New Earth

February 2020 | Vol. 41 | No. 2
The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo

From Bishop Folda: To the threshold of the apostles
Generous gift gives Rolette parish new life
Catholic Culture in the Home: Liturgical calendar guides us to Jesus Christ

40 days, 40 reflections

Faithful around the diocese share Lenten experiences
Redeemed Women’s Conference 2020

trusted sisters
blessed to be a blessing...growing in faith and friendship

Dr. Helen Alvaré

Helen Alvaré is a Professor of Law at George Mason University. She publishes on matters concerning marriage, parenting, non-marital households, and the First Amendment religion clauses. She is a speaker and a delegate to various United Nations conferences concerning women and the family. Helen will apply her knowledge of faith, civil law, and current cultural trends to assist us in our awareness of cultural influences and how we can effectively respond.

Bishop John Folda

Most Rev. Bishop John Folda, Bishop of the Diocese of Fargo, will preside at Holy Mass, Saturday, at 11:00 am and will shepherd us as sisters in Christ with his spiritual insights.

The Vigil Project

The Vigil Project, a collaborative group of Catholic artists provide Catholic music for the Catholic journey. Friday evening, our prayer in Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will be enhanced by the music and testimonies of this community of artists.

Dr. James Link

Dr. Link received his education in theology and clinical psychology from St. Thomas University. As a clinical psychologist he specializes in the integration of religion and spirituality within the practice of psychology. Dr. Link will help us grow in the understanding of the psychology of women and why we approach life the way we do.

Nell O’Leary

Nell O’Leary, wife and mother of four children, is a recovering lawyer turned blogger and speaker. She is a community coordinator for Blessed Is She, a Catholic women’s ministry. Nell’s passion and understanding of women as builders of communities will inspire us to make our families, neighborhoods, parishes, and workplaces an environment where faith can flourish.

Friday, March 27
5:30 pm Doors Open
6:30 pm - 9:30 pm
An evening of prayer, music, & inspiration

March 27-28
AVALON EVENTS CENTER
2525 9th Ave. S.
Fargo, ND

Saturday, March 28
8:00 am Doors Open
9:00 am - 5:30 pm
A day of uplifting speakers,
Mass, confession & fellowship

OR SEND COMPLETED FORM/PAYMENT TO:
Redeemed Women’s Conference
5201 Bishops Blvd. S, Suite A
Fargo, ND 58104 - 7605

Make checks payable to Diocese of Fargo

Diocese of Fargo 701-356-7900

To Register Online and For Complete Schedule: FargoDiocese.org/RedeemedWomen

SPACE LIMITED
REGISTRATION REQUIRED
CEUs AVAILABLE (Info online)

Early Registration: $50
after March 1: $75
Includes Meal & Refreshments

Name ____________________________________________
Email __________________________ Phone ________
Parish/City ______________________________ Special Food Accommodations?

BLOCK or ROOMS RESERVED:
Special Rate Expires Feb. 12
Country Inn & Suites
3316 13th Ave. Fargo
701-234-0565
ON THE COVER:
The high altar at St. Michael’s Church in Grand Forks.
(Kristina Lahr | New Earth)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FROM BISHOP FOLDA
4 To the threshold of the apostles

ASK A PRIEST
7 Is my will aligned with God’s plan for me?

AROUND THE DIOCESE
10 Generous gift gives Rolette parish new life

COVER STORY
14 40 days, 40 reflections

FAITH AND CULTURE
19 Tattered Pages:
Honing the art of good listening

NEXT GEN
20 Building character through virtue

US/WORLD NEWS
34 Bishops find hope, and humor, during “ad limina” meeting with pope

SIDEWALK STORIES
35 Chemical abortions a “last stand” for abortion industry
The law of the Church requires that bishops pay a visit to Rome every five years or so. This is called the visit *Ad Limina Apostolorum*, which means “to the threshold of the apostles.” In the long history of the Church, bishops have made this pilgrimage to the tombs of the great apostles, Peter and Paul, to strengthen our bonds of communion with the universal Church and to meet personally with the Pope, who is the successor of St. Peter. From Jan. 10–18, I joined the other bishops of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota for this visit, which constitutes a sort of pilgrimage and extended consultation with the Holy Father and his collaborators at the Vatican.

On the opening day of our visit, we celebrated Mass at the tomb of St. Peter in St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City. It’s an amazing paradox to see the massive and glorious basilica built over the tomb of a simple fisherman, who was called *Petros*, or “the rock,” by the Lord Jesus. As we celebrated Mass together, I thought of the early days of the Church, when Peter first came to Rome and began his preaching of the Gospel. Christianity was a new reality in pagan Rome, and while it attracted great interest among the people, it also aroused the ire and hatred of Rome’s rulers. Because of his faithful service to Jesus as the leader of the apostles and the first bishop of Rome, Peter was crucified and then buried at a place marked directly below the high altar of the basilica. In that crypt chapel, one remembers the apostolic foundation of the Church, which was established by Christ himself on a humble fisherman from Galilee: “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

Later that same day, the bishops of our region were invited to an audience with Pope Francis, the current successor of St. Peter and Bishop of Rome. The Holy Father welcomed us warmly and greeted the pilgrims who joined us. I was accompanied on this visit by Monsignor Joseph Goering, the Vicar General of our diocese, and also by Deacon Riley Durkin, who was in Rome with his class from St. Paul Seminary for their winter term. Our group of bishops then spent over two hours with the Pope in a wide-ranging conversation about the Church and the issues we face. Pope Francis was very interested in hearing about our dioceses, and he is very well-informed about the challenges that confront the Church in the United States and in our particular region. He specifically encouraged us to pray for our people and for ourselves, so we might grow in our communion with Jesus and in our zeal for the faith. The Holy Father was very open in discussing the problems of our times, and he shared his own challenges with us as well. But he also gave us great encouragement and reminded us that Christ is our Savior, the One who is with us always and who sustains us in our daily lives.

As part of our pilgrimage, we also traveled to the southern part of Rome to visit the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. There we celebrated Mass at the tomb of St. Paul, who also came to Rome in the early decades of the Church and preached the Gospel of Christ. Paul too died as a martyr, and his recently excavated tomb is located at the foot of the high altar in this huge basilica. Once again, as we prayed at the apostle’s tomb, I was reminded of the apostolic identity of the Church. Paul was called by our Lord and sent as a missionary (which has the same meaning as “apostle”) to the nations. He traveled throughout the Mediterranean region and courageously proclaimed Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world. The fervent witness of St. Paul drew countless souls to Christ and planted the seeds of Christianity that would spread throughout the world. We hear his words nearly every Sunday at Mass, but to approach the place of his burial and celebrate the Eucharist there was a moving moment of grace. Paul reminds us that we are all called to be missionaries, disciples of Jesus Christ who are ready to go into the world and share the Gospel by the witness of our lives. This is a point that Pope Francis emphasized as well: the power of Christian witness by the faithful. Our Catholic faith isn’t only taught by the words we speak, but by the way we live our lives fully in union with Christ.

I had the opportunity to live in Rome for two years as a young priest, and have visited there several times since. Every time I
come to Rome, I am reminded of the universality and apostolic character of our Church. People of every nation and language travel to Rome and visit the holy sites of our faith, especially the tombs of the apostles. They come to see and hear the Holy Father, and they come to pray. (They also come to take pictures and eat delicious gelato!) It is always remarkable to experience the catholicity, or universality, of the Church gathered around Peter’s successor. We discover once again that Jesus came to this earth to save all peoples, and he continues to reach out to every soul with the love and mercy of his Father. The mission of the Church is to carry forward the mission that Jesus gave to the apostles, to go and “make disciples of all nations.” Our own commission from the Lord is just as real as the commission he gave to Peter and Paul, and he gives us the grace we need to carry it out. During my time in Rome, I prayed in a special way for the clergy, the religious, the seminarians, and all the faithful laity of the Diocese of Fargo. May our Lord Jesus Christ continue to guide us and fill us with the grace of his divine love during our pilgrimage here on earth.

---

**BISHOP FOLDA’S CALENDAR**

Feb. 12–13  
Ordination and Installation of Most Rev. Donald DeGrood, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Feb. 17 • 6 p.m.  
Real Presence Radio Banquet, Delta by Marriott, Fargo

Feb. 19–21  
St. John Paul II Catholic Schools Alumni Events, Mesa, Ariz.

Feb. 22 • 6 p.m.  
Mass for Fargo Chapter of Communion and Liberation, Holy Cross, West Fargo

Feb. 26 • 12:10 p.m.  
Ash Wednesday, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Feb. 26 • 3 p.m.  
St. JPll Schools Board of Directors Meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo

Feb. 29  
St. John Paul II Catholic Schools Alumni Event, Naples, Fla.

Mar. 1 • 3:30 p.m.  
Rite of Election, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Mar. 10 • 11:30 a.m.  
Catholic Charities Caritas Award Luncheon, Sts. Anne and Joachim Church, Fargo

Mar. 13 • 7 p.m.  
Confirmation and First Eucharist, St. Philip Church, Napoleon

Mar. 14 • 10 a.m.  
Confirmation and First Eucharist, Transfiguration Church, Edgeley

Mar. 14 • 6:30 p.m.  
Confirmation and First Eucharist, Basilica of St. James Church, Jamestown

Mar. 15 • 2 p.m.  
Confirmation and First Eucharist, St. Charles Church, Oakes
Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

Listen to the Migrants’ Cries
We pray that the cries of our migrant brothers and sisters, victims of criminal trafficking, may be heard and considered.

Prayer for Priests
Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

“Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.”
– St. John Chrysostom
One of our readers writes: “One thing I’ve contemplated is the idea of free will that God grants us versus what God’s plan is for each of us. If we have free will, and make choices, perhaps influenced by temptations from Satan, how does this fit into God’s plan for us? Sometimes these two ideas seem to oppose each other, so it’s hard to comprehend them both coexisting.”

Christians have pondered variations of this question for centuries. God wills our ultimate happiness, that much is clear. The gift of intellect and free will are essential qualities of the immortal human soul formed in the image of God. God leaves us free to choose the course of our lives, realizing that we may choose badly at points along the way. Our “temptation-biased” choices often lead us on detours or dead-end paths, so we need to pray regularly for divine guidance.

In the first chapters of the Book of Genesis, we see this “divine dilemma” at work. God made it clear to Adam and Eve that heeding his command “not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil” would keep them alive and well in the Garden of Eden. And yet, lured by temptation of the “ancient Serpent,” they fell prey to the wrong choice we call Original Sin (Gen. 3; Rev. 12:9). Therein lies the tug-of-war as old as humanity itself. Whose voice will we heed in the day-to-day decisions and lifelong choices we make?

Our sinful choices clearly contradict the divine will for our ultimate happiness, risking the “loss of heaven and the pains of hell,” as our traditional Act of Contrition expresses it. On the other hand, there may be several vocational paths by which we can fulfill God’s overall plan for our salvation. The crux of today’s question seems to be, how can we know whether we are making these choices to God’s will or our own? Again, we know the crucial importance of prayerful discernment in our daily decisions and lifetime choices we make?

In the example of my own life, I have often wondered, “What if I had decided not to become a priest?” Looking back on the past many years, I am confident I made the right choice of vocation. What if I had become a high school science teacher instead? Would God have been displeased with me? Would a life of teaching and parenting satisfy the divine will, even if God desired the priesthood as my best path in fulfillment of his plan?

God graces each of us with the Holy Spirit’s gifts of wisdom and counsel, to help us make the best choices for our lives. God will enlighten us to see through the clouds of self-interest and choose life-giving directions in our journey, but he leaves us free to accept or reject these graces. To be truly and fully human is to act responsibly with the freedom of will we enjoy.

This subject is treated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church on “Man’s Freedom,” CCC 1730-48, especially paragraph 1742: “The grace of Christ is not in the slightest way a rival of our freedom when this freedom accords with the sense of the true and the good that God has put in the human heart. … The more docile we are to the promptings of grace, the more we grow in inner confidence and freedom during trials, such as those we face in the pressures and constraints of the outer world. By the working of grace, the Holy Spirit educates us in spiritual freedom in order to make us collaborators in his work in the Church and in the world.”

Heaven is open to those who do our best to cooperate with God’s will, and we need not necessarily find the “one and only thing” that would maximize the good in our lives and our world. There may well be bumps and detours in our life journey as consequence of our day-to-day decisions. Whenever I encounter one of these, I like to recall the words of Paul in Romans: “We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. … If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not give us every thing along with him?” (Rom. 8:28–32)

Trusting in God’s will for our well-being and our eternal salvation, seek God’s grace in daily prayer. Ask God to help you do his will in whatever you encounter that day and in the long road ahead. Seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and listening with openness to the inner voice of God speaking to the well-formed conscience, you can trust that God will not let you down.

Editor’s note: If you have a question to suggest for consideration in a future column, send to news@fargodiocese.org or mail to New Earth, 5201 Bishops Blvd. S, Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104, Attn: Ask a Priest.
Saintly love of St. Valentine
By Catholic News Agency

On Feb. 14, the Catholic Church commemorates St. Valentine, the patron saint of couples and young people in love.

One tradition in the church is that St. Valentine was a Roman priest during the reign of Emperor Claudius II. The emperor realized that unmarried men made better soldiers so he forbade young men to become engaged or to marry. St. Valentine, realizing the injustice of this law, helped young couples to marry in secret.

He was eventually betrayed, and the emperor had him arrested and thrown in jail. He supposedly converted his jailer while he was incarcerated. Ultimately, he was martyred by beheading.

Another story of St. Valentine says that he was arrested for helping Christians escape the harsh and brutal conditions of Roman jails. He is purported to have fallen in love with a young woman, perhaps the jailer’s daughter. Before he died, he wrote her one last letter, which he signed, “from your Valentine.” Thus, the first “valentine” was created.

Whatever his story, many couples remember St. Valentine on Feb. 14 by expressing their love for one another with gifts of flowers, candies or jewelry.

St. Valentine is also the patron saint of beekeepers, engaged couples, epilepsy, fainting, greetings, happy marriages, love, travelers, and young people.

At Riverview, leave your winter worries behind!
We offer exceptional senior living with strong community spirit, lively social gatherings and mission-based spirituality.
Everything you need and everything you love—It’s why home is here.
Call 701.237.4700 to schedule your personal tour today.

CHI Living Communities
Home is here.

Snow kidding, we will cover up to $1,000 in moving costs!
Seek First the Kingdom of God

Seek first the kingdom of God. That is the theme of the 2020 God’s Gift Appeal that gets underway this month. Each February the Diocese of Fargo reaches out to the faithful to consider a financial gift to help keep vital ministries and programs operational in the diocese.

God’s Gift Appeal (GGA) was established by the Diocese of Fargo 60 years ago as a way to fund ministries that are delivered from the diocese to support parishes in the areas of religious education, marriage and family life, right-to-life, accounting services, and financial assistance. There are a total of 47 programs funded by GGA, the largest being support of seminarian formation and education.

“The theme Bishop Folda chose for this year is a great one,” said Steve Schons, Director of Stewardship and Development for the Diocese of Fargo. “It puts into context what we as the faithful need to keep our eye on. We need to seek first the kingdom of God in all that we do and how we approach our everyday life, and if we do that we know that we are living life the way we are called to.”

Three weekends are reserved in February to invite the faithful attending Mass to participate in GGA. Informational materials are given out and a video from Bishop Folda appealing for support is shown. This gives the faithful some time to reflect on what they are able to give. Feb. 22–23 is commitment weekend, where the faithful are asked to make either a one-time donation or make a pledge and spread their donation payments out over several months.

The faithful are asked, in addition to their yearly giving of five-percent of their annual income to their local church, to commit one-percent to GGA. By supporting GGA, along with giving to their parish, parishioners are providing that extra support their own parish relies on from the diocese above and beyond the donation they make to their local parish. Bishop Folda believes that the financial support received through God’s Gift Appeal, that he is so grateful for, is critical at the diocesan level so that we can be strong for all parishes, especially smaller parishes.

“The number one priority for our appeal is, of course, prayer,” said Schons. “We ask everyone to pray for not only a successful appeal, but also for all of the ministries the appeal supports. It costs money to keep these ministries going, to provide books for religious education, to provide the support our parishes and the faithful in the diocese need, and we invite the faithful to respond at whatever level they can.”

Schons says the giving trend is curving slightly upward each year, keeping pace with cost of living increases at around 2 to 3 percent. The challenge is the loss of older long-time donors and replacing those donations with an appeal to younger potential donors and helping them understand how important giving is to their faith life.

The campaign this year centers on the future of the diocese, mainly the formation of our future priests. This year’s video, which will be shown in parishes across the diocese, focuses on the number one expense for the diocese of Fargo every year, and that’s the formation and education of seminarians. A top priority for Bishop Folda is the importance of having the future leaders of the Church educated and given the right tools to serve our diocese. It’s a priority of Bishop Folda to make sure our seminarians are prepared to serve the diocese in the future.

Please give prayerful consideration to making a donation to the God’s Gift Appeal this year to answer the call to stewardship that Christ asks of us.
When Father Paulraj Thondappa got the phone call, he had to sit down. On the other end of the line was an attorney representing the estate of Esther (Charnatsky) Crabtree, who informed Father Thondappa that Esther had left his parish, Sacred Heart Church in Rolette, a generous gift upon her passing. The catch was that the parish could only use the money for building improvement or preservation projects.

Sacred Heart Church had previously identified several projects that needed to get done if and when the money could be raised. In fact, parishioners had just completed a fundraising campaign and work to renovate the rectory and remove mold from within the rectory walls when the call from the Crabtree estate came in. With the estate funds dedicated, it was up to Father Thondappa to work with the parish council and other parishioners and representatives of the Crabtree estate to prioritize what needed to be done.

Three major projects were identified and funded with the donation. The church received a new heating and air conditioning system, new carpeting in the adoration chapel and main sanctuary, new paint in the sanctuary, and a new roof for the church and rectory. The donation is taking care of all costs of materials and some of the labor, but most of the labor was donated by parishioners and Father Thondappa. The roof projects were delayed by weather and will be completed in the spring or early summer.

Sacred Heart wasn’t the only beneficiary of funds from the Crabtree estate. Money was also earmarked for St. Ann’s parish in Belcourt. According to Diocesan Facilities Manager Earl Wilhelm, the funds will be used for a roofing project there as well.
Deacon John Marcavage passes away Dec. 28, 2019

Deacon John Robert Marcavage, age 86, of Devils Lake, passed away on Dec. 28, 2019 at his home. Deacon Marcavage was born Jan. 12, 1933, in Hazelton, Pa. to John Simon and Mary (Reklaitis) Marcavage. He was raised and educated in Chester, Pa. John received his Bachelor of Science in Chemistry at Pennsylvania Military College and received the Outstanding Chemist Award from the American Chemical Society in 1955. He served as a Lieutenant in the United States Army Chemical Corps and was an instructor at Fort McClellan, Ala.

He was united in marriage to Geraldine Marie LaFromboise on April 27, 1957. Together they had six children. John was a chemical engineer for Scott Paper Company, Pa., J.B. Martin Company, S.C., and Turtle Mountain Manufacturing, N.D. John and Geraldine owned and operated Expressions of Love floral shop and A Cut Above hair salon in St. Paul, Minn.

In 1986, John became a Deacon through the Fargo Diocese Diaconate program and was ordained in Belcourt at St. Ann’s Church. John enjoyed the outdoors especially golfing, fishing, bowling, and gardening. He reaped the benefits of his garden by canning and preserving vegetables and making wine. He loved to cross stitch, put puzzles together, and solve Sudoku puzzles.

John is survived by his wife, Geraldine Marcavage; children, Mary Jo Marcavage of Lexington, S.C., John (Rita) Marcavage of Devils Lake, Maria (Alan) Vormestrand of Devils Lake, Geraldine Marcavage Peltier of Bottineau, Gloria (Clarence) Davis of Belcourt, and Julianne (Steven) Senn of Newberry, S.C.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held Jan. 3 at St. Ann’s Church in Belcourt.

The priests claimed a 56–37 victory over the seminarians in the annual Collar Classic at Shanley High School in Fargo on Dec. 27, 2019. Congratulations to the priests and thank you for your continued prayers and support for the Fargo seminarians. (Father Kyle Metzger)
St. Cecilia's Church in Harvey hosted a Life in the Spirit Seminar Jan. 10-12 with 74 people participating. Father Kevin Boucher led the seminar with other priests and religious from the Fargo Diocese assisting with talks and discussion. It was a fruitful weekend as those attending gained understanding and drew closer in relationship with the Holy Spirit. (submitted photo)

LaMoure Knights of Columbus Council 6752 held an ice fishing event for kids, with 16 children and 16 adults participating on a frigid Sunday afternoon, Jan. 12. They caught a variety of fish and enjoyed hot chocolate and hot dogs served by the Knights. The council also sends a big thank you to all who helped open the road to Lake LaMoure and the parking area at Splitt's Landing. (submitted photo)

Real Presence Radio is coming to Carmel of Mary. Come join us for Real Presence Live in person on Monday, February 17, 2020 or listen on the radio, online, or on the RPR app from 9:00-11:00 a.m. CT.
“Many people mistake our work for our vocation. Our vocation is the love of Jesus.”
— Mother Teresa

Join the University of Mary for its fifth annual Vocations Jamboree

Meet members of religious communities from around the country, ask questions, schedule personal meetings with vocations representatives, and learn more about opportunities to serve God and the community.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
(Open to the Public)
Fr. John Burns and Sarah Swafford
Wednesday, March 18, 7:30 PM
University of Mary

Featuring messages from Fr. John Burns and Sarah Swafford. Fr. Burns is a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. He speaks at conferences, preaches missions, directs retreats, and is the author of Lift Up Your Heart. Sarah Swafford is the founder of Emotional Virtue Ministries and author of the book Emotional Virtue: A Guide to Drama-Free Relationships. She speaks internationally on a variety of topics and is the co-host of EWTN’s ‘At the Heart of Relationships.’

For full schedule and free registration, visit umary.edu/vocjam.
In recognition of Lent beginning on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 26, New Earth asked 40 people in the Diocese of Fargo to answer any one of these three questions in 50 words or fewer:

1. What word or phrase captures the meaning of Lent for you and why?
2. What is one thing you do to observe Lent and why?
3. What fruits have you seen in your life as a result of observing Lent?

These are their responses.

“During this time of renewal, our family will find a local penance service and take that day for prayerful reflection on what the sacrament of conversion means to us this Lent.” –Lance Keller, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Reynolds

“I picture my soul as a kettle that has been somewhat neglected. There is a little tarnish here and there. Lent is the scouring agent. With 40 days and a little elbow grease, my soul can get cleaned and ready to shine on Easter morning.” –Annette Schumacher, St. Philip Neri, Napoleon

“To me, Lent is a time to reflect on the areas of our lives in which we desire change. Not for ourselves, but to further prepare our hearts for the Resurrection.” –Jason Fussy, St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center, Grand Forks

“Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD” (Joel 2:12–13). The prophet Joel outlines the meaning of Lent as a time to return to God by changing our hearts—by truly loving God and our neighbor.” –Ben Seitz, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

“I strive to attend Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament after Holy Thursday Mass. Spending time in prayer so intimately to Christ is unparalleled. This time helps me prepare for the Easter Triduum by allowing my heart to slow down and listen to Jesus and remember his sacrifice for us.” –Angie Waletzko, St. Aloysius, Lisbon

“Lent is a time for me to reflect on weak areas of my spiritual life, to make a good confession, and start again. I always try to watch the Passion film with my wife, and ponder Christ’s words, ‘today you will be with me in paradise.’” –Daniel Malott, St. Timothy’s, Manvel

“Hope in weakness.’ I’m terrible at making Lenten observations. I want to be perfect! However, Lent isn’t about being perfect. Through our struggle in embracing prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we realize how weak we are. In our weakness, we must embrace Christ—who, in becoming weak, saved all of humanity.” –Angela Schmaltz, St. Michael’s, Grand Forks

“Am I not enough for you?” Words that came through prayer one Lenten season. We yearn for earthly human, material desires/affections. When we don’t get them, we feel empty. But the Lord is asking us, ‘Am I not enough for you?’ Help us Lord to say yes, you are enough.” –Tanya Schneider, St. Philip Neri, Napoleon

Carol Crissler, St. John’s, Wahpeton

Faithful around the diocese share Lenten experiences

Compiled by Kristina Lahr
“This year I am joining my husband in observing some of the things he is doing in his Exodus 90 men’s group some of which are: adding a weekly daily Mass, cold showers, no sweets or television or unnecessary smart phone use, and having a scheduled prayer time.” –Tonia Clark, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

“Lent is a penitential time of remembrance, to reflect and pray. In the movie City Slickers, a character trying to console his friend tells him this is his chance for a ‘do over,’ to start fresh. Lent is a time to cast off my sins and have a ‘do over.’” –Curtis Kaufman, St. Rose of Lima, Hillsboro

“The word I think of is ‘sacrifice.’ Jesus made a sacrifice for all, so during Lent I make a sacrifice. It’s not as simple as giving up something I like. During Lent I like to add good deeds that help others. It’s just as important as giving up a bad habit.” –Nikki Acosta, St. Michael the Archangel, Dunseith

“When I think of Lent, I’m reminded of Our Lord’s words to his disciples in the garden, hours before his passion, ‘Stay and keep watch with me.’ Stay and keep watch with Jesus this Lent, and ask him to guide you on the right path.” –Leo Devick, St. Anthony of Padua, Fargo

“Every time I pray the rosary I feel my dad praying with me. I started praying the rosary after my Dad died and starting at Lent that year, I made a commitment to go to daily mass whenever possible. That Lenten practice is now my daily practice when possible.” –Francis Bauer, St. Mary’s, Park River

“I prepare a Lenten centerpiece on my dining room table to represent the season with a purple cloth, cross, cactus, candle, lavender, and my Gregorian chant CDs. There are so many distractions in this world, so having Lenten ‘distractions’ can help to offset the secular world that we live in.” -Mary Freund-Braun, Holy Cross, West Fargo

“‘Abandonment.’ To abandon myself more completely to the will of God. Abandonment also reminds me of how completely our Lord Jesus Christ handed himself over to the Father’s plan of salvation. Jesus’ agony in the garden is a great meditation when I feel the temptation of being abandoned and alone.” –Father Jason Asselin, St. Helena’s, Ellendale and St. Patrick’s, Fullerton

“I heard Father Matt Kraemer once suggest praying each day with the entrance antiphon and communion antiphon for the daily mass. I did this for Advent, and it was a great and prayerful way to enter into the season and its mysteries. I’m excited to experience this for Lent!” –Kristi Bartholomew, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

“During the first Lent I participated in after my baptism in 2017, I tried to prove my faith by giving up dairy. Sometimes I consumed dairy accidentally, and it shook my faith in myself. While I failed at that task, I realized I was never lost in God’s eyes.” –Kaden Campbell, St. Helena’s, Ellendale

“I did the Exodus 90 challenge. It’s life-changing for guys, restoring relationships with wives and children and others changing jobs. By giving up many comforts and distractions, we grew in faith and self-discipline. I’m in another group this year, and also appreciate Matthew Kelly’s Best Lent Ever free daily videos.” –Chad Prososki, St. Anthony of Padua, Fargo

“‘Beauty in dying.’ During the fall season the greatest beauty is seen when the leaves are dying and changing color. Just like fall, the truest beauty in our life is revealed when we die to ourselves, whether through giving up some pleasure or taking up further devotion to Christ.” –Shane Hendrickson, St. James, Jamestown

“A deeper dive into love.” Lent shouldn’t be approached with dread. It’s meant to draw us further into the Father’s heart! As we remove distractions keeping us from experiencing that relationship fully, we can rest in his merciful presence. Lent should enrich us to receive the glorious gift of resurrection.” –Roxane B. Salonen, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

Compiled by Kristina Lahr
“The phrase that has meaning for me in Lent is, ‘Be still and know that I am God.’ It allows me to detach myself from worldly distractions such as electronic devices, negativity, and worry so God can love me and speak to me in the silence.” –Pat Breen, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

“‘Spiritual renewal’ captures the meaning of Lent for me. Lent is a call to repentance and spiritual discipline. ‘Even now says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning: Render your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD your God.”’ (Joel 2:12-13) –Gigi Artz, St. Mark, Bottineau

“Observing Lent always helps me refocus, not only in my faith, but in life as well. It’s a time of introspection, sacrifice, and gratitude—things that help bring clarity and focus. Lent, if observed with conviction in our faith, comes with opportunities of personal and collective growth.” –Kellen Dobmeier, St. Mary’s, Park River

“One thing I do to observe Lent each year is getting rid of one item I own on each day of Lent. It calls me to return to simplicity—simplicity in what I consume, simplicity in what I own, and simplicity in how I approach material goods.” –Jessica Kuznia, St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center, Grand Forks

“We do a lot of family sacrifices during Lent. We have a sacrifice jar and an idea jar with kid-friendly corporal/spiritual works of mercy. Throughout Lent, dry beans fill the sacrifice jar, and then on Easter Jesus makes all of our sacrifices sweet when the kids find jelly beans instead!” –Teresa Fewell, St. Mary’s, Dazey

“In thinking about Lent, the word ‘sacrifice’ comes to mind. Yes, we take on small sacrifices, but that’s not all. Let the small sacrifices we undertake remind us of what we’re anxiously waiting to celebrate, his ultimate sacrifice and his rising from the dead to make a way for us.” –Dusty Njaa, Holy Spirit, Fargo

“Lent is our journey to Jesus on the cross and an opportunity to turn from sin and unite ourselves with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As a family, we do prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. This year we will especially pray for God to transform us to grow closer to him.” –Beth Slag, St. Boniface, Wimbledon

“The one word that captures the meaning of Lent for me is ‘conversion.’ We’re all called to conversion, and Lent is a special time to turn myself back to the Lord and away from whatever keeps me from him. It’s a challenging and beautiful time of the year!” –Bishop John Folda, Diocese of Fargo

“Focusing on the three pillars of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving deepens my relationships and enriches my life. Prayer moves me closer to God and family. Fasting and penance helps me identify and make improvements, and giving time, talent, and treasure improves relationships in my diaconal ministries. All leading to Easter.” –Deacon Les Noehre, Holy Family, Grand Forks

“In 2015 I was given the book Rediscover Jesus by Matthew Kelly. I use this book to guide my Lenten journey. At the end of each chapter I journal a few reflections so that I can integrate what I read into my life. It works well for me!” –Connie Brandt, St. John’s, Wahpeton

“One thing I do to observe Lent each year is getting rid of one item I own on each day of Lent. It calls me to return to simplicity—simplicity in what I consume, simplicity in what I own, and simplicity in how I approach material goods.” –Jessica Kuznia, St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center, Grand Forks

“The phrase that has meaning for me in Lent is, ‘Be still and know that I am God.’ It allows me to detach myself from worldly distractions such as electronic devices, negativity, and worry so God can love me and speak to me in the silence.” –Pat Breen, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert.’ Lent is a time to follow Jesus into the desert. With him, we pray and fast, learning to hope in heaven and break free of our earthly attachments.” –Deacon Eric Seitz, St. Alphonsus, Langdon

“In 2015 I was given the book Rediscover Jesus by Matthew Kelly. I use this book to guide my Lenten journey. At the end of each chapter I journal a few reflections so that I can integrate what I read into my life. It works well for me!” –Connie Brandt, St. John’s, Wahpeton

“Shoulder my yoke / and learn from me.’ Matt 11:29 comes to mind in prayer. Lent is a time to learn about you and God, a time to reflect in prayer and listen, and to love all that is of you and Him in his likeness.” –Sandra Poitra, St. Michael the Archangel, Dunseith

“Spiritual renewal’ captures the meaning of Lent for me. Lent is a call to repentance and spiritual discipline. ‘Even now says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning: Render your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD your God.”’ (Joel 2:12-13) –Gigi Artz, St. Mark, Bottineau

“In thinking about Lent, the word ‘sacrifice’ comes to mind. Yes, we take on small sacrifices, but that’s not all. Let the small sacrifices we undertake remind us of what we’re anxiously waiting to celebrate, his ultimate sacrifice and his rising from the dead to make a way for us.” –Dusty Njaa, Holy Spirit, Fargo

“One way that I observe Lent is to pray for the catechumens preparing for Baptism. I also prepare to renew my own Baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil.” –Sister Veronica, O. Carm.
“Lent. A small word packed with powerful meaning and tradition. Growing up in the Catholic faith, we discussed as a family what we were going to ‘give up’ and ‘why we chose to give up that action or thing.’ These discussions allowed us to reflect and grow in our faith.” – Marlys Fix, St. James, Jamestown

“During Lent, whenever my brothers or me do an act of charity or pray for someone, we put a bean into a special bowl. At Easter, the beans get exchanged with jelly beans, and any time we do an act of charity or pray, we get a jelly bean!” – Peter Gow, St. Catherine’s Valley City

“‘Behold the wood of the cross…’ Throughout Lent, I recall these words whenever I look upon a crucifix. These words remind me that just as Christ embraced the wood of his cross in spite of fear and doubt, I am called to imitate him and embrace my own suffering.” – Joshua Bartholomew, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

“It takes time and personal growth to look beyond yourself. I find Lent is the time when the Lord shows me those who are suffering so I can make myself more available to them. The person in front of you is Christ in disguise, and each new person is beautiful.” – Monica Karas, Sts. Peter and Paul, Bechyne

“My family has a movie and popcorn night every Friday but during Lent we give up popcorn. This small sacrifice still allows us to spend time together but also helps remind us all to think of Jesus in his struggle during the 40 days in the desert that Lent signifies.” – Grace Burrell, St. Patrick’s, Crystal

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence. The norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members from age 14 onwards.

As always, fasting that would seriously hinder one’s health or the health of others would be contrary to the will of God. Those who are frail, pregnant, or manual laborers are excused from these obligations. The Church understands that certain people are not able to commit to the Lenten fast.

Catholics are also encouraged to undertake some sort of personal penance or abstinence. Examples include giving up sweets, a favorite TV show, or not listening to the radio in the car. Giving up these things isn’t some sort of endurance test, but these acts are done to unite our sufferings with Christ and draw us closer to him.

For example, a person may give up his favorite TV show, but if he simply turns the television to another channel, the Lenten penance really does not mean much. Instead, the person should consider devoting the spare time to prayer or perhaps his family.
Growing up, we followed traditions throughout the Catholic liturgical year which helped us live out our faith. I took these for granted as “normal.” I later learned that these traditions were unknown to many Catholics.

Upon realizing this, I set the liturgical year as a foundation for my catechesis class and the results were astonishing. Parents and children were engaged in this active and fun Catholic life. We now use the liturgical year to form our own family traditions and hand on the faith to our children. Because of this, I created a calendar which lays out the liturgical year and encourages us to live the traditions associated with it.

Vatican II’s teaching on the Sacred Liturgy explains how the liturgical calendar helps us live out the liturgical year: “Holy Mother Church is conscious that she must celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse by devoutly recalling it on certain days throughout the course of the year.”

A liturgical calendar is not a typical calendar, in that it forms a circle, a never-ending shape, which walks us through a cycle that is eternal. It is the shape of a wedding ring, calling to mind our “Divine Spouse.” It is the shape of the “Crown of Victory,” won by Christ through the saving mysteries it celebrates.

The time is not marked by months, but by Sundays. The largest outer square represents Sunday, the Lord’s Day. As we cycle through the weeks, we are continually drawn back to the day of the Lord’s victory over sin and death.

The mysteries made present throughout the year are represented by seasons and colors. The liturgical year begins on the First Sunday of Advent, a violet time of preparation, as we await the birth of the Lord. We cycle through the glory of Christmas and into Ordinary Time, the green growing time. The word “ordinal” means numbered; we number the Sundays as God’s message of salvation is laid out and we grow in knowledge of his son, Jesus Christ. Then, we plunge into the somber penance of Lent, which prepares for the “Feast of Feasts,” Easter. For fifty days, we revel in the Lord’s Resurrection. We continue growing through Ordinary Time, as we move toward the last things and await the Lord’s second coming.

We enter into the calendar by affixing a small crucifix to the day with sticky putty. In this way, my children concretely move through the seasons and come to understand the full cycle of the Church.

Feast days of the saints are laid out in the calendar and carry many traditions. Some feasts, like the Solemnity of St. Joseph, are major feasts and should be greatly celebrated in our parishes. Others may hold private importance and smaller traditions will develop in your home.

The essential point is why we celebrate these saving mysteries and what they hold for us. Throughout the liturgical year, the Church offers us a glimpse of the Lord’s power and glory. We enter into the moments which made our salvation possible. They are made present, not just as a memory, but are real and alive for us today. Celebrating these feasts in our home helps us to enter into the Mass and gives us a focus for our daily lives.

The Church uses the liturgical year to guide us in our relationship with Jesus Christ. On our own, it is difficult to understand Christ’s mysteries. Even reading the Bible regularly can leave the events empty or in the past. Therefore, the Church gives us both spiritual and physical ways to experience God’s life and love at each moment of the year. These illuminate our lives with Christ’s light, allowing us to enter into his heavenly glory!

Kristie Unterseher is a wife and mother of four. She has served in catechesis and evangelization for over 15 years and loves engaging children in the faith. She is a parishioner of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Reynolds.
There’s been a lot of talk about the Synodal Church—the Amazon Synod hosted by the Vatican in October, or the two-year German Synod begun in Advent. There are a wide variety of synods. Local dioceses periodically call synods, like Bismarck did in 2016.

“Synod” is from the Greek sunodos, sun- “together” + hodos “way.” Historically, it’s developed an emphasis on listening as how we find our way together.

Need help listening? Check out the app Overdrive. North Dakota’s county libraries can introduce you to a wealth of literature, including audiobooks and movies, lying at our fingertips. Thanks to the librarians in Rugby who set me up, I’ve listened to a little more than 200 books in the last five years—all for free.

Enough of that kind of listening. How about the art of listening?

Ignatius Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises encourages the director of the Exercises to work at salvaging the truth of what the retreatant is saying. Great lesson! The saint learned how entering into the vantage point of another unlocks the heart. The less guarded our dialog partner is, the more honest and interesting the exchange.

Minneapolis-based Krista Tippett hosts the podcast “On Being.” Featured on Public Radio, the program has recast an approach to debate by asking better questions. The tagline for its website reads: “Pursuing deep thinking and moral imagination, social courage and joy, to renew inner life, outer life, and life together.”

Becoming Wise grew out of this experience. More than just an anthology of choice conversations she’s had over the years, the book dances between dialogue and reflection, like a garden party peppered with periods for prayerful meditation. She captures the kind of intelligent discussions we deserve to hear more frequently in the Church.

“The connective tissue of these pages is the language of virtue—an old-fashioned word, perhaps, but one that I find is magnetic to new generations.” Virtues are “tools for the art of living…pieces of intelligence about human behavior.”

The virtues of faith, hope, and love each command a chapter. Covering the horizon, however, like the backdrop of a movie set, is the virtue of generous listening, an everyday social art powered by a noble, foundational curiosity.

This book won’t work for people who have little inclination to change their minds. If you’ve already got stuff figured out, why listen? But if you’re a pretty good listener, this book will hone the skill already at work in you.

Interviewed on NPR’s All Things Considered, Krista defined one of wisdom’s qualities as “joining inner life with our outer presence in the world. The litmus test of wisdom is the imprint a wise life makes on the world around it.”

Our Church wants to impact the world, uniting Jesus’ message to today’s lived experience. Similarly, a child’s mastery of a mother tongue starts with mom. One of the main bridges in both cases is listening.

Krista believes “Hope” (her final chapter) is making a comeback. Becoming Wise offers a hope that wells up when we listen to ourselves and to one another, even those we strongly disagree with.

As a parish priest, I’ve come to discover how effective homilies can grow out of conversations with honest, earnest unbelievers whose voices can ring with the raw yearnings of our common humanity.

Who are we to one another? What does it mean to be human? Am I impacting the world around me? No answers worth their salt will come to us unless we listen.

Essential to the Church’s Gospel witness is a willingness to be the best of listeners. How will we grow in that virtue? What a great conversation to have with Krista.

Father Michael Hickin is the pastor of St. Mark’s Church in Bottineau and St. Andrew’s in Westhope.
Building character through virtue

By Mary Beth Traynor | Vice-President, St. John Paul II Schools

Editor’s Note: National Catholic Schools Week was celebrated Jan. 26 through Feb. 1 with the theme “Catholic Schools: Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed.” Schools across the diocese observed the annual celebration with Masses, open houses and other activities for students, families, parishioners, and community members. St. John Paul II Schools in Fargo used the week to highlight a character-building program, which will be implemented this year in all of its schools across the diocese. The following article explains the program.

Our Catholic schools exist to serve the Church’s mission of education and evangelization. Parents entrust their children to Catholic schools with the expectation that our schools will form and inform their children as well as keep them safe from harm. Catholic schools have a longstanding commitment to educating the whole child—mind, body, heart, and spirit. Through education of the whole child, we aim to provide students with a faith that enables them to choose the right course of action in difficult situations and to grow in practical and ethical insight over time.

Catholic schools across the Diocese of Fargo are implementing character education and formation of the whole human person through the pursuit of virtues. St. John Paul II Catholic Schools in Fargo is in the first year of implementing “Education in Virtue,” an interactive curriculum structured on the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas. The program was developed by the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist from Ann Arbor, Mich. It is designed so that the entire student body is studying the same virtue each week, to provide a whole school focus. The program covers 38 virtues over the course of a year.

Daily prayer, role-playing, and modeling provide students with a foundation in virtuous living. Across all grade levels, instructors define each virtue to give shared understanding throughout the system. Students learn how to live out the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

Sara Dudley, principal at St. Michael’s School in Grand Forks, is in year three of implementing the Education in Virtue program. She says, “Education in Virtue has provided our school with a thorough and complete program that gives students the language of virtue and the examples of the saints. With each virtue, students have a prayer that is developmentally appropriate to help them grow in virtue and grow closer to God. The whole school implementation of Education in Virtue helps students understand all of the beautiful graces that God has given us.”

Catholic schools recognize that parents are the primary educators of their children. Through the partnership between school and home, parents are invited to follow each week in the study of virtue. Parents receive a monthly “School/Home Virtue” connection focusing on one of the theological or cardinal virtues. Included in the information are practical activities to do with the family as well as a saint study that will strengthen lessons from school.

Catholic schools are no doubt in the business of education, more importantly, we seek to inculcate the Church’s tradition and form students in mind, body, heart, and spirit. We are educating students not only for the time they spend in our schools, we are educating them for the time they will spend in the world, where they will make a difference.
A Portfolio of Protection

- Our signature product. Insure your life for life.
- Affordable protection for temporary needs.
- Retirement income you can count on. Guaranteed.
- Protect your assets. Get quality care. Prepare for the future.
- Receive an income even when you are sick or can’t work.

The Knights of Columbus offers a full-line of quality, flexible products backed by our highly-rated financial strength* to help protect your Catholic family.

Permanent Life Insurance
Term Life Insurance
Retirement Annuities
Long-Term Care Insurance
Disability Income Insurance

LIFE INSURANCE • DISABILITY INCOME INSURANCE • LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE • RETIREMENT ANNUITIES

Pat Dolan, FICF
General Agent
Fargo
701-298-9922
Patrick.dolan@kofc.org

The Dolan Agency

Steve Bill
Fargo
701-371-3377

Wayne Cherney
FIC, LUTCF
Devils Lake
701-662-4420
701-739-8143
1-800-906-6780

Joel Herman
FICF
Wahpeton
Jamestown
701-219-5847

Sean Osowski
FIC
Grafton
701-360-0770

Jim Suda
FICF
Grand Forks
701-430-0604

* As of 01/2018, rated A+ Superior by A.M. Best
As we approach Valentine’s Day, let’s take a moment to explore the true meaning of love. When you tell someone you love them, what do you mean? You want them to be happy, right? But do we really want what’s best for them, even if it hurts? What about God’s love? And how can we love our neighbor?

In his famous work *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis refers back to the ancient Greek as he distinguishes the different types of love into four categories. These can be thought of as the natural affectionate love within families, the brotherly or sisterly love among friends, the romantic or erotic love between men and women, and the selfless and unconditional charitable love of God.

First, let’s talk about loving others. When we say we love someone, do we really love that person? Do we love them for who they are, and help them become who they’re called to be? Or are we attracted more to what they can do for us? Do we like them more for how they make us feel about ourselves?

To truly love someone, we need to be free. We cannot be forced to love someone. Even within families, we have the choice whether or not to love each other, although the harm to society is evident when we fail to do so. In our wedding vows, we promise to love each other all the days of our lives. First we must be free to give of ourselves. Thus, if spouses have addictions or attachments, can they live out their vows fully? Of course not! At least not in the way we want and deserve to be loved.

Even if we could, would we really want to force someone to love us? No, and that’s partly why God gives us a free will (CCC 1730). God doesn’t force us to love him either. Instead, through the gift of our own free will, each of us can decide for ourselves and choose by our lives for all eternity whether to love him or not. As our faith teaches, true freedom is not the ability to do whatever we want but the ability to do as we ought so we can seek God and what is good (CCC 1733, 1740).

The greatest form of love is the charitable love of God. Perhaps you have heard the phrase “seeing with the eyes of God.” As children of God, we too are called to strive for this unselfish and unconditional love of others. True love can also be seen in how it makes us act. St. James tells us that faith without works is dead (James 2:14–26), and Jesus teaches us how to love others through the works of mercy.

One of the best ways we can participate in the Works of Mercy today is to support the mission of local charities and nonprofits. At Christmas we hear that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and we have another great opportunity right before Valentine’s Day to give in a special way on Feb. 13 at GivingHeartsDay.org, when gifts of at least $10 can be matched up to $4,000 or more.

Each of us were created to make a gift of ourselves to others, and we can’t truly love God without loving our neighbor. While every day is an opportunity to let others know how much we love them, this year on Valentine’s Day let’s take some time to let the people we love know they are loved. How about we send a note or let our family and friends know in simple little ways? Why not do something fun and romantic for your spouse? And finally, don’t forget to show your love for others by making a generous gift to support your favorite Catholic charities on Feb. 13 for Giving Hearts Day!
Austria in 1938. When a referendum on the annexation was held, Village authorities hid his vote and reported that the local vote Jagerstatter was the only person in the town to vote against it. Jagerstatter publicly opposed Germany’s annexation of war effort, Jagerstatter was deferred for military service several times. He was finally called up in 1940 and completed basic training. He refused to take the oath to Hitler, but authorities apparently overlooked his refusal and sent him home under the farmer exemption.

His experience at basic training and reports that came in about the Nazi regime made him further question not just the regime, but the morality of the war itself, including the claim that the war and Hitler were necessary to stop the Communists. The village began to turn on him and his family. Meanwhile, they lived under the ominous threat that someday he would have to face authorities for his position.

In addition to his wife and three young daughters, Jagerstatter cared for his mother, a sister-in-law, and a godson whose father had died. He understood his obligations to them and his responsibilities to his community. He asked his priest for guidance. The priest reminded Jagerstatter of his familial obligations, but arranged a meeting with the bishop. The bishop advised Jagerstatter of his “responsibilities” to civil authorities and his “far greater” responsibilities for his own life and his family’s.

Jagerstatter was called for active duty in 1943. He refused combat duty and the Hitler oath. He was later deported to Berlin, far from the remote mountain village of Sankt Radegund. Within a month, he was sentenced for “undermining military morale” and executed by beheading.

When the course of history turns, so do opinions. When the war ended and the Nazi atrocities were revealed, people who had supported or made peace with the Hitler regime found ways to praise or at least acknowledge those who stood firm against the defeated reich. Not so with Jagerstatter. In the eyes of the village and his fellow countrymen, Jagerstatter’s “crime” was not that he refused to give an oath to Hitler. It was the fact that he abandoned his family and community. In addition, in their eyes, his actions—because he based them on the Catholic faith—implied that the rest of them had made the morally wrong choice.

In truth, like St. Thomas More before him, Jagerstatter did not judge his neighbors. He only followed his own conscience. Nevertheless, he remained unpopular and relatively unknown. When Gordon Zahn set out to write a book about Jagerstatter in the late 1950s to early 1960s, many of the subjects interviewed still had bitter or ambivalent views about him. Why couldn’t he just say the words and spare his family? Doesn’t Paul tell the Romans to obey civil authority? What good did it do anyway? He didn’t stop Hitler, and the war continued.

This last question goes to the heart of Malick’s depiction of Jagerstatter’s life. Does a “hidden life” make any difference? Eventually, through the work of people like Zahn, Jagerstatter’s story did become known. In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI declared Jagerstatter a martyr, and he was later beatified. His widow, still alive and living in Sankt Radegund, along with his four daughters—including the child born out-of-wedlock—were at the beatification ceremony.

Even if it had never become known, Jagerstatter’s choice would still have mattered. To God, every “hidden” life is significant beyond our imagination. Jagerstatter trusted that what mattered in his life was obedience to God above all. The rest would be in God’s hands.
Reflections on seminary formation

As I am already in my fourth semester of seminary, I have had time to reflect on how much formation takes place at seminary. The goal of the seminary is to form young men into holy priests of Jesus Christ. This is no easy task! The seminary does this by developing the four main areas that contribute to the fruitful and transformative ministry of a priest. These four areas are the spiritual, academic, pastoral, and human formation. It is critically important for the health and growth of the Church that each of these four areas be firmly developed in each priest.

The spiritual life can be fostered and nurtured in various ways. St. Gregory the Great Seminary, where all of us Fargo college seminarians attend, requires attendance at Morning Prayer, Mass, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer each day. Mass is to be the highlight of each day so we normally have Mass in the morning before any of our classes.

The formation team at the seminary is also diligent in making sure each seminarian has an opportunity to make a holy hour each day. It is during these holy hours that we develop a personal relationship with our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. On top of all this, the seminary requires each seminarian to have a spiritual director who can help him advance more confidently in the spiritual life, understanding more clearly the promptings of God in his life.

Academic formation is most apparent in the classes and daily studying of each seminarian. Seminarians average 12 to 18 credits per semester. The first two years of seminary are mainly focused on general credits with a little philosophy sprinkled in the midst. The final two years are the “meat and potatoes” of philosophy, aimed at preparing us for entry into theological studies at a major seminary.

The pastoral formation is aimed toward forming good shepherds of Christ’s flock. In years three and four, each seminarian is assigned an apostolate where he goes out to a nearby parish on Wednesday nights and helps teach religious education, visit the elderly, or just stop by and visit with the parishioners. These apostolates give each of us an opportunity to improve our social interactions with other people and to see what parish life is like.

The human formation at the seminary is probably the most hidden as it has no true gauge. With the academic formation, each of us receives grades for our classes to show how well we are doing. The spiritual life can be checked by our spiritual directors. Pastoral formation can be evaluated through our various apostolates and interactions with the laity. Human formation really doesn’t have the same sort of evaluation. Each seminarian enters formation with his own challenges, hardships, and short comings. This is the target of human formation. Human formation attempts to polish the seminarian’s personality and interpersonal skills so that he can more effectively be an attractive bridge to Jesus Christ and his Church. Issues for human formation span a broad spectrum, encompassing things as mundane as poor hygiene and weight gain, to bolstering conversational fluency. Human formation must truly be borne by the seminarian as he needs to strive to improve. We all are striving for sainthood and human formation is one of the ways in which we become better men so as to serve the people of God well.

Each of these areas of formation are practiced at St. Gregory the Great Seminary and seminaries across the world. The old saying, “You reap what you sow,” couldn’t be truer when it comes to seminary. Because of the amount of time, effort, and resources the Church devotes to her seminaries, the result is good, holy priests who bring the Most Holy Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ to the faithful in the Diocese of Fargo.

Please continue to keep us seminarians in your prayers. You are in ours.

Editor’s Note: Seminarian Life is a column written by current Diocese of Fargo seminarians. Please continue to pray for them.
Soon I will celebrate my 30th anniversary of religious profession. Incredible! No, more than incredible: astounding, astonishing.

Where have the years gone, my Jesus; and who am I that you should have called me to an espousal which not even death can destroy?

I open my wedding album (that is, a certain well-worn white three-ring binder) and stare at the cover sheet of the booklet for my First Profession Mass on Feb. 2, 1990 in Kansas City, Mo. This album has faithfully accompanied me from Kansas City to Corpus Christi, Texas, to Siberia to New Mexico, then back to Texas, Belize (the cradle of my religious vocation), England, Iowa, back to New Mexico, back to Belize, once more Texas, and finally now to North Dakota, where I live on a SOLT Family Ecclesial Team and serve as catechist at St. Ann’s School in Belcourt and director of religious education at St. Michael the Archangel Church in Dunseith.

The original sky-blue of my Profession Mass coversheet has faded considerably over time, with all that travel; the cardstock edges are not exactly pristine. No matter: the astonishing truth of God’s preferential love for me shines forth as strongly as ever through the Prophet Jeremiah’s words typed on that page. What also shines forth is the starkly simple sketch of three candles which my superior of the time, Sister Patricia Mary Burns, SOLT, drew on the cover. They are candles for Candlemas of course, the popular name for mystery celebrated on my profession day. What a gift, my Jesus, to profess my love for you and your Church on the Feast of the your Presentation in the Temple, the feast par excellence of consecrated souls.

Tradition has it that on Feb. 2, the day of Christ’s self-donation in the Temple, men and women of religious of various communities—Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, etc.—present candles to the Holy Father as a symbolic renewal of their perpetual self-gift to the Lord.

“I have loved you with an everlasting love” my Jesus tells me in his language beyond words. “I love you, too, Lord,” I whisper in reply. To my way of thinking, his steadfast love to me borders on the absurd: why such patience, such disproportionate, even absurd patience in the face of all my doubts, fears, hesitations, faults, and failings?

But there is no remedy for such love. I must accept the fact that the faltering echo of my “yes” to him will never adequately answer his unshakeable, eternal “yes” to me, and through me, to the entire people of God. Chosen; yes, I—we—are chosen and beloved from before time began. “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3).

St. John Paul II spoke of this mysterious relationship between the call of the individual religious brother or sister and the call of the entire People of God:

“For in every consecrated person the Israel of the new and eternal covenant is chosen. The whole messianic people, the entire Church, is chosen in every person whom the Lord selects from the midst of these people; in every person who is consecrated for everyone to God as His exclusive possession” (Redemptionis Donum: To Men and Women Religious on their Consecration in the Light of the Mystery of the Redemption, p. 16).

To think that I somehow stand in for the entire People of God; to think that in some mysterious manner in and through me the Father ceaselessly proclaims to every single person who walks this earth, “You are my beloved, my chosen; I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

Ah, Lord, what can I say to your love, to your indefatigable love? Jesus my Beloved, as our anniversary approaches, with Mother Mary I sing “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior (Luke 1:46–47).
Once again, the annual God’s Gift Appeal is upon us. Over the past 10 years or so, there has been a significant shift in the method members of our diocese use to make a donation. For years, making charitable contributions by check was the old standby. And this remains, by far, the most popular method in the way people make a donation to our annual appeal. But, let’s face it, less people are carrying around their checkbooks nowadays, especially the younger generations. Let me share with you some of the other ways folks are making donations to the annual appeal.

1. Give online at www.fargodiocese.org with a credit/debit card. Other than check, this is the second most popular way we receive donations. Many people use their credit card so they can take advantage of card discounts or points. Giving online also allows the donor to set up a payment schedule with a start and end date. It truly gives the donor a lot of control over their giving.

2. Give online at www.fargodiocese.org with an electronic funds transfer (EFT). Simply put, folks can make a donation by using their checking or savings account. Just like using a credit card, payment schedules can be set up.

3. Give using Bill Pay. This has been a popular method for a number of years. Many donors set up bill-pay through their own bank’s online banking. For example, a donor can set up God’s Gift Appeal as a payee and much like the credit and EFT gifts, a payment schedule can be established as well.

4. Give by using a phone app. At the diocese, we use an app called GivePlus. When an individual puts the app on their phone, they can simply search for the Diocese of Fargo or God’s Gift Appeal and set up a payment or a payment schedule.

5. Give by text. This is really easy. Just like texting a family member or friend, all someone needs to do is put in the phone number (855) 850-8463 and the amount in which they choose to donate and the prompts for payment schedule and confirmation will come back to the phone.

6. Give by using stock or IRA. Because there are significant tax advantages for giving by using stock and/or required distributions from an IRA, these remain a popular method. Most people simply work with the custodian of their account and its fairly simple process. If you would like more information about procedures, contact me at steve.schons@fargodiocese.org.

7. Give by using farm commodities (grain, corn, livestock, etc). Again, there are some significant tax advantages for folks that use this method. The important thing to remember is that commodity has to be transferred to charity before it’s sold. For more information on this method, go to www.cdfnd.org. About 10 years ago, we had someone call in and tell us they were donating a truckload of chickens to God’s Gift Appeal. Thankfully, we received the proceeds from the sale and not the live chickens.

8. Giving with cash. It amazes me to see how many folks still send cash through the U.S. mail. Although we strongly recommend not to do this, we will always accept the donation. If you have any questions or would like any information about any of these methods, give me a call or send me an email at (701) 356-7926 or steve.schons@fargodiocese.org.
The One Pope

The new and much-ballyhooed Netflix film *The Two Popes* should, by rights, be called *The One Pope*, for it presents a fairly nuanced, textured, and sympathetic portrait of Jorge Mario Bergoglio (Pope Francis) and a complete caricature of Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). This imbalance fatally undermines the movie, whose purpose, it seems, is to show that old grumpy, legalistic Benedict finds his spiritual bearings through the ministrations of friendly, forward-looking Francis. But such a thematic trajectory ultimately does violence to both figures, and turns what could have been a supremely interesting character study into a predictable and tedious apologia for the filmmaker’s preferred version of Catholicism.

That we are dealing with a caricature of Ratzinger becomes clear when, in the opening minutes of the film, the Bavarian Cardinal is presented as ambitiously plotting to secure his election as Pope in 2005. On at least three occasions, the real Cardinal Ratzinger begged John Paul II to allow him to retire from his position as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and to take up a life of study and prayer. He stayed on only because John Paul adamantly refused the requests. And in 2005, upon the death of John Paul, even Ratzinger’s ideological opponents admitted that the now seventy-eight-year-old Cardinal wanted nothing more than to return to Bavaria and write his Christology. The ambitious plotting fits, of course, the caricature of the “conservative” churchman, but it has absolutely nothing to do with the flesh-and-blood Joseph Ratzinger. Furthermore, in the scene depicting an imagined meeting between Pope Benedict and Cardinal Bergoglio in the gardens at Castel Gandolfo, the aged Pope frowningly lashes out at his Argentinian colleague, bitterly criticizing the Cardinal’s theology. Once again, even Joseph Ratzinger’s detractors admit that “God’s Rottweiler” is in fact invariably kind, soft-spoken, and gentle in his dealings with others. The barking ideologue is, again, a convenient caricature but not even close to the real Ratzinger.

But the most serious mischaracterization occurs toward the end of the film when a dispirited Benedict, resolved to resign the papacy, admits that he had stopped hearing the voice of God and that he had begun to hear it again only through his newfound friendship with Cardinal Bergoglio! Mind you, in saying the following I mean not an ounce of disrespect to the real Pope Francis, but that one of the most intelligent and spiritually alert Catholics of the last one hundred years would require the intervention of Cardinal Bergoglio in order to hear the voice of God is beyond absurd. From beginning to end of his career, Ratzinger/Benedict has produced some of the most spiritually luminous theology in the great tradition. That he was, by 2012, tired and physically ill, and that he felt incapable of governing the great apparatus of the Catholic Church—yes, of course. But that he was spiritually lost—no way. Again, it might be a fantasy of some on the left that “conservatives” hide their spiritual bankruptcy behind a veneer of rules and authoritarianism, but one would be hard pressed indeed to apply this hermeneutic to Joseph Ratzinger.

The very best parts of this film are the flashbacks to earlier stages in the life of Jorge Bergoglio, which shed considerable light on the psychological and spiritual development of the future Pope. The scene depicting his powerful encounter with a confessor dying of cancer is particularly moving, and the uncompromising treatment of his dealings with two Jesuit priests under his authority during the “Dirty War” in Argentina goes a long way to explaining his commitment to the poor and to a simple manner of life.

What would have infinitely improved the film, in my humble judgment, is a similar treatment in regard to Joseph Ratzinger. If only we had had a flashback to the sixteen-year-old boy from a fiercely anti-Nazi family, pressed into military service in the dying days of the Third Reich, we would understand more thoroughly Ratzinger’s deep suspicion of secularist/totalitarian utopias and cults of personality. If only we had had a flashback to the young priest, peritus to Cardinal Frings, leading the liberal faction at Vatican II and eager to turn from preconciliar conservatism, we would have understood that he was no simple-minded guardian of the status quo. If only we had had a flashback to the Tubingen professor, scandalized by a postconciliar extremism that was throwing the theological baby out with the bathwater, we might have understood his reticence regarding programs advocating change for the sake of change. If only we had had a flashback to the Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith composing a nuanced document, both thoughtfully critical and deeply appreciative of Liberation Theology, we might have grasped that Pope Benedict was by no means indifferent to the plight of the poor.

Now, I realize that such a treatment would have made for a far longer movie, but who cares? Heck, I was willing to sit through three-and-a-half rather tedious hours of *The Irishman*. I would have been happy to watch four hours of a film that was as honest and insightful about Joseph Ratzinger as it was about Jorge Mario Bergoglio. It would have made not only for a fascinating psychological study, but also for an illuminating look at two different but deeply complementary ecclesial perspectives. Instead, we got more of a cartoon.
The responses I received to the story about the penny found on a tombstone published in the October 2019 issue of New Earth were so great that I want to share a similar story with you.

In October, I went out to dinner with Linda and Joe to meet two other friends from our UND Newman Center days long ago. Linda and Joe picked me up and together we drove to the restaurant.

The parking lot at the mall was packed. It was difficult to find a place to park, and it was a long walk to the restaurant. As we made our way across the parking lot, I was busy visiting with Joe, who is the quieter of the couple. Soon, I realize it was only Joe and I. “Where is Linda?” I asked.

Linda was behind us, picking up a penny. When Linda caught up, she was beaming in delight about the penny and said she would tell us why in the restaurant.

We met up with our old UND friends and were ushered to a table. We sat, eagerly talking about the “old days” at Newman with Fathers Larry Haas and Vincent Tuchscherer and Sisters Borgia Sondag and RoseMary Marquart.

Eventually, we moved on to modern times, family life, work, vacations, lake cabins, and second homes. When that was exhausted, Linda brought up the penny she found in the parking lot.

She said she had retired early so she could care for her little brother Randy who had brain cancer. Linda, Joe, Randy and his wife Carla had done so many things together in their younger years. They lived across from each other on the same street.

Carla had to work to keep the health insurance available. Randy needed a caregiver, so Linda volunteered to be with Randy during the workday. She would take him to the doctor and rehab, make meals, and sit with him remembering their childhood and the many games they played—winning a penny here, losing a penny there.

Penny Rummy was the favorite game of the two couples. They played several times a week when Randy was able. Soon enough, he was not able. And later, he died.

About a year later, on Randy's 60th birthday, Carla went to the cemetery. She was uneasy. She missed Randy so much and was having a hard time moving on with her life. She wondered what this visit would bring.

When she got there, she stood in prayer as the tears streamed down her face. Eventually, she pulled herself together and opened her eyes. What did she see?

Sixty pennies wove their way around the markings of the flat, ground-level tombstone as if they were dancing. There was a penny for each of Randy's 59 birthdays and his first year with God.

Carla was overjoyed. It was a sign that Randy was okay in his new life.

No one in Carla’s family or in the Linda and Joe’s family admitted to lining up the 60 pennies on the tombstone. No one knows how this could have happened.

Now, Linda cherishes every penny that falls in her path—whether taking a walk in Buffalo, Minn., or through a parking lot at the busy mall. Each penny reminds her of the precious life of her little brother Randy.

Father Bert Miller serves as pastor at St. Mary’s Church in Park River and St. Luke’s Church in Veseleyville.

Editor’s note: Stories of Faith is a recurring feature in New Earth. If you have a faith story to tell, contact Father Bert Miller at bert.miller@fargodiocese.org.
All high school and college aged women invited to Decora

By Bethany Richter | Junior at NDSU

Decora is a day set apart to awaken in young women the knowledge of their feminine genius through the discovery of God’s design for them, body, mind, and soul, to realize their true identity and vocation.

Lauren and Grace are two ladies who were able to experience Decora when they were college students at NDSU. They wrote the following testimonies to share the importance of this beautiful retreat to other women.

“The addition of the one-day Decora conference as part of women’s formation available to me while I was a student at NDSU equipped me with great tools to better understand the feminine genius and grow in lifelong sisterhood with other women. The thing I love about Decora is that it is focused on the whole person. I learned about women’s healthcare and fertility, proper leisure and its importance, the relationship between modesty and fashion, and healthy lifestyle habits for young Catholic women. Having a chance to learn these practical ways to live out the feminine genius echoes into my life today, some three, four, and five years later.” –Lauren

“Unfortunately, in today’s culture, women are led into comparison, doubt, confusion, and discouragement everywhere they turn through social media, commercials, and among the women in their communities. I once read, ‘Women are better together, and the kingdom of Heaven will be advanced only by our linking arms.’ In light of these words, what a hindrance it would be to the kingdom if women continue to be led into this comparison, doubt, confusion, and discouragement! Decora has led me and many other women towards a greater appreciation for the gift of the feminine genius.” –Grace

Decora is for high school and college aged women, and will be held on Feb. 29 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo. Come and enjoy inspiring speakers, fun breakouts, delicious food, a fashion show, time for personal prayer/reflection, and a guy panel! Decora is free for students, $35 for non-students, and includes meals and materials. Register at bisoncatholic.org by Feb. 23. Contact decorafargo@gmail.com. High school women are encouraged, but not required, to share this special day with their mom or a female mentor.
Dr. Ray Guarendi to be keynote speaker at Real Presence Radio Fargo banquet

Real Presence Radio will host Dr. Ray Guarendi as keynote speaker for a fundraising banquet in Fargo on Feb. 17. Sponsorships are available for $250, $500, $1,000 or higher levels, host a table of ten, or join as a guest! Dr. Ray Guarendi is a Catholic father of ten, a psychologist, author, and national radio and television host. His radio show, “The Dr. Is In” can be heard Mondays–Fridays on Real Presence Radio.

To become a table host, event sponsor, or to register as a guest, visit yourcatholicradiostation.com/banquet or contact us at (877) 795-0122 or jessica@yourcatholicradiostation.com.

Theology on Tap coming to Fargo Brewing Company Taproom Feb. 23

Head to Fargo Brewing Company Taproom for Theology on Tap Feb. 23. The evening begins at 5 p.m. with a social hour with food and drinks. At 6 p.m., guest speaker Jonathon Spaid, FOCUS Team Director at NDSU, will give a presentation on “St. Augustine—Conversion, friendship, finding your true self, and moms.” For young adults ages 21–40. Contact Jeff Benda at jeffinfargo@gmail.com

The seasons of our life: A spirituality of aging

Nurture a spirituality of aging that brings fulfillment, peace, and contentment in the autumn of life on Feb. 29 from 9 a.m. to noon at Presentation Prayer Center in Fargo. Workshop leader Briston Fernandes served as Director of Catholic Charities ND in Fargo from 2002–10 and continues to write and offer retreats and workshops on spirituality, social justice, and adult faith formation. Register by Feb. 21. Suggested fee is $20. Contact Scott, presentationprayercenter@gmail.com or (701) 237-4857.

Catholic Man Night expands locations

Join other men for an evening of fellowship at Catholic Man Night, now expanded to more parishes in the Fargo and Grand Forks areas. The evening begins at 6 p.m. with adoration and confession followed by a meal, prayer, and a speaker.

Feb. 20: Holy Family Church, Grand Forks
Mar. 3: St. Benedict’s Church, Wild Rice – speaker Johnathan Spaeth, FOCUS missionary
Mar. 19: Holy Family Church, Grand Forks
Apr. 16: Holy Family Church, Grand Forks
Apr. 16: St. Anthony of Padua Church, Fargo – speaker Father Kyle Metzger
May 12: Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo – speaker Father Larry Delaney

Catholic Charities ND’s Annual Award Luncheon on March 10

Join us on March 10 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for lunch and a program at Sts. Anne and Joachim in Fargo with special guest Bishop John Folda as Catholic Charities ND honors Dr. Lucho Espejo for using his medical skills to help those in need and advocating for the poor. A free will offering of $15 is suggested. RSVP to dinner@catholiccharitiesnd.org or call (701) 235-4457 by March 4.

Head to Valley City for a parish mission

Join St. Catherine’s Church in Valley City for their parish mission each night March 29 to April 1 at 6:30 p.m. Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers will speak on the topic: Relationships with God and Family. Deacon Harold is the author of The Mass in Sacred Scripture and has appeared on Life on the Rock, EWTN Live, and can be seen as the host of several popular EWTN television series.

Chris Stefanick headed to Holy Family Church in Grand Forks

Chris Stefanick will be hosting Reboot! Live at Holy Family Church in Grand Forks on April 29 from 7 to 9:30 p.m. Tickets are $25 which includes admission as well as select copies of Chris’ books, over a $40 value! Tickets are available at www.reallifecatholic.com or the parish office.

Chris Stefanick is a renowned Catholic author, speaker, and television host. His message reaches over 85,000 people a year. Reboot is a fun and inspiring experience that is geared towards those ages 12 and up. During this experience, Stefanick helps apply the inspiring truth of the Gospel to everyday life.
Harvey and Clarice Held (Savageau) celebrated their 60th anniversary on Nov. 7. They were married at St. Benedict Church in Wild Rice and are parishioners at Holy Rosary Church in Bisbee. They have 5 children and 5 grandchildren.

Allen and Elaine Swartz, parishioners of St. John’s Nepomucene Church in Pisek, celebrated their 60th anniversary on Dec. 29. They were married at St. John’s and remain parishioners there. They have 13 children (1 deceased), 31 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren.

Wendlen and Lavina Weninger, parishioners of Holy Spirit Church in Fargo, will celebrate their 60th anniversary Feb. 15. They were married at St. Cecelia Church in Harvey. They have 3 children, 7 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren.

Maggie Degenstein will celebrate her 85th birthday on March 10, Maggie has 4 children, 7 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren. She is a lifelong parishioner of Little Flower Church in Rugby.

Cececilia Goergen, parishioner at Sacred Heart Church in Cando, celebrated her 90th birthday on Dec. 29. She was married to Edward Goergen for 67 years until he passed away. She has 2 sons, 5 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great-grandchild.

Julia Klosterman, parishioner of St. Anthony Church in Mooreton, celebrated her 85th birthday on Jan. 29. She and her late husband Clyde were blessed with 7 children, 15 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren. She still lives on the farm and has lived on one all her life.

Florence Retterath, parishioner of St. Catherine’s Church in Valley City, will celebrate her 95th birthday on Feb. 21. She was married to Wesley until his death in 2007. She has 8 children, 20 grandchildren, and 34 great-grandchildren.

Don Wold, parishioner of Assumption Church in Starkweather, celebrated his 94th birthday on Dec. 18. Don was married to Rosemary for 50 years until her passing in 2013. Along with 3 children, Don has 2 grandchildren, Ashton and Seth Wold.

Lucille Wolfe, parishioner of St. Cecilia’s Church in Harvey, will celebrate her 90th birthday on March 10.

**Share life’s milestones** As a way to celebrate life and love, we encourage parishioners throughout the Diocese of Fargo to send a photo and news brief about golden anniversaries and anniversaries of 60 or more years or birthdays of 80 or more years to: New Earth, Diocese of Fargo, 5201 Bishops Blvd. S., Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104 or news@fargodiocese.org.
75 years ago — 1945
February is Catholic Press Month. “A Catholic Paper in Every Catholic Home” is this year’s motto. There are 7,500 subscribers to *Catholic Action News* which represents about half of the Catholic families in the diocese. For 25 cents, the publication will come to your mailbox for a full year. Under the guidance of Rev. Francis W. Lyons, the school children of St. Anthony’s in Fargo obtained subscriptions for practically every parish member. Rev. Thomas Hendrickson similarly launched a subscription drive contest between the high school classes at Sacred Heart Academy. St. Francis Academy in Hankinson secured another seventy subscriptions to our Diocesan paper for a combined total of forty-three dollars and seventy-five cents.

50 years ago — 1970
Father John Moore of St. Michael’s parish in Grand Forks, celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the holy priesthood on February 2. His ordination took place at St. Joseph’s church in Devils Lake. Father Moore has the honor of being the first native Devils Laker to become a priest of the Diocese of Fargo from St. Joseph’s parish.

20 years ago — 2000
The parishioners of St. Maurice in Kindred celebrated the dedication of their new worship space with the blessing of the altar by Bishop James S. Sullivan. It all began in 1963 when a committee from what became the original 15 families approached Father Maurice Mueller, then pastor at St. Benedict’s in Wild Rice, for his help in gaining official designation of a new parish in Kindred from the Diocese of Fargo. In gratitude, the new parish was named St. Maurice, after Father Mueller’s patron saint. After sharing a physical space for many years with Calvary Methodist Church, construction of the fellowship hall finally began in 1994. Sadly, Father Mueller died just 10 days prior to the groundbreaking ceremony for the worship center addition. A stained glass window was purchased in his memory and was unveiled at the dedication.

*These news items, compiled by Danielle Thomas, were found in *New Earth* and its predecessor, Catholic Action News.*
President Donald Trump addressed the annual March for Life on Jan. 24, telling pro-life demonstrators that he is an advocate for the right to life of unborn children, and calling for a federal prohibition on late-term abortion. He is the first president to attend in person the March for Life, which began in 1974 and has become one of the largest annual political events in the country.

“All of us here understand an eternal truth: Every child is a precious and sacred gift from God,” Trump told the crowd, which spanned across a large section of the National Mall and which the president described as a “tremendous turnout.”

“We’re here for a very simple reason, to defend the right of every child born and unborn to fulfill their God-given potential,” the president said.

“As President of the United States, I am truly proud to stand with you,” Trump said.

“Together we must protect, cherish, and defend the dignity and the sanctity of every human life.”

“You embrace mothers with care and compassion, you are powered by prayer and motivated by pure, unselfish love,” the president told the crowd.

Trump especially praised the college and high school students in attendance at the March for Life.

“Young people are the heart of the March for Life, and it’s your generation that is making America the pro-family, pro-life nation. The life movement is led by strong women, amazing faith leaders, and brave students, who carry on the legacy of pioneers before us, who fought to raise the conscience of our nation and uphold the rights of our citizens,” Trump said.

The president was welcomed enthusiastically by March for Life president Jeanne Mancini. Describing the March for Life as a “pro-life and pro-woman” event, and the “largest human rights demonstration in the entire world,” Mancini told Trump that “your presence here today makes a very powerful statement.”

“You are leader of the free world and you stand for life. Thank you for being here. Thank you for everything you’ve done for life. And thank you for everything you will be doing for life in the years ahead,” Mancini said, apparently in reference to the president’s upcoming election.

The president did not mention directly his reelection, but he did tell the crowd that “Democrats have embraced the most radical and extreme positions taken and seen in this country for years and decades, and you can even say, for centuries. Nearly every top Democrat in Congress now supports taxpayer-funded abortions all the way up until the moment of birth.”

Trump mentioned the 2019 passage of New York state’s Reproductive Health Act, which ushered in a wave of legislation in several states aimed at expanding legal protection for abortion. He also mentioned Virginia’s Governor Ralph Northam, who in 2019 made public comments that seemed to support allowing a child who survived a botched abortion to die without medical treatment.

As he closed his remarks, the president told the crowd his attendance was a “very special moment.”

“It is so great to represent you. I love you all...God bless America.”
The “ad limina” visits bishops are required to make to the Vatican are occasions to be honest about challenges, while also being encouraged to hope, said Bishop John Folda.

“It’s tempting at times to lose hope when all you hear is bad news and with some of the challenges we face in our dioceses at home; it’s extremely important to maintain a spirit of hope and the ‘ad limina’ I think has been that for me,” Bishop Folda told Catholic News Service Jan. 13 after meeting with Pope Francis.

Bishops from North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota met the pope on the first day of their “ad limina” visit. The region’s 10 dioceses have one archbishop, one auxiliary bishop, six bishops, one bishop-designate and two diocesan administrators.

Pope Francis spent about 30 minutes meeting with priests and seminarians from the 10 dioceses and then spent a full two hours alone with the bishops, Archbishop Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis said. “It was pretty amazing. It was beautiful.”

Bishop Folda, who was making his first ever “ad limina” visit, said that even though he lived in Rome for a few years of graduate work as a student-priest, it was a whole new experience to pray at the tomb of St. Peter as a bishop together with his brother bishops from the region.

The meeting with Pope Francis, Bishop Folda said, “was a really easy give-and-take, very conversational, which was delightful. And he was very interested in hearing about our experiences.”

The topics ranged from the sexual abuse scandal to migration, and from pastoral care of Native American communities to cultivating unity among diversity in the diocese, not just with different ethnic groups, but among Catholics with different preferences and priorities.

Pope Francis shared “some things that were on his mind, but also wanted to hear from us what are issues we are facing,” Archbishop Hebda said. Adding anecdotes and reflections from his own years as archbishop of Buenos Aires, the pope “really did a phenomenal job of connecting with each one of us and helping each one of us understand that he knows our situation and he’s very close to us.”

Pope Francis often talks about “accompaniment,” the archbishop said. That’s what they felt the pope was doing with them. Bishop David Kagan of Bismarck told CNS that the pope urged the bishops to pray, especially for themselves, when making decisions for their flock.

“The best thing and the first thing you simply have to do for the church—I mean your people—is pray for them,” Bishop Kagan recalled the pope saying. “But you’re not going to be much of a help if in your prayer, you don’t pray for yourself.”

The pope, he said, told the bishops that praying for themselves required humility “because we tend to think that because we’re bishops, we have the answers.”

“The only one who has the right answers is the Lord,” the pope said, according to Bishop Kagan. “Pray for yourselves and then pray for your people and the Lord will answer and do the rest. Just don’t get in his way.”

Archbishop Hebda said, Pope Francis was well aware of “divisions within our country that are not particularly religious-based, but some of the political challenges and how a bishop manages to help form his faithful about those things. He was very sensitive to that.”

Bishop Kagan said Pope Francis reminded the bishops that their first duty is not to get involved in “political quarrels,” but rather “to pray and to teach the principles of the church.”

“He reminded us—and we all kind of laughed as he did—he said, ‘Don’t forget: We already have a savior. We don’t have to try and do that again. We have to believe in him and allow him, through us, to lift people up to the truth of the Gospel and to a life of true dignity as they were created by God,’” the bishop recalled.

Bishop Kagan also said he told the pope about how people are moving to North Dakota to work in the oil and natural gas industry. But along with an increase in population and wealth, he said, there also has been an increase in homelessness and crime, including “drug addiction, prostitution, and human trafficking.”

The pope, he said, was “very knowledgeable of these things” and gave “very sound advice but it always begins with praying for those whom we serve.”

“It’s not a matter of running and hiding in the chapel so you don’t have to face those things,” Bishop Kagan recalled the pope saying. But “if you don’t begin with prayer, whatever you do is not going to have a lasting and good effect.”

Catholics who no longer practice their faith was another topic raised, Bishop Folda said.

Traveling across the mainly rural expanse of the Diocese of Fargo the past six and a half years “has been really delightful and edifying,” he said. “But it’s also challenging because you realize that there are many people who unfortunately have drifted away from the practice of the faith and so it is always on my mind how can I reach out to them, how can I draw them, welcome them back to the active living of a faith in the church, helping them to see that everyone is welcome, everyone has a place.”

“Being here in Rome for the ‘ad limina’ certainly brings that to the forefront of my mind as far as my own responsibility is concerned, as a bishop,” he said.
It seemed odd, the contrary comment on the Facebook page for Concerned Women for America of North Dakota, which is, according to its mission statement, “a chapter of the largest women’s public policy organization in the nation, conservative in nature and Biblical in foundation.”

I’ve watched threads on the page before, and usually they comprise discussions from like-minded women agreeing on a posted article or offering support on a highlighted event. This comment had come from a man, however, taking issue with a Family Policy Alliance article exposing the reality that chemical abortions can be reversed. He encouraged people to get their facts straight. The article had shared new stories of two children saved because their mothers found out that chemical abortions could be reversed, mentioning that hundreds of healthy babies now exist in our nation due to the Abortion Pill Reversal (APR) procedure. “All it takes is for the mother to take progesterone—a drug safely prescribed for decades to prevent miscarriages—after the first abortion pill.”

The man who’d highjacked the conversation inserted information gleaned from a medical journal challenging APR. But as anyone in this fight knows, these studies, even medical ones, can misleading. A moderator of the group page posted, in response, another article with medical professionals explaining the confusion and supporting the procedure.

We could go back and forth with articles all day, of course. But the reality is, according to Heartbeat International, as of May 2019, 750 babies have been saved from abortion due to the pill reversal. Because of this “second chance” procedure for mothers who change their minds about wanting an abortion, nearly 800 sweet-faced babies live with lives full of hope and the ability to help replenish our deadened culture’s lack of love.

Soon enough, the identity of the man who’d popped into the thread was exposed as an interloper when the moderator pointed out his role as a local escort who regularly ushers women into our state’s only abortion facility in Fargo every week.

I also recognized him from his little profile picture as the same man who, just days before—while I tried in freezing weather to offer a woman seeking an abortion real help—mocked me, saying “Blah blah blah” as our paths briefly crossed.

I’ve never understood his presence there, but he’s one of the more dedicated ones. Rarely a Wednesday passes without him present, ready and willing to accompany women in distress into a building where their children’s lives will violently end.

Knowing his identity, it made more sense why he’d entered the conversation. Chemical abortions are something of a “last stand” for the abortion industry. Even as surgical abortion “clinics” are continuing to close, the abortion pill has increased in usage, as have the facilities that offer it as an alternative to surgery.

According to written findings by Operation Rescue, in 2019 “Planned Parenthood doubled down as a supplier of abortion-inducing drugs by opening five new pill clinics, dropping surgical abortions from five to 14 of its centers that previously did not conduct abortions.”

In this age of “I want it now,” and the inclination to do one’s dirty deeds behind a screen or in private, it makes sense that a pill would be more appealing to many of the abortion-minded than surgery, which, outwardly at least, seems more invasive.

But I’ve been thinking lately about how especially egregious this “drive-thru abortion” really is. Sharing these thoughts with some friends recently, I noted that, with the abortion pill, instead of taking out any aftermath regret on the doctor who surgically ripped apart or poisoned her child, the woman is left knowing she ingested the pills that poisoned her baby—by her own hand. Further, she’s often alone in dealing with the dying process of her child, within her very body.

For these reasons, it seems especially insidious, and one friend, agreeing, added, “If she makes the mistake of looking at the ‘clump of tissues’ at home, she has the unfortunate reality of the baby’s humanity to deal with as well.”

Horrific, and straight from the bucket list of the evil one himself. Despite the bad news here, we cannot lose hope, nor think our Lord isn’t watching. For as another friend said, “It’s so sad for these deceived women. Satan is always at work, and it is tiring,” adding, “That is why it is always good to stay in the arms of Jesus, where we know God wins in the end.”

To which I respond with a grateful, “Amen.”

Roxane B. Salonen, a wife and mother of five, is a local writer, and a speaker and radio host for Real Presence Radio. Roxane writes for The Forum newspaper and for CatholicMom.com. Reach her at roxanebsalonen@gmail.com.
Do you know where we are?
The answer will be revealed in the March New Earth.

Where in the diocese are we?

Last month’s photo is from St. Boniface Church in Wimbledon.