

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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We Sow God's Spirit by Cultivating Connections in Christ.

50 years after his own journey, knight aids effort to help refugees



Photos by Ann Pierson

Dr. Jim Duong shared his story of finding peace and security in the United States as a refugee at a St. Augustin Knights of Columbus fund-raiser. The money raised will help recently arrived refugees as they settle in the Des Moines area.

By Ann Pierson
Staff Writer

A Des Moines doctor shared a personal story with his Knights of Columbus friends that surprised and shocked them.

He was a refugee from Vietnam who experienced a treacherous journey to the United States, then was embraced by Catholics who helped his family begin anew.

The friends asked Dr. Jim Duong to share his story as a

means of celebrating the 50th anniversary of his arrival in the United States. He agreed to do it on the condition that funds raised would help Catholic Charities' Refugee Ministry and St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish's Refugee Ministry.

On June 12, the St. Augustin Knights of Columbus Council hosted a multicultural fundraiser titled "Rejoice in Our Iowa Refugees: The Faces Behind the Numbers" that benefitted local refugees.

The evening began with Mass

celebrated by Bishop William Jonsen, followed by a dinner with Vietnamese, Sudanese, Ethiopian, and Eritrean ethnic foods. During the dinner, refugees (who fled their homelands because of the threat of persecution) shared their experiences of coming to America.

Duong shared his story.

In April 1975, Duong, then 11 years old, and his family fled from their home in Saigon. Duong's father had served in the South Vietnamese army during the Vietnam War, but his position placed his

family in danger of persecution.

Duong's family, promised extradition by the CIA, went to the United States Embassy. However, as the helicopters came and went throughout the night, "our hope of entering the compound to be rescued slowly faded away," said Duong.

His family sheltered in a church basement and waited until his father rented a shrimp boat that would take them to a U.S. Navy carrier.

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Witness to history

*Papal transition
alters perspective for
seminarian*

Seminarian Connor Lynch got a close-up look at history in the making with the death of Pope Francis, the conclave, and the installation of Pope Leo XIV.



Connor Lynch

It was a surreal experience that put life in perspective. He shared his experience via video with Bishop's Council, an advisory group of lay people from throughout the Diocese.

"It was a bit of a shock that (Pope Francis) passed away" on Easter Monday, he said. Lynch, who studies at the North American College in Rome, and friends went to St. Peter's Square, dropping to their knees when a bell tolled 88 times, once for every year of Pope Francis's life.

It was a great gift for Lynch, of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola, to be able to grieve and mourn at St. Peter's Square.

He went to pay his respects at the coffin and,

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Eternal Friends

Nine couples pledge friendship now to eternity

By Jennifer Willems
Contributing Writer

For more than 30 years, nine couples from Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines formed deep friendships as they volunteered in just about every way possible at their parish and elementary school, and eventually Dowling Catholic High School, also in West Des Moines.

Now they've taken steps to be bound throughout time as Eternal Friends.

Led by Nancy Anstoetter, the

group has stepped out in faith and chosen to be buried in the same quiet section of Resthaven Cemetery in West Des Moines. Their plots are in the back of the cemetery, just south of the pond, and rest near a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Best of all, this section of Resthaven overlooks the playground at Sacred Heart School, which brought such joy to them and their 23 children.

"We wanted to be near where we could 'hear' the kids on the playground," said Nancy, who raised three sons with her husband, Brian.

"We're a group of people that shows up for each other, whether it's a wedding or a funeral or their parents die or somebody gets hurt or somebody has surgery. We have always shown up for each other," according to Brenda Miller, who is part of Eternal Friends with her husband, Jeff.

"This is just a sweet way to say we're still showing up for each other and that love is lasting and eternal," she explained.

Everyone should have a plan

The idea started as a New Year's resolution Nancy made

in 2021. A wealth management adviser, she tells her clients to have a plan but she didn't have one herself.

She was also influenced by thoughts of her small town cemetery in Perry, where she had known everyone. The same was true for Brian, who was from Dubuque. Since they were established in West Des Moines, however, they decided to make arrangements there.

Like their hometown cemeteries, Nancy said they will be surrounded by friends and those who come to visit in the years to come will likely know everyone,

too.

The Anstoetters and five other couples met at Resthaven on St. Patrick's Day in 2021 for what turned out to be a light-hearted conversation that mixed logistics with faith, Brenda said.

"How we all came together originally was through faith at Sacred Heart School and Church and because of that faith, we believe in life after death," she explained. "Therefore, you can think more joyfully about it."

Mary and Don Coffin, of West Des Moines, are also part

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Bishop William Joensen

Deacons have been on my mind recently for several reasons. In this month of June, the Church commemorates two deacon saints: Ephrem the Syrian, and Ferrutio, deacon and martyr of Besançon, France. Proclaimed a Doctor of the Church, Ephrem is more broadly known for his popular hymns, poems and sermons composed in the Fourth Century. He eventually taught at the School of Edessa, the birthplace of the Syriac language. He died while ministering to plague victims.

Ferrutio, more obscure by our reckoning, is said to have been converted to Christianity by St. Polycarp, and was ordained deacon by the luminous St. Irenaeus of Lyon (famous, among other things, for his claim, “The glory of God is the human being fully alive.”) Ferrutio was sent by Irenaeus to evangelize at Besançon, where he was beheaded for the

faith in the persecution of Severus in 211 or 212 A.D.

Closer to home, it was my privilege on June 6, a different sort of “D-Day” (deacon day), to ordain L. Stanley Mannion Asjes to the diaconate for our Des Moines Diocese at the Basilica of St. John (see page 4). In my homily, I wove together now Deacon Stan’s own personal life story with the Church’s understanding of the role and ministry of a deacon. The school of his own family, with his parents Kate and Dave and five siblings, remains a cradle of conversion and deeply committed faith, sharpened by their collective intellects and wits.

By nature, Deacon Stan is disposed to serve a cause, a community greater than himself. He has long been a bona fide believer, aided by the robust Basilica faith community from which we hope to see many more young men follow their own path to the diaconate and priesthood. Yet it is no slight to suggest that as he came into his own as a young man, his head ran ahead of his heart, indicating a potential passion waiting to be activated.

But the God who suffers patiently for us, Jesus Christ, is gracious and merciful—and relentless. His heart is open, inexhaustible, deep and inviting. June is the month of the Feast of the Sacred Heart as well. As our late

Holy Father Francis reflects in his letter, *Delexit Nos*, “On the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ,” God’s desire for us results in something unexpected and previously unknown starting to speak in our heart. God breaks through merely superficial knowledge, and begins to set our life in order by means of the heart. “It is not about intellectual concepts that need to be put into practice in our daily lives, as if affectivity and practice were merely the effects of. . . the data of knowledge” (DN n. 24).

Further, “Accepting his friendship is a matter of the heart; it is what constitutes us as persons in the fullest sense of the word.” The believer “presses on in love and adoration, in pleading for forgiveness and in willingness to serve in whatever place the Lord allows us to choose, in order to follow in his footsteps” (DN n. 25).

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, embodied in the Most Blessed Sacrament, manifests the desire of Jesus for our love. Francis concludes, “Once the faithful heart realizes this, its spontaneous response is one of love, not a desire to multiply sacrifices or simply discharge a burdensome duty” (DN n. 166). The disciple whose heart has been activated in joy by the closeness of Christ and his Spirit within one’s very soul

embraces the mission to bring Christ’s love to the world. He or she is freed to commit one’s whole being in service to the Kingdom, even unto death (cf. DN n. 205).

Those who know Deacon Stan Asjes, including his formators, peers, and those whom he has served in pastoral placements, have testified that he is appropriately hospitable and vulnerable with others, and is well-disposed to pray for and with them.

Deacon Stan will not only help guide others to the saving waters of baptism in the role of Master of Ceremonies as he did at the Cathedral of St. Ambrose’s Easter Vigil this past Holy Saturday so that I might perform the sacred rite; he himself will pro-

claim Jesus and then “go down into the water” as he administers the Sacrament of Baptism.

He will pray and ponder God’s word and listen attentively to others as they pour out their sorrows and sighs, their unmet longings, so that hidden depths of the Scriptures will be brought to the surface to prompt conversion and refresh hope through his preaching.

This summer Deacon Stan will serve the faithful in the parishes of Cass County. And in the coming academic year, in the “synthesis phase” of his overall formation before what we hope is his eventual ordination to the priesthood on June 26, 2026, he

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Todo lo Relacionado con Diáconos

Recientemente, he tenido a los diáconos en mente por varias razones. En este mes de junio, la Iglesia conmemora dos santos diáconos: Efrén de Siria y San Ferrucio, diácono y mártir de Besançon, Francia. Proclamado como Doctor de la Iglesia, Efrén es conocido más ampliamente por la popularidad de los himnos, poemas y sermones que compuso en el Siglo IV. Eventualmente enseñó en la Escuela de Edesa,

donde nació el lenguaje Siríaco. Murió mientras servía a víctimas de la plaga.

Ferrucio, más oculto a nuestro conocimiento, se dice que se convirtió al cristianismo por San Policarpo y ordenado diácono por el iluminado San Irineo de Lyon (famoso entre otras cosas por su dicho “La gloria de Dios es el humano que vive plenamente.”) Ferrucio fue enviado por Irineo a evangelizar Besançon, en donde fue decapitado por la fe durante la persecución de Severo entre el 210 y 211 A.C.

Más cerca de casa, fue mi privilegio el 6 de junio, algo así como “Día-D” (día del diácono), el ordenar a L. Stanley Mannion Asjes al diaconado para nuestra Diócesis de Des Moines en la Basilica de San Juan. En mi homilía, tejí la historia personal de vida del ahora Diácono Stan con el entendimiento de la Iglesia sobre su papel y ministerio como diácono. La escuela de su propia familia, con sus padres Kate y Dave y cinco hermanos, sigue siendo una cuna de conversión y de un profundo compromiso de fe, apuntaladas con sus intelecto y astucia como familia.

El Diácono Stan está dispuesto, de forma natural, a servir a una causa, una comunidad más grande que él mismo. Él ha sido por mucho tiempo un creyente genuino, auxiliado por la robusta comunidad de fe de la Basílica, de donde espero veamos surgir muchos más muchachos jóvenes que sigan su propio camino hacia el diaconado o el sacerdocio. Aún así no podemos asumir a la ligera

mientras formaba su propio rumbo durante la juventud, su cabeza iba por delante de su corazón, indicando una pasión potencial en espera a despertar.

Pero Jesucristo, el Dios que sufre pacientemente por nosotros, está lleno de gracia y misericordia – y determinación. Su corazón está abierto, y es incansable, profundo y acogedor. Junio es también el mes de la Fiesta del Sagrado Corazón. Como lo medita el difunto Papa Francisco en su carta *Delexit Nos*, “Sobre el Amor Humano y Divino del Corazón de Jesucristo,” lo que Dios desea para nosotros resulta en algo inesperado y previamente desconocido que empieza a hablarnos en el corazón. Dios se abre camino por medio de conocimiento superficial y comienza a establecerse en nuestras vidas a través del corazón. “No se trata de discursos racionales que habría que llevar a la práctica, haciéndolos pasar a la vida, de modo que la afectividad y la práctica serían simplemente consecuencias . . . de conocimientos asegurados” (DN n. 24).

Más aún, “Aceptar su amistad es cuestión de corazón y eso nos constituye como personas en el sentido pleno de la palabra.” El creyente “ama, adora, pide perdón y se ofrece a servir en el lugar que el Señor le da a elegir para que lo siga.” (DN n. 25).

El Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, encarnado en el Santísimo Sacramento, manifiesta el deseo de Jesús por nuestro amor. Francis-

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Priest advisory group revised for greater representation

The Diocese is changing the composition of the Bishop’s advisory group of priests called the Presbyteral Council.

Why should parishioners care?

Admittedly, this may sound a bit like “inside baseball” in terms of organizational structure. Yet, bottom line, the change will result in better representation of priests and parishioners in this important leadership group, and better pastoral care for everyone in the 23 counties served by the Diocese.

The Presbyteral Council has been comprised of a priest representing five geographic areas of the Diocese.

This summer, the Diocese is shifting this model. It’s creating nine geographic areas called deaneries. (See May’s edition of *The Catholic Mirror* for details.)

One benefit under the new Presbyteral Council organization is that a priest will represent each deanery on the council. In addition, the vicar general and vicar of priests will be in the group along with five more priest representatives whom the Bishop can independently appoint. Two of those five would represent the retired priests and priests in specialized ministries. With 16 representatives, rather than

five, Bishop William Joensen will have greater feedback from all parts of the Diocese.

A second advantage is in decision making. Each dean, or leader of each deanery, will be enabled to make certain decisions that used to have to go to Bishop Joensen’s office for action. By granting authority to local leaders and respecting subsidiarity to a greater degree, it’s expected that certain decisions will come faster than if they went to the Bishop’s Office. Those decisions will also better reflect local needs and sensitivities.

The Diocese’s strategic plan, which was created after much input from parishioners across the Diocese, calls for greater pastoral planning in order to better cultivate connections in Christ through encounter, friendship, and communion.

Revising one of the Bishop’s top advisory groups to reflect organizational changes invites new leadership, greater representation, and more prompt decision-making on a local level so parishioners can cultivate connections with God and one another.

To see a copy of the statutes of the revised Presbyteral Council, go to dmdiocese.org/news.



Official

Bishop William Joensen made the following appointment effective June 16, 2024 to August 30, 2026.

Rev. Mr. Mark Burdt, from All Saints Parish, Des Moines, to St. Bernard Parish, Osceola, St. Joseph Parish, Mt. Ayr, and St. Patrick Parish, Grand River.

William Joensen

Jason Kurth

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

Jason Kurth
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Sumertime faith & fun at Praise in the Park

By Ann Pierson
Staff Writer

On Saturday, July 19, families are invited to Praise in the Park, a free, faith-filled outdoor event sponsored by the Diocese of Des Moines and Iowa Catholic Radio.

The day includes games, food, fellowship, and opportunities for prayer. People of all ages are welcome to attend.

The event is the perfect opportunity to bring the local Catholic community together and gives people a chance to meet families from other parishes, said Jessica Pancho, director of Youth Evangelization for the Diocese. The celebration is part of the Jubilee Year of Hope which began in late December. The day’s events will revolve around themes of hope, redemption, and mercy.

The speakers and live music will come from aptly named Array of Hope, a Catholic media organization that offers a variety of podcasts, videos, and worship music. Two speakers from the organization will offer reflections.

Alanis Vegas, a content creator for Array of Hope, will discuss finding one’s identity in Christ in her talk entitled, “Who Am I?”

Joshua Rosa, the co-founder of Agnus Dei Ministry, will discuss the Eucharist being the source of hope in his talk entitled, “Hope and Home.”

Array of Hope, one of the worship bands at the National Eucharistic Congress last year, will provide praise and worship music at Praise in the Park. The lively Christian music genre has risen in popularity over the years, especially with younger people.

Pancho believes the atmosphere of praise and worship, especially within the presence of the Eucharist, allows people to be vulnerable, connected to each other, and feel a sense of identity.

“You feel like you are not alone in your experiences,” Pancho said.


Along with speakers and live music, the outdoor event will have games and food trucks available, adoration, and will conclude with Mass at 6 p.m. celebrated by Bishop William Joensen. Throughout the day, there will be activities that will appeal to all age groups, including young children.

Praise in the Park points towards an uncommon theme in the world today – hope.

“This event is for bringing people together and showing the hope and the joy our faith can bring to the world,” Pancho said. “And who doesn’t want to attend something where you can find joy and hope?”

Praise in the Park begins at noon at the Jamie Hurd Amphitheater in West Des Moines. For more information, go to dmdiocese.org/events.





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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Rev. Tomson Thomas – June 1
Rev. David Nkrumah – June 6
Rev. Dominic Assim – June 7
Rev. Vincent Rosonke – June 7
Rev. Nipin Scaria – June 9
Rev. Kenneth Halbur – June 13
Rev. Chinnappan Devaraj – June 15
Rev. Eze Umunnakwe – June 16
Very Rev. David Fleming – June 19
Rev. Frank Palmer – June 24

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for you and your service to the Church.

Msgr. Lawrence Beeson – 65 years on June 5
Rev. John Acrea – 63 years on June 3
Rev. Frank Palmer – 63 years on June 3
Msgr. Frank Bognanno – 60 years on June 6
Rev. James Freeman – 60 years on June 6
Rev. Charles Kottas – 55 years on June 6
Very Rev. Aquinas Nichols – 45 years on June 29
Rev. Raphael Masabakhwa – 30 years on June 2
Rev. Protas Okwalo – 30 years on June 10
Rev. Zachary Kautzky – 15 years on June 4
Rev. Luis Mejia – 10 years on June 5
Rev. Andrew Windschitl – 10 years on June 5

HAPPY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY!

May God continue to bless your ministry with strength, wisdom and love.

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find out what’s
happening?

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Des Moines Diocese.

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dmdiocese.org and
look under “News” or
“Blogs.”
- Go to Facebook and
look up
dmdiocese
- Go to Instagram and
look up
dmdiocese
- Go to YouTube and
look up
dmdiocese

Looking for an
upcoming event?
Go to
dmdiocese.org/events

Congratulations to our newest deacon



Bishop William Joensen ordained Deacon Stan Asjes, of the Basilica of St. John Parish, to the transitional diaconate on Friday, June 6. Deacons are called to serve through the Word, sacrament, and charity. All deacons can celebrate baptism, assist at and bless marriages, bring the Eucharist to the dying, conduct wake and funeral services, read the Sacred Scriptures to the faithful, preach, and preside over the prayer and worship of the faithful. Deacons are leaders in identifying needs of their communities, then pulling together resources to meet those needs. Deacon Asjes is a transitional deacon, meaning this is the last major step on his journey toward priesthood.

At left, Bishop William Joensen lays hands on Deacon Asjes. This ancient and traditional gesture of invoking the Holy Spirit is the central act of the ordination rite.

Above, newly ordained Deacon Asjes assists in the Liturgy of the Eucharist with Bishop Joensen.

Photo at left by Ann Pierson. Photo above by Mike Gatzke.

Camino pilgrimage a journey of faith, fellowship

**By Deacon Tom Bradley
Contributing Writer**

More than 70 pilgrims embarked on a spiritual pilgrimage

along the Way of St. Lawrence (Camino de San Lorenzo), a three-day journey May 30-June 1 inviting families and individuals to prayer, reflection, and community.

While some participated for a day or two, 27 pilgrims completed the full route, receiving their Compostela (certificates of completion) and camino coin in recognition of their perseverance.

The pilgrimage commenced on Friday, May 30, at St. Patrick Church in Perry. As pilgrims set forth, they were greeted with cheers and encouragement from St. Patrick elementary students, a

heartwarming sendoff that set the tone for the journey.

A communal rosary under the shelter of a centuries-old tree in Bouton, Iowa, offered a sacred pause for prayer and reflection before the day's trek concluded in Woodward.

United in faith, they gathered again on Saturday, May 31. New pilgrims joined at Woodward for the walk to St. Malachy Church in Madrid, which is part of Ascension Parish of Boone County. Despite the afternoon heat, pilgrims were welcomed with prayers and blessings, renewing their spirits.

Faith, family, and special celebrations were part of Sunday's final stretch from Slater to St. Luke Church in Ankeny. Paul and Ann Suarez, of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary, while Jeff and Melissa Garton, of Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, marked their 28th anniversary the day before, walking in gratitude for their grace-filled marriages.

"I want to thank you for bringing the camino to Iowa. What a lovely three days of blessings in many ways, still unfolding," said Lynne Vestal. "It was a special three days for my daughter and me."

The Way of St. Lawrence reminded pilgrims that faith is not merely about reaching a destination. It is found in the journey itself and ultimately, in a relationship with Jesus.

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Mary Jo Howe - Sacred Heart	Doug Vail - St. Joseph
Ted Lockwood - St. Pius X	John Wild - Christ the King
Mark Masters - St. Boniface	Larry Zahm - St. Joseph

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Deacon formation opening second, concurrent class

By Jennifer Willems
Contributing Writer

Deacon Jim Houston is convinced there are many potential permanent deacons in church pews around southwest Iowa, but they may not know it yet.

Now is the perfect time to give these men a “nudge,” he said.

To meet a growing need for permanent deacons, the Diocese of Des Moines will issue a call to inquiry for a second formation class of these servant leaders in the fall, according to Deacon Houston, director of the diocesan Permanent Diaconate Office. It will run concurrently with the current class of 19 men who are already studying to be deacons.

Those who would like more information about diaconal ministry are invited to a St. Lawrence Dinner on Sunday, June 29, at Corpus Christi-Queen of Apostles, 3304 Fourth Ave., Council Bluffs. The gathering will start at 4 p.m. and include an informal meal, a short presentation, and time for questions.

Priests, deacons and parishioners are asked to encourage the men they think would make good deacons to attend the dinner.

“We all know who is in our parish that we think would be a

good leader,” said Deacon Houston, adding that this encouragement might be what they need to take the next step.

Half of parishes have deacons

While other dioceses have more than one group in formation at the same time – the Archdiocese of Dubuque starts a new class every two years, for example – this is a first for the Diocese of Des Moines. The new approach is designed to grow the program.

There are 51 permanent deacons serving in 39 of the Diocese’s 80 parishes, said Deacon Houston. Twenty of those deacons will be eligible to retire by the time the current class is ordained in September 2028.

“If we have 19 men ordained and 19 or 20 men retire, we still have 50 deacons. That’s just not growth,” he said.

“I’ve probably got half a dozen parishes today that would like a deacon and another bunch that don’t know they need a deacon, but I don’t have anybody to move around,” Deacon Houston said.

In addition to 51 active deacons, the Diocese of Des Moines has 49 retired deacons.

Move to virtual learning

The permanent diaconate has its roots the early church, when



Pictured above are three deacons attending Msgr. Frank Bognanno’s 60th anniversary of priestly ordination celebration. They are (from left to right): Deacon Rick Condon, of St. Catherine of Siena Student Center in Des Moines; Deacon Fred Cornwell, of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Ankeny; and Deacon Steve Tatz, of the Basilica of St. John Parish in Des Moines.

the Apostles determined they needed help to serve the community so they could devote themselves to “prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:1-6) In time, it fell into disuse but was restored during the Second Vatican Council.

The Diocese of Des Moines ordained its first permanent deacons in 1972.

Deacons are ministers of the Word, sacrament and charity -- preaching and teaching in the name of the church; baptizing, witnessing marriages, and conducting wake and funeral services; and identifying the needs of others and providing help. Permanent deacons do not go on to priestly ordination, as transitional deacons do.

Called to serve

“We’re looking for men who are called to serve. The word ‘deacon’ is a derivative of diakonos, which is Greek for ‘servant’ or ‘servant-leader,’” Deacon Houston said. Their prime example of service is Christ washing the feet of his disciples at the Last

Supper.

He said the move to virtual learning is an attempt to draw men from the rural and Spanish-speaking communities of the Diocese of Des Moines. It also makes the formation more conve-

nient to men with young families, allowing them to spend time with their wives and children while continuing to learn.

For more information, send email to vocations@dmdiocese.org or call 515-237-5034.



Deacon Bob McClellan, of Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs, shares the cup during Father Luis Mejia’s celebration of his 10th anniversary of priestly ordination.

New rule on attire for deacons

Bishop William Joensen has decreed that, beginning June 9, permanent deacons in the Diocese may start wearing grey shirts when dressed in clerical attire.

Effective Sept. 1, 2027, Des Moines diocesan permanent deacons will be required to wear grey shirts with the Roman collar when they’re in clerical attire.

Currently, priests and seminarians, who have reached the candidacy stage of their formation process, wear a black shirt with the white Roman collar.

A permanent deacon may wear a black shirt with a white Roman collar after ordination when doing ministry.

Sometimes there is confusion or an assumption by the general public that a man wearing clerics is always a priest, said Deacon Jim Houston, director of the diocesan Permanent Diaconate Office.

The change comes at the request of deacons for clear guidance and rules regarding clerical attire. It will help the general public better identify deacons, he said.

In addition to the grey shirt and Roman collar, deacons will wear some symbol of the diaconate whenever possible to more clearly distinguish between priests and deacons.

Deacons wear clerical attire (unless prohibited by their pas-

tor) at diocesan or parish liturgies, events, or in some way engaged in ministry like marriage preparation, marriages, baptisms, wake services, funerals, graveside services, benediction, ministry in hospitals and nursing homes, ministry in Catholic schools, catechetical sessions, or ecumenical faith gatherings.

If the deacon works for the Church, their place of employment determines whether the deacon may wear clerics while working.

Deacons can continue to wear black clerical shirts with the Roman collar until the new rule goes into effect.

How do I become a deacon?

Diaconate formation runs for five years and includes two years of aspirancy and three years of candidacy.

During aspirancy, the men are asked to step back from what they’re doing in their parishes to focus on their discernment of their call, and on their intellectual formation, which is accomplished virtually using the Josephinum Diaconate Institute. In addition to the classes – available in English and Spanish – and assignments, the men have access to the professor once a week and have a Zoom meeting with Deacon Matt Halbach, director of diocesan Diaconate Formation. They come together one Saturday a month at Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic.

The current class of potential deacons has just finished the aspirancy phase and is now involved in assessments and interviews. When that is done, the formation team makes a recommendation to Bishop William Joensen, who will invite them to the next phase, which is candidacy.

While candidacy also includes intellectual formation, the men are encouraged to get involved in their parishes again and explore the practical aspects of diaconal ministry. At the end of this phase, there are more assessments and interviews, another recommendation is made, and a final meeting held with the bishop.

If all goes well, there will be a call to ordination.

Want to know more?

Those who would like more information about becoming a deacon are invited (with their wives) to a St. Lawrence Dinner. Enjoy a meal, a short presentation, and time for questions on Sunday, June 29 at Corpus Christi-Queen of Apostles Church in Council Bluffs beginning at 4 p.m. For more information on the diaconate, go to dmdiocese.org/vocations/permanent-diaconate.

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June 21 Saturday
March for Life

DES MOINES – Iowa March for Life will begin with educational booths and music at the Iowa State Capitol rotunda, followed by a rally at 1 p.m. and the march at 1:45 p.m. Questions? Contact Pulse Life Advocates at 515-255-4113 or mdewitte@pulseforlife.org.

June 22 Sunday
Corpus Christi Celebrations

ADEL – St. John Church will hold a Eucharistic procession following the 11 a.m. Mass.
DES MOINES – St. Anthony Parish will celebrate with 11:30 a.m. Mass at its grotto followed by a Eucharistic procession through the neighborhood, pausing at each altar for a brief adoration. Free lunch follows the procession.

Byzantine Catholic Divine Liturgy
ALTOONA – There will be a Byzantine Catholic Divine Liturgy at 4 p.m., at Ss. John and Paul Church. The congregation has been meeting once a month at that location. If you have any questions, call Father Bruce Riebe at 440-227-5037.

June 27 Friday
Sacred Heart Feast Day

WEST DES MOINES – Sacred Heart Parish celebrates its 5th annual Sacred Heart of Jesus Feast Day with 5:30 p.m. Mass, 6:30-9:30 p.m. party in the parking lot featuring live music, food trucks, family games, and more.

June 28 Saturday
Christ the King Garage Sale

DES MOINES – Christ the King is having its garage sale from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. in its parish hall. Sales are by donation only. All proceeds help support the Altar and Rosary Society and CTK Parish Library.
Biking for Babies
ANKENY – Join Bishop William Joensen and fellow cycling enthusiasts for a day with family and friends on the High Trestle Trail. Proceeds from the Central Iowa Ride for Life benefit local pregnancy resource centers. Register or get more information at bikingforbabies.com/local-rides.

June 29
St. Lawrence Gathering

COUNCIL BLUFFS – Men interested in the diaconate and their wives are invited to a gathering for a meal, hearing vocation stories of deacons, and an opportunity to ask questions. Join us at 4 p.m. at Corpus Christi – Queen of Apostles Church. Questions? Email vocations@dmdiocese.org.

July 9 Wednesday
Can we use that?

DES MOINES – Parish staff are invited to a lunch and discussion with parish communication coordinators and attorney Todd Van Thomme, of Nyemaster Goode about copyright law, what you can use for parish publications, and what you can't use. Register at dmdiocese.org/events.

July 12
All-Abilities Family Camp

PANORA – St. Thomas More Center is hosting an all-abilities camp for fun and faith. Persons with disabilities along with Deaf and Hard of Hearing are welcome with their families to reconnect their relationships with God and each other. Register at dmdiocese.org/events or email office@stmcenter.com.

July 16
Biking for Babies

WEST DES MOINES – Cyclists traveling from the Twin Cities to St. Louis will pause at St. Francis in West Des Moines for 5 p.m. Mass with Bishop William Joensen, dinner, and a meet-and-greet opportunity with Biking for Babies missionaries. Learn more at dmdiocese.org/events or email steven.craig@unitypoint.org.

July 19 Saturday
Praise in the Park

WEST DES MOINES – Celebrate the Jubilee of hope with a day of fun, praise, and worship from noon to 6 p.m. at the Jamie Hurd Ampitheater. Array of Hope will provide music, two speakers are scheduled, and Mass is at 6 p.m. See page 3 for details.

July 21, Monday
Catholic Daughters

WEST DES MOINES – Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court 302, invites all Catholic women 18 years and older to join them for their monthly meeting in the Serra Room at St. Francis of Assisi Church. Rosary is at 5:40 p.m., Mass at 6 p.m., light supper and meeting follow. If interested, contact Rosie at rohaver611@msn.com.

August 21 Monday
Catholic Daughters

WEST DES MOINES – Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court 302, invites all Catholic women 18 years and older to join them for their monthly meeting in the Serra Room at St. Francis of Assisi Church. Rosary is at 5:40 p.m., Mass at 6 p.m., light supper and meeting follow. If interested, contact Rosie at rohaver611@msn.com.

August 28 Thursday
Benefit Concert for Mary's Meals

DES MOINES – Heartland for Kids will present a benefit concert for Mary's Meals at Jasper Winery, from 6-9 p.m. Hear Nashville musicians and MC comedian Willie Farrell. Free-will donation for burgers, chicken, meatballs, chips, desserts, drinks. Wine and beer available to purchase.

Rosary Rally

DES MOINES – Join Iowans to pray a monthly rosary the third Sunday of every month at 1:30 p.m. (rain or shine) at the Iowa State Capitol – west side steps. For more information contact Diana Balmaceda, 515-974-7691 or Jeff Pierick, 515-778-6087.

Armed Forces draw
priest to chaplain role

By Ryan Johnson
Contributing Writer

Father John Brobbey is trading in his black dress shoes for a pair of military boots.
The St. Francis of Assisi parish parochial vicar is the latest from the Diocese of Des Moines to pursue military chaplaincy. He follows in the footsteps of Father Zachary Kautzky, Capt., who currently serves as a cadet chaplain at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado.

Originally from Ghana, Father Brobbey serves the West Des Moines parish and is now taking steps to become a U.S. military chaplain and officer.

This decision wasn't made lightly. In fact, the process began more than a year ago, when Father Brobbey received an unexpected letter in August 2023 from a military chaplain asking if he had ever considered serving in the armed forces — either in the reserves or on active duty.

"I thought it was a kind of a joke when I received that letter," Father Brobbey recalls. "Never in my life did I consider serving as a chaplain in the military."

He set the letter aside. But then a phone call came.

"A priest named Father Nick called to discuss the possibility of becoming a military chaplain," he says. "I told him I needed to speak with my bishop in Ghana first, and he agreed to wait for a response."

A Trip to Ghana

In December 2023, Father Brobbey traveled home to Ghana and met with his bishop to discuss the invitation. The bishop requested a personal letter explaining why Father Brobbey may be a good chaplain. Only then would his bishop consider the idea.

Once again, the idea was placed on the back burner. But the military remained persistent. In spring 2024, another priest — who had taken over for Father Nick — reached out again. He



Photo by Phil Grothus

Father John Brobbey, of Ghana, came to the Des Moines Diocese in 2021 and served at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines.

mentioned that Father Brobbey's name was still on file, with a note that he was waiting on word from his bishop in Ghana.

When Father Brobbey explained the bishop's request for a letter, the military chaplain asked for the bishop's email address and sent the letter that same day.

"The following day, I received a call from my bishop, acknowledging the letter received from the U.S. military about me serving as a chaplain. My bishop asked me to do one more thing. He wanted me to speak to a priest who serves as an advisor to my bishop."

Time passed again. Then, in fall 2024, while attending a priest workshop in Ames, Father Brobbey received a video from a friend back in Africa. It showed an army officer vesting for Mass. He wasn't sure what to make of it.

Later that same morning, he received a call from his bishop in Ghana, who asked if he had spoken to the advisor priest yet.

"When I told him no, he said, 'Why are you waiting?'" Father Brobbey recalls.

And then the phone rang again — this time from the military chaplain.

"All I could say was, 'Wow.' It really felt like a sign from the Holy Spirit," he recalls.

That moment prompted him to finally speak with the priest advisor, who encouraged him to continue discerning the call. With that support, Father Brobbey made his decision: he would apply to serve as a chaplain in the U.S. military.

Next Steps

Before officially entering military service, Father Brobbey is required to complete a clinical pastoral education residency at a hospital in New York and pass an English proficiency exam.

What excites him most about the role is the opportunity to be a source of support and presence to military personnel.

Father Brobbey is deeply grateful for his time in the Diocese of Des Moines.

"I want to thank Bishop (William) Joensen, Father Ray McHenry, Father Joseph Pins, Father Michael Acquah, Father Daniel Adjei, and Father Alex Kramer," he says. "And the people of St. Francis — this is the best parish I've been to since leaving Ghana."

60th priestly anniversary celebrated



Msgr. Frank Bognanno celebrated his 60th anniversary of priestly ordination on Friday, June 6 at St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines. Pictured with him from left to right: Deacon Kevin Heim, Msgr. Larry Beeson, Msgr. Bognanno, Deacon Larry Kehoe, Father Nick Smith, Father Christopher Pisut, and Father Larry Hoffmann.

Surrounded by love, priest celebrates anniversary

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Parishioners at Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs pulled off an epic surprise to honor their pastor’s 10th anniversary of priestly ordination.

Father Luis Mejia thought he’d be celebrating a typical 6 p.m. weekday Mass on Thursday, June 5 — his anniversary date.

But the parish had been making other plans in secret for weeks.

Father had just wrapped up a weeklong retreat with other priests of the Diocese, celebrated reconciliation, and was preparing for Mass when he found priests (including Father Andrew Windschitl, who also celebrated his 10th anniversary that same day), deacon friends, and the man who ordained him, retired Bishop Richard Pates, preparing to join him for Mass.

That wasn’t the biggest surprise, though.

He stood in front of the altar, flanked by clergy, and listened to a message of gratitude from the people who love him, read by Father Fabian Moncada, pastor of Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines.

When Father Mejia turned to face the congregation, he saw a familiar face that he hadn’t seen in five years: his beloved mother, Anna Gloria Mejia, who came all the way from El Salvador.

Mother and son embraced as the cheers of the packed church echoed.



Photo by Anne Marie Cox

Father Luis Mejia hadn’t seen his mother, Anna Gloria Mejia, in five years. Generous donors at his parish, Corpus Christi in Council Bluffs, helped bring her from her home in El Salvador to Council Bluffs as a surprise in celebration of his 10th anniversary of priestly ordination.

“Honestly, seeing my mom walking in the church aisle was a huge surprise to me,” said Father Mejia. “I thought my surprise was the presence of Bishop Pates and Father Andrew, but I never expected to see my mom.

“She has never traveled to the United States by herself. She is illiterate. My siblings and I make sure she always travels with com-

pany. The first time she traveled was in 2014 for my diaconate ordination, along with my sister. The second trip was in 2015 for my priesthood ordination, along with my sister again. The third trip was in 2018, when she traveled with her grandson. So, seeing her without company was truly a surprise to me.

“What a blessing to have my mom, who played a very special role in my faith vocation journey,” said Father Mejia. “I feel so grateful and blessed with the people of Corpus Christi, for the wonderful celebration they put together for me. May God reward them for their love and generosity!”

After Mass, a video of Bishop William Joensen shared a congratulatory message, and Father Mejia processed out of the church to a surprise Mariachi band playing for him.


“He is well loved by this community,” said Father Luis Cabre-
ra, who also serves at Corpus Christi.

The crowd and mariachi band moved to the parish hall, where the joy continued with a meal, music, and a strong sense of family in this faith community.

“From the early stages of brainstorming and organizing, to seeing everything come together so beautifully, it was a labor of love and faith,” said event coordinator Victor Salcido.

“There were so many moving parts: late nights, long lists, and lots of coordination. But seeing our community come together to celebrate such a meaningful milestone for Father Mejia made it all more than worth it,” he said. “It was a day filled with joy, love, and deep appreciation for his ministry and I’m so proud to have played a part in making it happen.”

65 years a priest



Monsignor Larry Beeson celebrated his 65th anniversary of the day he was ordained a priest on June 5. During their annual spring retreat, priests of the Diocese celebrated with him. Pictured with him is Father Guthrie Dolan, chaplain at the Bishop Drumm Community in Johnston.

Golden anniversary approaches for two priests

Fathers Tim Fitzgerald and Vince Rosonke will celebrate their 50th anniversary of priestly ordination on Aug. 3 at St. Boniface Church in Waukee. The event begins with an open house at 12:30 p.m. and concludes with a 2 p.m. Mass. All are invited.

Making It Personal With Bishop Joensen

Tune in to Bishop William Joensen’s podcast to hear his latest guest sharing about their personal & spiritual life. Find Bishop’s podcast at <https://iowacatholicradio.com/on-demand/>



New priest: ‘God doesn’t always draw in a straight line’

By Joe Ruff
Contributing Writer

Father Stephen Boatwright’s journey to his May 31 ordination as a priest was marked by 44 years of marriage with a loving wife, 33 years as a permanent deacon and 13 years in retirement.

He was ordained recently at age 74 at the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Originally from the Des Moines area, he and his family – parents Dan and Barb; and siblings Mary, his late sister, Nancy; and brother, Bill – were from St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale, and Father Boatwright attended Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines.

Reflecting on his life’s journey, he said, “The thing I’ve learned very keenly in the last, well, two years, I guess, is that God doesn’t always draw in a straight line.”

Growing up, each night after dinner his family gathered to pray a rosary. After high school, Father Boatwright went to Loras College in Dubuque, which led him to a year at St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota from 1973 to 1974.

“I’ve come to the conclusion that either I wasn’t ready for God or God wasn’t ready for me” at that time to pursue the priesthood, Deacon Boatwright said.

He went on to forge a 35-year career with AT&T Inc. in accounting and billing resolution and retired in 2010.

He met his wife, Marcia, in 1975 and they married in 1977. They had a daughter, Sarah, who married, has three children. His wife died of pancreatic cancer in 2021.

“She was a nurse, through and through,” Father Boatwright said of his wife. She gave of her time and talent in other ways, as well, including making clothes for people in impoverished countries. She fashioned wedding dresses into burial garments for infants, the deacon said.

A fond memory is their first date, eight hours riding together on a tandem bicycle through Des Moines, topped by an ice cream with candy sprinkles.

“When we were done, I looked like I’d been on a horse for four years,” Father Boatwright said.

He and his wife moved with his work to the Twin Cities in 1987, and in 1991, he was ordained a permanent deacon. God remained close, he said, and he loved the ministry and working with people.

“All throughout my life I have discerned a calling. I wasn’t always sure where the Lord was going to lead,” he said.

Two pieces of advice helped him get through the death of his wife. The first came from a Jesuit priest and the second came from a book: Recall the good and happy times of his marriage; and life is a book filled with many chapters.

“After my wife passed, I decided that ‘OK, buster, there’s a new chapter. What are you



Photo by Dave Hrbacek/Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Des Moines native son, Father Stephen Boatwright, becomes a priest for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis recently at age 74. He is originally from St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale.

going to do?”

His experience as a permanent deacon included people wishing he could hear their confession and administer the anointing of the sick, two sacraments that can only be performed by a priest.

“I went and talked with Father (David) Blume (then-vocations director for the archdiocese) and a number of other priests to see if it was even possible” to pursue a priestly vocation, Father Boatwright said. “I started formation when I was 72 years old.”

Those considering a religious vocation should “pray, pray, pray and pray more,” he said. “Devel-

op your relationship with Christ.”

Be prepared as well to study and work hard, he said.

“I say that because I was retired for 13 years. I had gone through my wife’s death, and I had not been in school for 50 years. I’ll tell you; education has changed a whole bunch since the early ’70s with the internet and all that other business. The courses for a master’s (degree) and above require a lot of work. I think the younger you can go into that, the better off you are.”

A blessing is the support provided in the seminary to develop the human, spiritual, intellectual

and pastoral dimensions of ministry, Father Boatwright said.

“You’ll have spiritual directors, formators, all those folks who will provide you input and feedback throughout your journey.”

As he readies to begin his priestly ministry, Father Boatwright said he looks forward to celebrating Mass, and he hopes to spend “whatever remaining time I have with the people and serving God as a priest.”

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Help the Diocese remain vigilant

Priests and deacons provide faithful service with generosity and care to the people of the Diocese of Des Moines.

The sexual abuse of a minor by a member of the clergy, or any employee or volunteer affiliated with the Church is an exception. It’s a violation of the their authority, a gross offense against the human dignity of the victim, and a violation of trust.

The integrity of the Church and the well-being of its community demand vigilance in prevention efforts and a prompt and effective response to reports of abuse.

The Diocese of Des Moines encourages anyone who has been sexually abused as a minor to report to law enforcement and file a complaint with the Diocese. There are several ways a person can report an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by clergy.

- Diocesan Victim Assistance Advocate Sam Porter. He is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services and assists people through the process of filing a complaint. No matter how long ago the abuse occurred, a victim can file a complaint. Porter also helps people seek support and counseling services. He can be reached at 515-286-2015 or Sam.Porter@polk-countyiowa.gov or Sam Porter, Victim Assistance Advocate – Diocese of Des Moines, Polk County Crisis & Advo-

cacy Services, 2309 Euclid Ave., Des Moines, IA 50310.

- To report abuse of a person currently under the age of 18, Iowa Child Abuse Reporting line at 1-800-362-2178; for past child abuse of a person now an adult, Iowa Attorney General hotline for survivors of abuse at 1-855-620-7000.

- Directly to the Diocese at 515-243-7653.

- To a pastor or other official in any of the 80 parishes within the Diocese of Des Moines. The Diocese requires all clergy, staff, and volunteers for parishes, schools, and related organizations within the Diocese to report to the Bishop allegations or suspicions that a child has been the victim of abuse. The only exception is when a priest learns of the abuse from a person through the sacrament of reconciliation. He is bound to confidentiality by the seal of confession. In this situation, the priest should encourage the penitent to report the offense to civil and Church authorities.

For more information on reporting abuse, or the process that follows, go to the Victim Assistance page on the diocesan website at dm-diocese.org.

Los sacerdotes y diáconos ofrecen con generosidad y cuidado un servicio fiel a la gente de la Diócesis de Des Moines.

El abuso sexual de un menor por un miembro del clero, o un empleado o voluntario afiliado con la Iglesia es una excepción. Es una violación de su autoridad, una grave ofensa en contra de la dignidad humana de la víctima y una violación de confianza.

La integridad de la Iglesia y el bienestar de su comunidad exige vigilancia en los esfuerzos para la prevención y en una respuesta pronta y efectiva a los reportes de abuso.

La Diócesis de Des Moines exhorta a cualquier persona que haya sido víctima de abuso sexual cuando era un menor a reportarlo a las autoridades civiles y de levantar una queja con la Diócesis. Hay varias formas en las que una persona puede reportar alegaciones de abuso sexual de un menor por un miembro del clero.

- El Consejero Diocesano para Asistencia a Víctimas Sam Porter. Él es miembro del personal del Servicio para Víctimas del Condado de Polk y asiste a las personas durante el proceso de levantar una queja. No importa cuándo haya sucedido el abuso, las víctimas pueden levantar quejas. Porter también asiste a las personas que buscan servicio de apoyo y consejería. Lo pueden llamar al 515-286-2015 o por email a Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov o escribirle a

Sam Porter, Victim Assistance Advocate – Diocese of Des Moines, Polk County Crisis & Advocacy Services, 2309 Euclid Ave., Des Moines, IA 50310.

- Para reportar el abuso a una persona que es menor de 18 años, llame a la línea de Reportes de Abuso Infantil de Iowa (Iowa Child Abuse Reporting line, en inglés) al 1-800-362-2178; para reportar abusos de menores a personas que ya son adultos, la línea del Fiscal General de Iowa (Iowa District Attorney) para sobrevivientes de abuso es 1-855-620-7000.

- Directamente a la Diócesis al 515-243-7653.

- Aun párroco u otro oficial de cualquiera de las 80 parroquias dentro de la Diócesis de Des Moines. La Diócesis exige a todo el clero, personal y voluntarios de parroquias, escuelas y organizaciones relacionadas con la Diócesis que reporten al Obispo las quejas o sospechas de que un niño está siendo víctima de abuso. La única excepción es cuando un sacerdote se entera del abuso por medio de una persona en el sacramento de reconciliación. Él está sometido a la confidencialidad del sello de la confesión. En esta situación, el sacerdote debe exhortar al penitente a que reporte la ofensa a las autoridades civiles y de la Iglesia.

Para más información sobre reportes de abuso o el proceso que le sigue, visite la página Victim Assistance en el sitio web de la diócesis en dm-diocese.org.

Celebrating life and legacy

An evening with Pulse Life Advocates

By Sue McEntee
Contributing Writer

It was a beautiful summer evening when the annual summer house party took place, filling the air with a sense of purpose and community.

The gathering was dedicated to raising awareness and funding for Pulse Life Advocates (formerly known as Iowans for Life).

For more than 50 years, Pulse Life Advocates has been a steadfast defender of pro-life values, tirelessly advocating for the unborn at the legislative level, speaking at various events across Iowa, educating classrooms, and promoting pro-life principles among our youth.

The event not only celebrated the organization's enduring legacy but also looked forward to a future where the sanctity of life is cherished and protected.

Connecting hearts, charitable giving

The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa had the honor of joining the festivities.

They were invited to share insights on how attendees could channel their generosity into impactful charitable giving, whether through immediate gifts or planned giving for the future.

The goal?
To provide meaningful ways for supporters to contribute to Pulse Life Advocates, ensuring the continuation of their vital work.

Engaging with donors: Creative giving solutions

In the weeks following the event, the Catholic foundation engaged with numerous donors who were eager to explore different methods of giving.

The conversations highlighted the advantages of giving through gifts of stock and gifts of grain, offering donors tax benefits while maximizing their support for Pulse Life Advocates.

The power of planned giving

One of the key discussions centered around planned giving.

Donors were told how they could leave a lasting legacy by including Pulse Life Advocates

in their estate plans.
Whether through bequests, charitable remainder trusts, or other planned giving vehicles, these contributions ensure that the mission of Pulse Life Advocates will endure for generations to come.

A community united for life

The summer house party was a testament to the power of community and the impact of collective action.

Attendees left with a renewed sense of purpose, knowing that their support, whether immediate or planned, would help safeguard the rights of the unborn and promote a culture of life.

The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa was proud to be part of this journey, and ready to help you or your Catholic organization with information on Catholic values estate planning. For more information, reach out to 515-237-5044 or email smcentee@cfswia.org.

Sue McEntee is the executive director of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa.



Top photo: Sue McEntee, executive director of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa, shared at a Pulse Life Advocates event ways people can support Catholic organizations through planned giving.

Above: McEntee, Pulse Life Advocates Executive Director Maggie DeWitte, and Jodi Halligan, director of development for the foundation.

Nine couples pledge friendship now to eternity



Couples that call themselves the Eternal Friends include (pictured left to right): Kent and Cathy Gleichman; Jeff and Brenda Miller; Linda and Tim Woods; Don and Mary Coffin; Nancy and Brian Anstoetter; Marcia and Dan Allen; and Teresa and Tim Dunbar. Not pictured are Dennis and Denise Dormbier; and Mark and Alicia Rooney.

Continued from page 1

of Eternal Friends and Mary called the ability to plan like this a “double blessing.”
“One, we got to get it done, and two, we got to do it with our friends,” she said.
“My husband and I got everything taken care of. We have all of our arrangements made. I’ve told my children the only thing that’s left to do is write the homily,” Mary said with a chuckle. “I said, ‘I’m going to leave that one up to you.’”

Cemetery plots aren’t the only things the Eternal Friends have selected. Some have made decisions about urns, benches for people to sit on when they come to visit, and grave markers. Brenda has included her wish to have her favorite dessert, Cherry Berries on a Cloud, made and served at the funeral luncheon.

“It’s a gift for your family”

All three women said they were glad to be able to spare their children the responsibility for making tough choices at a difficult time.

“I know when I lost my parents, I think it was one of the hardest moments, no matter their age,” Mary said. “So I think it’s really important to have this all taken care of so your children can sit back and greet the people who come and cherish the memories and the moment, instead of having to take care of the nitty gritty details.”
“It’s a gift for your family to have it all taken care of,” Nancy said. She added that she hopes people will see this as a story of love and faith.
“We take care of each other

and we are united in our faith. We’re attempting to take care of things for the next generation so things are just a little bit easier,” she said.
Her advice for those who are hesitant to do the same thing?
“Take the first step. Make the call,” she said. “Start thinking about it, talking about it, and then take the next right step.”
In addition to Nancy and Brian Anstoetter, Mary and Don Coffin, and Brenda and Jeff Miller, the Eternal Friends include: Kent and Cathy Gleichman, Dennis and Denise Dormbier, Tim

and Linda Woods, Mark and Alicia Rooney, and Tim and Teresa Dunbar. The newest members are Dan and Marcia Allen, who started at Sacred Heart and are now at St. Francis of Assisi, West Des Moines.
To get a copy of the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Funeral Planning Guide, created in partnership between the Diocese and the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa, go to catholicfoundationiowa.org.

Strategy to deepen faith focuses on parents

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Parents need to deepen their understanding of faith and cultivate their relationship with God just as their children do.

The St. Joseph Evangelization Center is rolling out plans to help parishes with this by making presentations and holding discussions with parents beginning in the fall.

“My hope is to help parishes in their work to evangelize parents, many of whom are inactive in faith practice and may not even be believers. We can work together in getting parents and families more engaged with the parish and coming to Mass on the weekends,” said Tom Quinlan, director of the SJEC, based in West Des Moines.

Parents are understandably busy with work, helping children with homework, and shuttling them to various after-school activities, Quinlan said.

“I try to invite them into a

relationship with God in Jesus Christ, to take time to pray, to see the beauty of their calling as parents and not just the day-to-day tasks that they’re driven by,” he said.

“Out of that comes conversion and that’s game-changing. Once you know God and you experience God’s love in an intense and personal way, Mass isn’t a hoop to be jumped through. It’s this amazing, grace-filled experience that you hunger for,” Quinlan said.

Parenthood is a vocation, and God is there in the busyness, said Megan McCarthy, a mom of four and parishioner of St. Boniface Parish in Waukee.

“It is oftentimes easy with the business of life to ignore the blessings that God puts right in front of me,” she said. “Tom reminded me to find them in the sweet, chocolate-covered faces after a treat, in the skinned knees and tears that only mom’s comfort can ease, and in the moments that I get to slow down and play a board game or do a puzzle with

my children.”

Quinlan hopes his sessions with parents can be a part of a broader parish strategy to deepen faith in households. The approach benefits both parents and children. Parents who are growing in their own faith life are more inclined to walk with their children in an intentional way as they discover and learn about the beauty and richness of Catholic faith.

Rather than dropping kids off at weekly Faith Formation sessions and leaving it to someone else to teach the faith, the SJEC’s sessions invite parents to journey with their children on a path of growing in relationship to God.

Eleven parishes in the Diocese are working with nationally known catechetical leader John Roberto to focus on family faith formation. Quinlan’s project ties in the family-centric approach.

He piloted this evangelizing parent experience at St. Boniface in Waukee and St. Mary of Nazareth this past spring. Both sessions were well-received. He plans to bring it to more parishes



Tom Quinlan, his wife, Kristi, and their two boys.

in the Des Moines metro area in the fall.

Father John Frost, pastor of St. Mary of Nazareth, said Quinlan connects with parents.

“He is gentle, authentic, and rich in knowledge as he makes his presentation, and his delivery style resonates with those needing to hear the message of God’s everlasting love,” he said.

Quinlan hopes these sessions and the strategic consultation he provides parishes through the St. Joseph Evangelization Center will help to renew both faith

and practice of faith in many families in the Des Moines metro area, where he serves. And as a longtime advocate of parent and family faith formation, he affirms the direction many parishes in the Diocese of Des Moines are going.

“Less outsourcing of faith and more family engagement of Catholic faith together - this needs to be our aim,” Quinlan said. “Where parents are growing in faith and leading their children to faith, we see much better outcomes.”

Making It Personal With Bishop Joensen

Tune in to Bishop William Joensen’s podcast to hear his latest guest sharing about his/her personal & spiritual life. Find his podcast at <https://iowacatholicradio.com/on-demand/>



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Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs welcomes Jubilee of Hope pilgrims. The Des Moines Diocese has five pilgrimage sites: Corpus Christi; Ss. Peter & Paul Church in Atlantic; Basilica of St. John in Des Moines; Christ the King Church in Des Moines; and St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish in Des Moines.



Full time Music and Liturgy Coordinator

St. John’s Catholic Church in Adel is hiring a full time Music and Liturgy Coordinator. The Coordinator facilitates the worship and sacramental life of the parish community through music and liturgical planning, preparation, and coordination. The qualified candidate will be a practicing Catholic with knowledge of scripture, liturgy and liturgical music and be proficient in at least one performance area, keyboard, choral, voice, etc. Personal or professional experience in music leadership preferred. Please send your resume, cover letter and references to Rev. Michael Hutchison, office@stjohnsadel.org

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.



On Prayer

By Monica Pugh



Sacred Heart of Jesus

February is thought to be the month of love but it is June that holds the title. Historically weddings are the reason June is full of love. They were scheduled in late spring when flowers were in peak bloom and peasant brides and grooms were freshly bathed ready to bind their hearts together. Deacon Eric and I chose to be wed on a lovely day in June.

It is in our hearts where we feel love but love is also action like taking vows to be wed. Emotions begin in our brain signaling our heart to feel and the heart returns the signal for the brain to interpret. It is this path where a complex play between the body and mind happens. Jesus, becoming man, experienced this pathway to be closest to us. It is his Sacred Heart that beats for the love of God the Father, his Holy Mother, Mary, and for us. June is the month of many lovely solemnities including the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let’s turn our focus towards devotional prayers this month.

Pondering the solemnities brings many personal emotions. Our second son was born in June with life-threatening heart defects. Our young hearts shattered and our brains could not see the path. My prayers begged God to heal my son. Surrender for me did not come quickly like Mary’s yes for her. Fortunately, June also holds memories of a miraculous heart surgery. Today, our son is a husband and father. When his birthday arrives my heart swells with thankfulness and love for answered prayers. I remember what it felt like to carry him unaware of what we were to endure. Mary surrendered without explanation. Her action is the reason we have salvation through Jesus’ Sacred Heart that beat near her heart as she carried our Savior. Her yes brings understanding and surrender to my heart today.

Prayers surrounding the Sacred Heart of Jesus come in the form of a litany prayer, a novena, or a chaplet. These prayers began in the 17th century and stem from the private apparitions of Jesus given to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. The apparitions revealed practices now known as First Fridays devotion, Thursday Holy Hour in Eucharistic adoration, and the Feast of the Sacred Heart. This feast in the liturgical calendar always follows eight days after the Feast of Corpus Christi. The Immaculate Heart of Mary follows the next day with the dates changing yearly, like Easter, yet always near our son’s birthday.

Jesus’ Sacred Heart is often displayed with Mary’s Immaculate Heart pierced by a sword. But June also brings Father’s Day to honor our own fathers and the Most Chaste Heart of Joseph. His heart is swathed with lilies highlighting his love for Mary’s purity. These three hearts of our holy family reflect the Holy Trinity solemnity also celebrated in June this year. These hearts bring us hope to understand the immense love of the Trinity and mercy flowing from Jesus. Take action and pray these Sacred Heart chaplet prayers of warm love, “Sweet Heart of Jesus be my love, Sweet Heart of Mary be my salvation, oh Sweetest Heart of Jesus I implore that I may ever love Thee more and more. Amen.”

Monica Pugh is the Faith Formation director at St. John the Apostle Parish in Norwalk.



Graduates inspire classmates, family

St. Albert Catholic School

Dowling Catholic High School

By Matthew Pierson

Good evening, my name is Matthew Pierson, and I am a member of the graduating class of 2025. The last four years have been quite the epic journey, just think how much we have changed since our freshman year. As a freshman, I found myself lost and confused, without knowing where to turn. I watched as my older siblings figured out their lives, while I struggled to find my own purpose. I wanted to truly make an impact on those around me, but I didn't know how. That is what I took with me going into our freshman retreat. At the retreat we were challenged to write a letter to our senior selves pondering what our lives would look like four years into the future. Despite feeling tempted to write a joke letter saying I hope I didn't fail class, I decided to write down what I was truly thinking. So I wrote:

"Dear Senior self: How far have you come? Right now, as a senior, where are you? There are a few things I hope I did through my years at Dowling. First, where are you with God? Have I gained a true, personal connection with God? Have I spent extra time trying to connect with God? Second, what's my purpose and who am I? I'm honestly lost as a freshman and hopefully I have a plan for the future, and more importantly, found myself." Little did he know what was coming his way. "Finally, did I make a difference? Did I truly do something that changed someone else's life for the better?"

Looking back, I had been asking myself the right questions, but I had been looking at the wrong places to find the answers. I had been looking towards the culture, assuming that it would lead me to a joyful and fulfilling life. However, not only did I not find anything fulfilling, I had found myself feeling more empty than ever. This was when, out of desperation, I decided to turn to my faith. While I knew a lot about God thanks to my Catholic education, never had I taken the opportunity to actually get to know God, and form a relationship with Him. So, I decided to start attending PrimeTime Mass. It was there, thanks to the constant encounter with the Eucharist, that I couldn't help but be drawn closer to Him. Almost immediately, I saw a transformation take place in



Matthew Pierson with Dowling Catholic High School Principal Matt Meendering.

my life. Now, instead of having to force myself into good habits like going to Mass, I actively sought opportunities to grow in my faith. I felt an incredible love for God that I had never felt before. It was then, just weeks after I had written that letter for my future self, that my life changed.

My family and I were taking a trip to Washington, D.C. to visit my best friend, my brother George. In D.C. lies The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, or in short, one of the most beautiful basilicas on Earth. While we were praying before Mass that Saturday evening, I found myself pondering the beautiful artwork that surrounded us. Finally, I decided to look up, where, next to a depiction of The Trinity reads, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive honor and riches." Reading that, I felt my heart bursting in love and awe of God. Kneeling down, I begged God that just as Christ had given his life over for us, I wanted to give my life back to Him.

Well, that night I had a dream, where I was consecrating the Eucharist at a Mass. After waking up from this, I initially didn't think much of it, ignored it, and went back to sleep. However, as I returned to Dowling the next week, I noticed something strange. Thoughts of the priesthood came in my head, and I couldn't shake them. As each day moved through that week, the thoughts only intensified.

Use the QR code to read the rest of the speech or go to dmdiocese.org/news.



The student speaker at the Dowling Catholic High School graduation ceremony was Pax Christi ("Peace of Christ") award winner Matthew Pierson. The winner demonstrates a commitment to Christian faith, service, and participates in the life and spirit of Dowling Catholic High School.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We will pause Father Ron Rolheiser's column this month so we can share reflections from our graduating high school seniors on their Catholic education and the future.

By Ava Eickholt

The question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" is a question that every student gets asked frequently. Probably even more in their high school years compared to other ages.

In high school, the question comes in different versions from family members or strangers, and is usually followed by an awkward silence, or an "I'm not sure yet". In middle school, it was followed with innocent answers, untainted, like wanting to be an actress or the president. But in kindergarten, my answers were composed of random and unorchestrated responses. At that time, all I knew was that I wanted to be a part of something, something inspiring. I think every child does. For me, it was the cool surgeons on the TV or the teachers in real life. For others, it was the police officers or Grammy winners.

Whether you are still lost in the possible answers you can give to this question, I want you to know that you are already a part of something. In a wider view, you are a part of the class of 2025. You have filled a spot that no one else can sit in. In smaller pictures, you are a part of something even more special, like

making someone laugh in the audience of the fall musical, making a parent cry in the stands (with what I hope are happy tears), or making a teacher smile on a bad day. Some of you may walk out of these doors and never walk through them again, so I am reminding you, promising you, not to doubt yourself. You have already made an impact, been inspiring, and despite what you may think of yourself, you have already grown into a person I am proud of. Life will always have you grow, will always be asking you the question, "What, or even better, who do you want to be?" Take my advice, and don't hold yourself back from the endless answers you can follow. You have already gone this far, and you can go so, so much farther.



By Parker Heisterkamp

Good afternoon, everyone—teachers, family, friends, and of course, the Class of 2025. It's a surreal feeling! We did it! (Jayson Tatum reference) This isn't just the end of high school—it's the end of a journey we started together back in kindergarten. Most people go to school, make friends, graduate, and move on. But we've done something different. We've grown up in this building, together, for nearly our entire lives. We've been classmates, teammates, sometimes rivals—but always a family.

We've had experiences that only a group like ours could understand. Remember our Covid Zoom classes? Some of us trying to learn while others were clearly still in bed, or muted at just the right moment to avoid being called on. Somehow, we navigated breakout rooms, spotty Wi-Fi, and the weirdness of online school—and honestly, some of us might miss those pajama days playing video games. And then came the electrical fire. One day we were in class, the next—we were just off. No class, no backup plan, just... surprise time off. At first, it felt like a gift. Then we realized how much we actually missed being here together, even if it meant early mornings and uniforms. It showed us how much this place means to us—not just the building, but the people in it.

And speaking of change, how about our multiple principals? Each brought their own style, their own rules, and their own "vision." We adjusted every time, and we found stability in the chaos, mostly thanks to the teachers and staff who held everything together. To those teachers: thank you. You've

seen us through every version of ourselves—from wide-eyed kindergartners to barely functioning seniors. Ms. D, who welcomed us into the world of school in kindergarten and gave us our very first sense of what it meant to learn and grow in a community of faith, thank you for your kindness and your patience. And to Mrs. Gorman, who held it down in fourth grade and somehow managed to keep us all in line while still making us laugh—thank you for your strength, your humor, and your heart.

To all our teachers, thank you for believing in us, challenging us, and reminding us to put faith and kindness first. To our families: thank you for every ride to school, every pep talk, and every reminder to finish that assignment we swore we had already turned in. And to my classmates, you are my people. We've laughed until we cried, survived group projects, gone through real losses, and big wins. We've grown up here. And no matter where we go next, we'll always share something that no one else really can.

So here's to the Class of 2025—the class that Zoomed, evacuated, pivoted, and persevered. Let's carry what we've learned here—about faith, resilience, and friendship—into whatever comes next. Thank you, and God bless.



By Owen Marshall

Good afternoon everyone, family, friends, teachers, and of course, my fellow graduates. Standing here today, I'm not just seeing classmates. I'm seeing people I grew up with, people I've learned from, laughed with, and leaned on more times than I can count. At a big school, you might only know a few faces in the crowd. But here, we know everyone. We know each other's names, stories, strengths, and yeah, even those moments we wish we would have forgotten. There's something different about going to a small school. It's a place where teachers know your parents and siblings by name. Where every win on the field or in the gym felt like the whole school won. We weren't just students, we were family.

In a world that moves fast and where people sometimes feel like numbers, we've had something rare. Real connection. We've been surrounded by people who care, teachers who stay after class to make sure that all of their students are on the right track. Friends who always show up when it matters, and a community that's believed in us since kindergarten. And I can't not mention Spanish class. No VHL assignment was safe from the chaos, and none of us were safe from Mr. Poncini's sarcasm. He kept us on our toes, not just with vocab and grammar, but with constant jokes, mostly aimed at how long it took Parker to finish assignments and Jayden's anime obsession. Those moments are what make St.

Albert great.

The truth is, none of these memories would've happened without our teachers' time, effort, and patience. As the son of a teacher, I got to see the countless hours that they spend on their students. The stress that they have to deal with on a day to day basis, and the unconditional love that they have for everyone that they teach. For these many reasons, we cannot thank you all enough.

As we head into whatever's next, college, work, or a gap year, I hope we hold on to that sense of connection that we have built inside of St. Albert. Let's keep knowing people by name, showing up for each other, and not forgetting how much the little things matter. To everyone who's been part of our story, thank you. To our parents, who've spent countless hours at concerts, games, performances, and everything in between, your support shaped us, and we see it. We cannot thank you enough. We might be graduating from a small school, but what we're leaving with is something big: a foundation built on community, connection, and purpose.

Congratulations, Class of 2025. We did it.



St. Albert Catholic celebrates historic year in athletics

By Jake Shama
Contributing Writer

St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs closed out the 2024-25 school year with an athletic season for the history books. Success was particularly evident in girls' athletics, with state titles secured by the girls' basketball team and the girls' track team, alongside an individual state championship in girls' cross country claimed by the phenomenal Lili Denton. Principal Pat Ryan said he believes the last time St. Albert won two state championships in team sports was in 1981. "I knew we were going to be successful, but it was a little bit out of the blue on how well we did," Ryan said. "This is an exceptional year."

One of the most compelling stories of the year belongs to the girls' track team. Despite having only five members, this determined squad finished third in their district track meet and, remarkably, won the Class 1A state championship – an achievement made even more extraordinary as St. Albert doesn't even have a track at its school. "It just goes to show what our coaches and our parents and our students are able to overcome," Ryan said. Central to the girls' track success is Denton, who had already won the 1A state title in girls' cross country back in November. Denton was a key contributor to the track team's state title, winning three individual events – and breaking the state record in the 1500 – and anchoring a sprint medley team to a second-place

finish. Colton Lear, a physical education teacher and co-leader of St. Albert's weight room programming, offered Denton the chance to stretch instead of lift the day before she ran in the Drake Relays. "She was quick to deny that offer and said, 'I lift when I run every time, so why would I switch it up now?'" Lear said. "Oh, and by the way [she said], I run tonight, not tomorrow." She went on to win the Drake Relays in the 3000m race later that night. Lear attributes Denton's success to her internal drive and consistent training, also crediting her mother and aunt who "paved the way for what it takes to be an elite athlete and runner."

Foundation of strength, conditioning Activities Director Tim Cannon says a significant factor in this athletic surge is the growing popularity of a program that allows middle and high school students to earn PE credit through strength and conditioning classes. This initiative, which began three or four years ago, allows student athletes to participate in more training during the school day, freeing up time to compete in multiple sports. Cory and Colton Lear lead these strength and conditioning classes and run a weightlifting program over the summer for boys and girls high school sports – and they just added a middle school session as well. "We saw a golden opportunity to turn a dead weight room culture into one that thrives," Colton Lear said. "Cory and I are with these students almost daily and year-round."

Lear said over 90 percent of students are enrolled in a weights class throughout the year. **Girls' sports lead the way** The girls' basketball team also had an outstanding season. With only one loss, the team won the Hawkeye 10 Conference on their way to securing the Class 1A state basketball championship – the first state championship in the history of girls' basketball in Council Bluffs. Principal Ryan noted a "resurgence in and focus on female sports," partly crediting St. Francis of Assisi and Dowling Catholic High School graduate Caitlin Clark for bringing national attention to women's basketball and making it "okay to be competitive."

Lear attributes the girls' success to their individual coaches. "It's truly the coaches who have perfected their art in showing these girls how to be winners," Lear said. **Broader achievements reflect a thriving program** While the girls' sports are at an all-time high, the boys' programs are also headed in the right direction with many experiencing their most successful seasons in years. Football advanced to the state playoffs. Boys' basketball improved significantly with 14 victories. Wrestling saw higher participation. Both boys' and girls' bowling teams advanced to state. Boys' track finished third in their district and advanced participants to state. Both soccer teams had strong seasons, with boys' soccer becoming co-champions in the Hawkeye 10 Conference. The boys' tennis team had a strong dual meet record of nine wins and three losses, and the boys' and girls' tennis teams qualified athletes to the state meet. The girls' golf team also qualified one athlete for state. The combination of top-tier coaching, an improved strength-and-conditioning program, and sheer dedication of St. Albert's student athletes made 2024-25 a year to remember – and it looks like just the beginning.

Former refugee helps others

Continued from page 1

Bringing nothing with them to avoid suspicion, Duong's family embarked on their boat. By the time they reached the coast where the U.S. Navy had been, the carrier was gone. At that stop, some soldiers from the South Vietnam Navy and their families intercepted the boat and asked to join Duong's family. The boat that originally had thirteen passengers now had forty passengers. Having the soldiers on the five-day journey turned out to be a blessing. They protected the group from pirates. Upon reaching Thailand, Duong's family lived in a camp until August when the U.S. accepted his family to Camp Pendleton, a military base in southern California. This camp would host hundreds of thousands of refugees, some who would have to wait years before being placed. Duong's family was accepted to the U.S. in August 1975 and was placed in Houston, Texas in September by Catholic Charities. A family from the local parish, St. Mary Magdalene, sponsored Duong's family. In November of that year, Duong's family settled into their new house, furnished by Catholic Charities, and began their life in America. "The help from the federal and state government agencies, non-governmental organizations like Catholic Charities, the parish, and our sponsor family were critical to [my family's] success," Duong said. Fifty years later, Duong shared his story with refugees in the same position he was once in. "I felt really blessed to be able to repeat that [generosity] from the other point of view," Duong said. Refugees served by Catholic Charities and St. Ambrose Cathedral's refugee ministry in Des Moines will benefit from the fundraiser. Catholic Charities Executive Director Mike Sheehy shared how Catholic Charities continues to help refugees in the face of federal budget cuts. Ambassadors Terry Branstad and Ken Quinn spoke about Iowa's involvement in welcoming refugees, reflecting on the spirit of the late Gov. Robert D. Ray. The dinner's goal was to remind all to celebrate refugees with the same zeal the state of Iowa welcomed refugees half a century ago, which is still very much needed today. The organizers also wanted to focus on the positivity in the refugees' stories, said Duong. Duong encourages other parishes to host similar events that allow their communities to share their stories, especially in ways that also connect to the Catholic faith. "Embrace who they [refugees] are instead of asking them to assimilate. Celebrate what they are bringing," Duong said.

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All things deacon related

Continued from page 2

will be especially dedicated to serving men who themselves feel the tug on their hearts to a possible priestly vocation in a preparatory year program at St. Paul Seminary.

Throughout this period, he

will assist the priestly order not only in his sacramental ministry at the altar, but in being a conduit of communication and charity responding to the needs of God’s holy people. Beyond Deacon Stan’s own personal gifts and talents, he will share in my ministry as bishop, though not yet the

priesthood, revealing the love of the Father as an icon of Christ and faithful servant spurring others to social justice in a prophetic manner (see Kansas City, Kansas Archbishop Sean McNight, *Understanding the Diaconate*, pp. 38-43, 200-02).

I’m also spurred to think of deacons by my June interviews with the 18 married couples and one widower who have been engaged in the initial, two-year “aspirancy” phase of formation for what we call the “permanent diaconate.” They have undergone scrutiny of their personal backgrounds and qualities, and have given evidence of the mutual support of spouses and solid foundation of their marriages and family life.

These men range in age from their thirties to sixty, and represent geographic, ethnic, and occupational diversity from around the Diocese. Under the overall guidance of Des Moines Diocese diaconate director Deacon Jim Houston and formation director Deacon Matt Halbach, they have made several retreats, attended conferences, and are being formed in different styles of prayer, including undertaking the daily discipline of the Church in praying the Liturgy of the Hours—some gather virtually to do so each morning at 6:30 a.m. And they’ve been taking classes remotely in English and Spanish

through the resources of the Josephinum Diaconate Institute based in Columbus, Ohio.

In their written reflections and our conversations, some common themes emerged: they have struggled at times to reprioritize a new balance of family, work, prayer, and study. They have discerned what they have needed to let go of, and to “become more docile to the Holy Spirit which has allowed [them] to accept the yoke of formation and its various demands as the Lord’s will for [them].” Many of them have been away from studies for years, and have been humbled in trying to appropriate new habits of learning and theological language conveying God’s self-revelation and the Church’s teaching.

Yet they have also discovered afresh that they are beloved sons of the heavenly Father, and are entering more deeply into friendship with Jesus Christ, into the mystery of the divine life of the Holy Trinity dwelling within the Church. They are becoming better listeners, husbands, and fathers, even as they undertake a more “hidden life” where becoming takes precedence over doing.

I was moved and inspired by the dedication of these 19 aspirants and their spouses. I will be gladly poised to preside at the rite this Fall when they will formally move from “aspirancy” to the “candidacy” phase of their for-

mation, where discernment and service will take on a new intentionality as the prospect of diaconal ordination in 2028 draws ever closer.

Should they ultimately be ordained to serve in the Diocese of Des Moines, they will be subject to my decree concerning clerical attire of deacons, dated June 9, the Memorial of St. Ephrem. A separate article in this issue of *The Catholic Mirror* (see page 5) provides more details, but the basic rubric as of Sept. 1, 2027, is that deacons will only be permitted to wear grey clerical shirts that will distinguish them from priests in the course of their ministry. These opportunities include the celebration of liturgical rites, sacraments, marriage preparation, ministry to the sick and vulnerable in care institutions, teaching and forming others in the faith, and offering blessings and commending the dead according to the Lord.

June. Deacons. Thank you, God, for giving the Church this sacred order as a sacramental sign of service, a gift of the Holy Spirit that enables men to distinctively tend to the human and spiritual needs of God’s people in the Diocese of Des Moines. They build us up in hope and trust that God is always near us, accompanying us and drawing us into communion in the heart of Jesus, the life of the Holy Trinity.



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Todo lo Relacionado con Diáconos

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co concluye, “cuando el corazón creyente lo descubre, la respuesta que brota espontáneamente no consiste en una pesada búsqueda de sacrificios o en el mero cumplimiento de un pesado deber, es cuestión de amor” (DN n. 166). El discípulo cuyo corazón se despierta en gozo por la cercanía a Cristo y su Espíritu con su alma misma acoge la misión de traer el amor de Cristo al mundo. Éste se siente libre para comprometer todo su ser al servicio del Reino, incluso hasta la muerte (cf. DN n. 206).

Quienes conocen al Diácono Stan Asjes, incluyendo a sus formadores, compañeros y todos a quienes ha servido en asignaturas pastorales, han dado testimonio de que es apropiadamente hospitalario y vulnerable con los demás y con una gran intencionalidad de orar por y con ellos.

El Diácono Stan no solamente guiará a los demás hacia las aguas salvadoras del bautismo en su papel de Maestro de Ceremonias como lo hizo en la Vigilia Pascual en la Catedral de San Ambrosio este pasado Sábado Santo para que yo pudiera llevar a cabo el rito sagrado; él mismo proclamará a Jesús y “descenderá a las aguas” cuando administre el Sacramento del Bautismo.

Él orará y meditará sobre la palabra de Dios y escuchará atentamente a otros cuando le compartan sus sufrimientos y amarguras, sus deseos incumplidos, para que pueda sacar a la superficie las profundidades ocultas de las Escrituras para poder promover conversaciones y renovar la esperanza por medio de sus prédicas.

Este verano, el Diácono Stan servirá a los fieles en las parroquias del Condado de Cass. Y en el próximo año académico, en la “fase de síntesis” de su formación general antes de que, esperamos, en su eventual ordenación al sacerdocio el 26 de junio del 2026, se dedique especialmente a servir a hombres quienes ellos mismos sienten el tirón en su corazón respecto a una posible vocación sacerdotal en el programa del año preparativo en el Seminario de St. Paul.

Durante este período, el ayudará a la orden sacerdotal no solamente en su ministerio sacramental en el altar, sino en ser un conducto de comunicación y caridad que responde a las necesi-

dades del pueblo santo de Dios. Más allá de los dones y talentos personales del Diácono Stan, él compartirá mi ministerio como obispo, no aún el sacerdocio, revelando el amor del Padre como ícono de Cristo y fiel servidor promoviendo ante los demás la justicia social de una forma profética (ver Sean McKnight, Entendiendo el Diaconado (Understanding the Diaconate), págs. 38-43, 200-02).

También estoy pensando sobre los diáconos por mis entrevistas en junio con las dieciocho parejas de matrimonios y el viudo que han estado participando en la fase inicial de formación con dos años de “aspirantado” a lo que llamamos el “diaconado permanente.” Ellos han pasado por un escrutinio de sus antecedentes y cualidades personales y han dado evidencia de apoyo mutuo de los esposos y de solidez en las bases de sus matrimonios y vida familiar.

Estos hombres varían en edad de treinta hasta sesenta, representando la diversidad geográfica, étnica, y ocupacional de toda la Diócesis. Bajo la dirección general del director diocesano del diaconado, Diácono Jim Houston y

del director de formación Diácono Matt Halbach, han tenido varios retiros, asistido a conferencias, y recibido formación sobre diferentes estilos de oración, incluyendo el asumir la disciplina diaria de la Iglesia rezando la Liturgia de las Horas – algunos se reúnen virtualmente todas las mañanas a las 6:30 AM. También han tomado clases remotas en inglés y español por medio de los recursos del Instituto Josefino del Diaconado, basado en Columbus, Ohio.

En sus reflexiones por escrito y en nuestras conversaciones, surgieron algunos temas en común: ellos han batallado en veces en cambiar prioridades en un nuevo balance de familia, trabajo, oración y estudio. Ellos han discernido sobre lo que necesitan dejar atrás para “hacerse más dóciles al Espíritu Santo lo que les ha permitido aceptar el yugo de la formación y de las varias demandas que el Señor tiene de ellos.” Muchos de ellos han estado alejados de los estudios por años y han visto su humildad tratando de asumir nuevos hábitos de aprendizaje y de lenguaje teológico llevando la revelación de Dios y

las enseñanzas de la Iglesia a los demás.

A la vez han descubierto nuevamente que son hijos amados del Padre celestial, y están entrando más profundamente a una relación con Jesucristo, en el misterio de la vida divina de la Santísima Trinidad que habita dentro de la Iglesia. Se están convirtiendo en mejores oyentes, esposos y padres, conforme asumen una vida “más oculta” en donde el convertir toma precedencia sobre el hacer.

La dedicación de estos diecinueve aspirantes y sus esposas me han motivado e inspirado. Estaré dispuesto con gusto para presidir el rito este otoño cuando avanzarán formalmente de la fase de “aspirantado” a la fase de “candidatura” en su formación, en donde el discernimiento y el servicio tomarán un nuevo nivel de intención conforme se acerca el prospecto de ordenación al diaconado en el 2028.

Si llegan finalmente a ordenarse para servir en la Diócesis de Des Moines, estarán sujetos a mi decreto respecto al atuendo clerical de los diáconos, fechad el 9 de junio de 2025, el Memorial de San

Efrén. En esta edición de Mirror tenemos un artículo que da más detalles, pero en términos generales es que, a partir del 1 de septiembre de 2027, únicamente se les permitirá a los diáconos utilizar camisas clericales grises, de modo que se les distinga de los sacerdotes en el curso de su ministerio. Estas oportunidades incluyen la celebración de ritos litúrgicos, sacramentos, preparación matrimonial, ministerio a los enfermos y vulnerables en instituciones de cuidado, enseñanza y formación de otros en la fe y ofreciendo bendiciones y encomendando a los difuntos al Señor.

Junio. Diáconos. Gracias, Dios, por dar a la Iglesia esta sagrada orden como una señal sacramental de servicio, un regalo del Espíritu Santo que permite a los hombres a atender especialmente las necesidades humanas y espirituales del pueblo de Dios en la Diócesis de Des Moines. Ellos construyen nuestra esperanza y confianza de que Dios está siempre cerca de nosotros, acompañándonos y atrayéndonos hacia la comunión en el corazón de Jesús, a la vida de la Santísima Trinidad.

Witness to history: Seminarian shares papal experience

Continued from page 1

seeing the late pontiff’s grey, bruised face “brought the reality of his death. Our Holy Father has passed away. Peter is dead. We do not have a father. We are fatherless,” he said.

“The weight of that moment had such gravity, combined with the Swiss guards there, and his discoloration. There was such emotion and appreciation of the gift of his life, that he gave his life to the Lord to become a Jesuit and to become the Holy Father.”

On Saturday at his funeral, Lynch watched as the late pontiff’s casket proceeded out of St. Peter’s basilica. Cardinals lined the interior knave as the casket passed by the human columns.

“The respect shown in that moment was substantial and moving,” Lynch said. “It was a wit-

ness of the fraternal love, the fraternal charity that the episcopacy, that ordination and the Christian community give for each other.”

On a Thursday, Lynch was walking from Latin class thinking the next pope would be elected on Friday. He went to sit at St. Peter’s Square when the traditional smoke indicating how the cardinals voted began to emerge.

“Everyone was misty-eyed. We didn’t even know who he was yet,” Lynch said. “Before we knew who he was, everyone was in ecstasy because we had a father. We had Peter. He was back. That dynamic, that reality says so much in and of itself. Before we knew who he was, we loved him.”

His first reaction upon learning the pope was from the United States?

“No way!”

Celebrations began.

Following the election of Pope Leo XIV, the American cardinals went to the North American College in Rome, where they were staying, and held a news conference. Lynch watched.

Cardinal Robert Prevost, who became pope, is a citizen of the world, said New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan. Having done mission work in Peru, and having a global perspective shows our homeland is not here on Earth but that we’re all pilgrims for heaven.

“His comments brought this sort of dissonance I was living in into complete harmony,” Lynch said. “It’s a beautiful thing that (Pope Leo XIV) is American. It’s so good for the people of God back home, that they have a connection to the Holy See on a personal level. He knows the White Sox! He’s a fan! We have a Mid-

west pope,” said Lynch.

Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich, from the pope’s hometown, in an emotional moment spoke about the pope’s love for his people.

“The whole dynamic behind everything was surreal,” Lynch said. “That we have an American pope. We have a pope. Peter is back. We have a father.”

In closing, Lynch said: “I pray we can all continue to receive (Pope Leo XIV) with such gratitude in a new and deeper way that we haven’t had before. His being an American enlivens within us a deeper appreciation and a deeper personal relationship with the great ecclesial community, with the Church universal, and ultimately, hopefully, reminds us that we’re all pilgrims on this earth. We’re ultimately destined for heaven.”

Consejero Sobre Asistencia de Víctimas

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

2025 Biking for Babies Central Iowa Ride for Life

Join Bishop Joensen in supporting this year’s Biking for Babies Ride for Life.

Are you ready to ride for life? Join the Central Iowa Ride for Life on June 28th at St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church in Ankeny. There will be a 5-mile children & family ride, a 23-mile ride, and a 48-mile ride.

Proceeds from this fundraiser will benefit the financial support and public awareness of local pregnancy resource centers and maternity housing including: **Agape Pregnancy Resource Center** in Des Moines, **InnerVisions HealthCare** in West Des Moines, **Martha’s House of Hope** in Ames, and **Ruth Harbor** in Des Moines.

Bishop William Joensen’s Story



An avid cyclist and pro-life proponent, the relationship with Biking for Babies was a natural and passionate fit for Bishop Joensen.

In a letter to Vocations Directors, Bishop Joensen shared: “I speak for the entire Biking for Babies Board in affirming our conviction that together we can, by God’s grace, advance the mission our Savior Jesus Christ entrusted to us, and do “even greater works” that will glorify our Triune God.”



Scan the QR code to learn more and register or visit dmdiocese.org/BikingForBabies



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