From Bishop Folda: The Eucharist and the wisdom of the saints

Ask a Priest: What does it mean to be “saved?”

Family connected to historic site brings it back after devastating flood

Marriage Annulment
Healing and truth for divorced Catholics
REDEEMED

Eucharistic Conference
September 23-24, 2022
Delta by Marriott, Fargo

Speakers
Bishop Andrew Cozzens
Msgr. James Shea
Sr. Miriam James Heidland, SOLT
Dr. Mary Healy

Weekend includes
Eucharistic procession & healing service
Mass with Bishop John Folda
Worship by Aly Aleigha Band

Cost
$50 early registration
$75 after Sept. 5

For more information
www.fargodiocese.org/redeemed
(701) 356-7900
ON THE COVER:
Doves and interlocking wedding bands symbolizing the sacrament of marriage are depicted in a stained-glass window. (Catholic News Service)

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Earlier this summer we began a Eucharistic Revival in our diocese and throughout the United States. This Eucharistic Revival is a multi-year effort by the U.S. bishops to reinvigorate Eucharistic faith and practice in the Church of the United States. Many Catholics have lost faith or just drifted away from faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and we need to help them back. In fact, we all need a deeper faith in Christ, who gives himself freely to us in the Eucharist, so this Revival is for everyone.

Many of our fellow Catholics have a limited understanding of the Eucharist, believing it to be merely a symbol of the Body and Blood of Christ. But the saints, the heroes of our faith, knew better. They knew that the Eucharist is Christ himself, the Son of God who took our human nature, who died and rose so that we might have eternal life. The wisdom of the saints is a great testimony to the Church’s constant belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Even in the days of the apostles, the Church recognized our Lord in “the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35, Acts 2:42). St. Paul himself asks, “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10)

In the fourth century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote: “Do not see in the bread and wine merely natural elements, because the Lord has expressly said that they are his body and his blood: faith assures you of this, though your senses suggest otherwise...If Jesus who is God says that this is his Body, how dare you contradict him! With full assurance let us partake of the Body and Blood of Christ that we can be made of the same Body and Blood with him. Thus we come to bear Christ within us and, according to Peter, become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4).

According to St. Francis of Assisi, “Man should be seized with fear, the earth should tremble, and the heavens rejoice exceedingly when Christ, the Son of the living God, descends upon the altar in the hands of the priest. O admirable greatness and stupendous condescension! O humble sublimity! O sublime humility! that the Lord of the universe, God, and the Son of God, so humbles himself that for our salvation he hides himself under the form of a morsel of bread!”

St. Therese of Lisieux says, “Kneeling before the tabernacle, I can think of only one thing to say to our Lord: my God, you know that I love you. And I feel that my prayer does not weary Jesus. Knowing my weakness, he is satisfied with my good will.”

To her sisters, St. Teresa of Calcutta said, “The Eucharist is beyond understanding—we must accept it in deep faith and love. Jesus deliberately left us the Eucharist, lest we forget all that he came to show and to do...Every human being has a longing for God. ‘My soul is thirsting for God.’ Christians can go even further—they not only long for God, but they have the treasure of his presence always with them. We not only have this, but the joy of getting even closer to him by receiving him in Holy Communion.”

St. John Paul II tells us: “Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: they already possess it on earth, as the first fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality. For in the Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world: ‘He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day’” (John 6:54).

St. Maximillian Kolbe declares: “God dwells in our midst, in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar...If angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason: Holy Communion.”

The first major diocesan event of the Eucharistic Revival is just a few weeks away. A Redeemed Eucharistic Conference will take place Sept. 23–24 in Fargo, and will offer the testimony of outstanding national speakers, beautiful liturgies, and time for personal Eucharistic adoration. One of the added benefits of this event will be an encounter with many others from our
diocese who share our faith or are searching for God in their lives. At the very least, this Eucharistic Conference will be an opportunity to come together in prayer for our loved ones and neighbors who have fallen away from Christ and his Church. I have no doubt that our united prayer before Christ in the Eucharist will open the doors of grace to many who have grown away from our Lord, or who have not yet met him. I invite you to attend this conference, and I also encourage you to bring a friend or a neighbor who might be blessed by taking part in such an event. You can find registration information here in New Earth, at fargodiocese.org/redeemed, or at our diocesan offices.

The testimony of the saints is a great school of Eucharistic faith, because the saints knew that the Eucharist is Christ. We can learn much not only from their words but from the witness of their lives. May we grow in faith through our encounter with Christ in the Eucharist, and recognize our Lord more completely “in the breaking of the bread.”

FROM BISHOP FOLDA

I hereby appoint the:
Rev. H. Gerard Braun as Dean of Deanery II beginning August 1, 2022 and continuing ad nutum episcopi.
Rev. Paul C. Duchschere as Dean of Deanery VII beginning August 1, 2022 and continuing ad nutum episcopi.
Rev. Msgr. Dennis Skonseng as Dean of Deanery III beginning August 1, 2022 and continuing ad nutum episcopi.

Diocese of Fargo Official Appointments/Announcements
Most Rev. John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo, has made the following appointments, announcements, and/or decrees.

BISHOP FOLDA’S CALENDAR

Sept. 8 • 2 p.m.
Blessing of Marian grotto, Basilica of St. James, Jamestown

Sept. 9 • 4 p.m.
St. JPII Schools Block Party, Shanley, Fargo

Sept. 10 • 5 p.m.
Hall of Fame Banquet, Holiday Inn, Fargo

Sept. 11 • 9:15 a.m.
Mass of Installation of Pastor, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

Sept. 16–19
Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Omaha, Neb.

Sept. 20 • 5 p.m.
All Catholic Schools Principals and Pastors Meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo

Sept. 23 • 1:30 p.m.
Mass for Life and Thanksgiving, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

Sept. 23–24
Redeemed Eucharistic Conference, Delta by Marriott, Fargo

Sept. 25–28
Presbyterate Days, Carrington

Oct. 2 • 12 p.m.
Walk with Christ for Life, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Oct. 4 • 5 p.m.
St. Gianna Medical Professionals Conference, University of Mary, Bismarck

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On June 9, 1970, Mass was being said in the tiny town of Stich, West Germany by a visiting Swiss priest. After the Consecration, the priest noticed a small red stain on the corporal next to the chalice. The stain grew to the size of a coin. When the priest raised the chalice, he noticed another red spot on the corporal where the chalice had been. The priest ran his hand over the bottom of the chalice because he thought the stains were caused by a leak in the chalice. However, there was no moisture on the bottom of the chalice.

After Mass, the visiting priest inspected the corporal and the long cloth that covered the altar. The parish priest also examined the cloths. Since all the cloths were clean, there was no explanation for the stains. So, the cloths were sent to the University of Zurich for analysis. No information was provided to the laboratory about the cloths.

The results of the analysis were that the red stain was human blood. Additionally, the director of the clinical laboratory who performed one analysis stated that it was his opinion that the blood was from a male experiencing a great deal of pain.

Then on July 14, 1970, the same Swiss priest was scheduled to say another Mass at the chapel in Stich. He verified that the altar, altar cloths, corporal, and chalice were completely clean and in good condition. Shortly after the Consecration red stains again appeared on the corporal. The priest signaled the sacristan to come to the altar to see the stains. After Mass, the priest invited the parishioners to come to the altar to see the stains. These cloths were sent to the District Hospital of Cercee. The results of the analysis done by the hospital indicated that the stains were human blood.

The sacristan and various members of the congregation provided sworn testimony about what they had seen on the cloths. According to all the testimony, one stain was the size of the priest’s large Host and the other stains were the size of the Hosts given to the congregation. A cross was clearly visible in the red stains.

Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

September
Abolition of the Death Penalty

We pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country.

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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)
What does it mean to be “saved?” What do I say when someone asks, “Are Catholics really Christians?”

Shorer answers can be shared while deeper answers are important for our own understanding. For abundant resources, go to catholic.com for thousands of articles referencing Scripture, history, the early Church Fathers, and reason on various aspects of these questions.

Most Christians define “saved” as getting to heaven at the end of life here on earth. There may be a hundred ways of defining how that happens. On one end, some would say the only thing needed is a profession of real faith in Jesus as Savior using Romans 10:9 as their proof. Our Catholic faith and most Christians teach that faith must be lived. We hear that from Jesus in Matthew 25:40 as he describes the Last Judgment, in James 2:14-26 when St. James clearly tells us that faith without works is dead, and in Philippians 2:12 where St. Paul says that they must work out their own salvation in fear and trembling.

Some erroneously think that being “saved” is a one-time prayer of faith; but rather it is the ongoing work of God as he forgives us and makes us saints, transforming us into the image of Jesus. We know by looking at ourselves—and any Christian—that God is not done with us in a single moment. We do agree with those who say that God saves us; we don’t save ourselves by our good works. We simply correct this common misconception of the Catholic faith (by non-Catholics and by some Catholics as well) by explaining: We practice works of mercy toward others from thankful hearts because we have received God’s mercy. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Let us take a similar approach as we consider the second question: are Catholics really Christians? Before we look at the content of what we say, let us look at our heart and our life as we respond. Is my heart and mind at peace? Do I want to share my faith in Jesus, or am I hurt or angry and trying to prove something? Will I allow Christ to love through me? Will I humbly acknowledge that I am not a perfect Christian but a sinner striving by God’s grace to be a saint? We must be witnesses and not just apologists of our faith in Christ in word and deed.

When we have offered a prayer to God, we can begin the conversation by thanking the person for asking the question. Then ask them what is necessary to be a Christian. There are numerous answers to that question so listen for a few common threads. All Christians who actually believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God agree that faith is necessary—so include the information from the previous paragraph. As mentioned there, most Christians recognize from Jesus, Paul, James, and the whole of the Scriptures that the practice of our faith is necessary. (Reminder: majority isn’t always right, but in this case they match up.) You can ask them if someone who believes every line of the Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed is a Christian. It is a good opportunity to connect them with the depth of our Christian faith if they are not familiar with the Creeds. When you have read, prayed, and answered any questions, tell them that you believe all that is taught there of God, Jesus, and the Catholic faith.

Yet, some who ask whether Catholics are really Christian may respond that there are things the Catholic Church teaches that are contrary to the Bible. They will often bring up one example, then another, endlessly trying to get you to admit that the Catholic Church is wrong. If they interrupt and repeatedly ignore your response and won’t accept an explanation, I recommend that you simply invite them to have a conversation when they are ready to listen with Christian respect. If you show respect and they listen with respect, remember that you don’t have to convince them in one conversation. Thank God that you have the opportunity to help someone see the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Catholic Church and the fullness of faith. Close by thanking them for seeking to understand what unites us and working to build the unity that Jesus prayed for at the Last Supper. Invite them to ask any other questions they may have and you will seek with them the roots and flowers of the faith.

Another important witness that Catholics are Christian is the lives of the saints. Not the short and sweet stories, but the real life struggles and encounters with Jesus of fallen yet redeemed men and women. This spring we had the canonization of St. Charles Foucauld as well as the movie release of Father Stu. This canonized saint and this priest show the world real and believable Christians. I haven’t seen the movie as I write this, but I have read pieces of Father Stu’s story in numerous articles. St. Charles Foucauld’s story has inspired me for over 20 years. Share a life that inspires you. Let them see Christ alive in you. Then they will listen when you talk about him!
Century-old wayside cross restored
Family connected to historic site brings it back after devastating flood

By Mary (Hapka) Johnson | Finance Accountant for the Diocese of Fargo

While paging through the June 2022 New Earth, little did I know that my co-worker, Mary Hanbury, wrote an article about Catholic roadside shrines that featured a picture of St. Joseph Chapel near Warsaw. After I came across Mary’s article, I had to share with her the excitement of the restoration of a century-old wayside cross coming to fruition this summer just a couple miles to the northeast of the chapel. Mary encouraged me to share this story.

The Frank Marynik Wayside Cross was erected late 1922 or in 1923 by Frank Marynik’s neighbors where the Marais River empties into the Red River in Pulaski Township. The significance of the cross is based on prayerful visions and voices perceived a century ago by Marynik, who farmed in the area.

On June 16, after this past spring’s flood waters receded, my mother Theresa (Perkerewicz) Hapka and I went to check on the cross site, which is just beyond the farmstead where my mom was born and raised. The cross site is a very special place dear to the hearts of my mom and her sisters and to many who lived in or grew up in the area, as is our Polish heritage and Catholic faith and traditions (her father, Joseph, and Frank Marynik’s wife, Angeline, were siblings).

We were a little apprehensive as we approached the cross site as we knew the spring flooding had really taken a toll on the landscape in that area. We heard that the cross may have been swept away with the flood. As we walked through the mud and the muck, we saw the cross in the distance with a big log settled on top of it. Miraculously, the cross, which was in an area where the water reached 12 feet, had not gone with the flood! It did have a look of despair—as if Jesus was saying, “I need some attention here!”

With the blessing of the help of retired Pulaski resident farmer Gary Babinski and his loader, four of my brothers and I went to the cross site with plans, materials, hopes, and prayers and we worked together to build it up to withstand future flooding for another century. While one of my brothers was weed trimming the area, he came across “a piece of flimsy tin.” “That’s it”, I exclaimed! That was the shroud that goes above the corpus! Amazingly, that little piece of tin had stayed in the vicinity. The cross was meant to be there.

With the help of many neighbors of the Frank Marynik Wayside Cross, along with family and friends, the whole wooded and open area around the cross was cleared of flood debris and cleaned up beautifully. We welcomed a group of more than 80 people for the rededication celebration on July 31 at the cross site. Father Brian Moen arrived after the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. Stanislaus in Warsaw and led the Rosary, followed by a blessing of the land. Emily, Gina, and Hannah Plutowski sang a beautiful Polish hymn, Serdeczna Matko (Beloved Mother). A picnic followed and the rain went north that morning and south that afternoon, and the thunderstorm forecasted miraculously missed us.

It is inspiring that these faith-filled people still feel passionate about a cross in its original wood 100 years later. Gratefulness to God for the blessing of Jesus and his cross!

For more details about Frank Marynik’s experiences, see the July 20 issue of the Walsh County Record. Article by Todd Morgan.
Papal visit impacts Turtle Mountain Catholics

By Michelle Kuhar | St. Ann’s Indian Mission Development Director

In 2021, Pope Francis instituted the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, a celebration in line with traditions at St. Ann’s Indian Mission on the Turtle Mountain Reservation.

This year’s celebration on July 24 was extra special for St. Ann’s parishioners as it coincided with the Pope’s visit to Canada and the 138th St. Ann’s Day celebration. On July 26, several parishioners attended the Papal Mass on St. Ann’s feast day in Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, Canada.

In a crowd of 40,000, the Holy Father honored the elderly of the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis People alongside St. Ann and St. Joachim, the grandparents of Jesus.

St. Ann’s parishioners, who take pride in their long-standing devotion to Jesus’ grandparents, saw the trip as a once in a lifetime opportunity to hear the Pope address their own people and to join in a larger celebration of their beloved saint.

Duane Gourneau, who grew up on the Reservation and regularly participates in the St. Ann’s Day novena, recalls attending the Eucharistic procession, rosary, and outdoor mass, as early as age 10. He talked about the crowds who descended on the church grounds for the novena, spending the night in tents, and gathering in family groups for outdoor meals. This year, the feast of St. Ann created another powerful memory for Gourneau who joined a 12-hour caravan to see the Pope.

The magnitude of Pope Francis’ decision to apologize for the Church’s part in abuse, which took place in certain Catholic residential schools and the desire to witness this important, historic event, ultimately inspired Gourneau to attend.

Gourneau, who is a retired Social Worker and Mental Health Specialist, carried with him the tears and memories of individuals who shared their abuse stories with him over the years, and the weight of experiencing discrimination. He hoped to find deeper healing for his own experience and to bring with him the grief of others.

“What he said, how he said it, and the humility in what he said just brought me peace,” Gourneau said. “I’ve reconciled with my past, but seeing the tears of others as I looked around the stadium and knowing it brought healing was so moving.”

He acknowledged that individual experiences in Catholic boarding schools varied and that some had mediocre or very good memories, but for those who suffered abuse, he noted the importance of acknowledgement to bring healing.

“These things have happened and these apologies are important to hear,” Gourneau said. “People will say that happened a long time ago or how does this matter anymore, but the Pope’s words were powerful and needed to be heard.”

Gourneau’s words mirror the Pope’s heartfelt statements on July 25 in Maskwacis, Canada during a smaller gathering centered on individuals who experienced abuse.

“I think back on the stories you told... of how the children were taken away from their homes at a young age, and how that indelibly affected relationships between parents and children, grandparents, and grandchildren,” the Pope said.

“To remember the devastating experiences that took place in the residential schools hurts, angers, causes pain, and yet it is necessary.”

Gourneau also brought up a powerful lesson he learned as a Mental Health Specialist. “It is important to reconcile with the past so that anger doesn’t consume you.”

He prays for those who aren’t ready for that step, knowing that healing is a process that can’t be forced. Looking around the stadium that day, Gourneau felt that, “For those who were ready it was a blessing.”

The wisdom of this Turtle Mountain elder is a further invitation to reflect on the Pope’s words in Edmonton: “We are not isolated individuals, islands. No one comes into this world detached from others.” These words contain an invitation to pray for healing and reconciliation for those elders still struggling with memories of abuse from long ago.

The Pope’s words remind us to honor our ancestors in faith, to be grateful for the family traditions and cultural heritage we possess, and to pray for those who were prevented from passing on their traditions. In the words of Pope Francis’ concluding prayer, “May Joachim and Anne intercede for us. May they help us to cherish the history that gave us life, and, for our part, to build a life-giving history. May they remind us of our spiritual duty to honor our grandparents and our elders, to treasure their presence among us in order to create a better future.”

And in the words of Turtle Mountain parishioners, “Good St. Ann, pray for us!”
Bishop Folda leads prayers for fruitful harvest and safety at Rural Life Celebration

By Kristina Lahr | Assistant editor of New Earth

Bishop John Folda celebrated Mass, blessed land, animals, machinery, soil, and seeds and led the faithful in prayers for a safe and fruitful harvest for all farmers at the 5th annual Rural Life Celebration, held at the Arlen and Charlotte Blessum Farm near Rugby on July 31. In his homily, Bishop Folda reflected on the parable of the rich man who gathered a bountiful harvest and tore down his barns to build bigger ones. Jesus warns his listeners that rather than store treasures for ourselves, we must become rich in what matters to God.

“Jesus isn’t putting down anyone who enjoys the success of their labors, least of all the farmer,” said Bishop Folda. “But he is telling us to keep our eyes on the One who provides for us, the God of all creation. And he’s telling us to lift our eyes above the limits of this life, so that we can keep our eyes fixed on the ultimate goal, life with God in heaven…. The fruitfulness of the land is a sign of the eternal fields that await us in heaven.”

Following Mass, parishioners from parishes in Rugby, Knox, and Balta and the Blessum family provided a meal and entertainment. (Photos by Kristina Lahr | New Earth)
Eight men were admitted to Candidacy for the Order of Deacon on Aug. 20 at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Fargo. They completed two years of Aspirancy and are beginning year three of the five-year permanent diaconate formation program. (l to r) Tim Mosser, Randy Severinson, Shawn DeKeyser, Tom O’Keefe, Bishop John T. Folda, Brian Herding, Steve Splonskowski, Ted LeMier, Bruce Wehri. (Photo by Danielle Ottman | Diocese of Fargo)

Bishop Folda acknowledged Diocese of Fargo seminarians on Aug. 5 at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo, where some were admitted as candidates and others installed as lectors or acolytes. Seminarians petition the Bishop to become a Candidate for Holy Orders during the natural transition from college philosophy into graduate theology. The following year, once installed as a lector, the seminarian is specially tasked to proclaim scripture during the liturgy. As formation for the priesthood continues, the seminarian is installed as an acolyte and is tasked to distribute Holy Communion and may also purify the chalice and paten after Mass. With each ministry, seminarians take on a deepening priestly identity. (Photos by Father Kyle Metzger)
AROUND THE DIOCESE

Putt 4 a Purpose brings summer fun and fellowship

Photos by Kristina Lahr | Assistant editor of New Earth

One hundred forty-four golfers participated in the 16th annual Bishop’s Charity Golf Tournament, Putt 4 a Purpose, at Rose Creek Golf Course in Fargo on Aug 1. Proceeds from the event benefit seminarian education and youth programs throughout the Diocese, such as March for Life, SEARCH, and youth camps. Save the date and join us next year August 7, 2023.

The winning parish team was from St. Catherine Church in Valley City: Travis Ingstad, Chris Kvilvang, Dave Jenson, and Matt Glessner with a score of 56.

First place gross team with a score of 53 was Aaron Alton, Terry Welle, Mike Bruckbauer, and Father Jim Meyer.

The Annual Pilgrimage and Eucharist Procession in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel took place July 17 at Mount Carmel, north of Langdon. The Mount Carmel Heritage Society organized the Mass and Procession under the direction of Gary Metzger. Father Damien Schill, a priestly vocation from Mount Carmel, was the celebrant. He spoke of the importance of the Eucharist in our daily lives and in the conversion of the world to Christ and to his holy Church. Approximately 125 people participated in the Mass and procession. (submitted photo)
The Diocese of Fargo Youth Ministry Office kept busy with events, conferences, and camps throughout the summer to provide opportunities for youth to encounter Jesus through the sacraments and fellowship.

Starting in May, the Diocese of Fargo hired two college interns, Tommy Hollcraft and Zoe Kraft, to lead various events for middle and high school in the Fargo/Moorhead area and throughout the diocese. In my previous work in the Diocese of Crookston, I noted that summer ministry was a great opportunity to engage youth outside of a classroom setting. Even though summer is still busy for youth, weekly gatherings help promote community, foster spiritual growth, and help us at the diocese learn how to engage the youth more. The weekly gatherings, facilitated by Tommy and Zoe, comprised of three components: social engagement, spiritual formational, and service work.

Every Wednesday was a day for social events like bowling and visits to Thunder Road. Spiritual events consisted of XLT (exalt) which included recreational time (ultimate Frisbee or shtick), a shared dinner, and concluded with Praise and Worship, a keynote around the theme “I thirst,” and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Service Nights included learning about homelessness and what we can do in response to Roe vs. Wade.

Along with weekly events, Tommy, Zoe, and I prepared for Camp Summit and the Steubenville Youth Conference.

Camp Summit (for middle school students), under the patronage of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, expanded on the life of Pier and his constant pursuit of something greater. During this 5-day camp at Red Willow in Binford, the youth heard multiple keynote talks, engaged in small group discussion, attended daily Mass, spent time in daily adoration, and had recreational time. For many staff and youth, this was a new experience for them.

“Seeing them rush to confession and then open up in small group afterward was a powerful image of God’s mercy,” said Zoe Kraft. “It was also amazing to hear that for the majority of them, their favorite part of camp was adoration, Mass, and confession instead of the games and other activities.”

Steubenville Youth Conference (for high school students) took place at the end of July at the University of St. Thomas, in St. Paul. Unpacking the theme, Fearless, over 1,900 youth and chaperones learned how to be fearless disciples of Jesus Christ. Most of the speakers shared their witness stories and how the boldness of others helped them be courageous in the faith. As Emcee Chris Mueller stated, “being fearless doesn’t mean you have no fear, it means that you trust in the one who is leading you along the path of discipleship.” Throughout the 3-day conference, youth heard talks from nationally known speakers, sang whole-heartedly in worship with Sonar Worship Band, had small group discussion, attended daily Mass, and spent time in adoration.

Steubenville is one of the most transformative events our high school youth can attend. I’ve been coming to the Steubenville Conferences for 13 years and have watched the Lord do mighty things in the hearts of the youth. He has mended broken hearts, healed strained relationships, and revealed his love to some who have never experienced it before.

I hope to continue summer ministry with another year of Camp Summit and a larger group for Steubenville next summer. We know that the work we do couldn’t happen without our devotion to prayer and docility to the Holy Spirit.
For decades, divorce has become all too common in the United States. Catholic marriages are not immune to the rise in the divorce rate. Marriages fail for many reasons, and the hurt and pain can stay with people for years. The Church recognizes that couples who split often seek comfort and guidance, but may feel they aren’t worthy to turn to Christ and his Church for that help. Brad Gray, Marriage and Family Life Director for the Diocese of Fargo, knows firsthand the hurt and anxiety that comes with divorce.

“At the age of 23, life already felt like it was over,” said Gray. “I was a young man earnestly striving to live out my Catholic faith, and yet I found myself now a divorcé with two little daughters and deep anxiety about what possible future my life could have now. There was so much hurt, heaviness, and a general sense of bewilderment about how this even happened.”

In the midst of all of his pain, Gray says he found an unexpected source of healing and help in his efforts to make sense of everything happening in his young life. It was the marriage annulment process offered by the Catholic Church. Declarations of Nullity (commonly called “annulments”) are a way people in the aftermath of a divorce can find peace and comfort in communion with the Church and seek the truth regarding whether they can regain the freedom to marry.

“At first I was opposed to pursuing annulment,” said Gray. “But as I entered more deeply into the different aspects, examinations, and reflections, I was surprised to find that Jesus was ready to meet me in each of the areas of profound hurt that surfaced. In his love and mercy, he helped me to see that he had been with me through it all, and that his plan for my life wasn’t over.”

What is an “annulment?”

An annulment, otherwise known as a declaration of nullity, is an official decision given in the name of the Church that a marriage has been proven to be invalid from the beginning according to Church theology and law. In other words, something necessary to bring about an actual marriage was missing at the time of the wedding. A declaration of nullity is not a matter of sin and forgiveness. It is also not a “Catholic divorce.”

The Tribunal is part of the court system of the Church. The majority of its work involves resolving questions of marital invalidity. The goal of the Tribunal is not to give permission to re-marry but to seek the truth about the validity of a marriage.

According to the Fargo Diocese’s Tribunal webpage, “The Catholic Church presumes that every marriage, or at least every initial marriage, including a marriage between two non-Catholics, is valid.” At the time of the marriage vows, the couple must minimally:

- be willing to fully give themselves to each other and intend to be exclusively faithful to the other party in the conjugal relationship
- be open to fruitfulness, that is, the possibility of children
- freely choose and consent to marriage as an act of their own functioning wills

These aspects apply to all marriages, whether entered into by members of the Catholic Church, by other Christians, or even by non-baptized persons.

Nevertheless, not every relationship that at first blush looks like a marriage is in fact so. These are referred to as “Invalid Marriages.” The Tribunal describes these as “an apparent marriage which lacked something essential which Brad Gray, Director of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Fargo.
is necessary to bring about a true and binding marital union. Invalidity can occur from several sources including fraud, an inability to consent, or impediments (either divine or ecclesiastical) established in the law. Should one be able to prove such a source of invalidity, the Church is able, through a judicial process, recognize the fact of invalidity by declaring a marriage ‘invalid.’ If invalidity is proven, freedom to marry can be regained.”

**What is the process?**

The process to seek a Declaration of Nullity typically begins with a meeting with the local parish priest, who will assist in getting started. The person seeking freedom to marry, known as the “Petitioner,” begins by completing an application form, which may be found on the Diocese of Fargo Tribunal website, and sending it to the Tribunal. The application includes an outline for the Petitioner to provide the history of the marriage. It asks for information concerning the background of the Petitioner and the former spouse, known as the “Respondent,” and for significant information about the courtship and married life. The application and history serves as the petition, or the first step, in seeking a Declaration of Nullity. As part of this petition, the Petitioner must provide the Tribunal with the names and addresses of several witnesses.

Witnesses should be people knowledgeable about the parties and the history of the marriage. Key witnesses are those who knew both parties before and during the marriage. These are often parents, brothers, or sisters. Ideally, the Petitioner will provide the names of witnesses who would be from the side of the Respondent. The Tribunal will contact the Respondent and the witnesses to collect testimony.

The Petitioner will supply several documents, typically including the civil divorce decree. The decree serves as juridical proof that a reconciliation between the parties is unlikely (whenever possible, the local parish pastor may attempt to guide the couple through counseling and reconciliation).

The Tribunal is obligated to contact the Respondent. The Respondent can complete a marital history and offer names of witnesses. The universal law of the Catholic Church requires this contact. Hearing from the Respondent is helpful to the study. The Tribunal needs an accurate, current address of the Respondent. If this is not available, evidence must be provided that every reasonable attempt to obtain the address has been exhausted. The Petitioner does not have to contact the Respondent directly. The Tribunal contact the Respondent.

When the petition is presented to the Tribunal, the Court’s chief judge, known as the “Judicial Vicar,” will determine appropriate grounds. “Grounds” are reasons in Church law that can prove a marriage invalid. The Respondent will be notified of the grounds. After compiling all the testimony, the parties and their advocates (canonical attorneys) have the opportunity to view the evidence at a local Tribunal’s office. The advocates will then write briefs representing the position of the party they represent, and apply the jurisprudence of the Church to the facts of the marriage. Then the Defender of the Bond (the court official who acts as the “defense attorney” for the marriage itself) reviews and points out the elements of the case that favor the validity of the marriage. After reviewing the arguments, a college of three judges meets, discusses the case, and comes to a decision. It then issues a ruling called a “definitive sentence.” However, the Petitioner, Respondent, or certain court officials may appeal the case to a higher court for a second examination if they disagree with the decision and sufficient reasons still exist, and the higher court accepts the appeal.

**After the decision**

If a marriage is found invalid and nullity is declared, both the Petitioner and the Respondent are free to re-marry if they wish. Sometimes a second marriage is not permitted until the court is satisfied that the cause, which invalidated the first marriage, is no longer an issue. In these cases, counseling or other requirements may be imposed before a marriage will be allowed. If they have already attempted to marry, they may seek validation of that marriage.

If they do not receive a Declaration of Nullity, it’s still possible to present the case again on different grounds or appeal the decision to a higher court. Status as a member of the Church does not change, but they are not free to marry. If they have attempted marriage outside the Church, they are typically unable to receive the sacraments. In this situation, the Tribunal may be approached about the possibility of a “Brother/Sister Permission.” This allows the couple to live together chastely and still receive the sacraments if there are serious reasons why they cannot separate, such as children.

The declaration of nullity process can be lengthy, time consuming, and some obstacles can appear, but in 2015 Pope...
Francis made some changes to the process. Most importantly, Pope Francis eliminated the mandatory appeal of an affirmative decision. Now, cases that receive an affirmative decision are not automatically sent to a second court for review. This will help speed up the process in most cases. Also, in most cases, U.S. Tribunals are able to hear cases even if one of the spouses lives outside the United States, an important change with the realities of immigration across the globe. Pope Francis also desires that the process be free of charge. The Diocese of Fargo does not charge a fee, but a donation may be asked for at the end of the process to help the diocese cover costs.

**Dispelling misconceptions**

Many of the misconceptions surrounding the process for a declaration of nullity involve children. One of the most common questions asked is “are my children considered illegitimate?” The answer is no. The status of the children does not change.

According to Canon law, “The children conceived or born of a valid or putative marriage are legitimate” (canon 1137). Also, a declaration of nullity granted in the U.S. has no effect on child custody or visitations, nor the rights of inheritance. In addition, as mentioned previously, there is no charge for the declaration of nullity process. You can’t “buy” a declaration of nullity.

**Moving forward**

As for what happens after a declaration of nullity is granted or not, that is up to each person individually. For Brad Gray, he has re-married and has a family with his wife, Lisa.

“During this time, the passage from Jeremiah 29:11-12 became something of an anthem for me,” said Gray. “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.”

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If you want to start an argument in Catholic circles, bring up Vatican II. It seems that nothing else has divided the Catholic world in the last 100 years as much. However, as Father Blake Britton argues in Reclaiming Vatican II, most people have their opinions of the council based not on what Vatican II taught, but on second-hand accounts and customs. Most of these do not reflect the council’s true teachings. In Reclaiming Vatican II, Father Britton offers a thorough introduction to the events precipitating the council, an overview of the four major council documents, and commentary on their applicability today.

Father Britton makes the case that there were two interpretive forces at work during and after Vatican II: the council itself, as interpreted by the Magisterium resulting in the four major council documents, and what he calls the “paracouncil.” The paracouncil refers to people who were either adjacent to or participants in the council, who took liberties with or even misrepresented what it taught, teaching their pet ideas as either coming from the council or as consistent with its spirit. Although this could be ascribed to overenthusiastic interpretation, many were plainly using the council as an excuse to further their own agendas. As Father Britton writes:

“…certain theologians’ interpretations of the Second Vatican Council appeared to be yet another way of ‘sticking it to the man.’ People began to see Vatican II as a signal that even the Church was ready to change. No wonder the paracouncil’s agenda was welcomed in so many quarters, coinciding as it did with the spirit of the age” (10).

Since Vatican II coincided with an explosion in mass media, there was no one unifying voice to promulgate the Council. The dominant view became whatever got the most press time. In certain quarters, bishops, clergy, and laity saw Vatican II as an excuse to implement their pet projects in the name of the “spirit of Vatican II,” especially disregarding the Church’s teaching on sexual ethics, and many more visible so-called reforms in church practice, such as ceasing the use of Latin and changing the architecture and arrangement of many churches. Unfortunately, many of a more conservative view rebelled against these improper reforms and went in the other direction, rejecting anything related to Vatican II as a concession to modernity and creeping secularism, swinging the pendulum too far in the other direction:

“…as a reaction to the paracouncil, a large number of Catholics reject anything promoted by Vatican II, clinging to the rubrics of past liturgies or traditional religious practices... Traditional and traditionalism are two very different things. One is living and effective, the other is dead and stale” (26).

These reactions resulted in the Council not being properly understood or implemented. Vatican II simply never called for a majority of the changes it has been accused of, such as changing the position of the altar or deemphasizing Latin. Many of the structural changes it did impose have gone mostly unremarked upon, such as changes made to the Divine Office, the reading cycles used at Mass, our current liturgical calendar, and the RCIA program. In fact, the majority of the council documents, most notably Gaudium et Spes (largely written by St. John Paul II), deal with the position of the church in the modern world.

“Gaudium et Spes represents a true shift in the Church’s posture toward the world. Before Vatican II, the Church’s general attitude toward secular society was isolationist and critical... The Church had to discern her place in a world that was becoming increasingly antagonistic, and it was not immediately clear how to address the needs of the time” (142).

Father Britton helps us sort out the signal from the noise in interpreting the wisdom given to us in Vatican II. In my own experience, I know people who hunger for reverent liturgies, beautiful music, and an appreciation of older Church customs, such as Latin chant, used alongside the vernacular, where the two can complement each other. I’m hopeful that, as we continue to interpret and implement Vatican II, we will find a bridge between attachment to the past and modernization for its own sake to arrive at a Church which is truly Christ’s presence in the world. Reclaiming Vatican II can help us.
The First Eucharist shines light on realities of faith

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

The Disputation of the Blessed Sacrament by the well-known Renaissance artist Raphael, was painted between 1509 and 1510. Raphael was commissioned by the Pope to decorate the papal apartments (now the Vatican Museum). The room where this fresco (paint applied to wet plaster on wall) can be found is called the Signature Room. This was the room where the important documents of the church were signed. The pope must have knowledge of theology and wisdom to make important decisions and this concept was then depicted on the walls of the room. The two main frescos in the room are the School of Athens and the Disputation of the Blessed Sacrament. The School of Athens depicts different philosophers discussing the wisdom of philosophy with the motto above reading “Seek Knowledge of Causes.” On the opposite wall is the Disputation of the Blessed Sacrament which depicts men of the Church discussing the source and summit of the Christian life—the Eucharist. The motto above reads, “Knowledge of Divine Things.”

We can see the fresco is in two parts, an upper heavenly level and a lower earthly level. This split in the fresco shares a similar composition with the apse mosaic that was in the old St. Peter’s Basilica before Pope Julius II rebuilt it. That apse mosaic also showed a heavenly realm separated by the same upward curving line to the earthly realm. It was suggested that Raphael was making a strong connection to the authority of the Church in the Blessed Sacrament fresco by using a similar structure to the one inside the Basilica.

In the middle stands the Blessed Sacrament on an altar with everything centered around it. In a straight line from top to bottom, our eyes gaze on the Holy Trinity. God the Father is at the top, Jesus as the resurrected Son, and the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove with rays coming down to rest on the Blessed Sacrament, thus showing us the true and Real Presence within.

The upper heavenly realm depicts the “Church Triumphant” with some recognizable characters from the Old Testament and others who knew Christ. One of these witnesses is St. Lawrence who was martyred for his faith. The ones who can be identified, from left to right are: Peter, Adam, John, King David, Lawrence, Mary, Jesus, John the Baptist, Judas Maccabees, Stephen, Moses, James or Matthew, Abraham, and Paul. They sit perched on a cloud remaining calm and seem to take notice of the discussions below. In the earthly realm, the “Militant Church” on earth is discussing the Eucharistic mystery. In the center around the altar are four great Early Church Fathers who wrote something about the Eucharist. On the left seated with a papal miter is St. Gregory the Great, who modified the Eucharistic Prayer in 595, still in use today (number I). St. Jerome is next to him with a lion by his feet (his symbol). He wrote about the bread and the Real Presence. The third figure at the right of the altar is St. Ambrose, (340-397) who wrote that the Eucharist is the true flesh of Christ. St. Augustine is seated next to St. Ambrose. He wrote sermons describing the bread as the Body of Christ. These group of four around the altar attest to the importance of the belief of the True Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

St. Thomas Aquinas, known for his great wisdom, stands to the right of the altar facing a pope. On the right, behind Pope Sixtus IV is Dante Alighieri with a laurel wreath on his head. The inclusion of Dante may represent the beauty of literature in the Catholic faith. The last figure to point out on the left is another Dominican, Blessed Fra Angelico. He painted many scenes of the life of Christ, which may represent the beauty of art.

This fresco manifests what the Church has always believed and taught that the Eucharist is the true and Real Presence of Christ. This belief transcends all time and space and stands at the center of our Catholic Faith as source and summit.
Saints can become our close friends

By Kristie Unterseher | Wife and mother of six, parishioner at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Reynolds

Growing up in a Catholic home, I was familiar with the saints from the local churches: St. Rita, St. Joseph, and the like. We occasionally prayed to St. Anthony when a lost object needed to be found and St. Nicholas made his annual visit to our house. It wasn’t until college, however, that I realized that I could have an active relationship with the saints. Watching Catholics at the Newman Center relate to the saints intrigued me; they talked to them as if they were friends walking right alongside them.

Not knowing how to have a relationship with someone in Heaven, I started by reading about them and their lives. Since then, I have come to realize that sometimes the saints who want to be our friends actually seek us out! They come to meet us in many small and seemingly insignificant ways, if we only have eyes to see and the heart to receive them.

Many years ago, I was reading to my children from *Around the Year Once Upon a Time Saints*, and I came across the story of St. Frances of Rome, a completely new saint to me. This simple children’s story actually brought me to tears because it seemed like it was written for my life. I began to have random quotes, stories, and references pop up from her. Suddenly she was everywhere! I began to learn more about St. Frances and used her guidance often, speaking to her as a friend when I was frustrated with my children or overwhelmed by housework.

Fast-forward a few years and I was becoming a Benedictine oblate, for which I had to pick a patron saint. I knew right away St. Frances was going to be my saint. What I didn’t know was that she was a Benedictine oblate herself and is the patron saint of oblates! As I learned about her in this new light, it was as if she had been preparing me for this friendship long before.

In another instance, my husband and I were being “followed” (as we call it) by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, a saint neither of us knew much about. We homeschool our children and had vaguely talked about choosing a patron for our school but took no action. While in Washington D.C. on the March for Life pilgrimage, Jake had a powerful experience visiting the Mother Seton Shrine. He was able to stand on the rock from which she taught and felt a connection with her. She also loved teaching the “trouble-maker” little boys and that struck him, since our family is full of them! Only a few weeks later, he was visiting a friend in Canada and was randomly given a first class relic of Mother Seton. It was a little present from heaven and he knew at that moment she should be our patroness. At the same time, I had found a devotional book with Elizabeth Ann Seton’s writings and was feeling called to read it, so when Jake suggested her as our patroness, I was immediately drawn to her as well. Now we have someone to turn to when choosing curriculum, working through difficulties with our children, finding the energy to keep going when it is difficult, and much more.

We have also had the experience of the saints helping us to choose our children’s names. Choosing a name for your child can be a daunting task, especially as you have more children and meaningful names start to seem scarce. For our last five children (two in heaven, and three here on earth), naming them was definitely the work of the saints calling to us. Each time, one or both of us received a name and we just knew it was the right name. The timing and circumstances confirmed this in small ways, such as Zachariah (the doubting Father of John the Baptist, whose later proclamation of faith is used in the daily liturgy) for the baby we conceived after doubting that we would be able to have more children due to cancer treatment Jake received. Or Damian (brother of Cosmas, both doctors and martyrs in the early Church), after Jake had an unplanned but profound visit to his tomb. We never expected these names, but we are grateful for the patronage they offer our children.

May this openness to the little and insignificant ways of God working through his saints continue to be present in our lives and the lives of our children! May each of us find at least one friend in heaven to guide us and be with us on our way!

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During his down time at work, a Minnesota surgeon often browses the New Yorker in the hospital library. One day he spotted its famed cartoon caption contest—a caption-less cartoon that calls on readers to submit captions and then vote on their favorites, to be published in the following issue of the magazine.

The fun is trying to explain an oddity or the juxtaposition of two disparate elements in a single sentence. The contest generates some 5,000 to 10,000 entries a week. And this doctor was intrigued by the cartoon he saw: a husband and wife lying in bed behind prison bars.

“I stared at the cartoon for several minutes and typed a few duds,” he wrote. “Then I was called to start a surgery and, literally, in those few seconds before I logged off, the caption came to me.”

He typed: “How about we just stay in tonight?”

The caption won the contest.

What happened in the span of those three or four seconds? Inspiration struck.

As a Catholic journalist, I have always been fascinated by that Eureka moment. I often ask people to describe the scene in detail: room, time of day, beverage at hand, music in the background. There’s something satisfying about painting a picture, pinning down all the elements in place when the elusive experience occurred.

A criminal prosecutor told me he sets his alarm for 4 a.m. and makes Cuban coffee so he can write fiction before his kids wake up. His preferred method: paper and pen.

“This morning, right after my prayer, this story I’ve been thinking about for 18 months just kind of came together,” he said.

What made it click?

“Who knows?” he said. “I like to think it was grace and a bit of the Holy Spirit.”

The late novelist John Hassler found it helpful to read his old journals. “Between novels,” he said, “I will browse through my 30 years of journal entries looking for topics to write about, and this, together with my memory and imagination, produces the fiction.” If he needed an extra boost “to get the language rolling,” he’d craft a letter to a friend.

A chemist described the central role of his Catholic faith when he’s stuck in a science experiment. “Then I turn to God for guidance and I am amazed,” he said. “Things start to click in my head and problems are solved. I am very appreciative and I thank God—sometimes out loud.”

Movement can shake out a new idea, getting outside your head or your office.

“I get some of my best ideas in the morning when I’m thinking in the shower, rubbing my scalp,” the artistic director of an acclaimed theater told me. “Maybe it’s a scene I’m not satisfied with and I’ll rub my scalp really hard and something will pop up.”

Unloading the dishwasher helps me. My fingers are free from the keyboard, but my mind keeps turning an idea.

Undertaking a different creative endeavor—especially one that doesn’t involve a deadline or any degree of mastery—can get the juices flowing. Einstein called this tactic “combinatory play”—the act of opening up one mental channel by experimenting in another. That’s why he’d play the violin when he was struggling to solve a mathematical puzzle. It worked.

This underscores the Catholic belief that the body, mind, and soul are intimately connected. We can spark one by tapping into another. And the health of one dimension often leads to the health of another. A long walk, a clearer mind. An active prayer life, lower blood pressure.

Reflecting on creativity fills me with hope. We are creative beings, made in the image and likeness of the Creator. We are capable of beautiful things. Moreover, a brilliant new idea may arrive any second.
This summer, I was assigned to partake in the Ministry to the Sick and Suffering (MSS) program at the St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. MSS is an 8-week summer course focused on fostering the priestly heart of the seminarian for pastoral care of the spiritually, emotionally, and physically sick. Thirty-three seminarians took part in the program this year, each of them assigned to a particular ministry site for the 8-week period. Sites ranged from hospitals and nursing homes to a homeless shelter. I was one of six seminarians assigned to North Memorial Hospital in Robbinsdale, Minn., a 23-minute drive from the seminary.

Our weeks were rich and full. Each day we started with Mass at 7:30 a.m., around which I would fit a generous portion of silent prayer and Lauds. We ministered at North Memorial every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. This early afternoon cutoff gave us some much-needed time after ministry to care for ourselves, so that we would learn to minister in an integrated, balanced, and healthy way throughout the summer. I usually went for a run and did a holy hour. Both of these help me process, reflect, and bring my heart to God, as well as the hearts of those I meet during the day.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, we had a series of individual presentations by various speakers on medical field, psychological methods and helps, addiction, suicide, crisis management, poverty, abuse, trauma, and (importantly) prayer and priestly identity and ministry in the midst of all this. This was our morning session, from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Then we started again at 1:30 p.m. with group processing of the morning session, acting out hypothetical chaplaincy scenarios as a class. We also went through our weekly Verbatim reports in our small group, facilitated by one of the psychologists on staff at the seminary. Funny enough, we often found class days to be more exhausting than ministry days! For the rest of the day, we were free to rest from the consistent homework load during the school year. Joyful fraternity and Godly leisure were well underway.

In my ministry, I was gifted with the stories of so many courageous, lonely, and hurting people. Loneliness was the greatest pain of the hospital. I say “gifted,” because I soon realized that in the very sharing of these stories, in marveling at and being crushed by the abuses inflicted against their heart, in holding their hand and looking them in the tear-filled eyes as they told me the deepest sufferings, joys, hopes, and sorrows of their lives, I myself was being filled up. I felt fuller, richer, and wiser, more fully rooted in the way God sees us. I was confronted by the mystery of suffering and sorrow. I saw men and women led by pain and misery down the path of numbing the heart, compulsive self-reliance, addiction, isolation, and spiritual death, because down that path was the only goodness and comfort they could see. I saw men and women led by that same kind of pain and misery to yearn for God, gloriously shining in the midst of their own darkness with a faith that I could only venerate, a glory dawning even as they approached the end of the race. Many times, the latter had also been the former.

This summer, I encountered Jesus Christ, not only in those I served or in the chapel but in myself. I encountered Jesus in my own story of suffering, sin, and ultimate redemption; in the word of comfort and direction or the look of compassion that he gave through me; and in the luminous joy that surpasses all understanding, a joy that could only come to me because of the darkness into which he sent me.
Spotting conspiracy theories like St. Luke

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

Conspiracy theories may have always existed. History is riddled with them, many of which were blatantly anti-Catholic. It seems, however, that the internet, mass media, and social media have made them more commonplace and they are finding their way into our political discourse.

How should Catholics respond to conspiracy theories? How do we recognize one?

A conspiracy is a covert plan involving more than one person, usually for a nefarious purpose and with the intent to keep the plan secret from the public. Secrecy itself is not a conspiracy and nor is a secret agreement for a legitimate purpose, like national security. Real conspiracies rarely stay secret, especially if they involve many people. By their nature, people are not good at keeping secrets, especially for wrongful purposes.

A conspiracy theory, on the other hand, is the belief that certain events or situations are secretly manipulated behind the scenes by powerful forces with negative intent. They are hypotheses that are not actually proven to be true. Nevertheless, these unproven theories can become powerful forces. Many people accept them as true and shape their actions, including political actions, around them.

As Catholics, we believe that there exists more than the material world. We believe in the invisible—angels, demons, miracles, and the evil one. That does not mean, however, that we should succumb to superstition and conspiracy theories. Indeed, we are called to be on guard against them. Catholics are called to use reason and faith in all things. God gave us the ability to reason so that we can sort out facts and identify, to the extent humanly possible, what is true and what is false.

St. Luke gives us a good example of putting those gifts into practice in the first verses of his gospel. He wrote: “Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received” (Luke 1:1-4). He relied on eyewitnesses. He not only investigated, he investigated “anew.” Finally, his purpose was to obtain “certainty.” St. Luke did not write down anything that was not proven accurate.

One feature of conspiracy theories is that they consist of allegations that, by their nature, cannot be proved or disproved. I recently heard of someone in North Dakota government claim that the hospitals around the state—including the Catholic facilities—routinely perform abortions but hide them and do not report them to the Department of Health, as required by law. He claimed that the numbers were twice what is actually reported to the state. The claim has all the hallmarks of a conspiracy theory. It alleges a secret plot to hide abortions from the public, but the person cannot prove the plot is real because the abortions were “secret.”

Applying reason, however, we can conclude that the claim lacks credibility. For example, as mentioned above, large groups of people can rarely keep something secret. It is hard to believe that hundreds of hospital staff persons—including those at Catholic hospitals—have successfully hid hundreds of abortions from the public, insurance companies, and the state government for years.

Sometimes adherence to conspiracy theories contradicts truths or practices that we accept in other circumstances. For example, sometimes the same person who claims that health care entities and public health officials cannot be trusted based on a conspiracy theory has no problem turning to a physician or hospital when their own health is in danger. Another example is when someone alleges that a government agency, individual, or corporation is hiding the truth about something and then turns around and points to something said by the same government agency, individual, or corporation as “proof” that they are lying. If they cannot be trusted to tell the truth, why would their “admission” be valid?

Something similar happens when self-professed conservatives believe in a large government conspiracy. One of the foundational principles of conservatism is not that government is always bad, but that it is always imperfect. Accordingly, governments should be incapable of carrying out a massive conspiracy. Self-proclaimed conservatives that buy into conspiracy theories about governments are not really conservatives. Incidentally, the same principle applies to non-government entities. Claims that a select few billionaires or corporations are secretly controlling the economy are inconsistent with conservatism.

These are just some examples of how to apply the tools God has given us to spot conspiracy theories. St. Luke used them. When approaching claims of conspiracies, we should be more like St. Luke.
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Sunday, September 25 • 1 – 3 p.m.
Riverview Place

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SMP Health - St. Catherine South
SMP Health - St. Aloisius
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SMP Health - St. Raphael
I recently took a call from a man who wanted to know more about Donor Advised Funds. After some discussion, it became clear that a Donor Advised Fund was a good option to consider. He was trying to accomplish two things. First, he wanted to make sure he received a significant tax deduction for this tax year, explaining he has some unexpected income and he wanted to offset his tax liability with a tax deduction. Second, he wanted the ability to make donations annually to his parish but still wanted some flexibility in case he wanted to give to other causes. Based on his priorities, I urged him to talk with his financial advisor about his options and to learn more about a Donor Advised Fund.

A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is like having your own foundation. The fund is invested for growth, which permits you to make annual gifts of income and principal while you are alive. In some cases, parents will allow their children to advise charitable distributions for a term of years. If you establish a DAF with us, at the end of the term the remaining fund balance will become an asset of the Catholic Development Foundation, helping further the good work of our Catholic Church.

When you make a gift to the Catholic Development Foundation using cash or other assets, we take your tax-deductible contribution and establish a special DAF in your name. Your DAF is then invested to grow over time, permitting you to recommend annual gifts to your favorite charitable organizations.

Opening a DAF is easy to do. At the Catholic Development Foundation, we use a simple DAF agreement. You may fund your DAF with a gift of cash, securities, real estate, or other assets. Check with us if you have unique or special assets that may be donated in a tax efficient way.

Once your DAF is open, you are ready to begin giving! Simply contact us in writing with your annual recommendations for your DAF distributes. We take those recommendations, and providing the charities you recommend meet non-profit status requirements, we make those distributions. It’s that easy.

A DAF provides you a flexible and easy-to-establish vehicle for charitable giving. Unlike private foundation gifts, DAF gifts generally qualify for a full fair market value charitable deduction and there are no startup costs to establish a DAF at the Catholic Development Foundation. In addition, a DAF permits you to make grants to charities without the unfavorable Private Foundation restrictions and excise taxes.

For more information or if you wish to speak to me about Donor Advised Funds, please contact me at steve.schons@fargodiocese.org or call me at (701) 356-7926.
LIFE’S MILESTONES

Richard and Judy (Carr) Ziemba, parishioners of Holy Cross Church in West Fargo, will celebrate their 60th anniversary married Sept. 15. They were married at Sacred Heart Church in Carrington. They have been blessed with 2 daughters, 6 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren.

Wayne and Joan Novak, parishioners of Holy Family Church in Grand Forks, celebrated their 60th anniversary married Sept. 15. They were married at Sacred Heart Church in Carrington. They have been blessed with 4 children and 14 grandchildren.

Richard and Clara Elless, parishioners of Holy Cross Church in West Fargo, celebrated their 71st anniversary on Aug. 20. They were married at St. Joseph Church in Crosby, Minn. They are blessed with 6 children, 3 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

Ralph and Dorothy (Maluski) Muscha, parishioners of St. Cecilia’s Church in Harvey, will celebrate their 50th anniversary on Sept. 23. They have 4 children and 10 grandchildren.

Bill and LaDonna Goodwin, parishioners of St. Francis Xavier Church in Anamoose, celebrated their 65th anniversary Sept. 3.

Father Thaines Arulandu, pastor of churches in Rolla and Rock Lake, will celebrate his 40th ordination anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving at 10:30 a.m. Sept. 18 at St. Joachim’s Church in Rolla. He was ordained at St. Aloysius Church in his hometown in India on June 3, 1982.

Dennis and Dora Elbert, parishioners of St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center in Grand Forks celebrated their 50th anniversary of Aug. 18. They were married at St. John’s in Grafton. They are blessed with 3 children and 6 grandchildren.

Bill and LaDonna Goodwin, parishioners of St. Francis Xavier Church in Anamoose, celebrated their 65th anniversary Sept. 3.

Wayne and Joan Novak, parishioners of Holy Family Church in Grand Forks, celebrated their 60th anniversary married Sept. 15. They were married at Sacred Heart Church in Carrington. They have been blessed with 4 children and 14 grandchildren.

Neil Jonk, parishioner of St. John Nepomucene Church in Pisek, will celebrate his 90th birthday Sept. 26. He has been blessed with his lovely wife of 63 years, Cornelia and his 7 children, 21 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren.

Richard and Clara Elless, parishioners of Holy Cross Church in West Fargo, celebrated their 71st anniversary on Aug. 20. They were married at St. Joseph Church in Crosby, Minn. They are blessed with 6 children, 3 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

Patrick Broderick, parishioner of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Rock Lake, celebrated his 90th birthday on Aug. 26. Pat has 4 daughters, 12 grandchildren, and 23 great-grandchildren.

Phil Yale, parishioner of St. Timothy’s Church in Manvel, celebrated his 90th birthday on Aug. 9. Phil and his wife Marilyn have been married 64 years and have 6 children, 16 grandchildren, and 39 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 October issue is Sept. 20.
Father James P. Lauerman passes away July 28

Father James P. Lauerman passed away July 28 at Sheyenne Crossing in West Fargo. He was ordained for the Society of the Catholic Apostolate on Dec. 19, 1970 in Milwaukee, Wis. where he taught religion and was an associate pastor. In 1978 he was sent to serve in North Dakota as pastor of Lakota (Brocket) and, newly clustered at the time, Tolna. Permitted to join the Diocese of Fargo in 1984, he taught religion courses and classical languages at Cardinal Muench Seminary high school.

While there, he invented a statistically valid test instrument that quantifies openness to the grace of the priesthood, sisterhood, or brotherhood. Since the early 1990s tens of thousands have been tested and computerized results have thus far facilitated some 2,000+ vocation placements across the United States.

From 1993-2002 he was pastor at Napoleon and Burnstad. While there, he authored a short devotional booklet based on findings from scientific studies of the Shroud of Turin. In 2002, he became the pastor of Oakwood and St. Thomas, retiring from active ministry in 2014.

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

A new “Newman Hall” opens September 21 at the University of North Dakota. A seven-room house, given to the Newman Foundation by St. Michael’s Parish, Grand Forks, has been moved to a fine location at 320 Cambridge Avenue. The Hall will provide a small chapel in the basement, a reading room, a lounge for students, and an office and living quarters for a chaplain. The new arrangement will make possible daily and Sunday Mass for the convenience of the 550 Catholic students at the University.

50 years ago — 1972

Forty shipping cases of Cardinal Muench’s archival files were sent to the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. on September 8, and deemed “a most valuable contribution to the Mullen Library” as said by University president, Dr. Walton. The Cardinal Aloisius Muench Papers concentrate on the time period of 1946 to 1959 and are important not only as they relate to Muench’s life, but also for their information concerning post-war German-American relations. Cardinal Aloisius Muench was bishop of Fargo (1935-46) and papal nuncio to Germany (1946-59). He was elevated to Cardinal in 1959. He went to Rome, where he served until his death February 15, 1962.

20 years ago — 2002

Bishop Samuel J. Aquila made a special visit to the Italian home of Saint Gianna, patroness of Saint Gianna’s Maternity Home, formerly St. Anthony’s School and Convent, in Warsaw. Accompanying him were Father Damian Hils, pastor of St. Stanislaus Church and maternity home chaplain, Mary Pat Jahner, the home’s resident director, and board member Colleen Samson. The Molla family visit strengthened the resolve of those working to bring the home to life, furthering the pro-life mission of the Fargo Diocese and providing a way to put the culture of life message into practice.

Heading south for the winter?
Make sure New Earth comes with you!

In most cases, the USPS will not forward New Earth for individuals who record a forwarding/temporary address for their mail. As a result, New Earth does not reach many of our faithful who travel south for the winter. To set up a temporary address for New Earth, go to www.fargodiocese.org/new-earth, call (701) 356-7900 or mail a notice including a temporary address and what months you’ll be living there to:

New Earth, 5201 Bishops Blvd, Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104

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NEW EARTH | SEPTEMBER 2022 | 27
EVENTS

Encore performance in Drayton
Dr. Jay Hershberger, piano, and Dr. Gregory Hamilton, cello, return to St. Edward Church in Drayton Sept. 18 at 3 p.m. Beethoven, Chausson, and Miaskovsky will be performed. Dessert buffet will follow the event. Free will offering.

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 this incredible faith we practice, and arm ourselves for battle against secular culture. The night begins with adoration and confession at 6 p.m., followed by a simple meal and speaker at 7 p.m. Watch your parish bulletins for upcoming dates and locations. Sept. 13: Holy Cross Church, West Fargo. Speaker Father Jayson Miller. Oct. 20: St. Francis de Sales in Moorhead. Speaker Bishop Andrew Cozzens.

FALL DINNERS

Thompson: St. Jude’s Church will hold a fall dinner and bake sale Sept. 11 from 12 to 5 p.m. Adults and all take-outs—$13, age 6 to 12—$8, ages under 5—$5.

Horace: St. Benedict’s Church will hold its annual fall dinner on Sept. 18, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Silent auction, country store, bake sale, and kids activities. Adults—$15, children ages 5 to 10—$6, and children 4 and under—free. Takeout meals available.

Wimbledon: St. Boniface Church is hosting an Autumn Festival at Wimbledon Park on Sept. 18, from 4 to 7 p.m. Meal includes turkey, roast beef, and a pie and ice cream sundae bar. Live music from 5 to 6 p.m., bazaar, farmers market, bounce house and more. Take-out orders available. Free-will donation.

Grand Forks: St. Mary’s Church will host its annual Chicken & Meatball Dinner Sept. 25 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Adults 11 and older—$15, children 5 to 10—$8, children 4 and under—free.

Fargo: St. Anthony of Padua’s Fall Bazaar will be held Sept. 25 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Bingo, raffle for cash and other prizes, games for kids, a maker’s market, baked goods, jewelry, plants, and used books. Turkey dinner served from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Adults—$12, children—$6, and a family—$40.

Velva: St. Cecilia Church will host its Annual Fall Supper Sept. 25 from 4 to 7 p.m. serving swiss steak. To-go meals for pickup or delivery available (701)338-2663. Events includes a farmers market, quilt raffle, and local business raffle tickets.

6 miles east of Dazey: St. Mary’s Church will host their fall supper Oct. 2 from 4 to 7 p.m. Enjoy a turkey supper and our famous homemade German sauerkraut. Adults—$14, ages 6 to 12—$6, and children 5 and under—free. Takeout meals available. Unique gift baskets, pumpkins, and gourds.

Argusville: St. William’s Church is hosting a Turkey Dinner Oct. 2 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at the Argusville Community Center. Bake sale, country market, and raffle. Free will offering ($13 recommended). Take-out available.

Kindred: St. Maurice’s Church will host a full turkey dinner Oct. 9 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Take-out available.

Hunter: St. Agnes Church will hold a turkey dinner Oct. 9 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Adults—$13, ages 12 and under—$8. Take out available for an additional $1.

Milnor: St. Arnold’s Church will host their Chili Drive Thru and Pie Supper Oct. 12 from 5 to 7 p.m. or until gone. Drive up and place your order for chili supper or call (701) 427-9288 after 5 p.m. to place an order for pickup.

Langdon: St. Alphonsus Church will host a fall supper on Oct. 16 from 4 to 7 pm. Take-out meals available.

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.
The school shooting that rocked Uvalde, Texas continues to affect young children and their families. As these families try to recover, a Catholic charity with a longtime link to the area has funded 30 scholarships so that students may attend the local Catholic school.

“The tuition assistance means everything to my son and our family,” said Oscar Orona, whose son survived the school shooting. “My son has gone through a lot, and still has a long road to recovery ahead. At the very least, he deserves to go to a school where he feels safe.”

Catholic Extension is supporting 30 students who were affected by the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, a city of about 15,000 in south central Texas 50 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border.

On May 24, an 18-year-old gunman entered the school and killed 19 children and two teachers. Another 14 children and a teacher were wounded. Sacred Heart Church hosted funeral Masses for 11 of the victims.

Eleven of the new students at Sacred Heart were wounded in the shooting. Their former school is less than a mile and a half away.

Joe Boland, vice president of missions at Catholic Extension, was at Sacred Heart School on Monday, the first day of school.

“For many of these children, literally the last memory of being in a school building was an experience of a mass shooting,” Boland told CNA on Tuesday.

“We’re very encouraged by the kind of loving, joyful, faithful environment that they are creating at Sacred Heart School in Uvalde and it really gives us hope that it will be a place where these children can begin the long process of healing after the atrocities that they witnessed,” Boland said.

Principal Joseph Olan of Sacred Heart School told CNA he wants the school to be a place “where all children will understand that the love for Jesus is the center of (an) academic journey.”

“My hopes for the school year is that our school culture continues to reflect a place of grace, unity, and love,” he said Aug. 17. “My overall hope is that the students, families, and community understand that school is more than just a place for teaching and learning. It is a beacon of hope for the community, one that can also educate the heart as much as the mind,” the principal said.

The Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District permanently closed Robb Elementary School and has worked to disperse students to other public schools, though in this small district only four other schools serve primary grade students.

Catholic Extension learned that many families wanted to transfer their children to the nearby Catholic school, but they faced economic barriers. About 80% of the families of Uvalde are low-income households. At least 80 families in total might seek to transfer their students to the Catholic school.

Catholic Extension is asking for donations to its scholarship fund to help meet demand.
Mary’s humble life and example are a testament to the triumph of service and love over power and success, Pope Francis said.

Before reciting the Angelus prayer on the feast of the Assumption on Aug. 15, the pope told an estimated 10,000 pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Square that the song of praise uttered by Mary while visiting her cousin Elizabeth “announces a radical change, an overturning of values.”

Mary “prophesies that it will not be power, success and money that will prevail, but service, humility and love. Looking at her, in glory, we understand that the true power is service, and that to reign means to love. And that this is the road to heaven,” he said.

In his address, the pope reflected on the Magnificat, which is not only “a hymn of praise and exultation for the great things that the Lord has accomplished in her,” but also a recounting of “the work of God in the entire history of her people.”

However, her praise of God who “brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly” may make some wonder if she was “exaggerating, describing a world that does not exist.”

“Indeed, what she says does not seem to correspond to reality; while she speaks, the powerful have not been brought down: the fearsome Herod, for example, is still firmly on his throne. And the poor and hungry remain so, while the rich continue to prosper,” he said.

Mary’s canticle, he explained, does “not intend to chronicle the time, but to tell us something much more important: that God, through her, has inaugurated a historical turning point, he has definitively established a new order of things.”

“She, small and humble, has been raised up and—we celebrate this today—brought to the glory of heaven, while the powerful of the world are destined to remain empty-handed,” the pope said.

Pope Francis said the feast of the Assumption—celebrating when Mary was assumed, body and soul, into heaven—is a reminder of the hope all Christians have to “see the destination of our journey” and an invitation by Mary “to rejoice as we think of heaven.”

Mary “is the first creature who, with her whole self, body and soul, victoriously crosses the finish line of heaven,” the pope said. “She shows us that heaven is within reach, if we, too, do not give in to sin, if we praise God in humility and serve others generously.”
“We left a cleaner trail” can be our line of hope

Like many, we sidewalk advocates thought that July 27 would be the last day abortions would be legal in North Dakota. We arrived at the Kopelman building that day with that expectation entrenched in our hearts. But toward the end of the afternoon, that optimistic outcome was shattered by the stroke of a judge’s pen.

We don’t even need to fully understand why or how this happened. Clearly, it’s not about one misguided judge’s actions, but so much more: a spiritual battle raging forward that we cannot see but can surely feel. It will jolt the most spiritually sensitive among us.

So, the dark forces stole our hopeful thunder that day. Rather than our tears turning to joy, they stained our cheeks once more, while the escorts held their victory dance sporting Hawaiian shirts and gleeful smiles. As in so many previous moments, it seemed as though good had been defeated.

“How long Lord?” we are tempted to lament, as in Psalm 13:1. “Will you forget (us) forever?”

I was standing midway between our state’s only abortion facility and the jewelry store on the opposite corner of the long block shortly before news of the hours-old ruling to thwart the ban on abortion in North Dakota, based on a “trigger” law put in place years before the recent Roe vs. Wade reversal, became known to us.

A friend had made some signs to celebrate our many years praying there and remind passersby of the beauty of life. For one of them, she’d taken a favorite Mother Teresa quote, shortened it a bit, and turned it into a creative poster using artificial flowers: “How can there be too many children? That is like saying there are too many flowers.”

She was about to leave, and had begun putting her signs away in her vehicle. “Wait, can I take a picture?” I asked. The flower sign provided the spark of hope I yearned for on a day when death lingered so near. “Sure,” she said. “In fact, how about I take a picture of you and the sign?”

We chatted a bit, reflecting on the day’s significance, pondering whether we had made a difference over the years of praying here for the women who came seeking a permanent solution to a temporary situation, and would leave emptier of soul.

My friend told me a story about a woman who’d decided to hike the Appalachian Trail, and determined that along with hiking, she would commit to picking up trash along the way.

At the end of each day, she would weigh the trash on a scale. At some point, the pounds of trash began adding up and the task began to feel daunting. The woman, focusing on the negative things, such as the inconsiderate actions of so many who tossed trash along the trail without disposing of it properly, was tempted to give up.

But then a revelation came to her as she realized how her negative thoughts were draining her energy, “zapping her of her ability to do good.” Focusing on how much more trash she would have to pick up, she saw that she’d lost sight of her vision to beautify the trail.

“So, she decided to just do what she could, and in that, she realized that she had made the trail better after all,” my friend relayed. She had left the trail cleaner, and more beautiful, for those who would come after her.

My friend likened this story to the pro-life movement, where we can easily become discouraged; feeling we have not, and cannot, make a difference. But we must remember that our presence and prayers have mattered, she said, because we have “made the trail better,” and cleaner, than when we arrived.

“We’ve planted some seeds here, too, and we’re pulling some weeds, also, as we go,” she added. “We can’t get overwhelmed by those weeds. We just have to keep doing what we’re doing, confident it’s making a difference.”

Maybe not everyone sees that difference, but God does. He also sees our hearts, and knows how things would have looked if we hadn’t shown up.

The moral of the story? Don’t stop cleaning the trail. Don’t stop pulling the weeds. It all matters in God’s beautiful economy of life.
Do you know where we are?
The answer will be revealed in the October New Earth.

Where in the diocese are we?

Last month’s photo is of St. Martin’s Church in Geneseo.