

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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

## ‘For I was hungry and you gave me food’

*Parishes bring sunshine to lunchtime as they offer meals, kindness*



**By Ryan Johnson**  
Contributing Writer

It's lunchtime in downtown Des Moines, and a line of people forms outside of St. John Lutheran Church.

They are waiting for a free meal at the Connection Cafe, where volunteers serve lunch to anyone in need, including those experiencing homelessness and low-income individuals.

Available Mondays through Fridays, the Connection Cafe provides free lunches and personal

care items for its guests. The program serves meals from noon to 1 p.m. at its location at 600 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.

The Connection Cafe was started in 2003 by The Bridge, an ecumenical, non-profit organization founded by four prominent downtown Des Moines churches. These churches — St. Ambrose Cathedral, St. John Lutheran Church, First United Methodist, and the Cathedral Church of St. Paul Episcopal — came together to address the needs of those living, working and worshipping in Des Moines.

“Individuals from these

four downtown churches started The Bridge to work together to serve the community,” said Rob Hoover, the director of the Connection Cafe and a parishioner at Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. “The Bridge created the Connection Café in 2003 to address food insecurity in Des Moines.”

Twenty years later, in 2023, the Connection Cafe served over 34,600 meals. More than 2,000 volunteers contributed over 6,500 hours of service, highlighting the program's vital role in the community.



At left, Rolla and Mary Lou Hermann and Darlene Cangas, of Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines, serve a meal to a guest at Connection Cafe in downtown Des Moines. Above, staff at the Catholic Pastoral Center serve pizza. Pictured are Patty Origer, of St. John Parish in Adel, Ann Pierson, of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines, and Esmeralda Amezcua.

### Increased Demand in 2025

The Connection Cafe is currently serving more guests than ever. This trend is not unique to Des Moines; food banks and pantries across the country are reporting a higher demand for food assistance.

Attendance is on the rise this year, said Hoover. In June, the organization served 3,827 meals over 21 days — an average of 182 meals per day. On one particularly busy day, they served 253 meals, their highest attendance rate for 2025.

“We were up 25 meals per day in June compared to June 2024, and we're growing month by month,” said Hoover. “We're seeing a lot of new faces, and many guests are asking for multiple meals to take to others who can't

make it here.”

Hoover and his volunteers have noticed that inflation and increased food prices are making life more difficult for many people, especially older residents in downtown Des Moines. As a result, more individuals come to the café for meals, even if they have a place to live, because they simply cannot afford to purchase enough food.

During an early August visit, guest Daniel Morin had nothing but praise for the Connection Café.

“The cafe provides resources, including personal care items, and sometimes transportation assistance to help me get to a job interview,” said Morin. “It's especially nice when volunteers pro-

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## Catechesis of the Good Shepherd spreading in the Diocese

**By Ann Pierson**  
Staff Writer

The Good News — and the Good Shepherd — are on the move around the Diocese through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

CGS is a form of catechesis based upon the principles of Maria Montessori, using interactive, tactile materials to help children cultivate a relationship with God. The method has levels for children ages 3-12 plus a level for toddlers.

“CGS is the meeting of two mysteries: the mystery of God and the mystery of the child,”

said Mary Heinrich, membership coordinator of the U.S. Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

The materials, referred to as works, are set up in a prepared environment called an atrium. The atrium is designed as a retreat house instead of a classroom, says Heinrich.

In the atrium, children hear the Word of God proclaimed and watch catechists introduce different works. The works, whether they are a chalice or a map of Israel, connect to Scripture and liturgy. Children individually work with these materials, pondering and connecting with God in their

own unique way.

Watching children ponder truth through these works has been rewarding for the volunteers and parents of CGS.

Jessica Gerhart of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale is a CGS parent and volunteer since 2018. She loves watching children come to understand God's love for them.

One memory includes watching the children interacting with the work of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The wooden shepherd has a flock of wooden sheep. Throughout the year in the atrium, children come to realize that

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One of the materials (called “works”) that children use in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in the St. Pius X Parish atrium in Urbandale is a shepherd and sheep. The CGS catechetical program uses an interactive Montessori-type method of learning. Children work with the shepherd and the sheep, coming to realize that Christ is the Good Shepherd and they are the sheep.





Bishop William Joensen

Our late Holy Father, Pope Francis, in his message inaugurating this Jubilee Year when we are to be Pilgrims of Hope, notes that the “Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus.”

The pontiff’s mention of ‘intensity’ suggests to me a focus of heart and soul where distractions melt away and we are truly present to one another; we sense that the good we long for is within reach, within and among us. These moments of greater intensity activate hope and draw us into encounter with Jesus through one another.

This summer has afforded young people in our Diocese several “intense” moments for faith, friendship, and hope to flourish: the Praise in the Park event; the Concert for Life where Father David Michael Moses, our own Father Max Carson, and an all-priest band played to rave reviews before a packed Val Air Ballroom; and each of the 11 weeks of Catholic Youth Camp in Panora.

# Bringing hope home; A horror not left behind

Personally, one particular moment when I experienced the encouraging intensity of the Spirit in engagement with young people was the Region IX Encounter for Young Adults and Youth Ministry Leaders that took place in the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kansas in July. Ninety young adults from (arch)dioceses in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas were accompanied by a couple dozen ministers gathered in small group reflection and conversation, Eucharistically-centered prayer, and visioning about how they might be sent to those with whom they live, love and serve in their respective home dioceses, especially among Hispanics. The overall theme for the gathering, “Listen, Teach, Send,” provided the inspiration for the respective main presenters, coinciding with the U.S. bishops’ National Pastoral Framework for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults.

The presenters were dynamic and inspiring, but it was the table conversation with young adults from our own Des Moines Diocese that was a special source of grace and hope for me as I listened and heard the Spirit speak in the transparently courageous hearts of my table partners. I heard young Hispanic women and men from St. Anthony, Christ the King, Our Lady of the Americas (Des Moines) and St. Patrick (Perry) Parishes speak of how some well-intended parents and grandparents conveyed an image of God as one who is poised to

judge and punish. I heard their longing for greater connection among their peers, and of their willingness to risk boldly stepping forward to give witness to their relationship with Jesus.

I was inspired by participants’ wisdom to recognize that God sometimes opens doors, and sometimes closes doors—a message that resonated with my homily at Mass on the second day of our encounter. Both are part of God’s way of guiding us. Hope looks to the ultimate destination, but rarely can it perceive and chart every step of the way. Faith is always needed to guide our hope. In faith, we need to keep listening—to God and to one another. It’s key to know to whom we should listen, who are the teachers God is sending us. For then we in turn can be sent where God would have us be, to teach and serve and celebrate with others who need us.

I felt that I was not simply the “accompanier” of these anointed young persons, but that they accompanied me. As one young woman wrote in a light-hearted note to me, “Extremely blessed to have you here with us. I will no longer be scared on approaching you.” If I and other bishops and priests can show our young people the merciful and loving face of the Father and of his beloved Son, then that is all the grace for which we could pray.

Indeed, it was an “intense” weekend in the best of senses, where as we all returned home,

hope is sure to spring forth from our young people with greater passion and commitment to lead others to friendship with Jesus!

On a more somber note, this past Aug. 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration, marked the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States’ dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, on August 9, a different form of U.S.-made nuclear bomb devastated Nagasaki. Hundreds of thousands of lives perished in the immediate blasts and in the lethal aftereffects of radiation. While opinions remain divided whether the Japanese were prepared to surrender without our needing to unleash such destructive payloads, in these ensuing fourscore years (as Abraham Lincoln might frame things), our consciences should remain seared by the horrific capacity of humans like ourselves to inflict harm in the putative cause of peace.

The readings for the Transfiguration Feast are vivid in their imagery. The prophet Daniel envisions God seated on a fiery throne with wheels of burning fire, with a stream of fire flowing from his seat. And the familiar Gospel depicts the apostles Peter, James, and John roused from slumber to behold Jesus surrounded in glory in company with Moses and Elijah before the voice from the cloud charges them, “This is my chosen Son, listen to him.”

The lingering saber-rattling of the Cold War has not abated, with the ominous prospect of nuclear conflict still confronting us in the Middle East and in the war between Russia and Ukraine, in which the U.S. plays a prominent role, with nuclear-armed ships placed in closer proximity to Russia. We may have harnessed the intense destructive force of the atomic realm, but in this regard, still seem deaf to the voice of the Son. Jesus calls us to be prophetic in ushering in a peace that the world’s nations’ recourse to advanced weaponry can never generate.

Robert Oppenheimer, ‘godfather’ of the Manhattan Project and lead scientist who directed the Los Alamos team that was largely responsible for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, was featured in the Oscar-winning motion picture bearing his name. The biopic drama captures much of the history behind the birth of nuclear arms, but unlike the book on which the movie was based, does not convey Oppenheimer’s profound misgivings and dismay about the horrible carnage he and his colleagues had wrought. Three days after Tokyo surrendered, ending WWII, Oppenheimer told President Truman, “We believe that the safety of this nation—as opposed to its ability to inflict damage on an enemy power—cannot lie wholly or even primarily in its scientific or technical prowess. It

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## Trayendo Esperanza a Casa; Un Horror Que No Se Olvida

El difunto Santo Padre, Papa Francisco, en su mensaje inaugural este Año de Jubileo en donde debemos ser Peregrinos de Esperanza, señala que “la vida cristi-

ana es un camino, que también necesita momentos fuertes para alimentar y robustecer la esperanza, compañera insustituible que permite vislumbrar la meta: el encuentro con el Señor Jesús.”

La mención del pontífice respecto a la ‘intensidad’ me sugiere un enfoque de alma y corazón a donde las distracciones se desvanecen y que estamos verdaderamente presentes unos con los otros; sentimos que el bien que deseamos está a nuestro alcance, dentro y entre nosotros. Estos momentos de mayor intensidad activan la esperanza y nos llevan a un encuentro con Jesús a través de los demás.

Este verano les ha ofrecido a los jóvenes de nuestra Diócesis varios momentos “intensos” en fe, amistad y para que florezca la esperanza: el evento de Alabanza en el Parque; el Concierto por la Vida en donde el Padre David Michael Moses, nuestro propio Padre Max Carson y una banda compuesta solamente de sacerdotes tocaron ante un Val Air Ballroom lleno y con críticas favorables; y cada una de las diez semanas de Campamento Católico de Jóvenes en Panora.

Personalmente, un momento en particular en donde viví una intensidad prometedora del Es-

píritu en conexión con los jóvenes fue en el Encuentro para Adultos Jóvenes y de Líderes de Ministerio Juvenil de la Región IX que se llevó a cabo en la Arquidiócesis de Kansas City (Kansas) en julio. Noventa adultos jóvenes de (arqui)diócesis en Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska y Kansas estuvieron acompañados por un par de docenas de ministros reunidos en pequeños grupos de reflexión y conversación, oración centrada en la Eucaristía, y visionando cómo pueden ser enviados a aquellos con quienes viven, aman y sirven en sus respectivas diócesis, especialmente entre los hispanos. El tema general de la reunión, “Escucha, Enseña, Envía,” inspiró a los respectivos presentadores, coincidiendo con el Marco Pastoral Nacional para Ministerios Juveniles y de Jóvenes Adultos.

Los presentadores fueron dinámicos e inspiradores, pero fue en las conversaciones en la mesa con adultos jóvenes de nuestra propia Diócesis de Des Moines que fue una fuente especial de gracia y de esperanza para mí al oír y escuchar hablar al Espíritu en los transparentemente valientes corazones de mis compañeros de mesa. Escuché a jóvenes hombres y mujeres de hispanos de St. Anthony, Cris-

to Rey, Nuestra Señora de las Américas (Des Moines) y de St. Patrick (Perry) hablar de cómo algunos padres y abuelos de familia bien intencionados les formaron una imagen de Dios como alguien que está pronto a juzgar y castigar. Escuché sobre sus deseos de una mayor conexión con sus pares y su deseo de arriesgarse a dar un paso al frente para dar un audaz testimonio de su relación con Jesús.

Me inspiró la sabiduría de los participantes que reconocen que Dios a veces abre puertas y

en veces las cierra – un mensaje que resonó con mi homilía en la Misa en el segundo día de nuestro encuentro. Ambos son partes de cómo nos guía Dios. La esperanza mira hacia el destino final, pero rara vez se puede distinguir y marcar a cada paso del camino. Siempre se necesita de la fe para guiar nuestra esperanza. En la fe, necesitamos seguir escuchando – a Dios y unos a otros. Es la clave para saber a quién debemos escuchar, quienes son los mae-

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### THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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### Official

Bishop William Joensen has made the following appointment.

Rev. Mr. Randy Kiel, to diaconal ministry at Christ the King Parish, Des Moines, beginning July 31, 2025 until August 30, 2026.

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

Jason Kurth  
Chancellor



# Rockin’ Revs delight sold-out crowd

*All-priest band entertains diverse crowd to benefit prolife organizations*

By Ann Pierson  
Staff Writer

A crowded Val Air Ballroom jammed out to music played by six young priests, including one of the Diocese’s own.

The first Concert for Life in Iowa had a sold-out crowd of 1,500. The concert raised more than \$8,000 for Gabriel’s Corner in Council Bluffs and Pulse Life Advocates.

The bass guitarist for the band was Father Max Carson of the Diocese of Des Moines, who currently serves at St. Patrick Parish and St. Albert School in Council Bluffs. When the Diocese’s own priest entered the stage, the crowd went wild.

Iowans who have known Father Carson throughout his vocational journey came to support him.

“We had Father Max as a seminarian at St. Joe’s,” Chris and Dawn Linder of St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines said. “We’re here to see him.”

Christine and Tim Courtney belong to Father Carson’s parish of St. Patrick. They, along with other members of their parish, took a bus up to see their parochial vicar play.

“This is the first time we’ve been able to see [Father Carson] live with his band, so we’re excited,” the Courtneys said.

The concert was headlined by Father David Michael Moses of the Archdiocese of Houston, Texas, who is widely known for his social media presence. His presence at the concert drew in people outside the Diocese of Des Moines.

Jessica Moore of Blue Earth, Minnesota, follows Father Moses on Instagram. When she heard about the Concert for Life, she and her family drove three hours to see the band play.

“I saw that they were going to play close to us. I’m like, ‘We’ve got to go!’” Moore said.

Holly and Faith Tenhulzen from Mater Dei Parish in Sioux City also saw on Father Moses’ social media page that the Concert for Life was coming to the state.

“We saw that he had a concert and it’s for a good cause. We figured it’s worth a trip,” Holly said.

St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish in Des Moines bought 148 tickets for those in its youth ministry and their families.

The concert was a unique experience, celebrating the joy of life, especially the joy in the priesthood.

“I like what [the concert] is supporting,” Leslie Hague of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines said. “I’m excited to actually see priests do something fun that they enjoy doing.”

The concert’s songs were penned by Father Moses. The lyrics were about the Catholic faith, such as lightheartedly singing about challenges a priest faces, as well as more serious songs about trusting in God’s plan.

When the priests concluded



A crowd of 1,500 enjoyed original songs, rap to rock, penned by Texas-based Father David Michael Moses and played by an all-priest band including Council Bluffs’ Father Max Carson on Aug. 4 at the Val Air Ballroom in West Des Moines.



Photos by Mike Gatzke

Fans of Father David Michael Moses came from as far away as Minnesota, and supporters of Father Max Carson came from Council Bluffs and his home parish of St. Anthony in Des Moines.



Photo by Mike Gatzke

the concert, the crowd chanted for an encore. The band, being merciful shepherds, appeased their flock’s request by singing another song.

The Concert for Life had those in all walks of life jamming

out, enjoying great music.

“It is so family-oriented. You can bring your entire family ... and everyone is going to get something out of it,” said Casey Dervay of Houston, Texas, who works behind the scenes at the



At left, Bailey Vizcaria of St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines and Leslie Hague of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines wait in a line to get into the concert that wrapped around the ballroom. Below, the Ali family (Ferdinand, Celine, Samuel, Cecelia, and Faustina) from St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish enjoyed the concert.



Photos by Ann Pierson

concert.

The concert especially had young people on their feet, celebrating the joy their faith has to offer.

“How the kids were dancing and enjoying [the concert]

was my highlight,” Sister Shiji Marttakal of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale said. “They may not remember what we teach them in the catechism classes, but they will remember [this].”



# Catholic Charities: Loving neighbors in need

By Kendall Begnoche  
Contributing Writer

Every day, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Des Moines, bears witness to the unseen strength of neighbors striving to overcome life’s challenges.

Many individuals and families served by Catholic Charities live without the comforts of air-conditioned homes, cruise-controlled cars, or savings accounts. Instead, they focus on meeting their most basic needs.

Catholic Charities steps in to bridge this gap.

Rooted in Catholic Social Teaching, the organization serves the Diocese of Des Moines

through vital programs and services, including counseling, community resource coordination, domestic violence and sexual assault shelter and advocacy, an emergency family shelter, and a food pantry.

With a mission to empower individuals and strengthen families, Catholic Charities serves all in need with dignity and love.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus shared the greatest commandment, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” When Jesus is asked, “Who is my neighbor?” he responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan – showing his disciples what it truly means to love one’s neighbor.

A neighbor is more than someone living next door. A neighbor is every person, especially the lost, the struggling, and the forgotten.

Catholic Charities follows the example given through the Good Samaritan. Fueled by passionate volunteers and a dedicated staff, the organization serves neighbors in need by feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, comforting the afflicted, uplifting the lost and much more with true mercy.

But this cannot be done alone. The financial support provided by parishioners and donors is crucial to the work of Catho-



The Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter in Des Moines provides a safe and empowering space for families who are experiencing homelessness to grow, heal and rebuild their lives.



Patrick (Pat) Johnson and Dominic Berardi are among nearly 200 volunteers helping Catholic Charities Food Pantry offer a warm welcome and daily support to neighbors facing hunger.

lic Charities. Responding to the Catholic Charities Annual Appeal provides an opportunity to create exceptional life-changing experiences that foster growth and self-sufficiency for those who are struggling.

This could be the person sitting quietly in the back of a parish, a coworker facing hidden challenges, or the family next door. Often, the individuals receiving support are not visible in the community.

Catholic Charities offers a pathway for donors to be like the Good Samaritan. Support from generous donors directly impacts the lives of so many across the Diocese. Each gift, no matter the size, provides critical services for someone in need.

The needs of the community are ever-changing. Catholic Charities actively looks for ways to better care for clients by meeting them where they are and providing them with what they need to succeed. In the last 12 months alone:

- More than 128,000 bags of food were distributed at the Catho-

olic Charities Food Pantry.

- The Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter provided 14,735 nights of shelter for more than 150 families.
- The Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault program provided services to 647 individuals, helping them begin the healing process.


Each year brings more individuals and families in need of support, making the work of Catholic Charities more essential than ever before.

In many ways, Catholic Charities serves as the hands and feet of Christ, going to the margins to care for some of the most vulnerable. Donor support allows the organization to reach further, offering an encouraging and uplifting hand to those who might otherwise feel forgotten.

The Catholic Charities Annual Appeal fuels the organization’s essential programs and services. Every donation makes a difference. Every gift sparks a change. Every dollar has an impact. This financial support enables Catholic Charities to operate effectively and compassionately.

Catholic Charities says ‘Yes’ to the Gospel call to love our neighbors – every neighbor – just like the Good Samaritan. Together, we can build a community, rooted in compassion, mercy and hope – where no one is left behind.

To support Catholic Charities’ programs and services throughout the Diocese of Des Moines, visit [catholiccharitiesdm.org/annual-appeal](http://catholiccharitiesdm.org/annual-appeal).



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# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Rev. Samuel Danso – August 2  
Rev. Luis Cabrera – August 11  
Rev. Matthew Luft – August 11  
Rev. Robert Grant – August 13  
Rev. Mark McGeary – August 13  
Rev. Lazarus Kirigia – August 20  
Very Rev. Christopher Pisut – August 28  
Rev. Ignatius Makoji – September 1  
Rev. Raymond McHenry – September 6  
Rev. Philip Bempong – September 13  
Rev. Jason Lee – September 14  
Rev. Joseph Chu – September 27

The Saint Serra Club of Des Moines is so grateful for you and your service to the Church.

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Rev. Gregory Leach – 45 years on September 12

## HAPPY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY!

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

**Subscription Time**

Help us continue to send you stories of faith and inspiration every month through our diocesan newspaper.

[dmdiocese.org/giving](http://dmdiocese.org/giving)



# Homebound visits become a hallmark of love

By Ann Pierson  
Staff Writer

“He is just a godsend, literally.”

For Mitchela Cross, mother of four special needs children, Father Nick Stark has been a godsend in every sense of the word.

The pastor at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Carlisle has ministered to her family for half a decade, bringing Jesus to them in the Eucharist and catechizing her children. Father Stark displays Christ’s love each time he walks through their door.

### Right time, right person

Father Stark’s visits to the Cross family began while he was still a seminarian. He was assigned to homebound ministry in the summer of 2020.

The timing of his assignment was perfect.

Cross, who drove her family to Christ the King Parish, could no longer drive due to mobility issues. Her husband, William, could not drive the family during Mass times.

Additionally, her family was immunocompromised as each of Cross’ children had different special needs. These factors made in-person Mass impossible.

Despite their circumstances, faith remained a priority to Cross. After each of her children’s adoptions, she made sure her children were baptized and attended Mass. Their circumstances would not change how important their faith was.

“To Mitchela’s great credit,

she has been very consistent in wanting her children to receive the sacraments regularly,” Father Stark said. “She thinks it is very important, and I think it is very important.”

Father Stark was ordained in 2021. His assignments at Christ the King and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton meant he could continue home visits with the Crosses.

### Communion Together

Father Stark’s visits are a highlight of the week for the Cross family. When Father arrives, one of the kids is always at the door before he arrives.

Father Stark befriended the children quickly during the visits. They asked him questions about superheroes or video games but would also ask Father Stark about the life of the Church and the sacraments.

“It’s just amazing to see [my kids] when they learn something,” said Cross. “Their eyes light up.”

During each visit, Father Stark celebrates a communion service at a space the Cross family sets up. If the children become distracted, Father Stark and Cross gently guide their attention back towards the Lord. He even allows their dog, Marvel, to sit with them during the communion service.

Cross says the communion service feels custom-made to their family, with Father Stark speaking with each of her kids individually based on their needs.

“I never felt so openly served by someone who is modeling Christ-like behavior,” Cross said.

Father Stark’s relationship

with the Cross family impacts how he ministers to other children in his priestly ministry.

“To be with this family... was one of the first opportunities in [my] ministry to closely connect with children who are curious about the faith and be able to talk to them about it,” Father Stark said.

### Gathering the harvest

Cross is grateful for Father Stark, knowing their lives would be dimmer without the light he brings to her family.

“It’s been a great experience for all of us,” Cross said. “[I’ve] never dreamed my family would be so lucky to be a part of a spiritual team with someone who would be so willing share his love of Christ.”

Father Stark views his ministry as taking Christ’s command to heart. There are many people hungry for their faith and the sacraments but need others through homebound ministry to bring the Lord to them.

“It does give me life in my priesthood to be able to bring the Lord to people,” he said. “This is very important to me especially if we’re going to take Jesus at his word... ‘the harvest is abundant but the laborers are few’ ... there are so many people who are desirous of the faith.”

Father Stark is grateful for the chance to serve the Cross family and bring Christ to them.

“For me, this has been a blessing,” Father Stark said. “They welcomed faith even when it might be difficult to practice their faith.”



For five years, since he was a seminarian, Father Nick Stark has been making home visits to the Cross family, bringing joy, friendship, and the sacraments to the parents and children.

Father Stark encourages those who also cannot attend Mass to contact their pastor for homebound ministry.

“Reach out to [your] parish,” he said. “Ask for that type of engagement with [your] church.”

### Advertising Opportunity

Get your message out to 30,000 Catholic households in central and southwest Iowa by advertising in *The Catholic Mirror*. Contact Sandy at 515-237-5046 or [communications@dmdiocese.org](mailto:communications@dmdiocese.org).

## Catholic Tuition Organization Helping 1,939 Students with Tuition Expenses

Financially qualified students receive more than \$2.1 million in support from hundreds of donors

For the 2025-26 school year, CTO is directing donor contributions to assist 1,939 students attending the 16 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines. To qualify, families must be below 400% of the federal poverty limit.

Donors in 2024 qualified for a 75% state tax credit for the value of their donation. Donors may designate 75% of their gift to one or more of the schools that means the most to them. Visit [www.CTOiowa.org](http://www.CTOiowa.org) / [online-donation](#) to make a gift or pledge today. Gifts of stocks, mutual funds, grain and livestock are also accepted, but a call to the CTO Office to confirm arrangements is appreciated at 515-237-5010.

School	Number of Students Receiving Tuition Grants	Percentage of Anticipated Enrollment
Christ the King	129	56%
Dowling Catholic	470	33%
Holy Family	189	83%
Holy Trinity	96	26%
Sacred Heart	97	20%
Saint Albert	225	32%
Saint Anthony	178	74%
Saint Augustin	31	11%
Saint Francis of Assisi	50	7%
Saint Joseph	96	44%
Saint Luke the Evangelist	77	19%
Saint Malachy	12	8%
Saint Patrick	70	73%
Saint Pius X	137	34%
Saint Theresa	67	30%
Shelby County Catholic	15	15%
Total	1,939	31%



Catholic Tuition Organization | 601 Grand Ave | Des Moines IA 50309  
515-237-5010 | [www.CTOiowa.org](http://www.CTOiowa.org)





# Parish celebrates 150 years of faith

On Sept. 14, the faith community of Holy Cross in Elkhart celebrates with joy and gratitude its 150th anniversary. The grounds, people, and community are cherished corner-

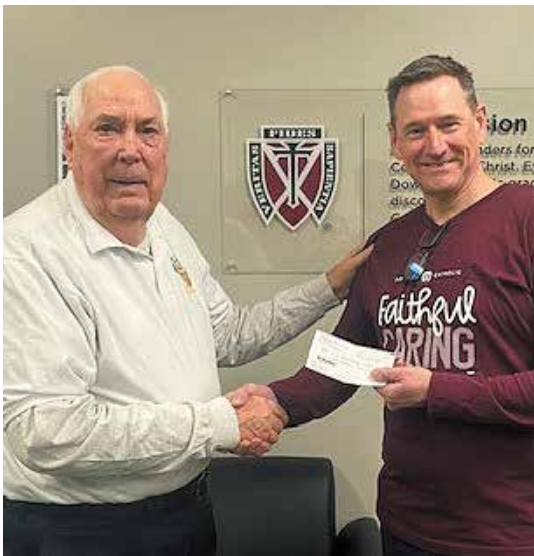
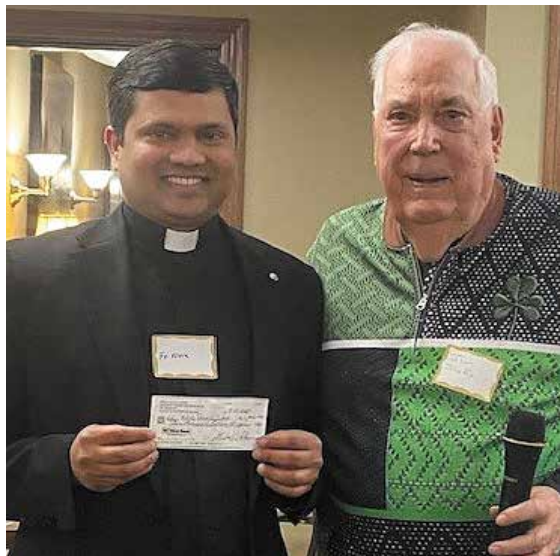


stones of their Catholic faith tradition. Founded in 1875, the first wooden church and now Holy Cross Church have been sanctuaries for worship, fellowship, and service for generations. As parishioners reflect on their journey, they invite everyone to join them in the celebration. Honor the past, cherish the present, and embrace the future on Sunday, Sept. 14 at noon, beginning with Mass followed by a brief history and catered meal. A digital presentation will be ongoing inside the church. A tour of the grounds, including the cemetery, will be available. The parish invites all those who have a connection to their journey to come celebrate.

## Hibernians support seminarians, Catholic schools

The Rev. James Kiernan division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians continues to provide support for education and vocations in the Diocese of Des Moines. The Polk County division was established in the fall of 1992. It actively supports Holy Family School in Des Moines with monetary donations to the teachers. It also provides money for scholarships to Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, and funds to support a seminarian. The local division sponsors a ticket raffle annually for two tickets to Ireland to support these endeavors and other charities. Since 1992, they have hosted a St. Patrick's Day Dinner for members, priests, and religious women. The Ancient Order of Hibernians is a Catholic, Irish American organization founded in New York City in 1836. The order can trace its roots back to the parent organization which has existed in Ireland for more than 200 years. The order evolved from a need in the early 1600s to protect the lives of priests who risked immediate death to keep the Catholic faith alive in occupied Ireland after the reign of England's King Henry VIII.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians of America was founded May 4, 1836, in New York's St. James Church to protect the clergy and church property from the "know nothings" and their followers. Active across the United States, the order sought to aid the newly arrived Irish, both socially and politically.



Jim Duffy, a member of the Hibernians, distributed \$1,000 to Bishop William Joensen for seminarians; \$3,000 to Father Nivin Scaria, of St. Ambrose Cathedral, for Holy Family School in Des Moines; and \$2,000 to Dowling Catholic High School President Dan Ryan, Ed.D. in West Des Moines for student scholarships.

## AROUND THE DIOCESE

### Aug. 16 Saturday Mass & Eucharistic Procession

AUDUBON – Join Bishop William Joensen for Mass at St. Patrick Church in Audubon and a Eucharistic procession to a nearby park famous for the Albert the Bull sculpture. See the shuttle service and more details at dmdiocese.org/events.

### Aug. 17 Sunday Rosary Rally

DES MOINES – Join fellow 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.

### Aug. 18 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.

### Aug. 28 Thursday Mary's Meals Concert

DES MOINES – Heartland for Kids will present a benefit concert for Mary's Meals at Jasper Winery, from 6-9 p.m. Enjoy a fun evening with Nashville musicians Phoenix Mendoza, John Leo, and Kitty Steadman, lead singer for Drop Dead Dangerous. The emcee is Des Moines native and comedian Willie Farrell. Free-will donation for burgers, chicken, meatballs, chips, desserts, drinks. Wine and beer available to purchase.

### Sept. 4 Thursday Alpha Course

WAUKEE – All are invited to Alpha at St. Boniface Church in Waukee on Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:30 p.m. In an Alpha course, guests meet weekly for dinner, a video, and open discussion around some of life's biggest questions. Invite a friend. All are welcome. No cost. Register at st-bonifacechurch.org/alpha or call Laurie Salz at 515-987-4597.

### Sept. 8 Monday Nourish for Caregivers

DES MOINES – Nourish for Caregivers meets at 6 p.m. at the Holy Trinity School library. This support group is for anyone juggling the challenges of life, health, and career, while caring for an aging parent, grandparent, or spouse either in your home, in town, or at a distance. For more information email troyt@holyltrinitydm.org or pastoralcare@saintpiuschurch.org.

### Sept. 13 Saturday Nourish for Parents

DES MOINES – Nourish for Parents is a new, Christ-centered support group for parents of children with disabilities or mental health challenges. The group will meet at 9:30 a.m. the second Saturday of the month at Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. Contact Kate McInroy at kmcinroy59@gmail.com for details.

### Sept. 15-Oct 13 Called & Gifted

WAUKEE – Want to discover your unique purpose? Come to Called & Gifted at St. Boniface Parish for the Catholic Spiritual Gifts Discernment Process on Mondays from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. in the Mother Teresa Room. Cost is \$50 for all sessions and materials.

### Sept. 20 Saturday Innervations Dinner Dance

ANKENY – A dinner dance and auction fundraiser for InnerVisions Health Care hosted by Our Lady's Immaculate Heart local Knights of Columbus includes dinner, silent/live auctions, and dancing from 6-10 p.m. \$50/ticket or \$400 for one table of eight. Knights Councils can purchase 2-for-1 tables for \$400 (limited to the first 12 councils). RSVP online by Sept. 6 to www.ivhc.org/2025DinnerDance/

### Sept. 13, Saturday NPM Event

COUNCIL BLUFFS – Join members of the Des Moines Chapter of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians and the music ministers of St. Patrick Church for a morning of prayer, song and fellowship from 8:30-11:30 a.m. at St. Patrick Church.

### Sept. 15 Monday Catholic Daughters

WEST DES MOINES – Our monthly meetings are held on the third Monday of the month in the Serra Room at St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. Rosary at 5:40 p.m.; Mass at 6 p.m., light supper served followed by a meeting. If you are interested in attending, please contact Rosie at rohaver611@msn.com.

### Sept. 19-20 Friday-Saturday School of Healing

WEST DES MOINES – Encounter Ministries will offer at Sacred Heart Church a two-day event to teach, impart, and activate Christians to be more effective ministers of healing.

### Sept. 20 Saturday Mass for Life

DES MOINES – A Mass for life will be celebrated at 10 a.m. at St. Anthony Catholic Church. For more information, go to stanthonysdm.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@polkcountyiowa.gov.



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# Generous donors help Kenyan sisters build a clinic

By Ann Pierson  
Staff Writer

The power of Iowans’ generosity transformed one community’s healthcare over 8,000 miles away in Tunyai, Kenya.

The Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation opened their clinic, St. Anthony’s Dispensary, in Tunyai this past January with a dedication Mass.

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Salesius Mugambi of the Diocese of Meru. It concluded with Bishop Mugambi blessing each individual room of the clinic and a celebration dinner put on by the sisters.

The project began in 2022 and replaced the open-air clinic the sisters ran. The previous clinic had one kitchen table that served as their examination table, could not run any clinical tests, and had a tin roof as its covering.

The new clinic features a clinical laboratory, pharmacy, multiple examination rooms, and two waiting areas. The staff now includes a clinical officer and a lab technician as well. The new clinic has also led to an increase in patients, especially among children who are receiving necessary vaccines for preventable diseases.

Steve Craig, a local doctor who helps coordinate Iowans’ support for the Nazareth Sister’s ministry, attended the grand opening of the clinic in January. “[The dispensary is] up and running, and it’s working beautifully,” he said. “The sisters are so



Photo by Steve Craig

**Patients wait to see medical professionals at a new clinic funded with help from central Iowans.**

excited with how wonderful the dispensary is.”

Thanks to additional fundraising, the sisters also received a vehicle for transporting patients who need more intensive care, and they received the funding to drill and deliver fresh water on site later this year.

The clinic was completed through the assistance of board member Sister Rosehellen Karwirwa, who formerly ministered in Des Moines and now ministers in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and three Nazareth Sisters who currently live in Des Moines: Sisters Joan Clare Njoroka, Rosalia Njura, and Joan Sudan Mwende. The sisters in Des Moines work as nurses’ assistants at MercyOne and send the money they earn back to their religious community in Kenya to fund the order’s work. Five other Nazareth Sisters live in the United States, who also send their earnings to fund the order’s ministry.

The next project the board has its sights on is constructing a short-stay hospital. The current hospital is 15 miles away from St. Anthony’s, but the cost of transportation and medical care is too high for some families in need.

The project is what the people in Tunyai need the most, said Sister Adelina Muguna, Superior General of the Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation.

The blueprint for the new hospital includes over 20 beds, including pediatric, antenatal, and postnatal beds, a delivery suite, and nursery room. It will serve all in the village, including low-income individuals.

The goal of the board is to raise \$130,000 – approximately \$80,000 to build the hospital and approximately \$50,000 to furnish and equip the hospital.

To donate, visit [nazarethsisisters.com](http://nazarethsisisters.com). For more information, contact Craig at [mbcraig1@msn.com](mailto:mbcraig1@msn.com).

## Diocese starts Nourish for Parents support group

Caretakers of children with disabilities or mental health illnesses are invited to a new, Catholic support group, Nourish for Parents.

Nourish for Parents is an offshoot of the Nourish for Caregivers support group. The curriculum was funded through a mental health grant from Catholic Charities.

Planning for this new group began after parents in the Nourish for Caregivers group requested a space where the unique needs, such as education or community resources, that come with raising a child with disabilities or mental health illness can be discussed, said Patty Origer, diocesan coordinator of Persons with Disability Ministry.

The leaders of Nourish for Parents, Kate McNroy and Anna Mundy, want to take the needs of parents and build topics surrounded by those needs. They also plan to bring in quarterly speakers to discuss topics.

“We are interested in learning what matters to them and what fits for the people attending,” said Mundy.

McNroy and Mundy hope Nourish for Parents will be a place where caregivers can connect with others in similar situations in the context of their faith. McNroy, a retired special education teacher, and Mundy, a parent of a special needs child and leader of other organizations, plan to bring their experiences to share and help others.

Origer, a parent of a child with special needs herself, hopes the connections formed in Nourish for Parents will be an invaluable resource for caregivers.

“It was really important to have that connection,” Origer said. “It’s nice to have other parents to talk to about things and to pray with.”

Caregivers of children of all ages are invited to come, McNroy said.

Nourish for Parents meets the second Saturday of each month. The first meeting is Sept. 13 at 9:30 at Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. Childcare will be provided.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Kate McNroy at [kmcnroy59@gmail.com](mailto:kmcnroy59@gmail.com) or Anna Mundy at [awholey@gmail.com](mailto:awholey@gmail.com).

# Mary’s Meals grows in financial support, volunteers, and prayers

Since Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow first shared about his charity, Mary’s Meals, with Iowans at the 2010 Christ Our Life Catholic Conference, he’s had support.

The latest is a benefit concert Aug. 28 at Jasper Winery in Des Moines from 6-9 p.m. Heartland for Kids will present the concert featuring Phoenix Mendoza, John Leo, and Kitty Steadman, with emcee Willie Farrell. A free-will donation for meals will be available with wine and beer for purchase.

Iowa has become “a critical contributor to our grassroots support,” said Helena Finnegan, spokeswoman for Mary’s Meals. Last year’s concert raised more than \$31,000.

MacFarlane-Barrow’s charity feeds school children in 16 countries struggling with hunger. If the children attend school, they will get a meal.

The benefit concert is just one event that supports Mary’s Meals. Others include musician Steve Angrisano concerts (Aug. 7-17 across the Davenport and Dubuque dioceses) and an annual race. Last Mother’s Day weekend, the race raised enough funds to feed 317 children for a year, or \$7,900.

The support for Mary’s Meals comes from financial contributions, volunteer time, and prayers, Finnegan said.

“It’s a movement that seems to have spread and continues to grow,” she said. In September, Mary’s Meals will expand its school feeding program from 2.6 million to 3 million children, a

milestone made possible by global grassroots support including regions like Iowa.

MacFarlane-Barrow’s approach of offering a meal for children who come to school

encourages them to stay for an education, which helps break the cycle of poverty and hunger.

It costs \$25.20 to feed a child for a year through Mary’s Meals. “Magnus calls it lots of little

acts of love. Everybody is able to be a part of the solution,” Finnegan said. “It’s really lovely to see the growth and impact Iowa has made for school feeding. It’s very, very heartening.”



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# Praise in the Park a Jubilee celebration of faith



Praise in the Park on July 19 at the Jamie Hurd Amphitheater in West Des Moines was part of the Jubilee Year of Hope yearlong Church-wide celebration. The day’s events revolved around themes of hope, redemption, and mercy. Bishop William Joensen, above, celebrated Mass. There were food trucks, games, praise and worship music by the band Array of Hope, adoration, and Mass.

# Byzantine worship now available in Des Moines



Father Bruce Riebe, of the St. Andrew of Crete Byzantine Catholic Outreach, is gauging interest in Iowa for establishing a Byzantine center of worship and community.

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

An Eastern Rite Catholic Mass is now available weekly in the Des Moines area.

Father Bruce Riebe, of the St. Andrew of Crete Byzantine Catholic Outreach, celebrates the Divine Liturgy on Sundays at 11 a.m. at All Saints Church in Des Moines.

The Byzantine Catholic Church has four dioceses – called eparchies – that cover the entire United States. The Cleveland-based Eparchy of Parma, which encompasses 12 states,

charged Father Riebe to come to Iowa to explore whether there is interest in establishing a Byzantine center of worship and community in the state.

Father Riebe began offering liturgies in Muscatine. He is now gauging interest in the Des Moines area.

## Where does the Byzantine rite come from?

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the apostles spread the faith. Four rites emerged at about the same time. The Latin Rite is the Western Church in proximity to the Mediterranean Sea.

Three Eastern Rites serving different areas – Constantinople (Byzantine), Antioch, and Alexandria – were also formed.

The Byzantine Rite spread to evangelize the Slavic people, said Father Riebe. When they immigrated to the United States, they settled in heavily industrialized areas like Pennsylvania and established their own worship sites.

“They wanted their own traditions, their own churches,” said Father Riebe.

Over time, people began to branch out. Father Riebe’s Eparchy wants to discern if there is a desire for a Byzantine church in each of the states covered by the Eparchy.

Currently, there are no Byzantine churches in Iowa.

## How do the Byzantine, Latin rites compare?

The theological tenets of the Latin Rite and the Byzantine Rite are the same, said Father Riebe.

Distinctions center more in styles of worship.

“It’s more about the outward expression of the same faith,” he said.

For example, at a recent liturgy at All Saints Church, prayers were in English and most were sung with a cantor. More incense was used than in a traditional Latin Rite Mass.

Father Riebe welcomes anyone who by virtue of Baptism or who otherwise culturally aligns with Byzantine worship, to participate in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays at 11 a.m. at All Saints Church in Des Moines.

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Franciscan Friar of the Renewal

“...they will lay hands on the sick & they will recover.” - Mark 16:18



# Catechesis of the Good Shepherd blossoms in Afton

By Ann Pierson  
Staff Writer

In a converted rectory, St. Edward Parish in Afton has offered Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for more than 10 years.

The passion that volunteers have for CGS has led the rural parish to offer all three levels (ages 3-6, 6-9, 9-12), and toddler atrium for its parishioners.

Michelle Moore, the office manager of St. Edward and Holy Spirit Parish in Creston and CGS catechist, is one of those volunteers.

In 2011, when Moore and her family moved to Afton, she spoke with the parish about bringing CGS to St. Edward, with Moore’s family making the materials that furnished the first atrium.

“The children immediately embraced it,” Moore recalled.

Over time, more parishioners took formation classes and volunteered, and the atrium grew. Most recently, St. Edward added their toddler atrium after receiving a grant from the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa.

Throughout her 13 years of offering CGS at St. Edward, Moore has loved watching the children use the atria’s works to connect with Christ. They establish Christ as a “person, place, and time” to the kids.

“[The children] adore the specially designed works, with toddlers sometimes focusing for 30 to 40 minutes,” Moore said.



Photo by Michelle Moore

**Olivia Findley, of St. Edward Parish in Afton, holds a picture of her 4-year-old self in her parish’s atrium. Findley, now 16 and a lector at her parish, says the leaven was her favorite work in the atrium. She now volunteers for her parish’s CGS.**

“It’s truly moving to witness them build a foundation of prayer through meditation and silence.”

Lindsay Thelen, a CGS volunteer and former director of re-

ligious education at St. Edward, has three children in CGS. Her kids are in different atria, and they each love CGS for different reasons.

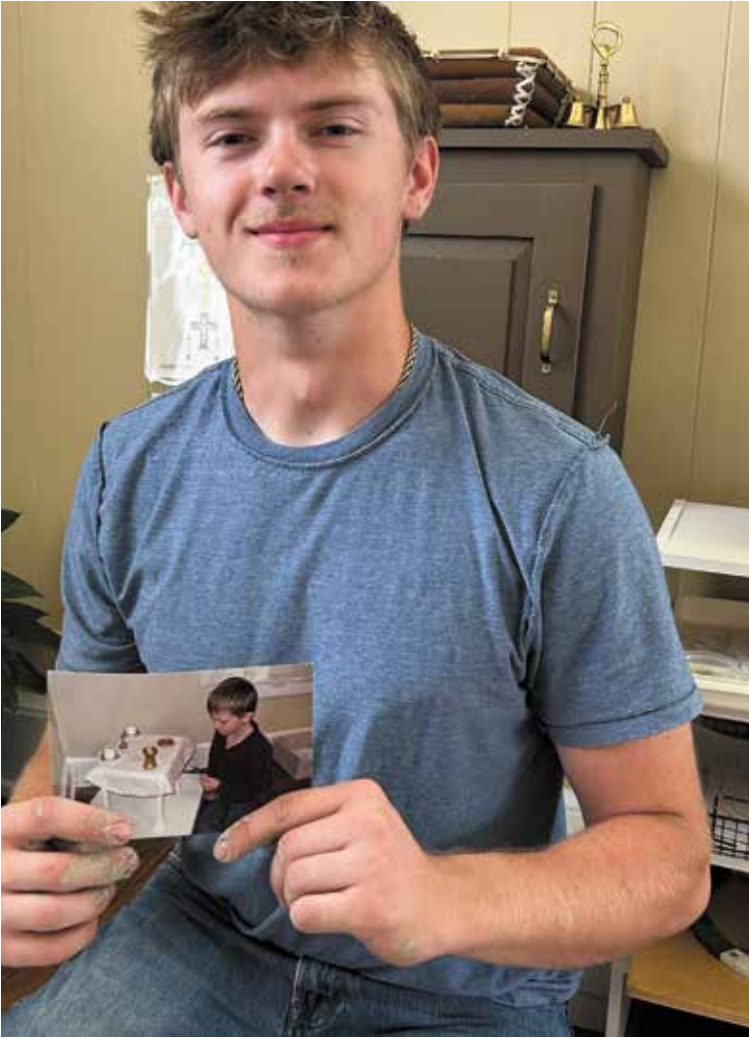


Photo by Michelle Moore

**Trevor Fry, of St. Edward Parish in Afton, holds a picture of his 6-year-old self in the parish atrium. Fry, now 18, recalls singing ‘This little light of mine’ in the atrium when he was a child.**

“It is so hands on and gives them independent learning,” Thelen said.

Maintaining the atria at St. Edward has brought challenges like training catechists, finding volunteers to donate their time, and upkeeping the prepared environment.

For Moore, the relationships the children have with God makes the sacrifices worth it.

“I’ve witnessed [CGS’s] powerful fruit: formations that uplift and foster closer relationships with Jesus,” Moore said. “The blessings are evident.”

## Catechetical program expanding

Continued from page 1

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and they are the sheep he cares for.

“Eventually... the revelation that they are the Good Shepherd’s sheep comes to them,” Gerhart said. “They hear the Good Shepherd call them by name.”

Heinrich, as a catechist and as a parent, has seen the impact of the atrium. When she and her daughter first visited an atrium, Heinrich’s daughter was so delighted by the space and the materials that she didn’t want to leave. Seeing that, Heinrich knew there were graces in the method.

The impact from the atrium stayed with Heinrich’s daughter, who as an adult is a trained catechist and coordinates CGS at her parish in Ames.

The witness to CGS has fueled its growth in the Diocese since coming in 2001. Heinrich was in the first CGS formation class in Iowa, with only 13 enrolled across the state.

Now, there are over 600 members of CGSUSA in Iowa and five formation leaders in the state offer multiple formation classes.

Heinrich encourages those interested in CGS to visit a local atrium and witness firsthand the place their child could encounter the Lord.

“[A child’s] greatest joy is coming to know the Good Shepherd and fall in love with him,”

said Heinrich. CGS could be the place where a child can do that.

Heinrich will be hosting a level I CGS formation course Oct. 4

at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola. For more information, contact Michelle Helm at [mhelm@stthomasindianola.com](mailto:mhelm@stthomasindianola.com).

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## MASS for LIFE

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# Faith’s family tree

## Guest Column

By Jaymie Stuart Wolfe  
OSV News

Our Catholic faith doesn’t appear out of thin air, and it plays out incarnation-ally and across history. Faith comes from somewhere, and often, that somewhere is a someone, often visibly woven into our personal genealogies.

Everyone wants to claim some connection to our first American-born pope: Dolton, Illinois, the suburb just outside the southern limits of Chicago where the Prevost children grew up; Villanova University in Philadelphia where their youngest son went to college; St. Louis, where he entered the Augustinians; Chiclayo, Peru where Msgr. Prevost served as a missionary priest, and then bishop.

So, it comes as no surprise that there’s been a lot of Louisiana chatter about our

new Holy Father’s Creole roots.

A well-researched and fascinating exhibit showing Pope Leo’s maternal family tree has drawn many to the Old Ursuline Convent Museum in the French Quarter. There, visitors can explore seven generations of the Holy Father’s New Orleans ancestors, leading back to the years just after the city’s founding in 1718. Supported by sacramental records still held in the cathedral archives, the story Pope Leo’s family tree tells is a uniquely Catholic and American one.

The pope’s family includes immigrants from Bohemia, France, Italy, Cuba, Haiti, Guadeloupe and Canada. Also among his predecessors are numerous men and women identified as people of color -- some free and others born enslaved.

What Pope Leo’s family tree reveals is the largely untold history of Black Catholics in colonies that eventually became part of the United States. This information, however, leaves us all with an unanticipated gift: the opportunity to recognize that the pope so many of us are excited about would not be who he is apart from the sad history of the African Diaspora caused by transatlantic slave trade and the complex racial history that followed in the wake of it.

Our family histories vary widely. But all of us share a lineage of spiritual fathers and mothers whose words and deeds also make us what we are.

Our task as Catholics is not only to recognize where we have come from, but to hand on what we have received. Most of us do that in the ordinary rhythms of family life, as the Holy Father’s ancestors did. Some of us embrace the mission by making choices that have an impact far greater and more universal than we imagine.

*Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.*

# Even now, the ship will hold

“Don’t give up the ship.”

Those five words were the dying command of Captain James Lawrence during the War of 1812. Mortally wounded in battle at sea, he gasped this final order to his crew as the ship slipped into enemy hands. Lawrence didn’t live to see what his words would spark—but his friend, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, did.

Perry took those words to heart. Before leading his squadron into the Battle of Lake Erie, he had a giant blue battle flag stitched with Lawrence’s dying words: “Don’t give up the ship.” The flag flew high as Perry’s fleet met the British, outnumbered and outgunned. When Perry’s own ship was battered beyond hope, he didn’t surrender. Instead, he climbed into a rowboat and crossed open water, cannonballs crashing around him, to board another vessel and continue the fight.

Perry’s daring paid off. Against the odds, he led his fleet to victory—a turning point in the war. In his report to General William Henry Harrison, a future president, Perry wrote the now-famous line: “We

## Twenty Something

By Christina  
Capecchi



have met the enemy and they are ours.”

All because of five words on a flag.

“Don’t give up the ship.”

This ancient admonition feels relevant to Catholics today. It speaks to the storms we face in our faith and our daily lives. Some battles are loud and public: scandals, division, debates that feel unending. Others are quiet and internal: doubt, discouragement, spiritual dryness.

The Church herself, with two thousand years of history, can feel like that battered ship. Rocked by waves. Pummeled by criticism. Easy to abandon. But the Church is also the original vessel—the oldest Christian faith, Christ’s ship, steered by

saints and ordinary souls trying to reach the far shore.

“Don’t give up the ship” could mean: Stay in the boat. Even when the crew is imperfect. When the storms are fierce. When the pope and the president change. Don’t leap overboard. There’s safety and strength here. Remember what St. Peter said when others walked away from Jesus: “Lord, to whom shall we go?”

Or maybe it means: Don’t give up who you are. When Instagram tells you who to be—from your eyebrows to your toenails—it’s easy to feel pulled off course. When you’re pulled in every direction, bailing water like you’re trying to empty the ocean with a teacup. Don’t surrender your true self, the child of God you were made to be.

Maybe it also speaks to your work. Are you tempted to trade meaning for money? Purpose for popularity? Don’t give up the ship. Stay with what matters most—even when it’s hard or hidden or feels small. The saints did. Joseph toiled in quiet carpentry. Thérèse of Lisieux changed the world from

a cloister.

I think of the tired mom who makes one more peanut butter sandwich for the toddler clinging to her leg. The 20-something who shows up to daily Mass even when his friends roll their eyes. The transitional deacon who prepares a homily only five people will hear. They haven’t given up the ship.

Neither should we.

There’s a reason Jesus chose fishermen—men of the sea—as his first followers. They knew storms. They knew patience. They knew what it meant to trust the Captain when the sky turned dark.

“Don’t give up the ship” might be the rallying cry we need in 2025. When out-of-town tournaments threaten to crowd out Mass. When prayer feels dry. When madmen execute assassinations both far and near.

Hold steady. Row hard. Keep the faith, trusting the Captain who calms the waves.

*Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Grey Cloud Island, Minn.*

# God’s presence is gentle and persistent

God’s presence inside us and in our world is rarely dramatic, overwhelming, sensational, impossible to ignore. God doesn’t work like that. Rather God’s presence is something that lies quiet and seemingly helpless inside us. It rarely makes a huge splash.

We should know that from the very way God was born into our world. Jesus, as we know, was born into our world with no fanfare and no power, a baby lying helpless in the straw, another child among millions. Nothing spectacular to human eyes surrounded his birth. Then, during his ministry, he never performed miracles to prove his divinity, but only as acts of compassion or to reveal something about God. His ministry, like his birth, wasn’t an attempt to prove his divinity or prove God’s existence. It was intended rather to teach us what God is like and how God loves us unconditionally.

In essence, Jesus’ teaching about God’s presence in our lives makes clear that this presence is mostly quiet and under the surface, a plant growing silently as we sleep, yeast leavening dough in a manner hidden from our eyes, spring slowly turning a barren tree green, an insignificant mustard plant eventually surprising us with its growth, a man or woman forgiving an enemy. God works in ways that are seemingly hidden and can be ignored by our eyes. The God that Jesus incarnates is neither dramatic nor flashy.



By Father Ron  
Rolheiser



And there’s an important lesson in this. Simply put, God lies inside us, deep inside, but in a way that is almost unfelt, often unnoticed, and can easily be ignored. However, while that presence is never overpowering, it has inside of it a gentle, unrelenting imperative, a compulsion, which invites us to draw upon it. And if we do, it gushes up in us as an infinite stream that instructs, nurtures, and fills us with life and energy.

This is important for understanding how God is present inside us. God lies inside us as an invitation that always respects our freedom and never overpowers us, but also never goes away. It lies there precisely like a baby lying helpless in the straw, gently beckoning us, but helpless in itself to make us pick it up.

For example, C.S. Lewis shares this in explaining why, despite a strong affective and intellectual reluctance, he eventually became a Christian (“the most reluctant convert in the history of Christendom”). He became a believer, he says, because he was unable to ultimately ignore a quiet but

persistent voice inside him which, because it was gentle and respectful of his freedom, he could ignore for a long time. But it never went away.

In retrospect, he realized it had always been there as an incessant nudge, beckoning him to draw from it, a gentle unyielding imperative, a “compulsion” which, if obeyed, leads to liberation.

Ruth Burrows, the British Carmelite and mystic, describes a similar experience. In her autobiography, *Before the Living God*, she tells the story of her late adolescent years and how at that time in her life she thought little about religion and faith. Yet she eventually ended up not only being serious about religion but becoming a Carmelite nun and a gifted spiritual writer. What happened?

Triggered by a series of accidental circumstances, one day she found herself in a chapel where, almost against her conscious will, she left herself open to a voice inside her which she had until then mainly ignored, precisely because it had never forced itself upon her freedom. But once touched, it gushed up as the deepest and most real thing inside her and set the direction of her life forever.

Like C.S. Lewis, she too, once she had opened herself to it, felt that voice as an unyielding moral compulsion opening her to ultimate liberation.

This is true too for me. When I was 17 years old and graduating from high school,

I had no natural desire whatsoever to become a Roman Catholic priest. But, despite a strong affective resistance, I felt a call to enter a religious order and become a Catholic priest. Despite that strong resistance inside me, I obeyed that call, that compulsion. Now, 60 years later, I look back on that decision as the clearest, most unselfish, faith-based, and life-giving decision I have ever made. I could have ignored that beckoning. I’m forever grateful I didn’t.

Fredrick Buechner suggests that God is present inside us as a subterranean presence of grace. The grace of God is “beneath the surface; it’s not right there like the brass band announcing itself, but it comes and it touches and it strikes in ways that leave us free to either not even notice it or to draw back from it.”

God never tries to overwhelm us. More than anyone else, God respects our freedom. God lies everywhere, inside us and around us, almost unfelt, largely unnoticed, and easily ignored, a quiet, gentle nudge; but, if drawn upon, the ultimate stream of love and life.

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a professor of Spirituality at Oblate School of Theology and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com. Follow on Facebook at facebook.com/ronrolheiser.*



# Jubilee pilgrims journey from Council Bluffs to Des Moines



Father Joel McNeil, of St. Patrick Parish in Council Bluffs, accompanies pilgrims to Des Moines to visit three pilgrimage churches there: St. Ambrose Cathedral, Basilica of St. John, and Christ the King. The pilgrims are pictured at the Basilica of St. John.

## The smallest sister leads

### Jubilee of Hope



By John Huynh, D.Min.

I’ve often found it interesting how love and memory are intertwined. The more we love someone, the more we remember them: intentionally, frequently, and longingly. Perhaps this is why “forget me not” is printed on greeting cards and carved into memorials. Remembering is how we hold someone close, especially when the person is absent.

This is also why forgetfulness, theologically speaking, is so dangerous to the life of faith. Forgetfulness is a habit of the quiet kind. It grows from fatigue and distraction and ultimately leads to indifference. We become indifferent to those who suffer because we’ve forgotten they are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and that love for them demands we act.

Jesus tells his disciples, “Do this in remembrance of me.” He wants them to remember what he has done and what he will do through their sharing of him. Scripture is full of this same call: to remember who God is, what he has done, and who we are because of him. When we forget, we lose our way. We lose sight of the people around us. We become indifferent.

In my recent conversation with Bo Bonner on Iowa Catholic Radio, we discussed Pope Leo XIV’s homily for the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It reminded me how easily indifference takes root. The parable is one we know well, yet it never ceases to be a powerful force for reflection. A man is left for dead. The priest and the Levite see him, but they move on. They don’t hate him; they just have things to do. The one who stops is the outsider, the one who refuses to ignore suffering.

It’s obvious that the failure in the parable isn’t rooted in malice. It’s rooted in forgetting: forgetting

God’s commandment to love one’s neighbor, forgetting that mercy is often inconvenient, and forgetting that love almost always costs something.

The good Samaritan, by contrast, remembers. He recalls what love of neighbor requires, and in doing so, shows how memory gives rise to hope, and hope gives way to charity.

In *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*, the French poet Charles Péguy imagines three sisters—Faith, Charity, and Hope—walking together toward the Kingdom of God. Faith and Charity are the older and stronger sisters. But it is the youngest, Hope, who walks in the middle, holding their hands and quietly leading the way.

Péguy describes Hope as a small child, almost unnoticed. She skips between her older sisters, carefree and trusting. She carries no weight, sleeps peacefully, and rises each morning with quiet resolve. It is this innocent persistence that surprises even God.

The antidote to forgetfulness and indifference is hope. Hope remembers what has been promised. And because it remembers, it helps us see again what we are tempted to forget: that God will fulfill what he has promised even when all signs seem to contradict it. Hope is what allows us, even in the most difficult times, to believe that good is still possible.

As pilgrims of hope, we are challenged to allow hope to lead charity and faith into action, however that might look in each of our lives. For some, it may mean volunteering at shelters, advocating for just policies, supporting migrants and immigrants seeking stability and belonging, or making space in our parishes and homes for those on the margins. For others, it may begin more quietly—with prayer, awareness, or small steps of accompaniment. Wherever we are, hope prompts us not just to simply feel but to move.

Where might hope be drawing your faith and love to act?

John Huynh, D.Min., is the director of Social Justice for the Diocese of Des Moines and Catholic Charities. He can be reached at [jhuynh@dmdiocese.org](mailto:jhuynh@dmdiocese.org) or 515-237-5006.

## On Prayer

By Monica Pugh



### With each sunrise, we can begin our prayer again

“Before we hang up, is there anything I can pray for you today, Monica?” said the customer service rep.

Her offer of prayer surprised me but I responded instantly. She asked if I would like to pray now or after we hung up.

I surprised myself by answering, “Oh, right now!” She offered the most beautiful prayer for my request.

How often do we reject offers like this out of our own uncomfortableness? It has taken me my entire life to become comfortable with the vulnerability of spontaneous prayer. God knew I needed this comfort through this stranger at that moment. The Holy Spirit guided her words and the soothing balm of God’s grace washed over me as she prayed. I allowed myself to receive.

St. Ignatius of Loyola says, “Prayer is entirely God’s gift; yet God asks that we dispose ourselves to receive that gift.” One of the ways to receive is by establishing a regular daily prayer life. This requires intentional time spent praying.

When I first determined to pray every day, my morning prayer was very simple: “Good morning, Lord. Thank you for another day.”

I said something similar as I climbed into bed.

This simplicity helped me establish regularity. The regularity inspired a desire in me to learn more about prayer and ways to pray.

The fourth pillar of the Catechism is entitled Christian Prayer. Not only did it teach me, but it also showed me prayer is where I enter into relationship with God. If I am not praying, I cannot know what God’s will is for my life. Today I end the day with The Examen.

The Examen is a five step mental prayer written by St. Ignatius in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to recognize God’s presence throughout the day before sleep. It begins by acknowledging God and asking the Holy Spirit for guidance through the reflection. Gratefulness comes next. Find at least one blessing from the day and give thanks for it. The third step is reviewing when we felt close to God or farther away from God throughout the day.

For moments where we moved farther from God, we ask forgiveness. Perhaps a harsh word was spoken or despair was allowed to creep into thoughts. Maybe we were ungrateful or did not accept God’s love.

Those moments are acknowledged with an Act of Contrition or perhaps the Jesus Prayer. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” This prayer addressed to God acknowledges our sinfulness and hopes to lead us to a state of humbleness and repentance through the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

The final step is to resolve to do better tomorrow with the desire to act wisely knowing the day might bring surprises.

With each sunrise, we can begin again. Good morning, Lord. Thank you for another day. And when retiring, acknowledge, give thanks, reflect, repent, and resolve. When we intentionally pray, we receive from God, we grow and learn and hope to give it away just like the woman on the other end of the phone did for me.

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


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# Parishes feed the needy through downtown cafe

Continued from page 1

vide meals on holidays, so we can celebrate together.”

Morin, who has been coming to the cafe for the past four years, is one of many guests who appreciate the volunteers and the sense of community they’ve built.

“The volunteers are always so polite, and I’ve been able to build a rapport with a few of them over the years,” he says. “They really make you feel welcome.”

### Volunteers Needed

It takes a small army of volunteers to help keep the Connection Cafe going. Groups from various churches and organizations in central Iowa, including many Catholic parishes, volunteer to prepare and serve meals. This includes staff from the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Pastoral Center, who assist quarterly.

“Most of the groups on our regular schedule are churches, but we do have some civic groups and businesses, that serve the

meals,” said Hoover.

Mary Jo Overton and Carole Chambers are the volunteer coordinators at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in West Des Moines. Overton has been helping in this role for the past five years.

“Volunteering at the Connection Cafe makes you feel good, helping others who are less fortunate,” Overton says. “They so appreciate the food and personal care items that we bring with us when we serve on the third Wednesday of the month. It’s interesting to talk to the guests and hear their stories.”

More than 200 parishioners at St. Francis of Assisi are on a list to contribute or serve at the Connection Cafe. In addition to food, drinks, paper products, and bus tokens, volunteers bring personal care items and new clothing like socks, plus cash donations.

In addition to meals, the Connection Cafe provides complimentary personal care items: body wash, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, and seasonal items like bug spray, sunscreen, hand warmers and other items.

The program is completely supported by financial donations, small grants, and contributions from churches and individuals.

“We need serving groups to prepare and serve meals,” Hoover emphasized. “Additionally, we need daily supplies, and we keep summer and winter needs lists.”

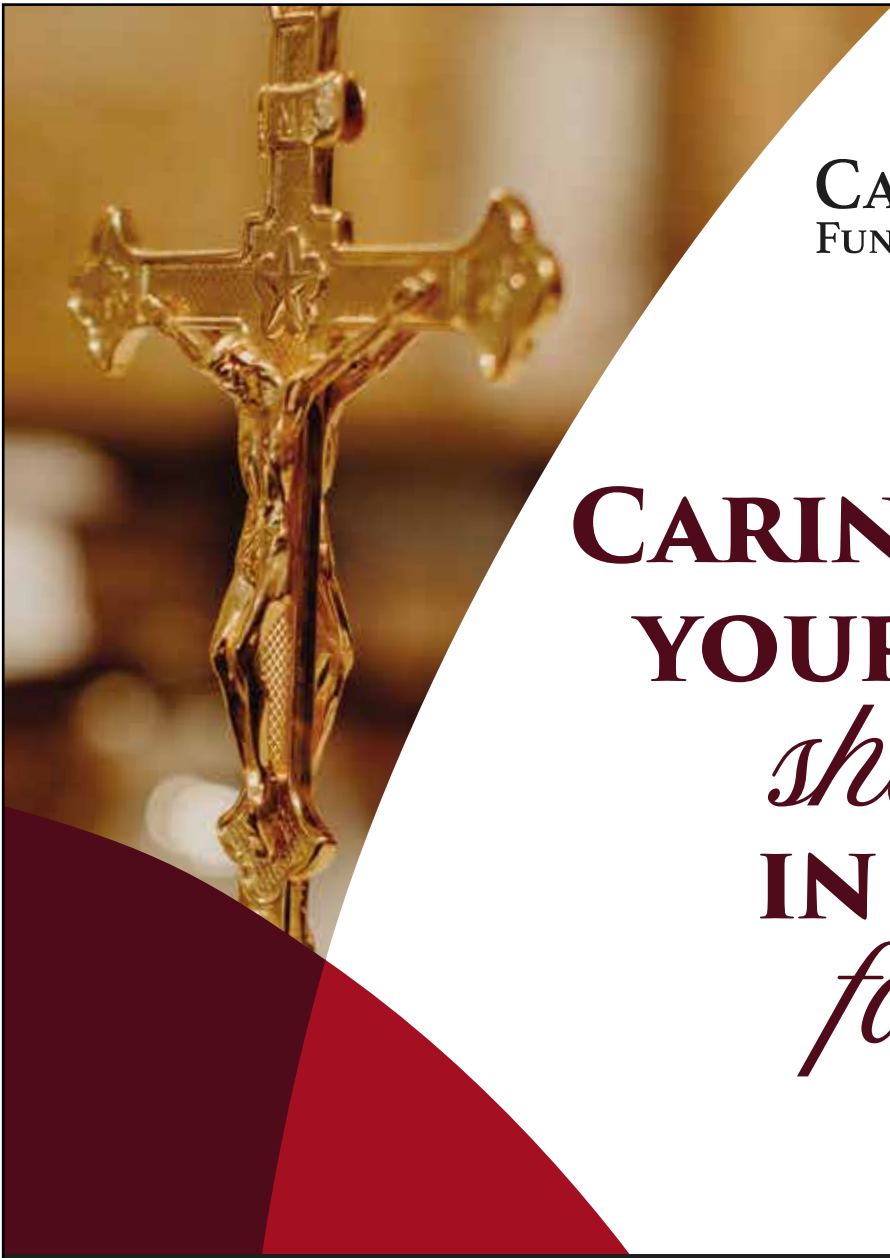
You can learn more about the Connection Cafe and find opportunities to support this program on the organization’s website: [theconnectioncafe.org](http://theconnectioncafe.org).

Sign up to help or donate to make a difference in the lives of those in need in the downtown Des Moines community.

Individuals interested in volunteering can also reach Hoover at [theconnectioncafe@hotmail.com](mailto:theconnectioncafe@hotmail.com).

### Parishes that support Connection Cafe

- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, Granger
- Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Des Moines
- Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Catholic Church, Ankeny
- Sacred Heart Catholic Church, St. Vincent DePaul, West Des Moines
- St. Ambrose Cathedral, Des Moines
- St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, West Des Moines
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## Mohan instituted as acolyte



Seminarian Luke Mohan, of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines, was instituted into the ministry of acolyte on Aug. 5 during the all-Iowa seminarian convocation at St. John the Apostle Catholic Church in Norwalk. Mohan studies at St. Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, New York.

## Catholic Daughters build community as luncheon draws record crowd

A record-breaking 185 guests representing the three parishes of Council Bluffs came together July 9 at St. Peter Church to enjoy salads, desserts, and each other’s company.

Hosted by the Catholic Daughters Court St. Anthony #330, the annual luncheon included a buffet and raffle with proceeds supporting various charities through the Catholic Daughters.

“Beyond fundraising, it is always such a joyous occasion when we all come together as one to share a meal and to give thanks for our faith and our community,” said Carol Hollenbeck.

\*\*\*

Council Bluffs Catholic Daughters Court St. Anthony #330 elected the following new officers: District Deputy Terri Dynek; Treasurer Kathi Markel; Recording Secretary Dola Mehlsling; Financial Secretary Mariann Hilderbrand; Regent Brenda Dresen; and Vice Regent Matalyn Sebetka.

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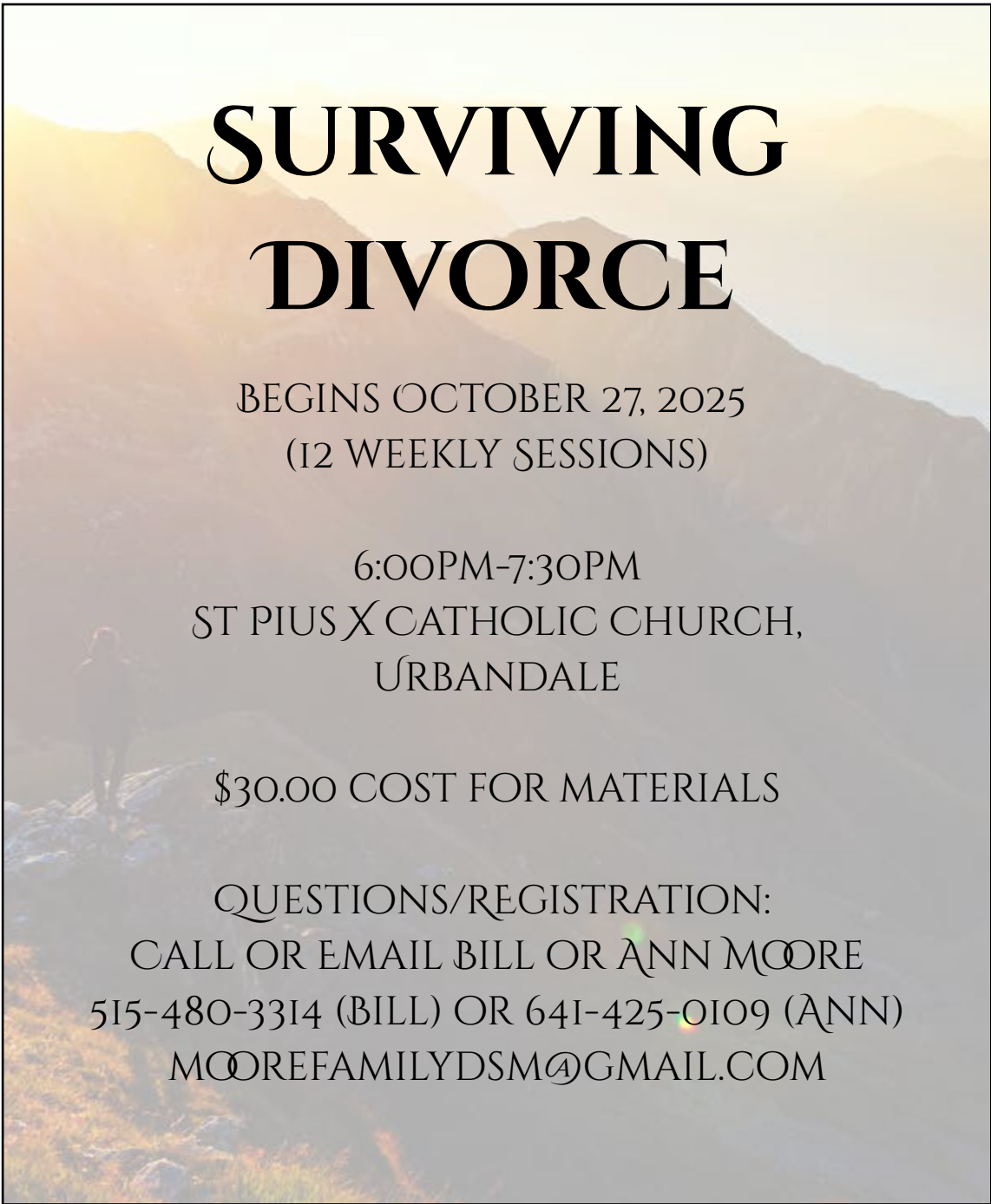
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# Bringing hope home; A horror not left behind

Continued from page 2

can be based only on making future wars impossible.”

And when summoned three months later to Los Alamos to receive a certificate of appreciation for his efforts, Oppenheimer first expressed hope that everyone associated with the lab’s work would be able to look back with pride on their efforts. But he then qualified, “Today that pride must

be tempered with a profound concern. If atomic bombs are to be added as new weapons to the arsenals of a warring world, or to the arsenals of nations preparing for war, then the time will come when mankind will curse the names of Los Alamos and Hiroshima.” He continued, “The peoples of this world must unite

or they will perish. This war, that has ravaged so much of this earth, has written these words. . . By our works we are committed, committed to a world united, before this common peril, in law and in humanity” (*American Prometheus*, Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, pp. 319, 329).

Temporal hope that issues

from human pride and the desire to dominate is destined to end in horror, if not the conflagration of the human community. Only the hope that is bestowed by the One seated on the throne from which the burning fire of Holy Spirit love issues, endures until the end of the ages. We pray not only that our world leaders will actually

read and listen to God’s Word, to the voice of the Beloved Son. We pray also that we the people who choose and commission our leaders to act in our name will ourselves listen to the Son and be converted, if we are to have hope of being saved from ourselves.

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Continued from page 2

stros que Dios nos envía. Porque entonces podemos ser enviados a donde Dios quiere que estemos, que enseñemos y que celebremos con aquellos que nos necesitan.

Sentí que no era simplemente el “acompañante” de estos jóvenes ungidos, sino que ellos me acompañaban a mí. Como la dulce nota que me escribió una jovencita, “Extremadamente bendecidos de tenerlo con nosotros. Ya no voy a tener miedo de acercarme a usted.” Si yo y otros de los obispos y sacerdotes podemos mostrar a nuestros jóvenes la misericordia y rostro amoroso del Padre y de su Hijo amado, entonces esa es toda la gracia por la que podemos orar.

¡Fue en verdad un fin de semana “intenso” en el mejor de los sentidos, en donde al regresar a casa, la esperanza seguramente fluirá de nuestros jóvenes con una mayor pasión y compromiso para llevar a otros a una amistad con Jesús!

En una nota más sombría, el pasado 6 de agosto, la Fiesta de la Transfiguración, marcó el 80mo aniversario de que los Estados Unidos arrojara la bomba atómica en Hiroshima, Japón. Tres

días después, el 9 de agosto, una forma diferente de bomba nuclear hecha en los Estados Unidos devastó Nagasaki. Fallecieron cientos de miles de personas en el área inmediata de la explosión y los efectos posteriores de la radiación. Aunque las opiniones siguen estando divididas respecto a si los japoneses estaban dispuestos a rendirse sin la necesidad de que lanzáramos una carga tan destructiva, en estos cuatro vicenios de años (como le gustaba a Abraham Lincoln expresar las cosas), nuestras conciencias deben permanecer marcadas por la terrible capacidad de humanos como nosotros de infringir daño en la putativa causa por la paz.

Las lecturas de la Fiesta de la Transfiguración son vibrantes en sus imágenes. El profeta Daniel tiene visiones de Dios sentado en un trono de llamas de fuego con ruedas de fuego ardiente, con un río de fuego brotando de él. Y el conocido Evangelio nos describe a Pedro, Santiago y Juan rodeados de esplendor para ver a Jesús rodeado en gloria en compañía de Moisés y Elías antes de que la voz de entre la nube les dijera, “Este es mi Hijo escogido, escúchenlo.”

La persistente amenaza de la Guerra Fría no ha cesado, con el ominoso prospecto de un conflicto nuclear que aún nos confronta en el Medio Oriente y en la guerra entre Rusia y Ucrania, en donde los Estados Unidos juegan un papel prominente, con naves equipados con armas nucleares desplazados en la proximidad de Rusia. Podremos haber almacenado una intensiva fuerza

destructiva en el ámbito nuclear, pero en este aspecto, parecemos sordos ante la voz del Hijo. Jesús nos llamó a ser proféticos en promover una paz la cual los recursos de las naciones del mundo no podrán generar con sus armas avanzadas.

Robert Oppenheimer, el ‘padrino’ del Proyecto Manhattan y líder científico que lideró el equipo Los Álamos que fue principalmente responsable de las bombas de Hiroshima y Nagasaki, fue presentado en la película ganadora del Oscar que lleva su nombre. Este drama biográfico demuestra gran parte de la historia detrás del nacimiento de las armas nucleares, pero contrario al libro en el que se basó la película, no transmite las profundas reservas y consternaciones de Oppenheimer sobre la terrible carnicería que él y sus colegas habían forjado. Tres días luego de que se rindió Tokio dando fin a la Segunda Guerra Mundial, Oppenheimer dijo al Presidente Truman, “Creemos que la seguridad de esta nación – opuesto a su habilidad de infligir daño a una potencia enemiga – no debe basarse plenamente o siquiera principalmente en su poderío científico o técnico. Puede basarse solamente hacienda que las guerras futuras sean imposibles.”

Y cuando se le convocó tres meses después a Los Álamos a recibir un certificado de agradecimiento por sus esfuerzos, Oppenheimer expresó en primer lugar esperanza de que todos quienes estuvieron asociados con el trabajo en el laboratorio pudieran ver atrás a sus esfuerzos con

orgullo. Pero entonces señaló, “Hoy ese orgullo puede nublarse con una profunda preocupación. Si las bombas atómicas se incluyen a los arsenales como nuevas armas a un mundo en conflicto, o a los arsenales de naciones que se están preparando para la guerra, entonces será el tiempo en que la humanidad maldecirá los nombres de Los Álamos y de Hiroshima.” Continuó, “Los pueblos de este mundo se deben unir o perecerán. Esta guerra, que ha desgarrado tanto de esta tierra, ha escrito estas palabras... Por nuestras obras estamos comprometidos, comprometidos con un mundo unido, ante este peligro común, en la ley y en la humanidad” (Prometeo Americano (*American Prometheus*), Kai Bird y Martin J. Sherwin, pp. 319, 329).

La esperanza temporal que surge del orgullo humano y el deseo de dominar está destinado a terminar en horror, no en el conflicto de la comunidad humana. La única esperanza que es perdurable la concede el que está sentado en el trono de fuego y cuyo ardiente Espíritu de amor fluye hacia nosotros. Oramos no solamente para que los líderes mundiales – incluyo aquellos que pueden manejar Biblias para vender al público – en verdad lean y escuchen la Palabra de Dios, a la voz del Hijo Amado. Oramos también para que nosotros, el pueblo que elige y nombra a nuestros líderes para que sirvan en nuestro nombra, escuchemos al Hijo nosotros mismos y nos convirtamos, si queremos tener esperanza de salvarnos de nosotros mismos.

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Pope Leo’s first 100 days:

# Leaning into his new role

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Leo XIV was elected May 8, making Aug. 16 the 100th day since he stepped out on to the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica as the new pope.

While the first 100 days of a pontificate may hint at what is to come, the initial period of Pope Leo’s ministry as the successor of Peter and bishop of Rome seemed mostly about him getting used to the role, the crowds and the protocol.

He lived up to his reputation as a person who listens before deciding -- holding a meeting with the College of Cardinals and individual meetings with the heads of Vatican offices.

His choices for members of his team, and whether he decides to have an international Council of Cardinals to advise him will send signals not only about what he wants to do but also how he wants to do it. (Pope Francis set up the Council of Cardinals early in his pontificate to help him with the reform of the Roman Curia and to advise him on other matters, but he did not make the council a formal body.)

In his first public address, moments after his election, the new pope said: “We want to be a synodal church, a church that moves

forward, a church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close, above all, to those who are suffering.”

Pope Leo went deeper when he spoke about the key objectives of his ministry during a meeting with the College of Cardinals two days after his election.

He asked the cardinals to join him in renewing a “complete commitment to the path that the universal Church has now followed for decades in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.”

That path had six fundamental points that, Pope Leo said, “Pope Francis masterfully and concretely set it forth” in his first exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel.”

The six points highlighted by Pope Leo were: “the return to the primacy of Christ in proclamation; the missionary conversion of the entire Christian community; growth in collegiality and synodality; attention to the ‘sensus fidei’ (the people of God’s sense of the faith), especially in its most authentic and inclusive forms, such as popular piety; loving care for the least and the rejected; (and) courageous and trusting dialogue with the contemporary world in its various components and realities.”

As the weeks passed after his election, Pope Leo seemed to grow more comfortable with a crowd, spending more time



CNS photo/Vatican Media

**Pope Leo XIV greets people gathered in St. Peter’s Square for the Angelus prayer at the Vatican on Aug. 10.**

blessing babies and enjoying his interactions with the thousands of people who came to St. Peter’s Square for his weekly general audiences.

As a Curia official, the future pope had a reputation of being somewhat reserved, but Pope Leo has shown he has a special tool for connecting with a crowd: speaking English and Spanish as well as Italian, the Vatican’s official working language.

His ability to switch between the three languages effortlessly was on full display at the Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers July 28-29 and the related Jubilee of Youth July 28-Aug. 3. The young people roared with approval as he spoke to them in languages that most could understand.

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MercyOne Health Plan (HMO/PPO) is a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in MercyOne Health Plan depends on contract renewal. Benefits vary by county. Not all plans have \$0 Premium or Cash Back (\$1,342.80 per calendar year, which is \$111.90/month). Other pharmacies, physicians or providers are available in the plan’s network. ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 888-546-2834 (TTY: 711). 注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 888-546-2834 (TTY: 711).

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