

New

June 2023 | Vol. 44 | No. 6



Earth

The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo

Letters to our loved ones

**Saints' letters an inspiration
to pick up the practice**



**From Bishop Folda:
Catholic Charities at 100**

**Catechesis of the Good
Shepherd brings Christ
to the very young**

**Stories of Faith:
Accident brings God's
providence to light**

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ON THE COVER:
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NEW EARTH

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Mission

Our mission is to inform, teach, and inspire readers about the Catholic faith and the life of parishioners in Eastern North Dakota. *New Earth* is the official monthly publication of the Diocese of Fargo.

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Most Rev. John T. Folda
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Editor

Paul Braun

Assistant editor & designer

Kristina Bloomsburg

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Contact *New Earth* staff

news@fargodiocese.org
(701) 356-7900
New Earth

5201 Bishops Blvd, Suite A
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Catholic Charities at 100

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” With these words, our Lord Jesus identifies himself with anyone in need, and he urges all of his followers to works of charity. In fact, the virtue of charity is an essential characteristic of the Church. So it stands to reason that the Church in our state over the years has dedicated itself to many works of charity and compassion toward those in need.

The Church in North Dakota celebrates an important birthday this year. The year 2023 marks the centennial of Catholic Charities North Dakota, which was founded in 1923 by Father Vincent Ryan of Fargo, who went on to become the second Bishop of Bismarck. In its early years, it was known as the Catholic Welfare Bureau, and was dedicated to assisting those in need, both materially and spiritually. Orphans, unwed mothers, and the homeless were just some of the many people who benefited from the Catholic Welfare Bureau in those days. During the years of the Depression and the Dust Bowl, many more people became destitute, and with the help of the faithful, the Catholic Welfare Bureau reached out in Christian charity to assist those who were in need of help. Later on, the Bureau was renamed Catholic Family Services, and in addition to social welfare programs, it coordinated the family and marriage formation programs in the diocese. Eventually, the agency became known as Catholic Charities North Dakota, and it now embraces the entire state, serving both in the Dioceses of Fargo and Bismarck.

Catholic Charities North Dakota serves God’s people in a variety of ways. The Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption program accompanies parents who wish to give a child the opportunity to grow up and be part of a loving family. Dedicated workers offer support to expectant mothers and accompany parents after the birth or adoption of their child. This service is especially important now that *Roe v. Wade* has been struck down and more women are approaching us for assistance during pregnancy. Several years ago, the bishops of the United States adopted an initiative called “Walking With Moms in Need,” and Catholic Charities has become an essential partner in carrying out this initiative. Catholic Charities also assists with the adoption of “special kids,” those who are in the foster care system and await a family who will welcome them. Every year, Catholic Charities promotes the sanctity of life by working to bring children and parents together to form a family.

Through its counseling program, Catholic Charities offers

therapeutic assistance to those who need help with mental and emotional health, family and vocational issues, trauma, and the ordinary challenges of everyday living. The counseling staff recognize each client as a child of God, and they bring a perspective of faith and prayer to their meetings and consultations. More and more people are dealing with mental illness in these confusing times, and the counselors at Catholic Charities offer compassion, hope, and meaning to those who come to them.

Catholic Charities also provides guardianship services to vulnerable adults and those with intellectual disabilities. In effect, a guardian is appointed by a court to help an individual who is not capable of handling the decisions and affairs of their own lives. This can include housing, medical care, financial decisions, education, and more. These brothers and sisters would be lost and even at significant risk without the help of their guardianship workers, and Catholic Charities truly embraces the least of our brethren through this program.

Jesus said to his followers, “The poor you will always have with you,” and this is true even in our affluent society. Catholic Charities offers direct charity assistance to those who face emergencies and immediate need. For example, they help with rent, utilities, food, clothing, referrals for service, and many other needs that the poor face every day. With limited resources, Catholic Charities staff can’t give limitless handouts, but does whatever is possible for the person in front of them.

Through all of these different programs, Catholic Charities North Dakota helps to build a culture of life in our state. As a Church we believe in the innate dignity of every human person, and we have a responsibility to the least among us. Catholic Charities isn’t just another social service agency. By extending a compassionate hand to those in need, Catholic Charities presents the loving face of Christ to our neighbors who are in distress or who are forgotten.

Catholic Charities North Dakota is overseen by the Bishops of Fargo and Bismarck, and governed by a board of volunteers from across the state who support the mission of caring for those in need. It is the charitable arm of the Church in our state, along with many others, and puts into action the call of our Lord to love one another, not just in word but also in deed. Of course, every one of us is called to charity and compassion towards the poor and needy, and the work of charity has been carried out in parishes and by the faithful since the beginning. But even greater things are possible when many hands and

hearts join together in common purpose. Catholic Charities has been a beacon of hope and a wonderful instrument of charity for one hundred years, and they deserve our congratulations.

I want to thank the staff, administrators, board members, volunteers, and all who support Catholic Charities North Dakota with their time, talent, and treasure. May our Lord continue to bless this great work of his Church for years to come. Happy 100th birthday!



Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

July - For a Eucharistic life

We pray that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters.

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

June 17

Perpetual Profession of Vows, Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus, Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, New Ulm, Minn.

June 20 at 3 p.m.

Diocesan Finance Council Meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo

June 20 at 5:30 p.m.

Catholic Charities 100th year Celebration, Bonanzaville, West Fargo

July 2 at 2 p.m.

Rural Life Celebration at Terry Haman Farm, Crary

July 4

Pastoral Center closed

July 7 at 7 p.m.

RedHawks Game with Knights of Columbus, Fargo

July 9 at 10:30 a.m.

Mass of closing, St. Michael Church, Wales

July 11 at 11 a.m.

Priests Council Meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo

July 11 at 5:30 p.m.

Installation Mass, St. James Basilica, Jamestown

July 13 at 2 p.m.

Mass for Camp Summit, Binford

July 14–16

Men's Retreat at Sticklestad Lodge, Fort Ransom

July 31–Aug. 3

Knights of Columbus Convention, Orlando, Fla.

Aug. 6 at 4 p.m.

Mass for Msgr. Laliberte 50th Anniversary, St. Anthony of Padua, Fargo

Aug. 7 at 11 a.m.

Putt for a Purpose, Rose Creek, Fargo



MONTHLY EUCHARIST MIRACLE

The Eucharistic Miracle of Lanciano, Italy

Republished from Ascension Press (edited for content)

In 750 AD, a priest in Lanciano, Italy experienced a terrible temptation to doubt the True Presence while he was celebrating Mass. As he pronounced the words of consecration, the host and the wine transformed into what appeared to be flesh and blood. The miraculous relics were preserved for 12 centuries.

In 1970, more than 1,200 years later, the archbishop of Lanciano, with Rome's approval, requested a thorough scientific examination of the miraculous relics by the director of the hospital at Arezzo and professor of anatomy, histology, chemistry, and clinical microscopy. The director's report, submitted on March 4, 1971, detailed the following results:

- The coagulated substance is human blood, AB blood type, with the same protein distribution as found in normal, fresh blood
- The host is human muscular striated tissue of the myocardium, left ventricle (heart); arteries, veins, branch of vagus nerve, and adipose tissue all can be identified
- Like the blood, the flesh is also fresh, living tissue, because it "responded rapidly to all the clinical reactions distinctive of living beings" as if the flesh and blood samples had been taken that day
- Histological tests revealed no sign of preservation techniques of any kind



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Full year ahead for newly ordained Deacon Seth Skjervheim

By Kristina Bloomsburg | Assistant Editor for New Earth



Newly ordained Deacon Skjervheim outside the Cathedral of St. Mary immediately following Mass. (Kristina Bloomsburg | New Earth)

On June 3, Bishop John Folda ordained Seth Skjervheim as a transitional deacon at the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo. This summer, Deacon Skjervheim will serve St. Therese the Little Flower Church in Rugby where he'll be able to preach both at daily and weekend Masses and baptize. He will complete his seminarian studies during the coming school year with the expectation of being ordained a priest next summer.

Father Kyle Metzger, Vocations Director for the Diocese of Fargo, says Deacon Skjervheim's upcoming year will be a busy one, as he completes his final steps before the priesthood.

"When he returns to seminary for his final year, he returns as a deacon. He will

also be assigned to a parish to visit on the weekends to preach and enter into parish life. At the seminary, he'll assist with daily exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, given that he is now an ordinary minister of Holy Communion. Deacon Seth will also have a series of practicum classes preparing him for priestly ministry. He'll 'practice' hearing confessions, forming his capacity to comfort and challenge a penitent in this important sacrament. He'll even 'practice' celebrating Mass. Although a seminarian has been to Mass literally thousands of times, celebrating a Mass is actually a wildly different experience. There are words to be spoken, gestures to be made, altar servers to direct, a homily to be delivered, etc. So keeping this all together calmly and prayerfully in one's mind literally takes practice."

The year prior to priestly ordination also includes planning for his first Mass as a priest, which often takes place at the seminarian's home parish the day after the ordination. For Deacon Skjervheim, that's St. Alphonsus Church in Langdon. Oftentimes extended family attend the ordination and first



Bishop John Folda lays his hands on Seth Skjervheim, bestowing the sacrament of Holy Orders. By this ritual, Bishop Folda invokes the Holy Spirit to come upon Seth to give him a sacred character and to set him apart for his diaconate ministry. (Kristina Bloomsburg | New Earth)

Mass, and afterwards, a reception. This means that Deacon Skjervheim will likely be planning a family celebration similar to a wedding reception.

"In addition to his parish ministry and his practicums and planning his first Mass, Deacon Seth also still has a full load of theological coursework to complete, often including final comprehensive exams," said Father Metzger. "So Deacon Seth will have a full year, but what helps provide the energy and motivation is knowing that the end of the time includes the sublime sacrament of his priestly ordination."

Diocesan Synod: What's next?

By Steven Splonskowski | Office of Evangelization for the Diocese of Fargo

Parish listening sessions across the Diocese of Fargo are now complete. Nearly 1,000 faithful took part in the 17 events at locations across the diocese. Also now being reviewed by committees and pastors are the parish self-reflections completed this winter by over 2,200 parishioners. As part of the ongoing synod preparations, Bishop Folda will continue to consult with the clergy of the Diocese of Fargo. What are some things that have stood out so far? What's next?

During the listening sessions the power of time spent in adoration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was a topic that always came up. Another common topic was the love for our priests and the appreciation of their availability for the sacraments. A concern was shared for those who have not yet returned to Mass after COVID-19, and for families who are not practicing or passing on their Catholic faith to their children. Lack of volunteers and help at parishes was another great concern.

The parish self-reflections offered a more personal perspective of faith journeys in our parishes. The majority of these surveys were taken by parishioners who attend Sunday Mass on a regular basis. Even with this being the case, there were a large number who indicated they did not attend confession on more than an annual basis. Additionally, in most cases, 50% of couples indicated that they pray together seldom to never. The majority of parishioners did not feel like their parish was on a mission to evangelize or had a very good connection to the greater community. An interesting paradox emerged: at the parish listening sessions, most parishes were concerned about the lack of help and volunteers. The parish self-reflection, however, reported that 25-50 percent of the respondents indicated that "they were not involved, but would like to be."

This summer, in preparation for the Synod Assembly scheduled for April 2024, each parish will elect at least one lay representative to participate in the three-day event. In October-November, after all consultations are complete, Bishop Folda will propose questions for discussion. Clergy, parish delegates, diocesan staff and other representatives appointed by Bishop Folda will study these questions in anticipation of the Synod Assembly.

Please pray for the success of the Synod. For more information, visit www.fargodiocese.org/synod.



Synod Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

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Sister Miryam Vandal pronounces Solemn Vows as a Poor Clare Nun

By Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy

On May 13, the Memorial of Our Lady of Fatima, Sister Miryam of the Holy Family (Cecelia Rose Vandal) pronounced her solemn vows as a Poor Clare Nun at the Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy in Belleville, Ill. Her proud parents, Mark and Shelia Vandal, along with her five brothers, sister-in-law and 3-month-old nephew, were all present to witness her solemn consecration as she promised to observe the Rule of St. Clare “during the whole time” of her life.

Approximately 35 other family members and invited guests from the Fargo and Crookston Dioceses joined friends and benefactors of the Poor Clare community at the Mass enfoldng the solemn profession, which was offered by Bishop Michael G. McGovern, Bishop of Belleville. Joining the Bishop at the altar were six other priests including Father Matthew Kraemer of the Diocese of Fargo, a long-time friend of the Vandal family. Three seminarians, whose families are members of the St. Joseph, Pillar of Families, Home School Group, were also in attendance.

Sister Miryam (Cecelia) had sensed the call to religious life from an early age, but intensified her discernment in high school while living in Langdon where she and her family were members of St. Alphonsus Church. Her parents and younger brothers have since relocated to Warsaw where they attend St. Stanislaus Church.



Sister Miryam with her parents, Mark and Sheila Vandal, and the rest of her immediate family following the Solemn Profession Mass. L to R: Andrew, Peter, Mark and Sheila Vandal, Sister Miryam, Joseph, John (holding his son, Matthias), Rachel (John's wife) and James.

It was during her first semester at the University of Mary, in the fall of 2013, that our Lord began to point Cecelia toward a contemplative vocation, and more specifically to the Poor Clare Colettine community in Belleville, Ill. She entered the Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy on March 25, 2014, as a postulant. The following March, she was clothed in the holy habit and received her religious name: Sister Miryam of the Holy Family. After completing a two-year novitiate, she pronounced her simple vows on May 13, 2017. Sister Miryam's spiritual formation as a Poor Clare continued through six years of temporary profession, during which time she also served her community as organist and refectorian. This period of initial formation culminated in the total gift of herself to Christ and his Church through her profession of solemn vows of obedience, poverty, chastity, and enclosure.

As a Poor Clare Nun, Sister Miryam's life is especially dedicated to the praise and worship of God. Her vocation is fulfilled through her participation in the Church's Liturgy, the seven-fold offering of the Divine Office and daily times of Eucharistic adoration. As a Bride of Christ and spiritual mother of souls, all the needs of the world are held close to her heart in prayer. Sister Miryam recalled, “My mom said that when I was young, I always had big intentions at our daily family prayers such as peace throughout the world, an end to abortion, or for all who have no one to pray for them. God gave me a missionary heart and a strong desire to be a spiritual mother of souls. I pray that my whole life may truly be ‘for the praise of His glory!’”



Sister Miryam of the Holy Family holding her bridal candle and wearing the ring and crown of thorns which are traditionally bestowed upon a Poor Clare after she pronounces solemn vows of obedience, poverty, chastity, and enclosure. (submitted photo)

Catholic Charities North Dakota appoints new executive director

By Catholic Charities North Dakota



Kari Dew (submitted photo)

Catholic Charities North Dakota has appointed Kari Dew as its new Executive Director. Kari comes to Catholic Charities with a background in social work and leadership. She has served as the Executive Director at CHI Living Communities: Riverview Place since 2017 and joined the Catholic Charities team on June 1.

Kari received her Bachelor of Social Work from Minnesota State University Moorhead in 1994, and her Master of Arts degree in Leadership from the University of Jamestown in 2017. She has over 25 years of experience in healthcare settings, including senior living, hospital, and hospice.

Kari is a native of Buffalo, ND, and is a member of Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church. She is also an active member of the Fargo/Moorhead community, volunteering with JPPI Catholic Schools and her children's many sports teams. Kari and her husband, Jim, live in Fargo with their two dogs and their three children nearby: Brookelyn (Noah), Jace, and Aubrey. They are excited to be welcoming their first grandchild this fall. In her spare time, Kari enjoys chasing her kids around the country for their sporting events, reading a good book, and taking long walks.

Kari is a valuable asset to her community and is an inspiration to those who know her. She is a kind, compassionate, and dedicated person who is always willing to help others. Kari is passionate about helping others and is excited to join the Catholic Charities team. She believes that everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive and is committed to working with Catholic Charities to provide services that meet the needs of the community.

With Kari's upcoming leadership, Catholic Charities North Dakota will continue to offer its services including Adults Adopting Special Kids, ND Post Adopt Network, Counseling Services, Guardianship Services: Vulnerable, Guardianship Division: Intellectual Disabilities, and Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services.

Guided by our values, Catholic Charities North Dakota serves people in need and advocates for the common good of all.

Catholic Charities accepting nominations for the Caritas Award

The Caritas Award is given annually to persons or organizations in recognition of outstanding service and love for humanity. The purpose of the Caritas Award is to recognize the individual or organization who has, by example and deed, served persons in need and advocated for justice and convened other persons of good will to do the same in a manner consistent with Catholic Social Teaching. If you know someone who you think demonstrates these qualities, please discuss with your priest about nominating them for the 2024 Caritas Award.

Correction

In the April issue of *New Earth* on page 11, Trinity Youth Camp was listed as Trinity Bible Camp. *New Earth* regrets the error.



Prayers for those who defended our country

Bishop John Folda celebrated Mass at Holy Cross Cemetery North in Fargo on Memorial Day, May 29. We pray for the souls of all who died in defense of our country and thank all veterans for their service. (Kristina Bloomsburg | *New Earth*)



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Early evangelization: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd brings Christ to the very young

By Paul Braun | Editor of New Earth

Most of us who have grown up in the Catholic faith have had some sort of early training in the faith as children. For some it was memorizing the Baltimore Catechism. For others it was Sunday school, summer bible camp, Wednesday night classes, and even attending Catholic school. All of these experiences teach children about their Catholic faith, instilling morals for the rest of their lives, and helping them to develop a relationship with God.

One unique program that is seeing growth in the Fargo Diocese is Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). This program builds on the already existing relationship a child as young as three years old has with God and fosters that relationship first before learning about the aspects of our Catholic faith.

CGS is an international program begun in Italy in 1954 by Sofia Cavaletti, a Catholic laywoman and theologian, and Maria Montessori educator Gianna Gobbi. Using the Montessori methods, the two women developed the program that has changed little since its inception. According to the CGS website: “CGS is a common religious experience involving children and adults in which the religious values of childhood, primarily those values of contemplation and enjoyment of God, are predominant. This experience is shared in a place particularly prepared for the religious life of children called the atrium.”

The “atrium” is at the center of any CGS experience. Typically, an atrium is designed to accommodate 10 to 12 children per session. It contains areas for contemplative study, one-on-one



A typical altar setting in an atrium. This altar and other items in the atrium at St. Anthony’s church in Fargo were hand-made by volunteers. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

and group learning sessions, and prayer time. The atrium can be compared to a retreat center for children. It’s a place for reflection and prayer, not classroom study, which sets the CGS program apart from other, more traditional catechesis programs.

CGS level one has already been introduced in the Fargo Diocese. There are atriums operating at St. Michael’s in Grand Forks, Holy Spirit in Fargo, St. Anthony of Padua in Fargo, and coming this fall, at Sts. Anne and Joachim in Fargo. The catechists for the Sts. Anne and Joachim atrium took part in a training session held the week of May 15 at St. Anthony’s, along with future CGS catechists from Little Flower Church in Rugby and the Diocese of St. Cloud.

“The CGS program is not a (typical) classroom setting where they’re being told something and receiving it,” said Brienna Dusec, who leads the CGS program at St. Anthony’s parish. “They are actually learning it for themselves. They are experiencing it for themselves, they’re hearing scripture as it is written in the Bible, and it’s also a place of silence and prayer, which they don’t always get outside of this setting. It’s one of our priorities to make this a place of quiet and prayer. That’s part of what the catechist training emphasizes.”

The program is divided into age groups: level one for 3-6 year olds, level two for 6-9 year olds, level three for 9-12 year olds, and so on. A dedicated room, the atrium, is set up to accommodate the different levels. The program typically runs from September through May, meeting once a week. The two hour sessions consist of gathering at the prayer table, discussing aspects of



Training future catechists at St. Anthony’s Church in Fargo on May 19. Trainees from as far away as St. Cloud, Minn. and Rugby attended. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

the current liturgical season, what kids saw at Mass, etc. The children are then dismissed to work with material they've been shown earlier with the help of an assistant catechist. One-on-one or small group gatherings continue in the atrium for new presentations. The children are then invited back to the prayer table to talk about a scripture verse or a phrase they may have heard at Mass. Prayer and song close out the session.

"The youngest children concentrate on 'work' in practical life like pouring, control of movement, care of the environment, then move into liturgical presentations," said Dusec. "We know through Montessori's observations and methods that this works, that silence and prayer and contemplation is what these children need. That will never change no matter what the culture is giving us."

Kate Haugrud has been leading the CGS program at St. Joseph's

in Moorhead, Minn. Her program has expanded to include level two and is in its fourth year. Haugrud says instilling a habit of quiet time serves children well into their teens and adulthood.

"Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is beautiful in that it gives them that opportunity for quiet contemplation and prayer," said Haugrud. "As adults, we need that as well, and it's hard to find that, so it's critical to instill that in the developing child. Three year olds are not very good at quiet time in the beginning of the year, but by the time the end of the sessions roll around, they are able to enter into this beautiful state of quiet contemplation, working independently with materials, and pondering the beautiful mysteries of our faith."

If your parish or school is interested in starting a CGS program, information can be found at www.cgsusa.org. An informational video can be found on YouTube at youtu.be/hfg9RfBk-fY.



Quotable
St. Irenaeus
Feast day June 28

"The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith."



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Congratulations Catholic School grads!

Submitted photos

June may be the month for weddings, but the month of May means graduations! Our Catholic schools in the diocese each held ceremonies honoring their own from the Class of 2023. Congratulations, graduates, and best of luck to all on your next adventure.



Eighth grade from St. Joseph's school in Devils Lake.



Fifth grade from Holy Spirit school in Fargo.



Eighth grade from St. John's Academy in Jamestown.



Fifth grade from Nativity school in Fargo.



Senior Class, Shanley High School in Fargo.



Fifth grade from Holy Family/St. Mary's school in Grand Forks.



Eighth grade from Little Flower school in Rugby.



Fifth grade from St. Michael's school in Grand Forks.



Sixth grade from St. John's school in Wahpeton.



Sixth grade from St. Catherine's school in Valley City.



Eighth grade from St. Alphonsus school in Langdon.



Sixth grade from St. Ann's school in Belcourt.



Fifth grade from Trinity school in West Fargo.



Eighth grade from Sacred Heart Middle School in Fargo.

(Unsplash)

Letters to our loved ones

Saints' letters an inspiration to pick up the practice

By Kristina Bloomsburg | Assistant Editor of New Earth

Year-round we're given opportunities to send letters to our loved ones whether it's for weddings, graduations, birthdays, holidays, condolences, or just to say hello. During any of these occasions, we can pause, pray for the recipient, and ask the Lord if there's anything he wishes to say to this person through you.

I'll admit the act of writing a letter is a bit daunting. It always seems to take me twice as long to write a letter as I think it will, even if I plan to write something short and sweet. Sitting down with a good pen and paper takes intentionality, thoughtfulness, and an awareness of what is going on in the recipient's life.

However, as one who has received a handful of great letters from family and friends that follow me with each move and turn in my life, I can say that the letters matter. Whenever I've reread these letters, I'm reminded of good and bad times gone by, relationships that have grown or faded, and obstacles overcome or goals yet to be realized. I've learned through letters more clearly the depth of family and friends' love and affection for me, which I can then reread any time.

Letters are a snapshot in time that can capture a beauty and perspective difficult to grasp otherwise. Letters that saints sent to their loved ones show us the depth of their love for others and their willingness to challenge those closest to them to be saints.

We don't need to be saints to express our love, concern, and memories with others. May these letters find you well and inspire you to take up a pen again.



Gianna Beretta with then-fiancé Pietro Molla in 1955. (CNS)

St. Gianna Beretta Molla

married Pietro Molla Sept. 24, 1955 in Magenta, Italy. Gianna was a pediatrician who later refused both a termination of pregnancy and hysterectomy during her pregnancy with her fourth child. Pietro was an engineer who traveled often for his work. Gianna and Pietro wrote many

letters to each other during Pietro's travels.

Letter from Gianna to Pietro Apr. 11, 1957 announcing the pregnancy for their second child.

My dearest Pietro,

How could I fail to respond to your beautiful letter? Dear Pietro, what a great comfort your love is to me!

The Lord has blessed our love once more by giving us another child—I am happy, and with the help of our Heavenly Mother, and with you close to me, you who are so good and understanding and affectionate, the sufferings of this new pregnancy no longer frighten me.

Thank you, dearest Pietro, for your prayers. The Blessed Mother will surely listen to us, and we will have another beautiful child like our little Pierluigi. What a dear little angel he is! Every day he becomes more beautiful, livelier,

and he seems to understand when we talk to him. Isn't it a consolation, Pietro? Every time I kiss him when you're away, I kiss him for you, too. Who knows how often you must think of him when you're away and wish he were near you! I'm so glad there are only four days left until you come back; I'm already looking forward to the joy of seeing you again, of embracing you, of finally seeing you with some free time to spend with your little angel. How sweet you always look when you have your little boy in your arms and you make him smile! And when he reaches out his little arms to caress you, what a beautiful picture you make! When he lisps his first words, he will be even more precious. Now he speaks with his little blue eyes, always smiling and waving his arms and legs.

And now, Pietro, I have a great favor to ask of you. Please forgive me when I am in a bad mood or sad; I try to be cheerful, but I don't always succeed. I hope it's just a result of these first months [of pregnancy]. Your great love will help me to be strong and conquer myself.

I am waiting for you, Pietro, with all my love.

I kiss you and embrace you, along with our dear little angel,

Your most affectionate

Gianna

Source: *The Journey of Our Love: The Letters of Saint Gianna Beretta and Pietro Molla*. Edited by Elio Guerriero. Pauline Books & Media. Pages 106-107. 2014.



Sts. Zèlie and Louis Martin.
(Society of the Little Flower)

St. Zèlie Martin

was born in 1831 in France. She was married to St. Louis Martin and together they had nine children though only five daughters survived childhood. All five daughters entered religious life, one of them being St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

Letter from Zèlie to her younger brother Isidore. "Isidore's heart was generous enough,

but his religion was quite superficial... His medical studies kept him in the skeptical and pleasure loving circles of Paris, which were not without their dangers for a youth of 22. On Jan. 1, 1863, Zèlie sends him the following message" (The Story of a Family, 58).

I wish you a happy New Year. I heartily wish you success in your undertakings, and I am sure you will do well if you wish. It only depends upon yourself. God protects all those who trust in Him. Not one has ever been forsaken. When I think of

what this good God, in whom I have put all my trust, and into whose hands I have resigned the care of my affairs, has done for me and for my husband, I cannot doubt that His divine providence watches over His children with especial care.

I beg of you, dear Isidore, to do as he did; pray, and you will not let yourself be carried along with the stream. If once you give in, you will be lost. It is only the first step that costs, on the way of evil as on that of good. After that, you will be borne along by the current.

If you would only consent to do one thing I am going to ask of you, and which you may well give me for a New Year's gift, I should be happier than if you sent me all Paris. Here it is: You live close to Our Lady of Victories. Very well! Go in, just once a day, to say an Ave Maria to her. You will see that she will protect you in a quite particular way, that she will make you succeed in this world and give you an eternity of happiness hereafter. What I am saying to you is not just an exaggerated and unfounded pious statement on my part. I have good reason to trust in Our Lady. I have received graces from her of which I alone know.

You know well that life is not long. We shall soon be at the end, you and I, and we shall be glad to have so lived as not to render our last hour too bitter.

Now if you are not right-minded, you will laugh at me; if you are, you will admit that I am right.

Source: *The Story of a Family: The Home of the Little Flower*. By Stéphane-Joseph Piat O.F.M. P.J. Kenedy & Sons, New York. 1946.



St. Thomas More (CNA)

St. Thomas More

was born in 1477 and was educated at Oxford, England. He married and had one son and three daughters. While Chancellor in the king's Court, he wrote works on politics, culture, and in defense of the Catholic faith. At one time one of King Henry VIII's most trusted ministers, More was beheaded on July 6, 1535 by

order of the King whom he and St. John Fisher had resisted in the matter of the King's divorce from Catherine of Arragon and remarriage to Ann Bolyn.

Letter from Thomas More to his daughter Margaret from his cell in the Tower of London where he had been imprisoned by King Henry VIII. Soon after writing this letter, Thomas was condemned to death on trumped up charges.

COVER STORY

Although I know well, Margaret, that because of my past wickedness I deserve to be abandoned by God, I cannot but trust in his merciful goodness. His grace has strengthened me until now and made me content to lose goods, land, and life as well, rather than to swear against my conscience.

God's grace has given the king a gracious frame of mind toward me, so that as yet he has taken from me nothing but my liberty. In doing this His Majesty has done me such great good with respect to spiritual profit that I trust that among all the great benefits he has heaped so abundantly upon me I count my imprisonment the very greatest. I cannot, therefore, mistrust the grace of God.

By the merits of his bitter passion joined to mine and far surpassing in merit for me all that I can suffer myself, his bounteous goodness shall release me from the pains of purgatory and shall increase my reward in heaven besides.

I will not mistrust him, Meg, though I shall feel myself weakening and on the verge of being overcome with fear. I shall remember how Saint Peter at a blast of wind began to sink because of his lack of faith, and I shall do as he did: call upon Christ and pray to him for help. And then I trust he shall place his holy hand on me and in the stormy seas hold me up from drowning.

And finally, Margaret, I know this well: that without my fault he will not let me be lost. I shall, therefore, with good hope

commit myself wholly to him. And if he permits me to perish for my faults, then I shall serve as praise for his justice. But in good faith, Meg, I trust that his tender pity shall keep my poor soul safe and make me commend his mercy.

And, therefore, my own good daughter, do not let your mind be troubled over anything that shall happen to me in this world. Nothing can come but what God wills. And I am very sure that whatever that be, however bad it may seem, it shall indeed be the best.

Source: Crossroads Initiative. Originally posted 2019.



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- Couples Retreat - Dec. 8-10, 2023
- Made for Greatness Men's Winter Retreat - Jan. 19-21, 2024
- Beloved Father - Men's Retreat - Feb. 1-3, 2024
- Couples Retreat - Feb. 9-11, 2024
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www.fargodiocese.org/bishop-retreat
jennie.korsmo@fargodiocese.org
(701) 356-7901



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TATTERED PAGES

A review of Catholic books, movies, music

Synodal wilderness

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

Wilderness is inviting and discomfiting. To hear the word “tick” is enough to scare off plenty of people or get them to roll through a national park with the windows up and AC on.

Still the trails are peopled. The desire to “get out there” inhabits a good many souls. Slowly, Synod is gaining traction in our church-vocabulary. We’ve got two going on right now—a diocesan one and a global one. It’s time to “get out there.”

We can cruise through the upcoming years observing Church landscape from a climate controlled, bug-free environment or we can join some folks around the campfires. It takes some courage. As our bishops wrote, “Synodality is an adventure and we aren’t very familiar with it” (§45, in the North American final document for the continental stage of the 2021-24 Synod).

It can be hard to talk about these synods because they’re moving targets. They’re processes. For instance, the document just quoted from representatives of the U.S. and Canada in late April gave a hopeful summary of “what has arisen from this journey so far” (§12). Next month, a review of the continental documents will yield an *instrumentum laboris*, the working document for the Synod that starts this October.

Some pass by signs for Glacier National Park and wonder what it’d be like. Others make a plan, pull in, and pitch a tent.

To these latter folks, the Lord declares, “Enlarge the space of your tent” (Isa. 54:2)—title for the document introducing the Continental Stage; good reading. It’s served its purpose, yet the spirit imbuing those paragraphs lives on. Those getting “out there” continue to breathe this spirit as it lives on in the acts of the Synod and in the way the Church will move through the coming generations. This is no passing fancy.

We’re at a threshold in the history of our Church. Tumultuous as they appear, the decades since Vatican II have opened a gate. Swinging on the hinges of Scripture and Tradition, it reveals a path forward, and its name is synodality.

Besides highlighting the importance of what’s happening in our Church, I wish to draw your attention to a strategy manifesto on how to negotiate the synodal terrain should you desire to park your car and walk these paths.

In *Braving the Wilderness*, Brené Brown responds to the challenge of what it means to stand up for yourself amidst vying factions—being authentic and refusing to be defined by the push and pull of polar extremes.

Brown is not writing for the Synod, but her approach applies marvelously. The virtues she champions are what synodal dialog calls for. For instance, one of her four pillars is called “Strong Back—Soft Front—Wild Heart,” which describes how to be tough and tender, brave yet vulnerable, rooted yet searching. Anyone who stands up in front of others to echo what the Holy Spirit is saying deserves encouragement.

Brown is a big fan of Teddy Roosevelt. One time, I referred to her book *Daring Greatly*, based on one of Roosevelt’s famous speeches, in a homily, and a young doctor came up to me afterwards and said Sanford Medical Center uses her text in their residency training program. Brown’s voice is “out there” and she’s out there for you. If you’ve ever felt awkward sharing an uncommon opinion, Brown gives you strategies for moving ahead and normalizes the fear we know all too well.

Braving the Wilderness acknowledges how alone we can feel when we stand up for our values. Brown’s stories, research, and principles apply to personal struggles at work or in the family as well as to the challenges of developing a synodal Church.

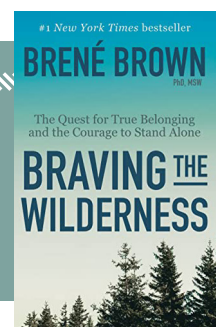
Loneliness is a greater threat to our health and lifespan than smoking or not eating our vegetables. Loneliness kills. This is why we need help in learning to stand sanely in our own thoughts and dreams. Only then can we share the best of ourselves with the Church at large or the neighbor next door. “Belonging to ourselves means being called to stand alone—to brave the wilderness of uncertainty, vulnerability, and criticism” (p. 26).

Being yourself is crippling only when you feel alone. Brené can and will bring you around to real belonging. In finding your voice, paradoxically, you end up finding others—because people really don’t want to know what team you’re on, but who you are.

This blessed wilderness—you—is worth whatever price each of us has to pay to “get out there.”

The best experience of Church is not within the confines of a sealed automobile, but on the intersecting pathways where pilgrims feel the wind, which Jesus likened to the Spirit, who promises to blow your witness to the ends of the Earth.

“Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone” by Brené Brown, 2017.





Gaze on the Lord's beauty

A look at Catholic images

The Eucharistic Miracle of Bolsena

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



The Eucharistic Miracle of Bolsena, Ugolino, 1364. (Photo by Mary Hanbury)

In the year of 1264, a great miracle occurred in the town of Bolsena, Italy. A priest was celebrating the Mass when during the consecration the host became stained with Blood and began to bleed onto the corporal linen on the altar. The priest had been filled with doubt on the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist but upon witnessing this miracle, his doubt was removed.

He carefully placed the corporal linen and chalice in the sacristy and went to the neighboring town of Orvieto to inform the pope, who was staying there at the time. The pope sent the bishop of Orvieto to Bolsena to investigate and retrieve the holy items.

The image shown is when the bishop crossed over the bridge as he headed back into the town of Orvieto, shown on the right. He is showing the stained Corporal along with the chalice and is presenting it to the pope who, with the clergy, dignitaries and a large crowd of citizens came out to see this great miracle. The crowd is all bunched together toward the front of the line to see the miracle and the children running around give it the feel of a festive gathering. One child is holding a branch, to remind us of a tradition of waving palm branches in processions, like on

Palm Sunday. The holy items were given to the pope who then processed with them back to Orvieto to be eventually housed in a chapel inside the Cathedral.

This fresco completed in 1364 by Ugolino comes from that chapel which tells the story. We do not know if there actually was a procession to greet the holy items, but the point is not about the actual event but of showing the faithful this grand display of pomp and procession for the great miracle that occurred. The fresco was meant to teach the viewer how to participate in the life of the church through Eucharistic processions. It was a year later that Pope Urban IV instituted the Solemnity of Corpus Christi and Eucharistic processions became the norm on Corpus Christi ever since.

The chapel that Ugolino painted not only depicts this miracle but other Eucharistic miracles as well, giving the sense that God is generous in showing us His power and presence, especially in the Eucharist, so everyone would come to believe. The faithful could only see the relic of the corporal on display for certain feast days, which is still the case today, so it was helpful to have images that showed what it looked like and the story of the miracle behind it.



Accident brings God's providence to light

By Tom Smith | Father of five daughters, parishioner of St. Anthony of Padua, Fargo

Nothing could have prepared us for that afternoon on Apr. 27, 1998. The day began as any other Monday. I kissed my wife Jenny and our four girls goodbye as I headed to work. Jenny drove our older three girls to school, after which she would return home with our youngest daughter, Christy, who was just a month and a half away from her fourth birthday.

Jenny and I had been married for 14 years and lived a few blocks from our parish, St. Anthony of Padua in Fargo. We loved St. Anthony's and had made many friends there over the years. Though Jenny and I did our best to educate our girls in the faith, sending them to the local Catholic school and giving them a loving family life, our spiritual life, and marriage as a whole, left a lot to be desired. We were "cradle Catholics," going through the motions, but we lacked an intimate relationship with God, and we were starting to drift apart.

At 1:30 p.m., the phone rang above my workbench at the local Ford dealer where I worked as a mechanic. It was my neighbor Bettie who said, "Tom, one of your girls is hurt and you need to come home." That was all the detail she gave me. Our neighbors, Bettie and Bud, were like family to us and the best neighbors we could ask for. As I put my tools away, thinking I may be gone for a few hours, Marilyn, who worked in the cashier's office, ran up to me and said, "Tom, you need to go home now!" Little did I know that the situation I was about to encounter was being broadcast on the radio.

As I got closer to our home, my heart pounded and I began feverishly praying to God to help whomever of my daughters was hurt. In our driveway and on the street were several police cars, an ambulance, a fire truck, a TV news crew, and lots of people looking around our yard. I ran into the house calling out my wife Jenny's name, but no one answered. I ran up to Bud and pleaded with him for an answer. As tears streamed down my face, he informed me that our little girl, Christy, had been accidentally shot by another neighbor, who was a security guard, as he was handling his .40 caliber pistol.

When I got to the hospital, I was escorted into the emergency room waiting area. There I met Jenny and our other three girls, a priest, and our parish nurse from St. Anthony's. We hugged, cried, and prayed in earnest for what seemed like hours. Suddenly a doctor entered and then we saw the huge smile on his face as he exclaimed, "I think your daughter is going to be okay.

It was very close, an inch closer and that bullet would have gone right through her heart and instantly killed her." We were able to see Christy about 30 minutes later as she was wheeled into the ICU. Miraculously, we brought her home just five days later, though she would need frequent visits to the hospital to monitor her healing.

Much physical and spiritual healing took place in our family in the weeks, months, and years to follow. We were overwhelmed by hundreds of prayers, gifts, meals, and well-wishes, not only from St. Anthony parishioners, but the Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo community and beyond. God blessed our family with a true miracle through the prayers and faith of so many around us! Jenny and I knew it was time for a change in our lives, a time to welcome God into our daily lives in an intimate way.

Many things came to light later about that day that simply cannot be coincidence. When the accident happened to Christy:

- Bettie and Bud were less than 100 feet away, ready to help.
- The ambulance was only two blocks from our house.
- The first emergency doctor to stabilize Christy was a parishioner of St. Anthony's.
- The two best cardio-thoracic doctors in the region operated on Christy.
- One of the first responders was a parishioner of St. Anthony's.
- Christy was on hundreds of prayer chains across the country.

I don't believe God wills accidents like this to happen, but when they do, he always provides us with the graces, the people, and everything we need to get us through. Christy will be 29 years old this year and has a wonderful husband, Kevin, and two children, Edith and Blaise. Though it has been 25 years since her accident, we still celebrate every year on Apr. 27 in thanksgiving to God for healing our family.



Christy and her family.
(submitted photo)

Holding the line on brain death



MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK, Ph.D

Director of Education at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia

How do we determine that someone has died? The Uniform Determination of Death Act (UDDA), which has been an important part of the medical and legal landscape in the U.S. for more than 40 years, states:

“An individual who has sustained either irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions or irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brainstem, is dead. A determination of death must be made in accordance with accepted medical standards.”

The UDDA, originally drafted in 1981 by a special Presidential Commission, was designed to serve as a legal standard and a uniform framework for determining that someone has died, as well as to provide a clear legal foundation for declaring someone dead by means of “neurological criteria,” also known as “brain death.”

Since that time, the UDDA has served as an important benchmark for the medical profession, and a point of reference for legislative standards adopted throughout the United States, with all 50 states relying on language borrowed from the UDDA in their legal definitions of death.

Clearly defining and ascertaining when someone has died is important for a number of reasons: grieving can begin; burial arrangements can be made; and organ procurement can take place if the person had indicated a desire to become a donor. Most importantly, establishing that someone has not yet passed on helps us provide appropriate care and medical treatments until the time of death.

Recently, a group of physicians, ethicists, and lawyers recommended revising the wording of the UDDA. Their proposal adjusts the definition of brain death from whole-brain death to less-than-whole-brain death.

Whenever brain death assessments are done today, physicians carry out a series of bedside clinical tests. They check whether the patient can gasp or initiate a breath when taken off the ventilator (known as an “apnea test”). Any attempt at taking a breath would indicate that the person’s brainstem is still functioning, and that he or she is still alive. Physicians also check for other reflexes and responses mediated by the brain: Do pupils of the eye respond to light? Is there any reaction to, or withdrawal from painful stimuli? Is there any gag reflex when an object is placed in the back of the throat? If such reflexes

are present, the individual is still alive.

For somebody to be deceased, then, there needs to be evidence of a catastrophic neurological event that has caused their brain to become irreversibly non-functional. One type of brain function that is not routinely assessed by doctors when carrying out brain death testing involves the hypothalamus. This important region of the brain coordinates with the pituitary gland to enable the secretion of hormones and small molecules that regulate the function of the kidneys and other organs, and helps control salt and water balance in the body. Sometimes a person can pass all the tests for being brain dead, but still have hypothalamic function.

If a patient has continuing hypothalamic function in this way, it seems clear that he or she does not manifest “irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain” as delineated in the UDDA.

Regrettably, some are now proposing that a person in this situation should still be considered brain dead, and they are seeking to revise the wording of the UDDA to reflect this, substantially lowering the standard for a declaration of brain death. They declare, without compelling support, that the persistence of neurosecretory function by the hypothalamus is consistent with brain death.

In cases of genuine brain death, when all functions of the entire brain have ceased, the bodies of these individuals can typically continue to function on a ventilator only for a matter of hours or perhaps a few days before their various subsystems, like blood pressure, electrolytes, and fluid balance become erratic and dysregulated, leading to cardiac arrest.

Meanwhile, some brain-injured individuals who have retained hypothalamic functioning have survived for months or years on a ventilator after losing both their brain-mediated reflexes and their ability to breathe. Even though these patients suffer an extremely severe central nervous system injury, they are clearly still alive.

Even to be “slightly alive” is still to be alive. If the language of the UDDA ends up being changed to allow for a declaration of brain death even with continued hypothalamic functioning, individuals who are not-quite-dead will be treated as if they were already dead.

Rather than revising the language of the UDDA and seeking to lower the standards for declaring brain death, the battery of routine reflex and apnea tests used for ascertaining brain death needs be expanded to include tests that can verify the loss of hypothalamic function.

Such improvements in testing will help ensure that people are not declared deceased prematurely. It will also help strengthen public confidence in the life-saving work of organ transplantation.

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July 17-21: Conference

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SEMINARIAN LIFE

TIMOTHY KRAEMER

Theology II at Mount St. Mary Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md.

I finished my last final and raced the clock to pack up my room at seminary—I needed to be leaving. I had to make it from Emmitsburg, Md. to Belleville, Ill. quickly! A childhood friend was having a big day. This May, I attended Sister Miryam of the Holy Family's final profession of vows at the Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy.

When I got there, it was clear I did not belong. No, not in a bad way! Rather, in the way that if I stayed too long, I would be interrupting the sisters in their life of contemplative prayer. But I was meant to be there briefly. What I saw was clear—Sister Miryam does belong there! Throughout the final vows ceremony, I saw joy and more joy that exclaimed a clear and holy peace. Sister Miryam was ready for her vows. It was clear that this way of life was her way of life—this was God's calling.

What is interesting is that even though Sister Miryam's life is contemplative and cloistered, she is not isolated. No one is. I have even met hermits before (as a child, I would have thought that was impossible). They too, are in community.

My vocation (and yours) exists in community. When I first started discernment, it was my discernment. At least, that is what I thought when I started. In seminary, though, I've seen that it is *our* discernment. Who is all included in that "our?" Well, of course God, the one who calls us, who writes our vocation into our very being so that we discover it as we grow close to him. But while that is crucial, there is more than just "me and Jesus."

At seminary, we often hear how we discern with the Church. Becoming a priest is not my decision alone. True, I did make a decision, but it is also the decision of the Church, the Body of Christ. In my discernment, there are important things I do: pray with our Lord, conversations with my formator and my spiritual director, and visits with Bishop Folda and Father Metzger. But that's not all. The whole Church's discernment is important. You are important to my discernment.

How?

At least in three ways. The first is prayer. Please pray for your seminarians. We need it. I only semi-jokingly say that my

grandma's prayers are the reason why I am in seminary. Oh, and do not worry, your prayers are not competing with Sister Miryam's. Remember the Body of Christ? Not all parts are the same (such a body would not even function). The point of community is that each does their part.

Another way is fellowship. We need to spend time with each other. When we seminarians come home for the summer between years of seminary formation, we're sent out on little summer missions. Often, they are assignments to spend time with you in parishes throughout the diocese. Through this time, we discover how to serve and what our future life will look like. That is good discernment! We need you to share your community with us.

Finally, the third way is your financial support. You often most directly help us through God's Gift Appeal and Knights of Columbus. There is no possible way we could pay for seminary on our own, but through your help we're able to dive deep into the treasures of the Church and discover Christ deeply, that we might return and offer the goodness of God more deeply to you. I do have to say, when the studies are hard and I want to quit for the day, I remember that you're counting on me and that through your support I am gifted with being in seminary. So, I sit right back down in my chair and keep going.

When I was able to say "hello" to Sister Miryam after her final vows, I found there was not much to say (one finds in such moments that small talk disappears). But I did have one request: would she pray for me? Except I knew she already was. So, instead I thanked her for her prayers.

I have one request for you, would you support us? Except I know that you already are. Thank you.

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2023 North Dakota Legislative Assembly conclusion



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 2023 regular session of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly concluded on April 30. Legislators considered 932 bills and 56 resolutions. The North Dakota Catholic Conference followed around 108 of them. About 25 of those bills became priorities for the conference.

How did the legislature and the Governor do when it came to issues of concern to the Catholic Church? By most standards, it was a successful session.

Let us start with the bad news. For the first time in the state's history, both legislative chambers passed a true school choice bill. House Bill 1532 was a modest start, but a start nevertheless. Governor Burgum, however, vetoed the bill, claiming that it did not go far enough. We hope the Governor will work with all parties to create a bill for the next session that he will sign.

In December of last year, the state's bishops proposed a package of legislation to help pregnant women and children. They called it *Responding with Love*. The legislature passed—and the Governor signed—every proposal. The new laws include:

- An adoption tax credit
- A tax credit for contributions to a maternity home, child placing agency, or pregnancy help center
- A sales tax exemption for child diapers
- Reimbursements to adoption agencies for the costs of conducting home study reports
- Expanding worker protections for pregnant women
- Creation of a state website of resources for pregnant women and new mothers
- A significant expansion of the Alternatives to Abortion program
- Expanding Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) coverage for pregnant to all stages of pregnancy
- Eliminating the “family cap” in TANF that denied assistance for a child conceived while the mother was receiving assistance for an older sibling
- Medicaid coverage for pregnant women for 12 months after birth

- Expanding Medicaid coverage for pregnant women who are legal immigrants
- Raising the Medicaid eligibility level for pregnant women

The enactment of these laws represents a significant commitment to building a sanctuary for life in North Dakota. Hopefully, more pro-woman, pro-family, and pro-life policies and practices will follow in our communities and businesses.

The legislature revised and strengthened the state's prohibitions on abortion. Unless a court intervenes before you read this, unborn children are protected from abortion in North Dakota in almost every circumstance. North Dakota is practically abortion-free. The legislature also made it a crime to force a woman to have an abortion.

North Dakotans now have greater protection for religious freedom with the passage of House Bill 1136. The law gives religious freedom the highest level of protection without interfering with legitimate government interests. In a separate bill, the North Dakota Catholic Conference successfully ensured that the final remains of indigent persons can be disposed of in a manner consistent with their religious beliefs.

Based on media reports, people might think that the legislature spent all its time on bills relating to gender issues. There were, in fact, multiple bills on gender issues, and some of them addressed the same topics. The claims that the bills consumed too many of the session's days, however, are exaggerated.

The North Dakota Catholic Conference supported only some of the bills. As in the past, it supported legislation to protect fairness in sports for K-12 schools by requiring sex-designated teams to be based on biological sex. It also supported protecting minors from “gender transitioning” medical interventions.

When it came to the other issues concerning gender, the bishops had two basic principles going into the session. First, protect the rights of public employees. Second, protect the rights of parents with children in public schools. These protections were included in Senate Bill 2231, which the Governor vetoed. The legislature, however, rewrote the protections and included them in House Bill 1522, which the Governor signed.

Almost immediately, columnists, gender ideologists, and even a school superintendent misrepresented House Bill 1522. Here are the facts. Regarding public school teachers, the bill only prevents them from being forced by the school to use a preferred gender pronoun. Concerning parents, the bill prohibits the school from withholding or concealing a student's transgender status from parents. It does not force the school to reveal the student's transgender status. Moreover, if any other law, such as a federal law or a law protecting the student's safety applies, the provisions of House Bill 1522 do not apply.

Opponents of the law claim that children with gender identity issues are more likely to suffer from depression, engage in self-harm, and attempt suicide. Assuming that is true, why should a school be allowed to intentionally hide those risk factors from the student's parents?

Contrary to popular claims, the gender-related bills supported by the conference were not motivated by hate. The opposite is

true. The conference supported these bills to protect children, protect parents, and secure the basic free speech rights of public employees.

The North Dakota Catholic Conference engaged in many other bills. All the written testimony given by the conference is on ndcatholic.org. Video of non-written testimony is on the website of the legislature at video.ndlegis.gov.

Four reasons to advance a bequest



STEWARDSHIP

STEVE SCHONS

Director of stewardship and development
for the Diocese of Fargo

Pastors and parish leaders are always encouraged when they find out that their parish has been named in a will or other estate transfer documents. Even to know that a person intends to include their parish can be very uplifting.

Whether your will includes your parish or not, there are some advantages of moving your bequest forward and giving all or part of it now. In particular, it may be worthwhile to consider some of the current benefits of a Charitable Gift Annuity, which remains a popular method of giving.

1. Increase your income now.

One of the more important benefits of a gift annuity is the attractive rates we are able to offer, especially for our older donors. For example, an 80-year-old person qualifies for an annuity rate of 6.8% percent. Thus, establishing a \$25,000 would provide \$1,700 every year for the duration of life. A 90-year-old annuitant would fare even better with a rate of 9% percent. While a person may be able to obtain a higher rate with a commercial annuity, it's important to remember that we're talking here about money that has already been "earmarked" for a Catholic parish or other ministry as a bequest.

2. Reduce your taxes now.

The IRS provides a charitable income tax deduction for gifts made to parishes during life. For itemizers, this deduction may be used to reduce income taxes. And fewer taxes means more money for you to spend... or give.

Since a portion of a Charitable Gift Annuity qualifies for a charitable income tax deduction, making that gift now with assets you already plan to give later, may be a tax-wise idea worth considering.

3. Stabilize your retirement now.

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4. Enjoy your giving now.

When a person establishes a gift annuity, they experience the satisfaction of completing a gift now by actually transferring assets to benefit your parish or other ministry. Why miss out on the "joy of giving?" Give while you live.

Of course, everyone's situation is unique. I would encourage anyone considering a Charitable Gift Annuity to consult their own financial and/or tax professional.

If you would like a free Charitable Gift Annuity illustration or more information, email me at steve.schons@fargodiocese.org, or mail a request to: Steve Schons, Catholic Development Foundation, 5201 Bishops Blvd, Fargo, ND 58104.

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LIFE'S MILESTONES



Rich and Phyllis Hagel, parishioners at Sts. Anne and Joachim in Fargo, celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 16. They were married at St. Joseph's in Devils Lake. They have 2 children and 5 grandchildren.



Edward and Patricia Shorma, parishioners of St. John's in Wahpeton, celebrated their 70th anniversary on June 3. They have 8 children 32 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren. They were married at St. John's.



Deb and Don Lorsung, parishioners of Sts. Anne and Joachim in Fargo, celebrated their 40th anniversary June 18. They were married at St. Mary's Church in Winnebago, Minn. They have 3 sons, 1 daughter, and 10 grandchildren.



Ben and Betty Axtman, parishioners of St. Therese Little Flower Church in Rugby, will celebrate their 65th anniversary on June 30. They are blessed with 6 children, 11 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren.



Michael and Susan Waldoch, parishioners of St. Cecilia's in Harvey, celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 15. They have been blessed with 3 married sons, 5 beautiful granddaughters, 2 step-children, and 1 step-great-grandson.



Betty Keegan Kathman, parishioner of St. Michael's in Grand Forks, celebrated her 85th birthday June 13. She married Lyle Keegan in 1960 and they had 4 children. Lyle died in 1974. She married Leonard Kathman in 1991. He had 5 children. Together they have 18 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.



Franklin "Treacy" Gibbens, parishioner of the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo, celebrated his 100th birthday June 12. Treacy served in three major European campaigns during WWII. He and his late wife Jean have 7 children, 16 grandchildren, and 29 great-grandchildren.



Lillian Meyer, parishioner of Nativity Church in Fargo, will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 25. Lillian and her late husband, John, were blessed with 7 children, 9 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren. Lillian and John were charter members of Nativity.



Sr. Jean Louise Schafer celebrated 40 years of Religious Life June 10. She pronounced vows Jan. 1, 1983. She served in Catholic Schools: St. John's, Wahpeton; Little Flower, Rugby, and St. Joseph's, Devils Lake. She's worked with youth in ND and MN through diocesan events and has served as the community's vocation director since 1988.



Sr. Ann Marie celebrated 50 years of Religious Life June 10. She entered St. Francis Convent and professed vows Aug. 10, 1973. She was elected to three terms as Provincial Superior in Hankinson and elected to two terms as General Superior of the worldwide congregation.

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 July/Aug issue is July 11, and the deadline for the Sept. issue is Aug. 16.

A glimpse of the past

These news items, compiled by Kristina Bloomsburg, were found in *New Earth* and its predecessor, *Catholic Action News*.

75 years ago — 1948

Bishop Dworschak blessed and dedicated the new church at Berwick, June 23. This brick structure replaces the old church, which was destroyed by fire on Ash Wednesday 1946. Immediately following the dedication, the pastor, Rev. Maurus Engel, was celebrant at a solemn high Mass. After the Mass, the Most Rev. Bishop conferred the sacrament of Confirmation on 53 members of the parish. The parish was honored by the presence of eleven other members of the clergy. The ladies of the parish served dinner in the new church parlors to approximately 500 people.

50 years ago — 1973

On June 30, 1973, the community of Horace, North Dakota, celebrated its centennial observance. A special field Mass was held at Horace at which Bishop Justin A. Driscoll was celebrant and homilist. The Presentation Sisters, Valley City, and choir members of St. Benedict's Church, Wild Rice, led the congregational singing and offered varied selections of Gregorian and

popular hymns. Father Albert A. Schmirler was in charge of the festivities. The ceremonies were attended by many dignitaries, guests and the people of the community.

20 years ago — 2003

Bishop Samuel Aquila ordained seven men to the permanent diaconate at St. Mary's Cathedral in May. Deacons ordained were: Tom Geffre, Jim Eggl, Arlen Blessum, Ed Didier, Stu Longtin, Emery Mears and Jerome Wisnewski.

10 years ago — 2013

With joy and prayers of thanksgiving, the people of the Diocese of Fargo welcomed Bishop John Thomas Folda as the eighth Bishop of Fargo June 19. His Mass of ordination and installation was celebrated by Archbishop John Nienstedt of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Archbishop Samuel Aquila, former Bishop of Fargo, and Bishop James Conley of Lincoln, Neb., Bishop Folda's home diocese, were the con-consecrators.



Events

Mothers and daughters invited to Mother-Daughter Days in Hankinson

The Franciscan Sisters of Dillingen invite you to their 2023 Mother-Daughter Days at St. Francis Convent in Hankinson July 20–22. Come spend time listening to Jesus, getting to know the Franciscan Sisters, praying with the Sisters, and meeting others pursuing a closer relationship with Jesus. Contact Sr. Jean Louise at ndfranciscan@yahoo.com for more information or to register.

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.

This is My Body

One-day retreat	Sept. 9 2023	St. Francis Retreat Center, Hankinson	Cost \$20
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This retreat will focus on St. John Paul II's teaching on the human person known as Theology of the Body (TOB) and its connection to the Eucharist. The day will include Mass, time for personal prayer, an introduction to JPPI's TOB, applying TOB to gender, marriage, procreation and euthanasia, as well as music, breakfast, lunch, and more. Facilitated by Tim Mosser, Respect Life Director of the Fargo Diocese.



www.fargodiocese.org/tob-retreat
tim.mosser@fargodiocese.org
 (701) 356-7910



Father Scott Sautner, pastor of churches in Lisbon and Gwinner, passes away



Father Scott Sautner, 49, Lisbon, passed away June 5 at Sanford Health, Fargo from a massive stroke.

Father Scott was born Feb. 27, 1974 in Harvey to Harlin and Marlys (Smith) Sautner. He grew up in Harvey before moving to Fargo to attend and graduate from Cardinal Muench Seminary. He then attended Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis and graduated with a degree in Theology in 2000. He was ordained a priest in May 2000 at the Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo followed by his first call in Jamestown for two years. He was then assigned to Lakota, followed by Hankinson, and lastly, Lisbon and Gwinner.

He was very much into cooking, that includes eating what he cooked, and enjoyed playing all types of music. He was both a talented pianist and organist and enjoyed camping and traveling.

He is survived by his siblings; Doug (Rhoda) Sautner, Bismarck; Darrel Sautner, Lisbon; Diane (Rick) Degenstein, Gwinner; Thomas Sautner, Mooreton; James Sautner, Forman; Julie (Roger) Rademacher, Harvey; Ann (Curt) Tracy, Minot; and Sandy (Paul) Brewer, Oakes; many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews and his fellow priests.

He was preceded in death by his parents, siblings, Debra, Dennis, Pat, and Donald Sautner and nephew, Erick Degenstein.

The funeral Mass was held June 9 at the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo. Burial was held June 13 at Holy Cross Cemetery in Velva.

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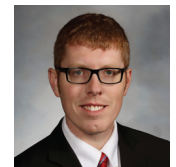
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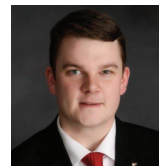
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Devils Lake
701-662-4420
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wayne.cherney@kofc.org



Jamison Fettig
Napoleon
701-325-0712
jamison.fettig@kofc.org



Joel Herman, FICF
Wahpeton, Jamestown
701-219-5847
joel.herman@kofc.org



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sgpmollahome@outlook.com
www.sgpmhome.org
(701) 248-3077

Catechist Retreats

Women's Retreat	Aug. 25 or 26 2023	Maryvale, Valley City	Cost \$25
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Come away for a day where Fr. Andrew Jasinski will direct a retreat with a series of talks reflecting on the Eucharistic saints. These retreats are primarily for those involved in catechesis, however, all are welcome.

The day begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m.



Register by Aug. 18
www.fargodiocese.org/catechistretreat
mary.hanbury@fargodiocese.org
(701) 356-7909



MADE FOR GREATNESS

Men's Retreat	Jan. 19-21 2024	Maryvale Retreat Center, Valley City	Cost \$250
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This retreat will be focused on being a leader in your family and will feature a renowned Catholic speaker. More details to come.

The retreat will feature profound spiritual insights Mass, confession, prayer and reflection, and time for growing as brothers in Christ.

July 14-16 event is filled.



Registration opens July 5
www.fargodiocese.org/mfg-retreat
brad.gray@fargodiocese.org
(701) 356-7903



“National Celebrate Life Day” rally in Washington, DC, announced for anniversary of *Roe* reversal

By Peter Pinedo | Catholic News Agency

Leading pro-life organizations will hold a “National Celebrate Life Day” rally and gala in Washington, D.C., on June 24, the first anniversary of the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*.

Students for Life of America (SFLA) announced the event in an April press release. The rally will be held on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall from 10:30 a.m. to noon and will be co-hosted by SFLA, 40 Days for Life, Live Action, and Pro-Life Partners Foundation.

SFLA President Kristan Hawkins said in the release that the first anniversary of the *Dobbs v. Jackson* Supreme Court decision marks “both the celebration of a battle won and a moment to rally the troops for our new opportunities.”

“We are no longer hampered by the 1973 *Roe* decision in light of the 2022 *Dobbs* ruling,” Hawkins said. “With *Roe* gone, we can reaffirm the obvious: Our nation was built on the hope of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all of us, including those not yet born.”

Tina Whittington, SFLA’s executive vice president, told CNA that the rally will be “laying out a vision of where to go next in the pro-life movement: achieving national protection for preborn Americans under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.”

“We are fighting for protections for life in law at the state and federal level,” Whittington said, adding that “as long as Planned Parenthood is funded through our federal government and pro-abortionists fight for life-ending bills in Congress, there’s a fight to be had in Washington.”

Whittington pointed out that although the 14th Amendment guarantees that no state can deprive any person of life, liberty, or equal protection under the law, abortion denies those rights to unborn children across America.

According to Whittington, thousands are planning to attend the event, which is expected to have a joyful, celebratory atmosphere marking the first full year since the decision that ended *Roe v. Wade*.

“Our celebration is a reflection of a momentous day in history,” Whittington said. “We celebrate the fact that half of all states prevent abortions after 12 weeks one year after *Roe*’s reversal, but we’re just getting started and far more can be done at the federal level to protect innocent lives from the violence of abortion.”

Shawn Carney, president of 40 Days for Life, told CNA that because the 2022 *Dobbs* decision occurred on the feast of the Sacred Heart, the event will hold a special significance for Catholics.

“This event is the epitome of how Catholics in America can make history if we trust God, go to work at the grassroots, and unapologetically share the Church’s beautiful teachings on the dignity of the human person,” Carney said.

Carney added that many Catholics have been especially motivated “to charter buses to D.C. to celebrate this ruling in the midst of so much current bigotry toward Catholics we have seen from the media, corporations, and even our DOJ.”

According to Carney the rally “is not a reflection on the past” but rather “a future resolve to end abortion in our nation now that *Roe* has fallen.”

“Pro-life Americans don’t want to see this historic day pass without celebrating what many thought they would never live to see,” Carney said. “This event is a positive celebration of the *Dobbs* decision and a firm resolution to end abortion across America.”

The rally will feature some of the country’s leading Catholic pro-life voices as speakers, including Live Action President Lila Rose, Daily Wire podcaster Michael Knowles, SFLA president Hawkins, and others. A ticketed National Celebrate Life Day gala will also be held in conjunction with the rally on the evening of June 24 at the Renaissance Washington, D.C.



The scene outside the U.S. Supreme Court after the court released its decision in the *Dobbs* abortion case on June 24, 2022. (Katie Yoder | CNA)

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-ST. POPE JOHN PAUL II



Thousands gather in Times Square for eucharistic procession in New York City

By Francesca Pollio Fenton | Catholic News Agency

In what many are calling the largest eucharistic procession ever held in New York City, thousands of people took to the streets reciting prayers and singing songs of praise on the vigil of Pentecost, May 27.

The NYPD estimated more than 4,000 people took to the streets and processed through Times Square. Led by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Espallat of the Archdiocese of New York, the procession brought together priests, nuns, and laity to pray for the forgiveness of sins in the iconic city and the world.

The theme of the procession was “*¡Esta ciudad pertenece a Jesucristo!*”—“This city belongs to Jesus Christ!”

The procession was organized by the Hispanic Catholic Charismatic Center located in the Bronx, which is part of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church. Participants started at Father Duffy Square in Times Square and after two hours, the procession ended at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, where Mass was celebrated.

With a bullhorn in hand, Espallat shared intense words to the faithful, saying: “In the middle of New York is the cross of Jesus Christ!”

“And this is why we rejoice today. We rejoice because this is Pentecost weekend. And we know what happened on Pentecost, right? There was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” he said.

“And we would not be standing here if it were not for the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen?”

“So my sisters and my brothers in Christ, we rejoice today for the blessings that God has in store for this great city. I love this city! I love New York! And that’s why I’m here, because I want to pray for our city. Amen?”

He exclaimed in Spanish: “*¡Esta es mi ciudad! ¡Esta es nuestra ciudad! ¡Esta ciudad es de Jesucristo!*” which translates to “This is my city! This is our city! This city is Jesus Christ’s!”

Photojournalist Jeffrey Bruno, who happened to be in the city for another assignment and stumbled upon the procession thanks to an Instagram post, said: “I have never seen anything like that before, especially in New York.”

One particularly moving moment Bruno captured was the crowded street, lined by the skyscrapers of Times Square, filled with the faithful kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament as it was being lifted high into the air.

Father Shane Johnson, administrator of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church and director of the Hispanic Catholic Charismatic Center, told CNA: “To me, the number of people was secondary to the amount of real authentic faith that was so evident in those who were present. It was astonishing.”

“These moments of kneeling on the asphalt in the middle of a city street with our arms raised to God remind us of who we are as his children and how this city really does belong entirely to him,” he added.

Johnson explained that while many view New York City as hostile toward Catholic events, such as protests held during pro-life walks in the city, the vast majority of people are respectful.

“There is far more faith than might appear at first glance,” he shared. “When the majority is silent and a tiny minority is very loud, we get the impression that faith is moribund, but I’m convinced that our Lord’s victory in the hearts of his children is, almost all of the time, far greater than we realize.”

“Most people like to see expressions of faith, even when they don’t understand them fully, and even in a city that’s often considered more famous for its sinners than for its many saints.”

The eucharistic procession was organized as part of the Church’s National Eucharistic Revival. Another procession took place on the feast of Corpus Christi June 11.



Thousands of people gathered in Times Square for a eucharistic procession in New York City on May 27. (Jeffrey Bruno | CNA)



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ROXANE B. SALONEN

Mother of five, writer for *The Forum* and *CatholicMom.com*, speaker and radio host for *Real Presence Radio*

He would show up on the sidewalk of the abortion facility at seemingly random times, but I always appreciated when Bill Johnson appeared there.

Selfishly, I missed his wife, Roberta, who passed away from cancer in Nov. 2010, and seeing him connected me back to this dear soul who'd been such a beautiful example of motherhood to me.

Her death especially haunted me, mainly because it came too soon, as death often does. Additionally, there were still Johnson children at home to raise, and it seemed unfair that someone so thoroughly a mother would be called away at such a crucial point in her family's lives.

Bill stepped up to the plate with little complaint. While I didn't know him as well as his beloved, I sensed a spiritual strength in him that gave me the confidence he'd manage the new mission.

When his youngest daughter, Julia, was selected to give the student talk at the 2015 March for Life—the year Shanley High School was asked to carry the lead banner—I could feel her mother's prayers buoying her up, and her father's, too.

While I cannot make a fair account of how well Bill did in fathering solo in the end, the day after his unexpected death on May 2, Julia wrote a Facebook post honoring her dad, offering some pointed evidence.

Now a mother herself, Julia thanked her father for being her first love, "responding to my heart with such empathy and gentleness as I grew into a woman," and showing her that "a man should be gentle, sacrificial, a strong hold, and a faith leader in his family."

"By modeling these virtues, I have found the best husband and am raising my own little ladies to look for the same," she said. "Thank you for being the husband who loved his wife beyond compare; you loved mom through cancer and death, and you raised five children with her intercession."

She mentioned his dedication in helping those with addiction and substance abuse issues, and "making all of those who go

unseen and unwanted feel like the most precious individuals in the room," and "for always calling me your most beautiful lady, and showering me with positivity and joy."

Nodding to his example as a grandfather of 11, Julia said, "You truly are a river to your family," noting that he led her to Christ constantly by example.

The photo she placed in the post shows Bill at her wedding, kneeling in a pew, alone, his head bowed. I picture Roberta beside him. Both were pro-life warriors, through their volunteer work, parenting, and every facet of their lives.

It's often said in such a time that we should be careful not to canonize anyone; that is the Church's work. But those blessed to have known the Johnsons would likely agree that, through their sacrificial love, we've been given a fine example of what it is to seek after Christ.

As Father Vincent Miller said at Bill's funeral at St. Joseph's in Moorhead, Minn., he would often show up in the most unusual of places, "wearing shorts and long socks," or in his children's voicemail, with messages like, "Hello, it's me. I'm your dad."

Bill once shared with him about his and Roberta's relationship, and how none of her friends at the Catholic Worker House in San Antonio, where they met, wanted her to marry him. "I was older, I was a rambling spirit, and they didn't see fatherhood in me," he'd shared.

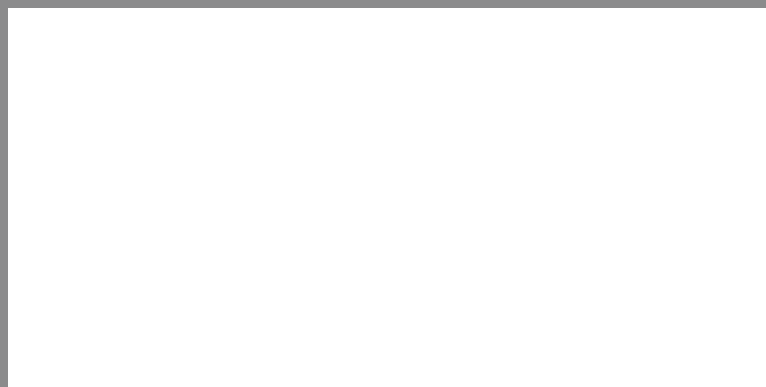
Though law school and time as a Jesuit missionary didn't suit him, either, Bill finally realized, "You have to listen to God and find out where he's calling you to." He did, and it seems God was calling Bill to ask Roberta to marry him, despite what her friends thought.

"And when you do that," Father Miller said, "and God combines the right two people, he takes the best of each and makes children and grandchildren. And then you teach the simple lessons," as did Bill. Lessons like: "Leave something behind." "Be willing to go through life empty-handed." "Love the ones you are with, all the time." And, finally, "Point to something ahead of us. If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall live with him."

Perhaps Roberta's Texas friends didn't quite see what God did, but it seems in hindsight that Bill not only became a fitting mate to her, but an exceptional one, and a consummate father. Thanks, Bill, for showing up on the sidewalk to encourage us. We already miss you, and know your children do, too. May you now feel the warm embrace of our heavenly Father.

NEW EARTH

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5201 Bishops Blvd, Ste. A
Fargo, ND 58104



*Do you know
where we are?*

The answer will be revealed
in the July/August *New Earth*.



Where in the diocese are we?

Last month's photo is from St.
Edward's Church in Nekoma.