From Bishop Folda:
Christmas – God with us

Visitors to Chimbote
find a community
building and dreaming

Seminarian Column:
Fratres in Christo:
Brothers in Christ

This Advent and Christmas, prepare
to spread the peace of Christ
Join Bishop John Folda at any of these Regional Listening Sessions

The Regional Listening Session will begin with adoration, reflection on Scripture, and prayer. This will be followed by a time in a gathering space to discuss and to reflect together as a community on these questions: What are the top three things that are working well at your parish/the diocese? What are the top three challenges to address in your parish/the diocese? What is one step I might be called to take to respond? All of the faithful are encouraged and invited to attend these events. For more information, go to: www.fargodiocese.org/synod.

All sessions are 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

- Sun. Jan. 22: Holy Cross, West Fargo (2 to 4:30 p.m.)
- Mon. Jan. 30: St. Joseph’s, Devils Lake
- Tues. Jan. 31: St. James Basilica, Jamestown
- Thurs. Feb. 2: St. Michael’s, Grand Forks
- Tues. Feb. 7: St. Catherine’s, Valley City
- Wed. Feb 8: St. John’s, Wahpeton
- Tues. Feb. 14: St. Alphonsus, Langdon
- Wed. Feb. 15: St. Ann’s, Belcourt
- Thurs. Feb. 16: St. Therese, Rugby
- Tues. Feb. 21: St. Philip Neri, Napoleon
- Thurs. Feb. 23: St. John’s, Grafton
- Tues. Feb. 28: Holy Rosary, LaMoure
- Wed. Mar. 8: St. Paul Newman Center, Fargo
- Thurs. Mar. 9: St. Thomas Newman Center, Grand Forks
ON THE COVER:
A stained-glass window of the Nativity from Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo. (Kristina Lahr | New Earth)

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One of the most beautiful hymns of the Advent season, and one of my favorites, is “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” With a sense of longing, we pray for the coming of the Lord, Emmanuel, a name which means “God with us.” All through Advent, we recall the coming of our God in history, in the flesh, and we look forward to his coming again in glory at the end of the ages. But we also pray for his coming to us now, in grace. So our hymn to Emmanuel—God with us—looks not only into the unknown future but also looks to the present moment.

As we make our way through this holy season toward the celebration of our Lord’s birth at Christmas, it’s good to recall that he has come already in the flesh, and he continues to come to us every day in remarkable ways. One of the most important ways that Christ comes to us even now is through the Eucharist. Jesus was indeed born for us in the flesh at Bethlehem. As we read in the Gospel of John, “The Word became flesh and dwelled among us.” But part of the mystery of Christmas is the abiding presence of Jesus, who is still with us in the sacrament of his Body and Blood. When we celebrate the Mass and come forward to receive the Holy Eucharist, it is Jesus Christ—God with us—whom we adore and receive. When we come to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, once again it is Emmanuel—God with us—to whom we pray.

The celebration of Christmas and the sacrament of the Eucharist are inherently linked together, because the Eucharist is Christ himself, who was born for us in the stable of Bethlehem. And now, with love beyond all telling, he remains among us to feed our souls and to assure us that we are not alone. When we sing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” we can take comfort in the fact that he answers our prayer in a beautiful way every day through the Eucharist. The same Jesus who was laid in a manger now makes his dwelling in our hearts when we receive him in Holy Communion. And the same Jesus whom the shepherds adored is present before us when we adore him in the Holy Eucharist upon the altar or in the tabernacle.

The very word “Christmas” reveals this mystery, because it is a joining of the words, “Christ’s Mass.” So when we come to Mass at Christmas, or at any other time, we are seeing a continuation of the Christmas mystery, the Son of God taking on our flesh and offering himself to us for the life of the world. Christmas has become very secularized in recent times, and Christ is often forgotten in our frenzied celebrations. If we find ourselves getting carried away by a merely worldly observance of Christmas, let’s keep in mind where the name of this holiday really comes from. It is “Christ’s Mass.”

The Eucharistic mystery is even foreshadowed in the place where Jesus was born. Bethlehem means “house of bread,” and Jesus calls himself “the living bread come down from heaven.” He is the “bread of angels” who feeds us with the bread of his own Body and Blood. He was born and laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn, but now through the Eucharist, he looks for room in the Bethlehem of our hearts.

There are many ways that we prepare for and celebrate Christmas, but at the top the list should be our celebration of Christ’s presence in the Mass. Wouldn’t it be odd to celebrate the coming of Jesus in the past without making time for him in the present when he comes to us through the Eucharist? If we don’t recognize him when he comes to visit us at this moment, how will we recognize him and welcome him when he comes in glory? Attending Mass and receiving our Lord in the Eucharist on Christmas is a wonderful and necessary way to celebrate his coming into the world as our Savior. But why limit ourselves only to Christmas Day? Why wouldn’t we want to meet Jesus as often as possible? He comes to us and offers himself to us in the Eucharist every day, and attending Mass frequently, even daily if possible, is a perfect way to prepare not only for Christmas but also for his final coming at the end of the ages.

The Church is now in the midst of a Eucharistic Revival, a time to encounter Christ once again and to be renewed especially through the Eucharist. At this holy time of year,
the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a fulfillment of God’s promise to send us a Savior. He is the Incarnate Son of God, and he comes to us just as we prayed he would. Let us not overlook this heaven-sent gift, the Son of God who is “the Word made flesh.” And let us be sure to place our Eucharistic Lord at the center of our Christmas celebration this year. After all, there can be no real Christmas without the Mass, which is the greatest miracle of all, the prolongation of the Nativity in time and space. Through the Mass, we know that our prayer, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” has been answered. The Holy Eucharist is, like Christmas, love beyond all telling.

FROM BISHOP FOLDA

“The became flesh.”

Word Bishop John T. Folda

the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a fulfillment of God’s promise to send us a Savior. He is the Incarnate Son of God, and he comes to us just as we prayed he would. Let us not overlook this heaven-sent gift, the Son of God who is “the Word made flesh.” And let us be sure to place our Eucharistic Lord at the center of our Christmas celebration this year. After all, there can be no real Christmas without the Mass, which is the greatest miracle of all, the prolongation of the Nativity in time and space. Through the Mass, we know that our prayer, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” has been answered. The Holy Eucharist is, like Christmas, love beyond all telling.

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

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

BISHOP FOLDA’S CALENDAR

Dec. 15
North Dakota Catholic Conference Meeting, Jamestown

Dec. 24 • 11 p.m.
Vigil for the Nativity of the Lord, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Dec. 25 • 12 a.m.
Midnight Mass, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Dec. 26–Jan. 2
Pastoral Center closed

Jan. 2–6
SEEK23 for FOCUS Conference, St. Louis, Mo.

Jan. 7–13
Region VIII Bishops’ Retreat, Clearwater, Fla.

Jan. 16
Martin Luther King Day, Pastoral Center closed

Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

Volunteer Not-for-Profit Organizations

We pray that volunteer non-profit organizations committed to human development find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation.
This Eucharistic Miracle took place on May 5, 2001 at Trivandrum. In the consecrated Host, the face of a man resembling Christ crowned with thorns appeared.

Father Johnson Karoor, pastor of the church where the miracle occurred, recounts in his report: “On April 28, 2001, in the parish church of St. Mary at Chirattakonam, we began, as we do each year, our Novena to St. Jude Thaddeus. At 8:49 in the morning, I exposed the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance and began a time for public adoration. After a few minutes, I saw three marks on the Holy Eucharist. At that point, I stopped praying and began to look at the monstrance, inviting the faithful also to wonder at the three marks. I then asked the faithful to remain praying and then put the monstrance back inside the tabernacle.”

“On April 30, I celebrated Holy Mass and the day after I departed for Trivandrum. After returning, on May 5, 2001, I opened the church for the regular Masses, I prepared myself and I went to open the tabernacle to see what had happened to the Eucharistic host of the monstrance, and I at once noticed in it a figure resembling a human face. I was very moved and asked the faithful to kneel down and begin to pray. I thought that it was only I who had seen the face, and then I asked the altar boy what he observed in the monstrance. He answered, ‘I see the figure of a man.’ I noticed that the rest of the faithful also gazed intently at the monstrance.”

“We began the Adoration and as the minutes passed by, the figure of the man became more clearly defined. I did not have the courage to say anything, and I began to cry. During the time of adoration, we had the custom of reading a passage from Sacred Scripture. The passage which fell upon me that day was the one from Chapter 20 of St. John’s Gospel, which recounts the episode when the Risen Jesus appeared to St. Thomas and asked him to look upon His wounds. I managed to say only a few words in my homily, and as I had to celebrate Holy Mass at the neighboring parish of Kokkodu, I arranged for a photographer to come at once to take a picture of the Holy Eucharist with the human face inside it. The photographs were developed in two hours, and in every photo, the face appeared ever more clear.”

His Blessedness Cyril Mar Baselice, Archbishop of Trivandrum, wrote regarding this Miracle: “For us believers, what we saw is something we have always believed. If Our Lord is speaking to us by giving us this sign, this most surely requires a response on our part.”

The monstrance containing the Miraculous Host is still preserved in the church.

The diocesan publication, New Earth, aims to provide informational, educational, and inspirational stories and photos about the people and places of the Diocese of Fargo. You are invited to submit articles, photographs, and story ideas for consideration and inclusion in an upcoming issue. The following are the 2023 printing deadlines for New Earth. Please share this schedule with anyone who may want to publicize events or share a great story through New Earth.

Please submit your items via:
- Email: news@fargodioce.se.org
- Mail: Diocese of Fargo, 5201 Bishops Blvd., Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104
- Phone: (701) 356-7900

All submitted articles must meet approval before being published. No item is guaranteed except for paid advertising.

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The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.”

In 1854, Pope Pius IX’s solemn declaration, *Ineffabilis Deus*, clarified with finality the long-held belief of the Church that Mary was conceived free from original sin. Mary was granted this extraordinary privilege because of her unique role in history as the Mother of God. That is, she received the gift of salvation in Christ from the very moment of her conception.

Even though Mary is unique in all humanity for being born without sin, she is held up by the Church as a model for all humanity in her holiness and her purity in her willingness to accept the plan of God for her.

Every person is called to recognize and respond to God’s call to their own vocation in order to carry out God’s plan for their life and fulfill the mission prepared for them since before the beginning of time. Mary’s response, “Let it be done to me according to Thy Word,” in response of the Angel Gabriel’s greeting, is the response required of all Christians to God’s plan.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a time to celebrate the great joy of God’s gift to humanity in Mary, and to recognize with greater clarity, the truth that every human being has been created by God to fulfill a particular mission that only he can fulfill.

“The word of the Lord came to me thus: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you’” (Jer. 1:5-6).
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Madonna of the Americas, Protector of the Unborn

By Sandra L. Gordon | Parishioner of Nativity Church, Fargo

Our Lady of Guadalupe’s feast is celebrated each Dec. 12 and St. Juan Diego’s is Dec. 9. To know about Guadalupe is to understand why over nine million Aztecs converted to Catholicism within 10 years of Mary’s apparitions. Called the biggest conversion in the Church, it coincides with the loss of Catholics during the Protestant Reformation.

In the 16th century, Aztecs used war and control to dominate alliances in Mesoamerica. Conquered tribes were mandated to supply sacrificial victims to nourish the Sun god Huitzilopochtli’s need for human blood to continue rising each day. In 1519, Herman Cortes and Spanish soldiers arrived at Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital. Montezuma II believed Cortes was the god Quetzalcoatl, returning to reclaim his kingdom. Gifts like gold did not satisfy Cortes’ greed. Montezuma later was killed. Subjugated tribes assisted the Spanish in overthrowing Aztecs.

In 1524, the Franciscans arrived. Their attempts to evangelize and educate were hampered by the Spanish soldiers’ atrocious treatments of Aztecs. Natives associated the Spanish god with cruelty. Bishop Zumárraga wrote King Charles V of Spain, “If God does not provide a remedy from His hand, this land is about to be lost.”

Between Dec. 9 and 12, 1531, five apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe changed everything! St. Juan Diego, one of few converts, was met by a Lady at Tepeyac Hill, a worship site of an Aztec goddess. The woman appeared as a mestiza of mixed European and indigenous ancestry. Her appearance showed she was a mother to everyone, suggesting Aztec and Spanish cultures were to become one.

She told Juan in the Náhuatl language to inform the bishop to build a church in her honor. He did so. The doubting bishop asked for a sign. After delays Juan met the Lady again. At her request, Juan gathered roses, which she arranged on his tilma or cloak. When he saw the bishop again, he opened his cloak to show the flowers. The bishop and companions fell to their knees at seeing the full image of Our Lady on the tilma.

Our Lady’s image on the tilma shows no evidence of sketching, sizing or brush strokes. The open weave fabric is rough with imperfections, totally inappropriate for paint. In fact, paint flakes off. For centuries, the tilma hung with no protective glass surrounded by candles and smoke. Faithful pilgrims frequently touched the image. Yet, its colors remain vibrant today (now displayed behind protective glass in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City).
Visitors to Chimbote find a community building and dreaming

By Father Tom Graner | Member of the Board of Directors of Friends of Chimbote and Pastor of churches in Anamoose, Drake, and McClusky

The full Friends of Chimbote Board of Directors was able to visit our mission in Chimbote, Peru in October for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Todd, Julie, Bill, Randy, Tammy, Lucho, Matt, Margy, Michelle, Pam, Joan, Kim, Brian, three Dans, and I enjoyed many celebrations, thank yous, witness talks, and dreams.

We demolished an estera (panels of woven reeds) shack and dedicated the new home built from wooden panels for a single mother of four, three of whom have serious disabilities. We participated in a Sunday Mass where 28 people—from infant to 14 years old—were baptized. We assisted with two different food distributions that supplement the meals and nutrition for hundreds of households who depend on day labor for their livelihood, much of it located on nearby farms.

We heard about needs for a new chapel, transportation between 13 chapels and the parish center for the pastor in Cambio Puente, meeting spaces, and classrooms. Leaders of six communities showed us the work they are doing to provide a water distribution system to their homes that would save them time and significant money on a monthly basis and told us about the dollars it would take to complete their project.

We dined at the sponsored culinary school after a cooking lesson. We played soccer and volleyball with community residents. We had lunch in the estera walled community center where the local children come to do their homework and learn the faith. We received awards from a Peruvian Congresswoman, and attended a flag raising welcome ceremony. We received a key to the city from the mayor and police chief of Cambio Puente. We were treated to a preschool and kindergarten talent show. We watched a micro-lending client make bricks two at a time with a form and a punch, and his employee with a mental handicap. Their bricks are then sold to local building suppliers. We visited a bakery and sampled their breads and cookies made from alternative flours and including ingredients like algae and/or blood that addressed nutritional issues. Many of us brought home some loaves of their traditional holiday breads that are similar to what my grandmother called Easter bread or Hot Cross buns.

If you’re thinking that this list is approaching endless, you’re right. I’m sure I’ve missed some of our activities. Amid the whirlwind and the dust of this seaside desert community, I was most struck by the progress being made by our employees, programs, and clients. The whole place could have displayed a sign: Excuse our dust and mess, construction underway. Build on! Dream on!

I think we honored Pope Francis’ challenge to reach out to the margins, to show signs of God’s love to those that society pushes to the side or runs over. The ones Jesus challenges us to remember who also call on God as Father making them our brothers and sisters.

Thank you for your prayers and support for the mission of Friends of Chimbote. Visit friendsofchimbote.org.
“Eucharist wasn’t meant just for us but for us to share”

By Kristina Lahr | Assistant Editor of New Earth

Our world teaches us to focus on what we do and form our identity around that, drawing us into our own selfish desires, rather than relationship with God and those around us. In our routine, day-to-day lives, it is often difficult to recognize that we are called to greatness, a life that recognizes the relationship, identity, and mission God calls us to pursue.

A conference or retreat is often the antidote to shake us from our ordinary environment that can convince us we are stuck with our sins, trapped in our circumstances, and that God cares little for us.

Muriel Rott and Frances Kanneh, both parishioners at St. Michael’s Church in Grand Forks, shared with New Earth how the Redeemed Eucharistic Conference on Sept. 23–24 in Fargo affected them.

“The conference itself was so forming and changing for me,” said Muriel. “I started going to daily Mass, which is actually crazy for me. I look back on myself a year ago and wow, the Holy Spirit is wild. I feel like I dove into my faith when I was confirmed in April, but this gave me an extra nudge that said, ‘hey, Jesus really loves you. How are you going to show more devotion to him?’ Because at the end of the day, faith in Christ is the most important thing. Before I would catch myself saying I don’t have time to pray or it felt like a chore. Since the conference, I see prayer more as building a relationship with Jesus that’s loving and forgiving.”

“The whole conference was a highlight for me,” said Frances. “I never experienced anything like this before. The first speaker Monsignor Shea opened my eyes that we were made for the invisible world, because the visible world cannot keep its promises to us. Dr. Mary Healy showed me a different way of God’s healing. Growing up Protestant, I have witnessed many healings through putting their hands on people and speaking in tongues, but Dr. Mary Healy was different. She allowed God to do the healing and made God the focus of that healing. I have seen others take the praise, but Dr. Healy made sure that God took all the praise.”

The number of people attending can mistakenly measure the success of a conference. One of the speakers at the conference, Bishop Andrew Cozzens, bishop of the Diocese of Crookston, said, “We can pat ourselves on the back because we had 1,000 people come to a conference. We did something great, but that’s actually not what’s most important. What’s most important is who we are. And if we live who we are, then the Lord will in fact use us for his mission in incredible ways… We have received as Catholics the greatest gift in the world, the gift that our Lord gave us on the night before he died, the gift that carries forth his redemption throughout all of time and this gift, this incredible gift of the Eucharist, wasn’t meant just for us, but in fact, for us to share.”

“I love telling people my story,” said Muriel. “I went into RCIA with a list of nonnegotiables. I went into it mostly because I knew it would make some of my family happy. But sure enough that list disappeared. If I can do it, anyone can do it.”

“This was an unforgettable experience,” said Frances. “I would go again. It set my heart on fire for God. It’s a revival I believe the world needs, especially during this time. I am grateful and blessed to have a friend who encouraged me to go to this conference.”

Presentations from the conference can be found on the Diocese of Fargo YouTube page.

Heavenly Father,

increase our faith in the Real Presence of Your Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. We are obliged to adore Him, to give Him thanks and to make reparation for sins. We need your peace in our hearts and among nations. We need conversion from our sins and the mercy of Your forgiveness. May we obtain this through prayer and our union with the Eucharistic Lord.

Please send down the Holy Spirit upon all peoples to give them the love, courage, strength, and willingness to respond to the invitation to Eucharistic Adoration.

We beseech You to spread Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament in parishes around the world.

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament, help us to spread the glory of Your Son through Perpetual Adoration.

From World Apostolate of Fatima
Walking with Moms in Need: How we got started

By Connie S. Brandt | Parishioner of St. John’s Church in Wahpeton

My involvement in pro-life work began in 1978 when my pastor asked me to attend a meeting to form a Right to Life Chapter. I walked out of that meeting as the newly elected president.

In 1993 while attending World Youth Day in Denver, I heard Pope John Paul II say, “go home and work with youth.” I came back to Hankinson and organized a Teens for Life Chapter. I am grateful to say that youth group is still active today.

In January 2009 after receiving a call from 40 Days for Life that abortions were being performed at the Red River Women’s Clinic in downtown Fargo, I went to the church to pray. There I felt called to start a Cenacle of Life to End Abortion prayer group. For 13 years now every Wednesday from 8 to 11:30 a.m., faithful pray before Our Lord at St. John’s Church in Wahpeton.

Naturally, Father Eric Seitz, parochial vicar at St. John’s at the time, approached me with a packet of inventory questions to get started with the Walking with Moms in Need program in the Spring of 2021. I didn’t want to take on another project, but I didn’t want to say “no” to Father.

I asked several women from the pro-life team to help me fill out the inventory. The purpose was to list the services and resources that were readily available here in our community to assist moms in need. Following the five outlined phases made the process less overwhelming for us. We identified pregnancy related resources and services that were available in Wahpeton, such as childcare, healthcare, counseling, education, and social service. We posted a list of all the pregnancy support services in the state of North Dakota on the parish bulletin board.

Soon we met with our pastor, Father Dale Lagodinski, Father Seitz, and Michelle Fehr, our Parish Life Coordinator, on how we would announce this program to the parish. Our plan was to have pulpit talks at all Masses one weekend. We invited members of the parish to take part in some way by serving on a team, praying for mothers, and providing needed baby items.

We were grateful for the response. By Feb. 3, we had a team of volunteers organized. Aaron and Brenda Morman now chair the Walking with Moms in Need ministry at St. John’s along with 46 volunteers willing to pray and provide in different ways with our Walking with Moms in Need ministry.

In March 2022, through the efforts of the pro-life team, a statue of Our Lady of Hope arrived. It’s a fitting message to begin our Walking with Moms in Need ministry program here at St. John’s. This beautiful 48-inch statue of Mary was blessed on March 25, the solemnity of the Annunciation, which was the beginning of Mary’s pregnancy. Our Lady of Hope is the patron saint of women who are expecting a child and symbolizes the gift of life. The statue can be found at the west entrance to the church along with a history of its origin and a prayer card to the Virgin Mary.

In April, we were asked to host the Bundle Up Your Baby Bump for Catholic Charities ND. All summer we collected donations of baby and toddler clothes new to slightly used. We also collected strollers, pack-and-plays, bottles, toys, books, baby bedding, maternity clothes, and boxes and boxes of diapers in many sizes. The event at St. John’s school gym Sept. 24 was packed! Eighty-two moms or families came to shop that afternoon. Many moms voiced, “this is another blessing.”

Over the years, God has continued to put life projects in my path. He gives me the energy and confidence to say, “yes.” I have met many wonderful people in my pro-life work across the state and nationally and for that I’m grateful.

There are moms in need in every community and parish in our diocese. It doesn’t matter the size of your parish. Maybe your parish is helping moms in need already. If not, pull out that inventory of questions with the Walking with Moms in Need program. Be creative and do something, so we can all say “yes” to those in need in our community.

O Mary,

Mother of Jesus and Mother of us all, we turn to you today as the one who said “yes” to life. “You will conceive and bear a Son,” The angel told you. Despite the surprise and the uncertainty about how this could be, you said yes. “Be it done unto me according to your word.”

Mary, we pray today for all mothers who are afraid to be mothers. We pray for those who feel threatened and overwhelmed by their pregnancy. Intercede for them, that God may give them the grace to say yes and the courage to go on. May they have the grace to reject the false solution of abortion. May they say with you, “Be it done into me according to your word.” May the experience the help of Christian people, and know the peace that comes from doing God’s will. Amen.
Our Lady of La Vang, pray for us!

By April Mitchell | Communications and Events Coordinator at St. Anthony’s, Fargo

The afternoon of Oct. 16 found St. Anthony’s Church in Fargo abuzz with visitors and parishioners alike, some of them speaking Vietnamese and dressed in traditional Vietnamese dress, and all excited for the reason they had gathered that day—to celebrate Mass in Vietnamese and dedicate the newly donated statue of Our Lady of La Vang.

The story of Our Lady of La Vang begins in the 18th century when Vietnamese Catholics were being persecuted for their faith. Fearing for their lives, they left their villages and hid in the jungle in the La Vang region. This group gathered each night at the base of a large tree to pray the rosary. One night, Our Blessed Mother appeared to them, carrying the infant Jesus. Not only did she console and remind them of her intercession, but she showed them the leaves of an indigenous fern to treat their physical ailments. Throughout the years, Our Lady appeared many times in this place, strengthening the faith of the local people.

The Fargo area Vietnamese community of believers (population of about 100) has found a home at St. Anthony’s for the past 15 years. To celebrate their heritage, they invite Vietnamese priests who are visiting or studying in the United States to celebrate Mass with them several times a year. For this October Mass and dedication of the statue, the guests included four Vietnamese priests, three religious sisters, and two brothers, all living in Collegeville, Minn.

To honor the St. Anthony’s Vietnamese community, Bridget Bowden, whose family owns Hurley’s Religious Goods, wanted to offer a visible sign of their presence in the parish—a donated Our Lady of La Vang statue. It was also a way for her to honor her parents, who had offered their help and welcome to Hmong and Vietnamese Catholic families who were coming to North Dakota through Lutheran Social Services during unrest in their home countries. Her family and others were asked to “adopt” different families and help teach them skills to adapt to life in the United States. As a child, she fondly recalls “just playing” with the children while her parents helped the families with adult things like teaching them how to grocery shop and drive. These experiences impacted her in a positive way and made her want to create a more inclusive environment in her own home parish of St. Anthony’s.

Tiffany Nguyen, a member of the St. Anthony’s Vietnamese community said, “We are so grateful to have Our Lady of La Vang to watch over us. As a community, we feel that we belong at St. Anthony’s and are so happy.” A non-Vietnamese parishioner in attendance at the dedication Mass agreed and wanted to attend the event to show her support. She said she has enjoyed getting to know some of the Vietnamese parishioners over the years and is proud that St. Anthony’s has become their spiritual home.

The new statue of Our Lady of La Vang can be found in the adoration chapel at St. Anthony’s. All are welcome to stop in and ask for her intercession. Our Lady of La Vang, pray for us!
Bishop David Kagan, Bishop of Bismarck, is flanked by priests representing the Diocese of Bismarck and Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) at a Mass to officially initiate the cause for sainthood of Michelle Dupong, a former FOCUS missionary and North Dakota State University graduate, who passed away in December of 2015. The Mass was held at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck on Nov. 1. Michelle’s parents, siblings, and immediate family were on hand to see Bishop Kagan officially recognize her as a “Servant of God” after “having verified the existence of a true and widespread reputation of sanctity, enjoyed by her during her life and growing ever stronger after her death, as well as ample evidence of the granting of graces and favors by God through her intercession.”

(Dakota Catholic Action)

“Your soul must hold fast to Him, you must follow after Him in your thoughts, you must tread His ways by faith, not in outward show.”

——— St. Ambrose

Feast day Dec. 7
At Christmas time, we’re reunited with friends, family, and our greater parish family. No matter how easy it is to allow the busyness of meals and gifts to hijack the peace of the season, there’s no way to completely escape the meaning for this special time of year.

Jesus’s entrance into the world was humble, quietly tucked away in a stable in Bethlehem, but the announcement of his birth could be seen for thousands of miles by the light of a star. The wise men and shepherds saw the star and knew what it meant. They left what they were doing and came to see this miraculous event that had taken place.

Today is no different. Many of us see the star. We attend Mass, receive the Eucharist, and as we do, we come to a greater understanding of what it means for our lives and our souls to unite ourselves with Jesus Christ. Even in our busyness, we feel—if only for a moment—the peace that only comes from God. Maybe it’s after all the kids are in bed and a light snow begins or a quiet second around the dinner table as you recognize how blessed you are to have those gathered in your life.

It’s in these quiet moments we can invite our loved ones to see the joy of Jesus’s birth and the deeper implications of that event. No need to be preachy here. Simply ask God how you can work with him to speak to this person’s heart. It may be to simply point at the peace as the shepherds did with the star. Or, if there seems to be no peace in the house at all, point to the desire for peace, which is especially strong during the holidays.

Even the secular world knows there’s something special about this time of year. Every Christmas, we’re encouraged to keep the “Christmas spirit” of generosity, kindness, forgiveness, and joy.
year-round. We’re invited to “Have yourself a merry little Christmas” and to “let your heart be light.” We’re told “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year” and “our hearts will be glowing when loved ones are near.” Why not be mindful of this time ripe with nostalgia for “Christmas-es long, long ago?” Why not be attentive to tender hearts that long for those not with us? What better time of the year could there be to acknowledge the world beyond our understanding of a loving and merciful God?

Bishop Robert Barron, in his recent article “4 ways to grow the Church,” shared this challenge to all the faithful: “Every faithful Mass-goer reading these words knows people who should be going to Mass and aren’t. They might be your own children or grandchildren. They might be coworkers who were once ardent Catholics and who simply drifted away from the practice of the faith, or perhaps people who are angry at the Church. Identify these wandering sheep and make it your evangelical challenge to bring them back to Mass. If we all did this successfully, we would double the size of our parishes in a year.” Bishop Barron goes on to say that these invitations should be accompanied by prayer for the expansion of the Church, invitations for seekers to raise their questions, kindness on our part, and our own efforts to pursue holiness.

We can’t force anyone to return to Mass nor should we want to. But we can invite. We can encourage. We can remind our loved ones that we invite and encourage because of our deep love for them.

These invitations can be difficult. They mean asking authentically how our friends and family are doing. They mean giving space to listen to their criticisms and pain. They mean extending an invitation when you don’t know how it will be received. They mean declaring the name of Jesus. An invitation might mean getting rejected, scoffed at, or making a friendship awkward. Are we willing to do that? As we gaze at the baby Jesus in the manger, can we commit to giving it an honest effort? Can we say, “I love my friends and family so much. I want them to know the love I’ve experienced through you.”

This is the great commission. This is to act out in faith that with our small efforts, the Lord can move mountains.

If you find yourself discouraged by this idea during the holidays, take this note from Matthew Kelly’s new book Holy Moments to heart, “Never stay discouraged. You will get discouraged, that’s life, part of humanity, comes with the territory of trying to do good in the world. But people desperately need what you are doing, so never stay discouraged for long.” Matthew Kelly’s spiritual mentor once told him, “You will only ever see less than one percent of the impact you have on people’s lives. Reflect on that whenever you get discouraged.”

This Advent and Christmas seasons, allow yourself to dream. Who do you wish was kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament with you at Mass? Who has drifted so far—seemingly too far—that it would take a miracle for them to consider following God? Ask God every day who he wants you to reach out to. It may not be who you expect.

We never know when God is tugging at someone’s heart. We never know when someone is open to listen. Let us put our best foot forward. Let us put our best foot forward. Let us first prepare ourselves by returning to the sacrament of Reconciliation to admit our sinfulness and restore peace within our own souls. Let us kneel before Jesus, fully present in the Eucharist, humbly conceding glory is his alone. Let us ask God to provide opportunities for conversation and relationship that—in his perfect timing—will guide his beloved children back to him.

The Lord has done and continues to do incredible things for us. Let us pray with confidence and anticipation that all—especially those furthest from God—may experience healing and a longing for a relationship with Jesus this Advent and Christmas season.
Catholic schools across the diocese celebrated All Saints Day Nov. 1 with Mass and lessons about the saints. Several schools encouraged students to dress as their favorite saints.

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Catholic schools across the diocese celebrated All Saints Day Nov. 1 with Mass and lessons about the saints. Several schools encouraged students to dress as their favorite saints.

The Shanley High School Deacons football squad took home the North Dakota Class 11AA championship on Nov. 11 at the Fargo Dome, beating Bismarck Century 48-7. Shanley moved to the top 11AA division in 2019, earning a championship in just their fourth season in the division. Head coach Troy Mattern was also named the North Dakota State High School Athletic Association Coach of the Year. Congratulations to the Deacons of Shanley!

Fargo Shanley junior running back Adam Leininger (34) muscles his way through the Bismarck Century defense during the 2022 NDHSAA Division 11AA football state championship game played Nov. 11 at the Fargo Dome. (Tom Mix / NDHSAA Media Specialist)

Shanley head coach Troy Mattern celebrates the win over Bismarck Century. Mattern was named Coach of the Year by the North Dakota High School Athletic Association. (Tom Mix / NDHSAA Media Specialist)

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NEW EARTH DECEMBER 2022 17
Books to lead to the living lens

By Father Michael Hickin | Pastor of churches in Mooreton and Mantador

Can You Hear the Trees Talking?: Discovering the Hidden Life of the Forest by Peter Wohlleben (2019) was an eye-opener for me. My parish assignments have blessed me with proximity to many known and unknown gems of North Dakota geography: Antelope Lake, Turtle Mountains, Pembina Gorge, Sheyenne National Grasslands—all spaces that put people in communication with God’s creation. Like learning a foreign language, deciphering the voice of our landscapes only comes gradually. First, you have to just hang out and do lots of listening.

As with the land, so with God. Gary Chapman, popular for his books about love-languages, left me with an insight that would lead back to the trees. Marriages work when couples learn to speak their partner’s “love language.” He identifies five, each a sort of lens: words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. Like a visit to the optometrist, one lens or a combination of lenses renders a clearer image of the other. Learning to speak that “language” promises to go a long way in keeping the heart of one’s partner full. In The Love Languages of God (2002), Chapman applies what he discovered in thousands of marriages to our relationship with God. Reading about how Divine Love follows these same channels, it struck me how all five sing of the Eucharist.

Words of Affirmation – few people visit the Blessed Sacrament without a piece of literature. The Eucharistic Christ in all the tabernacles of the world welcomes encounters between words and the Word.

Quality Time – besides marinating in Jesus’ Presence, “Come away to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31), our tradition sets aside time uniquely for God. We call it Sabbath.

Gifts – the very word “Eucharist” is Greek for “giving thanks.” “And he took bread, gave thanks [eucharisted] and broke it” (Luke 22:19). The Eucharist, the fullest gift of self—blessed, broken, given—is ours to run with... into the world as servants.

Acts of Service – Jesus linked the Last Supper to “doing something.” “Wash one another’s feet. I’ve given you a model; as I’ve done, you should also do” (John 13:14-15).

Physical Touch – God, who is Spirit, became flesh to have direct contact with us. This healing touch continues through the ages. The Eucharist is God made oh-so tangible. “What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands” (1 John 1:1) is the Bread of Life come to knead eternity into time.

After the Eucharist broke open Chapman’s love languages, something else started to occur. So much of what I was reading also came alive to channel communion with Christ.

The biography Black Elk: The Life of an American Visionary (2016) by Joe Jackson constantly spoke of the Eucharist without ever mentioning it. The same is true for the comedic tromp of Nick Offerman (Ron Swanson on the sitcom Parks and Recreation) through national parks and agrarian culture in Where the Deer and the Antelope Play: The Pastoral Observations of One Ignorant American Who Loves to Walk Outside (2021). I’ve also listened to a scientific portrait of whales and another of octopuses, and Charles Cockell’s The Equations of Life (2018), where keen observations in the fields of biology and physics can pass through the lens of Eucharist and take on new levels of amazement. Groaning creation sounds like a foreign language hard to decipher and yet we know deep down we were made to “get it.”

Pope Francis confirms this in his letter to the whole world on caring for our common home. Building on the catechesis of St. John Paul II, he says, “This contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us, since ‘for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice.’” Then later, “The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation” (Laudato si, §§236. 85).

In the Eucharist, the Master mutely teaches the love language that makes our world throb with a Divine pulse.

Can we really listen to the cross if we’ve never stopped beneath a tree to let it talk to us—in its own language? Hearing trees talk is just one example of allowing creation to stimulate our deeper language skills. Scientists and poets have their ways of unlocking the messages hidden in every creature. But another key is needed to access Love’s symphony that holds it all together.

The animation of the natural world is not a Disney trip in the mind but a vision belonging to believers fed on the Eucharist—earth, water, sun, microbes nurtured, harvested, worked up, adopted and transformed become an all-penetrating worldview grounded in the humility of dirt and the glory of God.

To grow familiar with the world’s many languages, the magnifying glass, translator and personal guide is as close to us as the One Alive next to the little red flame in our local parish.
The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb

By Mary Hanbury | Director of Catechesis for the Diocese of Fargo

This image called The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb or also the Ghent Altarpiece is part of a much larger work that includes upper and side panels (not shown). It is one of the most famous art pieces in Europe. There are whole books written on the Ghent Altarpiece with its fascinating details and interesting yet tragic history.

The Ghent altarpiece is the work of two brothers, Hubert and Jan van Eyck completed in 1432 for St. Bravo’s Cathedral in Ghent, Belgium. The scene in this panel comes from the Gospel of John 1:29 where St. John the Baptist proclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

The Ghent Altarpiece was made to stay in one place; instead, it became a constant target barely escaping destruction. Soon after it was created in 1566 for the Cathedral, the iconoclasm of northern Europe came along. This was a movement to destroy all religious images. It was recognized as a masterpiece, so it escaped destruction. However, it was stripped of its liturgical function when it was transferred to City Hall. The French Revolution of 1789 caused it to be moved again to various parts of Europe in hopes that it would be saved. Then there was a fire in the church. People took down the panels to rescue them, but in their haste they caused a crack down the middle, right through the Lamb. The Lamb had to be restored, during this process, some changes were made to the face of the lamb to make it more “sheep like.” In a more recent restoration, the lamb’s face was restored to the original, which, if you look closely, has more human features. The piece was hidden in a German mine during WWII by the Nazis. There were orders to blow the mine up if they found themselves losing the battle, fortunately that order was not carried out. In 1934, a burglar broke into the Cathedral and stole the panel of St. John the Baptist and, ironically, the panel of the Just Judges. The panel of John the Baptist was recovered, but the Just Judges panel has never been found. A ransom note from the thief found after he died stated: “[it] rests in a place where neither I, nor anybody else, can take it away without arousing the attention of the public.” Treasure hunters have been on the case since.

This panel of the altarpiece depicts different groups of people emerging towards the Lamb to worship him. In the center is the Lamb standing on the altar offering his blood as it pours out into the chalice. Meanwhile, the angels surround the altar, some of them carrying the instruments of the passion to remind the viewer what he suffered for us. In front of the altar there are two angels offering incense. In a line straight down the middle, our eyes follow the path from the Holy Spirit at the top of the piece to the Lamb in the center, and the water fountain near the bottom. The fountain represents the living water of Baptism. The octagonal shape of the fountain is the traditional shape of a baptismal font. Notice the water spigot and a path for the water to flow right out of the frame. This life giving water is meant for the viewer.

The theme of this image is very Eucharistic. The Lamb on the altar reminds us of the Old Testament slaughtering of the unblemished lamb in the temple as an offering to atone for sins. Jesus Christ is the unblemished lamb who offered himself as a sacrifice wherein he gives us his Body and Blood. We enter into this mystery through the life giving waters of Baptism.

Gaze on the Lord’s beauty
Reconciliation and retreat opened my heart to the diaconate

By Deacon Kirk Ripplinger | Deacon at St. James Basilica, Jamestown

My name is Kirk Ripplinger. I lived my Cursillo, Diocese of Fargo Men’s Cursillo #131 in January 2014 at Maryvale in Valley City, and I sat at the St. James table.

Anyone who has made a Cursillo retreat is certainly familiar with that style of introduction.

I was invited to attend Cursillo retreats many times throughout the years, but being a dad of four children between the ages of 8 and 15, this was the first time that all of the schedules lined up allowing me to attend. It was indeed God’s timing.

The weekend, as with all Cursillo retreats, began with the retreatants settling in and getting to know one another. There were about 20 of us, including two priests. Confessions were available every evening. I decided to go to confession on Friday.

At that time, I was an angry, bitter man. I had certification for air conditioning and refrigeration, and my wife, Leann is an Occupational Therapist. When our second child was born in 2001, we knew that we could not afford to have our children in day care. Leann earned a better wage so we decided that I would stay at home during the day with the kids and work evenings and weekends. That would mean that air conditioning and refrigeration would not be options. The jobs that I’d be working would be less skilled labor. My ego was deflated. I lost my identity as the provider.

When people who knew our family saw me out with the kids, they’d ask if I was babysitting today. At first, I would respond, “No, these are my kids. I’m parenting.” But it was no use, I would wonder, “does anyone ever ask a mom with her children if she’s babysitting?” A group of moms invited me to their Bible study with good intention. I politely refused, but it reaffirmed what I already believed. As a man, I was a failure. All this loss of identity made me bitter and short-tempered.

I went to confession that Friday evening and unloaded everything. “I’m a bad dad, a bad husband, I hate my job, and I feel like a complete failure.” The priest listened and said, “You need to find a way to get rid of your resentment. You will not progress in your spiritual life or your personal life until you figure out how to let go of resentment.”

I left the confessional and remained in the chapel. Something truly amazing happened. I didn’t need to figure out how to let go of my resentment. I gave it to God, and it was gone. Complete peace enveloped my body. I came to the realization that I didn’t lose my identity; I forgot my identity was rooted in being a son of the Father. As I came to this realization, I heard as plainly as a person sitting right next to me, “I want you to serve the church as a deacon.”

I argued for a while. I had been at my job for about a year as a janitor. I told Jesus that surely there were more qualified people to serve his Church as a deacon than somebody who cleans toilets and showers.

The following weekend at Mass, the first reading was from the prophet Amos. In the reading the prophet says, “I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamores, but the Lord took me.” I knew then that God was telling me to apply for the diaconate and leave the rest to him.

I applied to the diaconate and started formation in 2015. For the first year and a half, our formation weekends were held at Maryvale. I was ordained a permanent deacon on Oct. 31, 2020.

My anger and bitterness are all but gone. I am a better husband, father, and friend. It breaks my heart when I think that my two older kids had a completely different dad than my two younger kids. I still scrub those same toilets and showers for a living, but now I can see value in the service that I provide to others.

I know that God chose me to be a deacon. I’m grateful for his providence that everything unfolded as it did. God could have entered my heart and changed me at any time in any place. He chose Maryvale Convent in Valley City to change me.

As I write this, I’m also preparing a homily for the gospel passage, Luke 13:10-17, when on the Sabbath, Jesus frees a woman who was bound with an infirmity for 18 years. The synagogue leaders, instead of rejoicing, put up obstacles. I had put up many obstacles to grace. I was set free from bondage in the chapel at Maryvale, free to carry out his will, and free to serve his Church.
Our Catholic president and the most pressing moral issue of our time

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON
Theologian and evangelist, known for his Word on Fire ministry. Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minn.

On numerous occasions throughout his public career, President Biden asserted his personal belief as a Catholic that human life begins at conception and that abortion, therefore, is morally wrong. He has always been quick to add, however, that he is unwilling to use the law to “impose” this personal conviction on anyone else. He presumably feels that since this understanding of human life is a function of uniquely Catholic doctrine or dogma, it would be as objectionable to require everyone to accept it as it would to require all Americans to assent to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception or to the articles of the Nicene Creed.

But this is so much nonsense. Opposition to abortion is not a matter of doctrine in the strict sense of the term, but rather a conclusion drawn from moral reasoning and from the findings of objective science. It is an indisputable fact that human life—which is to say, a living human being with a distinctive genetic structure and identity—comes into existence at the moment of conception. It is furthermore a fundamental axiom of ethics that innocent human life ought never to be attacked. These insights and principles are the foundation of an argument against abortion that can and should be made in the public forum; they are decidedly not a matter of “dogma” peculiar to Catholicism. I fully understand that people might disagree with the line of reasoning that I’ve proposed. Fine, let’s argue the matter in the public forum and see which of us can garner majority support. But please don’t tell me that I’m imposing a dogma on you.

And while I’m at it, may I say, I am mightily tired of the way the President and his allies use the term “impose.” Time and again, they say some version of, “I’m unwilling to impose my beliefs on others.” Now that we’ve established that opposition to abortion is not a matter of sectarian doctrine, can we also admit that any law, by its very nature, imposes on others? If a majority of federal representatives formulated a piece of legislation to set the speed limit at 65, and if the executive agreed with this determination, a law would go into effect imposing this viewpoint on the entire society. The same goes for tax codes, anti-trust regulations, minimum wage requirements, civil rights statutes, etc. Laws don’t suggest; they impose. And behind every truly just law, there is some moral principle: preserving life, establishing greater justice, protecting the poor, fostering the common good, etc. So if you were to ask me whether I was working to impose on the entire society a law that would protect the rights of the unborn, I would say, “yes.” And then I would add: “And what’s your point?”

Finally, can we please put to rest the silly position first articulated by Governor Mario Cuomo 35 years ago and then tiresomely repeated by far too many Catholic politicians ever since that “I am personally opposed to abortion, but publicly I support it.” Again, one might make such a distinction in regard to a strictly doctrinal matter, arguing, for instance, “I personally believe it is indispensable to attend Mass every Sunday, but I would never dream of sponsoring legislation to that effect.” However, since opposition to abortion, as we have just shown, is not a conviction born of “dogma” but rather of moral reasoning, it is utterly incoherent to claim that one can hold to the position privately but not defend it publicly. It would be precisely analogous to someone in the 19th century saying that while he personally finds slavery abhorrent, he will do nothing to eliminate it or even to stop its spread. It would also be precisely analogous to someone in the mid-20th century saying that though his personal conviction is that Jim Crow laws are morally repugnant, he will fight publicly to keep them in place.

In light of this, can you see why so many Catholics, including your humble scribe, find the President’s statements and actions in regard to abortion policy so repellent? The man claims that he objects to abortion, that he considers it morally wrong, and yet, time and time again, in the most straightforward, even strenuous manner, he strives, by word and deed, to make it more available, more acceptable, more legally defended. In the 19th century, the viscerally anti-slavery Abraham Lincoln did not pursue the extreme anti-slavery policy advocated by the abolitionists; rather, he took a more moderate position, endeavoring to hem slavery in, to limit its spread, in the hopes that he was setting it on course for extinction. This was, for the 16th president, a matter of prudential political judgment. If our current president, convinced as he claims to be that abortion is wrong, were to take steps in the direction of curtailing the practice, or if he could have found positive words to say about the Dobbs decision that at least gives individual states the right to restrict abortion, I might see him in the mold of Lincoln. But instead, he presses forward, advocating the most radical pro-abortion policy imaginable, seeking to codify into law the Roe v. Wade and Casey decisions that essentially made abortion up to the moment of birth a matter of legal impunity in our country.

President Biden speaks often of his Catholic faith, attends Mass regularly, and prays the Rosary. I have absolutely no reason to doubt the sincerity of his Catholicism. But I am sorry to say that, in regard to the most pressing moral issue of our time, he stands athwart both right reason and the explicit teaching of his Church.
Legislature with a pro-life focus

CATHOLIC ACTION

CHRISTOPHER DODSON
Executive director of the North Dakota Catholic Conference, which acts on behalf of the Catholic bishops of N.D. to respond to public policy issues of concern to the Catholic Church

The United States Supreme Court decided the Dobbs case on June 24 of this year. The decision restored the ability of states to prohibit and regulate abortion. At the time of writing this column, North Dakota’s laws banning abortion are still caught up in the courts.

As I have written before, however, banning abortion alone has never been the goal of the Catholic Church or the pro-life movement. Our goal is to create a society where abortion is unthinkable. Therefore, we must move forward with love-inspired action to make that happen.

It starts in our families, businesses, communities, and churches. Catholic parishes across the state have taken action inspired by Walking with Moms in Need, a program launched by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that encourages parishes to support local pregnancy centers and provide resources to pregnant and parenting women.

The USCCB also called on Congress to enact legislation that reflects a “radical solidarity” with mothers, babies (born and unborn), and families. Its recommendations include labor protections for pregnant and nursing women, support for pregnancy resource centers, the Child Tax Credit, parental leave policies, adoption support, and an end to marriage penalties.

The North Dakota legislature, which reconvenes in January, must also move forward with legislation reflecting our love for all pregnant women, their children, new mothers, and families.

The North Dakota Catholic Conference makes the following proposals for the next legislative session:

• Expand the Alternatives to Abortion Program. This program provides limited funding to pregnancy centers, adoption agencies, and maternity homes. Currently, the program only provides assistance to women who are pregnant or think they are pregnant. It does not cover women after they give birth or their infants. The program also does not cover health care services, such as ultrasounds. The legislature should fix both of these omissions and greatly increase the program’s funding. Compared to other programs in the state, the program is substantially underfunded.

• Enact a sales tax exemption for infant diapers. Did you know that adult diapers are exempt from sales tax in North Dakota but not infant diapers? Both South Dakota and Minnesota do not tax infant diapers. North Dakota should do the same.

• Provide a child car seat sales tax exemption. Like diapers, child car seats are a necessary item. Other states have signaled their support for children and families by enacting a child car seat sales tax exemption. For safety and children, North Dakota should do the same.

• Give protection to pregnant workers. North Dakota law requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant workers. For some reason, however, the law does not provide similar protections for conditions related to childbirth or miscarriage.

• Establish a life resources website. North Dakota should have a one-stop site with links to pregnancy centers, adoption agencies, maternity homes, government programs, and other resources. South Dakota launched one immediately after Dobbs.

• Update the Medicaid program. During the 2021 special session, the legislature chose to provide coverage to postpartum women for 12 months. The legislation, however, expires July 2023. The legislature should make the care permanent. The state should also make a small adjustment in the program to ensure that legal residents who are not yet citizens—at least those who are pregnant—receive needed coverage. After all, their unborn children will be citizens at birth. We should ensure that they receive health care before birth.

• Make adjustments to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program. This program assists the poorest pregnant women and families. But it does not provide help until the mother is in her third trimester. The program also penalizes large families. The state should remove these incentives to seek an abortion.

• Create a tax credit for donations to pregnancy centers, maternity homes, and adoption agencies. The state should encourage charitable contributions to these organizations that comprise an important part of the culture of life.

• Restore the adoption tax credit. For years, North Dakota provided a tax credit to individuals who adopted children. The credit disappeared in 2009 as part of a rewrite of the tax code. Now is the time to restore it.

• Cover the cost of an adoption home inspection. Another way we can reduce the cost of adoption is to have the state cover a part of the adoption process that it requires, such as the required home inspection. This is an unfunded mandate that falls on the adoption agencies like Catholic Charities, which must either pass on the cost to adopting parents or find the money elsewhere.

This list is not exclusive. The conference encourages legisla-
tors to tackle other issues that impact pregnant women, unborn children, and families, such as the childcare crisis in the state and any tax marriage penalties. Some issues could be addressed in other ways. We hope, however, that the list provides an essential foundation for the state’s contribution to making North Dakota a sanctuary for life.

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- Meet old friends and make new ones!

Franciscan Sisters of Diligent Retreat Center, Hankinson, ND
2023 dates: Jan. 20-22, Feb. 17-19, Mar. 3-5
For info and registration: www.sixstonejars.org

Our North Dakota Ministries

SMP Health
www.smphealth.org

Bottineau
Enderlin
Fargo
Fargo
Harvey
Jamestown
Rolla
Valley City

SMP Health - St. Andrew's
SMP Health - Maryhill
SMP Health - St. Catherine North
SMP Health - St. Catherine South
SMP Health - St. Aloysius
SMP Health - Ave Maria
SMP Health - St. Kateri
SMP Health - St. Raphael
Fratres in Christo. “Brothers in Christ.” This slogan is familiar to many faithful of our diocese, particularly Cardinal Muench alumni, and residents of the Cardinal Muench Men’s Hall at St. Paul’s Newman Center, where I acquired the phrase. Admittedly, I don’t think I fully appreciated the one-liner until I entered seminary this fall.

As a fresh graduate of North Dakota State University, and one of Fargo’s newest seminarians, a lot was changing in my life. I left all my friends in Fargo and headed nearly 500 miles south to the humble town of Seward, Neb. Now, upon my initial Google search, I was excited to see that the scenery wasn’t going to be changing much. The seminary is located right next to a Case tractor dealer, a Walmart, a bar, and plenty of cornfields. Upon arriving, I was pleased to find we were also located not far from a cattle feedlot, which, if the wind is blowing just right, the smell could peel the paint off your vehicle.

After an uneventful 8-hour drive I wasn’t necessarily in the mood to meet a bunch of new people. The first few days at seminary were like a pre-teen’s first day in high school with orientation, lots of new faces, and a schedule that seemed impossible to follow. In a strange way, I really wanted to be there, but at the same time, would not have minded waking up to find out it was all a dream. In the first few weeks, I met men from all walks of life and from various points on the higher education spectrum. There are freshmen (College I) to Pre-Theology (those who have already received a degree) with ages ranging from 18 to 26; making for a robust community.

The best part of all is that every single one of them is striving to live a life totally for Christ.

The seminary has some interesting ways of gently forcing us to get to know each other. Things such as community recreation (dubbed as “forced fun” by those who are not fans of sports), house jobs, chores, community Holy Hours, and community nights. These things that sometimes seem excessive, or unnecessary could not be more necessary. These events promote unity within the house, and they help us get to know each other, our strengths, and our weaknesses.

I made it through the first few weeks, and surprisingly, I didn’t discern out (though it did cross my mind after a few weeks of forced fun). The transition from NDSU to seminary was rather difficult. For starters, seminarians are not allowed to have jobs. This allows them to focus on their studies, prayer, and their apostolates. With no job, I had to address the workaholic mentality I had developed through four years of being a full-time student, and working a full-time job. With so much free time, I found myself overthinking just about everything. A profound sense of loneliness started to creep in, despite the brotherhood I had so very clearly observed. I started to blame God for bringing me to this seminary so far from home and so far from all of my friends. It was evident that I was entering into a spiritual battle that I had not experienced before.

It was during this period of spiritual desolation, which lasted a number of weeks, that I discovered what it really means to be “brothers in Christ.” A fellow seminarian noticed that I was not doing so well. Normally you’d think a person who’s only known you for a month wouldn’t really press you on the issue, but he did. After all, they have no vested interest in your well-being. But that didn’t matter, we discussed in depth what was going on, and though he didn’t have much advice, he did something that was even better. He offered to pray with me and for me. He invited me to bring my problems to someone who was higher than both of us. It was this simple act that made me feel heard, made me realize that we are all in this together, and recognize that we are brothers who are trying to help each other grow closer to Jesus.

There have been many graces bestowed upon me these past few months, like growing in my prayer life and delving into my studies, but the most rewarding of them all has been growing in fraternity with my brother seminarians.
When you work with small children, as I do, there’s never a shortage of opportunities to grow in self-knowledge. Case in point: my kids’ never-ending (it seems) angling for the coveted role of line leader, and my exasperated reaction to their bickering.

For those of you who don’t work with small children, let me refresh your memory. In elementary school, to be the line leader is to occupy a position of leadership, prestige, and dignity, if only for the time it takes to journey from your classroom to the bathroom. As the line leader, you stand out in sharp contrast to your less distinguished colleagues who must meekly trundle after you like ducklings. This kind of trip provides teachers with a sterling life lesson: You can’t always be first; that’s just the way life is.

One day my patience snapped when a sixth grader insisted on being the line leader. I probably shouldn’t have done it, but I took the child aside and told him unambiguously that while little kids tend to fixate on being first in line, he was far too old for such nonsense. The boy accepted my correction with good grace, as I recall, and we moved on. Case closed.

Well, not exactly. In the days following, I noticed to my chagrin that in any number of ways, I myself wanted to be the line leader: to be first, to stand out from the crowd, to be generally esteemed and admired.

But the fact of the matter is that I can’t always be the line leader, nor even the caboose, which is actually a good thing.

St. Paul skewers the lie that some roles are inherently better than others. He writes:

“...the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body.... God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as He chose.... the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable (1 Cor. 12:14-15, 18, 22).

Down through the ages, God has raised up any number of saints whom the world considers unimpressive and inadequate but who have exercised key—if hidden—roles in his kingdom. One such man was the 20th century Polish tailor and mystic Jan Tyranowski.

What do you do when you feel totally inadequate and unprepared for the task to which God seems to be calling you?

Such was the dilemma of a shy tailor during the dark days of Poland’s Nazi occupation during WWII. Jan Tyranowski was neither a priest nor a religious brother; he boasted neither a theological degree nor youth ministry training. He was merely a simple layman who took prayer and his faith seriously and responded to the need to step up to the plate when needed.

In May of 1941, the Gestapo rounded up the Salesian priests of St. Stanislaw Kostka Church, located in a suburb of Cracow. As spiritual sons of St. John Bosco, the Salesians had dedicated themselves to youth formation, a key apostolate that they entrusted to Jan prior to their arrest. But was the tailor-mystic up to the task?

On a natural level, introverted Jan lacked the credentials to encourage and teach the young men. Nor did he himself feel drawn to youth ministry.

Fortunately, Tyranowski got out of his comfort zone and stepped out in obedience, creating “Living Rosary” groups of 15 young men each, with special training dedicated to the leaders of these groups. Of those whom Jan formed, a number became priests. One of these was Karol Wojtyła, the future St. John Paul II. The pope who came to be called “John Paul the Great” could never have achieved his greatness apart from Jan Tyranowski’s hidden formation.

I began this reflection in the classroom at St. Ann’s Catholic School in Belcourt, and I’ll end it there. What is the connection between Tyranowski and my school? A very simple one. In the three years I’ve taught there, I’ve come to see that God is calling my students to heroic sanctity and nothing less, just as he called the young men of St. Stanislaw’s Parish to eminent holiness. I am called to be my kids’ Jan Tyranowski. That’s my role.

Forget being the line leader. Jan Tyranowski, pray for us.
A message from Bishop John Folda

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With praise and thanksgiving to God, I am deeply grateful for your generosity during the past fiscal year. We live in a tumultuous world, but that does not stop us from being the light to the world that Jesus calls us to be.

A pandemic, high inflationary pressures, war in the Ukraine, supply chain issues, heating costs and much more try to detract from the good that is all around us. Jesus is not limited by earthly concerns.

We continue our emphasis on evangelization and rural life. Agriculture sustains all of us, and Jesus used many examples of crops and animals in his teaching. The Eucharist Revival has begun and culminates in July 2024 with the National Eucharist Congress. We also are focusing on our Diocesan Synod with listening sessions and activities through April 2024.

Your support helps us to be Christ to others, and provides for catechesis, Catholic education, charity, justice, worship, personal spiritual growth, and pastoral ministry. Maryvale retreat center is a new diocesan resource that will support this mission.

What follows is the annual accountability report, which covers the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. The Diocesan Finance Council, which includes 10 laypersons from throughout the diocese and five diocesan representatives, assists me in the painstaking task of overseeing diocesan finances. We are thankful for your generous and consistent financial support. May God bless you and reward you for your financial assistance, prayers and acts of service in response to his call.

The condensed summary of our reports, found in this issue, is intended to give you a broad view of the normal operations of our diocese and its ministries, as well as the contributions made by our diocese to the national and international work of the Church. This report summarizes many pages of audit reports on the Diocese of Fargo, and the Catholic Development Foundation. Complete audited financial reports are available to the faithful of the diocese via links on our website under the Finance Office. A copy of each report may also be reviewed in the Diocesan Finance Office.

These ministries and other diocesan services link together the parishes which constitute the Diocese of Fargo. Good stewardship begins with the faith and understanding that we all are called to give back to God a first portion of the gifts he has bestowed on us. Your gifts of time, talent, and treasure are reflected in this annual report. Your trust in God is reflected in your gifts to the Church and your parishes.

As in the past, we planned and evaluated the compelling needs of the diocesan Church against available resources. I believe that responsible and creative stewardship guided this process, and I pledge to continue good stewardship in the future.

I am convinced that through the goodness and generosity of the Catholics of our diocese, we will continue to rise to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters. Your continued support through prayer, volunteer service, and financial commitment, is a positive sign of a community alive in our Catholic faith. May God generously reward and bless you and your families.

You are in my constant prayers. Please pray for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo
Diocese of Fargo statement of operating income and expenses for year ending June 30, 2022

A message from Catholic Development Foundation

Dear Friends,

We have all heard the saying, “We reap what we sow.” Since 1985, the Catholic Development Foundation (CDF) has been sowing the seeds of generous Catholics throughout the Diocese of Fargo. Because of this generosity, hundreds of Catholic programs and ministries within the framework of our diocese will continue to grow and strengthen our Catholic faith community for years to come.

CDF is a securely structured organization that was incorporated in 1985. As a publicly supported 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, CDF helps donors achieve their charitable and financial goals. The foundation ensures the security of all donated funds. The funds are used only for their intended purposes as designated by the donors.

CDF has produced wonderful benefits for many parishes and diocesan programs over the last five years. Distributions from the CDF for parishes, cemeteries, schools, diocesan programs, clergy/seminarian education and other apostolates have totaled $16,442,647.

On pages 29-30, you will see a list of endowments currently established for various Catholic ministries and parishes. I encourage you to review this list to see which ones are created in your community or otherwise important to you. All Diocese of Fargo parishes have an endowment established in the CDF. If you do not see your parish listed, it’s simply because it hasn’t been funded by a donation yet.

God has planted within us a desire to give and to receive. The CDF’s ability to easily receive gifts and help donors offer gifts is rewarding both for donors and for those who are assisted. Donors know their gifts are long-term investments for current and future Catholics. I encourage you to become a Catholic Development Foundation donor. Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a difference in the lives of Catholics in our diocese. Planning and making a gift now will allow you to witness your charity in action.

Thank you and may your blessings be multiplied through your generosity to the CDF. For more information about Catholic Development Foundation, visit cdfnd.org or call (701) 356-7926.

Sincerely, Steve Schons | President
Other financial funds and related information

**CUSTODIAL FUND**

The Custodial Fund is used for monies that are from national collections taken up in the parishes, and the Diocesan Insurance Program. When national collections (e.g. Black & Indian Mission, Peter’s Pence/Holy Father, Good Friday/Holy Land, Religious Retirement) are taken, the monies from each parish are sent to the Diocese. Once all the monies from all parishes are received, a single check is sent on behalf of the people of the diocese to the intended national office or agency.

During this past year, the following collections were forwarded to national offices:

- Aid to Ukraine...................................................... $274,937
- Black & Indian Missions....................................... $24,372
- Catholic Home Missions....................................... $17,120
- Holy Land............................................................. $51,906
- Peter’s Pence/Holy Father.................................... $21,147
- World Mission/Propagation of the Faith............... $49,901
- Religious Retirement............................................ $40,763
- Catholic Relief Services......................................... $13,265
- Disaster Relief...................................................... $34,372
- Others (e.g., Homeless Shelters)......................... $6,513

The Diocese of Fargo received $86,600 from the Black & Indian Mission Office this year for direct aid to Native American communities in the diocese and Catholic schools with Native American and Black American students.

All parishes participate in the diocesan insurance program through Catholic Mutual. Catholic Mutual sends bills to the parishes based on a $2,500 deductible. The parishes make payments to the Diocese for these insurance premiums. Catholic Mutual bills the Diocese based on a $25,000 deductible, and the Diocese makes payments to Catholic Mutual. The premium difference or spread between the $2,500 and $25,000 deductibles is retained in the Insurance Reserve and is used to pay insurance claims. Parishes receive a rebate from the fund to bring deductibles down to $1,000.

**CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION**

The Catholic Development Foundation was established in 1985 as a separate entity that exists as an “umbrella Foundation” for Catholic churches and institutions. The Foundation serves as a vehicle for Catholic entities to accumulate endowments, perpetual care funds, and the like through bequests and deferred gift planning. Gift planning tools such as charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder uni-trusts, charitable lead annuity trusts, and other deferred gift plans utilize the Foundation as a means of providing for the Church after our earthly existence.

At June 30, 2022 there were:

- Endowments for parishes and agencies................. $17,554,745
- Endowments for Seminarians/Clergy Education... $20,967,122
- Perpetual Care Cemetery Funds......................... $3,444,678
- Endowments for Diocesan Programming............. $2,036,871
- Endowments for Catholic schools...................... $24,070,075
- Other Apostolates............................................... $1,828,091
- Annuities/Uni-trusts.......................................... $2,474,146
- Donor Advised Funds.......................................... $5,598,703

The Catholic Development Foundation provides a permanent way for donors to make a positive impact for years to come on the well-being of the Catholic Church and people served through its many ministries. As an umbrella foundation for the Catholic entities in the Diocese of Fargo, the Catholic Development Foundation seeks to support financially the spiritual, educational, and social well-being of our Catholic Faith community and to help donors achieve their charitable and financial goals through a legacy gift. All endowments are qualified endowment funds making contributions eligible for the 40% North Dakota Tax Credit.

**North Dakota Tax Credits benefit the Church and you**

A few years ago, ND legislators passed a bill that allowed a very generous tax credit to those who make a charitable gift to a ND qualified endowment. If you are a North Dakota resident and make a gift of $5,000 or more to a ND qualified endowment, you are eligible for a 40 percent tax credit on your ND taxes. Tax credits are much different from a tax deduction because they reduce your tax liability dollar for dollar. The maximum tax credit allowed is $20,000 for individuals or $40,000 for married couples filing jointly. However, credits may be carried forward up to three years.

The following is an example of how tax credits may benefit you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GIFT AMOUNT</th>
<th>$5,000</th>
<th>$20,000</th>
<th>$50,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal tax savings</td>
<td>-$1,200</td>
<td>-$6,000</td>
<td>-$12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND state income tax credit</td>
<td>-$2,000</td>
<td>-$10,000</td>
<td>-$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net “Cost” of Gift</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on individuals that fall in the 24 percent Federal tax bracket. Please consult your own financial or tax advisor for your unique situation.
Catholic Development Foundation (CDF) offers many ways to give and leave a legacy. CDF accepts gifts of cash, appreciated securities, and real estate. All gifts are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. And, you choose the parish, school, or organization which will benefit from your gift.

**Gifts that start making a difference today**

These are gifts that are easy to make and see immediate impact.
- Existing Endowment Fund
- Donor Advised Fund
- New Endowment Fund

**Gifts that give back – Life income gifts**

These types of gifts provide income for the donor’s lifetime, any remainder goes to the donor’s charity of choice.
- Charitable Gift Annuity
- Charitable Remainder Trust
- Charitable Unitrust

**Gifts that bear fruits later – Deferred gifts**

The benefits an organization receives from these gifts are deferred until a later time, typically after a donor passes away.
- Charitable Bequest
- Life Estate

*For more information, please contact Steve at (701) 356-7926 or visit cdfnd.org.*

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**Endowments Awarded**

**July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endowment Fund Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminary/Clergy</td>
<td>$801,816</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish</td>
<td>$876,825</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Schools</td>
<td>$1,031,190</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td>$83,358</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan</td>
<td>$103,226</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$481,882</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,378,298</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Endowment Funds in the Catholic Development Foundation**

The Catholic Development Foundation has 500+ funds supporting a variety of Catholic parishes, cemeteries, schools, ministries and programs. Because we simply don’t have the space to print the entire list, go to cdfnd.org/endowment to review the list established in the name of Parishes, Cemeteries, Seminarians and Clergy Education, and Catholic Schools.

The following is a partial list of individual, family, and other sponsored endowment funds that are most active. If you have questions, or seek additional information, contact Steve Schons at (701) 356-7926 or email steve.schons@fargodiocese.org.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endowment Fund Name</th>
<th>For the benefit of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles Church of Oakes “Music” Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Charles Church of Oakes for Music ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles Church of Oakes “Teen Life” Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Charles Church of Oakes for Teen Life ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallum Family 2 Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Gianna’s Maternity Home, Minto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John and Jan Klocke Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Gianna’s Maternity Home, Real Presence Radio, Women’s Care Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Gianna’s Maternity Home</td>
<td>St. Gianna’s Maternity Home, Minto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles and Mary Ellen Frey Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. James Basilica of Jamestown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John’s the Evangelist Church “Education” Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. John the Evangelist Church of New Rockford for Education ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob and Dayle Dietz Memorial Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. John the Evangelist’s Church, Wahpeton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John’s Church of Grafton “Poorest of Poor” Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. John’s Church of Grafton for ministry of the poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John’s, Wahpeton, Hunger Fund Endowment</td>
<td>St. John’s Church of Wahpeton for Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvester and Shirley Gores Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Joseph’s Church of Devils Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey and JoAnn Kitchens Family Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Joseph’s Church of Devils Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop James S. Sullivan 3 Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Mary’s Cathedral of Fargo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary’s Church of Forman Youth and Education Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Mary’s Church, Forman for Youth and Education ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuck and Meghan Breen Family Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Rose of Lima Church of Hillsboro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Rose of Lima Church “Improvement” Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Rose of Lima Church of Hillsboro for improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anawim Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Thomas Newman Center of Grand Forks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert and Sally Arzt Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo, Catholic Schools, and Catholic parishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Experience Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Beginning Experience Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Tribunal Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Marriage Tribunal Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miracle of Cana Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese Catholic Education, Respect Life, Marriage, Family, Vocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Duane Cote Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Scholarship to Seminarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcella Feist Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Seminarian Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinal Aloisius Muench Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Seminarian Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George and Marcella Allmaras Memorial Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Seminarian Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul and Harriet Greving Family Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Seminarian Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Donald Leiphon Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Seminarian Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Darin Didier Memorial Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Seminarian Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Mass Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for TV Mass Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Disciples Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Young Disciples Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Ministry “Scholarship” Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Youth Ministry Scholarships (formerly known as Diane Brooks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Care Clinic Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Women’s Care Clinic (formerly known as First Choice Clinic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocese of Fargo Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for general purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archbishop Samuel Aquila Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for Seminarian Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred Ritzke Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Diocese of Fargo for scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities ND Endowment Fund</td>
<td>General Endowment for Catholic Charities ND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas U. &amp; Patricia S. Crary Memorial Fund</td>
<td>For the benefit of St. Anthony’s Fargo, Richardton Abbey, and St. JPII Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enderlin—St. Patrick’s Rectory Endowment Fund</td>
<td>St. Patrick’s Church of Enderlin Rectory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoselson Family Endowment Fund</td>
<td>Perpetual care and upkeep of St. Edward’s Cemetery at Drayton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Msgr. Val Gross Memorial Fund</td>
<td>The Diocese of Fargo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visit cdfnd.org or call (701) 356-7926 for more information.
LIFE’S MILESTONES

Gary and Ruth Paur, parishioners of St. Timothy’s in Manvel, celebrated their 50th anniversary Nov. 18. They were married at St. Ann’s, in Janesville, Minn. This union produced 3 sons and 5 grandchildren who all reside in the Twin Cities.

Mike and Peggy Welder, parishioners of St. Philip Neri in Napoleon, celebrated their 50th anniversary Nov. 18. They were married at First Baptist Church in Ashley and have 3 children, 10 grandchildren, and 1 great-grandchild.

Florence Klosterman, parishioner of St. John the Baptist in Wyndmere, will celebrate her 90th birthday on Dec. 25. She has 7 children, 13 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren and continues to be a “present” to her family and friends.

Eugene Marcotte, parishioner of St. Alphonsus in Langdon, will celebrate his 90th birthday on Dec. 27. Eugene is blessed with 4 children, 9 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Life’s Milestones includes anniversaries for marriages, ordinations, and religious vows for 25, 40, 50, 60, 65, and 70+ years and birthdays for 80, 85, 90, 95, and 100+ years for those in the Diocese of Fargo. Submissions will only be accepted for milestones occurring during the month of publication, one month prior, or one month following. Send a photo with text to news@fargodiocese.org or to Diocese of Fargo, New Earth, 5201 Bishops Blvd S, Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104 with a stamped return envelope and phone number. Deadline for the January issue is Dec. 13 and deadline for the February issue is Jan. 17.

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

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

75 years ago — 1947

The Most Rev. Leo F. Dworschak, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Fargo, blessed and dedicated the new stained glass windows in Sacred Heart Church at Oakwood. It was a red letter day for Father Bastien and his parishioners. A large number of the clergy from the Diocese, from Minnesota, and from Canada were present for the celebration which included an address by the Bishop on the meaning of the images followed by Mass.

50 years ago — 1972

The 24th annual Catholic Relief Services Clothing Drive will take place throughout the Diocese beginning the week of December 4. Clothing, bedding, piece goods and remnants will be shipped and distributed to the poor of all races and religions in 70 countries. Last year’s collection in the Diocese of Fargo netted a total of some 51,000 pounds of clothing.

20 years ago — 2002

The young people of St. Michael’s School Grand Forks, with the help of the parishioners, collected 20 boxes of used children’s books for the children of Appalachia in Kentucky. The books will be sent to the Christian Appalachian Project to help with the education of the poor mountain children there. Whalen’s Moving and Storage donated book boxes, and Wherley Moving Co. coordinated the shipping.

Diocesan policy: Reporting child abuse

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

Events

Catholic Man Night coming to Fargo-area churches

Invite a friend, bring your sons, and join us as we deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ, learn more about our incredible faith, and arm ourselves for battle against the secular culture. The night begins with adoration and confession at 6 p.m., followed by a simple meal and speaker at 7 p.m.

- Apr. 20: Blessed Sacrament, West Fargo. Speaker Brad Gray.

Christmas Cookie Walk has done your Christmas baking for you

Come to St. Mary’s Church in Grand Forks Dec. 17 from 9:30 to 11 a.m. for all your homemade Christmas cookie needs. Pick and choose the cookies you want in containers provided for $9 a pound. Breads and specialties sold separately.

We Remember

These names were submitted after the November New Earth deadline. Included are those who passed away between Oct. 1, 2021 and Sept. 30, 2022.


We Remember

Father John Cavanaugh, pastor of parishes in Reynolds and Thompson, visits the grave of Father Peter Hughes in Ireland. (submitted photo)

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Catholic church leaders are taking a new approach to teaching the faith, saying they recognize a pressing need to do this in a way that adapts to the modern world. This new outreach, called the Institute on the Catechism, is not a place but instead a new springboard for faith formation developed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Subcommittee on the Catechism.

It will involve catechetical publishers working with the USCCB subcommittee on new ways to pass on the faith using digital tools and aiming to reach a more diverse church. It will also provide resources to dioceses and yearly, in-person training conferences and retreats for diocesan catechetical leaders.

As Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Conn., chairman of the bishops’ Subcommittee on the Catechism, sees it: Catholic parishes need to re-create a “Catholic culture that recognizes we’re in the 21st century. We can’t go back to 1950; it’s gone.”

Re-creating what he describes as a “radically different model” for teaching the faith is something he has been working on with this subcommittee for the past several years.

The bishop announced the proposal to create the institute at the bishops’ spring meeting last June. It launched Nov. 10-12 just ahead of the bishops’ annual fall meeting in Baltimore.

This new approach, starting on the 30th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, draws inspiration from Pope Francis’ 2021 document Antiquum Ministerium (Ancient Ministry) that described catechesis as an official church ministry. It also builds on the Vatican’s Directory for Catechesis, issued in 2020, that gives guidelines for catechists and pastors particularly in the role of evangelization.

The most frequently used description for the Institute on the Catechism is evangelizing catechesis. In explaining this to Catholic News Service Oct. 19, Bishop Caggiano said this new method will emphasize truth, beauty, and goodness and it “recognizes that the passing on of the faith is no longer in a Catholic culture but in a secular and hostile culture toward Christian faith.”

He said the institute’s mandate is to “create multiple opportunities where a young person can encounter Christ in an ongoing way” and have the “leadership of the church and their parents accompany them.”

In other words, it’s not just religious education through textbook learning or service projects but a more concentrated effort to engage young people with the church and provide role models for them with diocesan and parish resources to facilitate this.

In a previous interview with CNS, catechetical consultants said the institute has the potential to change the fundamental relationship between publishers and bishops into something that’s less reactive to a finished product and more collaborative.

Mike Raffio, vice president director of sales for Pflaum Publishing Group and the president of the Association of Catholic Publishers, said leading people to a meaningful encounter with Christ through catechesis and an understanding of their role in the mission of the church is something many catechetical materials attempt. “We must admit our limitations,” he added.

“All person’s faith development is a lifelong journey. That journey, even for young people, includes so many more variables than catechetical texts can be expected to provide,” he said.

Similarly, Sabrina Magnuson, a catechetical consultant for Loyola Press, said the institute’s aim of forming leaders who will in turn inspire and form parents, teachers, and catechists in their home diocese is a daunting prospect.

“At the end of the day, the textbook is a resource, a tool,” she said. “Encounter is so much more than that.”

Bishop Caggiano said about 17 bishops plan to attend the institute’s launch, committing to using this new model in their dioceses, and he hopes more dioceses will join next year.

In the meantime, he said, participating dioceses will get the support they need to get this work started. It will also be a learning experience for all participating dioceses and a time to come to a deeper understanding of what parishes really need to make this work.

“It has to be the work of the Holy Spirit,” he added, and he also said it will need financial support that he hopes to get from those who want to be partners in this effort.

By Carol Zimmermann | Catholic News Service
Pope Francis said his trip to Bahrain was a new step on the journey to create “fraternal alliances” between Christians and Muslims.

The pope spoke about his Nov. 3–6 visit to Bahrain, a small, mostly Muslim country in the Persian Gulf, during his weekly public audience in St. Peter’s Square Nov. 9.

“The journey to Bahrain should not be seen as an isolated episode,” he said. “It was part of a process initiated by St. John Paul II when he went to Morocco.”

This is why, he continued, “the first visit of a pope in Bahrain represents a new step on the journey between Christian and Muslim believers—not to confuse things or water down the faith, but to create fraternal alliances in the name of our Father Abraham, who was a pilgrim on earth under the merciful gaze of the one God of Heaven, the God of peace.”

“And why do I say that dialogue does not water down [the faith]?” Francis said. “Because to dialogue you have to have your own identity, you have to start from your identity. If you do not have identity, you cannot dialogue, because you do not understand what you are either.”

The motto of Pope Francis’ visit to Bahrain was “Peace on earth to people of goodwill.” The trip included encounters with government officials, Muslim leaders, and the small Catholic community, including a Mass with around 30,000 people in Bahrain’s national soccer stadium.

The small Christian minority in Bahrain is mostly made up of immigrants, especially from India and the Philippines.

More than 70% of the total population—1.5 million—is Muslim, while there are only about 161,000 Catholics living in the country, according to 2020 Vatican statistics.

Pope Francis said Nov. 9 it was “marvelous” to see the many Christian immigrants in Bahrain.

“The brothers and sisters in the faith, whom I met in Bahrain, truly live ‘on a journey,’” he said. “For the most part, they are immigrant laborers who, far from home, discover their roots in the People of God and their family within the larger family of the Church. And they move ahead joyfully, in the certainty that the hope of God does not disappoint.”

The pope pointed out that the Kingdom of Bahrain is an archipelago of 33 islands, which “helps us understand that it is not necessary to live by isolating ourselves, but by coming closer”—something which aids peace.

He said “dialogue is the ‘oxygen of peace,’” not only in a nation but also in a family: Dialogue can help bring peace to a husband and wife who are fighting, for example.

Throughout his visit to Bahrain, Francis said, he heard several times the desire to increase encounters and strengthen the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the country.

He recalled a custom in that part of the world to place one’s hand on the heart when greeting someone. “I did this too,” he said, “to make room inside me for the person I was meeting.”

“For without this welcome, dialogue remains empty, illusory, it remains on the level of an idea rather than reality,” he said.

Francis encouraged Catholics to have “open hearts,” not closed, hard hearts, and said he would like to transmit the “genuine, simple, and beautiful joy” of the Christian priests, religious, and lay people he met in Bahrain.

“Meeting each other and praying together, we felt we were of one heart and one soul,” he said.

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### Faith, hope, and love

Are these present in your marriage? Have you given up hope that they can be?

Weekend for couples March 3-5, 2023

If you have given up hope that your marriage can and will get better, ask your spouse to consider attending a Retrouvaille program. Retrouvaille is an international Christian-based ministry that offers a three-stage program to help couples improve their marriages. First, a weekend program is attended, followed by post-weekend meetings. Finally, an ongoing monthly small group of couples gather for support and growth.

For more information, Call (701) 356-7903 or visit HelpOurMarriage.com
It had been a very long time since we’d experienced a confirmed abortion save. Too long. So long, that I was beginning to wonder if God had taken a long vacation in Belize and maybe just forgotten about us here in the Red River Valley.

Of course, he hadn’t. God doesn’t lift his gaze from our lives for a second. But sometimes, he grows very silent, and it can feel lonely. It can seem like he’s disappeared for a time. Or just isn’t paying attention.

And then, often in an unexpected moment, God makes it very clear that he is very much alive, and very much a part of our world, and that he loves us very much.

That’s how I felt the day I got the news from Cassie John-son, who helped lead the 2022 Moorhead 40 Days for Life campaign; a campaign that started this fall after North Dakota’s only abortion facility jumped ship following the overturning of Roe vs. Wade, and pitched its tent just over the state line.

“I have two miracles to share with you!” Cassie announced in a 40 Days for Life email. “Two babies are alive today because of your prayers and fasting!”

She shared that one woman had gone inside the facility, but eventually came out and began visiting with a sidewalk advocate. “Today we learned the woman decided against abortion and chose life! Praise God!”

Another woman had planned on scheduling an appointment for an abortion, she said, but instead got the number for a crisis pregnancy center. “The woman asked for a sign from God, and right then a post-abortive woman called her back,” Cassie reported, adding that by the end of the conversation, that mother also decided to choose life.

I just sat with that news for a while. I thought of the joy of these two little lives, and the promise of each of them. I thought of my friend Nellie Edwards’ recent Facebook post, which showed two elderly women holding a beautiful new baby, and the words, “Babies are God’s opinion that the world should go on.”

Years ago, a homeless man I met near the former abortion facility in downtown Fargo told me that each new life shows us that “God hasn’t given up on us yet.” It still gives me chills to think of what this man, who did not seem to live a very extraordinary life, reminded me. What a profound utterance by someone most would pass by.

At the 40 Days for Life closing, on a very cold and windy night, 60 of us advocates lined up along the sidewalk in front of the place where babies’ lives end every week now in Moorhead, thanking God for a successful first campaign there, singing some songs while Tim Moser played his keyboard from the back of a pickup. We held flowers representing someone in need of prayer.

In the middle of our gathering, a man riding a bike came barreling down the sidewalk with little warning, cursing at us to get the **** out of his way. That startling interruption to our prayerful gathering reminded me that the Evil One is still present, no matter how beautiful the songs or the flowers we held. And when a gust of wind blew so hard, kicking up some leaves and knocking over the speaker on the back of the pickup, we all had to catch our breath.

Yes, Old Scratch will do his darndest to interrupt our peace, and it made sense that he would show up somehow to the 40 Days for Life closing. As we are often reminded, this battle is not one of flesh and blood. It is a spiritual fight through and through. But nothing—not even an angry man tearing through our prayer line on a bike—could rob us of our joy.

Why? Because two little souls whom God designed, and whom he had placed in our world as a sign of hope—a sign that he has not given up on us yet—have been given a chance to live. The heavens rejoice!

As she offered her final thoughts and prayers, Cassie said, “God, you are a God who saves, and we want to join you in that.” Amen.
Do you know where we are?
The answer will be revealed in the January New Earth.

Where in the diocese are we?
Last month's photo is from St. Michael's Church in Wales.