In service to God and the faithful

Four Fargo Diocese seminarians are ordained

From Bishop Folda: Holy Communion and the dignity of life

Confirmation makes us strong in Christ

St. John’s Academy, Jamestown, to add 7th and 8th grade
Join Bishop John Folda as we invoke God’s blessing upon our rural communities

4th annual RURAL LIFE celebration

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Russ and Mary Mauch Farm
16305 Hwy 13, Barney, ND
(1/4 mile east of Barney on Hwy 13)

4:00 Welcome
4:15 Blessing of land and machinery
4:30 Mass
6:00 Meal and entertainment

• Event is free and open to all
• Bring a container of soil or seed from your field or garden to be blessed
• If it rains, we’ll move indoors
• For more information, visit fargodiocese.org/rural-life
ON THE COVER:
Newly-ordained to the Holy Priesthood, Father Kevin Lorsung recites part of the Eucharistic Prayer during his ordination Mass at the Cathedral of St. Mary (Kristina Lahr | New Earth)

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Holy Communion and the dignity of life

Every year around this time, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, or Corpus Christi. With Masses and processions, we contemplate the incomparable mystery of the Eucharist, which continues to nourish us as followers of Jesus Christ. Especially now, as we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic, it seems opportune to recall the necessary place of the Eucharist in the Church and in our lives as Catholics. The Eucharist is Christ, sacramentally and really present among us, sustaining us through communion in his sacred Body and Blood. As Pope Benedict XVI taught, “Without the Eucharist, the Church simply does not exist.”

The act of receiving the Eucharist is conventionally called “Holy Communion.” By receiving the Eucharist, we enter into a deeply personal union with Jesus himself, who said, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him” (John 6:56). But receiving the Eucharist is also an act of communion with the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ. When we come forward to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we essentially declare ourselves to be in full communion with Jesus and the Church that he established. And of course, this requires that one must be in a state of grace, i.e. free from mortal sin that cuts us off from God’s divine life.

For this reason it is necessary to recall that receiving Holy Communion is not a right but a gift and a privilege. The Church has always taught that one may not receive Holy Communion if in a state of mortal sin, i.e., if one has knowingly and willfully separated himself from Christ and his Church through grave sin. St. Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, tells us clearly: “Whoever eats unworthy of the bread and drinks from the Lord’s cup makes himself guilty of profaning the body and the blood of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:27). With St. Paul’s admonition in mind, we must examine our consciences carefully as we approach the altar to receive our Lord and make regular use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to receive forgiveness and healing whenever this is needed. This is not meant to discourage anyone from receiving the Eucharist, but to encourage everyone to do so in a state of grace.

But now the question arises: what about those who act in ways that are contrary to our faith? What about Catholic officials and public figures who support and advocate for abortion and euthanasia in public policy? Should one who holds such a position be allowed to receive the Eucharist? In point of fact, any person who actively promotes or facilitates abortion, whether it be a politician, a voter, a business owner, a health care worker, or a family member, is acting contrary to divine law and makes themselves unworthy to receive Holy Communion. We cannot compartmentalize our public acts from God’s will, not even in the name of pluralism, democracy, or compassion, and formal cooperation with the evil of abortion prevents us from being in full communion with Christ and his Church.

Our current President is Catholic, and often described as “devout.” Yet he has vigorously acted to expand provision of abortion not only in this country but in other countries as well. Now he seeks to remove the long-standing prohibition of using public funds for abortion. In other words, abortion could become even more available, and we could be forced to pay for it. This is more than benign toleration of abortion; this is overt and active promotion of a moral act that is intrinsically evil. In terms of moral theology, this can only be viewed as formal cooperation with evil, i.e., consent with the intention of the one who performs the evil act.

This issue has arisen before, and was addressed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, in a 2004 letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the bishops of the United States. He wrote: “Regarding the grave sin of abortion or euthanasia, when a person’s formal cooperation becomes manifest (understood, in the case of a Catholic politician, as his consistently campaigning and voting for permissive abortion and euthanasia laws), his pastor should meet with him, instructing him about the Church’s teaching, informing him that he is not to present himself for Holy Communion until he brings to an end the objective situation of sin, and warning him that he will otherwise be denied the Eucharist.”

Nor is this question limited to the United States. In their 2007 Aparecida document, the bishops of Latin America said, “We hope that legislators, heads of government, and health professionals, conscious of the dignity of human life and of the rootedness of...
the family in our peoples, will defend and protect it from the abominable crimes of abortion and euthanasia; that is their responsibility... We must adhere to ‘eucharistic coherence,’ that is, be conscious that they cannot receive Holy Communion and at the same time act with deeds or words against the commandments, particularly when abortion, euthanasia, and other grave crimes against life and the family are encouraged.” It is worth noting that a principal author of this document was Cardinal Jorge Maria Bergoglio, who is now Pope Francis.

It is quite simply impossible to be in full communion with the Church while taking a position that is so diametrically opposed to the Church’s most basic moral teaching on the dignity of human life. For this reason, it is inadmissible for anyone who publicly advocates for abortion to receive the Eucharist, which should be an expression of communion with Christ and his Church. This is not a political statement. It is a pastoral judgment based on the public acts of those who call themselves Catholic, and it would be the same regardless of one’s party affiliation. The moral laws of the Church are not optional; they are founded on the Word of God and apply to everyone. Yes, we all fail in our adherence to the divine law because of sin, and God graciously calls us to repentance. But if we openly stand in opposition to God’s law and refuse to repent, then we exclude ourselves from communion with him, especially the communion manifested through receiving the Eucharist.

Let us all examine our consciences and strive to conform ourselves to God’s law, and let us pray especially for our leaders who have a public responsibility to promote the common good and the dignity of every human life, including the unborn.

Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

July

Social Friendship
We pray that, in social, economic, and political situations of conflict, we may be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship.

BISHOP FOLDA’S CALENDAR

June 19 • 10:30 a.m.
Sister Debra Berr, SMP,
50th Anniversary of Profession, Maryvale

June 20 • 10:30 a.m.
Mass of Installation for Father Richard Fineo,
St. John’s Church, St. John

June 22 • 3 p.m.
Diocesan Finance meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo

June 23 • 10 a.m.
North Dakota Catholic Conference, Jamestown

June 27 • 4 p.m.
Rural Life Celebration, Barney

June 28 • 11 a.m.
Catholic United Financial, Rose Creek, Fargo

July 5
Pastoral Center closed, 4th of July

July 16
Made for Greatness Men’s Retreat, Stickelstad Lodge

July 17 • 4 p.m.
Centennial Mass, St. Alphonsus School, Langdon

July 31 • 11 a.m.
Jubilee Mass for Franciscan Sisters, Hankinson

Aug. 2
Putt for a Purpose, Rose Creek, Fargo
The Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul is a solemnity feast day for the Catholic Church in many parts of the world. We Catholics know these two saints well. St. Peter was the first Pope and was given the keys to Christ’s kingdom by Christ himself. St. Paul was converted in the dramatic vision he had of Christ on the road to Damascus and became an evangelizer who opened the Christian faith to Gentiles and pagans.

But why does the Church celebrate these two monumental pillars of the Christian faith together? Sts. Peter and Paul’s feast day honors the martyrdom of the two saints, sometime between AD 64 and 68. While the church recognizes that they may not have died on the same day, tradition says that this is the day that they were both martyred in Rome by Emperor Nero.

Because he was not a Roman citizen, St. Peter was crucified. Tradition has it that he was crucified upside down at his own request, because he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as the Lord. St. Paul was beheaded, also on orders from Emperor Nero.

The day is a solemnity, a feast day of the highest rank reserved for the most important events, like events in the lives of Jesus or Mary. Therefore, this emphasizes just how important the two saints are to the Catholic faith.

Historical information from Catholic Online.

Feast day: June 29
Death: Between 64 and 68 A.D.

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.

Not willing to let go of your marriage?

Retrouvaille is a program designed to help struggling marriages regain their health. It helps husband and wife rediscover or reawaken the love and commitment that originally brought them together. The program is highly successful in saving hurting marriages, even bringing reconciliation to couples who have already separated or divorced. Retrouvaille is a peer ministry of volunteer couples that can help you learn the tools of healthy communication and healing.

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

SAINT OF THE MONTH

Sts. Peter and Paul

By Paul Braun
My parents don’t want me to hang out with some friends because they think they’re a bad influence on me. But aren’t we called to evangelize?

By the sound of your question, I assume that you’re writing as a teenager still living at home. If that’s the case, you’re probably feeling similar to 95% of other teenagers throughout history. Teens often struggle between their parents and their friends, and that’s part of growing up. Before we separate from home physically, we start to do so emotionally. We’re preparing to take flight.

Contrary to popular opinion, however, teenagers who feel stifled at home do not have parents who, in fact, hate them and want to ruin their lives. Parents actually love their teenage sons and daughters as much as they ever did and just want to help them. This brings up the main question you could ask yourself: “Why are my parents worried about my friends’ influence?” And in fact, there’s only one way to learn that answer: Talk to them.

If your parents are saying they think some of your friends are bad influences, there’s a good chance that they can see things you might not. They don’t want you friendless, so they would be happy to see you with friends that are good for you. Maybe they can remember some of their teenage friends who led them to decisions they came to regret. That could be a helpful conversation to have with them. Parents naturally have a wider perspective on life, having lived through the effects of their own teenage and young-adult decisions. They’re not trying to hurt you; they’re trying to help you. Ask if your friends could come over to the house. Your parents might be a lot more open to that instead of hanging out with those friends outside of the house. If you really want to give your friends a good image of Jesus, then maybe spending time with your whole family could do that for them.

That brings me to the specific question you asked. Yes, Christians are always called to evangelize, to help other people know and love Jesus. However, it is key to remember that Christians can evangelize others only when they’re already strong in the community of the Church. If most of your friends are not practicing the faith, and you’re the only Christian among them, it is a lot more likely that they’ll be a bigger influence on you than you on them. It’s often been repeated that, “you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”

Although statements like that are generalizations, it is true that we are much more influenced by the people and the environment around us than we might realize. It is great that you want to be a good example to your friends, but you’ll only be able to be that if your primary friendships are with people who share your faith and make it stronger. When your “cup” is filled up by such people, you will be able to overflow with good influences to your friends. If you’re not being filled up by love and support from good Christian friends, your ability to share your faith with others will be lacking.

Christians have countless chances to be a good witness to their faith almost every day if we’re looking for the opportunities. However, unless our primary relationships are filling us up—both in the sharing of our faith and in other wholesome pursuits—then we won’t have much to give to others.
Father Vincent J. Tuchscherer
passes away May 19

Father Vincent was born April 17, 1928 in Rugby to Casper and Mary (Schreiner) Tuchscherer. He grew up and attended school in Rugby before graduating from Crosier Seminary in Onamia, Minn.

He served in parishes in Edgeley, Gackle, Jud, Conway, Napoleon, Hope, Page, Finley, Grafton, the University of North Dakota, Balta, Fulda, and Orrin throughout his ministry in the Diocese of Fargo. He also served in various missions in other communities throughout North Dakota. His longest tenure was 17 years at Balta, Fulda, and Orrin. He retired from active priesthood when he was 70 years old.

He was a proud of his 40+ years of sobriety and he enjoyed ministering to others who struggle with sobriety.

He is survived by his brother-in-law, John Bachmeier, his special nephew, William (Judy) Erbstoesser, Clifford, ND and many other nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers and sisters, Maggie (Bob) Herbage, Fran Bachmeier, Delores (Nick) Roller, Catherine Brandon, Ann (Henry) Weiler, Jim Tuchscherer, Frank Tuchscherer, Roy (Pauline) Tuchscherer, Dominic (Mary) Tuchscherer, and Catherine (Jude) Brandon.

Mass of Christian Burial was held on May 24 at Holy Cross Church in West Fargo.

Violet Josephine Krom was born Nov. 29, 1927 to John L. and Rose Bisihn Krom, near Langdon. She attended a one-room rural school near Easby. After her mother’s death, she lived in St. John’s Orphanage and attended high school at Sacred Heart Academy in Fargo.

While living at St. John’s Orphanage, Violet was impressed and inspired by the Presentation Sisters’ ministry to the children housed and cared for there. It was this example that attracted her to the Sisters and their work. She was named Sister Mary Geraldine and was professed Aug. 16, 1947.

During her 74 years of ministry in the Congregation, Sister Geraldine served three different times at the Bishop’s Residence as cook and housekeeper to the late Bishops Dworschak and Driscoll, plus the many clergy and guests. She served in a similar capacity at St. Alphonsus School, Langdon; City Hospital, New Rockford; the former St. Joseph Hospital, Grafton; St. Michael’s Rectory, Grand Forks; and Cardinal Muench Seminary, Fargo, where she was head cook. Sister Geraldine spent seven years of retirement in Portsmouth, Ohio.

Sister Geraldine is pre-deceased by her parents, her four sisters, Rose Hooey, Mary Avery, Lillian Doxrud, Betty Blom, and her four brothers: Walter, Jake, Edward, and Ralph.
Sister Eloise Marie Pulskamp died at Maryvale Convent May 18 at 100 years of age. The funeral Mass was held May 28 at Maryvale Convent Chapel in Valley City.

Sister Eloise Marie was born Feb. 28, 1921 near Cummings to Jacob and Bertha (Mueller) Pulskamp. She attended school at Notre Dame Academy, Willow City and graduated in 1938. On March 25, 1941, she professed her vows as a Sister of Mary of the Presentation. While in France for Religious Congregation Formation, World War II broke out, and she was a prisoner of war at Vittel, France from 1942–44. In 1948, she received her Bachelors of Elementary Education from Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

Sister Eloise Marie taught elementary children throughout her 56 years of ministry beginning in Oakwood in 1948. She continued to teach at schools in Wild Rice, Willow City, Oakes, Valley City, Harvey, Washington, Ill., and Princeton, Ill.

She was preceded in death by her parents, brother Aloysius (Annie); sisters Cecilia (Francis) Schreiner, Rose Mary (Walter) Cramer, Rita (Ambrose) Braun, Sister Mary Leo, SMP; brother-in-law Urban Panther and sister-in-law Shirley Pulskamp.

She is survived by her Religious Community, the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation, brothers Joseph and Leo (Roberta); sisters Bertha Panther and Sister Mary Jane, SMP, as well as nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and nephews and great-nieces and nephews.

Over 100 faithful attended the Memorial Day Mass at Holy Cross Cemetery North in Fargo on May 31. Bishop John Folda celebrated Mass in the cemetery’s stone chapel near the graves of military veterans. Fargo American Legion Post 2 performed a 21-gun salute before Mass, the West Fargo Fourth Degree Assembly of the Knights of Columbus were the honor guard, and musicians from Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo provided music. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

Trinity Youth Camp is a Catholic camping experience for youth entering 4th-8th grades fall 2021.

June 23 - 27 Red Willow | Binford, ND
July 14 - 18 Pelican Lake | Bottineau, ND
July 21 - 25 Camp of the Cross | Garrison, ND
July 28 - Aug 1 Pelican Lake | Bottineau, ND

Activities include Good News, crafts, recreation, water sports, daily Mass, skits, campfires, new friends, and much more!

All camp sessions will resume as normal this year. Mask regulations will be determined by each campsite’s leadership this summer, and we will still be following state and local recommendations.

For more information, and to register go to our website: www.trinityyouthcampnd.com

*Registration is due one week prior to the start of each session
SUNDAY, AUGUST 15, 2021
Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
CARMEL OF MARY MONASTERY
17765 78th St. SE
Wahpeton, N.D. 58075
Father Anderl will give his talk on the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and the lives of the saints, and he will bring his collection of 800+ relics on this special occasion!

CARMEL of MARY
FOR MORE INFO: 701-640-6152 • THE MONASTERY: 701-642-2360 CARMELOFMARY.ORG
• CARMELOFMARY@GMAIL.COM • FACEBOOK: CARMEL OF MARY

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• Enderlin - Maryhill Manor
• Fargo - Rosewood on Broadway & Villa Maria
• Harvey - St. Aloisius Medical Center
• Jamestown - Ave Maria Village
• Rolla - Presentation Medical Center
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The Sacrament of Confirmation can be called a “more” sacrament. It confirms and deepens the grace of Baptism. Confirmation makes us strong and courageous followers of Jesus Christ, able to bear witness to the cross of Christ to a world that lacks truth, discipline, and firmness of purpose. To become mature adults naturally, we must take on responsibility and not expect others to perpetually take care of us, as rightfully happened in childhood. To mature spiritually, we must live out our faith in public, taking responsibility for the mission Jesus left for each member of his Church: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19-20). Failure to live out our faith keeps us in a state of perpetual spiritual adolescence.

The Rite of Confirmation makes clear to us the nature of the sacrament, and the grace it contains. First the name itself. To confirm means to make firm or strong. God wants to make strong in us the grace of Baptism and the gifts of the Holy Spirit we received therein. He deepens and completes the graces of Baptism, but he also wants to make us strong with a new strength, because as adult Christians, we are like soldiers going out to battle against a deadly enemy. Our enemy is not a standing army, but rather Satan and the demons who prowl through the world seeking the destruction of souls. Our enemy is the pride of this world that would lure us away from the cross through many seductive promises. Our enemy is our own flesh, our fallen human nature, with its many weaknesses and inordinate desires. The name tells us we are being made strong for battle as true soldiers of Christ.

Confirmation strengthens us to push us on to adulthood and spiritual maturity with the help of grace. Many cultures have ceremonies for coming of age, which signal the passage from adolescence to adulthood. The Sacrament of Confirmation helps us to become adult Christians. Specifically, Confirmation makes us strong and courageous followers of Jesus Christ, able to bear witness to the cross of Christ to a world that lacks truth, discipline, and firmness of purpose. To become mature adults naturally, we must take on responsibility and not expect others to perpetually take care of us, as rightfully happened in childhood. To mature spiritually, we must live out our faith in public, taking responsibility for the mission Jesus left for each member of his Church: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19-20). Failure to live out our faith keeps us in a state of perpetual spiritual adolescence.

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Confirmation uses chrism oil, blessed by the Bishop. We sometimes use oil to soothe and limber our skin and limbs. In ancient times, gladiators, athletes, and soldiers would oil their bodies to prepare for competition or battle. This symbolism carries over to the Sacrament of Confirmation. The use of oil reminds us that God prepares us through Confirmation for a great contest: a spiritual contest of faith.

The chrism oil also has a certain fragrance, due to the mixture of balsam with olive oil. The smell of our bodies can either be pleasing and attractive to others or repulsive. The pleasing aroma of the Chrism oil reminds us that we are to be the “good aroma of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15). Through our good works, we should attract people to the Gospel, just as pleasing fragrances make our bodies attractive. Confirmation therefore gives us this grace to be Christ in the world.

In Confirmation, the sacred chrism is put onto the forehead in the Sign of the Cross. The forehead is that part of us that is most visible to others. It is the part of us that blushes when we are ashamed. How fitting to put the Sign of the Cross, the symbol of the king we serve, on the most visible part of ourselves. People will either see us blush with shame when we are confronted for our faith, or they will see us boldly stand with the cross of Christ (Heb. 12:2). Our mature Christian lives should speak of nothing but the cross of Christ, without fear or shame. Like St. Paul, the saving cross of Jesus is our one message to the world, and through bold proclamation, it becomes the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23-24). This cross is drawn on our forehead as the Bishop seals us with the gift of the Holy Spirit; Confirmation gives us the grace to live the cross publically.

Most of our readers have probably already received Confirmation. Does it still affect us? Yes, like Baptism, Confirmation inscribes a permanent and indelible mark on the soul. This seal acts as a continual conduit of grace for us, as long as we are disposed to receive it, so we can ask the Holy Spirit to stir into flame the gift of God we received through Confirmation. We all need grace to live as adult Christians and soldiers of Christ in the spiritual battle we are in. Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, God continues to give us everything we need to win the battle.
Reading someone’s journal seems like an invasion of privacy of the greatest degree. As Catholics, we seem to have a habit of publishing the private writings of saints, but this is done to better show the ways they pursued and loved God and offered their sufferings to him. While she is not a saint, Flannery O’Connor’s conversations with God as recorded in the brief pages of *A Prayer Journal* might be familiar.

*A Prayer Journal* gives us the private reflections of Flannery O’Connor, a young woman who is now held as one of the greatest writers in the American Literary Canon. Born on March 25, 1925 in Savannah, Ga., O’Connor was raised in a devout Catholic family and spent most of her life on their farm in Milledgeville, Ga. While she considered herself a novelist, she is most widely known for her short stories—such as *A Good Man is Hard to Find*—usually set in the American South and deal with people in need of grace.

These journal entries were written from January 1946 to September 1947 while she attended writers’ workshops in Iowa City. The first few pages of the journal have been lost, but the first full sentence we read is her frank statement: “Dear God, I cannot love Thee the way I want to” (3). The following entries depict a woman in her early twenties away from home for the first time, facing the sea of other influences in the largely secular artistic community she found herself in. While her writing greatly benefited from the intellectual atmosphere, there is a skepticism that wanted to creep in as well. O’Connor was fully aware of it and brought it to prayer: “I dread, Oh Lord, losing my faith... [My mind] is a prey to all sorts of intellectual quackery” (5). It is these admissions of weakness and her resolutions to keep trying that model the ups and downs of so many of our prayer lives. This book may be particularly encouraging for O’Connor’s *A Prayer Journal* showcases growing pains of one tested in faith.
**O’Connor’s A Prayer Journal showcases growing pains of one tested in faith**

**TATTERED PAGES**

BERNADETTE O’KEEFE  
Parishioner of Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Reading someone’s journal seems like an invasion of privacy of the greatest degree. As Catholics, we seem to have a habit of publishing the private writings of saints, but this is done to better show the ways they pursued and loved God and offered their sufferings to him. While she is not a saint, Flannery O’Connor’s conversations with God as recorded in the brief pages of *A Prayer Journal* might be familiar.

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*A Prayer Journal* gives us the private reflections of Flannery O’Connor, a young woman who is now held as one of the greatest writers in the American Literary Canon. Born on March 25, 1925 in Savannah, Ga., O’Connor was raised in a devout Catholic family and spent most of her life on their farm in Milledgeville, Ga. While she considered herself a novelist, she is most widely known for her short stories—such as *A Good Man is Hard to Find*—usually set in the American South and deal with people in need of grace.

These journal entries were written from January 1946 to September 1947 while she attended writers’ workshops in Iowa City. The first few pages of the journal have been lost, but the first full sentence we read is her frank statement: “Dear God, I cannot love Thee the way I want to” (3). The following entries depict a woman in her early twenties away from home for the first time, facing the sea of other influences in the largely secular artistic community she found herself in. While her writing greatly benefited from the intellectual atmosphere, there is a skepticism that wanted to creep in as well. O’Connor was fully aware of it and brought it to prayer: “I dread, Oh Lord, losing my faith... [My mind] is a prey to all sorts of intellectual quackery” (5). It is these admissions of weakness and her resolutions to keep trying that model the ups and downs of so many of our prayer lives. This book may be particularly encouraging for those who find themselves in fields of work in which one’s faith is called into question openly or indirectly. In this day, that’s most of them.

There is also a beauty to the sureness with which she accepts her vocation in prayer: “I must write down that I am to be an artist” (29). She enjoyed writing and knew she was good at it. If the journal had been longer, perhaps there could be something to say about her better days. To catch a glimpse of that fuller picture, one would need to read her letters or essays. I’d also note that, as these were private entries, they are less polished than her other works. But they still have that glimmer, the succinct and penetrating lens that can be seen in her later, more developed works. This book in particular shows the growing pains in a life that would not last very long.

O’Connor was singled out for her talent and became a popular writer, paying her bills by doing speaking tours. But her travels slowly ceased as she struggled against lupus. O’Connor died in 1964. She was 39 years old.

This publication of a very private work treats O’Connor with great respect, including a facsimile of the actual journal after the corrected transcription. (O’Connor had some trouble with her spelling—another relatable characteristic—so the publishers chose to correct those instances to remove distractions). Seeing her own writing makes these struggles and childlike honesty all the more real. And before the transcription, there is an introduction by W.A. Sessions, a good friend of O’Connor’s who published many of her works during her lifetime, describing the events in her timeline that affected these entries.

All of this together gives a fuller, more honest story of a woman who can seem like a titan to those who read her works: she was a person who knew she was in need of grace.

The first weekend in June was a joyous one for the Fargo Diocese when Bishop John Folda ordained three transitional deacons and a new priest. Father Kevin Lorsung, a native of Isanti, Minn., was ordained to the priesthood on June 5 and has been assigned to serve as parochial vicar at St. James Basilica in Jamestown, along with St. Mary’s Church in Buchanan and St. Mathias Church in Windsor.

Father Lorsung’s vocation to the priesthood was something he thought about on and off in high school, but he put those thoughts aside in college.

“I first heard the call to the priesthood at a youth conference called Steubenville which I attended right before high school,” said Father Lorsung. “It was there that my relationship with God was forever changed as I realized the love that he had for me, and I responded with a deepening prayer life. Fast forward to my senior year and the idea of the priesthood had taken a back seat. I was heading to North Dakota State University to study Civil Engineering and to discern marriage through dating. My time at St. Paul’s Newman Center, even though only a year, was a year of deep personal and spiritual growth, and I became involved in many things including adoration and daily Mass.

“Through my time spent gazing at the Lord and him gazing back at me, I came to realize that I would never have true peace if I did not enter seminary. As diocesan vocations director Father Kurtis Gunwall wisely told me, ‘Kevin, you didn’t discern your vocation, you assumed your vocation.’ With these words and a wise spiritual director, I was able to discern that I needed to enter seminary, which I did the following year for the Diocese of Fargo, which had basically become my home due to siblings living in the area and all the priests that I got to know.”

In his homily, Bishop John Folda reminded those gathered that the priestly vocation is a continuation of Christ’s mission on Earth. “The gift of a new priest is an awesome blessing,” said Bishop Folda. “We should be awed and amazed, and even brought to silence at God’s generosity. He gives us this man to carry on the work that his own beloved son began. Remembering the words of St. John Vianney, “The priesthood is nothing but the love of the heart of Christ.” Jesus Christ chooses this man, your son and brother, and conforms him to his
own heart. Through the priesthood, Jesus is always with his people; teaching, sanctifying and shepherding them.”

As he begins his priestly ministry, Father Lorsung says his journey would not have been possible without the early support of his family, especially his parents, and the examples set in their home of prayer and Mass attendance. As for the future, Father Lorsung says he is eager to get started.

“As I look forward to the priesthood, I am so very excited and also a bit nervous, which I’ve been told is a good thing,” said Father Lorsung. “With being in seminary for so long, there is an element of wonder that I am now going to serve you, the good people of the Fargo Diocese, as his priest. I am excited about all the elements of parish life, and I’m excited to learn from my future pastor, Father Pfeifer. What I look forward to the most is all the sacraments that I will be able to preside at, and in particular the amazing sacrament of Reconciliation. This sacrament has been very powerful for me and to be an instrument of God’s love and hope in the confessional is honestly breathtaking. I also look forward to presiding at Mass and feeding the people with the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I also look forward to getting to know the people of my parishes and helping them grow closer to God. I am excited to just live the life of a parish priest with the realization that every day is unique and an adventure!”

Transitional Diaconate

On the evening of June 4, the Diocese of Fargo welcomed three seminarians to the order of the Transitional Diaconate. Robert Foertsch, Matthew Kensok, and Joseph Littlefield pledged their devotion and service to God and Bishop Folda.

As transitional deacons, these men will spend the year preparing for the next step of Holy Orders at the end of their fourth-year theology studies. Transitional deacons proclaim the gospel at Mass, preach, and baptize, among other duties, but they also prepare to be ordained to the priesthood, and take a vow to forgo all outside exclusive relationships in order to focus on their preparation for the priesthood.

*New Earth* asked each of the new transitional deacons to tell their discernment stories so the faithful can get to know them as they prepare to be ordained as priests next year.

**DEACON ROBERT FOERTSCH**

I am originally from Wyndmere. After high school I attended North Dakota State University, receiving a degree in Computer Science. After working at NDSU for a few years after graduation, and after prayer and discernment, I left my job to enter seminary.
Seminary has been a long and important journey in my own life of faith, and I am grateful for the opportunity to grow more deeply in my relationship with Jesus Christ through the spiritual and academic formation found in our seminaries.

I am overjoyed to have reached this milestone in my formational journey and am excited to be able to serve the people of God in the role of deacon. It is a great blessing to be able to be a part of the lives of so many faithful Catholics in North Dakota.

DEACON MATTHEW KENSOK

It’s hard to believe that it’s already been six years since I first felt called to the priesthood and entered seminary. After a retreat experience and through times of adoration at the NDSU Newman Center, I felt a call to the priesthood. Jesus whispered a quiet but profound invitation into the very depth of my being: “Be my priest.” I fell in love with Jesus in the Eucharist, and we began a journey of discernment together.

After each year of seminary, the Lord just kept inviting me back. My love and desire for the priesthood only grew and matured with time. In my first years of seminary, the question I asked was, “am I called to be a priest?” In these past few years, the question has changed to, “what kind of priest am I called to be?” I was no longer looking simply to ordination. I was looking beyond ordination, to my future ministry in service of Jesus Christ and his bride, the Church.

As I am ordained a transitional deacon, my “discernment” comes to an end. I am looking forward with joy to my ministry of the sacraments, preaching, and serving God’s people. In these past months, as I thought of ordination, it was a thought of joyful acceptance: “Let’s do this!” I am excited for this new chapter of my life—a chapter entitled “Deacon Year.” And then priesthood is right around the corner. What a blessing! I am extremely grateful for all the support I have received from friends, family, seminary formators, and the faithful of the Diocese of Fargo. My prayer is that God will use me as his instrument for his greater glory.

DEACON JOSEPH LITTLEFIELD

I have been seriously discerning my vocation to the priesthood since I was 14 years old. Thus, my formation journey has been a long one... over 10 years in the making! On one hand, it’s truly been a long time coming while on the other hand, it’s hard for me to believe that it’s finally here!

Before I entered seminary, I thought eight years of school and formation was such a long time. The first four went slower, but that last three have really flown by. Like any other Christian pursuing their vocation in life, I have had many ups and downs, especially during my time in seminary. Through it all, the Lord has always granted me the special grace of his peace and his love which only he can give.

As I approach my deacon ordination, I am filled with so much joy, peace, and confidence. The Lord has been so good to me in calling me to this great vocation, and I know this is only the beginning. I’m really excited and looking forward to seeing what the Lord has in store for me in my future life and ministry as a deacon and not so far off as a priest!
To register your team, contact:

Brenda Hagemeier
701-356-7928
brenda.hagemeier@fargodiocese.org

Steve Schons
701-356-7926
steve.schons@fargodiocese.org

Register online:
http://www.fargodiocese.org/puttpurpose

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When the crops need rain and the church has no roof

By Father Bert Miller | Pastor of St. Mary’s Church in Park River and St. Luke’s Church in Veseyville

This spring, farmers have lamented that there has been no rain for their crops. I remember 23 years ago when there was a similar drought through the summer and fall, about three months with no rain.

There was a church in that region that had a leaking roof. During the springs of two years, the roof had leaked so badly that buckets caught most of the water. Some of the buckets were balanced on wooden planks over the tops of the pews. On weekends, the catching structure severely limited space for the churchgoers.

The people grumbled about the situation. Water, water, everywhere! You stand in it! You sit in it! The kids play in it! What a mess!

It took a while to find a company with a fine reputation to replace a roof like this one. Finally, in a neighboring state, a company about 200 miles away expressed interest in the project. They came for site inspections of this 12-gabled church roof with like-numbered valleys. They thought they could do it.

They bid on it and met with church elders to determine the color of the roofing material. A responsible secretary decided she would record the meeting. She knew she would not be able to keep up with all the details.

The church agreed to the $180,000 roofing price and picked a color for the roofing materials. The parishioners worried about how the old roof could be removed and the new roof installed without the inside of the church getting wetter. They prayed.

It was around then that the spring rains stopped. The pastor went to Europe to see relatives and was stranded there by a volcanic eruption. Planes could not fly in that area of the world. He would have to wait to travel home.

While he was waiting, the roofers appeared, removed the entire outer structure of the roof, and began putting the new roofing material into one of the valleys. It was a hot, sunny day!

A parishioner noticed the work going on and the “awful” brown color of the roofing materials. He questioned whether that was the color ordered. The secretary who recorded the meeting said it certainly was not.

She called the pastor in Europe and asked what she should do. He said, “Stop the project. Do whatever you have to. Get the contractor to stop and fix the error.”

She got the project stopped. They would not do anything more until the pastor got home for a contract meeting. That wouldn’t be for another month. The heavens co-operated; there was no rain.

When the pastor returned, the meeting was called. The company representative said that if there was an error in color, the company would pay $60,000 on the roof, the roofing maker would pay $60,000 and the church would pay $60,000.

That’s when the secretary produced her tape and transcript of the meeting. She read the transcript and played the tape. Both clearly stated the color choice. The rep looked at his chips and realized that the color delivered was on the backside of the color ordered. It was clearly the contractor’s fault. He said the church would not have to pay anything for the new roof. Good news for the church!

Now, the roof had been open for six weeks, and it had not rained a drop. Could that situation continue another six weeks until the new roof was fabricated and delivered for installation?

In the end, the skies were closed (no rain fell) and the church roof was open for three months. The farmers still got a relatively good crop—60-fold instead of their expected 100-fold.

The farmers survived and the parishioners cheered for their new roof sheltering them from rain, snow, and wind. The roof has not leaked for 23 years.
Blessings: A Biblical, liturgical, and personal way to strengthen your family

TIM MOSSE
Director of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Fargo

I have fond memories as a child of me and my siblings all asking my parents for “hug and kiss and blessing” every night before we went to bed. I can vividly recall the sense of love, joy, and peace that came over me every time my parents touched my head and prayed a simple, one-sentence blessing.

The combination of the physical and spiritual have a profound effect on all of us. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that blessings are the first of the sacramentals. They don’t confer grace, but they prepare us to receive and cooperate with grace. The Catechism also states that, “Blessing expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man” (2626). That’s it! A prayer of blessing is an encounter with God. In a very real way, through the cooperation of my earthly parents, I was encountering my heavenly Father—and was prepared to receive and cooperate with his grace.

Blessings are all around us. Let’s look at them from a biblical, liturgical, and personal perspective.

BIBLICAL. Some form of the word “bless” occurs hundreds of times in the Bible. When God created man in his image as male and female, he blessed them and said to be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Abraham is blessed by God and told that he (ultimately through Jesus) will be a blessing to all people. Aaron, the priest, blesses the people with the famous, “The Lord bless and keep you” blessing (Num. 6:24-26). Dozens of Psalms and canticles, as well as many of Paul’s letters contain some formulation of “Blessed be God.”

When Elizabeth encounters Mary and baby Jesus in her womb, she is filled with the Holy Spirit and declares, “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Luke 1:42). Zachariah and Simeon are both filled with the Holy Spirit and “bless” (praise or give thanks to) God. This attitude of praise and gratitude should also be our response to God’s gift of blessings to us.

LITURGICAL. Speaking of thanksgiving, “Eucharist” means “thanksgiving” and the Mass is a great example of a Trinitarian liturgical blessing. Consider this dynamic of prayer, thanks, and blessing at the Mass. The priest prays “Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation for through your goodness” we have gifts of bread and wine to offer. We respond—adding the gift of our very lives—“Blessed be God forever.” This dialog continues when we affirm that it is “right and just”—even “our duty and our salvation”—to give the Father thanks. All gifts come from the Father and we thank him. The priest continues with the Eucharistic Prayer where he asks the Father to “bless and approve our offerings” and calls on the Spirit to make them holy so that we can have the most personal encounter with Jesus in Holy Communion. The Father gives us the gifts to offer, the Spirit makes them holy, and we then consume these life-giving, transubstantiated gifts as the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus. Everything—including us—comes from God and returns to God. No wonder the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the Christian life (CCC 1324!)

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE. Blessing is closely related to living a life of love, joy, peace and gratitude. Our son, Romeo, is a great example of this. We are very grateful for the blessing he is to me and my wife—even on the difficult days—because the shared sacrifice it takes to raise him well brings our family closer to each other and closer to God. Romeo lights up a room no matter where he goes with his joyful presence and genuine love he shares with others. We recently reconnected with an old friend who had not met Romeo yet and Romeo’s happy greeting and smile set the stage for a wonderful conversation. When it was time to go, he gave my friend a big hug and smile, bringing a deep sense of love, joy, and peace to all of us.

Now, my wife and I bless each other and Romeo every day—just like my parents did—through physical touch and those same prayers of blessing. Romeo welcomes our blessing and then is always waiting with a big hug and a duck-billed kiss for us after we bless him. I pray that continuing my personal family tradition of “hug and kiss and blessing”—along with biblical and liturgical blessings—will help us live joyful, grateful lives, help us facilitate Godly encounters, and empower us to be a blessing to all those we meet.
Sherry Kurtz, music teacher at St. Joseph’s Elementary/St. Mary’s Academy Catholic School in Devils Lake, loves to help her students make a joyful sound each week at the all school Mass. But for the last two years she says it has been hard trying to worship in a gymnasium that’s not well suited for the celebration of the Eucharist. Soon, all that will change.

On May 18, St. Joseph’s Elementary/St. Mary’s Academy broke ground on a new facility large enough to allow all 190 students to attend Mass together. The $2.5 million project will include St. Mary’s Academy Chapel and the St. Joseph Learning Center.

With the addition of seventh and eighth grade classes to the Pre-K through sixth grade school the last two years, Mass had to be moved into the gym to accommodate all of the students at one time. The new chapel will be able to hold up to 250 students, so there’s room to grow for the future as well.

The new learning resource center will house a library and a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) lab which will give students the technological tools they need for a future in their chosen career fields.

A committee formed to secure funding for the project was able to raise the entire amount in just two years. St. Joseph Catholic School students raised $5,000 of that amount by making and selling rosaries and other hand-made religious items.

During his homily at the Mass that followed the official groundbreaking, Bishop Folda gave thanks to God and all those who made the day possible.

“The addition of a new chapel and learning center at St. Joseph Catholic School is a testimony to the fact that the heart of this school is Jesus himself,” said Bishop Folda. “He is the reason this school exists, and we seek only to know him and love him more fully through this great endeavor now beginning.”

Construction on the new addition will get underway in early August, and should be completed by the start of the 2022–23 school year.
As we gear up for an exciting new milestone in St. Paul’s Newman Center history—opening up the faith-based housing, Newman Living—I’ve been asking myself this: what is the biggest benefit of Catholic college students living in community?

While living in a beautiful, new, secure apartment just across from campus gives an abundance of benefits in itself, the greatest gift Newman Living gives to the students is realized in this: saints often come in groups.

I’m reminded of course of saints who became great friends while studying together at university, like Sts. Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, and Peter Faber, but there are so many more. Think of Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross; or Monica, Augustine, and Ambrose; Francis and Clare; not even to mention the 1st and 2nd Century early Church saints/friends. The list goes on.

Asking graduating seniors or recent alumni what their biggest Newman Center grace was typically reveals a short list. Our students are blessed with a place to receive the Sacraments while at college, to listen and discuss God’s inspired word in Bible studies, to step up into various leadership roles, and to be a witness to others on campus, etc. However, nearly everyone says this: one of the biggest graces I received through the Newman Center was Christ-centered friendships.

The Catholic housing idea first started with the Bosco and Clare houses. Right away, the men living in the Bosco house that first year all became priests or Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) missionaries. The women living in the Clare house their first year all became either religious sisters or FOCUS missionaries. As the years went on, more students came together to rent other houses on the Newman block, so we couldn’t just describe them as the “men’s house” or “women’s house” anymore. At the Newman Center, we’re all excited to extend this blessing to 80 students with the new faith-based housing.

Some quick trivia: The Bison football programs’ head coach with the most wins is Craig Bohl. The bible verse that his players heard him constantly quote was none other than Proverbs 27:17, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” This is what we’re embodying with Newman Living: young Catholics helping to form others into saints. How much more important is sanctity than football championships (but we appreciate those too)!

Here’s the call to action for you, reading this right now: please pray for us. If you know current or potential NDSU students, let them know about Newman Living, and let us know, too. We would love to extend an invitation and give them a tour of the new housing. Pray for saints to rise up during these times, and pray for the St. Paul’s Newman Center students to, in the words of St. Paul, “fight the good fight, keep the faith, and finish the race.”

**LEASING NOW**

If you or a student you know is interested in living at Newman Living this fall, visit our website bisoncatholic.org/housing or give our leasing agent William a call at (701) 235-0142.
St. John’s Academy, Jamestown, to add 7th and 8th grade

By St. John’s Academy

The Basilica of St. James and St. John’s Academy are pleased to announce that the Academy will offer middle school education beginning in the fall of 2021.

Originally a boarding school, St. John’s Academy opened in 1890 and offered education through high school for 75 years until the closure of the middle and high school after the 1965-66 school year. With the announcement made this past weekend at services at the Basilica of St. James, the school will resume offering Catholic-Christian middle school education beginning with the addition of 7th grade in the fall of 2021 and with 8th grade in the fall of 2022.

A proposal was approved by the Academy’s school board, the Basilica of St. James Parish Finance Council, and future pastor Father Neil Pfeifer.

“Adding 7th and 8th grade was a part of the vision that Monsignor Wald had for this parish and for St. John’s Academy. Furthermore, it supports the mission of the Basilica of St. James and Academy,” said Father Pfeifer.

The decision comes with the encouragement and support of Bishop John Folda, who holds a deep belief in the importance and value of Catholic-Christian education.

“I’m very pleased that St. John’s Academy will add 7th and 8th grades in the next two years. This will be a great blessing for our students and their families, who already trust St. John’s to pass on an excellent education and formation in the Catholic faith,” said Bishop Folda.

“Since 1890, the mission of St. John’s Academy has been to educate and spiritually form the children of this community through rigorous academics built on the firm foundation of Catholic-Christian faith,” said Father Pfeifer. “The decision to proceed with the addition of 7th and 8th grade was made with a firm belief that education within a Catholic-Christian school is both valuable and necessary for passing on the faith to the next generation. In other words, it is impossible to educate a child fully and properly without bringing Christ into the conversation.”

School Principal, Jeff Trumbauer, commented “Educating middle school students here at the Academy will not only enhance the academic experience for our children but will greatly contribute to the formation and development of the whole child. The ability to present Christ to middle school children during their formative years is very important. We understand that there will be challenges to face, but through Christ all things are possible, and it is in him we put our faith. We are excited to offer this incredible, faith-based education that has become the standard at St. John’s Academy to 7th and 8th grade students. We appreciate the input and support of our stakeholders and ask for the prayers of this community as we embark on the next chapter at St. John’s Academy.”

For more details and enrollment information, visit the Academy’s website: stjohnsacademynd.org.

The new addition to St. John’s Academy completed in August 2020. (submitted photo)

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On May 25, 5th graders from Fargo-area Catholic schools toured Sullivan Middle School in preparation for 6th grade. (submitted photo)

Eighth graders at St. Mary’s Academy in Devils Lake graduated on May 23. Mass was celebrated at noon at St. Joseph’s Church and diplomas were given to the seven graduates (l-r) Rachel Willey, Olivia Mitchell, Andrew Ternes, Isaac Vaagen, Logan Skurdall, Kellan Wiberg, and Carter Smith. (submitted photo)

The cast of Jamestown’s St. John’s Academy spring drama “Country Ella.” (submitted photo)

Nativity School students in Fargo enjoy “mini-week” activities at Lindenwood Park on the last day of school May 26. (submitted photo)

School’s out for summer!
Catholic schools across the Diocese of Fargo celebrated the last day of school through graduations, fun days, and even musical productions. While the 2020/2021 school year was a challenge, the majority of Catholic school students in the diocese were in class the entire year, with some temporary exceptions. Thank you to the parents, teachers and staff for a successful year!

On May 25, Shanley High School Class of 2021 toss their caps in the air at the end of commencement ceremonies on May 26 in Fargo. (submitted photo)

St. John’s Academy, Jamestown, to add 7th and 8th grade By St. John’s Academy of our stakeholders and ask for the prayers of this community as we embark on the next chapter at St. John’s Academy.” For more details and enrollment information, visit the Academy’s website: stjohnsacademynd.org.

St. Catherine’s School in Valley City’s graduating 6th grade class (front, l-r) Tori Nelson, Jack Sorby, Elizabeth Max, Luke Praska, and Marisa Hoffarth. (back, l-r) Principal Joshua Gow, Pastor Monsignor Dennis Skonseng, and teacher Dawn Ihry. (submitted photo)

Father James Gross, pastor of St. Mary’s Church in Grand Forks, hands Holy Family/St. Mary’s 5th grader Cole Tanabe his graduation certificate. (submitted photo)

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Shanley High School Class of 2021 toss their caps in the air at the end of commencement ceremonies on May 26 in Fargo. (submitted photo)
Countering Catholic misinformation about vaccines

A priest recently mentioned to me that he was not planning to get the COVID-19 vaccine. He told me he was concerned that RNA vaccines could alter our DNA and he heard there were also risks to fertility.

I replied that those particular concerns were unsubstantiated, and not scientifically correct, and encouraged him to be vigilant about various forms of misinformation, including “Catholic” misinformation that can spread rapidly on social media.

In a January 2021 article in Crisis Magazine, for example, AnnaMaria Cardinali repeats several errors regarding a cell line widely used in vaccine production and research. Her comments appear to be based on a problematic LifeSite News interview by John Henry Westen with former graduate student Pamela Acker:

“Acker speaks about her research into the HEK-293 cell line specifically, and talks about the number that’s at the end of that cell line name. ‘HEK’ stands for ‘Human Embryonic Kidney’ and the ‘293’ actually reveals the number of experiments that a specific researcher did to develop that cell line. ‘It doesn’t mean there were 293 abortions, but for 293 experiments, you would certainly need far more than one abortion. We’re talking probably hundreds of abortions,’ Acker shares.”

In reality, the HEK 293 cell line was obtained from a single fetus, and only one abortion occurred, not hundreds. Cells were removed from the kidney, modified, and grown subsequently for many years in the laboratory of Alex van der Eb in Leiden, the Netherlands. This cell line, generated in 1972 or 1973, underwent many “passages” and purification steps, leading to the number “293.”

Whether there were hundreds of abortions or just one is not the key issue, since harvesting cells from even a single abortion is still unethical. However, in Acker’s interview, the sense of outrage for the audience is ramped up in proportion to the overstated claims about the number of abortions. This phenomenon is understandable, since there are some Catholics who do not seem to grasp the problem with abortion-derived cell lines at all, or minimize it, which can generate frustration among others who may be tempted to overstate their case.

When Catholics disseminate incorrect medical, scientific, or factual information in their discussions, or subscribe to urban legends and conspiracy theories, it raises serious concerns. Some of this scientific fake news comes from those who are generally opposed to vaccinations and perhaps more gullible when it comes to false scientific claims. We face a particular obligation to get our facts straight because “the establishment” will fact-check us very strictly even as it allows certain liberal distortions of truth to pass unchallenged, particularly when it serves the narrative that the Church is “anti-science.” In terms of COVID-19 vaccines, we spend a fair amount of time at the National Catholic Bioethics Center countering “Catholic” misinformation and/or disinformation about cell line usage from abortions, whether from those who believe one can never get vaccinated, or from those at the other end of the spectrum who believe there is no moral problem at all with the continued use of these cell lines in research.

Cardinali also offers the claim that the HEK-293 cell line was obtained from a living baby because once a child dies, the cells are basically no longer useful: “HEK stands for ‘human embryonic kidney.’ To harvest a viable embryonic kidney for this purpose, sufficiently healthy children old enough to have adequately developed kidneys must be removed from the womb, alive, typically by cesarean section, and have their kidneys cut out. This must take place without anesthesia for the child, which would lessen the viability of the organs.”

These claims are not correct, and there is no historical evidence that a C-section was ever done to obtain the HEK-293 cell line. Rather, procurement of the kidneys relied on standard abortion techniques. It is also noteworthy that extracted kidneys can survive and even function for many minutes following the death of an individual—that is how cadaveric kidney transplantation between adults originally took place—and cells can be successfully derived from kidneys quite some time after their removal from the body.

The best response to these forms of misinformation from well-intentioned Catholics is to provide accurate guidance and scientific explanations to our Catholic faithful, hoping they will have ears to hear and hearts open to dialogue and reflection when presented with factually correct information.

None of this is to reduce the obligation we have to object strongly to the continued use of abortion-derived cells in vaccine work and other forms of research, as I have emphasized in several recent essays available at ncbcenter.org and father tad.com.

Catholics have to be on guard against anti-science prophets, no matter how well meaning, and the false witness they bear. We should give witness to the truth in all its forms, including in the important and highly influential worlds of science and medicine.
Legislators introduced over 900 bills and resolutions during the 2021 legislative session. The North Dakota Catholic Conference followed about 100 of them. Here is a look at the work of the legislature on just some of the bills and resolutions. The legislature:

- Defeated a bill to mandate insurance coverage for fertility treatments, some of which are contrary to Catholic teaching and threaten human life. However, the legislature might study implementing such a mandate during the interim.
- Provided new services for youth at risk of homelessness.
- Passed a fairness in sports bill requiring that only biological girls can participate in girls sports, only to have the bill vetoed by Governor Burgum. The Senate failed to override the veto.
- Trounced a bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide by a vote of 9 yeas and 85 nays.
- Increased funding for county-run guardianship programs.
- Faced an unprecedented bill to mandate priests violate the seal of confession. The bill, however, was withdrawn following an outpouring of opposition from Catholics and non-Catholics alike.
- Prohibited institutions of the North Dakota University System from partnering with abortion providers. The Governor vetoed a section of the bill. The remaining sections require that any institution receiving the popular matching grants for foundations cannot partner with an abortion provider on anything.
- Defeated tax credits for contributions to a scholarship granting organization to help lower-income students. A bill to provide an income tax credit directly to parents with children in nonpublic schools also failed.
- Put off for now building a new State Hospital in Jamestown to replace the old and rapidly declining facilities there.
- Defeated several proposals to expand gambling in the state, particularly sports gambling and internet poker.
- Turned back a plan to legalize recreational marijuana in North Dakota.
- Added ten slots to the corporate guardianship program run by Catholic Charities of North Dakota.
- Merged the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health.
- Rejected a chance to create education empowerment grants that could be used by public or nonpublic school students to help cover the costs of tuition or supplemental needs.
- Authorized the Department of Human Services to assume the refugee resettlement program following the collapse of Lutheran Social Services.
- Defeated a bill to allow someone to use deadly force even when not necessary to protect human life. However, the legislature then passed a differently worded bill that might allow the same use of such force.
- Provided grants to expand substance abuse treatment in underserved areas.
- Approved an expansion to the tax credit for contributions to nonpublic schools and private universities.
- Protected religious freedom during emergency orders.
- Protected religious freedom for persons in state institutions such as prisons, jails, and the State Hospital.
- Allowed for a process to remove restrictions placed by a guardian on visiting and communicating with a ward.
- Clarified and hopefully finally settled questions concerning what church property local governments can tax.
- Protected the free speech and religious rights of students and student organizations on the state-run college campuses.
- Made known that North Dakota’s ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment had expired.
- Prohibited municipalities from enacting paid family leave policies and zoning ordinances relating to firearms. It also limited their ability to assist federal law enforcement with enforcing some gun laws.
- Changed to a study a bill that would have allowed 20 new weapons to be brought without permission into churches and other public gatherings.
- Turned a paid family-leave plan into a study and then defeated the study.
- Expanded the income tax credit for employment of individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Rejected a bill that would have exposed private schools and churches to old claims of child sexual abuse without doing the same for public schools and government agencies.
- Created a new childhood education grant for four-year olds.
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When I was young (quite a few years ago!) devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was very prominent and popular in the Church at large, in our parish, in the Catholic school of St. Mary’s in New England, N.D., and in families. Special devotions were held on the first Friday of each month such as exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the reception of Holy Communion, and a holy hour.

What is the origin of devotion to the heart of Jesus? Origen, an early Christian writer (185–254 A.D.) refers to St. John, who, at the Last Supper “lay close to the breast of Jesus” (John 13:25). Origen comments, “This signifies that John rested in Jesus’ innermost heart.”

Even earlier, we can consider Our Lady and St. Joseph as they lovingly cared for Jesus in his infancy, youth, and young manhood. With what reverent devotion, adoration, and love they served the sacred humanity of the Son of God.

Many early Fathers of the Church and writers in the first centuries depicted the love in the heart of the Incarnate Word. Later saints developed devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus including St. Gertrude, St. Bonaventure, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Francis de Sales, and others.

Prominent among these saints was St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation nun who lived from 1647 to 1690. Her feast day is celebrated Oct. 16.

“Our Lord appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque on Dec. 27, 1673, feast of the Apostle St. John, and revealed the ineffable mysteries of his Sacred Heart:

“My divine Heart is so impassioned with love for men and for you in particular, that being unable any longer to contain within itself the flames of its burning charity, it must spread them abroad by your means and manifest itself to others in order to enrich them with the precious treasures that I reveal to you, and that contain graces of sanctification and salvation...”

In a third vision, Jesus revealed himself in glory with his five wounds shining like five suns. He opened his breast which was like a furnace, and showed his heart as the living source of all the flames. In a fourth vision Jesus asked for a special feast in honor of his heart. It was only in 1865 that Pope Pius IX extended the feast or the Sacred Heart to the entire Church.

St. John Paul II’s personal devotion to the heart of Jesus began in his boyhood and continued throughout his life. Between 1985 and 1989, he gave a series of 34 meditations on the Litany of the Sacred Heart during his Angelus messages. They are his personal reflections on the litany which he offers as a stimulus to meditate on the heart of Jesus more fruitfully. It is rich in Scriptural references.

Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance, have mercy on us. —St. John Paul II

“My favorite invocation of the litany is, “Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance, have mercy on us.”

These are excerpts from St. John Paul II’s Angelus meditation: “No sooner had the soldier struck the blow with the lance than from Christ’s wounded side, ‘there came out blood and water’ (John 19:34). From Christ’s side, pierced by the lance there came forth a torrent of water to quench the thirst of the People of God...”

“From the pierced heart of Christ the Church is born. Just as from the side of the sleeping Adam his wife Eve was taken, so—according to a tradition going back to the first centuries—from the wounded side of the Savior as He slept in death on the cross, the Church, his Spouse, was taken.”

St. John Chrysostom also develops this: “There flowed from his side water and blood. Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has another hidden meaning... Water and blood symbolized baptism and the Holy Eucharist. From these two Sacraments the Church is born.”

The Chaplet of Mercy revealed to St. Faustina is a later development of devotion to the Heart of Jesus, with its invocation: “Jesus, I trust in You.”
Building a relationship with Christ a subtle journey

Jesus I trust in you. Help me to trust you more.” That was my prayer as I embarked on my first year of seminary at St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, Neb. I had many worries coming in. What are the classes going to be like? Will I adjust to the new lifestyle? How will I mesh with all the other seminarians? But my biggest concern was, will I have a closer relationship with Jesus at the end of the year? I came there to learn, but if I didn’t grow in a deeper love and trust for Christ, it would all be for naught.

I had only one problem. I had no idea how to do that.

My first weeks at seminary were spent getting used to the schedule, learning my way around the breviary, and getting to know the guys in the house. As the months went by, I became more settled in to my schedule and the flow of life at the seminary. There are many points throughout the day that we are required to pray together as a community. Morning, evening, and night prayer, along with Mass every morning are the main parts of the day where we all come together. Having these times scheduled into my day helped to solidify my prayer life. Having this structure of prayer throughout the day was a great frame to build my own personal devotions around. It helped me to be much more intentional about making time to pray on my own. As the year went on, I found myself turning to prayer more and more when difficulties arose.

...you build a better relationship with Jesus Christ the same way you build a better relationship with anyone else—by spending time with him. —Paul Zach

Before I knew it, my first year at seminary was over. It seemed like it just started. I felt I didn’t have enough time to grow spiritually like I wanted. However, upon reflecting on the year, my eyes were opened to just how far Jesus led me. He took care of most—if not all—my worries. I passed all the classes, I came to enjoy the daily life of the seminary, and I made some of the best friends I have ever had. I also began to realize how my relationship with him grew throughout the year. I turned to Jesus more with my problems instead of trying to figure things out on my own. I was more intentional and consistent spending time with him in prayer.

These changes in me were subtle and slow moving as the year progressed. I didn’t realize they were happening. I realize now that you build a better relationship with Jesus Christ the same way you build a better relationship with anyone else—by spending time with him. By consistently committing time to prayer and uniting myself to him in the Eucharist, it allows him to enter my heart and soul to form me into the man he is calling me to be. I still have a long way to go in my spiritual life, but I thank God every day for starting me on this journey of formation to hopefully be one of his priests someday.

I’m thankful that he brought me to the seminary. It’s a place where I can foster my relationship with him and let my trust continue to grow. I know that if I trust in Jesus, I will have nothing to fear. I look forward to the years to come with anticipation as I pray: Jesus I trust in you. Help me to trust you more.
Your contingency notebook

STEWARDSHIP

STEVE SCHONS
Director of stewardship and development for the Diocese of Fargo

Do you have a contingency notebook? Perhaps you do, but you call it by another name. Maybe it’s your “emergency file” or your “crisis notebook.” Or, maybe you had intentions of starting something like this but just haven’t taken the time.

A contingency notebook can be as simple as the three-hole binder containing all the information a loved one or personal representative needs to know if you become seriously incapacitated or even die. When tragedy strikes, it’s no time to go through drawers, filing cabinets, and shoe boxes looking for pertinent information. Those who bear responsibility for your affairs need the relevant material immediately.

Your up-to-date contingency notebook can make all the difference.

After you’ve obtained a good-sized notebook and 12 dividers, label the front cover in big letters, “contingency notebook.” Then divide it into several sections, including:

1. Action list. Specify the immediate and secondary steps one should follow if something happens to you.
2. Key contacts. Identify family members, friends, professional advisors, and others who should be informed of your condition.
3. Medical notes. List any medical problems and treatments. Identify types and locations of medicines. Name your doctors and provide contact information.
4. Financial accounts (savings, checking, brokerage, credit, debit, etc.). Include account numbers, customer service numbers and a copy of a past statement for each account.
5. Insurance. Include life, accident, disability, auto, and health policy information. Summarize your coverage and/or include a copy of the coverage page from each policy. Identify insurance agent(s) and phone numbers.
6. Business interests. Include copies of contracts and outline action to take.
7. Asset inventory. List your major possessions (autos, real estate, etc.).
8. Funeral instructions. Identify your wishes concerning the funeral service and burial. You might also suggest that donations can be made to your parish for those who wish to make a memorial gift in your honor.
9. Estate planning documents. Include copies of your will, power of attorney, living will, or directive to physicians, trusts, and other items. Also, specify where the original of each document can be found.
10. Charitable commitments. Summarize your charitable involvements, specifically your ties with your church. This will help your family know what organizations you supported during life and why.
11. Personal items. Include biographical information that can be used in preparing your obituary. Summarize your values and purpose in life. You might also provide personal notes to each family member expressing your love and your hopes for them.
12. Miscellaneous. This section is reserved for anything that doesn’t fall into one of the other categories.

For the sake of your loved ones, we urge you to get started with your contingency book right away. Keep working on it until you are satisfied it’s complete. Then show it to your family and tell them where they can find it. All of this will produce peace of mind for you and for them.

I am available to assist you and to provide further ideas if you wish. You can reach me at (701) 356-7926 or steve.schons@fargodiocese.org.

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There is always something we can do to encourage others, no matter what our own situation may be. – Chad Prososki

For many struggling with loss or transitions, embracing technology can help greatly. Many of us clearly remember how difficult it was to stay in touch without email and cell phones. Now with the touch of a button, we can see and hear our loved ones on a screen as if they are in the room next to us. Many during the past year for work have embraced this, but it can also be a great blessing for the homebound or elderly. For those who found cell phones too small, complicated, or expensive, now there are more affordable options with bigger screens and even special phones available with larger fonts easier to read. There are also inexpensive computers and tablets that can be set up with only a few buttons for email with family and friends, favorite websites, local news, and apps or services such as the weather.

Volunteering is another activity that helps people break free of the struggles of loneliness. As our churches and communities begin holding more events again, there will be a greater need for volunteers. Visiting and interacting with others can free us from some of our struggles of loneliness. Not that we can ever replace our loved ones who are no longer with us, but we can form new friendships at any stage of our lives. There is always something we can do to encourage others, no matter what our own situation may be. Rather than focusing on the things we can no longer do, do we look at the opportunities to serve one another in the ways that we can?

Similarly, there can be great satisfaction in donating items we no longer need to those in need. For instance, we recently sponsored a Bundle Up Your Baby Bump event at Catholic Charities North Dakota to help new moms in need. This requires an incredible amount of work and community support. First, we need the donated clothing, baby items, and funds to share with others. We also need help to set up, prepare, host, and clean up the event. All this work and preparation is well worth it when we can see the joy on the faces of new moms who find the perfect outfit, a new stroller, or whatever else they might need—items donated by generous people like yourselves.

Another easy way to encourage others is to reach out to an elderly relative or someone you know and let them know you’re thinking of them. It’s so easy to make someone’s day with a friendly phone call or card. It’s a quick and simple way to be a true light in this world. Also, don’t wait for someone else to make the first move. I can’t tell you how many times I have reached out to a friend—or they have reached out to me—whom I haven’t spoken to in a long time, and their reaction is, “I was just thinking about you.” So why not pick up the phone right now and call up that person you haven’t seen in a while? It’s good for them, and probably good for you too!
75 years ago — 1946
Reverend Monsignor Leo F. Dworschak, Vicar General of the Diocese of Fargo, has been selected by Pope Pius XII to be Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Rapid City, S.D. As Coadjutor Bishop, he will work with Most Rev. John J. Lawler, the current Bishop of Rapid City, and have the powers of a bishop. Upon death or retirement of Bishop Lawler, Coadjutor Bishop-elect Dworschak will succeed to the office without further action. Rev. Msgr. Dworschak is the third Fargo priest to be elevated to the episcopate in a little more than six years. The Most Rev. Vincent J. Ryan, former pastor of St. Anthony of Padua parish in Fargo, was appointed Bishop of Bismarck in 1940. The Most Rev. William T. Mulloy, former pastor of St. Mary’s Cathedral, was selected as Bishop of Covington, Kentucky in 1944.

50 years ago — 1971
The Walsh County Historical Society will dedicate a monument and host a community “festival day” on Sunday, June 20, to recognize the founding of one of the first churches in Walsh County. In 1880, Irish Catholic pioneers gathered in the log cabin home of Michael Kearns to celebrate the community’s first Mass with Father John W. Considine. Out of this humble inception grew a parish and St. Patrick’s Church was built in 1884. It was later consolidated with Sacred Heart parish of Minto in 1957.

20 years ago — 2001
Breaking ground in the Diocese. Our Lady of Peace in Mayville broke ground for construction of a new church, social hall and classrooms after a ten year planning and fundraising period. Father Bernard Schneider thanked all those who sacrificed to give financially as well as those who donated time and/or talents. Father Bernie Pfau joined St. John’s Academy students in Jamestown signaling the beginning of the construction on phase one of a new multi-purpose facility for youth ministry, religious education, and a development office.
NEW EARTH  JUNE 2021

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

Celebrate Mother-Daughter Days in Hankinson this June and July

The Franciscan Sisters of Dillingen in Hankinson invite you to their annual Mother-Daughter Days on July 26–28 with the theme “The Joy of the Lord is My Strength.” Mothers and their daughters, age infant through young adult, are invited to spend some quality time together and grow in their faith through talks, activities, and prayer. Young people will see a glimpse into religious life as they accompany the Sisters for prayer, Mass, meals, and recreation. To register, contact Sister Jean Louise, OSF by text (701) 208-1245 or email ndfranciscan@yahoo.com.

Diocese to sponsor women’s retreat Aug. 13-15

Join the Diocese of Fargo for Jesus Approaches: A Women’s Retreat, led by award-winning author and writer Liz Kelly. The retreat will include conferences, time for prayer and rest, social time, Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and the opportunity to go to confession. It will be a chance to step out of the routine and stress of daily life in order to encounter the Lord Jesus through prayer and inspiring talks. This retreat is Aug. 13–15 at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Hankinson. Register at fargodiocese.org/evangelization-retreats-workshops.

LIFE’S MILESTONES

Karl and Mary Broeren, parishioners of St. Stephen’s Church in Larimore, celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 10. They live in Northwood and have 3 children and 6 grandchildren.

Wayne and Evangeline Gerig, parishioners of St. Therese the Little Flower Church in Rugby, will celebrate their 70th anniversary on June 25. They have 8 children, 6 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.

Ted and Eleanor Harles, parishioners at St. Boniface Church in Lidgerwood, celebrated their 65th anniversary on June 6. They have been blessed with 10 children, 18 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren.

Gerry and Mary Joyce, parishioners of Holy Family Church in Grand Forks, celebrated their 69th anniversary on June 2. They have 6 children (2 deceased), 16 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.

Daniel and Deidre O’Keefe, parishioners of St. Patrick’s Church in Crystal, celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 12. They were married at St. Patrick’s Church in Crystal. They have 3 children and 9 grandchildren.

Norman and Lois (Piechowski) Wirtz, parishioners of St Philip’s Church in Hankinson, celebrated 65 years of marriage on June 20. They are adored by their 6 children and their spouses, 9 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren.

Rose Miller, parishioner of St. Margaret Mary Church in Drake, will celebrate her 100th birthday on June 26. Rose and her late husband Jack, who passed away in 1986, are blessed with 5 children, 12 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, and 7 great-great-grandchildren.

Mary Connor, parishioner of St. Joseph’s Church in Devils Lake, celebrated her 90th birthday on June 12. Mary has been a member of St Joseph’s since the closing of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in rural Ramsey County. Mary and her late husband Clinton’s 7 children will be hosting her at a family dinner at the farm.

Norman Schommer, a lifelong resident of Munich, will celebrate his 90th birthday on July 13. He and his wife Shirley are parishioners of St. Mary’s Church in Munich. They have been blessed with 1 son and 1 daughter, 4 grandsons, and 9 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.
Archbishop Aquila: Germany’s synodal path needs repentance, belief, truth
By Catholic News Agency

The German Catholic bishops and those involved in the synodal path of the Church in Germany must be the first to “repent and believe,” even as they call the world to do the same, Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver has said. He has warned that the synod’s first text puts forward “untenable” views of the Catholic Church, downplays the Church as God’s instrument of salvation, and ignores the tensions between the Church’s mission and worldly attitudes.

“Most of us outside Germany are aware through the media of the German Catholic Synodal Path and the outspokenness of some bishops in calling for radical changes to Church teaching and practice,” Archbishop Aquila reflected in his open letter dated May 13 and released May 26.

His letter is a 15-page commentary on the fundamental text produced by the first forum of the German Catholic Synodal Path. Aquila warned that the first basic text offers “selective and misleading” interpretations of Church teaching, but emphasized that he offered his response for the German bishops’ prayer and reflection and to encourage other bishops to “bear witness boldly to the truth of the Gospel, to Jesus Christ.”

The archbishop wrote that the German synodal assembly is right to voice distress over clergy sexual abuse scandals and cover-ups. The synod’s fundamental text is right to say these scandals have engendered “a true crisis of credibility for the Church.” The way forward, Aquila said, is to accept the just consequences for these failures, work to restore trust, and work to provide pastoral care for the victims of clergy abuse. Church leaders must make public acts of sincere contrition and penance and make a commitment to genuine transparency.

For Aquila, this transparency includes clarity about what the Church believes.

“If the Church is unwilling to tell the truth with prudence and The “Synodal Path” is a process that brings together German lay people and Catholic bishops to discuss four major topics: how power is exercised in the Church; sexual morality; the priesthood; and the role of women. When the German bishops launched the process, they initially said that the deliberations would be “binding” on the German Church, prompting a Vatican intervention that rejected such claims.

Some critics of the effort are concerned it will lead to German bishops and lay Catholics promoting positions that contradict Catholic teaching and discipline on matters like the ordination of women and intercommunion, even resulting in a “de facto schism.”

Archbishop Aquila voiced his own concerns about the fundamental text.

At one point, the text states that even for theology “there is no one central perspective, no one truth of religious, moral, and political evaluation of the world” and “no one way of thinking that can lay claim to final authority.”

“Even in the Church, legitimate views and ways of life can compete with each other even in core convictions,” the text continued. “Yes, they can even at the same time make the theologically justified claim to truth, correctness, comprehensibility, and honesty, and nevertheless be contradictory to each other in their statements or their language.”

To this, Aquila responded: “This is a remarkable claim if only for its incomprehensibility.”

“It is difficult to know how to comment on it, for such a candid rejection of the law of non-contradiction is already its own reductio ad absurdum,” he added. “Despite lip service to the authority of Scripture and tradition, it is evident that the Synodal Assembly’s interpretive approach is sufficiently malleable to strip them of any truly decisive content.”

The archbishop warned that this approach makes divine revelation captive to “endlessly protean hermeneutics of ‘dialogue.’” This should be contrasted with “the authentic understanding of dialogue articulated by Vatican II and developed by the post-conciliar popes.” For Aquila, the text’s reinterpretation of the Church’s teaching office corresponds to “explicit, radical doctrinal relativism.”

According to Aquila, the fundamental text’s interpretation of the Second Vatican Council documents is “selective and misleading” and works “to prop up untenable views of the nature of the Church, her relationship with the world, and her foundation on divine revelation.” These views are “impossible” to reconcile with a full understanding of the Council and result in a vision for the Church that risks abandoning Christ, the one who has “the words of eternal life.”

Despite the synodal assembly’s apparent emphasis on process...
By Catholic News Agency

Path needs repentance, belief, truth

Archbishop Aquila: Germany’s synodal process must speak the language of its recipients. While the Christian message begins from common ground, the archbishop said, the assembly “believes itself not only competent but duty-bound to make binding decisions for the Church” and to break through “blocking discourse.”

“The Synodal Assembly in fact proposes truly radical revisions of the structure of the Church and of her understanding of her mission,” he said. The fundamental text’s proposals are based on “a partial and tendentious account of the origin and nature of the ordained ministry” that is at odds with the Church’s own understanding.

On the issue of women’s ordination, Aquila said the text implicitly questions the distinction between the priesthood of the baptized and the ministerial priesthood. The text’s approach “seems calculated to undermine the definitive and permanent character of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.”

The archbishop specifically cited the fundamental text’s call to re-evaluate the teaching of St. John Paul II that the Church is unable to ordain women to the priesthood. He doubted the text’s claim that there are “new insights” that question this teaching’s coherence.

Aquila thought the trends of the fundamental text showed symptoms of “deeper maladies” linked to its view of authority in the Church.

While Lumen gentium, the Second Vatican Council’s dogmatic constitution on the Church, “could hardly be more forceful in its restatement of the doctrine of direct episcopal succession from the Apostles and of this succession’s divine institution,” said Aquila, and it is thus “outside the competence of the Church, in Germany or elsewhere, fundamentally to alter it.”

The hierarchical nature of the Church, in Catholic teaching and in the Second Vatican Council, is taught to be the “manifest intention of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit themselves,” said Aquila, and it is thus “outside the competence of the Church, in Germany or elsewhere, fundamentally to alter it.”

This hierarchical nature is for the sake of the whole Church, and this means that Church structures of authority are not simply a power that can be balanced or checked by others to ensure good governance, as some worldly models would advise. Rather, these structures and those in the hierarchy must be purified through “penance and the sincere pursuit of holiness,” in Aquila’s words.

For Aquila, the German synodal text reinterprets the Church in “remarkably anthropocentric terms,” such as its belief that because the Church is a “sign,” it must “be understood” and “must speak the language of its recipients.” While the Christian message begins from common ground, the archbishop said, eventually people are “confronted with the otherness of the transcendent God, whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways” but has invited us to become practiced in “the Lord’s way of speaking.”

The fundamental text “badly misconstrues” the Church as an instrument for mankind, in its demand that the Church, as the German assembly says, “must be easy to grasp and efficient, designed for its effectiveness and able to be used without causing harm.”

“The Sacraments—and much less the Church!—are not our ‘instruments.’ They are God’s instruments, for he alone is the principal efficient cause of all the graces mediated through the Church and the Sacraments,” said Aquila.

While the German synodal assembly has noted in passing that many Catholics who leave the Church are displeased with Church teaching on same-sex relationships and divorce and remarriage, and some Catholic bishops in Germany have called for changes on these matters, Aquila said he would refrain from discussing these topics which appear to be reserved for the synodal path’s second forum.

At the same time, he reaffirmed his commitment to Pope Francis’ teachings in his 2016 apostolic exhortation Amoris laetitia on outreach and accompaniment for those who have suffered broken family relationships or who show a homosexual orientation.

“The Church has a sacred obligation to proclaim God’s love for every human being, a love so great that he sent his Son to save the world,” said Aquila.

The synodal assembly, Aquila argued, wrongly avoids the dynamism and tension between the Church and the world. It seems to see the Church as “equally beholden” to both “the demands of the Gospel and the standards of a pluralistic, open society in a democratic constitutional state.”

Judging from its fundamental text, it appears that the assembly “hopes to bring about a Church that, far from being prepared to suffer the world’s contempt for her fidelity to Christ, will be preeminently conditioned by the world and comfortably accepted by it as one respectable institution among others.”

The text “ignores the cost of discipleship,” said Aquila, and instead embraces the standards of the world, what the text calls “enlightened and pluralistic society.”

Archbishop Aquila closed with several questions. “Are we willing to speak of the cross? Do we have the courage to walk in the way of the cross, bearing the world’s contempt for the message of the Gospel? Will we ourselves heed the Lord Jesus’s call to repentance, and have the courage to echo it to an unbelieving world?” he asked.

He continued: “Are we ‘not ashamed of the gospel’ (Rom. 1:16) and its offer of freedom from sin through the death and resurrection of Christ, and of an intimate relationship with his Father in the love of his Holy Spirit? Will we stay attached to the vine, Jesus Christ, and bear fruit, or will we continue to wither (John 15:5–6)?”

The archbishop closed his letter asking whether we are like the Church in Ephesus, addressed by Christ in the Book of Revelation as having “abandoned the love (we) had at first.” This Church was exhorted repeatedly to repent lest Jesus come and “remove your lampstand from its place.”

“My brothers, let us remember Christ crucified. Let us remember our first love,” said the archbishop.

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Pope Francis launches 7-year Laudato si' action plan

By Courtney Mares | Catholic News Agency

On May 25, Pope Francis launched the Vatican’s seven-year Laudato si’ action plan to implement environmental sustainability in different sectors of the Church from religious orders to Catholic schools and hospitals.

“We need a new ecological approach that can transform our way of dwelling in the world, our styles of life, our relationship with the resources of the Earth and, in general, our way of looking at humanity and of living life,” Pope Francis said in a video message May 24.

The pope marked the end of the year celebrating the fifth anniversary of his environmental encyclical Laudato si’ with the message announcing the initiative.

He said that the year would be followed immediately by a seven-year plan known as the Laudato si’ Action Platform.

The Laudato si’ Action Platform will focus on seven sectors: families, parishes, schools, hospitals, businesses, organizations, and religious orders.

The pope explained that the action plan also has seven goals: the response to the cry of the earth, the response to the cry of the poor, ecological economics, adoption of simple lifestyles, ecological education, ecological spirituality, and community involvement.

“Our selfishness, our indifference and our irresponsible ways are threatening the future of our children,” Pope Francis said. “I therefore renew my appeal: let us take care of our mother Earth … let us overcome the temptation of selfishness that makes us predators of resources, let us cultivate respect for the gifts of the Earth and creation, let us inaugurating a lifestyle and a society that is finally eco-sustainable.”

“We have the opportunity to prepare a better tomorrow for all. From God’s hands we have received a garden, we cannot leave a desert to our children,” he added.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, the prefect for the Dicastery for Integral Human Development, said at a press conference May 24 that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many of the Vatican’s planned events, conferences, and celebrations for the Laudato Si’ year, but expressed gratitude to the parishes and associations that organized local events.

In particular, the cardinal commended Catholics in Bangladesh for planting 700,000 trees over the course of the past year.

Father Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, who leads the Ecology and Creation section of the Vatican dicastery, stressed that the Laudato Si’ Action Platform can only be accomplished in partnership with “the synodal path that Pope Francis is proposing to the entire Church.”

“Integral ecology demands that we journey together on this mission,” he said.

Kureethadam explained that the first year of the initiative will be dedicated to “drawing up concrete action plans” following by “five years of concrete action” with the final year dedicated to “praise and thank God.”

In addition to the Vatican dicastery, Eco-Jesuit, the Pan-Amazonian Church Network (REPAM), the Global Catholic Climate Movement, the Union of Religious Superiors in Rome, and other Catholic groups are involved with the organization of the seven years of programming.

“On a journey that will last for seven years, we will let ourselves be guided by the seven aims of Laudato si’, which will show us the direction while we pursue the vision of integral ecology,” Pope Francis said.

“There is hope. We can all collaborate, each one with his own culture and experience, each one with her own initiatives and capacities, so that our Earth may be restored to her original beauty, and creation may once again shine according to God’s plan.”
“Save” of twins an unexpected, double blessing

The friend accompanying me that day hadn’t planned on staying any longer. She’d been at our state’s only abortion facility since morning and had a 90-minute drive ahead of her. Now late afternoon, she’d put in her time, and knew we local, afternoon dwindlers would cover for her.

But something made her turn around: the flash of a woman she’d greeted a while earlier, now exiting the facility. I was closest to the woman now and reached out with some literature on counseling options. Surprisingly, she took them, but her face showed she was processing something deep.

A male escort walked with her to the end of the sidewalk heading west, and my friend who’d just said goodbye was suddenly next to me, suggesting we try to talk to the woman who’d just left the abortion facility. So, we began in that direction, and as the escort turned back, we picked up our pace to catch up.

By the time we reached her, she was nearly to the end of the next block. We knew this might be our last chance to see if she had any needs we might help with—perhaps post-abortive resources, or information on abortion-pill reversal options. It seemed best in this case to just cut to the chase. “Are you okay?” we asked. “Did you have an abortion?” “No, I couldn’t go through with it,” she replied.

Both shocked, but also cautiously hopeful now, we gently persisted in our questions to make sure we understood. She responded, “I found out I’m having twins, and I just knew I couldn’t do it. I’m also a twin.”

Noting her sincerity, a flood of joy filled our hearts, and the pace of conversation picked up quickly. “Are you serious?” “We’re so proud of you!” “Do you need any help?”

She was a mother to three born children already, she told us, and though she had been reluctant about coming to the abortion facility, she’d wanted to at least hear the information. Obviously, news of another pregnancy had overwhelmed her. But now, having discovered not one life but two would be ended, any consideration of abortion vanished, and all lingering questions disappeared. The reality of the death of two babies had tipped the balance of doubt into the direction of life.

After learning her name, and offering prayers and our phone numbers, along with more if she needed—she claimed her support was more than sufficient—we celebrated with this precious mom, hugging her, and letting her know how proud we were of her decision. As we parted, my friend and I skipped off—literally—thanking God for his divine hand, and for the nudge that sent us after her, so that we could experience the joy and victory with her.

We wish every Wednesday would end this way, but saves are still all too rare. Recently, I was introduced to a poem by Catholic poet Catherine Chandler that conveys the haunting heartache of those who listen to the world’s wooing, and not God’s guidance, in such moments. I share it now with you, as published first in Able Muse ©Tim Murphy, 2010, with permission of the “Able Muse: A Review of Poetry, Prose & Art.”

MOTHER’S DAY
On Sunday evening after the party ends
and family have gone, you ache to say
how you can’t bear this gathering each May.
Your thoughtful husband usually sends
a rose bouquet, but changed his mind this year:
a special gift, it makes your finger shine
with emerald and ruby. Too much wine,
he banter as he wipes away your tear.

But you and I know, Mother, what he can’t—
your April foolishness; how bit by bit
they snipped me out of you, “took care of it,”
how through the years I’ve been your confidante,
the reason for this night’s unraveling—
the garnet missing from the mother’s ring.

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Do you know where we are?
The answer will be revealed in the July/August New Earth.

Where in the diocese are we?

Last month’s photo is of St. Boniface Church in Esmond.