said. "Part of that is adjusting to our changing climate and helping people in different parts of the world figure out how to adapt the farming practices to the climate changes."

Additionally, CRS advocates for disaster risk reduction, and the farm bill addresses the issue to help people in developing nations.

"It isn't just providing food assistance, it's trying to help them become self-sufficient," Chapman said. "We support programs



Photo by Liza Suttten

Father Tim Fitzgerald, Tom Chapman, Paulette Chapman, Kathy Avey, Phil Kohler, and U.S. Rep. Zach Nunn.

that send food overseas where necessary, but prioritize getting food from local markets to the people who need it so that it also helps develop the economy."

An example of a domestic policy that U.S. bishops advocate for is the SNAP program. Chapman says when the group met with the U.S. senators from Iowa and Rep. Nunn, they mentioned funding for the SNAP program as part of the farm bill.

"There are folks in our country who are very much struggling

to meet their food needs, and we don't want to see more cuts to the SNAP program," Chapman said.

The local CRS chapter in the Diocese of Des Moines -- a local iteration of what used to be called the Global Advocacy Team -- intends to work with Catholics throughout southwest Iowa to bring these important human life issues to light. With the support of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chapman believes the local chapters can raise awareness for CRS and encourage more

grassroots support and advocacy. For instance, encouraging Catholics to write letters to the editor of their local newspaper, supporting the ongoing efforts for CRS.

"CRS is grounded in the principles of Catholic social teaching, the life and dignity of the human person," Chapman said.

If you would like more information or want to get involved in the local chapter, please contact John Huynh at jhuynh@dm-diocese.org.

Bishop's celebration a success



The second annual Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools on Aug. 26 saluted the legacy of Catholic education in schools in the Diocese of Des Moines and honored three individuals for their contributions to Catholic education. Hundreds of supporters attended. The event raised nearly \$56,000 to support special education and social-emotional programming for students attending diocesan Catholic schools. Pictured above is Anne Levine, named Teacher of the Year, surrounded by her pastor, St. Malachy School administrator and colleagues.

Catechetical leaders focus on evangelization



Mary Heinrich
St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines



Carol Poole
St. Patrick Parish in Missouri Valley

Parish faith leaders gathered Aug. 22 for their Summer Ministry Enrichment Day at St. John Parish in Adel. The group heard Bishop William Joensen talk about sharing the Church's evangelizing mission. They also heard a discussion on servant leadership, a panel discussion featuring four faith leaders from around the Diocese, and updates on the Why Mass? evangelization tool.



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Knights launch initiative to strengthen faith

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Faith and charity are the two pillars upon which Blessed Michael McGivney built the Knights of Columbus 140 years ago.

Today, there is renewed emphasis on the faith part.

Parishes across the Des Moines Diocese will start to see this take shape as their councils adapt a new initiative called Cor to their local needs.

“Cor” is Latin for “heart.”

Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly last month unveiled the new Cor initiative and encouraged all Knights of Columbus councils to consider how they might touch the hearts of men – Catholic or not – through prayer, faith formation, and fraternity.

In Des Moines, the Basilica of St. John is a frontrunner in adopting this new initiative.

Three men heard about the new initiative and brought the fledgling Cor idea to the parish by

hosting an evening that included prayer, a faith-based discussion, and an opportunity for socializing to build fraternity. They opened the meeting up to all men – Catholic or not – in August and September and they’re planning another for October.

“I heard about it when it was in its infancy and it was being piloted in other states,” said Greg Waddle, a parishioner at St. John’s and a member of the Knights. “Men need fraternity and brotherhood to grow in their faith. It’s not something that is readily available in society today.”

Deacon Mark Campbell agreed.

“I don’t think we need to shy away from sharing how Jesus has impacted our lives, whether it’s in reconciliation, physical or spiritual healing, or an encounter that led us to a love we’ve never known before,” he said. “It would do the world great benefit to make these stories known.”

Each council’s version of



Cor is a new faith initiative launched by the Knights of Columbus. The next gathering organized by the Basilica of St. John is Sept. 19 at the Tea Room in Des Moines. Doors open at 7:30 p.m., talk starts at 8 p.m. For more information, contact Greg Waddle at 515-218-3550.

Cor may look a little different. One parish may have a men’s Bible study and another might have some guys gathered in a church basement for coffee and donuts on a Tuesday morning. At the last

parish Cor event, a panel of men spoke about the joys and struggles of being a husband and father.

A parish Cor group doesn’t have to be new; it could be an existing regularly scheduled event as long as it has the three facets

of prayer, faith formation and fraternity.

Waddle said: “It’s easy to get isolated and feel alone if we’re not involved in a community that shares our values.”

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

Catholic radio expands in Iowa

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

The Iowa Catholic Radio Network has expanded through a major acquisition of a 34,000-watt powerhouse station, 105.3FM based in Chariton.

Its 600-foot tower is situated just north of Rathbun Lake.

St. Gabriel Communications, the nonprofit parent of Iowa Catholic Radio, agreed May 24 to purchase the station from Iowa-based Honey Creek Broadcasting, LLC.

Catholic programming began airing on Sept. 1.

“A station of this quality is very difficult to come by,” said Matt Willkom, director of Programming and Network Development for Iowa Catholic Radio. “Usually, an FM of this size will get gobbled up by a huge radio conglomerate with deep pockets.”

Willkom reached out to the owner of Honey Creek Broadcasting, who was willing to talk about a sale to another Iowa-based entity, Willkom said.

“This was not a gift. It

was a strategic acquisition with the long-term goal of covering as much of the state as possible and shoring up some of the gaps in coverage even within the Des Moines metro area,” said Willkom. “That’s always been the calling that the board (of directors) has felt from the beginning.”

The former oldies station with the call letters KEDB now has a new identity as KIHC, with the IHC representing an abbreviation of Jesus’ name using Greek letters, also known as a Christogram.

The acquisition expands the Iowa Catholic Radio Network’s reach well into the Davenport Diocese and the Diocese of Jefferson City, said Willkom. Cities within the expanded listening area include Albia, Centerville, Ottumwa, Indianola, Osceola, Leon, Knoxville, Pella, Bloomfield, and Unionville, Missouri.

Residents south of Des Moines will receive local forecasts and local events will be promoted, yet they’ll get most of the same programming as residents in the Des Moines metro area receive.

Apostle’s relic coming to Iowa

A relic of St. Jude Thaddeus, known as the Apostle of the Impossible, is coming to St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines on Tuesday, Sept. 26.

The relic of the apostle of Jesus will be available for veneration beginning at 1 p.m. and continuing until shortly before a 7 p.m. Mass in the saint’s honor. Following Mass, veneration will resume until 10 p.m.

Beginning this month and for eight months, the relic of St. Jude, which has been venerated in Rome since ancient times, will be on a pilgrimage in the United States with stops in 100 cities.

The visit to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church is part of the pilgrimage approved by the

Vatican to strengthen the faith of followers of Jesus and to raise funds for the restoration of the Shrine of St. Jude in Italy.

A Vatican-sponsored organization called Treasures of the Church coordinates the pilgrimage of the relic. Any donations received during the day will be used to pay expenses for the relic’s journey and for the restoration of the Shrine of St. Jude.

An arm of the saint was separated from St. Jude’s remains several hundred years ago and placed in a simple wooden reliquary carved in the shape of an upright arm in the gesture of imparting a blessing.

Relics are important within the Catholic faith because Scrip-

ture teaches that God acts through relics, particularly in terms of healing. It is important to note that the cause of healing is God, the relics are a means through which he acts.

St. Jude is known as the saint of the impossible because of the many miracles associated with him, and because he is one to whom people turn when they are desperate and have tried everything else. He was also one of the twelve apostles and a cousin of Jesus. At some point after his death, his body was transferred to Rome and placed in a crypt within the original St. Peter’s Basilica.

For more information, go to saintfrancischurch.org.

Seminarian appeal weekend



The Diocese invites the faithful in all 80 parishes to participate in the annual Seminarian Appeal which supports 14 seminarians studying and discerning a vocation to the priesthood.

Funds collected in this appeal cover tuition, room and board, and provide a small monthly stipend for our pre-theologians and theologians. Tuition includes the whole range of formative services afforded to the Des Moines seminarians.

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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@polkcountyia.gov.

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Mujeres de Influencia

Continued from page 2

a los que iban a la sinagoga, a los que hacían los deberes de sus casas o simplemente a quienes frecuentaba, a una mayor dignidad y presencia en su hablar y en sus actitudes unos con otros? ¿Inspiró a una mayor devoción a la oración durante todo el día, más allá de unas simples palabras de agradecimiento antes de sus comidas? ¿Pusieron mayor atención en las tareas que les asignaban para que esto les permitiera relajarse más plenamente al terminar las tareas diarias – y no caer presas a las formas tontas de entretenimiento que los dejaba aún más desgastados?

María les dice a los sirvientes en la fiesta de las bodas de Caná, “Hagan lo que él les diga.” Impresionantemente, la escuchan, cuando ellos pudieron haber ignorado a su Hijo, ya que entonces era prácticamente un desconocido. (¿No hemos sentido en algún momento como si el mesero de nuestra mesa en el restaurante está demasiado ocupado o simplemente nos ignora? No tenemos la

misma influencia convincente de María.)

Dios Padre, al ofrecernos a su Hijo a través de la mediación de María su madre, equipa a gente especial en nuestras vidas para que se conviertan en influyentes. Aquellos que invocan la intercesión de María y que buscan imitarle reciben la gracia de poner la competencia a un lado y a esforzarse por una comunión fundada en la caridad y el respeto por la dignidad que es el principal don que Dios nos da. Nos resistimos a la tendencia de mostrar nuestros propios poderes de atracción y persuasión en beneficio propio.

Quisiera poner el reflector sobre una mujer entre muchas en nuestra Diócesis que es una influyente en nuestra propia cultura local. Bárbara Quijano Decker, Directora Ejecutiva de Caridades Católicas de la Diócesis de Des Moines (Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Des Moines, por su nombre en inglés) los pasados cinco años, fue reconocida por el Des Moines Business Record (publicación Registro Empresari-

al de Des Moines, por su nombre en inglés) como “Mujer de Influencia.” El honor es bien merecido, pero se queda corto en capturar la potencia e influencia espiritual que ejerce esta mujer e hija de la Iglesia sobre tantos en nuestra comunidad, incluyéndome a mí mismo.

Nacida de padres italianos y mexicanos, Bárbara fue testigo del respeto y de la dignidad que manifestaban sus padres hacia sus hijos y hacia otros en la comunidad más allá de la propia, pasando por alto lo que en veces era una actitud mezquina hacia los matrimonios entre diferentes grupos étnicos. Ella acogió el énfasis en la educación y del arduo trabajo que recibió de su familia y la vida en la fe y devoción que le ofrecieron las Hermanas de la Humildad durante su educación escolar parroquial. Ella avanzó por varios títulos en la Universidad de Drake, culminando con un título en derecho que incrementó su capacidad de escuchar y de ofrecer consejo y su sabiduría a aquellos a quienes respondía durante su administración en el Des Moines Register & Tribune, en el sector corporativo, en el gabinete del presidente de la Universidad de Drake y en el Hospital Mercy. Eventualmente, llegó el momento de mostrar su liderazgo en el Colegio Mercy de Ciencias de la Salud (Mercy College of Health Sciences, por su nombre en inglés.) Como presidente de Mercy

College, su alto potencial en estándares profesionales combinó su gracia, ecuanimidad y abnegado compromiso con el carisma de Mercy en sanar y restaurar la esperanza, especialmente en situaciones donde la pobreza parece limitar las perspectivas de vida de las personas, así como su propia autopercepción.

Bárbara dejó Mercy luego de rendir honores a sus fallecidos padres y aceptó humildemente el llamado del Señor para asumir el liderazgo de Caridades Católicas de la Diócesis de Des Moines. Debemos de estar todos agradecidos con los excepcionales dones de esta mujer, quien dentro de las múltiples oportunidades que se le presentaron para beneficiarse financieramente, prefirió probar su suerte en la “opción preferencial por los pobres” que está en el centro del Evangelio.

Bárbara tiene una presencia que es de gracia y de apremio de modo que motiva a las personas a enfocar su atención y combinar su misericordia y la generosidad de sí mismos por algo más grande – llámémosle el Reino de Dios. Caridades Católicas en la Diócesis de Des Moines ha sido el trabajo de Dios entre nosotros ya por un siglo de espíritu y gracia que lleva a apoyar las vidas de aquellos que sufren y de quienes están en riesgo de perder la esperanza. Nuestra Diócesis comienza ahora un año de celebraciones reconociendo la presencia de Caridades Católicas

entre nosotros bajo el tema: “Un Siglo de Cuidado y Compasión: Cumpliendo la Promesa de Cristo de Ayuda y Esperanza.”

Construido por aquellos que le precedieron, Bárbara supervisa los esfuerzos para apoyar inmigrantes y refugiados, madres solteras y a sus hijos, así como a las víctimas de abuso doméstico. Ella ha enfrentado las tensiones locales entre las iniciativas para remediar la inseguridad alimentaria. Ella y su equipo se esfuerzan incesantemente para asegurarse que tanto adultos como niños que enfrentan problemas de salud mental y espiritual tengan alguien quien los acompañe en su camino hacia la paz y una confianza renovada, que es vida misma y en que, el Dios que es vida, es su aliado.

Bárbara Decker es una mujer de una fe inquebrantable. Ella está comprometida en su Parroquia de la Catedral de San Ambrosio en donde ora y alaba, y donde ella benignamente ejerce su liderazgo al ofrecer sus percepciones y sabiduría entre los diversos grupos parroquiales. Ella vive y respira la caridad de Cristo. Cuando tengo la bendición de compartir con ella en reuniones, e incluso en momentos casuales, salgo más comprometido con nuestra misión como Diócesis, con mi propia vocación como sacerdote y obispo.

Al igual que María, la Madre de Jesús, Bárbara Decker es influyente en el mejor sentido de la palabra.

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In Memoriam
The Wolf And The Lamb Will Lie Down Together
(Is. 11:6)

Monday, September 18

Agnus Dei
Like a Gentle Lamb Led To The Slaughter
(Jer. 11:19)

Tuesday, September 19

Mary
I Watched As The Lamb Opened The First of Seven Seals
(Rev. 6:1)

All Are Welcome

Decoding doubt through Narnia and Nazareth

Empirical and Ethereal: Decoding Doubt through Narnia and Nazareth

The journey of faith is difficult, often entangled with moments of doubt. St. John's Gospel narrates a touching instance when Thomas the Apostle struggles with his skepticism about the resurrection. He needs tangible proof, a touch of the risen Jesus' wounds, before he can believe. And once allowed this evidence, his doubt is transformed into unshakable faith, and he exclaims, "My Lord and My God!" (Jn 20:28)

This transformation from doubt to faith is mirrored in the character of Eustace Scrubb from C.S. Lewis' *Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Eustace, a young man rooted in empirical evidence and skeptical of the unseen, initially dismisses the magical world of Narnia. He needs evidence that aligns with his worldview. While Thomas required physical proof to

Food for the Journey

By John Huynh



believe, Eustace is even more resistant. He only trusts empirical evidence when it suits his perception. His journey through Narnia presents him with countless wonders, yet he denies their truth, attributing them to illusion or fantasy.

Thomas represents the skeptic who is willing to believe when provided with proof. Eustace, however, embodies the skeptic who remains resistant, even in the face of undeniable evidence. This stark contrast offers insights into our mod-

ern-day forms of unbelief. Some seek empirical proof like Thomas, open to embracing evidence when presented. Others, akin to Eustace, are steadfast in their skepticism, choosing to reject any proof that doesn't align with their worldview.

But Eustace's eventual transformation, from a skeptic to a believer, offers hope. His literal transformation into a dragon, induced by his own greed, becomes the catalyst for his change of heart. This profound conversion showcases that sometimes intellectual assent isn't the first step towards faith. A personal, transformative experience might precede intellectual assent, guiding the skeptic towards belief.

For Catholics, the Eucharist stands as a testament to both evidence and personal experience. While it might seem impossible for bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ, the Eucharist invites us to move beyond the empirical. It chal-

lenges us to experience Christ's presence in a transformative manner, to believe that things aren't always as they seem. Jesus, in the Eucharist, beckons us to touch, feel, and partake in him, allowing faith to flourish even amid doubts.

To do this, we must remember that humility remains a cornerstone for navigating the path of faith amid doubt. Recognizing that we don't have all the answers and seeking understanding through prayer, Scripture, and sacraments, grounds our faith journey. Embracing humility allows us to say, as Proverbs 3:5-6 instructs, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."

The Eucharist awaits, offering not just evidence but transformation for those who partake. Within the cacophony of doubts, may we find solace and strength in Christ's humble invitation to "come and see." (Jn 1:39)

We need to fall

I grieve the loss of summer.

It is such a season of delight, with elongated hours of sunlight, intense heat of the day, state fair, and kids out of school.

I grieve the change from the heat to the cool. "Oh, but don't you just love the fall?" many ask, possibly hoping to change my mind. "No, not so much" I say, most often then to hear the common reply, "Oh, it's MY favorite time of year!"

But I do grieve the end of the colorful trees that leave the landscape barren with black wooden branches and trunks.

I then grieve the last snowfall that leaves a peaceful white blanket upon our future's promise.

I grieve also those last days of spring that are filled with the absence of humidity that all too soon gives way to the season of tropical summer swelter; this puts me right back to the beginning of my own personal seasonal grieving cycle.

But for now, we prepare for fall, although I prefer the word autumn. It seems like a softer, less painful word than "fall." We don't like to fall. But by necessity, our land needs the fall to prepare for new seasons.

Maybe also, we need to fall, even if

Let's Get Psyched

By Deacon Randy Kiel



the fall is hard and painful. This may seem paradoxical to the call to follow Christ and the call to purity. While these calls are accurate and biblical, we have never been called to conquer the Christ-like life nor have we been called to conquer purity and chastity.

We are called to repentance and contrition for our sin, but what if our "fall" isn't about sin? Our falls in life can be physical, mental, psychological, emotional, behavioral, or symptomatic of our mental health.

Falling is within the design of God. Jesus fell three times on the path to Golgotha. Not simply to teach us a lesson, but because the wood of the cross was too heavy to bear without falling. He fell because of physical limitations.

Emotionally, Jesus must not have

been sure if he could take even one more step while also carrying the burden of the grief of all his loved ones just as we do when others grieve for the sake of our own suffering.

He fell because he was emotionally exhausted.

He fell also because of the spiritual weight of the world's sin upon his shoulders. This weight is the collective of the whole of man's existence. Imagine, he carried the weight of sins that are still yet to come until his Second Coming.

He fell because of love.

Behaviorally, he fell due to his own human sense of determination and will power. It was within his own human weakness that he fell, and it was within his own human strength that he got up and continued on to face his death.

For the sake of his endurance, he allowed others to comfort him with words and even someone to share in his pain, to carry the cross with him. He fell so we could share in his suffering.

He fell also to teach us many lessons.

First lesson: That we will fall and that we must fall. One reason we fall is from the weight of sin on our souls. This falling

is natural and necessarily consequential to sin.

Second lesson: We are called to examine our life. If we fall due to a spiritual matter then we need repentance and forgiveness. If we fall due to behavioral ways, then we need to change our ways.

If we fall due to mental health reasons, then we need help. We all have some sort of mental health issue during the course of a lifetime. We do not change these on our own. It takes another person's compassionate mind and careful skill to effect a change within our own mind. Thus, help for carrying our cross. This may come from the counsel of a loved one, or even a mental health counselor.

Sometimes during a fall, a person might think that help is unnecessary.

The thought that says, "I don't need help" or "I can do it on my own" is not the way God designed us to think and live. These thoughts are the voice of self-sufficiency and ego, the false self.

Jesus fell so that we could see our way through with help.

After all, why then, would he have ever promised us, "Behold, I will be with you always"?

Divine permission for human fatigue

Father Ron Rolheiser



Someone once asked Therese of Lisieux if it was wrong to fall asleep while in prayer. Her answer: Absolutely not. A little child is equally pleasing to her parents, awake or asleep – probably more when asleep!

That's more than a warm, cute answer. There's a wisdom in her reply that's generally lost to us, namely, that God understands the human condition and gives us sacred permission to be human, even in the face of our most important human and spiritual commitments.

This struck me recently while listening to a homily. The preacher, a sincere and dedicated priest, challenged us with the idea that God must always be first in our lives. So far so good. But then he shared how upset he gets whenever he hears people say things like: "Let's go to the Saturday evening mass, to get it over with." Or, when a celebrant says: "We will keep

things short today, because the game starts at noon." Phrases like that, he suggested, betray a serious weakness in our prayer lives. Do they?

Maybe yes, maybe no. Comments like that can issue out of laziness, spiritual indifference, or misplaced priorities. They might also simply be an expression of normal, understandable human fatigue – a fatigue which God, the author of human nature, gives us permission to feel.

There can be, and often is, a naïveté about the place of high energy and enthusiasm in our lives. For example, imagine a family who, with the best of intentions, decides that to foster family togetherness they agree to make their evening meal, every evening, a full-blown banquet, demanding everyone's participation and enthusiasm and lasting for ninety minutes. Wish them luck! Some days this would foster togetherness and there would be a certain enthusiasm at the table; but, soon enough, this would be unsustainable in terms of their energy, and more than one of the family members would be saying silently, let's get this over with, or can we cut it a little short tonight because the game is on a 7 p.m. Granted, that could betray an attitude of disinterest; but, more likely, it would simply be a valid expression of normal fatigue.

None of us can sustain high energy and enthusiasm forever. Nor are we intended to. Our lives are a marathon, not a sprint. That's why it is good sometimes to have lengthy banquets and sometimes to simply grab a hotdog and run. God and nature give us permission to sometimes say, let's get it over with, and sometimes to rush things so as to not miss the beginning of the game.

Moreover, beyond taking seriously the normal ebb and flow of our energies, there is still another, even more important angle to this. Enthusiastic energy or lack of them don't necessarily define meaning. We can do a thing because it means something affectively to us – or we can do something simply because it means something in itself, independent of how we feel about it on a given day. Too often, we don't grasp this. For example, take the response people often give when explaining why they are no longer going to church services, "it doesn't mean anything to me." What they are blind to in saying this is the fact that being together in a church means something in itself, independent of how it feels affectively on any given day. It's akin to visiting your aging mother. You do this, not because you are always enthusiastic about it or because it always feels good emotionally. No. You do it because this is your aging mother and that's what God, nature, and maturity call

us to do.

The same holds true for a family meal together. You don't necessarily go to dinner with your family each night with enthusiasm. You go because this is how families sustain their common life. There will be times when you do come with high energy and appreciate both the preciousness of the moment and the length of the dinner. But there will be other times when, despite a deeper awareness that being together in this way is important, you will be wanting to get this over with.

For spiritual advice in this area, avoid the spiritual novice, the over-pious, the anthropological naïve, the couple on their honeymoon, the recent convert, and at least half of all liturgists and worship leaders. The true manual on marriage is never written by a couple on their honeymoon and the true manual on prayer is never written by someone who believes that we should be on a high all the time.

Find a spiritual mentor who challenges you enough to keep you from selfishness and laziness, even as she or he gives you divine permission to be tired sometimes. A woman or man at prayer is equally pleasing to God, enthusiastic or tired – perhaps even more when tired.

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