What will it take to overturn Roe?

North Dakotans discuss current state of abortion laws and pro-life efforts

From Bishop Folda: The mission of the Church

How a gift formed a journey from Nigeria to Devils Lake, and started an award-winning movement

Sidewalk Stories: Yellow roses remind us we can all do something
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ON THE COVER:
A man kneels in prayer outside the abortion facility in downtown Fargo on Sept. 22, the first day of the annual 40 Days for Life campaign. (Kristina Lahr | New Earth)

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The mission of the Church

In 1993 I was appointed as a pastor for the first time in Syracuse, Neb., and I remember noticing a brass plaque in the back of the church. It said that St. Paulinus Church had been built with the help of contributions from the Catholic Extension Society, a national organization that supports the mission of the Church in needy areas of the United States. I thought about the many people from places all around the country who had contributed to building that church, and many others besides. I realized in a personal way how important it is to support the mission of the Church, especially in places where the Church lacks resources and priests.

For three days in September, I had the opportunity to meet with about 65 other bishops from the United States at a gathering sponsored by Catholic Extension. Our time together renewed my awareness of the Church’s ongoing mission, even as it is carried out in places that are both needy and often very remote. Like every diocese in this country, the history of the Diocese of Fargo was also written through the generous work and material contributions of countless benefactors who actively supported the mission of the Church in North Dakota. I’ve seen plaques in churches right here in our own diocese that commemorate the contributions of Catholic Extension and many others who supported the mission of the Church in this corner of the world when we needed outside help. From the earliest days of the Catholic Church in North Dakota, we have been assisted by missionaries—priests, religious, and laity—who came to the northern plains and shared the gift of faith with those who lived here. And a multitude of others made material contributions that allowed our parish churches and schools to rise up on the prairies. John Patrick Shanley, our founding bishop, constantly sought assistance from missionaries and benefactors who would help him build up the Church in our diocese, and all of his successors have continued those efforts.

The Church is by nature missionary. In fact, it is said that the Church doesn’t have a mission, it is a mission. It is sent out into the world by Christ, just as he sent out his first followers, to proclaim the Kingdom of God. “Go and make disciples of all nations...” There are thousands of Catholic missionaries who still go out into the world today, bringing the Gospel to the most remote areas and to places where the Catholic faith is barely known. Just as missionaries came here to plant seeds of faith, so do they still share that same faith with brothers and sisters around the world. Their work isn’t easy. In fact, it can be quite dangerous, and every year we hear of faithful missionaries who have died in service to Christ, true martyrs for the faith.

Even though our diocesan Church is now well established, we shouldn’t assume that the work of missionaries is completed. We are still blessed by the presence of missionary priests from Africa, Asia, and Europe who serve in our parishes. We still find among us religious sisters who left their homelands in order to serve in North Dakota, a place many of them had never heard of. And we have young adults who come every year to work with our own young people in schools, parishes, and college campuses. I think especially of the great missionaries of FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) who serve at UND and NDSU, as well as the National Evangelization Team (NET) missionaries who visit our parishes and schools to witness the faith to our youth. And we still need material support as well, especially in places where resources are meager and parishes struggle to make ends meet.

Ever since his election as our Holy Father, Pope Francis has drawn attention to the essential mission of the Church, and he has taught us that every one of us, by virtue of our baptism, is called to be a missionary disciple of Jesus Christ. In other words, as baptized followers of Jesus, we are sent—missioned—into the world as his witnesses. Some assume that missionaries must be priests or religious sisters or brothers, but the very fact of our baptism configures us to Christ, who was sent by his Father as our Redeemer. Now he, in turn, sends us into the world to continue his work. No matter what our state in life is, we all have a part to play in the mission of Christ’s Church.

It’s also important to realize that the Diocese of Fargo hasn’t only been on the receiving end of the Church’s mission. We have contributed to that mission by sending candidates to religious orders who serve in various places around our nation and the world. We have sent a growing number of young people who now serve as missionaries on college campuses across the country. In fact, some of our own priests were campus missionaries before they entered the seminary. We have made our own material contributions to the missionary work of the Church all over the world. I’m constantly edified by the generous support

No matter what our state in life is, we all have a part to play in the mission of Christ’s Church. –Bishop John Folda

FROM BISHOP FOLDA
of the faithful in our diocese for the Church in need, places of great poverty, places that have suffered natural disasters, and places that could not build their own parish churches without the help of others.

We must always remember the mission of the Church, which is to make Christ known and present in every land and among all peoples. By our material support, we make it possible for our brothers and sisters here and abroad to worship God and live the faith as we do. And by our prayers, we sustain those who “put out into the deep” and take the Gospel of Christ to the far reaches of the earth. Once again, we all have a part to play in the mission of Christ and his Church.

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### BISHOP FOLDA’S CALENDAR

**Oct. 10–14**
Retreat Presenter for Diocese of Portland, Portland, Maine

**Oct. 20 • 9:30 a.m.**
St. JPII Feast Day All School Mass, Shanley, Fargo

**Oct. 21 • 8 a.m.**
Mass for Diocesan School Professional Development Day, Shanley, Fargo

**Oct. 21 • 2 p.m.**
Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo

**Oct. 21 • 5:30 p.m.**
bisonCatholic Banquet, Delta Hotels by Marriott, Fargo

**Oct. 22 • 5 p.m.**
Mass at Middle School Rally, Red Willow

**Oct. 26 • 5:30 p.m.**
Operation Andrew Dinner, Bishop’s Residence, Fargo

**Oct. 27–29**
Bishops Conference on Evangelizing Dioceses, Steubenville, Ohio

**Nov. 2 • 9:30 a.m.**
St. JPII Memorial Mass, Shanley Chapel, Fargo

**Nov. 3 • 9 a.m.**
Mass for Holy Family School, Holy Family, Grand Forks

**Nov. 6–7**
Pastoral Visit, St. Thomas Newman Center, Grand Forks

**Nov. 8–9**
Catholic Rural Life Directors Meeting, St. Paul, Minn.

**Nov. 10 • 9:30 a.m.**
Talk at Women of the Word meeting, Nativity, Fargo

**Nov. 14–18**
USCCB Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

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### Diocese of Fargo Official Appointments/Announcements

Most Rev. John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo, has made the following appointments, announcement, and/or decrees:

**Rev. Philip K. Chacko** has been granted retirement from active ministry due to health, effective August 25, 2021.

**Rev. Bernard R. Schneider** has been appointed Administrator of St. Stephen’s Church, Larimore, effective August 25, 2021 and continuing *ad nutum episcopi*.

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### Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

**October**

**Missionary Disciples**

We pray that every baptized person may be engaged in evangelization, available to the mission, by being witnesses of a life that has the flavor of the Gospel.
Karl Cardinal Wojtyla was born in Wadowice, Poland, on May 18, 1920, the third of three children born to Karol Wojtyła and Emilia Kaczorowska. After completing high school in Wadowice, he enrolled in the Jagellonian University of Krakow in 1938.

Feeling called to the priesthood, he began his studies in 1942 during World War II in the clandestine major seminary of Krakow, directed by the Archbishop Adam Stefan Sapieha. After the war, Karol continued his studies in the major seminary, newly reopened, and in the school of theology at the Jagellonian University, until his priestly ordination in Krakow on Nov. 1, 1946.


Archbishop Wojtyla took part in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and made a significant contribution to the drafting of the Constitution Gaudium et Spes. He also took part in the five assemblies of the Synod of Bishops prior to the start of his Pontificate. On Oct. 16, 1978, Cardinal Wojtyla was elected Pope and on Oct. 22 he began his ministry and numerous travels as universal Pastor of the Church.

On May 3, 1981, an attempt was made on Pope John Paul II’s life in St. Peter’s Square. Saved by the maternal hand of the Mother of God, following a lengthy stay in the hospital, he forgave the attempted assassin and, aware of having received a great gift, intensified his pastoral commitments with heroic generosity.

During his pontificate, Pope John Paul II proclaimed the Year of Redemption, the Marian Year and the Year of the Eucharist as well as the Great Jubilee Year of 2000. He especially loved young people and attracted them to the Church by beginning the celebration of World Youth Day in 1986, which continues today. He was a staunch supporter of the Solidarity movement in his native Poland and is widely credited with helping to bring about the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe.

Pope John Paul II died on April 5, 2005, the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday. He was beatified in St. Peter’s Square on May 1, 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI, and was canonized on April 27, 2014 by Pope Francis.

Historical information from vatican.va

O Jesus, our great High Priest, hear my humble prayers on behalf of your priests. Give them a deep faith, a bright and firm hope and a burning love, which will ever increase throughout their priestly life.

In their loneliness, comfort them. In their sorrows, strengthen them. In their frustrations, remind them that through suffering the soul is purified. Show them that they are needed by the Church; they are needed by souls; they are needed for the work of redemption. Amen.
The Sacrament of Holy Orders: God’s gift to inspire and sanctify us

Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to the apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time...” (CCC 1536).

This definition from the Catechism of the Catholic Church should fill us with wonder and awe. We realize that Jesus did not intend that his ministry for the salvation and sanctification of souls should end with his Ascension into heaven. He surely could have distributed heavenly graces without enlisting ministers and mediators, but he left the apostles with the commission and power to distribute his grace to the faithful in all parts of the world until he returns in glory. Our hearts are filled with gratitude at the plan of providence to provide men of flesh and blood, that we can see, hear, and speak to, as ministers of his grace and truth.

The Church speaks of two distinct ways of sharing in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ. First, the baptismal—or interior—priesthood is shared by all the baptized. Through Baptism, we are washed in the blood of the lamb, given his spirit, and made members of the high priest, Jesus Christ. Thus, we are able to offer to the Father spiritual sacrifices, pleasing to him because of our union with his son. The writings of the New Testament affirm this truth (Rev. 1:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 12:1). So all the faithful become spiritually fruitful by offering sacrifice with Christ in atonement for sin and as a plea for God’s blessings.

However, the true essence of the sacrament of Holy Orders consists in the call of certain men from the body of the faithful to be consecrated for ministry for the sanctification of souls. Through the ritual of ordination, a man is united to Christ to offer sacrifice and administer the sacraments, for the good of the faithful. We could say that all the sacraments depend on this one in that they require an ordained minister to provide them or to adorn them with sacred ritual. The Church speaks of different degrees within the Sacrament of Orders, such as deacon, priest, and bishop. However, I will focus specifically on the priesthood, simply because we are spiritually impacted most by the priests who weekly and daily provide the sacraments we need for salvation, especially the Mass and confession.

A priest does not choose this sacrament for himself but responds to the call of God. He should not choose the priesthood out of selfish motives, be he seeking honors, material sustenance, or other human motives. Holy Orders confers special graces of sanctification upon the priest if he is open to this grace and corresponds with it. These gifts are specifically given to him so that he can inspire and sanctify those he serves. Holy Orders also confers a special power in reference to the Blessed Sacrament, for only a priest may confect the Sacrament of the Altar, and absolve sinners that they may receive the Sacrament worthily.

The sacrament also imposes a special spiritual character—like in Baptism and Confirmation—on the soul of the priest. This marks him forever as a priest, and it cannot be erased. Thus, the sacrament can never be repeated, and even if a priest loses the clerical state, he always remains a priest in his soul, even into an eternity of heaven or hell. This spiritual mark confers the sacred power to offer divine worship as a priest, as the character of Baptism and Confirmation allow the faithful to offer their spiritual sacrifices.

St. John Vianney, the patron saint of priests, said that if a priest is a saint, his people will be good, if a priest is good, his people will be mediocre, if a priest is mediocre, his people will be lost. We know that the degree of holiness of a priest impacts his ability to be a channel of grace, and the ability of his people to be disposed to receive grace from his hands. So the faithful must pray for the sanctification of their priests. Pray for your priest as you prepare for Sunday or daily Mass, and pray for your priest before you meet him in confession. Pray that God would give him the grace to be a courageous and loving spiritual father to you and your family.

We also need to pray for more priests. That the number of priests has declined over the past several decades is no secret, and those left continue to age. Surely the Lord wants to provide the Church with good, holy priests, and will do so in answer to our prayers. Let’s continue to beg the “...Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:38).
OUR VOCATIONS

Answering God’s call to the priesthood, religious life, and diaconate

SEMINARIANS

Dcn. Robert Foertsch
Hometown: Wyndmere
School: St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.
Year: College IV

Dcn. Matthew Kensok
Hometown: Casselton
School: Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.
Year: College IV

Dcn. Joseph Littlefield
Hometown: Hatton
School: St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.
Year: College IV

Quinn Krebs

Andrew Meyer
Hometown: Wahpeton
School: Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.
Year: Theology II

Seth Skjervheim
Hometown: Langdon
School: St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.
Year: Theology II

Timothy Kraemer
Hometown: Grand Forks
School: Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.
Year: Theology I

Richie Stenger

Jasper Keller
Hometown: Fargo
School: St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.
Year: Theology I

Justin Reineke
Hometown: Fargo
School: St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.
Year: Theology I

Pat Sorrells
Hometown: Fargo
School: Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.
Year: Pre-Theology II

Garrett Aberle

Brendon Schneibel
Hometown: Manvel
School: St. Gregory the Great Seminary, Seward, Neb.
Year: College IV

Taylor Ternes
Hometown: Devils Lake
School: St. Gregory the Great Seminary, Seward, Neb.
Year: College IV

Paul Zach
Hometown: Rosholt, S.D.
School: St. Gregory the Great Seminary, Seward, Neb.
Year: College III

Kade Palmer
Hometown: Portland
School: St. Gregory the Great Seminary, Seward, Neb.
Year: College I
RELIGIOUS IN FORMATION

Sr. Maria Teresa (of the Sacred Heart) Borden
Hometown: Colorado Springs, Colo.
Novice
Carmel of Mary, Wahpeton, N.D.

Sr. Mary Pietta Breen, SV
Hometown: Fargo
Professed
Sisters of Life, Stamford, Conn.

Br. Michael Joseph Donahue, OP
Hometown: Moorhead, Minn.
Solemn Vows
Eastern Province of St. Joseph, Washington, D.C.

Abby Forward
Hometown: Oakes
Postulant
School Sisters of Christ the King, Lincoln, Neb.

Sr. Mary Angela Gross, ACJ
Hometown: Napoleon
1st Vows
Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus, New Ulm, Minn.

Br. Stephen Johnson, OSB
Hometown: Fargo
Temporary Vows
Order of St. Benedict, Richardton, N.D.

Conan Rainwater, SJ
Hometown: Fargo
Regency
Society of Jesus, Midwest Province

Rev. Trevor Rainwater, SJ
Hometown: Fargo
Theology
Society of Jesus, Midwest Province

Br. Joseph Maria Thoelke, KHE
Hometown: Crystal
Novice
Knights of the Holy Eucharist, Lincoln, Neb.

Sr. Miryam Vandal, PCC
Hometown: Langdon
Temporary Vows
Poor Clare Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, Belleville, Ill.

DIACONATE ASPIRANTS

These men are in their second of five years of formation.

Shawn DeKeyser
Blessed Sacrament Church, West Fargo

Brian Herding
St. Anthony Church, Fargo

Ted LeMier
Sts. Anne & Joachim Church, Fargo

Sts. Anne & Joachim Church, Fargo
Tim Mosser

Sts. Anne & Joachim Church, Fargo
Tom O'Keefe

Holy Family Church, Grand Forks
Randy Severinson

Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo
Steve Splonskowski

Holy Spirit Church, Fargo
Bruce Wehri
It all started with a pair of shoes
How a gift formed a journey from Nigeria to Devils Lake, and started an award-winning movement
By Paul Braun

Shoes. He wanted to have the luxury of his own a pair of shoes. Those shoes led him to a new life in a new country, with a new purpose.

Emmanuel “Manny” Ohonme, chair of the International Board of Directors for Sanford Health Systems, is also the founder of a worldwide charitable organization called “Samaritan’s Feet,” which provides shoes to kids in need across this country and the world.

Manny knows what it’s like to do without. Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, Manny’s family was very poor. Like many of his friends, Manny never had a pair of shoes to wear growing up, but a pair of shoes changed his life when he was only nine years old. A visiting American from Wisconsin was sponsoring a basketball-shooting contest in Manny’s neighborhood, with the first prize being a pair of American-made basketball shoes. To Manny, owning his own pair of shoes was beyond his wildest dreams, but he entered the contest anyway, and he won!

“Winning those shoes started my love for the game of basketball,” said Manny. “I played all through high school, and then I told my state-level team coach I wanted to play basketball in America. He laughed and said I wasn’t good enough, but I persisted. He gave me some names of schools to send letters to, and he promised to vouch for me.”

One of the schools that showed great interest in Manny was the Universality of North Dakota-Lake Region in Devils Lake. Manny admits he didn’t know much about the United States, much less North Dakota. In early 1989, he chose UND-Lake Region to play basketball and attend college. He accepted the school’s offer to come, and the local paper even did a story about the new player from Nigeria coming to Devils Lake.

But there was a snag. Manny didn’t have the $700 for the plane ticket to the United States. The year went by and the school eventually gave up on Manny’s coming to play for the college basketball team. However, in late 1989 Manny got the money needed for a one-way ticket to America. When he landed in Chicago, he was shocked to learn how far he still was from North Dakota. He had to spend most of his remaining money to buy a ticket to Grand Forks. He then took a bus to Devils Lake.

“It was early winter, and it was freezing when I got there on a Sunday morning,” said Manny. “I started walking to the college and started shaking. At that time a couple named Larry and Shiela were coming from church. They asked me if I was Emmanuel, which freaked me out, but they remembered me from the story in the local paper. They asked if I needed a ride and if I was hungry. I hadn’t eaten in two days, so I said sure. They took me to their home, and they eventually became my “adopted” family during my time at Lake Region. Larry and Shiela were true examples to me of Christian charity and living out a true Christian marriage, which I try to emulate to this day.”

During his time at Lake Region, Manny met his bride, Tracie (Elfman), who grew up attending Mass at St. Joseph’s Church in Devils Lake, and attended UND-Lake Region. He also became
friends with fellow teammate Bob Alkofer, whose family attended St. Mary’s Church in Park River.

“Manny became part of the family in so many ways,” said Bob’s mother, Laura Alkofer. “We had Manny come to our house at Easter, Christmas, and other times. My son, Bob, was in Manny’s wedding and is the godfather to Manny and Tracie’s daughter, Adenike.”

Manny eventually transferred to Concordia College in Moorhead, where he played basketball and earned an undergraduate degree in International Relations. He attended graduate school at North Dakota State University, earning a master’s degree in Applied Economics. It was after graduating from NDSU that Manny went back home when his father died, and saw scenes that would change his life.

“I was living the American dream, and I came home to a shock,” said Manny. “I looked out on my neighborhood and saw hundreds of children in poverty. None of them were wearing shoes. I thought to myself what if I could help these kids? What if I could do the same for them that someone did for me and help them achieve their dreams?”

In 2003, Manny and his wife, Tracie, founded the charitable organization Samaritan’s Feet International. According to the organization, it was founded “with the purpose of sharing hope with those in need by washing their feet, giving them a new pair of shoes, and encouraging them to pursue their dreams. To date, more than 7 million pairs of shoes have been distributed to children in need in 108 countries and 450 U.S. cities.”

In recognition of his and Tracie’s efforts, Pope Francis bestowed an award on him (see accompanying article). To this day Samaritan’s Feet continues to work to get shoes on the feet of children worldwide. The organization even manufactures its own line of shoes and markets them at theworldshoe.com.

“Children need shoes,” said Manny. “I learned when starting Samaritan’s Feet that a single cut on a child’s foot could lead to a death sentence through infection. The World Health Organization estimates that 1.5 billion people are infected with diseases worldwide by not wearing shoes. I said someone needs to do something, and I guess that somebody was me, Tracie, and Samaritan’s Feet. We set a goal of washing and putting shoes on the feet of ten million people, and we’re getting close. We hope to reach that goal by the end of December.”

Manny and Tracie now live in Charlotte, North Carolina, where the Samaritan’s Feet organization operates on an 80,000 square foot complex, and oversees 200,000 employees and volunteers across the globe.

“All of this happened because a coach at UND Lake Region gave me an opportunity,” said Manny. “But the true hero of this story is God. He called me, he allowed the challenges I faced in my upbringing, and overcoming those obstacles has put me where I am today.”
Sister Marlyss Dionne (Sister Julia Marie), age 86, of Valley City, died peacefully at Maryvale Convent, Valley City on Sept. 7. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Sept. 13.

Sister Marlyss was born in Rolette on Nov. 23, 1934 to Hylas and Josephine (Strand) Dionne. She professed Vows of obedience, poverty, and consecrated chastity in 1953 with the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation (SMP) in Spring Valley, Ill. She attended elementary school at Russel School, secondary education at Notre Dame, Willow City, and graduated high school from St. Catherine’s School, Valley City in 1951. She received her Bachelor’s Degree from College of Great Falls, Mont. in 1965 in Elementary Education and History. She received her Master’s Degree in 1984 from Gonzaga University, Spokane, Wash. in Systematic and Moral Theology.

Sister Marlyss loved to teach and did so at the following schools: St. Catherine’s, Valley City, 1953–54, 1962–66, 1968–77; St. Joseph, Wild Rice, 1954–60; St. Aloysius, Oakwood, 1960–62; St. Aloysius, Lisbon, 1966–68; and St. Louis, Princeton, Ill. 1979–83. She was also principal at St. Catherine’s and St. Louis.

Sister Marlyss served as Director of Religious Education in Galesville, Wis. from 1983–84 and Pastoral Associate at St. Patrick Church, Dickinson from 1992–93. She served as Provincial Councilor from 1972–78, Assistant Provincial from 1984–92, Provincial Superior from 1996–2005 and Hospitality Director from 2006–20 all at Maryvale, Valley City. She served in parish ministry at St. Cecilia’s Church and as mission integration leader at St. Aloisius Medical Center, both in Harvey from 1993–96

Through her leadership of our Religious Community, she became involved in health care ministry. She served on numerous hospital and long-term care Board of Directors, chairing the SMP-Long Term Care Board of Directors for many years. She also served and chaired the SMP Health System Board of Directors and was a member of SMP Health Ministry.

Sister Marlyss is survived by her Religious Community, the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation; her sisters Elaine Crosby and Ramona Johnson; and many nieces and nephews.
If you live in one of the communities that have one of the health care ministries of SMP Health System, you may have noticed a recent change. On Oct. 1, the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation Health System (SMP Health System) and their North Dakota hospitals and long-term care ministries changed their names. According to Aaron K. Alton, President and CEO, “the name changes are part of a rebranding effort for our system to emphasize its Catholic identity and raise awareness of our unity as a health care system.” He further explained that “the new names continue to reflect our source and spirit in the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation, who established their first hospital in North Dakota in Bottineau in 1913.” Alton also noted that, “the changes to our names do not represent any kind of change in operations or ownership.”

SMP Health System is now “SMP Health.” It is a Catholic health care system with ten health care ministries located in North Dakota and Illinois with its central office in Fargo. It operates the following hospitals and long-term care ministries in North Dakota:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former name</th>
<th>New name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Aloisius Medical Center</td>
<td>SMP Health – St. Aloisius</td>
<td>Harvey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Andrew’s Health Center</td>
<td>SMP Health – St. Andrew’s</td>
<td>Bottineau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Medical Center</td>
<td>SMP Health – St. Kateri</td>
<td>Rolla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave Maria Village</td>
<td>SMP Health – Ave Maria</td>
<td>Jamestown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheyenne Care Center</td>
<td>SMP Health – St. Raphael</td>
<td>Valley City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryhill Manor</td>
<td>SMP Health – Maryhill</td>
<td>Enderlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosewood on Broadway</td>
<td>SMP Health – St. Catherine North</td>
<td>Fargo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villa Maria</td>
<td>SMP Health – St. Catherine South</td>
<td>Fargo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

J.T. Kennelly, Vice President of Mission and Formation, explains that three of the ministries of SMP Health will be under the patronage of saints whose names they have adopted as part of the rebranding effort.

Presentation Medical Center, Rolla, is now “SMP Health – St. Kateri.” St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the “Lily of the Mohawks,” was a Native American girl who lived in the second half of the 17th century in what is presently New York State. As a young child, her family was killed by smallpox, an illness which also left St. Kateri covered in unsightly scars. She was adopted by her aunt and uncle. As a teenager she showed no interest in marriage. At 19, St. Kateri was baptized into the Catholic faith with the help of a Jesuit missionary.

As a Christian, St. Kateri took a vow of chastity, which led to oppression from her Mohawk tribe. She fled her tribe and joined a native community of Christian converts where she offered fasts, penances, and mortifications for forgiveness and conversion of her Mohawk people. St. Kateri died at the age of 24. It is reported that after her death, her scars disappeared and her skin became radiantly beautiful. She was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012 and is currently the only Native American saint.

Sheyenne Care Center, Valley City, is now “SMP Health – St. Raphael.” St. Raphael, literally translated “God Heals,” is one of the three Archangels mentioned in the Scriptures, being a major character in the book of Tobit. Among his many patronages, he is the patron saint of bodily ills, nurses, physicians, and medical workers, making him a fitting patron saint for a health care ministry. In fact, Sheyenne Care Center chose him as its patron saint when it joined SMP Health System in 2002. It later named its chapel in his honor, making it appropriate that he should be chosen as the new namesake for the ministry.

The long-term care ministries of SMP Health in Fargo—Rosewood on Broadway and Villa Maria—are unified under the patronage of St. Catherine Labouré with the names “SMP Health – St. Catherine North” and “SMP Health – St. Catherine South.”

St. Catherine Labouré was a 19th century French mystic and religious sister. She was a member of the Daughters of Charity, a religious order begun by St. Vincent de Paul—the second patron saint of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation. St. Catherine received visions of St. Vincent, as well as of the Blessed Virgin Mary who gave her the miraculous medal whose devotion has spread throughout the world. St. Catherine spent the majority of her religious life caring for the sick and elderly for whom she is a patron saint. St. Catherine Labouré is a fitting patron for our two Fargo long-term care ministries.

In central Illinois SMP Health operates a regional network, St. Margaret’s Health, comprised of two hospitals, St. Margaret’s Health—Spring Valley, and St. Margaret’s Health—Peru, and Prairieland Home Care agency, in Spring Valley.
North Dakotans discuss current state of abortion laws and pro-life efforts

By Kristina Lahr

From Texas to Mississippi, there’s been a lot of talk on abortion laws in recent months. New Earth asked Christopher Dodson with the North Dakota Catholic Conference; North Dakota Senator Janne Myrdal, chair of the legislature’s pro-life caucus; and Tim Mosser with the Diocese of Fargo Respect Life Office about the current state of abortion laws and local pro-life efforts.

Christopher Dodson,
North Dakota Catholic Conference

1. TEXAS RECENTLY PASSED A LAW THAT BANS ABORTION AFTER A HEARTBEAT IS DETECTED. WHAT LED TO THAT BILL’S SUCCESS?

Its legislative success was not surprising. Texas is a pro-life state with a pro-life legislator and governor. The heartbeat bill was just one of several pro-life bills enacted during their last legislative session.

2. WHAT APPROACH DID TEXAS LAWMAKERS USE THAT MAKES THIS LAW DIFFERENT FROM OTHER BILLS ATTEMPTED IN THE PAST?

Pro-life laws are usually criminal penalties. As a result, as soon as the law goes into effect, or even before, the abortion lobby lawyers seek an injunction to prevent law enforcement from enforcing the law. Because of the Supreme Court’s rulings, most of these requests for injunctions are granted.

What makes the Texas law different is that it gives private citizens a right to sue in civil court anyone involved in procuring an abortion. This does not mean that the law is constitutional. It merely means that the abortion lobby could not immediately seek an injunction because there is no one to enjoin. Opponents will have to wait until someone is sued and then bring up the constitutionality argument as a defense.
WHAT DOES THE SCOTUS NON-ACTION MEAN FOR THE TEXAS LAW AND SIMILAR LAWS THAT MAY BE PASSED ACROSS THE COUNTRY?

On the one hand, not much. The Supreme Court’s decision was based solely on the fact that the abortion lobby lawyers had not met all the procedural requirements for seeking an injunction. The court did not rule on the law itself and many lawyers, including pro-life lawyers, think that if the court had done so, it would have struck it down. Most legal observers think that the Texas law’s success is only temporary.

On the other hand, it gives a hopeful signal that a majority of the court will look favorably on allowing pre-viability restrictions on abortion in the Dobbs case. The Supreme Court will decide that case within the next year and it, rather than the Texas law, is our best hope at the moment for undoing Roe and Casey.

IT SOUNDS LIKE SOUTH DAKOTA IS TRYING TO ENACT A SIMILAR LAW AS TEXAS. DO YOU SEE ANYTHING LIKE THAT HAPPENING IN NORTH DAKOTA IN THE FUTURE?

North Dakota already has a heartbeat ban. The question is whether legislators will want to empower citizens to bring private lawsuits to stop abortion. That is a complicated issue, one which not all pro-life legislators and even Catholic leaders agree.

More likely, by the time North Dakota legislators meet again in 2023, they will be looking at the outcome of the Dobbs case rather than the Texas law for directions for new legislation.

NATIONWIDE, WHAT ARE SOME OTHER PRO-LIFE LAWS THAT HAVE BEEN ENACTED OR ATTEMPTED IN THE LAST FEW YEARS?

Most of the recent laws fall into two categories. First, there are the bans, such as heartbeat bans, 20-week bans, and bans on certain procedures. All of these run up against the current limitations on pre-viability restrictions. This is the issue in the Dobbs case.

The other set of laws concern giving women accurate information, reflection periods, and regulating medical abortions.

North Dakota has already enacted all of these laws. It was the first in the nation, for example, to pass a heartbeat law and the first to ban abortions for reasons of Down syndrome. Some of these laws have been enjoined and some are in effect. What comes next depends a great deal on what happens in the Dobbs case more than the Texas law.

In the meantime, the most important thing is to focus on helping women and mothers so that they would never consider abortion. That means giving support to them through both the private and public sectors, before birth and after birth.

YOU’VE MENTIONED THE DOBBS CASE A FEW TIMES. WHAT IS THAT? WHAT CAN WE EXPECT TO COME OF IT IN THE FUTURE?

Mississippi passed a law restricting abortions after 15 weeks gestation. Under current Supreme Court rulings, states cannot ban abortions prior to viability, which is about 22 weeks according to most courts.

The Supreme Court accepted the case and the question for consideration is whether a state can prohibit pre-viability abortions. This will be the first time in years the court will consider that question and it will be the first major case since the court has a majority of justices who oppose Roe. The court could overturn Roe and Casey or scale it back somehow. Either would be a victory.

The case is Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization.

WHAT EFFORTS HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD RECENTLY IN THE NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATURE TO PROMOTE LIFE?

We did a lot of the heavy lifting in back in the early 2000s and into 2013. When I was working with Concerned Women for America lobbying with others and Christopher Dodson, North Dakota has some of the strongest pro-life laws in the nation. One of them was a law sponsored by Representative Betty Grande, which was one of the first heartbeat bills that went on the books. Governor Dalrymple signed it. It was a scientific bill that went all the way to the Eighth Circuit court. The Supreme Court did strike it down because of Roe vs. Wade but it gave the states an opportunity to instruct the Supreme Court to allow the states to control this issue. So it didn’t win, but it opened a door.

There have been a few smaller things. During my first session, a couple had a miscarriage at 19 weeks. They asked for a death certificate but the state of North Dakota wouldn’t give it to them because the pro-abortion industry doesn’t want to identify an unborn child at 19 weeks. So we wrote a bill, and it passed. How could we deny a couple a piece of paper to say their baby died so they can bury him? However, that means that in code, someone miscarried at 19 weeks is considered a baby. It’s little things that get put in laws that lead us in one direction or another.
WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS OF NORTH DAKOTA’S EXECUTIVE BRANCH GOING ALONG WITH LAWS SIMILAR TO THE ONE PASSED IN TEXAS IF PUT FORWARD BY THE LEGISLATURE?

There are some people who would like to see what is happening in Texas happen here. We don’t need to reenact something in North Dakota. As much as I would like to have stopped abortion yesterday, I think we need to wait for this Supreme Court case with Mississippi. We have everything on the books in North Dakota to end abortion. We have a trigger bill, which means that if the Supreme Court allows states to make their own decision about abortion, then abortion would be banned immediately in North Dakota.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT NORTH DAKOTANS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CURRENT EVENTS SURROUNDING PRO-LIFE LEGISLATURE?

Laws are not going to fix every ill in the world. We need to have a culture of life. We need to welcome these lives. We need to take care of the women and girls and help our crisis pregnancy centers. We need to applaud adoption; it’s a beautiful thing. We need to be the hands of Jesus. I think laws are very important. We write good laws when we seek God and his mercy and respond to his Word, but I also think churches and people of faith need to step up to provide services, compassion and homes. It isn’t just about abortion but about welcoming children into our world, which is more about individuals than government.

Tim Mosser,
Respect Life Director for the Diocese of Fargo

WHAT EFFORTS HAVE YOU SEEN RECENTLY IN OUR DIOCESE TO FURTHER PROTECT THE UNBORN?

One of the best ways to help protect the unborn is to serve pregnant mothers in need so that they feel they can make life-affirming choices rather than feel abortion is their only choice. Currently, the Fargo Diocese is implementing an initiative from the USCCB called Walking with Moms in Need. This is a program to give practical help to women who are facing challenging times either with a pregnancy or young children. Each parish identifies a wide variety of assets such as pregnancy-related resources, food, housing, counseling, employment, child care, and education as well as the help specifically available from the local parish. The goal is to have a list of services and resources available at their fingertips to better assist these moms in need. Catholic Charities North Dakota, who is partnering with the Diocese of Fargo on this effort, provided an initial list of resources available statewide to the parishes and offer ongoing help through their “Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services” program. Some parishes made extensive lists—addresses, phone numbers and type of services available—and even placed “pins” on their locations so people can see a map of the available resources and get directions as well.

Another initiative is the annual 40 Days for Life campaign that began on Sept. 22. This is a peaceful, prayerful vigil that is kept for 40 straight days outside of the Fargo abortion facility. Hundreds of volunteers show their support for the unborn and their mothers through prayer and compassionate interaction with the pregnant mothers and abortion facility staff. This year, we offered free “40 Days for Life” yard signs to the faithful. Hundreds of signs have been given away and these are giving a strong, positive message about the dignity of all human life.

The annual Walk with Christ for Life was held on Oct. 3. Bishop Folda—while carrying the Sacred Host in the Monstrance—led hundreds of the faithful on a peaceful procession to the abortion facility in Fargo for a brief but powerful prayer service. The procession returned to the Cathedral where there was...
Benediction and a shared meal. This event combined, prayer, Adoration, and fellowship for all the people in attendance.

Pro-life education efforts continue as well. The Diocese of Fargo Respect Life office provides pro-life events that educate, energize, and equip the faithful to engage in positive and persuasive pro-life dialog. It is important to make strides to change hearts and minds. This takes time, patient effort, and prayer.

**THE ISSUE OF ABORTION IS NOT JUST ABOUT LAWS BUT CONVERSION AS WELL. WHAT CAN WE DO IN OUR EVERYDAY LIFE TO FURTHER PROTECT THE UNBORN?**

The first thing is to pray. Pray specifically that God will touch the hearts and minds of those who are not yet of the pro-life mindset. Second, we should live a joyful, life-affirming lifestyle. A joyful Christian witness to the beauty of life is very compelling.

It is also important to see the “big picture” of life and love. There are so many issues that our culture accepts that undermine the pro-life message. Many well-intentioned Christians, for example, practice contraception and think nothing of it. While not everyone that practices contraception will abort an unplanned child, the temptation to do so will be stronger. Contraception says that the couple (not God) controls the meaning of the sexual act. If you control the meaning of the sexual act, it is not a big leap to want to control the fruit of the sexual act. St. John Paul II said that contraception and abortion are “fruits of the same tree” and that “the pro-abortion culture is especially strong precisely where the teaching on contraception is rejected” (*Evangelium Vitae* 13). This “contraceptive mentality” has greatly injured the Culture of Life—even if unwittingly.

We should value all human life at all stages. Life at any stage and in any state is precious. As mentioned in the previous question, our goal is to educate people on the truth of the human person. It should be our goal that not only is abortion illegal but—and more importantly—that abortion is unthinkable.

**WHAT DO YOU WANT THE FAITHFUL TO KNOW ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF ABORTION AND PRO-LIFE EFFORTS?**

Life is winning, for several reasons.

Science shows more clearly every day that from conception, the unborn is a unique, whole, separate human person from its mother and, as such, must be afforded the most fundamental right of all—the right to life. If we “follow the science” this conclusion is inescapable.

Legislative efforts in many states are showing great support for life. The recent Texas law is just one example. The recent Mississippi abortion ban *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* has been accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court. While we don’t know what the outcome will be, these legislative and judicial actions show that this country is willing to directly address the issue of life.

Be not afraid. Regardless of what laws or court cases come into force, God reigns supreme. He is in charge. Our job is to remain faithful to this call to protect all human life. As St. Mother Teresa said, “God has not called me to be successful, he has called me to be faithful.” God will provide the “success” to the work of our hands.
When I first entered the Catholic Church, I was fascinated by the stories of saints. Hearing about the men and women in the Church Triumphant renewed my spirit and modeled how to follow the Lord in intimate discipleship. Of all the saints I learned about, St. Isidore the Farmer was my favorite. For me, he represents “the every man;” he lived a simple life and walked in his relationship with Jesus Christ. Isidore did not do anything noteworthy, but he knew how to surrender every moment of his day to the Lord.

Fast forward to the present day, and I am still deeply moved by the witness of men and women who lived simple lives and followed the Lord. It is easy to notice the saints who cooperated in tremendous miracles, led social changes, and toppled the enemies of their days. But I love to find the simple saint, the one who goes unnoticed but shows us holiness is possible for everyone. Enter Blessed Stanley Rother, who has become for me the new St. Isidore the Farmer, the “every man” saint.

When I first heard about the book, *The Shepherd Who Didn’t Run* by Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda, I immediately knew I needed to check out this work on the life of Blessed Stanley Rother. Stanley was the child of a farm family in rural Oklahoma. He learned discipline and to love the Lord from his family and education in the local Catholic school. Upon graduating from high school, Stanley went straight into seminary, determined to become a priest. After a few failed attempts, a St. John Vianney-esque seminary experience, Stanley was ordained for his native diocese in Oklahoma.

Early in his priesthood, Father Stanley continued to be known as the simple farm kid. In his first assignments, Father Stanley would celebrate Mass every morning and spend his days building a retreat center for the diocese. He enjoyed working with his hands, and the Lord provided a way for him to share these gifts. After his initial assignments, Father Stanley felt a call within a call, a call to respond to the initiative of Pope St. John XXIII to send American priests to Latin America to evangelize. Father Stanley responded generously to this call, packing his pickup and driving to Guatemala.

The majority of Scaperlanda’s retelling of Blessed Stanley’s life focuses on his work in the Guatemalan mission, a work full of dramatic twists and turns. From beginning the mission with almost a group of a dozen missionaries, including priests, laity, and religious, Father Stanley watched as missionaries left and were not replaced, leaving him to shoulder more responsibilities. Throughout his ministry, Father Stanley continued to exhibit his endearing qualities. He humbly accepted whatever task was before him, whether learning the native Tz’utujil language to serve the indigenous peoples, installing new stained glass windows in a church over 400 years old, or volunteering to serve in the wake of an earthquake. Despite tremendous work to be done, Father Stanley never lost sight of the people before him.

In the end, Father Stanley was a victim of political upheavals in Guatemala, killed because of what he symbolized to the people: Jesus Christ. When faced with the dramatic decision to return to safety or care for his flock, Father Stanley decided the good shepherd doesn’t run. He gave his life as a good shepherd, one who would not leave his flock.

While the story of Blessed Stanley Rother is dramatic enough, it is made even more gripping in the way Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda assembles this book. Throughout the retelling of Blessed Stanley’s life, Scaperlanda interjects his own letters written to numerous individuals in the United States. These letters written to his sister are especially moving as they show the closeness of the relationship between these siblings and their genuine concern for one another and their family. These letters give life to the figure of Blessed Stanley Rother and show how he experienced and wrestled with the many challenges.

*The Shepherd Who Didn’t Run* is a moving story of a simple saint of and for our times. This work gives beautiful insights into the life of a man who simply loved the Lord and trusted him with everything. Blessed Stanley Rother, the “every man” saint, pray for us!
Have you gotten your pets blessed this month?

By Mary Hanbury
Director of Catechesis for the Diocese of Fargo

We celebrated the feast of St. Francis of Assisi on Oct. 4, but did you also know there is a tradition of blessing the animals connected to this feast? Perhaps this is already a tradition in your church and your lucky pet was there for the blessing. Typically, the ceremony happens on or close to the saint’s feast day, but could really happen any time. It can occur inside or outside, any place where people are able to bring their pets, and small livestock. One I suppose could even haul a couple of cows or horses to church, but I would recommend just inviting the priest out to your property for the larger animals.

The blessing of the animals is an old Catholic tradition dating back to the time of St. Francis of Assisi (1181–1226). St. Francis was born in Assisi, Italy. Because he was the son of a rich cloth merchant, his early life was one of privilege. He grew up and became a soldier like most young men in his town. At one point during a battle with the neighboring town, he was wounded and captured by the enemy. They kept him in prison for a year before releasing him back to his family. However, by then his former lifestyle had no appeal to him. This new disposition is what started his search for God and looking for answers in his life. One day while praying in front of a crucifix—which today is called the San Damiano cross and can be seen in Assisi—he heard the voice of God who said, “Go repair my church which is falling in ruin.” He thought God was telling him to physically restore the old church, which needed much repair. He later realized it meant much more than that. There was much corruption in the church and a lack of zeal among Christians. So eventually, after the physical repairs were done, Francis discerned that God was calling him to leave all his earthy possessions, live a life of poverty for God, and serve others. Soon others started following him and a new religious order was born, the Franciscans.

St. Francis had a great love of animals. One story relates the tale of the wolf who terrorized the city’s people to the point where they would not leave out of the city gate because the wolf would lie in wait to harm them. St. Francis approached the wolf, made the sign of the cross, and commanded the wolf to cease attacks on the people in the name of God. The wolf bowed its head at St. Francis’ feet and began to follow him around like a tame dog. The people so loved this wolf that they gave it an honorable burial and later a church was built by the site. In 1872 excavations at the sight found the skeleton remains of a wolf several centuries old. In another story, St. Francis came upon a flock of birds and decided to preach to them about God’s glory. He walked among the birds, preaching to them even brushing his tunic against them, yet none of the birds departed until his speech was over and a blessing was given.

It is for these reasons that he is often invoked for the care of animals. There is a special blessing for animals found in the Book of Blessings that beautifully invokes God’s blessings on these living creatures for all our needs.
A little more than 16 years ago, my husband and I brought home our first child, and I remember looking at that newborn and thinking, “Wow, can we really do this?” Such a responsibility to not only figure out how to care for this precious child, but the thought of helping this soul get to heaven seemed daunting. I started thinking a lot about how we as parents might help our children to know and love Christ. Ultimately, I know that we as parents can’t “get our children into heaven” nor can we live their lives for them, but I believe that we are responsible to do all that we can to help them develop a relationship with Christ and his church.

As the first teachers of the faith for our children (and for the sake of our own souls), it’s important that we strive to deepen our own faith lives individually and as a couple in order to help our children grow and deepen theirs. Opportunities that have been fruitful in deepening our faith first throughout different seasons of life have included Bible studies, Catholic young adult groups, retreats, Teams of Our Lady, going to parish missions, listening to Catholic radio, School of Community, and listening to the wise and experienced mothers and fathers around us.

I certainly don’t claim to have the answers for keeping our kids Catholic or assuring that they spend eternity in heaven, but I’d like to share a few ideas that have been helpful in building relationships within our family and in deepening our family’s faith life as we strive for heaven:

**Take advantage of the sacraments.** Go to Mass together on Sundays and Holy Days and take the time for a daily Mass when you can. Go to Reconciliation regularly as so many graces come from this sacrament.

**Spend time in Adoration.** A weekly holy hour is an amazing blessing, and some of our children ask to join us after we have introduced them to this beautiful quiet time with our Lord.

**Make a big deal of feasts and/or solemnities.** We’ve started having a St. Joseph celebration on March 19 to honor one of his feast days where we invite friends/family over, make good food, and enjoy each other with this holy saint being the reason for our celebration. The kids pick up on this easily: “Mom can we have ice cream tonight, it is Mary’s birthday today!” Why not celebrate these gifts that Christ and the Church have given to us?

**Pray together.** Help your children to develop a prayer life that isn’t just going through the motions at meal time or bedtime, but consider introducing them to different types of prayer. Try the “Examen for children” on the Laudate app, pray the Rosary, a special novena, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, or Lectio Divina.

**Find the silence, turn off distractions.** Maybe not a fan favorite, but something that has definitely made an impact for our family is having a “screen-free/quiet” Holy Week (and other days or times throughout the year as needed); the extra quiet time and family time is always a blessing for each of us.

**Do chores as a family.** Great conversations can happen while folding laundry or cleaning the kitchen together.

**Be involved in your parish.** Let your children see that church is an important place to be not only on Sunday but for other events and activities as well.

**Have a priest over for dinner.** I’m so grateful to one of our former parish priests who said to my husband, “You should have me over for dinner.” We never thought to do that but have since shared many meals with different priests. This has been a great opportunity not only to get to know and spend some time with them but also for our children to see these holy men as part of our family.

**Volunteer as a family.** Serve a meal together, sort food or clothing at a shelter, or help with a project at school or church.

**Finally, pray with your spouse.** I remember a priest speaking about how impactful it was for him to see his parents praying together because they were living the faith they were teaching their children.

These are a few of many possible opportunities to spend time together as a family with the goal of building strong, faith filled relationships. Our hope is to encounter Christ through one another, let us pray for a deep and lasting love for Christ and his church for both ourselves, and for our children.
The right time, through the grace of God

How the Holy Spirit guided our adoption story

By Paul Braun, with Mary Freund-Braun | Parishioners of Holy Cross Church, West Fargo

In our 36 years of marriage, the best decision we made together was agreeing to adopt our son Hayden, now an 8th grader at Sacred Heart Middle School in Fargo. However, agreeing to bring this miracle into our lives wasn’t a cut-and-dry formality, and we firmly believe it took the intervention of the Holy Spirit to help us to realize it was time to be a family.

When we started our married life together, I was in the U.S. Air Force and we spent three years overseas. After I left the service, we moved from city to city as I pursued a career in television broadcasting and Mary in music education and church music ministry. Starting a family was not a high priority at first, but that soon changed.

In 1998 we were living in Bismarck, and it was then we decided to get serious about starting a family. We rejoiced over the news that Mary had conceived, and were so ready to bring this precious life into our lives. But God had other plans for us. We suffered a miscarriage in Mary’s first trimester (the second one we had suffered), and we were devastated. So much so that I decided in my mind that, after two miscarriages, God did not ordain for us to have a family. Mary had frequently mentioned her desire to adopt, but I always selfishly rejected the idea. I took the phrase from our marriage vows literally... will you accept children lovingly from God. I wrongly interpreted that to mean children only through our holy bond. Through the years, Mary had been praying earnestly for me to accept the idea of adoption, but I was having none of it. How wrong I was!

Fast-forward to early March 2008. We are living in Canyon, Texas. My mother called me to say she knew of a young girl who was pregnant and considering adoption. For reasons unknown, I blurted out “Mom, that’s our baby!” I don’t know why I suddenly changed my mind after years of resistance. It just felt right and comfortable to suddenly say yes to the idea of adopting a child.

After getting off the phone with my mother, I immediately called Mary. She was attending the retirement reception of Bishop John Yanta in Amarillo, Texas that evening. I must have called a dozen times, but she never answered the phone. When she arrived home, she asked me why I was trying to call her so many times. I told her about the conversation with my mother, and she said, “Paul, that’s our baby!” I told her I had said the same thing, and she looked at me in mild shock and with some tears. We agreed together at that moment that we would pursue this adoption. We were both amazed that my resistance to adopting a child had finally been broken.

Mary then looked at her phone, saw my messages, and asked me what time my mother called with the news. I told her, and she became silent for a moment. She said it was at that time that the bishop pulled her aside at the reception and told her he would like to give her the blessing of St. Gerard, the patron saint of fertility, expectant mothers, mothers, women in childbirth, and unborn children. He had no idea of our heartaches and longing to have children, but he gave her this blessing anyway. We are convinced that, through the intercession of this beloved saint, the Holy Spirit gave me the heart and wisdom to finally agree with Mary’s desires and prayers that we needed to bring a child into our lives through adoption.

Hayden was born later that summer and was placed in our arms two hours after his birth. We have never looked back as a family. We will always be eternally grateful to Hayden’s birth mother and father for choosing life, to the bishop for his blessing, to the kindness of St. Gerard for his intercession, and especially to the Holy Spirit for guiding this exceptional young man to us.
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*Paul Braun, Editor*
Candle’s Great Feast is a delightful story of hope, self-giving, and joy...Children of every age will be touched by this charming tale.” - Bishop John T. Folda, Diocese of Fargo

Candle’s Great Feast
By Kristina Lahr
(Assistant Editor of New Earth)
Illustrated by Virginia de la Lastra

Great gift for Baptism, First Communion, Birthdays, and Christmas!

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Every fall the push to do more intensifies. Sharpen your pencil and dig in. Produce more, study more, socialize more, exercise more, volunteer more. The calendar becomes the battlefield, its squares squeezed ever tighter. If summer is for vacation, fall is for achievement.

But we are forgetting something. The very thing we consider the opposite of productivity—play—is, in fact, an accelerator of it. And more importantly, it is central in the Christian path to wellness.

I was reminded of this when I read about Reform, a Catholic wellness practice based in Islip, N.Y. with online programming. Their skilled team includes nutritionists, a priest, and a doctor. And in their wisdom, they declared play one of the nine pillars of wellness, right alongside sleep, movement, community, and faith.

No pillar is more important than the other—movement helps with a good night’s sleep, a good night’s sleep allows for greater community involvement and so on.

Play is the most overlooked pillar, dismissed as a matter reserved for kids—something you graduate from around the time you abandon stuffed animals and mac and cheese.

“But if we take life seriously all the time,” the Reform team writes on its blog, “we miss what God calls us to be: childlike. As his children, we were all designed for play—no matter our age.”

What a profound statement! As God’s children, we are designed for play. At 7 or 70.

The blog post goes on to cite the many benefits of play: it encourages both movement and sleep, it nourishes our bodies, it stimulates personal growth and reduces stress. It also strengthens our relationships, bonding us to others and enabling us to know them on a new level.

A powerful spiritual benefit of play is the way it reconnects us with ourselves, the post notes. “It is easy to get bogged down by the worries and expectations of the world and lose our true selves in the process. When we play, we remember that we are first and foremost beloved children of God. We are human beings, not human doings. Play helps us remember what truly makes our spirits come alive and the unique gifts God has given us.”

Play keeps us young at heart, a fact my mom ably demonstrates at 65. She is not the grandma parked on the bench. She’s the one who hula hoops. She goes down slides with her grandkids and encourages them to play in the rain, pulling out her own rain boots to jump in puddles.

She is inspired by her faith. Her mantra comes from St. Irenaeus: “The glory of God is man fully alive.”

For my mom, play unlocks her creativity. “It takes me out of my world,” she said.

Indeed, play is the brain’s favorite way of learning, and to ditch it at adulthood is to dramatically limit your intellectual growth.

My friend Stephanie enrolled in a Reform program to help process the death of her 18-month-old. Learning to embrace play has been a surprising step forward in her long journey with grief.

This summer Steph played with her kids—running through the splash pad with them, baking, going on one-on-one dates. She also pledged to take up a hobby of her own. Creative engagement can be a playful outlet, so Steph decided to learn how to knit. She hopes the clacking needles soothe her heart.

As I write, a thunderstorm is rustling through, dimming the streets. It shifts me into a state of observing. I can step away from the to-do list. I don’t have to outrun the clock. I can simply let autumn unfold. And if I find a good leaf pile, I will jump.
Here’s how we end abortion

North Dakota has gone up. This means that the percentage of North Dakota pregnant women getting abortions has gone down. At one time, more than ten percent of North Dakota pregnancies ended in abortion. Today, the percentage is around seven percent. The decline corresponds with economic conditions and the roll-out of the state’s alternatives to abortion program, which assists pregnancy and adoption centers.

Contrary to common belief, the vast majority, about 90 percent, of North Dakota women getting abortions are adults 20 years of age or older. Of the remaining ten percent, less than three percent of the abortions are performed on minors. North Dakota has a parental consent requirement that might explain the low number of abortions for minors, but that is only part of the story.

North Dakota has done a phenomenal job reducing teen pregnancies, without the massive funding of contraceptive programs seen in states with higher rates. It used to be that over 11 percent of all pregnancies in North Dakota were among teenagers. Today, that percentage is below four percent. Most of these pregnancies occur with “adult teens,” that is, 18 and 19 year olds. Minors make up less than one percent of all pregnancies in the state. With that drop, we have seen a corresponding drop in the number of minors getting abortion. In short, our minor teens are getting pregnant less and having fewer abortions.

Although North Dakota has done a great job at reducing teen pregnancies and abortions, it has a problem with out-of-wedlock college-age pregnancies and abortions. Most of the women having abortions are in their twenties. About half have some college education. About 85 percent of them are unmarried.

These women are among the roughly 830 women a year who need our help now and when the Supreme Court might allow North Dakota to prohibit or restrict more abortions. They are our neighbors.

Consider this thought experiment. North Dakota has 235 Catholic parishes. If each made enough effort to help just three or four abortion-prone women to choose life each year, we could eliminate abortion among North Dakota women without legislation. The Walking with Moms program is a start (walkingwithmoms.com). Consider what could happen if all the non-Catholic churches joined in the effort. Consider also what could happen if the state committed resources to helping those women choose life like it does when it comes to fighting other social ills. Creating a culture of life where no woman ever considers abortion is a job for both the private and public sectors.

There exists some hope that the courts may soon allow us to prohibit the evil of abortion. That is good news. We must not, however, focus all our energy and attention on the courts and legislation. Abortion is ultimately ended not by laws alone but through love.

Recent legal and political developments have renewed attention to the possibility that Roe v. Wade and Casey v. Planned Parenthood, the two Supreme Court opinions that most shape abortion law, could be overturned or scaled-back. Such a decision would allow the states to restrict or even ban abortion.

Abortion is ultimately ended not by laws alone but through love.

—Christopher Dodson

In this respect, North Dakota is ready. It has already passed a post-twenty week ban, a ban on the most-used second trimester abortion procedure, a post-fetal heartbeat ban, and a complete ban if Roe is overturned. The legislature does not need to reenact these laws. They would become enforceable to the extent allowed by the courts.

Prohibiting abortions, however, is not the end-goal of the pro-life movement, at least not from the view of the Catholic Church. The goal is to save and protect all human life. Prohibiting abortions in North Dakota may help, but it will not stop all abortions. Women will still face unexpected pregnancies. Some women will go to other states for abortions. Some might seek illegal abortions. To be ready, North Dakota must be ready to help those women so that they never consider abortion.

Who are these women? On average, about 1,200 abortions have been performed in North Dakota per year for the last ten years, though the number is closer to 1,100 in more recent years. Of those, about 830 are North Dakota residents. These neighbors are the women on which we need to focus.

The number of North Dakota pregnant women getting abortions has been mostly steady. In 2020 it was 833, which is exactly the same number for 2019. The number for 2018 was 832. By numbers, there has been no perceivable trend in abortions on North Dakota residents. The lowest since 1998 was 750 in 2001. The highest was 918 in 2008. It has gone up and down, the average since 1998 being 837.

At the same time, however, the number of pregnancies in...
Finding the joy of the Lord each day

Like anyone, I’m not immune to moments of sadness and discouragement. This pandemic hasn’t done anything to improve this. However, recently I’ve been making an effort to choose good habits that enable me to find strength in the “joy of the Lord,” to quote Nehemiah 8:10.

Actually, an impetus in this direction came earlier this summer when I was asked to give a talk around this theme to the mothers gathered at our annual mother-daughter retreat in Hankinson. It truly was a wonderful opportunity for me to delve into this topic of joy through reflection and research, and even to remind myself of things I already should have been aware of!

This was so fruitful that I decided to present on this topic to our women’s group during our September gathering. I asked a friend who seems to live this well to give the talk with me. Here are some tips I’d like to suggest for finding joy in the Lord in the midst of difficulties. I find that every day is a new opportunity for me to practice what I preach.

- **Be grateful.** A simple way to encourage this “attitude of gratitude” is to make the practice of calling to mind five things you have to be thankful for when you wake up in the morning. You can also utilize idle moments in the car or walking down the hall for this purpose. This is also a good way to wind down at night, by thinking over the blessings of the day.

- **Remember God’s presence.** Your best friend (who also happens to be the King of the Universe) is with you always. If that’s not cause for joy, I don’t know what is!

- **Surrender and trust.** Acknowledge that you are not in control of the difficulties you’re facing. Surrender and entrust these things that are weighing on you to our Lord. I have found that praying with palms up/open is a poignant way of expressing and deepening these sentiments.

- **Keep your thoughts in check.** I’m not much of a journaler, but I do find the following exercise to be helpful when I’m disturbed about something or lacking joy. This exercise can be effective in restoring your joy by not letting harmful thought patterns spiral you in the wrong direction. I encourage you to prayerfully write your answers to the following questions when you find yourself in the same boat:
  - **Situation:** What is going on? What happened?
  - **Emotions:** What am I feeling (angry, anxious, sad, etc.)?
  - **Automatic thoughts:** What am I telling myself (Things will never work out! She’s always mean to me! I’m no good at this, etc.)?
  - **Cognitive distortions:** What is wrong with my thinking patterns here (generalizing, focusing on the negative, catastrophizing, making a mountain out of a mole hill, etc.)?
  - **Rational response:** Respond to each “automatic thought” with a more rational and positive counterstatement.

- **Don’t let others steal your joy.** Learn to have good personal boundaries. Realize that if another person is being unkind or badgering you, it’s their problem, not yours. I have struggled lately with people who were very negative and even unkind. I have to remind myself of this with them. Through advice from others, I’ve learned not to react, not to engage them when they are being negative—not to let them steal my joy. One image that was offered to me was of our Blessed Mother’s mantel of protection around me.

# Beneath our feet

If we let the joy of the Lord be our strength, we can better serve those around us. We can be happier ourselves and we can share Christ’s love and joy with the next person we meet, perhaps in as simple a way as a genuine smile.

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**SISTERS PERSPECTIVE**

**SISTER CHRISTINA MARIE**
Franciscan Sister at St. Anne’s Living Center, Grand Forks. For more of her work, visit ndfranciscans.org/fiat.

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**OUR CATHOLIC LIFE**

17765 78th Street SE, Wahpeton, ND 58075
carmelofmary.org  carmelofmary@gmail.com

Oct. 15: Sister Maria Teresa, Feast of St. Teresa of Avila
Oct. 16: Sister Margaret Mary, Feast of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque
Reflections on brothers leaving the seminary

As a seminarian, I get asked a lot of questions: “What is seminary life like? What are your thoughts on this or that event in the church? What is the metaphysical difference between quantity and matter (luckily, this one is rare)?” One question I’m asked frequently is: “What is it like when somebody leaves the seminary?”

This is a hard question to answer because every man in the seminary is different, so every time someone “discerns out,” it’s always a different experience. However, there are a few common aspects: some degree of surprise, sadness, and hope.

There were a few men towards the end of my freshman year at St. Gregory the Great Seminary who would not be returning in the fall and one who left very early in the year. The man who sticks in my mind as an example of surprise, actually discerned out during the summer after my first year. I was surprised because over the course of our one year together, he struck me as an extremely holy guy.

I do not mean to say that I had a false perception of him and that he was, in fact, not holy, nor that the seminary is reserved for only the most holy of men. I do not want to conflate the terms “seminarian” and “saint,” but he was the kind of guy about whom you could say, “He will make a very saintly priest.”

When I heard he discerned he was not called to the priesthood, I remember thinking, “If he’s not called, what am I doing here?” After the initial stun wore off, life moved on, classes continued, and I started to realize how a man can be called to the seminary, not necessarily to be ordained a priest, but to consider the priesthood, and to learn to be open to God on another path.

I could give many examples of sorrow for men discerning out. I discovered one classmate had discerned out after I arrived at school for junior year only to see his name missing on the room arrangements. When diocesan brothers leave, they take a distinct character of our diocesan group with them. One of the best friends I made at seminary told me personally this summer he had been called elsewhere. An element of sorrow is present every time a brother leaves because the seminary naturally draws good men to it, men who want to do God’s will, men who form good friendships, men whom we proudly come to call our brothers. But I’m not writing this so people feel sad for us or for those of us who discern out, nor to vent some frustration over my brothers coming and going. “Hope springs eternal,” as the saying goes.

I’m writing this because it is part of seminary life, the beautiful and blessed life seminarians lead. I’m writing this remembering the good men who have walked the path of discernment with me, whether all of it thus far or only a part, men whom I am honored to call my brothers in Christ. And I’m writing this to ask for your prayers, not only for me and my brother seminarians, but for all the people of God who are discerning their vocations. The Lord knows it is not always an easy road; it has many hills and just as many valleys, but it is a path showered with his blessings and love.
Another smart use of your IRA

W

hile you may initially appreciate the income, as time goes on, the higher withdrawal requirements can sometimes push you into a higher tax bracket, increasing your taxes.

A few years ago, Congress made the IRA (Individual Retirement Account) charitable rollover permanent. The rollover law allows taxpayers who are required to withdraw money from their IRAs to give directly to charity. Because the rollover counts against your required minimum distribution (RMD), making an IRA rollover gift to an organization like ours could reduce your income and taxes.

The IRA rollover is a great way for you to help support your Catholic parish, diocese, or other ministry. While you won’t receive an income tax deduction for a rollover gift, you also won’t pay any income tax on the transfer.

The transfer only works for IRAs and not with other retirement accounts. An important feature to remember, any gifts to charity that come from an IRA need to come from the IRA itself. So, to realize the tax advantage, the charitable gift should originate and be dispersed by the IRA custodian. For your own unique situation, check with your tax advisor or the custodian of your own IRA account for advice.

Here are some of the requirements for making an IRA rollover charitable gift this year:

• You must be age 70½ or older.
• You must transfer money directly from your IRA to a qualified charity.
• You can give annually up to $100,000 from your IRA.

As usual, this information is not intended as tax, legal, or financial advice. Consult your personal financial advisor or tax attorney for your information specific to your situation.

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Diocesan policy: Reporting child abuse
The Diocese of Fargo is committed to the protection of youth. Please report any incidents or suspected incidents of child abuse, including sexual abuse, to civil authorities. If the situation involves a member of the clergy or a religious order, a seminarian, or an employee of a Catholic school, parish, the diocesan offices or other Catholic entity within the diocese, we ask that you also report the incident or suspected incident to Msgr. Joseph Goering, vicar general, at (701) 356-7945 or the victim assistance coordinator, at (701) 356-7965 or by email at victimassistance@fargodiocese.org. To make a report of sexual abuse of a minor and related misconduct by bishops, go to ReportBishopAbuse.org or call 1-800-276-1562.
A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

These news items, compiled by Danielle Ottman, were found in New Earth and its predecessor, Catholic Action News.

75 years ago — 1946
Bishop William T. Mulloy, former priest of our diocese, was elected president of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference at its 23rd annual convention in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Approximately twenty thousand attendees, including twenty bishops and hundreds of priests and nuns, gathered to discuss issues confronting the Church in rural areas. One hundred five of the one hundred eighteen dioceses in the United States have an official Director of Rural Life who met to report on activities and exchange ideas to support their rural churches. For example, Father John Heinz of Mohall, N.Dak., who visited our diocese last year, spoke about Rural Retreats, an idea of his now spreading all over the nation.

50 years ago — 1971
“Our own church” is the way most Spanish-speaking migrant families feel about St. Ann’s Church at Auburn, six miles north of Grafton. They built the basement and moved it from Crystal in 1950. They maintain it and fill it to capacity – 200, or until it overflows, every Sunday from May through August. Father Kenneth Gallagher, diocesan director of the migrant program, traveled with Bishop Driscoll to the fields to visit with the families and try his hand with the hoe. “They’re beautiful people,” said the Bishop in reflection of his visit. The migrant program was initiated by Bishop Muench several decades ago.

20 years ago — 2001
Visible from Gateway Drive and Columbia Road, the most traveled roads in Grand Forks, drivers would have seen 400 simple white crosses in Calvary Cemetery. The crosses were placed by the Grand Forks Teens for Life group. A banner read, “4,000 babies die each day, killed by abortion. What will you do to save them?” Sadly, the banner was cut down and stolen. The group of young people are dedicated to protecting human life at all stages and to spread the truth about abortion by educating themselves and their peers.
LIFE’S MILESTONES

Jerry and Darlene Axtman, parishioners of St. Anthony’s Church in Selz, celebrated their 50th anniversary on Oct. 1. They were married at St. Anthony’s and are blessed with 2 sons and 2 grandchildren.

Vern and Joan Dondoneau, parishioners of St. Michael’s Church in Grand Forks, will celebrate their 60th anniversary on Nov. 18. They were married at St. Stanislaus in Warsaw and are blessed with 3 children (2 deceased).

Howard and Nola Drewlo celebrated their 60th anniversary on Oct. 7. They were married at St. Stephen’s Church in Larimore, where they are still parishioners. They have 5 children, 8 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren.

George Allen and Marge Forward celebrated their 70th anniversary on Sept. 25. They were married at St. Charles Borromeo Church and have been lifetime parishioners. They’ve been blessed with 8 children (1 deceased), 24 grandchildren, and 37 great-grandchildren.

John and Janice Hager, parishioners of St. John’s Church in New Rockford, celebrated their 65th anniversary on Sept. 4. They were married at Seven Dolors Church in Fort Totton and have 4 children, 7 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren.

Marvin and Judy Knutson, parishioners of St. Arnold’s Church in Milnor, celebrated their 60th anniversary on Sept. 1. They were married at St. Henry’s Church in Alice and have 3 children, 7 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.

Leon and Donelda Lauer, parishioners of Holy Family Church in Grand Forks, will celebrate their 65th anniversary on Nov. 10. They were married at St. Katherine of Sienna Church in Oldham, S.D. They have 5 daughters, 11 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren.

Eugene and Theresa Marcotte will celebrate their 65th anniversary on Oct. 25. They were married at St. Alphonsus Church in Langdon and are still parishioners there. They have been blessed with 4 children, 9 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren.

Terry and MaryAnn McKenna, parishioners of Holy Family Church in Grand Forks, will celebrate their 65th anniversary on Nov. 3. They were married at Sacred Heart Church in Cando. They have 5 children, 10 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren.

SHARE LIFE’S MILESTONES

As a way to celebrate life and love, we encourage parishioners in the Diocese of Fargo to send a photo and news brief for anniversaries of 50 years or 60+ years or birthdays of 80+ years to: New Earth, Diocese of Fargo, 5201 Bishops Blvd. S., Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104 or news@fargodiocese.org.
Head to Wahpeton for this positive, persuasive, and practical pro-life event

St. John’s Church in Wahpeton is offering a free pro-life training event on Oct. 23 from 9:15 a.m. to 2 p.m. hosted by Tim Mosser, Respect Life Director for the Diocese of Fargo. Participants will learn the “big picture” of human dignity and how it relates to the pro-life movement, discover one of the biggest impediments to the pro-life message, and learn how to articulate the pro-life message in a positive and persuasive way by engaging in pro-life dialog with fellow participants. Mass will be offered at 9:15 a.m. and a free lunch provided. Call (701) 642-6982 by Oct. 20 to register. For more information, visit fargodiocese.org/presentations-and-training.

Come to Washington D.C. for the March for Life pilgrimage

The Respect Life Office will be leading its annual youth pilgrimage to the 2022 March for Life in Washington, D.C. All youth grades 9-12 are invited. The pilgrimage begins in Fargo Jan. 17 and returns Jan. 22. Pilgrims will also participate in the Mass for Life at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception and see the sights of Washington, D.C., Emmitsburg, Md., and Gettysburg, Pa. Cost is $850. Limit 26 participants. Register at fargodiocese.org/march-for-life.

EVENTS

Norman and Shirley Schommer, parishioners of St. Mary’s Church in Munich, will celebrate their 65th anniversary on Oct. 23. They were married at St. Joseph’s Church in Devils Lake and are blessed with 2 children, 4 grandsons, and 9 great-grandchildren.

Christ Jaeger, resident at Riverview Place in Fargo, celebrated his 92nd birthday Sept. 1. He was born in Rugby and spent his retirement years attending Little Flower Church. Christ farmed near Fillmore, where he and his wife raised 6 children and attended St. Ann’s Church.

Wilfred Keller, parishioner of St. Cecilia’s Church in Harvey, will celebrate his 90th birthday on Nov. 1. He was married to Eva (Burgard) for 63 years until her passing in 2019. They have 1 son and daughter-in-law, and 2 grandchildren.

Georgine Miller, parishioner of St. Joseph Church in Devils Lake, celebrated her 98th birthday on July 3. She and her husband Edward (deceased) have 6 children, 15 grandchildren, and 23 great-grandchildren.

Twins Bernard Schommer and Bernetta Schommer Ritter, parishioners of St. Mary’s Church in Munich, will celebrate their 80th birthdays Oct. 15. Bernard and his wife Aletha celebrated their 50th anniversary July 31. They are blessed with 5 children, 16 grandchildren, and 1 great-grand child. Bernetta and her husband Richard celebrated their 60th anniversary June 21. They are blessed with 2 children, 4 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

Donald Swartz, parishioner and long-time usher at St. Mary’s Church in Grand Forks, will celebrate his 90th birthday on Oct. 15. Donald and his late wife Annella “Ann,” who passed away in 2005, are blessed with 3 daughters, 7 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. Donald continues to enjoy playing keyboard in an old-time band.

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Catholic foster parents open door, hearts to over 100 babies in 43 years

By Kristi Anderson | Catholic News Services

When Travis and Rhonda Kitch met Ron and Jane Brown for the first time in 2008, they were already family. It was the day the Browns, longtime foster parents, introduced the Kitches to their daughter, Grace, whom the Browns had cared for almost from birth.

The Kitches also had a 7-year-old son, Carson. Carson had a liver transplant as a baby, an open-heart surgery when he was 6 months old and another open-heart surgery when he was 3 years old. He also lost most of his hearing while he was ill, waiting for his liver transplant. The couple also experienced four miscarriages before beginning the adoption process in 2008. “Our home-study paperwork wasn’t finalized when our social worker called asking if we wanted to know more about a toddler in Minnesota,” Rhonda recalled. “She indicated the child had had an open-heart surgery and a hearing loss. When she asked if we wanted to know more, there wasn’t any doubt that we wanted to learn more.”

Grace was placed with the Browns almost as soon as she was born. The Browns had been foster parents since 1978 and had seen almost everything in their years of service. But Grace had more obstacles to overcome than most of the 100-plus babies who had been placed in their care.

“We had five months to get her up to 12 pounds so she could have the surgery,” Jane recalled. “We had to wake her up to eat. We rejoiced at every ounce she gained.” Grace’s surgery was successful and the Browns continued to nurture her until she was healthy enough to meet her forever family. Travis and Rhonda met Grace Aug. 4, 2008, when she was 17 months old.

“It was evident Grace was raised in a home filled with love,” Rhonda said. “We loved seeing the backyard where she played, the nearby park, the ease she moved throughout the home. Grace has only known love.”

“We got to learn about her routines, her favorite items and toys, see pictures of her growing up, hear all about her medical journey, and giggle about silly stories,” she said. “We were so grateful we could always ask questions about her experiences and hear stories about our sweet toddler.”

Carson met his sister who shared his “matching scar” Aug. 5, 2008, and the Browns brought Grace to the Kitch home Aug. 8 of that year—their Forever Family Day.

“Everybody’s got a perfect match,” Jane said in an interview with The Central Minnesota Catholic, magazine of the Diocese of St. Cloud. “These are the things we can’t explain. How amazing that (Grace) was placed with parents who had a son with hearing aids so they already knew sign language. “You can’t take those memories away from us. To see that baby, to watch how they change and grow and start smiling at you, and bonding with you, and then to hand them over to their adoptive parents, we can’t even explain it in words.”

Jane is an only child and always dreamed of having a big family. The couple has four children. But, if you ask the couple, their family really includes over 100 babies and the countless birth parents, adoptive parents and their families who entered their home and their hearts through foster parenting.

The Browns decided to become foster parents through Catholic Charities in 1978. Over the years, they did work with Stearns and Morrison counties and ended their 43-year stint as foster parents as a bridge couple with Lutheran Social Service. “Every baby was new life for us,” Jane said. “Our commitment was with the adoption program, but our first priority was always with the birth parents because they gave birth. And bless their hearts, they didn’t have to do that. To place a child for adoption is such a great gift, one of the greatest gifts anyone could give. Our job was to support them along the way.”

The Browns worked with both the birth parents and the adoptive parents, and oftentimes, extended families, welcoming them all into their home.

If they wished, the birth parent or parents planned a “blessing ceremony”—where both the birth parents and the adoptive
parents came together for the sake of the child. This was almost always done at the Browns’ home.

The Browns were the first foster family Jane Marrin worked with when she served as a social worker for Catholic Charities in the 1980s and ’90s.

“They made it easy for me as a social worker,” Marrin said. “They are one of, if not the most, faith-filled couples I have ever met. Their example of treating everyone, and I mean everyone, as Christ is unparalleled.

“The way they welcome all life and treat everyone with dignity, from the birth parents to the social workers to the adoptive parents to the pediatricians to a person they just met on the street. They built their home and their lives on those principles. It is who they are.”

Now age 78 and 75, respectively, Ron and Jane Brown retired in June after 43 years of loving service. Reflecting on the myriad stories of love and loss, joy and hope, the couple said they are at peace with their decision.

“We’d love to keep doing it, but we thought it wasn’t fair to the babies if something should happen with our health,” Jane explained.

Their door will still be open to all—the families and birth parents who have remained in contact over the years, as well as the numerous international exchange students they’ve hosted and also their Cathedral High School family.

The Browns modestly realize their lifetime of service has made an impact on countless people over the years, but what they really hope is that everyone who has come through their door knows that each one has had an impact on them, too.

“It’s humbling really,” Ron said. “To recognize the fact that you’ve been an important part of someone’s life, even for a short time.”

“They helped us realize what is important in life,” Jane said. “While we helped them become parents, they helped us become parents. If we were to say the biggest blessing of being foster parents, it would be the lessons it taught our children. We realized what we wanted to teach our kids—to be people who give to other people.”

“Everyone needs a purpose,” Jane said. “What better purpose than to be a volunteer for something that you love or feel strongly about? You do it because you want to. Never would we look at anything we did as a sacrifice. We would do it all over again.”

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For more information, Call (701) 356-7903 or visit HelpOurMarriage.com

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- Individual voice lessons
- Silent prayer

Register at fargodiocese.org/sacredmusic

The beginning of thy words is Truth.”-Psalm 119:160

What to Expect
As the COVID-19 situation worsens in Bangladesh, the country’s tiny Catholic community has been playing a vital role in battling the outbreak, despite limited resources. Church-run St. John Vianney Hospital, which started operating in November 2019, has served thousands of coronavirus patients since the virus hit the country in March 2020. Some 700 patients have been hospitalized there.

Father Kamal Corraya, hospital director, told ucanews.com that the hospital’s 20 beds have been reserved for COVID-19 patients.

“We have a central oxygen facility for 20 patients but have yet to arrange an ICU for the patients, as it is expensive. We realize the ICU is very urgent for us,” Father Corraya told ucanews.com. As the COVID-19 situation keep worsening, with many patients failing to get treatment, the hospital decided to treat as many as possible with minimum costs, the priest said.

“When we get any critical patients, we refer them to other hospitals where they can get an ICU facility. In maximum cases, we succeed in arranging ICU beds through our connections in various hospitals. Our biggest obstacle is that our health workers are being affected, so we have to hire new staff and spend a lot of money to treat them,” the priest added.

Kishore Gomes, 36, a Catholic who received treatment for COVID-19 in the hospital and recovered recently, told ucanews.com he appreciated its services.

“I can say this hospital is not business-minded and prioritizes services. The cost is much lower than other private hospitals,” Gomes said.

The pandemic has hit the tiny Catholic community of an estimated 400,000 people in the Muslim-majority nation of more than 160 million.

There is no exact data on how many Catholics have succumbed to the virus. Archbishop Moses Costa of Chittagong died of COVID-19 in July 2020. At least two other priests also died of COVID-19.

Bishop Sebastian Tudu of Dinajpur said 10 priests and around 20 nuns of the diocese had tested positive for COVID-19, but they all recovered after treatment.

“Our priests need to run to villages for their pastoral work, and I think that’s why they got infected,” Bishop Tudu added. The Association of Catholic Doctors of Bangladesh has been providing telemedicine services free of charge.

“In fact, it is risky to go to (the) hospital because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have launched this telemedicine service so that anyone can get the service from home for any kind of illness while they struggle for transport,” Dr. Edward Pallab Rozario, president of the association, told ucanews.com.

Meanwhile, eight regional offices of the Catholic charity Caritas have reached out to vulnerable people whose livelihoods have been seriously impacted.

As of June, Caritas had mobilized funds equivalent to $4.55 million for COVID-19 emergency interventions, said James Gomes, program director at Caritas Bangladesh.

“Since the beginning in mid-March 2020, Caritas has been providing emergency assistance to affected people through mobilizing funds from existing disaster risk reduction, recovery and development projects with prior approval of donors, mobilizing new funds from Caritas Internationalis member organizations, international and national NGOs, and private donors,” Gomes told ucanews.com.

Gomes said the agency looks forward to alternative income-generating projects for people who lost jobs, to train young people to get better jobs, and to protect the poor through social safety nets, but a lack of funds for such projects and long-term livelihood plans pose challenges.

Meanwhile, Catholic youth groups such as Young Christian Students, Bangladesh Catholic Students’ Movement and some parish-based organizations have moved ahead to help the poor in their localities.

Bangladesh has been struggling to contain the more lethal third wave of the pandemic in recent weeks due to the outbreak of the delta variant.

The country has recorded 1.4 million COVID-19 cases and more than 25,500 deaths. The government has rolled out a nationwide mass vaccination campaign, and the age limit for vaccines has been lowered to 25 years.
One by one, the abortion escorts’ rainbow vests came off and then placed in the plastic storage tub. One by one, the mothers whose wombs had, just that morning, harbored a tiny, tender life, walked away, weighed down by their choice. One by one, the last workers in our state’s only abortion facility had slipped away, another week’s worth of abortion appointments crossed off their list.

It was the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. A couple hours earlier, my sidewalk sister Ann and I had renewed our consecration to Mary before the mosaic of Our Blessed Mother near the altar at St. Mary’s Cathedral. Now, we had returned to the sidewalk of the Red River Women’s Clinic, hoping for a miracle.

Though everyone else had departed by this time, including the large college group that had, thanks be to God, come to pray the Rosary, we were still in the middle of a recitation of the Seven Sorrows Rosary. As we made our way through the beads, reflecting on the sorrows we were carrying deeply this day, another joined us. Silently, she stood beside us, a bundle of yellow roses in her hands.

As we prayed our prayers, our friend fell to her knees, the roses still with her, as she uttered her own quiet, spontaneous prayer, tears forming in her eyes. As we finished our Rosary, I asked, nodding to the flowers, “What are they for?”

“A memorial,” she answered.

After a while, she got up and walked up to the building in which babies earlier had been either poisoned or punctured, and began tearing green leaves off branches of the bouquet, scattering them upon the ground in a jagged line. Next came the soft baby’s breath. Finally, she cut the roses, so that only the yellow buds with small stems remained, and began strategically placing them among the greens.

That’s when I began to feel deeply the symbolism of her actions: yellow, a color that represents light and purity and stands for the babies and their sweet, innocent lives; green, a vibrant color indicative of life, though lives cut short; and baby’s breath, starkly calling to mind the babies’ breaths that had been so unfairly stopped.

Watching these pieces of roses and stems fall to the ground, the reality of what was happening in this unanticipated memorial began to penetrate my soul, a heaviness spreading throughout. So often, we come to the sidewalk and leave saddened at the end of our shift, but not having purposefully stopped to mourn the losses. But now, our friend had, in the gentlest manner, helped us pause to recall those whose lives have been forever altered or taken here this day.

“This is what we do at funerals, right?” she had remarked. Indeed, we offer flowers, we pray, we cry. We cannot bury these dead, but I would think God would honor our attempts to fulfill this corporeal work of mercy, which he has summoned us to do, in this alternative way. These little ones deserve no less.

What struck me most about this moment was the powerlessness of how we all feel about abortion. We come with hope to the sidewalk, but the cruelty of it often happens despite our efforts. Saves are few and far between. And yet, we are not powerless. We can all do something.

With October being Respect Life Month, events are happening throughout the diocese to bring this paramount cause to the forefront. If your heart has been moved by abortion in any way, if it has been broken as is natural, I urge you to commit to doing something.

Among the many events happening, the Shanley Teens for Life “Cupcakes for Life” will take place at 7 p.m. on Oct. 25, at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo. I will be among those sharing insights about abortion and how we can approach this difficult topic. I would be glad to see you there. In the meantime, please pray for the babies, the moms, the dads, the workers, and our broken, hurting world.
Do you know where we are?
The answer will be revealed in the November New Earth.

Where in the diocese are we?

Last month’s photo is of St. Margaret Mary Church in Buchanan.