CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS IN CHRIST: REFLECTIONS OF FAITH IN THE DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

The Catholic Mirror

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026
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Serva Fidem

INSIDE

Building a future: Local schools expand

Away to the mountain: Building a retreat culture

With so many elephants, who needs a zoo?

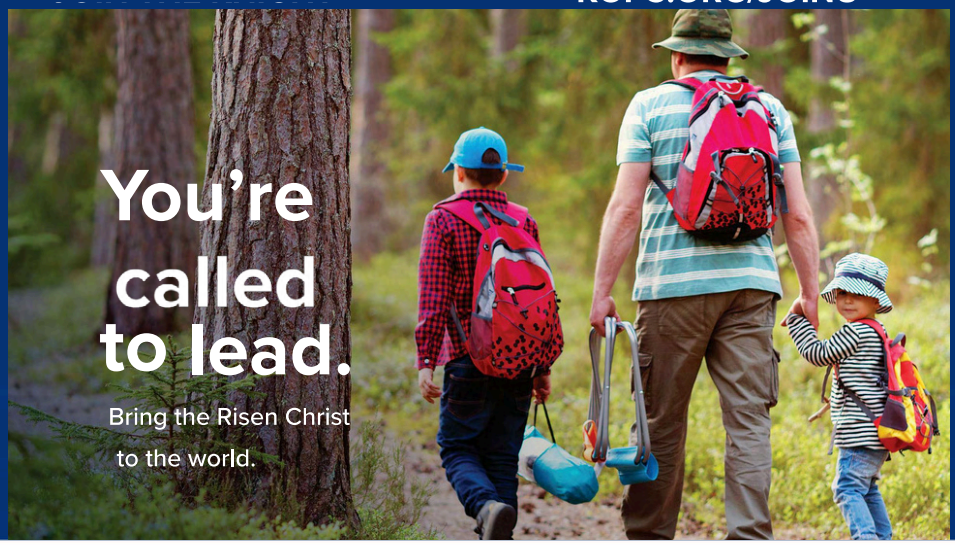
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Teen Faith Sharing Flourishes at St. Albert, Looks to Expand in Council Bluffs

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



ANNE MARIE COX
Editor

As we help our kids settle into their new school year routines, we remember our own excitement from years ago: getting a new backpack, seeing dear friends, and trying new adventures. Yet, researchers say kids today are grappling with issues like anxiety and depression that were not major concerns in our day.

Our parishes and young people are finding support and love through small faith-sharing groups. They're learning — through parish religious education programs or Catholic schools — that we are all children of God. And they're coming to understand that our God offers healing and peace. Our parish programs are empowering our youth to live as disciples of Jesus in a challenging world. In this issue of *The Catholic Mirror*, we highlight a few examples from construction projects at schools to honored educators and small faith-sharing groups.

To all of you who help us bring you these stories through your gift to *The Catholic Mirror*, thank you! If you haven't made a gift yet, I encourage you to consider doing so. It is only through your support of our annual appeal that we can bring you *The Catholic Mirror* magazine. Go to dmdiocese.org/giving and click on Special Collections. Thank you!

INSIDE



A group of teens are growing in their faith through a new initiative in the Council Bluffs area called Serva Fidem. Photo by Jake Shama

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PICTURED ON THE COVER: Lexie Pearce, Jenna Sneed, Gracie Gruis, Grace Christensen, and Alexa Lenz share and grow in their faith through Serva Fidem. Photo by Jake Shama

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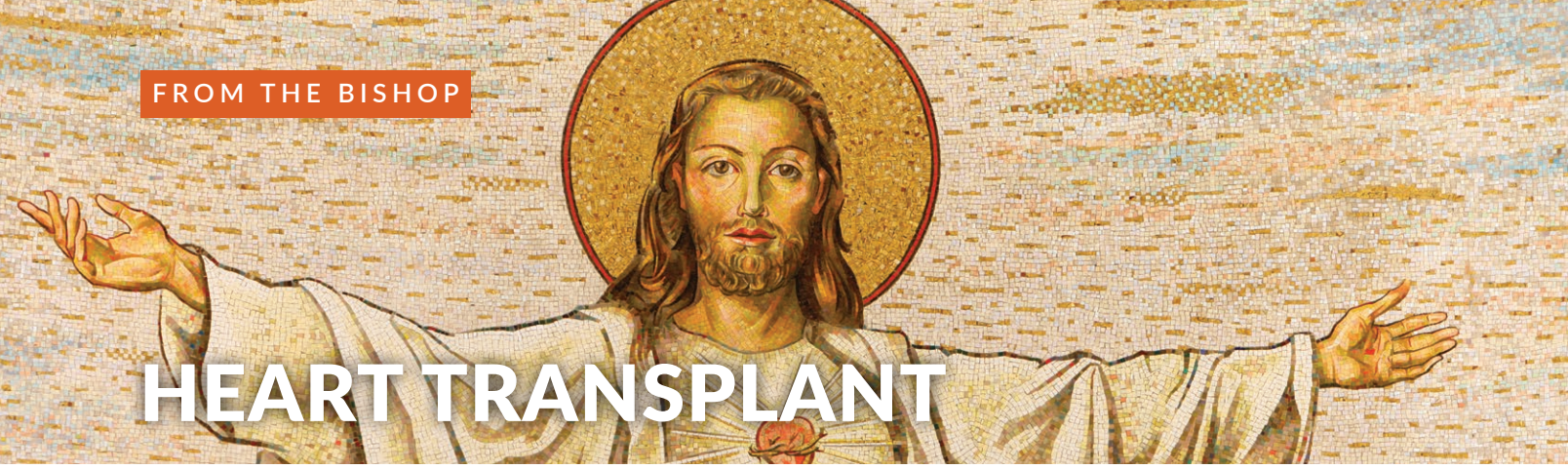
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HEART TRANSPLANT

In the year before he died, Pope Francis meditated on the Sacred Heart of Jesus to which our nation's bishops recently consecrated our entire country in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the founding of our country. Pope Francis observed, "Our best response to the love of Christ's heart is to love our brothers and sisters." He continued, "As we meditate on Christ's self-offering for the sake of all, we are naturally led to ask why we too should not be ready to give our lives for others." *(Dilexit nos nn. 167, 171)*

This prompting to give our lives for others arises in various seasons of life: for men considering the priesthood, it may be in their teens, 20s, or 30s; for men considering the call to become a deacon, it may be slightly later, after marriage and the initial raising of a family. Whatever the age, it is a call to fidelity and friendship, a journey of conversion and discipleship, and a grace-filled amplification of natural and supernatural gifts.

Before all else, and in a way that specifies the universal call to holiness for all persons that is initiated in baptism, the call to sacred orders is predicated upon the call to deep and intimate friendship with Jesus, the Son of the Heavenly Father. Having created us in his own image, the Father "goes the distance" of love in not withholding from us his Son made human for us. Jesus declares, "I and the Father are one." (Jn 10:30)

Jesus' love is so radical that in his heart he opens up space and grants us entry into the life of the Holy Trinity. The life of the Trinity is personal life, not some abstract ideal. This life draws its source from sacrificial love that withholds nothing from the other, including for persons who are not God. This utterly selfless love unites persons in the singular desire to be with, to remain with the other.



MOST REV. WILLIAM M. JOENSEN, PH.D
is the 10th bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines.

Trappist Father Simeon (Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis before taking monastic vows) comments, "God's only 'goal' is persons." Hence, to focus vocational discernment around the question, "Lord, what do you want from me?" is not the right question, for it prioritizes activity, effort, productivity, acquisition of skills, and proficiency ahead of personal transformation where, as with St. Paul, who declares, "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal 2:20) We, too, can say, "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Rom 14:8)

Reciprocally, as Jesus wants us for himself — not to constrict us, but to perfect us as humans — we desire Jesus not for what he gives us or does for us, but in himself. The blessed poverty of spirit that Jesus embodies correlates with the fact that there are things he did not do; per Leiva-Merikakis, Jesus does not:

- Traffic in material goods
- Propose a political-religious, let alone nationalist, program
- Offer tips for social fame and prosperity
- Teach a sublime philosophy of life, à la Confucius, Socrates, the Stoics
- Extol self-help techniques directed either at mental health or social harmony
- Usher in a utopian worldview.

A man who comprehends these truths desires personal union with Jesus that is eminently realized in his gift of the Eucharist. He seeks a life where his personal "I am" participates in Jesus' eternal "I am." Entering fully into the life of faith in Christ, he recognizes that he can never return to who he was without settling for a life of mediocrity. With St. Peter, he says, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (Jn 6:68)

In my experience as parish priest, seminary spiritual director, and now bishop, the call to the vocation of priesthood and the permanent diaconate is communicated in diverse ways: a personal voice heard in the depths of one's soul; an observation or question posed by a friend, family member, or parish priest; or the surging passion in one's heart that only by giving oneself to this life will one find oneself. As author and spiritual director Father Donald Haggerty of the Archdiocese of New York observes, "Only those who at some point in their lives make a passionate choice for God become true friends of God." (*Contemplative Enigmas*, p. 219)

But there are similar threads that converge in placing oneself before the Church's ministers to help discern and ratify the authenticity of one's call. The substantial offering of Jesus' own self issues in the call to follow him, to serve his Father as the Son's disciple, and to embrace his mission to communicate to others the Divine Life now possessed as a gift. It is the call to be Church, to allow the Spirit of Jesus to pervade the ecology of our lives and build up the community on pilgrimage to heaven.

Initiation into friendship with Jesus conveys trust in his mercy, his confidence in us. Men are freed to courageously announce

Continued on page 30

Getty Images/Pascal Deloche

TRASPLANTE DE CORAZÓN

Durante el año anterior a su muerte, el Papa Francisco meditaba sobre el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús ante el cual los obispos de nuestro país consagraron a toda nuestra nación por motivo del 250mo aniversario de la fundación de nuestro país. El Papa Francisco observó, "la mejor respuesta al amor de su Corazón es el amor a los hermanos." Continuó, "Si contemplamos la entrega de Cristo por todos, se nos vuelve inevitable preguntarnos por qué no somos capaces de dar la vida por los demás" (Dilexit nos números 167, 171).

Este llamado a dar nuestras vidas por los demás surge en varias etapas de nuestra vida: para los hombres que están considerando el sacerdocio, puede ser en la adolescencia, en sus 20s o 30s; para los hombres considerando el llamado a ser diáconos, puede ser un poco después, luego del matrimonio y de empezar a formar una familia. Sin importar la edad, es un llamado a la fidelidad y la amistad, una jornada de conversión y discipulado y de una ampliación llena de gracia de dones naturales y sobrenaturales.

Antes que nada, y en una forma que especifica el llamado universal a todas las personas a la santidad que inicia el Bautismo, el llamado a las órdenes sagradas se predica sobre el llamado a una amistad profunda e íntima con Jesús, el Hijo del Padre Celestial. Habiendo sido creados nosotros mismo a su imagen, el Padre "va más allá" del amor al privarnos de su Hijo hecho hombre por nosotros. Jesús proclama, "El Padre y yo somos uno" (Juan 10:30).

El amor de Jesús es tan radical que su corazón nos hace espacio y nos concede acceso a la vida de la Santísima Trinidad. La vida de la Trinidad es una vida personal, no una idea abstracta. Esta vida toma de su fuente de amor abnegado que no se reserva nada de la otra persona, incluyendo a las personas que no son Dios. Este amor absoluto y desinteresado une a las personas en el deseo singular de estar y permanecer con el otro.

El Sacerdote Trapista Simeón (Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis antes de tomar sus votos monásticos) comenta, "La única 'meta' de Dios es las personas." Por lo tanto, el enfocar el discernimiento vocacional alrededor de la pregunta, "Señor, ¿qué quieres de mí?" no es la pregunta correcta, ya que hace prioridad en la actividad, esfuerzo, productividad, adquisición de habilidades y capacidades por delante de una transformación personal en donde, como son San Pablo, quien declara, "Y no vivo yo, sino que es Cristo quien vive en mí" (Gál 2:20), nosotros podemos también decir, "Ya vivamos o muramos, del Señor somos" Rom (14:8).

En reciprocidad, así como Jesús nos quiere para sí mismo—no para contenernos sino para perfeccionarnos como humanos—nosotros deseamos a Jesús no por lo que nos da o hace por nosotros, pero por él mismo. La bienaventurada pobreza de espíritu que representa Jesús se correlaciona con el hecho de que hay cosas que no hizo; según Leiva-Merikakis, Jesús no:

- Traficó bienes materiales
- Propuso religiosidad política, mucho menos un programa nacionalista
- Ofreció sugerencias para fama y prosperidad
- Enseñó una filosofía de vida sublime, tipo Confucio, Sócrates, los Estoicos
- Exalto técnicas de auto ayuda dirigidas a la salud mental o armonía social
- Introdujo una visión utópica del mundo.

Un hombre que comprende estas verdades desea una unión personal con Jesús que se lleva a cabo inminentemente en su regalo de la Eucaristía. Él busca una vida donde su personal "soy" participa en el "soy" eterno de Jesús. Al entrar plenamente en la vida de fe en Cristo, él reconoce que nunca puede regresar a quien era antes sin tener que conformarse con una vida de mediocridad. Como dice San Pedro, "Señor, ¿a quién iremos? Tú tienes palabras de vida eterna" (Juan 6:68).

En mi experiencia como sacerdote parroquial, director espiritual de seminaristas y ahora como obispo, el llamado a la vocación sacerdotal y el diaconado permanente se comunica de varias formas: una voz personal que se escucha en las profundidades del alma; una observación o una pregunta que hace un amigo, un familiar o un sacerdote; o cuando surge la pasión en nuestro corazón de que podemos encontrarnos a nosotros mismos solamente entregándonos a su vida. Como lo menciona el autor y director espiritual de la Arquidiócesis de Nueva York, el Padre Donald Haggerty, "Solamente aquellos que en un punto de sus vidas tomaron la decisión apasionada por Dios se convierten en verdaderos amigos de Dios" (*Enigmas Contemplativos*, pág. 219).

Pero hay tendencias similares que convergen cuando uno se pone a sí mismo ante los ministerios de la Iglesia que ayudan

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EL RVDMO. WILLIAM M. JOENSEN, PHD
es el 10mo obispo de la Diócesis de Des Moines.

CTO INCREASES TUITION SUPPORT THANKS TO GENEROUS DONORS

Financially qualified students will receive more than $2.7 million in support from hundreds of donors

For the 2026-27 school year, the Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO) is directing donor contributions to assist nearly 1,900 students attending the 16 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines. To qualify, families must be below 400% of the latest federal poverty limit.

Charitable donors to CTO in 2025 qualified for a 75% state tax credit for the value of their donation. Donors may choose to designate 75% of their gift to one or more of the schools that means the most to them. **Visit CTOiowa.org/online-donation to make a gift or pledge today.** Gifts of stocks, mutual funds, grain and livestock are also accepted, but a call to the CTO Office to confirm arrangements is appreciated at (515) 237-5010.

School Name	Grades Offered	Parish-Supported Discount Tuition Rate	Total Student Recipients	Total Tuition Awards Funded	Average Award Per Student
Christ The King	TK-8	$6,350	115	$80,460	$700
Dowling Catholic	9-12	$11,630	495	$1,576,544	$3,185
Holy Family	K-8	$7,475	204	$174,600	$856
Holy Trinity	TK-8	$5,875	87	$55,050	$633
Sacred Heart	TK-8	$6,350	81	$53,345	$659
Saint Albert Catholic	K-5	$8,475	108	$92,820	$859
	6-8	$8,715	49	$43,740	$893
	9-10	$11,031	24	$69,410	$2,892
	11-12	$11,739	17	$54,215	$3,189
Shelby County	TK-5	$8,000	8	$6,880	$860
St. Anthony	K-8	$6,875	171	$131,615	$770
St. Augustin	TK-8	$5,600	26	$14,265	$549
St. Francis of Assisi	K-8	$6,125	44	$25,635	$583
St. Joseph	K-8	$6,200	112	$77,135	$689
St. Luke the Evangelist	K-8	$5,550	69	$37,280	$540
St. Malachy	K-8	$8,200	11	$8,550	$777
St. Patrick	K-8	$9,450	73	$95,215	$1,304
St. Pius X	TK-8	$6,225	133	$85,250	$641
St. Theresa	K-8	$6,225	56	$39,125	$699
Totals			**1,883**	**$2,721,134**	

CTO
Catholic Tuition Organization

OFFICIAL PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

BISHOP WILLIAM JOENSEN HAS MADE THE FOLLOWING APPOINTMENTS:



Deacon Patrick Snook, of St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs.

EFFECTIVE APRIL 13, 2026, TO AUG. 15, 2027:

DEACON ERIC BERTRAND, Holy Trinity, SE Warren County; Sacred Heart, Chariton.

DEACON THOMAS BRADLEY, Diocesan Special Assignment with liturgical assistance at All Saints, Des Moines.

DEACON DARRL BROOKS, St. Patrick, Neola.

DEACON MARK BURDT, St. Bernard, Osceola; St. Joseph, Mt. Ayr; St. Patrick, Grand River.

DEACON JUAN BUSTAMANTE, St. Anthony, Des Moines.

DEACON MARK CAMPBELL, Basilica of St. John, Des Moines.

DEACON FRANCIS CHAN, St. Ambrose Cathedral, Des Moines.

DEACON DANIEL DOMBROSKY, St. Francis of Assisi, West Des Moines.

DEACON MATTHEW HALBACH, St. Luke the Evangelist, Ankeny.

DEACON KURT HEINRICH, St. Augustin, Des Moines.

DEACON JAMES HOUSTON, St. Pius X, Urbandale.

DEACON THOMAS HUNKELE, St. Thomas Aquinas, Indianola.

DEACON MICHAEL HUNTSMAN, St. John the Apostle, Norwalk.

DEACON RANDY KIEL, Christ the King, Des Moines.

DEACON MICHAEL KNIPP, St. Augustin, Des Moines.

DEACON GREG KOLBINGER, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, Ankeny.

DEACON FRANK LOPEZ, St. Anthony, Des Moines.

DEACON RANDY LYNCH, St. Joseph, Des Moines.

DEACON DANNY MAXCY, St. Ambrose Cathedral, Des Moines.

DEACON STEVEN MCGEE, Ss. John & Paul, Altoona.

DEACON MONTY MONTAGNE, Corpus Christi, Council Bluffs.

DEACON JAMES OBRADOVICH, Holy Trinity and St. Ambrose Cathedral, Des Moines.

DEACON DENNIS PATRICK, St. Cecilia, Panora; St. Mary, Guthrie Center; St. Patrick, Bayard.

DEACON ERIC PUGH, St. John the Apostle, Norwalk.

DEACON DOUG RENZE, Holy Trinity, Des Moines.

DEACON TOM SCHENK, Assumption, Granger.

DEACON DAVID SCHMIDT, St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Des Moines;

DEACON DON SHANNON, St. Luke the Evangelist, Ankeny.

DEACON PATRICK SNOOK, St. Peter, Council Bluffs.

DEACON RAYMOND STARK, Christ the King, Des Moines; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Carlisle.

DEACON KELLY STONE, St. John the Apostle, Norwalk.

DEACON ORAN STRUECKER, St. Francis of Assisi, West Des Moines.

DEACON SAM SULLIVAN, All Saints, Des Moines.

EFFECTIVE AUG. 25, 2026 TO AUG. 15, 2027.



Deacons are ordained ministers of the Word, sacraments, and charity. Pictured above are Deacons Randy Kiel, Jim Houston, Francis Chan, Tom Bradley, Dennis Wright, and Luke Tieskoetter.

DEACON STEPHEN TATZ, Basilica of St. John, Des Moines.

DEACON TROY THOMPSON, St. Pius X, Urbandale.

DEACON QUAN TONG, Basilica of St. John, Des Moines.

DEACON PAUL TRAN, St. Peter Vietnamese Catholic Community, Des Moines.

DEACON STEVE UDELHOFEN, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish, Ankeny.

DEACON LOWELL VAN WYK, St. Patrick, Perry.

EFFECTIVE AUG. 15, 2026 TO AUG. 15, 2030:

DEACON DENNIS WRIGHT, St. Boniface, Waukee.

THE FOLLOWING DEACONS HAVE RETIRED.

DEACON JEFF BOEHLERT, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, Ankeny.

DEACON MICHAEL CARNEY, St. Patrick, Missouri Valley.

DEACON RICHARD CONDON, St. Catherine of Siena, Des Moines.

DEACON FRED CORNWELL, St. Luke the Evangelist, Ankeny.

DEACON KEVIN HEIM, St. Augustin, Des Moines.

DEACON DENNIS LOVELL, St. Anne, Logan; Holy Family, Mondamin.

DEACON TERRY SCHLEISMAN.

DEACON WILLIAM RICHER, St. Francis of Assisi, West Des Moines.

DEACON DAVE O'BRIEN, St. Thomas Aquinas, Indianola.

THE FOLLOWING RETIRED DEACONS WILL HAVE ASSIGNMENTS

EFFECTIVE AUG. 1, 2026 TO AUG. 15, 2027.

DEACON ED GARZA, Sacred Heart, West Des Moines.

DEACON ROBERT GLASER, Sacred Heart, West Des Moines.

DEACON LARRY KEHOE, Christ the King, Des Moines.

DEACON MICHAEL MANNO, St. Augustin, Des Moines.

DEACON ROBERT MCCLELLAN, Corpus Christi, Council Bluffs.

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From Knowledge to Encounter: The Heart of Catechetical Sunday

BY JOHN GAFFNEY

Catechetical Sunday will be celebrated in our parish communities on Sept. 20. The 2026 theme, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18), invites us to reflect on how faith formation is never simply about learning information. It is about learning to see and love as Jesus does.



The Catechetical Sunday image of St. Francis of Assisi embracing a leper captures this truth beautifully. St. Francis was transformed when he moved beyond fear and encountered Christ in a person whom society rejected. Pope Leo XIV recalls that "in the person of a leper, Christ himself embraced Francis and changed his life." (*Dilexit Te*, n. 6) What changed St. Francis was not an abstract lesson but a living encounter with the Lord present in someone who was poor, suffering, and overlooked.

This insight flows directly from Pope Francis' encyclical *Dilexit Nos*. There he reminds us that Christ's heart draws us out of superficiality and into authentic relationships rooted in love. He teaches that Jesus showed God's compassion through concrete actions, closeness, and tenderness toward those in need. Faith formation, therefore, must help people of every age encounter the loving heart of Christ and allow that encounter to shape how they live.

Pope Leo XIV develops this theme in *Dilexi Te*, emphasizing that "love for the Lord is one with love for the poor" (*Dilexit Te*, n. 5) and that contact with those who are vulnerable is a privileged way of encountering Christ himself. The Church's mission is not only to teach the faith but also to form disciples who recognize Jesus in the poor, the forgotten, the lonely, and the searching.

That is why Catechetical Sunday matters. It celebrates and commissions those who hand on the faith, while reminding the entire parish that catechesis is a lifelong calling. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops describes Catechetical Sunday as an opportunity for all the faithful to recommit themselves to witnessing the Gospel and passing on the faith received in baptism.

Like St. Francis, lifelong faith formation helps children, youth, and adults move from knowledge to encounter, from encounter to conversion, and from conversion to mission. When that happens, the Church truly brings the Good News to the poor and reveals the compassionate heart of Christ to the world.



JOHN GAFFNEY
Diocesan director of the Evangelization and Mission Team.



Getty Images/ dmitriymoroz





AWAY TO THE MOUNTAIN: Building a Retreat Culture



BY BENJAMIN SHANE EVANS

The Diocese of Des Moines' culture thrives on retreats, with several opportunities for youth to participate through the year.

Dowling Catholic High School Retreats

The goal of retreats is to "step away from all the distraction, noise, busyness of life, and have a very concentrated, intense experience to open yourself up to an experience of God," according to Dowling Catholic High School Director of Campus Ministry Stephanie Parks and Retreats and Liturgy Coordinator Christy Sheaff.

"The same way Jesus in the Gospels would go away to the mountain," Parks said. "In the midst of serving, he would go away to talk to the Father. That's what we're trying to give people an opportunity to have. It's amazing how much you can hear God when you are not listening to your parents' voice and your radio's voice and your phone's voice and your friends' voices, and all of these things."

The following are types of retreats offered at the high school:

- **"Get Your Head in the Game" — Freshmen**
  This daylong retreat is meant to help students "integrate their relationship with Jesus into every aspect of their high school lives." It is offered in the fall for freshmen.
- **Metanoia ("Change of Heart") — Freshmen**
  A two-day retreat for freshmen held at the St. Thomas More Center that focuses on avoiding distractions by allowing students to listen to speakers and participate in discussions and prayer. According to Dowling's website, "the experience is intended to give students a chance to get away from the hectic pace of life, reflect on their faith, get to know many new classmates, and grow in faith and friendship."
- **Quest — Sophomores**
  This 24-hour retreat takes place at the St. Thomas More Center and encourages students to invite Christ to form their identity. Students contemplate Jesus's question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mt 16)
- ***Kairos* (The Lord's Time) — Juniors**
  This four-day retreat held at the Creighton Retreat Center near Griswold, has a 25-year long tradition of leading students to explore their roles as Christian leaders as they prepare for graduation. According to Sheaff and Parks, students have identified this as an impactful and defining moment of their faith.

Diocesan Retreats

The Diocese of Des Moines primarily offers two retreats for youths and students.

- **Senior Retreat — High School Seniors throughout the Diocese**
  This three-day retreat has been designed for seniors across the Diocese to prepare for their adult faith lives.
- **Confirmation Retreats – Confirmation Candidates**
  The purpose of this retreat is to provide confirmation candidates with the time and space to reflect on God's call for them. It includes a "Journey to Emmaus" reflection, which centers on Jesus's journey to Emmaus and offers an opportunity for candidates to deepen their connection with the Sacred Heart of Christ.

Getty Images/Darja Kuznetsova



Father Max Carson facilitates faith discussions at Catholic Youth Camp.



St. Thomas More Center Retreat Coordinator Gigi Wilwerding emphasizes to youth that they are important to God.

St. Thomas More Center Retreats

St. Thomas More Center offers several retreats.

Retreat Coordinator Gigi Wilwerding said that her message to youths who participate in the center's retreats is simple: "I'm so happy you exist."

"I want them to know that they matter to God," she said. "That Jesus made them, and they have a purpose, even if they don't know what it is, that they are important and they matter in this world. That they have a home here, and that they can take that love of Christ with them wherever they go in their next journeys. We fulfill that in the mission of forming joyful missionary disciples of Christ."

- **My Jesus — Eighth Graders**
  Designed specifically for eighth graders with alternating periods of activity and reflection appropriate to their developmental stage, this opportunity helps students learn how to make a retreat.
- **Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) — High School Youth**
  TEC provides an intensive encounter with Christ and serves students from across the Diocese. Former participants often become leaders in other ministries.
- **Catholic Youth Camp (known as CYC) — Elementary, Middle, and High School Youth**
  Although discussed primarily as a camp experience rather than a formal retreat, it is repeatedly described as a profound encounter with Christ through prayer, adoration, confession, community, and beauty.

St. Albert Catholic School Retreats

Katie Hopping's retreat experiences helped form who she was as she grew into a deeper connection with Christ. Now St. Albert Catholic School Head of Campus Ministry, she said in one experience, while at CYC, the group of students were worshipping at chapel and were looking at the stars, with each camper trying to find "their star."

One of the camp counselors quoted a passage from St. Augustine, which said that "their beauty is their confession."

"It pierced me to my core," Hopping said. "She started to explain how just like this beautiful star, that we were all beautiful."

After contemplating, she realized that "beauty wasn't just beauty itself, but it was a person."

"The freedom and joy experienced at camp wasn't just freedom and joy itself, but it was also a person," Hopping said. "It all came down to this dynamic I had with [Christ], and I think he just drew me in as a little girl. I didn't know what all those words meant at the time, but I knew there was something very true and good and beautiful about being here. That you are far more beautiful and far more loved than a star by God, and I think that that captivation of beauty and wonder lit a deep, deep fire in me that just will never go away."

We're pierced by that kind of love, "we can't help but want to share it," she said.

For Hopping, retreat is one of the ways to share that love.

- ***Sancto Subito* ("Sainthood Now") — Grades 6-8**
  Separate boys' and girls' retreats teaching that holiness is a present calling, not merely a future goal. Student leaders share witness talks, encouraging younger students to recognize that they are called to sanctity today.
- **"Do You Even Like Jesus?" — Freshmen and Sophomores**
  A retreat that intentionally reframes the relationship with Christ by emphasizing not only that Jesus loves students but that he delights in them personally. The retreat presents discipleship as joyful and adventurous rather than burdensome.
- ***Core ad Cor* ("Heart Speaks to Heart") — Seniors**
  A senior retreat focused on preparing students for life after graduation by teaching prayer, helping them receive Christ's ongoing relationship, and encouraging perseverance in the faith beyond high school.



Serva Fidem

Teen Faith Sharing Flourishes at St. Albert, Looks to Expand in Council Bluffs

BY ANN PIERSON

Serva Fidem continues to blossom in Council Bluffs.

The small faith-sharing group, which originally began at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines in 2017, recently concluded its first year at St. Albert School in Council Bluffs.



After members of the St. Albert community expressed interest in *Serva Fidem*, the vision came to life through the work of campus minister Katie Hopping and school chaplain Father Max Carson.

The program began with Hopping mentoring a group of girls and Father Carson mentoring a group of boys. With Hopping being a native from the area and Father Carson serving as pastor in the community for several years, both discerned and reached out to potential mentors, walked them through training, and introduced those mentors to their students.



With constant prayer and trust, the program grew "organically." At the end of the last school year, 70 high school students were part of the extracurricular program.

The fruits of *Serva Fidem* are already being felt around St. Albert. Father Jacob Epstein, president of St. Albert, noted how the club's presence is having a positive impact on the school's culture.

"In becoming president [this past spring], one of the things I was most excited for was what was happening with *Serva Fidem*," Father Epstein said.

The students in *Serva Fidem* extended the invitation to their own peers. Some even approached Hopping about speaking to the student body through an assembly, their initiative showing the impact *Serva Fidem* has had on their lives.



"It was beautiful to see the students own it," Hopping said.

Campus leaders are excited about *Serva Fidem's* ability to create meaningful leaders for their school and beyond.

"It's helping [students] speak more openly about their love for God, and it's created interest among the student body," Father Carson said.

Getty Images/ajuga

St. Albert and Beyond

With *Serva Fidem* growing within St. Albert, the leaders in Council Bluffs are working on creating a parish model for those who do not attend the Catholic high school.

"One of the things we are excited for is to make this available to those who are at a public school or homeschooled," Father Epstein said.

Several parishes in Council Bluffs, including St. Peter, St. Patrick, and Corpus Christi, are working to create groups and recruit leaders. The desire is there in the parishes, says Father Carson, because *Serva Fidem* encourages students to be active members of their parish.

The desire is there from the high school students, especially those who are looking to build off of what they experienced on a retreat, Hopping said.

The first *Serva Fidem* parish group planned to begin their weekly meetings towards the end of July. Going forward, Hopping and Father Carson are continuing to recruit potential mentors. They also look to navigate the practical challenges of recruiting students from multiple schools, including those that have different schedules.

The work they are striving to do can be summed up, Hopping says, through a quote by St. John Paul II: "Open wide the doors for Christ."

"[That quote] is our invitation to the students and prospective mentors," she said.

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Youth from several Des Moines Diocese parishes attended the Steubenville Youth Conference in Springfield, Missouri on July 18-19. Photo shared by Jason Feeney

The Teen Faith Conference Inspires Youth and Adults

BY JASON FEENEY

When I became youth minister at Christ the King eight years ago, during my very first week on the job, I attended that year's teen faith conference in Steubenville, Ohio, with three teenagers and one other chaperone.

The conference combines the traditional high energy atmosphere of youth conferences with a more prayerful atmosphere of a traditional retreat that reminded me of the Youth 2000 retreats I attended in middle and high school.

Steubenville — through its various talks given by amazing Catholic speakers like Mari Pablo, Kyle Huelsing, and Father Brian Fallon (and many more across 19 different locations all over the country), small group discussion times, powerful adoration and confession services, and fellowship-building fun activities — explores what it means to be truly worthy, not by some external metric, but what it means to be worthy in the eyes of God as his beloved son or daughter.

Whether they know it or not, young people seek this, and the numbers of attendance this year from our Diocese (and even from my own parish) show it. Last year, Christ the King took just 10 teens and five adults. The year before, Christ the King and St. Luke Catholic Church in Ankeny partnered and brought 15 teens. This year, Christ the King, St. Patrick Parish in Perry, and Sacred Heart Parish brought 52 kids (from rising ninth grade students to graduated seniors on their way to college) and chaperones (and one priest — thank you, Father Nick Smith).

First timers St. Patrick and Sacred Heart brought six and 10 teenagers, respectively. Christ the King brought 26 to the conference. More than half of them were going for the first time to something like this. In our group, 17 of the participants were high school boys, a tough demographic to get interested in an event like this. Of those 17 only five had attended a conference like this. A dozen came through the invitation of their friends or siblings.

We filled an entire charter bus with kids seeking to get to know their worth through Christ in an amazing life-changing way.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Steubenville conferences. Each year we take a few more kids than the year before. And each year, the conference continues to outdo itself in creating a sense of the universal Church, and in engaging teens to grow closer to Jesus. This year, the conference began with a very special message. The conference teens were greeted by a message from Pope Leo XIV!

He spoke to them about how their sense of worth comes directly from how much God loves them. He told them how important it was for them to be there and how God had planned for their attendance from the very beginning. He had a very important message to teach them this weekend.

The keynote presentations focused on how our worth can be torn down by the world, our own self-perception, and our own sinful nature, and how none of that matters in the light of God's overwhelming, never ending love for each of us. One of the speakers emphasized the point that, "There is nothing you can do to stop God from loving you."

Throughout the weekend the teens were surrounded by the Church. At least 1,000 young people from around the Midwest

Getty Images/



Youth from Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines attended a faith conference that explored what it means to be worthy in the eyes of God.

> **"We filled an entire charter bus with kids seeking to get to know their worth through Christ in an amazing, life-changing way."**

attended the conference. They also were surrounded by the presence of many vocations throughout the weekend. Over 50 priests and about a dozen religious sisters attended the conference. The students had the opportunity to converse with many of them about their vocations, have their confessions heard, and just share lives with these amazing examples of how to love and be loved by Jesus.

I believe the atmosphere, the retreat experience, and the presence of many priests and religious combined with deep talks and discussions helped our young people see that they are part of a Church larger than their home parish.

The Steubenville conferences have made a difference in the lives of teens in our country and will hopefully continue to do so for many more to come.

JASON FEENEY
is the coordinator of Catechesis and Evangelization at Christ the King Parish in Des Moines.

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Building a Future: Local Schools Expand



BY ANN PIERSON

If you visit West Des Moines or Ankeny, you are bound to see school construction.

This past summer, Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School in West Des Moines, and St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic School in Ankeny began construction thanks to the generosity of supporters through capital campaigns.

Each project aims to enhance the rich traditions already present in each of the schools for years to come.

DOWLING CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

This summer, Dowling broke ground on a major expansion thanks to the generous contributions made to its Honoring Our Faith in Our Future campaign.

The $76 million project features a dedicated main entrance, a student union, additional athletic facilities, including a varsity arena that doubles as a storm shelter, and 100 additional parking spaces. Additionally, several administrative offices and campus ministry will be relocated to the new main entrance of the school.

The renovations are meant to increase security at the school. They are also intended to give students additional space to meet and grow in fellowship, just as many former Maroons did before them.

"The most important part of this renovation is storytelling," Dr. Dan Ryan, president of Dowling, said. "So many people who have left this institution have done great things. I want every student to realize they can do the same."

Renovations are expected to be completed by summer 2028. To date, more than $53.7 million has been raised for the project.

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST

St. Luke began renovations in their school in June. The $7 million project marks the third phase of their growth following construction of the initial parish spaces and classrooms.

The new changes bring necessary updates, including replacing portable classrooms. Eight permanent classrooms will keep the students inside the main school for all classes.

The school will also have a dedicated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) classroom, art classroom, a cafeteria that doubles as a storm shelter, and an expanded library. Office space for pastoral staff and school administrators will be expanded for additional availability to meet with students.

Father Ken Halbur, pastor of St. Luke Parish, looks forward to the project giving both staff and students more space to continue their spiritually enriching work.

"We have a pretty strong faith [program] here," he said. "[The renovations] give the space to continue it."

The project will be completed by March 2027. To date, $5.3 million has been raised.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

In August, St. Francis of Assisi broke ground thanks to their Rebuild My Church campaign. The $15 million project addresses multiple parish needs.

First, they are building a dedicated preschool that will double as a storm shelter for the entire student body. Not only will this increase safety, but it also places preschoolers closer to the other children, said Father Joseph Pins, pastor of St. Francis.

A chapel is being built for adoration and smaller liturgies. The chapel will give parishioners — from middle school students attending weekly adoration to adults in the workplace — an opportunity to encounter the Lord.

Additionally, the parish kitchen, classrooms, and nursery will undergo renovations to better accommodate visitors and small groups.

Father Pins appreciates the community's support for these impactful changes.

"I state my gratitude for all … who have donated or given time or have prayed for this," he said. "This will be an exciting part of our parish for generations to come."

The project will be finished by December 2027. To date, $14.5 million has been raised.

Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools Honors More Than 150 Years of Faith-Centered Learning

BY JAKE SHAMA

The Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Des Moines was one for the history books.



Administrator of the Year is Susan Battani, center, of Christ the King Catholic School in Des Moines.



Teacher of the Year is Lana Duff, of St. Theresa Catholic School in Des Moines.



Volunteer of the Year is nurse Susan O'Brien, of St. Pius X Catholic School in Urbandale.

Krause Hall was filled to the brim with about 240 supporters and volunteers, a true testament to the vibrant community behind our Catholic schools. We're grateful we had the opportunity to honor the Catholic Tuition Organization and celebrate our administrator, teacher, and volunteer of the year.

Keynote Address

As Bishop William Joensen introduced keynote speaker Father Ross Caniglia, a St. Albert Catholic School alumnus, water from a broken water main outside began coming in the back door. Several priests in attendance immediately sprinted to the basement to rescue vital documents and historical artifacts. One group of attendees hurried to lift and secure the bottom of our historic papal quilt to keep it safe and dry. While we're disappointed the water main break interrupted our celebration, we are tremendously blessed that it happened when there were people in the building who noticed the problem and worked together to minimize damage as much as possible. Thank you for helping preserve our shared history.

The Catholic Pastoral Center was closed on Monday, but the upper floors reopened on Tuesday. A team of diocesan leaders and preservation experts have mapped out a plan to preserve papers and materials affected by the flooding.

The Impact of Your Support

Despite the abrupt evacuation, the evening generated approximately $23,000. Combined with funds from past events, these proceeds will help us launch vital new programs for diverse learners in our classrooms.

We honored Teacher of the Year Lana Duff, of St. Theresa Catholic School in Des Moines, Administrator of the Year Susan Battani, of Christ the King Catholic School in Des Moines, and Volunteer of the Year nurse Sue O'Brien, of St. Pius X Catholic School in Urbandale. We invited Father Caniglia back to deliver his keynote at next year's event on Aug. 28, 2027.

With a full house, an incredible cause, and a grand finale none of us will ever forget, Saturday proved that even a sudden flood cannot dampen the spirit of our community. Thank you for your presence, your quick cooperation during the evacuation, and your unwavering support of our students and schools.

CLERGY APPEAL



The current community of men and their wives (cohort 17) in diaconate formation.

Support needed for seminarians, deacon candidates

BY ANNE MARIE COX

Our diocesan faith family is blessed with 48 men who are considering whether God is calling them to serve people through ordained ministry.

This fall, the Diocese of Des Moines has:

- 13 young men studying for and discerning a vocation to the priesthood.
- 18 men and their wives in their third year of a five-year diaconate formation program. God willing, they will be ordained deacons in summer of 2028.
- 17 men and their wives beginning the deacon formation process. This is the first time the Des Moines Diocese will have two groups in formation at the same time.

"The generous heart of Jesus is reflected in the generous response of these candidates for ordination," said Bishop William Joensen.

With this blessing comes a tremendous responsibility to provide the resources, education, guidance, and prayer to all of these men who have come forward to discern whether God is calling them to serve the people of the Des Moines Diocese through ordained ministry.

The annual average cost to form one seminarian is $59,500. The annual cost to support one deacon candidate is $7,600. While some expenses will be covered by the Annual Diocesan Appeal and some will be covered by interest from an endowment, there is pressure on the budget.

We need your help.

First, pray for the seminarians and the deacon candidates. One of them could be your pastor someday. One of them may be with you at a hospital bedside, at your child's or grandchild's baptism, or provide opportunities for you to grow in your faith.

Second, consider making a generous gift to the Clergy Formation Appeal (formerly known as the annual Seminarian Appeal). These vocational seeds to the priesthood and the diaconate will take root and bear fruit so that our local churches might flourish. Join Bishop Joensen in providing prayerful and financial support for our future clergy.





Listening to the Father: 13 diocesan men discern a call to the priesthood

Seminarians Connor Lynch, Kyle Rowan, and Shawn Daley.

BY ANNE MARIE COX

Thirteen young men are discerning whether God is calling them to become priests in the Diocese of Des Moines.

Among them are Abe Manley, Noah Summers, and Peter Ickes, all new to the program.

A seminarian's vocation call is as unique as he is.

"I first felt called to the priesthood during a mission trip to Colorado," said seminarian Connor Lynch. He thought about it and prayed about it. Two years later, while on another mission trip, he felt God sent him a sign that showed he should consider religious life. His decision changed his life.

"I felt more patience, more understanding, and more love than I had before," he said.

Newly ordained Deacon Luke Mohan was considering changing majors as a sophomore in college when the priesthood became an option.

"At first, I hoped this 'consideration' would lead to crossing the priesthood off the list of possible life paths," he said. "This did not happen, and the more I prayed and considered what might be God's will for me, the more interior peace I felt about being a priest (despite a bit of exterior anxiety)."

Matthew Johll worked in the engineering industry for a few years and was involved in young adult and parish ministry when he felt a restlessness grow in his heart.

"Gradually, I began to discuss the idea of priesthood more seriously with close friends and with my spiritual direction," he said. "As conversations progressed and I took these thoughts to prayer, I realized how great my attraction to the life of priesthood had become and so I contacted Father Ross [Parker] to begin the application process."

As a college student, Kyle Rowan worked at Catholic Youth Camp with several seminarians one summer.

"Experiences throughout the summer helped to light a new fire in my heart for discernment," he said. When he returned to Benedictine College, he joined a men's discernment group and contacted the former Vocations director, Father Parker.

Though Shawn Daley thought about the priesthood at various times in his life, he didn't seriously consider a vocation to religious life until after he'd earned a master's degree in music performance.

"The pursuit of beauty and the intellectual life throughout these times I believe ultimately led me back to seeking God in the priesthood," he said.

A gift to the Clergy Formation Appeal takes the burden of worrying about tuition off the plate for seminarians so they can more fully engage in their studies and formation. Make a gift by going to dmdiocese.org/giving and click on Special Collections, then Clergy Formation Appeal.

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS CONSIDERING THE PRIESTHOOD,
have him reach out to Vocations Director Father Nick Smith at 515-237-5070 or vocations@dmdiocese.org.

Sparkle Illustrations: Getty Images/Nadlinko

Called to the Diaconate: Kevin Campbell Finds Passion in Service to the Church

BY ANNE MARIE COX

Kevin Campbell was raised Catholic, loved being an altar server, and raised his kids in the faith.



Kevin & Kathy Campbell at the Vatican in 2022.

But over time, the passion he had for his faith faded, and he became a lukewarm Catholic. Until, that is, he was asked to be a catechist for 11th grade youth at his home parish of St. Michael in Harlan.

That one invitation initiated a change in the trajectory of his faith. Today, he says he's on fire for his faith; and he is studying, praying, and discerning becoming a deacon.

Initially, Campbell didn't see the path.

"I thought, 'I have no business teaching 11th graders.' For some reason I raised my hand and said, 'Yes, I would.' That's when my faith really took off, wanting to be prepared for those kids to learn the faith. I felt responsible. I didn't want to screw this up."

After nine years, he took a break from teaching youth.

"It was during that time I was reflecting on those nine years and realizing that in giving yourself away, you receive so much back."

He began to feel called to the diaconate, which was unsettling in a way.

He suggested to his wife, Kathy, that he was considering the diaconate, and she said, "No way! You're too naughty to be a deacon."

"Honestly, when I found out what was required of me, I didn't feel ready at all. That was about eight years ago," she said.

But that discussion was the beginning of a change for her, too.

Though she converted to Catholicism in 2001, sKathy really didn't start growing in her faith until 2020 during the pandemic. She had been going to the catechism classes Kevin taught and learned along with the 11th-graders. But during the pandemic, she began reading Scripture with Kevin and praying with him.

"Three years later, he brought the idea to me again. We were growing together in our faith journey and felt much more ready to entertain the idea," she said.

—"I wanted to have male companionship in the faith and really be able to explore that. It dawned on me about a year later that those prayers were answered," he said.

A family with a husband who is passionate for the faith moved into the parish. They became friends with the Campbells working as catechists and starting the Welcome Retreat at their parish.

Five years after he ceased being a catechist, Campbell became a part of a group of 18 other men discerning the diaconate.

The wives of the men in formation are encouraged to go through the formation process with their husbands. They bring their gifts and talents to the community.

"They bring a lot of wisdom, a lot of support and understanding," Kevin said.

"There have been a lot of ups and downs as we've faced a lot of challenges balancing everything out," Kathy added. "But we've grown through those challenges because we've worked together through them. It's not easy, but we pray through it, we talk through it, we get mentorship and guidance through it. The whole formation experience has been very beautiful."

Deacons are called to proclaim and teach the Gospel, assist at Mass,, and celebrate sacraments, and be a minister of charity. Campbell is exploring the ministry of charity through his service as a chaplain for the Shelby County Sheriff's Department.

Sheriff's deputies "see people on their worst days, [suffering the consequences of] poor life decisions, health issues, accidents, and death," he said. "Sometimes, they're a little reluctant to get external help in the form of therapy or counseling. I'm a set of ears for them to talk to. I'm not a counselor or therapist. I've told them I'm not here to proselytize or convert you. I'm just here to serve you. If you want to talk, what you say here stays here.

"It has really opened my eyes to the diaconal call modeling Christ the servant."

Called to the diaconate: Jose Santos Wants To Be a Doctor of Souls

BY ANNE MARIE COX



As a child growing up in Mexico, Jose Santos used to dream of becoming a doctor.

Today, the self-employed man is studying to be a deacon. Reflecting on his path, he never dreamed that God might be calling him to be a doctor of souls.

And yet, as a doctor listens to patients using a good bedside manner, Jose goes out of his way to spend time with the elderly, the homebound, and those in care facilities by providing his presence to heal the effects of loneliness and bring them the Eucharist.

"I want to work for the vulnerable and guys who are lost like I was," he said.

Jose lost his way a few times as his path moved back and forth from Mexico City to the United States.

He grew up Catholic and was taken to church by his parents. At age 13, Jose traveled to Mexico City with his cousin to work with him.

There, he dabbled with drugs.

After two years, he moved back home and went to high school. He didn't get into college, dashing his dream of a career in medicine.

He came to the United States at age 22 and "got lost again" with drugs and alcohol. He went to work in Virginia. In 2009, his mother died. He experienced a dark time.

Jose's lifestyle, his grief, and loneliness left him crying at night.

"God, take me out of this," he prayed. While sitting in the back pew of a church, begging for help, God answered. Her name was Viviana.

"God is perfect," Jose said.

They married at Christ the King Church in Des Moines, where they've raised their daughter.

"That's where everything started working. At first, I just wanted to sit in the pew and didn't want to help," he said. But he kept being invited to help as a member of the choir, as a lector, a minister of the Eucharist.

> **"When God calls you, you just need to open your heart and give him a chance to transform your life." Viviana Santos."**

"I was all over the place," he smiled.

Jose and Viviana took part in a two-year Hispanic Lay Ministry formation program through the Diocese. Then he asked Viviana if she would support him if he applied to the diaconate formation program.

She was surprised and initially said, "No." Then, she thought back to when her brother told the family he wanted to be a priest and her mother said she would not stand in the way. Viviana, too, told Jose that she didn't want to stand in the way if he was truly called by God.

"When God calls you, you just need to open your heart and give him a chance to transform your life," she said. "Whether it's for marriage, diaconate, or priesthood, I think we all have something to give for the community, for God, and for the Church."

Jose works in his construction business, spends evenings studying to be a deacon, and every Tuesday drives to Perry to assist Father Nick Smith by visiting the homebound, the sick, and those in care facilities.

The formation process has changed Jose. He has improved his English, grown spiritually, and has become a better listener.

"It's not easy but every minute is worth it. It's not just for the Church but for myself. Personally, I have grown a lot. I'm a little more patient, I try to listen more, I try to help more. I try to be nice to everyone. I'm trying to do better."

Sparkle Illustrations: Getty Images/Nadlinko

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Spirituality AND STEADINESS

BY FATHER RON ROLHEISER



Something in us is dissatisfied with the ordinary. There's something in the ordinary that can have us think that predictable routines, domestic rhythms, and commitment to duty can weigh us down, swallow us up, and anchor us outside the more rewarding waters of passion, romance, creativity, dance, and celebration.

We often vilify the ordinary. I remember a young woman, a student of mine, who shared in class that her greatest fear in life was to succumb to the ordinary, "to end up content, a little housewife and mother, happily doing laundry commercials!"

If you're an artist or have an artistic temperament, you're prone to this kind of feeling. That's one of the propensities of an artist. Doris Lessing, for example, once made the comment that George Eliot could have been a better writer "if she hadn't been so moral." What Lessing is suggesting is that Eliot kept herself too anchored in the ordinary, too safe, too secure, too far from the edges.

Kathleen Norris, in her biographical work *The Virgin of Bennington*, shares how as a young writer she fell victim to this kind of ideology: "Artists, I believed, were much too serious to live sane and normal lives. Driven by inexorable forces in an uncaring world, they were destined for an inevitable, sometimes deadly, but always ennobling wrestle with gloom and doom."

An ennobling wrestle with gloom and doom! That does have a seductive sound to it, particularly for those of us who fancy ourselves as artistic, intellectual, or spiritual. That's why on a given day any of us can feel a certain condescending pity for those who achieve simple happiness. Easy for them, we think, but they're selling themselves short! That's the artist inside of us speaking. You've never seen an artist doing a laundry commercial!

Don't get me wrong. Not all of this is bad. Jesus, himself, said that we do not live by bread alone. No artist needs that explained. He or she knows that safe routine, drab duty, and a mortgage that's been paid, alone do not necessarily make for heaven. We need bread, but we also need beauty, color, and celebration.

Doris Lessing, who was a great artist, joined the communist party as a young woman but later left it after she'd matured. Why did she leave? One phrase says it all. She left the communist party, she says, "because they didn't believe in color!"

Life, Jesus assures us, is not meant to be lived in black and white, that is, as simply an endless cycle of rising, showering, going off to work, responsibly doing a job, coming home, having supper, getting things set for the next day, and then going back to bed.

And yet, there is much to be said for that seemingly dram routine. The rhythm of the ordinary is, in the end, the deepest wellspring from which to draw joy and meaning. Kathleen Norris, after telling us about her youthful temptation to side-step the ordinary to engage in the more ennobling battle with gloom and doom, shares how a wonderful mentor, Betty Kray, helped steer her clear of that pitfall. Kray encouraged her to write out of her joy as well as her gloom and to "dismiss the romance of insanity as a sham." As Norris puts it: "She tried hard to convince me of what her friends who had been institutionalized for madness knew all too well: that the clean simple appreciation of ordinary, daily things is a treasure like none on earth."

Sometimes a different mentor teaches us this. When we regain our health and energy after having been ill, off work, and out of our normal routines and rhythms, nothing is as sweet as returning to the ordinary — our work, our routine, the normal stuff of everyday life. Only after it has been taken away and then given back, do we realize that the clean, simple appreciation of daily things is the ultimate treasure.

Artists, though, are still partially right. The ordinary can weigh us down and keep us outside the deeper waters of creativity, of romance, of color, and of the wildness that lets us dance. But, that being admitted, anchors and weight also have a positive function. They keep us from being swept away. They anchor our sanity. They keep us steady. The rhythm of the ordinary is perhaps the most powerful anchor of all to hold us in sanity.

Paul Simon, in a 1970s song entitled, "An American Tune," sings about coping with confusion, mistakes, betrayal, and other events that shatter our innocence. And he ends that rather sad ballad quite peacefully with the words: "Still tomorrow's gonna be another working day, and I'm trying to get some rest. That's all I'm trying, is to get some rest."

Obedience to that imperative helps anchor our sanity. There's much to be said about being a contented, ordinary person, anchored in the rhythms of the ordinary, trying at the end of the workday to get some rest.



OBLATE FATHER RON ROLHEISER is a Professor of Spirituality at Oblate School of Theology and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com. Follow on Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser

Getty Images/ mifilippo

Let's Get Psyched: With So Many Elephants, Who Needs A Zoo?

A Reflection on the Luminous Mysteries

BY DEACON RANDY KIEL



Getty Images/Stanislaw Pytel

> "Could we please address the elephant in the room?"

This common idiom is used to bring a type of levity to the attention of others in the hope of talking about a difficult and obvious matter. Whether within the home, the workplace, or a community of people, there are likely elephants. We dread them. At times, we find it more comfortable to pretend the elephant is invisible than to bring it up for discussion. So, we walk around it. We make ourselves believe the elephant is in total darkness and nobody can see it. This is a form of psychological defense.

This behavior is not about pretending; it is about sustaining a sense of safety. It is a form of protecting the self from real or perceived harm, danger, or shame. Therefore, we play "Hide the elephant", so as to avoid what may come with exposing the difficult matter.

St. John Paul II gave us the Luminous mysteries in 2002, almost six centuries after the original Mysteries of the rosary were established. These new mysteries highlighted the major events in the life of Christ, His Deity, and his Father's Kingdom. John Paul II wrote, "It is during the years of Jesus' public ministry that the mystery of Christ is most evidently a mystery of light: 'While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' (Jn 9:5)" We have been created in his image, not only to reflect him but also to illuminate him.

If we think carefully, undoubtedly we will recall an elephant within our own lives that someone has tip-toed around. Maybe we all have tip-toed this way at some time in our lives. Throughout our nation's history, we can see elephants such as slavery, racism, eugenics, and abuses of power and position to name a few. Within our own family lives, we may also see them in secrets, abuse, money, medical matters, addictions, historical stories, and legal situations.

The most common elephant seen within the office of a counselor is that of mental health itself. For generations, mental health was a topic to hide because it had such high risk of negative ramifications. For example, the ending of the "insane asylum" within America happened in the middle to latter part of the twentieth century. Commonly, if a person was depressed, addicted, anxious, psychotic, or even intensely grieving, the risk of being "put away" was always lurking. Fortunately, we no longer live with this treatment. Mental health care has advanced quite far since this era. No longer does mental health have to be an off-limits topic within any society.

For example, even our Church has been addressing the elephants within itself through a painful examination of its own history. The only way to restore people who have been wounded by these hidden elephants is to bring such matters to the light.

Thank you, Lord, for being our guiding light, in the midst of all our darkest times. May we always look to you as our guiding light.



DEACON RANDY KIEL
serves Christ the King Parish in Des Moines. He is the founder of Kardia Counseling. Connect with him at Randy@Kardiacounseling.com.

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LEMON ORZO SOUP



INGREDIENTS

- 2 TBSP. olive oil
- 3 celery ribs, finely diced
- 4 medium carrots, finely diced
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 6 cups vegetable broth
- ½ tsp. Italian seasoning
- 16 oz. protein of choice, optional
  (shown: super firm tofu)
- 1 cup uncooked orzo
- 2 lemons
- ¼ cup fresh chopped parsley, extra for garnish
- Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

- In large pot with lid, heat oil over medium heat. Add celery, carrots, onion, and garlic. Sauté for 5 minutes or until onions are translucent and fragrant.
- Add broth and Italian seasoning. Mix well and bring to a boil, add tofu or other cooked protein
  (if using). Lower heat to a steady simmer. Cover and simmer 10 minutes.
- Uncover, gently mix, and add orzo. Cook uncovered 10 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent orzo from sticking, and test for doneness.
- Turn off heat. Zest, then squeeze juice of one lemon directly into pot. Add parsley and test for seasoning. Adjust salt, pepper, and lemon levels as needed.
- Garnish with lemon slices or wedges, serve hot.

A SEPTEMBER SOUP TO HONOR ST. PETER CLAVER

BY MARY KAY MCPARTLIN

PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING BY SHANE EDWARD PHOTOGRAPHY

St. Peter Claver was a light in the darkness for hundreds of thousands of human beings in the 17th century who were brought from Africa to the Americas. During his 40 years of ministry in Cartagena, Colombia, Peter Claver greeted slaves with medicine and food, in particular, lemons. Lemons and other citrus fruits were vital after the long voyage across the Atlantic because they counteracted deadly and debilitating scurvy as well as other diseases.



Inset: GFreihalter, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

The Church celebrates St. Peter Claver's feast day on Sept. 9. He landed in Cartagena in 1610 as a missionary and was ordained there five years later. Powerless to stop the practice of slavery, Peter Claver immersed himself in caring for the people who were captured and forcibly brought there.

In addition to providing the basics of food and drink, Peter Claver's ministry to the slaves included prayer, baptizing and administering the sacraments. It is believed that 300,000 souls entered the Church during his time in Cartagena.

One of the simplest and most nutritious meals we can offer to our loved ones is a hearty soup. St. Peter Claver provided as much healthy food to the slaves as he was able, including a dose of fresh lemons to give tired bodies a burst of Vitamin C. September is a busy month for families as school is back in session and activities begin in earnest. Try this simple and delicious recipe to give your family an added boost of nutrition and a treat for the palate.

It's sure to become a family favorite.

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Wonder Seeking Truth

Modern education has become remarkably efficient at asking certain questions for practical purposes. We reward inquiry that leads to measurable outcomes, celebrate expertise that solves practical problems, and measure success by the speed with which answers are produced. These are worthy pursuits. Yet, when this same approach governs faith, something essential is lost. Instead of efficiency and certainty, faith flourishes in an atmosphere of wonder.



Aristotle observed in *The Metaphysics* that philosophy begins in wonder. He did not mean curiosity in the trivial sense, but astonishment before reality itself. The child gazing at the stars and asking, "Who made all this?" is standing where philosophy begins. The Christian tradition, likewise, understands that wonder is indispensable to the life of faith. As St. Anselm wrote in the *Proslogion*, the Christian life is faith seeking understanding.

Children possess this capacity for wonder almost instinctively. They ask questions most adults have long since stopped asking: Why do people die? Why can't I see God? Why does God allow suffering? Too often, when children pose these questions, our instinct as adults is to provide immediate answers. Sometimes an answer is necessary. More often, what is needed is the preservation of the question. Certain questions should not be solved too quickly; they should mature with the person asking them.

Here, I am not suggesting a path towards skepticism but to contemplation. Josef Pieper suggests that wonder is the beginning of philosophy because it teaches us to receive reality before trying to master it (cf. *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*). The greatest thinkers in human history knew this all too well. Socrates is remembered for his questions. St. Augustine's life was one long search for God in wondering where he might find true happiness. Even St. Thomas Aquinas, after a profound mystical experience, declared that all he had written seemed "like straw" compared with the mystery he had encountered (cf. William of Tocco, *The Life of St. Thomas Aquinas*).

Jesus also formed his disciples through questions. "What are you looking for?" (Jn 1:38) "Who do you say that I am?" (Mt. 16:15) "Do you want to be well?" (Jn. 5:6) His questions were not meant to seek information; they aimed at awakening the heart.

Perhaps our task as parents, teachers, and catechists is not to answer every question immediately, but to cultivate wonder. Sometimes our best response is simply, "That's a beautiful question." In doing so, we teach children that faith is not threatened by honest inquiry.

To be clear, Christians do not believe that questions are ends in themselves. Every sincere search for truth ultimately leads beyond an idea to a Person. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote, Christianity is not "the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person." (*Deus Caritas Est*, n.1) It is no coincidence, then, that Jesus identifies himself not merely as one who teaches truth, but as Truth itself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (Jn. 14:6)

Before our children learn the answers of the faith, may they first learn to marvel at its mysteries. For wonder is not the enemy of faith; it is often where faith begins.



JOHN HUYNH, D.MIN.,
is the director of Social Justice for the Diocese of Des Moines and Catholic Charities.

Getty Images/ Visual Generation





ALONG THE WAY: Encountering the Risen Christ in Prayer

The crisp fall air brings the scents of apples, falling leaves, and remnants of garden blooms not yet touched by frost. The smells remind me it has been one year since my mom passed away and nearly a year since my niece passed away. The seasons have changed signaling the perpetual movement of time. My heart misses them both deeply yet mourning has become more peaceful and hope-filled as I walk with Christ through my daily prayers guided by the liturgical calendar. I have encountered Christ through each passing month and season learning to rest not in his suffering but recognizing the hope and joy his resurrection brings to us every day. We all have the opportunity to encounter the resurrected Christ in prayer.

The Apostle Paul encountered the risen Christ as he journeyed to Damascus. As a Pharisee, Paul would have followed the laws of life and prayer rigorously. He mercilessly persecuted Christians who accepted Jesus. His life changed instantly when the bright light on the road dropped him to his knees and struck him blind. When Paul questioned who was speaking, Jesus replied, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." While Paul waited in the city for more instruction and understanding, he turned to the prayers he knew. Ananias arrived, laid hands on him, and the scales fell from his eyes. He converted and began preaching so all would believe Jesus was the Messiah. But during those three days and through even more suffering to come, it was his prayer life that sustained him.

Paul teaches us in Romans to pray without ceasing and to the Colossians he writes to be steadfast in prayer.

Great joy and deep sorrow are the turns of life. Many sorrowful moments happened long before I realized the necessity of the regularity of prayer in my life. I prayed in desperation and sadness and often forgot to thank God for his generosity. My hunger for prayer was absent because I had not experienced the joy of regular prayer. Showing up for a few minutes daily was my first step. Encountering Jesus in the Eucharist and reconciliation softened and adjusted the attitude of my soul as grace and mercy flowed abundantly. I began to experience an unbroken awareness of God's presence in my life. Morning and evening prayers brought the rising and setting sun as the clock counted for me. And before long, a deep desire to never miss prayer with my good and gracious heavenly Father took root.

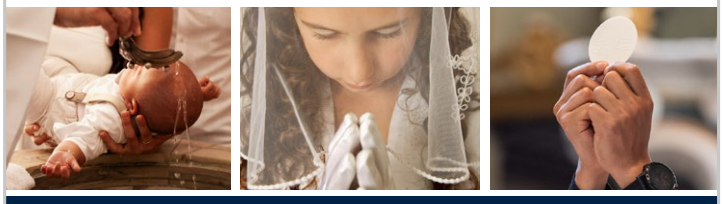
As the shocking news of my niece arrived, I struggled. I dropped and prayed to God in great sorrow through Jesus because he conquered sin and death. He sits at God's right hand as our living advocate in heaven. We pray today because Jesus is alive and brings great joy through sorrow. Paul tells the Thessalonians to rejoice always and give thanks because this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us all.

As the new liturgical year nears, establish regularity as you rise and again upon retiring. Encounter our risen, living Savior, Jesus Christ, as you pray through life's joys and sorrows.



MONICA PUGH
is a spiritual director and the Faith Formation Director at St. John the Apostle Parish in Norwalk.

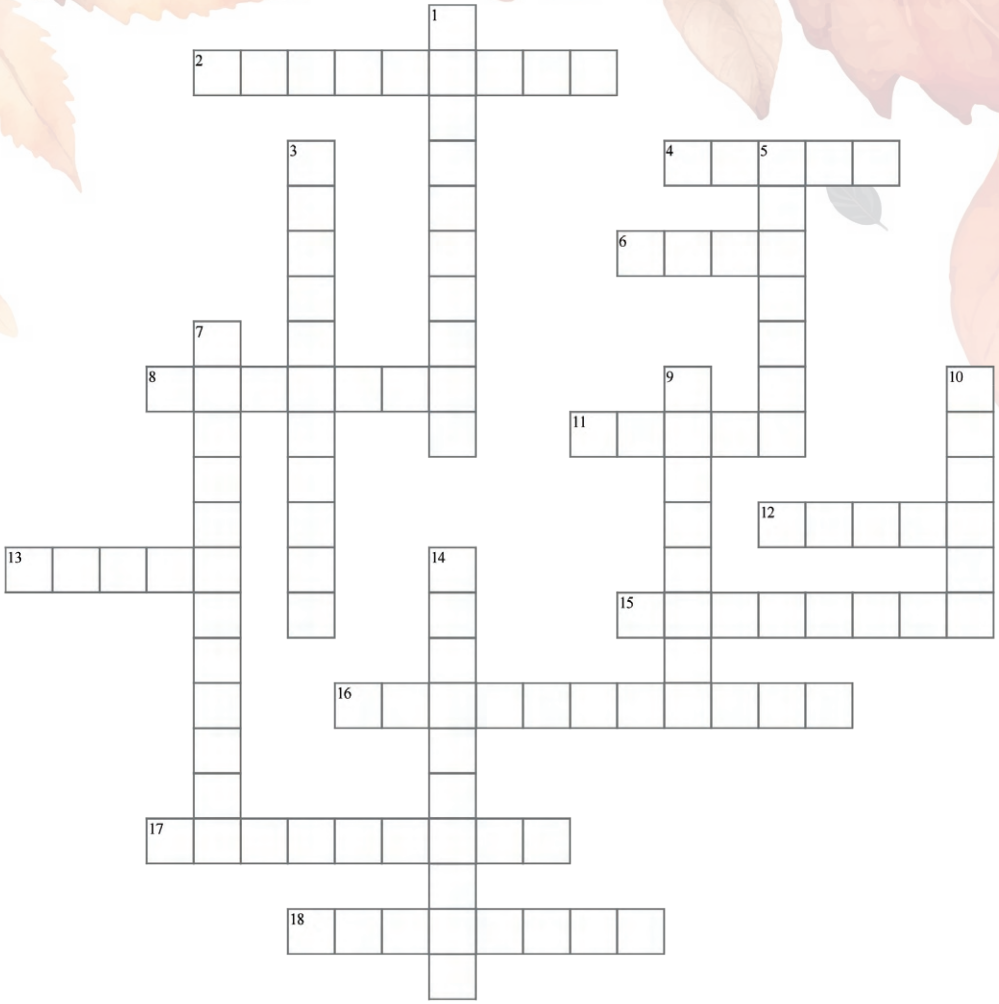
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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE



ACROSS

2. Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
4. Founded the Order of Poor Ladies; friend to St. Francis of Assisi
6. Impure desires give birth to this deadly sin
8. From the word meaning "lattice work", once used to section off the choir
11. Vestment that is worn around the neck of the priest
12. There but for this
13. Some can't get enough of this deadly sin
15. Transverse arm of a cruciform church
16 These Christians had so much trouble, Paul wrote them "twice"
17. Where the alter and tabernacle can be found in a church
18. Revelation says that the serpent will be chained for this many years

DOWN

1. This "High Society" gal was a princess, actress, and Catholic
3. Incites an intense loathing or aversion
5. Principal goddess of the Phoenicians; Greeks knew her as Aphrodite
7. The National Shrine of St. John Neumann is in this U.S. city
9. This winning coach of the first two Super Bowls once contemplated the priesthood; last name
10. The "actual thing that is done" in terms of moral theology
14. "Let it be printed"



Getty Images/Anna Ivonia

This crossword puzzle was created with EclipseCrossword. Try it today— it's free!

SEPT. 12
WEST DES MOINES — **Nourish for Parents** is a Christ-centered support group to encourage and empower parents. Meet at Sacred Heart Parish from 10-11:30 a.m.

SEPT. 13
DUNLAP — St. Patrick Church, on Highway 30, hosts its **Fall Festival Chicken Dinner** from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. featuring Staley's famous chicken dinner, children's games, homemade country store items for purchase, and cash drawings for up to $5,000.

SEPT. 14
URBANDALE — **Nourish for Caregivers** is for anyone juggling the challenges of life, health, and career while caring for a disabled child, an aging parent, grandparent or spouse. Meet at St. Pius X Parish from 6-7:30 p.m.

SEPT. 17
WAUKEE — St. Boniface Parish is hosting **Alpha,** a weekly gathering for dinner, a video, and an open discussion in a safe space for honest conversation about some of life's biggest questions. Get more information from Beth Henderson at bhenderson@stbonifacechurch.org or call 515-987-4597.

SEPT. 20
The St. Catherine of Siena Dialogue Series will feature award-winning author and speaker Diana Butler Bass, Ph.D., as the keynote speaker at 2 p.m. in Sheslow Auditorium, Drake University.
Her speech "God and Caesar: A Different Path" will explore the space between two competing visions of human flourishing and other paths forward. Her keynote is free and open to the public. Register at stcatherine-drake.org/dialogue-series.

SEPT. 22
WAUKEE — St. Boniface Parish hosts a series of **Called and Gifted** sessions designed to address charisms, discernment, and what God calls you to do. Get more information from Beth Henderson at bhenderson@stbonifacechurch.org or call 515-987-4597.

SEPT. 26-27
DES MOINES — **Christ Our Life Catholic Conference,** one of the largest faith conferences in the Midwest, will be at the Casey's Center featuring nationally known speakers such as Bishop Joseph Espaillat, Chris Stefanick, Father Robert Spitzer, Sister Medhin Tesfay, musician Steve Angrisano and Bishop William Joensen. Get tickets at christourlifeiowa.com.

SEPT. 27
ANKENY —**Tap into Faith** at Magee's Irish Pub when Tom Chapman will start at 7:30 p.m. talking about public policy and the Catholic Church. Chapman is the executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Church in Iowa.

OCT. 4
COUNCIL BLUFFS — All are invited to join Bishop William Joensen at St. Peter Church for the noon Mass to honor couples celebrating a **milestone anniversary** of 5, 10, 20, 30, 40, or 50+ years of marriage this year. Get more information and register at dmdiocese.org/events.

OCT. 10
DES MOINES — Join Bishop William Joensen in recognizing couples who have reached a **milestone anniversary** this year. Mass is at 4 p.m. at St. Ambrose Cathedral. Get more information and register at dmdiocese.org/events.

OCT. 18
ADEL — St. John Catholic Church invites you to a **Respect Life Mass** at 11 a.m. followed by a gathering in its **Memorial Garden** for the Unborn for a prayer service and dedication of memorial stones in remembrance of unborn children or infants lost too soon.

OCT. 25
WAUKEE — St. Boniface Parish hosts a **sensory-friendly Mass** at 5 p.m. in an effort to create a welcome and inclusive environment. This Mass will have lower lights, instrumental music, the availability of picture schedules, and other accommodations.

NOV. 16
DES MOINES — Begin a 12-week series called **Surviving Divorce: Hope and Healing for the Catholic Family** from 6-7:30 p.m. at St. Theresa Catholic Church, west meeting room. Questions? Contact Bill and Ann Moore, moorefamilydsm@gmail.com or call 515-480-3314 (Bill) or 641-425-0109.



Getty Images/Penpak S.



Continued from page 4

that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life — albeit a narrow way that entails the embrace of the Cross. Even Ralph Waldo Emerson, the 19th century American essayist and poet who helped found the Transcendentalist School, which is far from Catholic in its sensibilities, captures this truth: "The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship.... It is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust." (Emerson, cited in Arthur Brooks, *The Meaning of Your Life: Finding Purpose in an Age of Emptiness*, p 131) It's one thing to say, "Jesus, I trust in you." It is nearly overwhelming and profoundly humbling to be convicted, "Jesus, you trust in me."

Again, with the focus of this issue of *The Catholic Mirror* upon priestly and diaconal vocations, and without exclusive claim for these paths within the call of Christ extended to all the baptized, I let Father Haggerty have the last words describing this "affair of the heart": "The most reliable mark of a genuine desire for God is the quick discovery outside prayer of sacrificial opportunities for the sake of others. To give ourselves to God in prayer is to find a door in our heart unlocking and opening the hearts of other people." "People we have not been accustomed to notice suddenly draw our sympathy and interest. Unknown strangers, especially the poor, will now provoke a visceral reaction of compassion for their suffering and loneliness. The vulnerable condition of forsaken people is mysteriously felt as a chance to love Our Lord himself" (Haggerty, *op. cit.*, p. 237).

Talk about a heart transplant! Please join me in enjoying the following stories, and in continuing to pray that God will raise up holy priests and deacons in our Des Moines Diocese.

Des Moines Catholic Worker House Fund

Do you have an upcoming Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA? Do you have a donor advised fund? The Des Moines Catholic Worker House Fund is a 501c(3) non-profit. Your donations would be used to support the hospitality ministry of the Des Moines Catholic Worker House by providing food and other necessities to the homeless population of Des Moines.

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Continúa en la página 5

a discernir y ratificar la autenticidad del llamado. La ofrenda sustancial de sí mismo de Jesús provoca el llamado a seguirle, de servir a su padre como discípulo de su Hijo y de acoger su misión de comunicar a otros en la Vida Divina que se lleva como un regalo. Es el llamado a ser Iglesia, de permitir que el Espíritu de Jesús impregne nuestras vidas y de construir la comunidad en un peregrinar hacia el cielo.

La iniciación en la amistad con Jesús transmite una confianza en su misericordia, su confianza en nosotros. Los hombres se liberan para anunciar valientemente que Jesús es el Camino, la Verdad y la Vida—aunque hay un camino angosto que incluye acoger la Cruz. Incluso Ralph Waldo Emerson, el ensayista y poeta americano que ayudó a fundar la Escuela Trascendentista, que está muy alejada del catolicismo en sus sensibilidades, expresa esta verdad: "La gloria de la amistad no está en extender la mano, ni en la sonrisa amable, ni en el gozo de la compañía... Es la inspiración espiritual que viene a la persona cuando descubre que alguien más confía en ella y está dispuesto a confiar en ella" (Emerson, cita del libre de Arthur Brooks, *El Significado de Tu Vida: Encontrando Propósito en una Era de* Vacíos, pág. 131). Una cosa es decir, "Jesús, en ti confío." Es casi abrumante y profundamente humillante el convencerse a decir, "Jesús, confía en mí."

Una vez más, con el enfoque de este ejemplar de *The Catholic Mirror* sobre las vocaciones sacerdotales y al diaconado, y sin decir que estos caminos son exclusivos dentro del llamado que hace Cristo a todos los bautizados, dejo que el Padre Haggerty tenga la última palabra describiendo este 'romance del corazón': "La marca más confiable de un deseo genuino de Dios es el descubrir rápidamente oportunidades de sacrificio por los demás más allá de la oración. El entregarnos a nosotros mismos a Dios en oración es el encontrar que se abre una puerta en nuestro corazón y que abre los corazones de otras personas." "La gente a la que no distinguíamos comúnmente de pronto atraen nuestra simpatía e interés. Extraños desconocidos, especialmente los pobres, provocan ahora una reacción visceral de compasión por su sufrimiento y soledad. La condición vulnerable de la gente olvidada se siente misteriosamente como una oportunidad para amar a Nuestro Señor mismo" (Haggerty, *cita abierta.*, pág. 237).

¡Vaya que es un trasplante de corazón! Unámonos a disfrutar las siguientes historias y sigamos orando para que Dios aumente sacerdotes y diáconos santos en nuestra Diócesis de Des Moines.

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