

# THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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

## Amid divisions over immigration, Church stands as 'beacon of hope'

By Barb Arland-Fye  
OSV News

(OSV News) -- A pastoral reflection on immigration from the Iowa Catholic bishops aims to present church teaching in a way that transcends political rhetoric.

"My fellow Iowa bishops – in

Davenport, Dubuque, and Sioux City – and I feel this is an opportune time to share the beauty and teachings on how the Church addresses immigration with faith, justice, and mercy," said Des Moines Bishop William Joensen.

The Iowa bishops – Archbishop Thomas R. Zinkula of Dubuque; Bishop Joensen; Bish-

op John E. Keehner of Sioux City; and Bishop Dennis Walsh of Davenport – penned the reflection, titled "Pilgrims of Hope: A Pastoral Reflection on Immigration," last month through their work with the Iowa Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the bishops.

In the pastoral letter, the bish-

ops said: "The Catholic Church has always proclaimed the inviolable dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. Governments do not bestow this dignity, nor does legal status instill it, but it is intrinsic to every human person as a beloved child of the heavenly Father."

The nation has a right to reg-

ulate its borders, the bishops said, but "the security of a nation can never be used as an excuse to violate the dignity and human rights of migrants, including the right to due process by law."

**Read the pastoral letter on pages 6-9.**

## \$10 million gift kickstarts capital campaign



**Jim and Patty Cownie are longtime supporters of Catholic education. They've contributed the largest single gift to Dowling Catholic High School in support of its capital campaign.**

By Beth Samson  
Contributing Writer

This fall, Dowling Catholic High School will kick off its most ambitious fundraising effort ever: a \$76 million campaign called Honoring Our History, Faith in Our Future capital campaign.

Focused on long-overdue improvements to safety, student life and athletics, the campaign will bring many of the oldest parts of the campus into the 21st century.

Plans include a new student union, a single secure student entrance, expanded parking, an updated kitchen and dining area, additional practice and competition spaces, new locker rooms, and a roomier space for all-school Masses and pep rallies. These projects reflect Dowling Catholic's ongoing commitment to providing an exceptional learning environment for every student.

While Dowling Catholic's leadership has worked on refining these projects, campaign

strategy, and fundraising goals, a small group of donors has already stepped forward to create a foundation for this historic effort.

At the heart of it is one transformative gift that stands out for its size and for the legacy it reflects.

Jim and Patty Cownie, both of the Class of 1962, are longtime supporters of Catholic education, pillars of the Des Moines community and Cornerstone Chairs for the Honoring Our History, Faith in Our Future campaign.

They have committed a \$10 million gift to the effort – the largest single gift in Dowling Catholic's history and a bold vote of confidence in the school's future.

For Jim, the gift is deeply personal.

"My relationship to Dowling began formally in 1958, and it ended up being the best four years of my life."

Those formative years shaped Jim as a student, athlete, and leader. He served as student body

## A legend who was loved

Father John Acra will be remembered as a priest who loved with gentle strength and who had a special gift for working with students. He died Sept. 4 at the age of 89.

"He will be remembered as a person who was, in the end, incredibly compassionate and humble," said former student and close friend Mike Downey. "He loved young people and he had some kind of special ability to connect with young people."

Father Acra spent much of his life with students at Dowling Catholic High School, even in retirement.

"Father Acra was an ambassador of Divine Mercy," said Father Reed Flood, chaplain at Dowling Catholic. "In his many meetings with students, often at impromptu times of the day, Father Acra practiced radical availability in the sacrament of reconciliation. He often spoke of his confessional as the most joyful place in the entire school."

Born in 1936 and raised in Missouri Valley, Father Acra had a conversion experience in high school that changed his life.

"It caused an explosion in my heart and that was it," said Father Acra.

Father Acra studied at Mt. St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque and Creighton University in Omaha. He was ordained in 1962.

He taught at Dowling

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Bishop William Joensen

Our ongoing Jubilee Year 2025 celebration has overlapped with another Jubilee that concluded this past June: the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque at the Visitation monastery in Paray-le-Monial, France. The latter Jubilee was inspiration for a group of 38 pilgrims from the Diocese of Des Moines, including Father Trevor Chicoine of Cass County and me, to recently venture to France to visit numerous sites made holy by female and male saints who compose some of the legacy of this country once called the “eldest daughter of the Church.”

I won’t bore you with a travelogue, but certainly the opportunity to pray and celebrate Mass in the locales where Ss. Thérèse of Lisieux, Catherine Labouré, Louise de Marillac, Vincent de Paul, Margaret Mary and her spiritual director, Claude la Colombière,

Hugh of Cluny, John Vianney, Thomas Aquinas, Sernin, Bernadette Soubirous, and above all, Blessed Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes, are venerated was a source of profound personal grace for group members. And we believe these graces flowed to others for whom we implored the saints’ intercession in our families, in the Diocese of Des Moines and beyond.

Spiritual connections with the universal Body of Christ were deepened—most vividly at the moving candlelight vigil procession under a clear, moonlit sky at the Lourdes Shrine, where people of many language groups were united in invoking Mary, who is both the Immaculate Conception and the temple of her Son’s Body. As an anonymous monk once observed, Jesus endowed Mary “with every privilege, making her in body and soul the purest, loveliest temple that ever was: pure because immaculately conceived, lovely because full of grace.” The pure spring Lourdes water that weighed down many of our pilgrims’ suitcases on the way home is intended to be a sacramental that conveys healing and hope to gifted recipients.

After a preliminary excursion by the first wave of our group to Normandy, our whole group converged in Paris. I reminded everyone of a distinction I’ve previously drawn between a tourist and

a pilgrim: A tourist, I propose, enlists the senses to take in the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes that are a source of fascination and pleasure. He or she samples this or that food, is bemused and appreciative of differences in cultures, all in the name of having an experience directed toward oneself. A tourist remains to some degree detached from one’s surroundings until one gets back on the bus, the plane, to return home.

Pilgrims, in contrast, have a goal, a destination, that is only partly perceived or known. There is a degree of mystery that draws us forward, and if we submit ourselves with humility, docility, and reverence to something, someone greater than ourselves, allowing the One who evokes our curiosity and longing to lay claim to us, then our souls are set for something far more meaningful than self-satisfaction—we are drawn through the doors of mystery into a genuine personal encounter.

From there, we are moved to conversion of heart, to deepened friendship with Jesus. We are then spurred to affirm and expand the communion of life, Spirit, and love God bestows. This communion is no transient affair, such as we experienced on our final night together in France when our hotel manager finally found the televised Iowa-Iowa State football game for several of us to watch gathered around a flat screen TV;

rather, this communion endures long after our pilgrim days are done.

Father Chicoine, in his several rousing homilies, invoked the tourist/pilgrim distinction more than once and convicted us of our need for the mercy coursing from Jesus’ Sacred Heart in the sacraments of confession and Eucharist—mercy that strips away the material and psychic layers we accumulate that pose a barrier to the simplicity, poverty of spirit, and charity embodied by the saints.

In his last encyclical, *Dilexit nos* (“He Loved Us” [DN]), our late Holy Father, Pope Francis, comments on the disposition to make reparation for personal sins to offer consolation to Jesus’ wounded heart: “It might appear to some that this aspect of devotion to the Sacred Heart lacks a firm theological basis, yet the heart has its reasons. Here the *sensus fidelium* [instinct of the faithful] perceives something mysterious, beyond our human logic, and realizes that the passion of Christ is not merely an event of the past, but one in which we can share through faith. Meditation on Christ’s self-offering on the cross involves, for Christian piety, something much more than remembrance.”

Here we note St. Thomas Aquinas’ claim, “The believer’s act of faith has as its object not simply the doctrine proposed, but

also union with Christ himself in the reality of his divine life.” Pope Francis continues, “We can also add the recognition of our own sins, which Jesus took upon his bruised shoulders, and our inadequacy in the face of that timeless love, which is always infinitely greater” (DN par. 154, including note 157).

As much as novel and renewed connections were formed during our France pilgrimage, I was also moved to reflection about some of the social and political dynamics among the French people that underlie some felt disconnections between the French and Americans, and even more, between Catholic Christians. Philosopher Chantal Del-sol exposes one foundational rift in her work, *Prosperity and Torment in France: The Paradox of the Democratic Age*. She refers to Philippe d’Iribarne’s celebrated book, *La logique de l’honneur* [the logic of honor], where he exposes how the relations of authority within businesses vary greatly among countries:

“In the Anglo-Saxon world [which informs our American mindset], the logic of the contract predominates.” This sort of logic presumes a type of equality among parties inspiring confidence and an expectation of receiving a fair return for what one

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## (Des)Conexión Francesa

Nuestra celebración del Año Jubilar 2025 se ha sobrepuesto a otro Jubileo que concluyó el pasado mes de junio: el 350 aniversario de las apariciones del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús a Santa Margarita María Alacoque en el monasterio de la Visitación en Paray-le-Monial, Francia. Este último Jubileo inspiró a un grupo de 38 peregrinos de la Diócesis de Des Moines, incluyendo al Padre Trevor Chicoine del Condado

Cass y a mí, a aventurarnos recientemente a Francia a visitar los varios sitios santificados por hombres y mujeres santos que conforman parte del legado de este país una vez llamado la “hija mayor de la Iglesia.”

No los quiero aburrir con relatos del viaje, pero ciertamente la oportunidad de orar y celebrar Misa en los lugares en donde Santa Teresa de Lisieux, Santa Catalina Labouré, Luisa de Marillac, Vicente de Paul, Margarita María y su director espiritual, Claudio la Colombière, Hugo de Cluny, Juan Vianney, Tomás de Aquino, Saturnino, Bernardita Soubirous, y sobre todo, la Santísima María,

Nuestra Señora de Lourdes, son venerados como una fuentes de profunda gracia personal para los miembros del grupo. Y creemos que esas florecieron en aquellos en nuestras familias por quienes imploramos a la intercesión los santos, en la Diócesis de Des Moines y más allá.

Se profundizaron las conexiones espirituales con el universal Cuerpo de Cristo—más claramente la motivante procesión y vigilia con velas bajo el Cielo despejado e iluminado por la luna en el Santuario de Lourdes, en donde personas de diversos grupos de muchas lenguas se unieron invocando a María, quien es tan-

to la Inmaculada Concepción y el templo del Cuerpo de su Hijo. Como una vez lo dijo un monje anónimo, Jesús dotó a María “con todo privilegio haciendo de su cuerpo y de su alma el templo más puro y amoroso que nunca hubiese existido: puro porque fue concebido inmaculadamente y amoroso por estar lleno de gracia.” El agua pura del manantial de Lourdes que aumentó el peso de las maletas de nuestros peregrinos en su regreso a casa serán sacramentales que lleven la sanación y esperanza a quien se los lleven.

Luego de una excursión preliminar de la primera fase de nuestro grupo a Normandía, el grupo

se reunió en París. Le recordé a todos de la distinción que había hecho anteriormente entre un turista y un peregrino: Un turista, les propuse, enfoca sus sentidos en capturar las vistas, sonidos, olores y sabores que son fuentes de fascinación y placer. Prueba esta comida y aquella, se queda perplejo y apreciativo de las diferencias culturales, todo en búsqueda de tener una experiencia dirigida a sí mismo. Un turista permanece en cierto grado desconectado de lo que le rodea hasta que regresa al autobús, al avión, para regresar a casa.

Los peregrinos, en contraste,

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### Bishop William Joensen and diocesan Schools Superintendent Donna Bishop on the shooting of students at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis

The hearts of the people of the Diocese of Des Moines—especially all who are involved in the mission of Catholic education—are searingly shocked and moved to prayer by the news of today’s gruesome shooting at the Annunciation Parish School Mass in South Minneapolis. Such wanton disregard for the little ones Jesus holds dear to himself defies explanation and is a reflection of evil and brokenness in our world. Our prayers are with the families most touched by this grievous event, with Archbishop Bernard Hebda of the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, and all the faithful and people of the Twin Cities region. Our respective dioceses have many historic, personal points of connection, and we stand in solidarity of spirit and grief with them all.

Building upon our existing emergency response plans, we encourage our pastors and school administrators to have heightened vigilance at this time and our focus will remain on continued training and preparation regarding the health and safety of the children entrusted to us.

Los corazones del pueblo de la Diócesis de Des Moines – especialmente los de aquellos que participan en la misión de la educación católica – están profundamente impresionados y enfocados en la oración por la terrible noticia del día de hoy respecto al tiroteo en la Misa escolar en la Parroquia de la Anunciación, al sur de Minneapolis. Ese flagrante desprecio por los pequeños a quienes Jesús tanto ama desafía cualquier explicación y es el reflejo de la maldad y de un mundo fraccionado. Hacemos oración por aquellas familias que han sido más afectadas por este doloroso evento, por el arzobispo Bernard Hebda de la Arquidiócesis de St. Paul-Minneapolis y por todos los fieles y el pueblo de la región de las Ciudades Gemelas. Nuestras respectivas diócesis tienen muchos puntos de conexión históricos y personales, y estamos en solidaridad de espíritu y duelo con todos ellos.

Exhortamos a nuestros párrocos y administradores escolares a que estén más vigilantes durante este tiempo y nuestro enfoque seguirá en el entrenamiento y la preparación continua respecto a la salud y la seguridad de los niños que se nos han confiado.



# From one woman’s sorrow springs a new healing ministry

**By Ann Pierson  
Contributing Writer**

The Basilica of St. John Parish in Des Moines is offering resources and love to those who have experienced miscarriage or stillbirth. Miscarriage ministry began last year through the work of parishioner Maria Campbell, but the seeds of the ministry were planted years earlier.

Campbell and her husband, Deacon Mark Campbell, experienced two early miscarriages before the birth of their oldest child. Amid the tragedy, the Campbells were uncertain of what steps they needed to take as Catholics. Campbell recalled being unaware of her rights like naming her unborn child.

In 2012, the Campbells’ last child was stillborn. Campbell, knowing God works through all suffering, wondered if she was being called to help others suffering the same pain of miscarriage she suffered.

Those thoughts remained planted in her heart until 2024.

While attending the National Eucharistic Congress, Campbell met Rebecca Harpring, founder of Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry. Covenant Resources is a nonprofit that offers Miscarriage Supply Totes™ so families have access to same-day resources and supplies for the dignified burial of their miscarried baby.

That encounter rekindled the calling God put on Campbell’s heart to help others through their own losses. She prayed on this call.

Upon her return from the National Eucharistic Congress, Campbell turned to her parish’s Knights of Columbus council for financial support. They were willing to fund the basilica’s first tote and replenish its supplies as needed.

The response in the parish community has been overwhelmingly positive, said Campbell. Those who have experienced loss offered to help the ministry. Friends reached out to miscarriage ministry for others who could not reach out for themselves.

The need for the ministry is dire, as anywhere between 10 percent and 20 percent of pregnancies end in miscarriage, according to the Mayo Clinic.

“It is much needed,” Campbell said.

Through miscarriage ministry, she offers practical help with the supply totes furnished by Covenant Resources.

She also walks with and supports women throughout the process to provide some sense of closure.

Having someone as a point of contact and their phone number is essential to having a miscarriage ministry, said Campbell. Especially with a lack of resources available, having an established, caring contact to turn to is crucial for the parent.

Campbell is creating a lending



Maria Campbell



Photo provided by MercyOne Des Moines

The MercyOne bereavement garden, located by the Des Moines medical center’s east entrance, is a peaceful sitting space for reflection at any time. Anyone is welcome to come to the garden, regardless of their connection to MercyOne.

library with Catholic resources on grieving and miscarriage. Also, she is working to establish plots for parents to have a place to bury their child with dignity.

Miscarriage ministry has taken root in three other diocesan parishes so far. Campbell hopes ultimately that every parish in the Diocese and the state can have a similar ministry.

“I don’t want this to just be a basilica thing. I want every parish to have a way to support [parents through miscarriage],” Campbell said.

For those interested in bringing miscarriage ministry into their own parish, or wish to support

miscarriage ministry, visit [covenantresources.org](http://covenantresources.org).

## Walk to Remember on Oct. 12

MercyOne’s 26<sup>th</sup> annual Walk to Remember on Sunday, Oct. 12 supports those who suffered miscarriage, ectopic pregnancies, stillbirth, and early infant death.

It is open to everyone; families do not have to have been MercyOne patients to attend. The event begins with a short

program at 2 p.m. at the MercyOne East Tower Auditorium. Families will then walk around the MercyOne campus and have an ice cream social. RSVP to Connie Thompson at [Connie.thompson@mercyoneiowa.org](mailto:Connie.thompson@mercyoneiowa.org) or call 515-358-3030.

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515-286-2028 o en [advocate@dmdiocese.org](mailto:advocate@dmdiocese.org).



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Very Rev. PJ McManus – October 5

Rev. Augustine Clement Owusu – October 9

Rev. Litto Thomas – October 9

Rev. Oscar Rosales Hernandez – October 11

Rev. Jacob Epstein – October 17

Rev. Enrique Garcia-Elizalde – October 18

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## AROUND THE DIOCESE

**Now-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 InnerVisions Dinner Dance**  
ANKENY – The 15th annual InnerVisions Dinner Dance, hosted by Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Knights of Columbus, celebrates a long partnership between InnerVisions and local Knights of Columbus councils and one of their core pillars: Life. This year's event raised nearly \$60,000 in pledges and donations, bringing the total over the last 15 years to nearly \$500,000. The funds raised from the event will help pregnant women and families in central Iowa.

**Sept. 20 Saturday Mass for Life**  
DES MOINES – St. Anthony Parish is sponsoring a Mass for Life at 10 a.m. where we will remember and pray for the unborn and all victims of abortion. We will also pray for the inviolability of all lives as we are all created by God in his image. For more information visit [stanthonysdm.org](http://stanthonysdm.org).

**Sept. 21 Sunday African Worship Service**  
DES MOINES – There will be an African worship service at 1 p.m. at St. Theresa Parish. All are welcome.

**Sept. 25 Thursday St. Vincent de Paul Golf Outing**  
GRIMES – The 100+ Men on a Mission Golf Outing will take place on at Beaver Creek Golf Club. Registration opens at 11:30 a.m. with a shotgun start at 12:30 p.m. If you have question or need more information contact Mike Schneider at [kelcorsdad@msn.com](mailto:kelcorsdad@msn.com) or 515-867-1839.

**Sept. 28 Sunday Tap Into Faith**  
ANKENY – Tap into Faith is a monthly event sponsored by Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Church bringing people together for an evening of faith and fellowship in a casual environment at The King's Head in Ankeny. The social is from 7-7:30 p.m. with the speaker beginning at 7:30 p.m. Anyone is welcome and there is no cost and no registration needed. Food and drinks available for purchase. Speaker is Father Ken Halbur on the saints.

**Oct. 1 Wednesday Theology of the Body**  
DES MOINES – St. Mary of Nazareth Parish is hosting "Theology of the Body: God has a Perfect Plan for your Family" with speaker Joe Tallman. There will be a meal at 5:30 p.m. and the presentation will begin at 6:30 p.m. both in the parish hall. Childcare is available. Contact the parish for more information.

**Oct. 4 Saturday Craft and Vendor Fair**  
DES MOINES – The St. Joseph Rosary Society's Craft and Vendor Fair will be in both gyms, from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. A lunch of walking

tacos and Papa Murphy salads will be available. Email Carol Iske for spot and to get a contract: [carolone85@gmail.com](mailto:carolone85@gmail.com).

**Oct. 5 Sunday Life Chain**  
DES MOINES – Join pro-lifers from central Iowa for the 36th annual Life Chain from 2 - 3:30 p.m. We will stand for all the lives that God has created and spend the time in prayer and praise. Parking and signs will be available at Des Moines Fellowship Church on 35th Street. Life Chain will take place rain or shine.

**Oct. 18 Saturday Oktoberfest**  
ANKENY: Visit St Luke's in Ankeny for its annual Oktoberfest festival from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. on the feast day of our patron St. Luke the Evangelist. Classic German food, music, and a biergarten. Activities for all ages, runs, wine pull, stein-holding, and more. Visit [SLTE.org/events](http://SLTE.org/events) for details and to register for events.

**October 19 Sunday Sensory-Friendly Mass**  
ALTOONA – In an effort to embrace and welcome the members of our community with autism, Down syndrome, and other intellectual and developmental disabilities, a sensory-friendly Mass will be at Ss. John and Paul Parish at 10:30 a.m. All are welcome to attend, and a special invitation is extended to any person with sensory issues. Contact Jenni Lihs, [jlihs@ssjohnpaul.org](mailto:jlihs@ssjohnpaul.org), with any questions.

**Oct. 21-Dec. 16 Tuesdays Grief Support**  
ANKENY – St. Luke the Evangelist Parish invites you to join us for "The Seven Intentions of Mourning," a transformative seven-week guided video series designed to support individuals navigating grief. This workshop offers a prayerful, practical, and personal approach to mourning, helping participants honor their loved ones while fostering healing and connection. Session details: Tuesdays, Oct. 21-Dec. 16 from 4-5:30 p.m. at the parish meeting room. Cost is \$20 for materials if you are able to pay. For more information contact Julie Shannon, parish nurse, at [jshannon@slte.org](mailto:jshannon@slte.org).

**Oct. 28 Holy Happy Hour**  
DES MOINES - The St. Serra Club of Des Moines invites men and women of all ages and from any parish to join a Holy Happy Hour event at St. Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church. Mass begins at 5:30 p.m., followed by a social time at 6 p.m. Father David Fleming, diocesan vicar general, will be the guest speaker from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**Nov. 2 Sunday Staley's Chicken Dinner**  
COUNCIL BLUFFS – Come to the Corpus Christi Parish's Annual Staley's Broasted Chicken Dinner 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The dinner will be held at St. Albert Catholic School. Cost is \$15/dinner for ages 9 and up, \$10/ ages 4 to 8 and free for ages 3 and under. \$3,000 grand prize raffle, silent auction.

Below is an introduction to the newest seminarians.  
Go to [dmdiocese.org](http://dmdiocese.org) and click on Vocations and then Seminary Life to read their full vocation story in their own words and to see all 14 seminarians considering the diocesan priesthood.



Dr. David A. Clark



**Matthew Pierson**  
St. Pius X Seminary,  
Loras College, Dubuque  
St. Francis of Assisi Parish,  
West Des Moines

Since applying for the seminary, he's been filled with peace and anticipation for what God has planned.

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# Peregrinos de Esperanza

Reflexión Pastoral sobre la Inmigración



Nuestra visión colectiva en la Diócesis de Des Moines es la de cultivar conexiones en Cristo. Una forma de lograr esto es compartiendo firme y claramente las enseñanzas de la Iglesia Católica. El mes pasado, los cuatro obispos de Iowa publicaron, a través de la Conferencia Católica de Iowa, una reflexión pastoral sobre inmigración con la meta de ayudar a los fieles a tener un mejor entendimiento de las enseñanzas de la Iglesia con respecto al asunto de migración.

Aquí tenemos un resumen breve de la carta pastoral. Siga los códigos QR en la parte de abajo para leer en español la carta pastoral en su totalidad y para utilizarla como una guía con preguntas que nos motiven a la oración o a conversaciones con familiares y amigos. Reúnase con familiares o amistades y utilice la guía de reflexión para crecer más profundamente en el amor con Dios y con los demás.

## I. “Adonde tú vayas, iré yo; y donde tú vivas, viviré yo” (Rut 1:16)

- La Iglesia Católica siempre ha proclamado la dignidad inviolable de la persona humana, creada a imagen y semejanza de Dios.
- El derecho a migrar se ha afirmado durante mucho tiempo en la enseñanza moral católica.
- Al acoger al migrante, acogemos a Jesús mismo.

## II. Inmigración a Través del Lente de la Doctrina Social Católica

- En el centro de la Doctrina Social Católica está la convicción de que toda persona tiene derecho a vivir en condiciones consistentes con su dignidad humana.
- Las naciones tienen derecho a regular sus fronteras en favor del bienestar común, siempre que estas protecciones se promulguen justamente respetando los derechos humanos fundamentales.
- La Iglesia está llamada a defender a sus hijos más vulnerables. Es por eso que las instituciones católicas se involucran en la asistencia legal, reasentamiento y defensa.

## III. La Realidad de la Inmigración en los Estados Unidos: Una Preocupación Moral y Humana

- Los obispos no creen que sea consistente con los reclamos de justicia emplear tácticas de aplicación de la ley que traten a todos los inmigrantes, especialmente a los miembros trabajadores, antiguos y pacíficos de nuestras comunidades, de la misma manera que a los delincuentes violentos.
- Los obispos de los Estados Unidos han expresado una preocupación particular por el despliegue indefinido de activos militares para hacer cumplir las leyes civiles de inmigración, la prevención del acceso al asilo y las propuestas para reinterpretar la ciudadanía por derecho de nacimiento.
- La Iglesia reconoce el derecho de las naciones a regular la inmigración, pero este derecho debe ejercerse siempre de acuerdo con los preceptos de la justicia, el respeto al estado de derecho y la moderación prudencial.
- Los obispos se comprometen con el gobierno para abogar por un sistema que sea eficaz y humano, protegiendo a los inmigrantes, refugiados y pobres como parte de la misión más amplia de la Iglesia de defender la dignidad de toda vida.

## IV. El Llamado a la Acción de la Iglesia: Vivir la Fe

- Todo Cristiano Católico tiene la responsabilidad moral de garantizar que se respete la dignidad personal de los migrantes.
- Los Católicos pueden abrazar su misión como discípulos de Jesús aprendiendo sobre la enseñanza de la Iglesia sobre la inmigración, participando en esfuerzos de defensa y apoyando ministerios que sirven a migrantes y refugiados.
- Las instituciones Católicas deben ser lugares de acogida y acompañamiento para los migrantes y refugiados.

## V. María, Consoladora de Migrantes: Modelo de Esperanza y Hospitalidad

- María experimentó de primera mano la dura realidad de la migración forzada cuando ella y José huyeron a Egipto con el niño Jesús, buscando refugio de la persecución.
- Como Reina del Cielo y la Tierra, María es una poderosa intercesora y abogada por aquellos que caminan en esperanza.

## VI. Un Jubileo de Esperanza y un Llamado a un Compromiso Renovado

- La esperanza Cristiana no es un optimismo pasivo, sino una confianza activa en la obra continua de redención de Dios.
- No basta con desear justicia; debemos comprometernos a dar forma a sistemas que lo sostengan.
- A medida que avanzamos en este Año Jubilar, estamos llamados a encarnar la hospitalidad radical, viendo a Jesús en cada persona.

La Conferencia Católica de Iowa es la agencia de política pública de la Iglesia Católica de Iowa. Los obispos diocesanos de Iowa son el arzobispo Thomas Zinkula de Dubuque; Obispo William Joensen de Des Moines; Obispo Dennis Walsh de Davenport; y Obispo John Keehner de Sioux City. Puede registrarse para recibir actualizaciones legislativas en [iowacatholicconference.org](http://iowacatholicconference.org).

Para leer en su totalidad la carta pastoral “Peregrinos de Esperanza” y para ver una guía con preguntas de reflexión ya sea para oración personal o para discusión en grupos pequeños, utilice su teléfono para hacer clic en el código QR.





# Pilgrims of Hope

A Pastoral Reflection on Immigration



Photo by Alexis Ries

The public gathered at the steps of St. Ambrose Cathedral last summer during a prayer vigil for immigrants.

*Our collective vision in the Diocese of Des Moines is to cultivate connections in Christ. One way we do this is by boldly and clearly sharing the teachings of the Catholic Church.*

*Last month, the four bishops of Iowa, through the Iowa Catholic Conference, released a pastoral reflection on immigration with the goal of helping the faithful better understand the teachings of the Church as it*

*relates to the issue of migration.*

*As with many Vatican documents, the paragraphs are numbered to make it easier for referencing specific sections of the reflection.*

*Bring this reflection to prayer. Gather family or friends and use a reflection guide (see QR code on page 9) to grow more deeply in love with God and one another.*

## I. Introduction: “Wherever you lodge, I will lodge” (Ruth 1:16)

1. The Catholic Church has always proclaimed the inviolable dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. Governments do not bestow this dignity, nor does legal status instill it, but it is intrinsic to every human person as a beloved child of the heavenly Father. In every age, the People of God are called to uphold this truth by welcoming the stranger, defending the oppressed, and standing in solidarity with those who are displaced.

2. Immigration is not merely a political or economic issue; it is a deeply moral matter that calls for a response rooted in faith, justice, and mercy. Sacred Scripture consistently reveals God’s care for the immigrant and the refugee: “You shall not oppress a stranger; you yourselves know how it feels to be a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 23:9).

3. The right to migrate has long been affirmed in Catholic moral teaching. Pope John XXIII taught that “every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own state. When there are just reasons in favor of it, he must be permitted to migrate to other countries and take up residence there.”

4. More recently, in an address to world diplomats, Pope Leo XIV enjoins us, “No one is exempted from striving to ensure respect for the dignity of every person, especially the most frail and vulnerable, from

the unborn to the elderly, from the sick to the unemployed, citizens and immigrants alike.” Our present pontiff continues, “All of us, in the course of our lives, can find ourselves healthy or sick, employed or unemployed, living in our native land or in a foreign country, yet our dignity always remains unchanged: it is the dignity of a creature willed and loved by God.”

5. At a time when political rhetoric often generates division and fear, the Church stands as a beacon of God-given hope. This hope is not mere optimism that ignores where good is absent, but a virtue that sustains us in the work of justice. Hope resists the tendency to become indifferent to the suffering of migrants; it prevents us from resigning ourselves to the injustices that force them from their homes. Rather, it demands that we respond with courage and solidarity, recognizing that our faith is measured by the way we treat the most vulnerable among us. Our hope spurs us to ensure that migrants can share a life worth living, founded on conditions that enable them, with us, to flourish.

6. The social mission of the Church must always begin with persons who are poor, displaced, and otherwise neglected. These individuals are not simply objects of charity but agents of God’s presence, who evangelize us through their endurance and fidelity. We can find inspiration in the Bible’s account of Ruth, the daughter-in-law of the widowed Naomi. When Ruth’s husband also dies, leaving Naomi bereft of children, Naomi decides to return to her native Judah. In the

face of tragic circumstances, Ruth remains loyal to Naomi and emigrates with her in order to accompany and support her. Ruth’s pledge, “Wherever you lodge, I will lodge” (Ruth 1:16), reveals God’s universal concern for humanity and the blessing God bestows upon those who care for others who are not affiliated with us by blood relation or nationality.

7. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that “love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind is as essential to her [the Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel.” In welcoming the migrant, we welcome Jesus himself. In defending their dignity, we proclaim the Gospel. And in advocating for justice, we embody the love of Christ, in whom “love and truth meet, justice and peace embrace.” Jesus desires that all his children live in peace and security.

8. As we reflect on the current state of immigration in the United States and beyond, including extant and pending actions by our government, we must ask ourselves: Are we a Church who welcomes or a Church who excludes? Are we led by faith or by fear? Do we see Christ in the migrant, regarding them as a neighbor in the spirit of the Good Samaritan parable, or do we turn away? May this reflection serve as a renewed call to discipleship, inviting us to see Christ in the faces of those whose life path intersects with our own as pilgrims of hope.



## Pilgrims of Hope



### II. Immigration Through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching

9. The Church's teaching on migration is not an abstract theory but is rooted in the concrete experiences of migrants and their neighbors. Migration is a moral and political issue that should evoke responses shaped by justice, charity, and respect for human dignity. Pope Benedict XVI exhorts us that "the reality of migration must never become an occasion for conflict, but rather an opportunity for building peace."

10. This conviction has deep roots in the Church's Magisterium—the body of tradition and authoritative teaching conveyed by the Church's pastors, the bishops, throughout the centuries. The Church's teaching on migration is not simply another political viewpoint to be weighed against others; it is grounded in Scripture, tradition, and reason. Faithful Catholics are called to engage this teaching and allow it to shape and guide their consciences.

11. Pope Pius XII, in his Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia*, affirms the Church's steadfast commitment to the protection and pastoral care of migrants and refugees. Issued in the aftermath of World War II when mass displacement of people was a pervasive phenomenon, the document frames migration as a moral and ecclesial concern before it is a political one. Pius XII teaches that the Church's ministry to migrants is a long-standing expression of her maternal solicitude, conceiving the migrant and

refugee as a brother or sister in Christ to be treated with dignity in love rather than being viewed as an outsider devoid of all dignity and worth.

12. At the core of Catholic Social Teaching is the conviction that every person has a right to live in conditions consistent with his or her human dignity. All persons come from somewhere and seek to live a decent and dignified life where they presently reside. But when their right to exist and other basic human rights are threatened or denied to an extent that they decide to exercise their right to migrate, the Church upholds this latter right. Indeed, the Church teaches, "Among man's rights, we must include his right to enter a country in which he hopes to provide for himself and his dependents." When people are unable to provide for their families due to violence, persecution, or extreme poverty, they have a right to seek a better life elsewhere.

13. At the same time, nations have the right to regulate their borders for the sake of the common good, provided these safeguards are justly enacted with respect for fundamental human rights. The Church does not argue for unrestricted migration, but she does reject policies that are inhumane, arbitrary, or disproportionately punitive.

14. Overall, weighing these collective and personal goods that are not readily reconciled is a matter for prudential, political discernment and deliberation. St. John Paul II acknowledged this dynamic, noting that immigration policies must ensure both the security of nations and the rights of migrants. However, the security of a nation can never be used as an excuse to violate the dignity and human rights of migrants, including the right to due process under law. Nor should economic expediency be the gauge of persons' worth.

15. The prophetic role of the Church is to proclaim the truth, ensuring that immigration policies reflect proper competence and moral accountability of respective authorities. The Gospel values of justice and human solidarity are rooted in both faith and reason. The Church is not a partisan institution; she is a mother, called to defend her most vulnerable children. Pope Francis maintains, "It is not just about migrants; it is about all of us, about the present and future of our human family." This is why Catholic institutions engage in legal aid, refugee resettlement, and advocacy efforts for just and compassionate immigration reform.

### III. The Immigration Reality in the United States: A Moral and Human Concern

16. We again emphasize: While immigration policies must balance humanitarian concerns with national security and public order, such policies must never ignore or insult the fundamental dignity of the human person. It is inconsistent with the claims of justice to employ enforcement tactics that treat all immigrants, especially hardworking, longstanding, and peaceful members of our communities, in the same manner as violent criminals. Bishop Mark Seitz, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, has expressed deep concern over rhetoric that dehumanizes migrants, stating that "the use of sweeping generalizations to denigrate any group, such as describing all undocumented immigrants as 'criminals' or 'invaders,' to deprive them of protection under the law, is an affront to God, who has created each of us in his own image."

17. Recent executive orders have heightened concerns about the violation of justice and human dignity in immigration enforcement. Policies that restrict humanitarian protections, deny asylum claims, and expand detention measures disproportionately harm the most vulnerable, including families, children, and trafficking victims. The U.S. bishops have voiced particular concern about the open-ended deployment of military assets to enforce civil immigration laws, the prevention of access to asylum, or that broach proposals to reinterpret birthright citizenship. With our brother bishops, we caution that these measures undermine the moral fabric of a nation built on principles of justice and human rights.

18. The Church recognizes the right of nations to regulate immigration, but this right must always be exercised in accord with the precepts of justice, respect for the rule of law, and prudential restraint. Concomitantly, respect for due process is paramount and must be sustained under all sorts of trying circumstances. Longstanding jurisprudence rooted in the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution makes clear that due process is owed to all persons within the country, not just to citizens.

19. More fundamentally, the right to due process is grounded in the natural law and is inherent to every human person by virtue of her dignity—it is not merely a privilege granted by civil authority. Such a right should never be dismissed for the sake of expediency in pursuit of political objectives. When a society sets aside fundamental rights for some individuals, it risks further erosions, such as the suspension of habeas corpus, that would imperil the freedoms of all.

20. When immigration policies fail to reflect these collective principles, they subvert the common good and instead create conditions for greater exploitation, suffering, and disorder. Law must never be misused to advance the predominance of the majority at the expense of the poor, the marginalized, and vulnerable communities. Rather, respect for the common good implies that, given their respective capacities and needs, people participate diversely in the life and activities of any given community, and this mutual participation serves not only individual flourishing but the overall well-being of the entire community.

21. The Iowa Catholic Conference has previously emphasized that immigration policies must reflect our shared moral commitment to human dignity and family unity, prioritizing compassion over exclusion. In that vein, the bishops have affirmed their nonpartisan commitment to work with lawmakers of every stripe to advance just, responsible immigration policies. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has engaged previous and current presidential administrations and Congress to advocate for a system that is both effective and humane, protecting immigrants, refugees, and the poor as part of the Church's broader mission to uphold the dignity of all life.

22. As Catholics, we must resist narratives that reduce immigrants to political problems or pawns and instead recognize them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our late Holy Father, Pope Francis, cautions against attitudes that, in practice, treat migrants as "less worthy, less important, less human." The Church's mission is to proclaim the Gospel, defend the dignity of the marginalized and most vulnerable among us, and cooperate with the grace of Jesus Christ to usher in the Kingdom of God while seeking the salvation of souls. In every season of life, the words of Jesus in Matthew 25 remain our polestar: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35).



## Pilgrims of Hope

### IV. The Church’s Call to Action: Living the Faith

23. The Church’s response to immigration must go beyond platitudes; it must take concrete form in the way believers advocate, accompany, and serve others. The treatment of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers is not a marginal issue but a gauge of how seriously we take the command to love our neighbor.

24. Every Catholic Christian has a moral responsibility to ensure that the personal dignity of migrants is upheld. This responsibility includes personal dispositions rooted in the truth of the Gospel with its call to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. To act in good faith means resisting narratives that dehumanize immigrants and instead recognizing them as neighbors whom God allows to meet us on our life’s path. We must guard against political rhetoric that instills fear and division, that skews perceptions to justify violations of fundamental rights.

25. Pope Benedict XVI observes, “In the present social and cultural context, where there is a widespread tendency to relativize truth, practicing charity in truth helps people to understand that adhering to the values of Christianity is not merely useful but essential for building a good society and for true integral human development .”

26. Catholics can embrace their mission as disciples of Jesus by learning about Church teaching on immigration, participating in advocacy efforts, and supporting ministries that serve migrants and refugees. First and foremost, prayer must guide our personal and collective responses, asking God for the prudence to enact just policies and the grace to see Jesus in the faces of those seeking a better life.

27. Parishes, schools, and Catholic institutions must be places of welcome and accompaniment for migrants and refugees. This Gospel call includes providing legal aid, pastoral support, and material assistance where possible.



Catholic schools and faith formation programs should incorporate education on Catholic Social Teaching regarding immigration, ensuring that young people understand the Church’s commitment to justice. Parishes can also foster intercultural dialogue, creating communities where immigrants are not seen as outsiders but as vital members of the Body of Christ.

28. The call to welcome the stranger is not optional—it is at the heart of the Christian life. In every migrant, we

encounter Christ himself. The Church’s mission is clear: to defend human dignity, advocate for justice, and create a society where all are treated as beloved children of God. The way we treat the immigrant will not only define our nation—it will mark our fidelity to Christ.

### V. Mary, Comforter of Migrants: Model of Hope and Hospitality

29. As we commemorate the Queenship of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, we are invited to turn our hearts to the woman whose life manifests profound openness to God and gracious solidarity with the vulnerable. Mary experienced firsthand the harsh reality of forced migration when she and Joseph fled to Egypt with the infant Jesus, seeking refuge from persecution (Matthew 2:13-15). Their journey reflects the painful experiences of countless migrants and refugees today, who leave their homes under threat, seeking security and peace.

30. As Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mary stands as a powerful intercessor and advocate for those who journey

in hope. She reminds us that every migrant carries within them the image of her Son, deserving of dignity, protection, and hospitality. Just as Mary welcomed and nurtured Jesus with maternal love, the Church is called to imitate her tender care, welcoming migrants and refugees as beloved children of God.

31. Further, Mary’s “yes” to God’s proposal to be the Mother of his Son inspires our commitment to justice and mercy. In proclaiming that God “has lifted up the lowly” and “filled the hungry with good things” (Luke 1:46-55), Mary prophetically declares God’s preferential option for the poor, the marginalized, and those on the move from lo-

cales where they and their families are not safe. Her words compel us to humbly question systems and structures that oppress and exclude, urging us toward faithful responses of solidarity and advocacy.

32. Mary, the Comfort of Migrants and Refugees, stands before us as both guide and model. May her example and intercession awaken in us a deeper commitment to live our faith in action: to welcome generously, to advocate courageously, and to love graciously.

### VI. Conclusion: A Jubilee of Hope and a Call to Renewed Commitment

33. As the Church celebrates the Jubilee Year of 2025, we are invited into a profound season of grace, renewal, and commitment to the Gospel. The theme of this Jubilee, “Pilgrims of Hope,” reminds us that Christian hope is not passive optimism but an active trust in God’s ongoing work of redemption. This theme speaks profoundly to the experience of migrants and refugees who journey in hope seeking security, dignity, and peace.

34. Hope must be more than an idea—it must take form in the structures we build and the actions we take. It is not enough to desire justice; we must commit to shaping systems that sustain it. This requires faithful endurance, resisting the temptation to withdraw in discouragement or be embroiled in polarizing social media posts or other messages. Meaningful change comes not through “quick fixes” but through long-term dedication to advocacy, hospitality, and accompaniment. The call to welcome the stranger challenges us to move beyond comfort and convenience, embracing a spirit of encounter that reflects the heart of the Gospel.

35. A more robust sense of hope is seamlessly tied to charity understood as the love of God in himself that carries over into love of neighbor. Carmelite Father Conrad de Meester, in the spirit of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and her “little way” of love, relates these virtues of hope and love: “This hope is no dead-end. It is love on the move; love that is constantly growing and flourishing. Hope is love in the process of becoming. Without hope, love would suffocate.”

36. The Eucharist, the Sacrament of unity and charity, offers us the ultimate model of Christian hospitality. In the breaking of the bread, we are reminded that we are one Body in Christ, called to reconciliation and to make room at the table for our sisters and brothers, especially the poor and the marginalized. The same Christ who gives himself to us in the Eucharist is present in the immigrant seeking shelter, the refugee longing for peace, and the displaced family searching for security.

37. As we proceed through this Jubilee Year, we are called to embody radical hospitality, seeing Jesus in every

person who seeks refuge and stability in hope. Just as the ancient Israelites understood the time of Jubilee as a call for restoration, liberation, and renewal, so, too, does this Jubilee year invite us to renew our commitment to welcoming the stranger, advocating for justice, and working toward a society that reveals the merciful face of Christ. Our response to those seeking refuge and stability in hope is not only a reflection of our nation’s founding values, but is primarily a testament to our fidelity to Christ.

38. May this Jubilee Year be a time of conversion and renewed commitment to help “justice and peace embrace,” where we open our hearts to encounter Jesus in the migrant and the refugee, advancing a Church and a society rooted in justice, mercy, and love.

Aug. 22, 2025, Memorial of the Queenship of Mary

Most Rev. Thomas Zinkula, Archbishop of Dubuque  
Most Rev. William Joensen, Bishop of Des Moines  
Most Rev. Dennis Walsh, Bishop of Davenport  
Most Rev. John Keehner, Bishop of Sioux City

*A study guide is available for personal prayer or small-group discussion. Use your smartphone’s camera on the QR code at right to see the pastoral letter with footnotes or to see the reflection guide.*





# This little light of mine

As the song says, “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine. Oh, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.” This song is rooted deeply in our history with its more than 100 years of being penned and set to music. This song has been popularized as a lullaby, a campfire song, and most poignantly, a civil rights anthem in the pursuit of freedom.

While there are many lights in this world and almost all can be extinguished, there is a certain light that cannot be. This light is reflected in the Gospel of John, which says, “The light shines in the darkness and darkness has not overcome it.” This is the light of hope.

In my experiences over the years, I have heard many people express that they have run out of hope for whatever circumstances they may be facing. If we think of hope as an emotion, then it has to have an end because no emotion lasts forever. It is necessary to realize that hope is not an

## Let’s Get Psyched

By Deacon Randy Kiel



emotion. It is spiritual. It is the biproduct of faith.

### Hope Is A Gift

Hope is an action of God given to mankind as a response to one’s life of faith. Hopelessness, on the other hand, is known to be a condition within one’s mind, but not within one’s soul. Hopelessness to many, seems to be a perceived result from the effects of discouragements and disappointments.

### The Source of Hope

In some of our earliest Christian writings, we have a collection of foundational teachings from men known as our Church Fathers, one of which was St. Justin Martyr.

From his teaching, we as Catholics understand who we are as humans and why hope is actually a spiritual matter. This concept is called “spermatikos logos” which is translated from the Greek as “seed of the divine.” This concept supports the idea that all humans are created in the image of God (imago Dei), and that all possess an innate potential to reflect God’s attributes and have an authentic desire to pursue him.

We as Catholics now understand that the hope of salvation is given to us from God unto our created being. There is a seed of the divine within every person. Now that is hopeful!

### A Spectrum of Decline

Much of mental health revolves around distortions of emotion and thought with hopelessness being one of the strongest examples. It is therefore inevitable that behaviors and relationships will be vulnerable to decline as mental health declines.

### Disappointment Is Not Depression

When circumstances fall and expectations fail us, we need to realize that we are disappointed, not depressed, not hopeless, not even mad; we are simply disappointed. Let’s recall now the second verse to our titled song *This Little Light Of Mine* which says, “Hide it under a bushel? No! I’m gonna let it shine.”

May our prayer be that we reflect the seed of the divine in all we do and speak.

*Deacon Randy Kiel serves Christ the King Parish in Des Moines.*

# Faith with feet

When the word ‘faith’ is referenced, we often think only of doctrines and creeds, of truths handed down for us to assent to.

And this is part of it.

The Church calls this believed faith—the content of the creed, the Paschal Mystery, the unity and trinity of God.

But there is also what the Church calls believing faith: the act of trusting God with our whole selves, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #170.

Believed faith says, “I believe that Jesus rose from the dead.”

Believing faith says, “I believe in the risen Lord, and I belong to him.”

Both dimensions are essential.

Believed faith guards the deposit of truth handed down from the apostles.

Believing faith makes that truth personal, dynamic, and alive. It is not enough to know about Christ; faith means surrendering to him, welcoming him, and confessing with joy, “Jesus is Lord!” As St. John reminds us, everything depends on whether Christ is welcomed (Jn 1:12). St. Paul describes this welcome as obedience—not

## Jubilee of Hope

By John Huynh, D.Min.



blind submission, but a confident abandonment of ourselves into God’s hands (Rom 1:5).

The Beatitudes reveal to us where believing faith must find root. Jesus calls “blessed” those whose situations seem anything but enviable: the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are merciful, those who are persecuted. None of us naturally desire poverty or persecution.

Mercy, while wonderful when received, can be painful when given.

And yet, Christ locates joy in precisely these realities.

Faith that believes only the content of

the Beatitudes might nod in agreement that these are noble ideals.

But faith that believes in Christ dares to trust that this strange way really leads to life. It believes not only that God exists, but that God is present now in the poor, the hungry, and the persecuted.

It believes not only that mercy is good, but that to show mercy is to enter into the very heart of God.

This is the foundation of Catholic social teaching. Believing faith will not let us relegate justice or mercy to abstract ideas or future hopes. It draws us to concrete action:

- to work tirelessly to defend the dignity of life from conception to natural death,
- to welcome migrants and immigrants seeking stability and belonging,
- to advocate fair wages and safe conditions for workers, and
- to strengthen families by building communities rooted in solidarity and care.

Not everyone can do everything. But believing faith always presses us to do something; because faith in Christ means

faith in his body, the Church, and in the people he calls us to serve.

The Church has long taught that faith is both gift and response.

The gift is the truth revealed in Christ; the response is the heart that says, “Yes, I will follow.”

The Beatitudes teach us that this “yes” will often look strange to the world. But here is the paradox: in the very places we fear to go, Christ promises happiness. And we do not traverse these roads alone; he is with us always (Mt 28:20).

So let us hold the truths of our faith firmly. And let us also live them boldly, trusting that believing faith will draw us deeper into God’s mercy and into the lives of those who most need to be remembered, embraced, and loved.

*John Huynh holds a doctoral degree in ministry. He is the director of the Social Justice for both Catholic Charities and the Diocese of Des Moines.*

# What makes a good marriage?

No amount of preaching shapes a soul as much as seeing someone living an honest life. If that’s true, and it is, then no marriage course is ever as powerful to teach about marriage as is the witness of a good marriage.

I understood this first-hand several years ago when I attended the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of an uncle and aunt. Theirs was a good marriage: harmony, hospitality, family, faith.

However, and only they knew the price tag, this did not always come easily. They spent the first years of their marriage without much money and without extras, raising a large family. His first job, clerking in a store, paid him a pittance. She couldn’t find any work at all, since in the small town where they lived, women weren’t much wanted in the job market then.

As well, as in all families, there were countless other struggles and, in their case, countless hours spent by both, beyond their own family concerns, working in church and community circles.

More than two hundred of us, family and friends, gathered to toast and roast them. At the end of the banquet my uncle stood up to thank everyone and ended his comments with these words.

“When we got married fifty years ago, we didn’t have much, but we had an un-

ways contains more than enough surplus to feed everyone who is fortunate enough to meet it. This is what makes it sacramental.

- A good marriage is a container which holds suffering. An old axiom says: “Everything can be borne if it can be shared!” That’s true. Anyone fortunate enough to have a true moral partner in life can bear a lot of suffering. This is particularly true in a good marriage where the wife and husband, because of their deep moral affinity, can carry not just their own sufferings but also can help carry the sufferings of many others.
- Finally, a good marriage is Christ’s body, flesh that is “food for the life of world.” Christ left us his body to feed the world. A good marriage does precisely that, it feeds everything and everybody around it. This, above all else, is what makes marriage a sacrament.

The marriage of my aunt and uncle can be described by these images. Their relationship with each other was a fireplace, where many people, including myself, found warmth. It was a table; their houses always had big tables, loaded refrigerators, and friendly doors that welcomed and gave hospitality and food and drink to everyone who crossed their threshold.

And their relationship was a container for suffering. Through the years, thanks to

their love for each other, they were able to bear with faith, dignity, soft hearts, and an ever-deepening charity, all the pain, tragedy, and suffering that came their way, and were able to help many other people carry their sufferings.

Finally, their relationship was, in real human flesh, Christ’s body, food for the life of the world. Virtually everyone whose path ever crossed theirs was in some way fed, nourished, and given vitamins for their souls.

We might look at a marriage like this one to better understand what constitutes a sacrament.

Sometimes the answers we seek are not found in a book, but in the house across the street; sometimes the divine grace we seek is found when someone opens a door of welcome to us; sometimes the elusive consolation we seek is given us by a friend who understands our pain; and sometimes the sacrament we seek to feed our souls is found in a warm living room, at a loaded table, in the banter and humor flowing back and forth across the table, and in a couple who are happily married.

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a professor of spirituality at Oblate School of Theology and an award-winning author. He can be contacted through ronrolheiser.com.*

By Father Ron Rolheiser



conscious trust that if we lived by the Ten Commandments and the laws of the church, then things would turn out all right - and I think they did.”

What an understatement! They turned out better than all right.

A good marriage can best be described, I believe, by four images, and theirs is the prime analogate of each:

- A good marriage is a warm fireplace. The love that the two people have for each other generates a warm place. It also warms everyone else who comes near them: their children, their neighbors, their community, and everyone who meets them.
- A good marriage is a big table, loaded with food and drink. When two people love each other in a true sense, that love becomes a place of hospitality, a table where people come to be fed, figuratively and literally. In a good marriage, love al-



# Exciting additions slated for school

By Beth Samson  
Contributing Writer

With a campaign goal of \$76 million, Dowling Catholic High School is embarking on a historic and transformative effort to ensure the school’s facilities can keep up with the growing student body and today’s pressing needs.

The campaign will provide much-needed updates and expansions and position the school to have the best tools to prepare all students to be Leaders for Life, Centered on Christ.

- With enrollment growth of 10% expected within three years, Dowling Catholic will add more cafeteria space and study and gathering areas.
- The school’s parking lots are limited and the traffic flow is congested, over 100 new parking spots and another 17<sup>th</sup> Street entrance/exit will be added.

- They will build a main, secure entrance on the west side of the school and relocate the attendance office to enhance safety measures.
- With an outdated kitchen and a growing need for food available after school, the school will renovate the kitchen, expand the dining area, and add after-school on-campus snack options.
- With students from 46 zip codes, many stay on campus after the final school bell waiting for practice, club meetings, or rides. Rather than sitting in the hallways, a student union with comfortable spaces to study, meet, and socialize will be built.
- The school’s athletic facilities are overstretched, so three new courts, an indoor fitness track, four new locker rooms, a team prayer space and coach offices will be added.
- The cherished school

traditions are important, but current event spaces have reached their limits. This will be resolved with expanded seating for all-school Masses, pep rallies, and competition spectators.

- Local safety requirements prompt the school to build a storm shelter that will double as an auxiliary athletic court.

The Honoring Our History, Faith in Our Future capital campaign kicks off at halftime of the homecoming game on Friday, Sept. 26. More information and updates can be found at [dowlingcatholic.org/campaign](http://dowlingcatholic.org/campaign).

*This story was originally printed in Focus Magazine, of Dowling Catholic High School. It is reprinted with permission.*

# Generous donors lay foundation for Dowling Catholic capital campaign

Continued from page 1

president, played every sport he could, and built friendships that have lasted a lifetime. “It built self-esteem and confidence,” he said. “I’ll never forget it.”

Dowling Catholic also introduced Jim to his wife, Patty (Hines) Cownie, who attended St. Joseph’s Academy. The two met as freshmen, thanks to meddling from Patty’s best friend, and began a lifelong partnership rooted in faith, family, and community.

The Cownies’ relationship with Dowling Catholic has only deepened over the decades. All nine of their children attended Dowling Catholic, and now their grandchildren are Maroons as well.

“We’ve seen how Dowling nurtures its students,” Jim said. “Not just academically, but in discipline, values, and opportunity. We believe in it.”

The Cownies’ generosity stems from gratitude for what Dowling Catholic has given them, as well as a sense of responsibility.

“We stayed in Des Moines because we love Des Moines,” Jim said. “We built a business here, and we’ve been blessed. We had good fortune and we learned – thanks to people like Bill Knapp – how to give it away.”

Jim and Patty see their gift not as a one-time gesture, but as part of a tradition of generosity. “We’ve been motivated by the behavior of others who give generously of their time and their money,” he said. “We’re happy to be one of those families.”

Jim also understands the importance of a strong lead gift for a campaign of this magnitude.

“Patty and I decided we were going to do something we’ve never done before – and we’re happy to do it for a place that has meant so much to us.”

He’s confident in the vision guiding the campaign. “I trust (Dowling Catholic President) Dan Ryan and the board. The thinking has been clear and good. We want to see Dowling Catholic continue to prosper and do the job it’s been able to do for students for a long time in the future.”

His advice for current and future Dowling Catholic students?

“Stay busy,” he said without hesitation. “There are a huge number of extracurricular activities offered. That’s what I tell my grandkids. Take advantage of the opportunities, stay busy, and life is better.”

Through the Honoring Our History, Faith in Our Future capital campaign, the Cownies are ensuring that future generations of Maroons will have the same opportunities – and strong foundation – that shaped their own lives.

And for Jim and Patty Cownie, it’s simple.

“Dowling has been important to us,” Jim said. “It’s time to give back.”

Soon, Dowling Catholic will turn to the entire Maroon community to build on the foundation that Jim and Patty Cownie have so generously set.

*This story was originally printed in Focus Magazine, of Dowling Catholic High School. It is reprinted with permission.*

# Local legend Father Acrea dies

Continued from page 1

Catholic High School for nine years, served as principal for one year, then studied at the North American College in Rome for a year. He returned to teach for another three years before going to parish ministry.

Father Acrea served both urban and rural parishes, having been at St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale, St. Cecilia Parish in Panorama and St. Mary Parish in Guthrie Center.

In 1980, he returned to the faculty of Dowling and the St. Joseph Education Center, serving students and adults for nine more years. He fondly recalled becoming a debate coach, having never debated before. His teams won four state championships plus

earned fifth in the nation one year.

In 1989, Father Acrea returned to parish life, serving St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish, St. Mary/Holy Cross Parish in Elkhart, Holy Spirit Parish in Creston and St. Edward Parish in Afton.

Nine years later, he became the diocesan Vocations director. At the time, there were three seminarians. He pulled together a promotions committee and started looking for innovative ways to reach young men.

Just a few years later, Father Acrea made local and national news when he launched a website, [vocationsonline.com](http://vocationsonline.com), to recruit seminarians.

Father Acrea had a gift for working with the young.

“That’s what energized him,”

said Downey.

“I think his greatest forte was with the young people,” said Father Frank Palmer, who was ordained the same day as Father Acrea.

Father Acrea’s ministry will be remembered as legendary, said Father Flood.

“Most priests spend at least one hour a day preparing for their ministry through prayer. Father Acrea spent 23 hours preparing for his one hour of ministry when he interacted with students at Dowling Catholic,” said Father Flood. “His solid witness will forever remain as a living cornerstone of our community.”

## On Prayer

By Monica Pugh



## Bringing Mary’s seven sorrows into focus

The weather has cooled and soon beautiful images of our Holy Mother and her newborn son lying in a manger will become our focus.

Before I became Catholic, those beautiful images were the only ones I understood about Mary’s role in salvation history.

Mary’s Immaculate Heart, pierced with a sword, was an image I saw for the first time hanging in my in-laws’ home. As a convert, this common image to Catholic parishes and homes became something I desired to understand. “Why is her heart pierced with a sword? Isn’t she just Jesus’ beautiful mother?” I asked myself silently.

Simeon’s prophecy in the gospel of Luke warned Mary her heart would be pierced with a sword as she witnessed her son’s suffering and death. But she suffered six other deeply sorrowful events. These sorrows, sometimes referred to as dolors, are trials of great suffering. They provide windows into her innermost feelings.

She suffered through their flight into Egypt, losing Jesus in the temple, encountering her son on the path to Calvary, witnessing his crucifixion and death, receiving his body into her arms, and assisting at his burial. Through it all, she maintained her perfect yes. She experienced profound love for her son and deep understanding of her role in salvation.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Mary appeared to St. Bridget of Sweden in a private revelation revealing the Rosary of Seven Sorrows. This rosary announces the sorrows at each Our Father bead and has seven Hail Mary beads instead of the usual ten. This prayer leads us in understanding our own suffering and sorrows. It also evokes honor for her as we experience our own trials and feel pain.

The official Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows date was formally set by Pope Pius X on Sept. 15, 1913. This feast day brings Mary’s seven sorrows into focus for all of September. While this rosary can be prayed at any time, it is often prayed on this day.

When we suffer, sadness fills our hearts. If we are not content with the answers God provides, discouragement can take hold. We might wonder what good it does to pray. This is the battle in prayer we are told to confront in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2728. But Mary is our model for hope. She knew all things would pass away and become new as we read in Revelation 21:5. She knew hope because of her perfect yes.

When the unthinkable happens around us or to us, and our hearts turn to deep sorrow, sometimes fear, it is prayer that gives us hope. We can unite our prayers to Mary’s seven sorrows. She knows our pain and her sorrows instruct us how to endure suffering and to grow spiritually. She graciously lived in pain as a mother on earth and felt all the emotions and feelings like we do today.

She is not just Jesus’ beautiful mother. She is my heavenly mother. She is your heavenly mother. She is the ark of the new covenant bringing us salvation. She is the Queen of Heaven who intercedes for us because of the sword that pierced her heart.

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



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# Avoca parish marks 150 years

By Stephanie Geraghty  
Contributing Writer

St. Mary Mediatrix of All Graces Catholic Church in Avoca celebrated its 150th anniversary on Sunday, Aug. 17.

Bishop William Joensen presided at the 10 a.m. Mass with concelebrating Fathers Seth Owusu, Tom Dooley and John Frost. Father Paul Monahan, who is retired, also attended the Mass.

“What a joy to be able to celebrate with past pastors, concelebrating Mass with the bishop,” said Father Owusu, the pastor.

There were approximately 130 people in attendance.

“The 150th celebration at St. Mary’s was beautiful. We had many past and present parishioners in attendance as well as guests join us for our special day,” said planning committee member Chantelle Harre.

The Knights of Columbus provided a 20-member Honor Guard, and a choir of nine vocalists and one pianist enhanced the worship.

Everyone enjoyed a meal together afterwards in the parish hall, where a photographic history slideshow was presented.

“St. Mary’s parishioners shared their photos and memories to make the slideshow and I couldn’t have been happier with how it turned out,” said Linda Hansen, planning committee chair. “It was a wonderful trip down St. Mary’s memory lane. We are so blessed to have so many people who helped make our celebration a success.”

“It was a fantastic celebration and first thanking God who made it all possible. The planning committee deserves great applause for their time and sacrifices,” said Father Owusu.



Parishioners of St. Mary Parish in Avoca celebrated 150 years of faith with a Mass, a meal, and a presentation honoring those who laid the foundation and passed on the faith from generation to generation.

## School staff prepare spiritually for the start of the academic year

The gathering wasn’t a typical professional development.

On Aug. 18, approximately 500 Catholic educators filled St. Boniface Parish in Waukee. Three days later, about 75 more educators assembled in the Council Bluffs area.

Both groups had come for the diocesan Catholic schools’ annual convocation with a theme that promised something deeper than curriculum updates or administrative procedures: “You are God’s Beloved—Living Joyfully in Christ Jesus.”

Tom Quinlan from the St. Joseph Evangelization Center delivered identical messages to both audiences, creating a unified experience across the Diocese’s geographic expanse.

As he prepared to address each group, the Gospel reading of Mary and Martha set the stage—the eternal tension between doing and being, between the busyness of service and the stillness of presence.

At both gatherings, Quin-

lan opened with a observation that would resonate through the day’s sessions.

“I have this feeling as I go around the Diocese and around the country that we don’t know it. We know it, but we don’t know it—how precious each of us is to God.”

As participants departed, they bore the fruit of a day spent in honest reflection about their own need for healing, their capacity for gratitude, and their calling to joy.

### Praying with Julian of Norwich

September 22 - December 13 online

6 Zoom sessions **Sep. 22, Oct. 6+20, Nov. 3+17, and Dec. 1, 7:00am – 8:00pm, CST. December 13, 9:30am – 2:30pm:** opt. retreat day at **St. Benedict Center, Schuyler, NE** Julian of Norwich’s revelations show us that in falling and rising again we are “ever precious kept” in God’s love and goodness. Facilitator: **Steven Blum, PhD.**

Register now at [www.StBenedictCenter.com](http://www.StBenedictCenter.com)

### Wow: Wonder of Wonders

October 11, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Schuyler, NE

In a world that can seem full of woe, we need sacred space to practice living in the light of awe and astonishment. Come, taste the goodness of God. Grow in your awareness of the Divine that begins with wonder. **Margie M. Walker**, as teacher, spouse, mother of six and spiritual director leads retreats around the US.

Register now at [www.StBenedictCenter.com](http://www.StBenedictCenter.com)

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# Sister’s move marks the end of an era

Sister Sandy Rodemyer, a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is leaving Des Moines, ending 160 years of the BVM presence in the Diocese of Des Moines.

She is moving to Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque at the end of this month.

## BVMs

The BVM community came to Iowa in 1843 after Bishop Mathias Loras invited them to Dubuque to teach.

From 1865, when the first BVM sisters came to teach at St. Ambrose Grade School at the invitation of the pastor, to today, more than 1,100 sisters served the Diocese of Des Moines.

They also served in Des Moines at St. Michael School, later known as Visitation, and St. John School until Holy Family School merged Visitation, St.

John, and St. Ambrose schools.

The sisters were invited to teach in St. Francis parish grade school and high school in Council Bluffs in 1871. By 1873, they had opened St. Francis Academy, a boarding school.

In Des Moines, the sisters purchased the estate of WH Welch, located in a suburb called Greenwood Park in 1884. The home, christened Villa Maria, served as both school and convent until brick school buildings were built. St. Joseph Academy opened in 1885 and remained open until the merger of the academy and Dowling High School to create a co-educational high school in 1972.

BVM sisters also served at Christ the King Catholic School in Des Moines from 1980 until 1995.

As schools merged or closed, the sisters found other ways to live out their charism of “being

freed and helping others to enjoy freedom in God’s steadfast love” through their core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice.

Some of those roles included serving the diocesan Schools Office, Family Life Office, and the Communications Office; in parish ministry; Drake campus ministry; a Drake Education Specialist counselor; at Mercy Medical Center as chaplain and volunteer visitors; the Beacon of Life Women Shelter; in Church Women United; teaching music; cooking at Orchard Place; assistant manager at Mercy Park apartments; prison ministry; the Iowa School for the Deaf; in senior day care centers; and nursing homes.

About 123 women entered the BVM community from Council Bluffs and Des Moines. Of those, 30 returned to serve their home Diocese.

Of those who entered from the Des Moines Diocese, four are living in Dubuque: Sisters Barbara Brooks, Kathleen Mullin, Carol Marie Baum, and Rodemyer.

**Sister Sandy**

Sister Sandy was raised in Des Moines in St. Augustin Parish and attended St. Joseph Academy.



Sister Sandy Rodemyer accepts the Distinguished Alumni Award from Dan Ryan, president of Dowling Catholic High School, in 2021.

“I always wanted to serve in my home Diocese, so I was thrilled to be assigned to teach at St. Albert High School for six years,” she said.

She was invited to teach in Iowa City and went there for three years. But she found herself yearning to return to Des Moines to serve with Bishop Maurice Dingman, whom she greatly admired. She joined the faculty of Dowling High School in 1974 and served there for 18 years.

She volunteered for 23 years in the Residents Encounter Christ

retreat program at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women at Michellville. She served as the director of the Des Moines Area Religious Council Emergency Food Pantry for 12 years.

In nominating Sister Sandy for the Dowling Catholic Distinguished Alumni award in 2021, Kimberly Bowman, wrote: “She has kept the BVM sisterhood alive in the hearts and minds of those of us fortunate to have had them as our teachers. She has been a lifelong ambassador for social justice for all.”

# Longtime educator dies

Franciscan Sister Bernice Gall, whose religious vocation centered on education and music, died at Harper Hospice House in Omaha on July 30. She was 85 years old.

Sister Bernice served Christ the King community for nearly 20 years. From 1995 to 2013, she served as a resource and support teacher. She also served in the ministry of prayer and presence at St. Ambrose Cathedral from 2013-2016.



Sister Bernice Gall

Sister Bernice was born in 1939 in Howells, Nebraska. She entered the School Sisters of St. Francis in 1956, made her first profession of vows in 1959, and her final (perpetual) vows in 1964.

Before coming to the Des Moines Diocese, she ministered in the Archdioceses of Milwaukee and Omaha and in the Dioceses of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana; and Joliet, and Rockford,

Illinois.

A Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Bernice was celebrated Aug. 5 at St. James Catholic Church in Omaha followed by internment in Calvary Catholic Cemetery.

## 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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# Corporal Works of Mercy in action with funeral dinners



St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Panama teaches and practices the Corporal Works of Mercy through its ministry of providing a meal and comfort to those who have attended a funeral at the parish.

## French (Dis-)Connection

Continued from page 2

gives. In France, another sort of logic prevails when it comes to authority: “What is essential is not to lose face, to receive the consideration that is due you. It is necessary to remain dignified and to shine, even if the situation demands obedience” (Delsol pp. 57-58).  
Freedom and the honor that attends it for the Frenchman means

not having to submit to another. On the surface French society extols “egalité” among all persons, but this supposed equality is undermined by a stealth preference for money and material privileges that must remain concealed: “One does not speak of them, one deceitfully denies them, and one finds ways to hide them” (p. 63). Hence, the net result is fundamental mistrust among citizens.  
Certainly, our American cul-

ture is beset by a tendency toward excess and materialism, and surveys show a rise in social mistrust. There is a form of transparency that can negatively manifest itself as ostentation, a “show-off” attitude that says, “look at me.” Such a mindset lacks discretion and modesty.  
In contrast, and more positively, in the U.S. there is also a disposition to honor those who excel in any venue of life, whether in academics, athletics, business or other charitable pursuits that extend beyond mere personal gain. In America, we need not be shy about striving to be excellent or generous, or in receiving the earthly honors and compensation that recognize our efforts.  
Yet, given their treasury of saints, our French friends have all the spiritual resources at hand to foster a culture shift, and to inspire Americans and all Catholics

to go deeper in faith and self-donation (i.e., “self-submission”) than we already have to this point in our lives. For as Delsol observes, in contrast to limited material goods, “immaterial goods unfold by being shared. . . . One would not revolt over spiritual goods; they cannot be accounted for or equalized; they are not distributed from outside, but are internal in terms of access and evaluation” (pp. 60-61).  
Herein lies a French paradox: in a contemporary society with a preference for privilege and benefits that are discreetly hidden from public view, the lives of the many French saints who animated this eldest daughter of the church disclose a preferential option for hiddenness, for self-effacing sacrifice that is not interested in personal gain at the exclusion of one’s fellow citizens.  
Rather, the French saints,

whatever their degree of recognition by their peers, “suffered” the indignity of allowing their pointed insights and tireless practice of charity among the poor to be made public despite their personal preferences. These saints reveal the hallmark features of those who belong as baptismal card-carrying citizens to the Kingdom of God.  
St. Catherine Labouré, for example, was a 19<sup>th</sup> century 24-year-old novice in St. Vincent de Paul’s Daughters of Charity who received private apparitions from the Blessed Virgin Mary. She revealed to Catherine the design for the Miraculous Medal. Yet Catherine did not rest on her “most favored” status, but spent the next 40 years of her life serving the aged and infirm to an extent that she is regarded as a patron of seniors and the sick.  
The glory of the saints is the hope and impetus for us to follow the path they have trod, to worship at the one altar of Word and Sacrament, drawn into sacred company with the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The French saints, as do all saints, help us to view our whole life, our very identity, as pilgrims who have embarked on a journey of hope in which our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, has paid for us to take part.

### Catholic Elementary School Principal

St. Matthew's School in Topeka, KS, is seeking a dynamic and visionary leader with a passion for Catholic education. The principal will continue the school's tradition of forming disciples, pursuing academic excellence, and spiritual growth. The principal will lead by example and inspire a team of dedicated faculty and staff. Applicants must have or be eligible for Kansas licensure in educational leadership. Apply online at [archkckcs.org/apply](http://archkckcs.org/apply). For more information, contact Vince Cascone at [vcascone@archkckcs.org](mailto:vcascone@archkckcs.org)

### Friends Of Catholic Worker Coat Giveaway Des Moines Catholic Worker Fund, Inc.

We are planning a winter coat and winter gear giveaway at DM Catholic Worker House on November 25, 2025. Last year, 130 coats, 80 sweatshirts and hats, gloves and socks were distributed to low income and homeless folks in the DSM inner city. This year we would like to increase those numbers. Will you help?  
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# (Des)Conexión Francesa

Continued from page 2

tienen una meta, un destino, que se percibe o se sabe solamente de manera parcial. Hay un grado de misterio que nos lleva adelante y si nos entregamos con humildad, sumisión y reverencia a algo o alguien más grande que nosotros, le permitimos a Ese quien provoca nuestra curiosidad y que desea hacernos suyos, entonces nuestras almas buscan algo más significativo que la satisfacción personal—nos lleva a través de las puertas del misterio hacia un encuentro personal y genuino.

Desde ahí, estamos motivados a la conversión de corazones, de profundizar nuestra amistad con Jesús. Se nos impulsa entonces a reafirmar y expandir la comunión de vida, Espíritu y amor que Dios nos da. Esta comunión no es un asunto transitorio, tal como vivimos en nuestra última noche juntos en Francia cuando el gerente de nuestro hotel finalmente encontró la transmisión del juego de fútbol entre Iowa y Iowa State para que varios de nosotros lo pudiéramos ver en la televisión de pantalla gigante; por el contrario, esta comunión permanece muchos después de que terminen nuestros días de peregrinaje.

El Padre Chicoine, es sus varias motivantes homilías, invocó la distinción de turista y peregrinos más de una vez y nos recordó de nuestra necesidad de la misericordia que surge del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús en los sacramentos de la confesión y de la Eucaristía—la misericordia que elimina las capas materiales y psíquicas que se acumulan y que representan una barrera ante la simpleza, pobreza de espíritu y caridad que representan los santos.

En su última encíclica, Dilexit nos “Él Nos Amó” [DN], el difunto Santo Padre, Papa Francisco, comenta sobre la disposición de reparar los pecados personales para ofrecer Consuelo al corazón lastimado de Jesús: “Puede parecer que esta expresión de la devoción no tiene suficiente sustento teológico, sin embargo, el corazón tiene sus razones. El sensus fidelium intuye que aquí hay algo misterioso más allá de nuestra lógica humana, y que la pasión de Cristo no es un mero hecho del pasado: podemos participar en ella desde la fe. Meditar la entrega de Cristo en la cruz, para la piedad de los fieles es algo mayor que un mero recuerdo.”

Aquí recordamos lo que dijo Santo Tomás Aquino, “El acto de fe del creyente tiene como su objetivo no simplemente la doctrina propuesta, pero una unión con Cristo mismo en la realidad de su vida divina.” El Papa Francisco continúa, “A esto se une la conciencia del propio pecado, que él cargó sobre sus hombros heridos, y de la propia inadecuación frente a tanto amor, que siempre nos sobrepasa infinitamente” (DN pár. 154, incluyendo la nota 157).

Tanto como las nuevas y renovadas conexiones que se formaron durante nuestro peregrinaje en Francia, también me motivaron a reflexionar sobre algunas de las dinámicas sociales y políticas entre los franceses que remarcan

algunas de las desconexiones que sentimos entre los franceses y americanos, y más aún entre cristianos católicos. El filósofo Chantal Delsol expone una fisura fundacional en su trabajo, Prosperidad y Tormento en Francia: La Paradoja de la Era Democrática. Ella se refiere al libro celebrado de Philippe d'Iribarne, La logique de l'honneur [la lógica del honor], en donde expone cómo las relaciones de autoridad entre negocios varían ampliamente entre países:

“En el mundo Anglosajón [que es el que forma nuestro estilo de pensar americano], predomina la lógica del contrato.” Este tipo de lógica presume un tipo de igualdad entre partes que inspira confianza y una expectativa de recibir algo justo a cambio de lo que uno da. En Francia, prevalece otro tipo de lógica cuando nos referimos a la autoridad: “Lo que es esencial es el no quedar mal, el recibir la consideración que se te debe. Es necesario el mantenerse digno y brillar, incluso si la situación demanda obediencia” (Delsol págs. 57-58).

Para el francés, la libertad y el honor que le merece significa el no tener que someterse a otro. A simple vista, la sociedad francesa festeja la “égalité” entre todas las personas, pero a esta supuesta igualdad la supera una preferencia oculta por el dinero y por los privilegios materiales que deben permanecer ocultos: “No se habla de éstos, se niegan engañosamente y se encuentran formas de esconderlos” (pág. 63). Por lo tanto, el resultado neto es una desconfianza fundamental entre los ciudadanos.

Ciertamente, nuestra cultura americana está acosada por una tendencia hacia los excesos y el materialismo, y las encuestas muestran un aumento en la desconfianza social. Hay cierta forma de transparencia que se puede manifestar negativamente



Photo by Sue McEntee

**Bishop William Joensen, Father Trevor Chicoine and pilgrims at Lourdes, France before the evening procession/vigil.**

a sí misma como ostentación, una actitud de “presunción” que dice, “mírenme.” Tal actitud está falta de discreción y de modestia.

En contraste, y de una manera más positiva, en los Estados Unidos también existe una disposición de honrar a aquellos que sobresalen en cualquier tipo de vida, ya sea en lo académico, en deportes, en negocios o en esfuerzos caritativos que van más allá de las ganancias personales. En América no necesitamos ser tímidos sobre nuestros esfuerzos para lograr la excelencia o para ser generosos, o en recibir honores y compensaciones terrenales que reconocen nuestros esfuerzos.

Aun así, dado su gran tesoro de santos, nuestros amigos franceses tienen todos los recursos espirituales a la mano para promover un cambio cultural, y para inspirar a los americanos y a todos los católicos de ir más profundamente en fe y donación de nosotros mismos (como la “auto sumisión”) de lo que lo hemos hecho en este punto de nuestras vidas. Como lo dice Delsol, en contraste a límite de bienes materiales, “los bienes inmateriales

se desenvuelven cuando se comparten. ...Uno no debe sublevar sobre los bienes espirituales; no deben darse por hecho ni traerse al mismo nivel; éstos no se distribuyen desde el exterior, pero son internos en términos de acceso y de evaluación” (págs. 60-61).

Y esta es la paradoja francesa: en la sociedad contemporánea con una preferencia por el privilegio y beneficios que se ocultan discretamente de la vista del público, las vidas de muchos santos franceses que animaron a esta hija mayor de la iglesia a revelar su preferencia de estar oculta, de un sacrificio discreto que no está interesado en la ganancia personal por encima de sus conciudadanos.

Por el contrario, los santos franceses, sin importar su grado de reconocimiento por sus semejantes, “sufrieron” la indignidad de permitir que sus enfoques y sus incansables prácticas de caridad entre los pobres se hicieran públicas a pesar de sus preferencias personales. Los santos revelaron el sello distintivo de aquellos que pertenecen a los ciudadanos bautizados y registrados en el Reino de Dios.

Santa Catalina Labouré, por ejemplo, era una novicia de 24 años de las Hijas de la Caridad de San Vicente de Paul que tuvo apariciones privadas de la Santísima Virgen María. Ella le reveló a Catalina el diseño de la Medalla Milagrosa. Pero Catalina no se confió de su condición de “favorecida” sino que pasó los siguientes 40 años de su vida sirviendo a los ancianos y a los enfermos al extremo que es considerada la patrona de adultos mayores y de los enfermos.

La gloria de los santos es la esperanza y el ímpetu para que podamos seguir el camino que ellos han trazado, de adorar al altar único de Palabra y Sacramento, llevados a una compañía sagrada con el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús y el Inmaculado Corazón de María. Los santos franceses, así como lo hacen los santos, nos ayudan a ver nuestra vida completa, nuestra propia identidad, como peregrinos que están entablando un camino de esperanza en el que nuestro Señor y Salvador, Jesucristo, ha pagado para que tomemos parte en él.



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