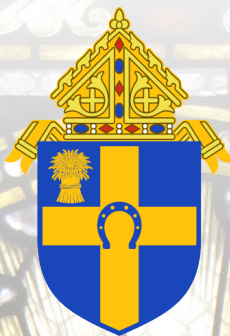


New Earth

February 2024 | Vol. 45 | No. 2



The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo



"By his wounds you have been healed"

New ministry provides healing
for adult children of divorce

4 From Bishop Folda:
Faith and grace of Lent

12 New construction, renovations
taking place at several parishes

25 Seminarian Life: You don't
have to pay rent to live
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FARGO



NATIONAL
Eucharistic
Revival

ON THE COVER:

Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Cathopic)

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NEW EARTH

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Mission

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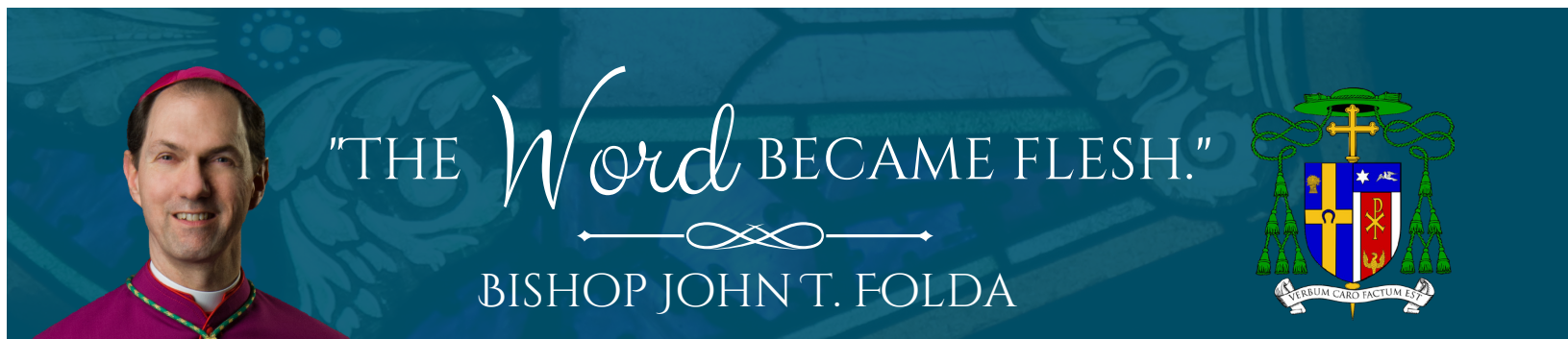
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Faith and the grace of Lent

A recent national study indicates that somewhere around 80% of residents of the United States believe in God. That's clearly a substantial majority, but it's also the lowest percentage measured since this question was first asked by pollsters. The number of people who believe in God has steadily declined for decades, and that's a cause for concern. For one out of five Americans to assert that there is no God has an unmistakable impact on our national culture and on the future of this country. Of course, statistics don't tell the whole story, but we're all affected when faith grows faint.

There are some who are professed atheists, who try to offer an argument from science or the problem of evil to prove that there is no God. "Look at the size of the universe. How could there be a God who made all that?" "Look how much evil there is in the world. How could a good God allow evil to exist?" (There are very good answers to these questions, by the way.) Much more common is the practice of atheism by those who live and act *as if* there were no God. There are many who live as if the human soul were not immortal. And finally, by extension, many live and act as if there will be no ultimate accountability at the end of our earthly lives, no final judgment, no heaven or hell. Not surprisingly, when faith in God is absent, there is little regard for what is sacred, for what is true and what is good.

Even among Christians, one can find a kind of "practical atheism," that is, a way of life that carries on as if there were no God. It's easy to live everyday lives while keeping God at a distance and paying little heed to his commandments. We might pay lip service to faith, but it has little effect on the choices and decisions we make from day to day. That kind of faith doesn't have roots and withers when the going gets tough.

On Feb. 14, Ash Wednesday, we begin the holy season of Lent. This season of grace is a time for all of us to deepen our communion with God through prayer, to do penance for our sins, and to live more charitably, especially toward those in

great need. But underneath it all is the call to deeper faith, more fervent faith, a truly personal faith in the God who loves us. Lent is a time to challenge our status quo, our comfortable way of doing things, and to put our faith more completely in Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us so that we might live eternally. Lent is an opportunity to respond to God's grace in our lives, the grace that is a sharing in his divine life. It is a time to renew our faith commitment to the One who created us, who redeemed us, and who walks with us even now on our journey.

This season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving is also a summons to live out our faith in a lively way, to be a leaven in the world that has lost its way. As people of faith, we are called by our Lord to witness our faith in him before those who don't believe, who have no knowledge of God and no awareness of his presence in their lives. By living our faith joyfully and fervently, we manifest the reality of God in our lives and the joy of being followers of Jesus. We show our fidelity and our adherence to the truths that God has revealed to us, truths about ourselves, our life here on earth, and the eternal destiny that awaits us. By living our faith openly, we give witness to what is right and wrong, as opposed to the relativism of our times that says there are no absolute truths.

We often address Jesus as "Lord," and so he is, the Lord of heaven and earth. Now is the time to really be convinced of this, and to live in such a way that shows we believe it. In other words, using the words of St. Paul from the Ash Wednesday Mass, "now is the acceptable time" to really make Jesus the Lord of everything that matters to us: our time, our work, our study, our leisure, our relationships, our love lives, our entertainment—everything. In contrast to the culture of unbelief that surrounds us, Jesus is calling us to put our faith in God, to believe more fully and live more fully in relationship with him.

We often make certain resolutions for Lent, resolutions of prayer, fasting, and good works, and that's good. Allow me

"We often address Jesus as "Lord," and so he is, the Lord of heaven and earth. Now is the time to really be convinced of this, and to live in such a way that shows we believe it."

-Bishop John T. Folda

to recommend two resolutions for Lent that will help us to come to deeper faith. First, I suggest time with Christ himself in the Eucharist. Attending Mass every Sunday and even during the week, and spending time with him in quiet prayer is a sure and certain way to open our minds and hearts to the grace of faith that Jesus offers us. And secondly, make an effort to learn more about the faith that has been handed on to us. Read a few verses of one of the Gospels each day and give yourself time to really absorb the Word of God. Read a few paragraphs of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or any other authoritative resource on the truths of our faith. There is a wealth of material available to us in print and on the internet. Take advantage of it!

May this beautiful season of Lent enliven our faith in God and help us to be living witnesses of that faith in the world. As Paul tells us, "Now is the acceptable time."

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

O Jesus, eternal Priest, keep your priests within the shelter of Your Sacred Heart, where none may touch them. Keep unstained their anointed hands, which daily touch Your Sacred Body. Keep unsullied their lips, daily purpled with your Precious Blood. Keep pure and un-earthly their hearts, sealed with the sublime mark of the priesthood. Let Your holy love surround them and shield them from the world's contagion.



Bless their labors with abundant fruit and may the souls to whom they minister be their joy and consolation here and in heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown. Amen.
(By St. Therese of Lisieux)

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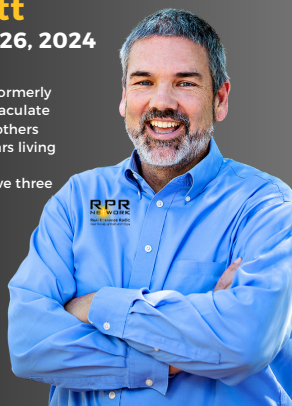
Cy Kellett

**Monday, February 26, 2024
Fargo, ND**

Cy Kellett is the host of "Catholic Answers Live". He formerly hosted "The Bright Side" with Cy Kellett on the Immaculate Heart Radio network. Cy also taught at Xavier Brothers High School outside of Boston and spent several years living in Boston's Catholic Worker house working with the homeless mentally ill. Kellett and his wife, Missy, have three children.

For more information, to host a table of 10, or to sponsor this event, email Lori Kalgard at lori@realpresenceradio.com or call 701-795-0122

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February - For the terminally ill

We pray that those with a terminal illness, and their families, receive the necessary physical and spiritual care and accompaniment.

BISHOP FOLDA'S CALENDAR

Feb. 5-7

National Catholic Bioethics Conference, Dallas, Texas

Feb. 14 at 12:10 p.m.

Mass for Ash Wednesday, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Feb. 18 at 3 p.m.

Rite of Election, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Feb. 20 at 5:30 p.m.

Operation Andrew Dinner, Bishop's Residence, Fargo

Feb. 22-23

St. JP II Schools Alumni Events, Mesa, Ariz.

Feb. 25

Vianney Discernment Weekend, Maryvale

Feb. 27 at 5:30 p.m.

Real Presence Radio Banquet, Delta by Marriott, Fargo

Feb. 28 at 3 p.m.

St. JP II Schools Board of Directors, Pastoral Center, Fargo

Feb. 29 at 2 p.m.

Diocesan Pastoral Council, Pastoral Center, Fargo

Mar. 1-4

St. JP II Schools Alumni Events, Fort Myers, Fla.

Mar. 8

Diocesan Pastoral Center Lenten Retreat, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

Mar. 9 at 10 a.m.

Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Joseph, Devils Lake

Mar. 12-13

Catholic Charities Retreat and Board Meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo



MONTHLY EUCHARIST MIRACLE

Eucharistic Miracle of Tixtla still under investigation

By EWTN Great Britain (edited for content)

On Oct. 21, 2006, St. Martin of Tours parish in the Chilpancingo-Chilapa Diocese of Mexico held a retreat. Two priests and a nun were distributing Communion during Mass when the nun suddenly turned, with tears in her eyes, to face the priest next to her. The Host that she was holding had begun to ooze a reddish substance.

Bishop Alejo Zavala Castro immediately came to see the Host and then convened a theological commission to study the event. In 2009, he contacted Castañon to conduct scientific research. That research was conducted between 2009 and 2012. Conclusions were presented in 2013.

The reddish substance was found to be blood with hemoglobin and DNA of human origin. Two studies were conducted by prominent forensic experts using different methods. Both showed that the blood originated from the interior of the Host,

excluding the hypothesis that someone could have placed blood in the Host from the outside.

The blood type was AB, the same blood type that was found in the Host of Lanciano and on the Holy Shroud of Turin. Microscopic analysis showed that the exterior part of the blood had been coagulated since October 2006. The interior layer of the blood was found to be fresh.

Intact white blood cells, red blood cells, and macrophages were found. The tissue was found to be heart muscle, called myocardium. At the time of testing, DNA remnants were found, but not enough to produce amplified DNA.

On Oct. 12, 2013, the bishop declared that what happened in Tixtla was a Eucharistic miracle. It has not yet been approved by Rome.

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I found this in my grandma's house. What is it?



ASK A PRIEST

FATHER ERIC SEITZ

Liturgy/Priest Secretary to the Bishop

You can find one of these in the house of every pious Catholic of a certain generation. Sometimes it's a box. More commonly it is a crucifix, with a sliding top that reveals candles and a prayer book on the inside. Often the crucifix is hanging on the wall.

What are these for?

These are sick call kits. The idea is that, when someone falls sick at home, you call the priest to bring the last rites. While the priest is on his way, you light the candles and begin to pray with the sick folk. When the priest arrives, the family is ready for the priest to begin Confession, Anointing of the Sick, Communion, the Apostolic Pardon, and the Commendation of the Dying. Since these are liturgies of the Church, it is most fitting to have a crucifix present and candles lit.

Sounds great, doesn't it? But I've never seen one of these used before.

In my role as Director of Liturgy, I handle used liturgical goods of various qualities. Often times, these sick call kits come to my office. They frequently are of high quality, and people naturally do not want to throw them away.

Unfortunately, I do not have the space to store all of these fine kits.

So I propose a different solution: why don't we put these kits to their proper usage?

Much of our world has become professionalized and outsourced. You can find professionals to plan your wedding, educate your children, repair your house, plan your vacation, support your emotional needs, and settle your estate. In centuries past, all of these things would be taken care of primarily by families and communities.

Nothing has been more professionalized than healthcare. And most of us would say that's a good thing. We have a quality of medical care and patient outcomes that far exceeds anything the world has ever seen. But end of life care should not be entirely professionalized. Dying and death are very personal things, which affect not only you but your loved ones and your community. Planning your death should not be treated the same way as planning your vacation.



A sick call kit. (submitted photo)

By bringing a priest and the Church's whole liturgical tradition into the time of dying and death, you can ensure a more personal touch to the end of you or your loved one's life. And using a sick call kit is a way to do just that. Bringing out the sick call kit when the priest is on his way powerfully invites God into the life of the sick and dying, bringing comfort and the opportunity to repent and be reconciled with God.

I think it would even be worthwhile to bring these sick call kits to the hospital. Large hospitals, especially, are unfamiliar, efficient, and impersonal. A crucifix and some candles will bring a little taste of Church to the hospital room. (The hospital staff might object to lighting the candles. Listen to them, oxygen tanks and open flames don't play nice together.)

There are a few more points on ministry to the dying that are worth covering. First, you should call the priest for the sick as soon as possible. Even if the sick person is not likely to die right away, the priest can give them the sacrament of anointing, and follow up as the disease progresses. Anointing of the Sick can be given before surgery as well.

Second, note that the last rites is in the plural. It is more than one thing. The complete last rites are Confession, Anointing of the Sick, Communion, the Apostolic Pardon, and the Commendation of the Dying. If someone is intubated or unconscious, they are not able to confess their sins or receive communion. We certainly trust that God's mercy will be made available to the sick person, but ideally, the whole package will be received.

These sick call kits are a part of our Catholic tradition. They welcome God into a tender and intimate part of our lives. And I, for one, would delight to see one in use when I arrive.

St. John Vianney's pastoral plan for Eucharistic Revival

By Father Roger Landry Blogs | National Catholic Register, Catholic chaplain at Columbia University, a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., and National Eucharistic Preacher.

As Catholics in the United States enter more deeply into the three-year Eucharistic Revival, there are many lessons and much hope to be gained by successful Eucharistic renewals that have taken place in Church history. One of the most important was led by the patron saint of parish priests, St. John Vianney, in his parish of Ars, France, in the 19th century.

When St. John Vianney arrived at St. Sixtus Church in 1818, most of the 230 residents of the village assembled the next Sunday to learn the identity of their new shepherd. Few presented themselves, however, for Holy Communion at Mass—and the following week, few presented themselves at Mass at all. As spring came, songs of praise for God on the Lord's Day were regularly routed by the cacophony of anvils, carts and workers in the field, and morning revelry in the taverns.

The lack of love for God, and almost total lack of awareness of the gift of God in the Holy Eucharist, flummoxed Father Vianney. As a young boy during the bloodiest years of the French Revolution, he used to travel furtively with his parents in the middle of the night to isolated barns for clandestine Masses with hunted priests as volunteer sentinels kept vigil. The penalty for getting caught—for clergy, hosts and attendees alike—was the guillotine. Nevertheless, the Vianney family, the heroic fugitive clergy and the faithful all deemed attending Mass, worshipping the Son of God-made-man in the Eucharist, and receiving him important enough to die for. That those in Ars, after the atrocities of the Terror had passed, would not use their freedom to give God thanks and praise on the Lord's Day, was a faith crisis St. John Vianney could not duck.

His pastoral strategy to get his people to return to their Eucharistic Lord is a model of practical wisdom that can guide the Church today. It involved four essential steps.

The first was to help his people recover a sense of importance of sanctifying the Lord's Day. From the earliest days of the Church, Sunday has been treated as a "little Easter," and if people don't recognize the importance of celebrating Easter or prioritize other activities over it, they do not really grasp the basics of the Christian faith. The Curé of Ars, both in the pulpit with those who came to Mass and in walks throughout the village for those who didn't, would stress the importance of Sunday as a divine gift to help us become who we're supposed to be.

"The Sabbath was made for man," Father Vianney said, repeating Jesus' words. "Man is not only a work horse, but is also a spirit created in the image of God! He has not only material needs and basic appetites

but needs of the soul and appetites of the heart. He lives not only by bread, but by prayer, faith, adoration, and love." He didn't hesitate to use fire and brimstone when necessary or to go out before Mass to find people in the fields. One farmer tried to hide himself behind one of his carts. Father Vianney reminded him, "My friend, you seem very much surprised to find me here, but the good God sees you at all times!"

Eventually, his persevering efforts worked, and the majority of the villagers returned to Sunday Mass. That allowed the real work of forming them to live Eucharistic lives to begin.

The second step was to teach them what the Mass really is. "Attending Mass is the greatest action we can do," he repeated, until they grasped the profound truth of those words. "All the good works taken together do not equal the sacrifice of the Mass, because they are the works of men and the Holy Mass is the work of God. The martyr is nothing in comparison, because martyrdom is the sacrifice that man makes to God of his life; the Mass is the sacrifice that God makes for man of his Body and Blood."

He helped them to recognize that in the sacrifice of the Mass, we participate in Christ's sacrifice from the Upper Room and Calvary that made salvation possible, and that in the consecration, bread and wine are totally changed into Jesus Christ, really, truly and substantially present under sacramental appearances, who gives that Body and Blood for us. "The tongue of the priest, and a piece of bread, makes God!" he said. "That's more than creating the world!"

Once he had restored a sense of holy awe at what happens in the Mass, he was able to pass to a third stage: to help them grow in practical appreciation of the Lord's real presence in the Eucharist. "He is there!" Father Vianney would often preach



Canvas depicting the Curé of Ars exhibited in the chapel of Providence in Ars (photo: Benoît Prieur | Wikimedia Commons)

amid tears, reminding his people that God himself was among them on the altar and in the tabernacle. "If we had one favor to ask of Our Lord, we would never have thought... to ask God for his own Son... to have his son die for us, to give us his body to eat, his blood to drink. But what man couldn't say or conceive, what he never would have dared desire, God in his love has said, conceived and acted on."

By his own reverence in the celebration of the Mass and his own example of prayer before the tabernacle, he helped them to see that Jesus in the Eucharist "awaits us night and day," "waiting for us to go to him to say our needs and to receive him," accommodating "himself to our weakness: if he appeared in glory before us, we would never have dared approach." He urged them to make time for prayerful adoration of the Lord's wondrous self-gift, visiting him like we would a beloved friend.

The last step was to help them make frequent holy Communion. His 31 years of famous 12- to 18-hour days spent hearing confessions was all to help his parishioners—and those coming from all over France—to be able to receive Jesus with clean souls. At the time in France, people seldom received. He tried to help his people prepare inwardly to receive Jesus worthily not just every Sunday, but as frequently as possible.

He described the power of Jesus in the Eucharist to make

them holy. "Next to this sacrament, we are like someone who dies of thirst next to a river, just needing to bend down the head to drink, or like a poor man next to a treasure chest, when all that is needed is to stretch out the hand."

The Eucharist, he stressed, is the Living Water welling to eternal life and the world's greatest treasure. He told his people that if they communicated more often and with greater love, "they would be saints." He passed on to them his own astonishment over what happens in Holy Communion: "God gives himself to you! He makes himself one with you!" saying that if they really understood their happiness, they "would not be able to live" but "would die of love." And so he urged his people, "Come to Communion, come to Jesus, come to live off him, in order to live for him!"

After years of patient work and prayer for the conversion of his people, St. John Vianney eventually rejoiced that every day the 7am Mass was packed with Catholics receiving the Lord as the source, summit, root, center and treasure of their life. Pilgrims to Ars soon began to be amazed not just with Ars' saintly Curé but with Ars' holy Catholics.

The simple, straightforward paradigm for Eucharistic revitalization of the patron saint of parish priest—whose feast day the Church celebrates on Aug. 4—has no expiration date.



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Fasting and Abstinence: Lent begins Feb. 14

By Catholic News Agency

Lent is the time before Easter during which the faithful abstain and fast in remembrance of the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made on Calvary. It is a 40-day time of preparation before Easter, the memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus. There are two main ways that Catholics focus on growing closer to God during the Lenten season: abstinence and fasting.

Abstinence is the act of “doing without” or avoiding something. For example, someone may abstain from chocolate or alcohol by not consuming them. Particular days of abstinence during Lent are Fridays, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. As canon law states, Catholics over the age of 14 are expected to abstain from the eating of meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays throughout the Lenten Season (Canon 1250 -1253).

During Lent, Catholics are also encouraged to undertake some sort of personal penance or abstinence. Examples include giving up sweets, a favorite TV show or not listening to the radio in the car on the way to work. Giving up these things isn't some sort of endurance test, but these acts are done to draw the faithful closer to Christ.

For example, a person may give up his favorite TV show, but if he turns the television to another show, the Lenten penance really does not mean as much. Instead, the person should consider devoting the spare time to prayer or his family.

When considering acts of penance that are stricter than the norm, it is important to speak with a priest or spiritual director. Any act of penance that would seriously hinder one's health or the health of others would be contrary to the will of God.

Fasting is the act of doing with less. In the Catholic Church, those ages 18–59 must fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (Canon 97). On such days, those fasting may eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals, sufficient to maintain strength. However, together, the smaller meals should not equal a full

meal.

Eating between meals is not encouraged, but liquids are allowed.

It is important to understand that the Church excuses certain people from these obligations. Examples include those who are frail, pregnant or manual laborers. The Church understands that certain people are not able to commit to the Lenten fast.

The time of Lent, through fasting and abstaining, may be an important reminder of what it means to suffer. This small suffering should not be met with misery but with great joy as we better understand the incredible sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for humanity.



(Catholic)

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A Retreat Experience for Women

Beloved Daughter Retreat: Feb. 15–17

Beloved Sister Retreat: May 2–4

Beloved Spouse Retreat: Aug. 8–10

Beloved Mother Retreat: Oct. 3–5

All Women are welcome. The natural relationships of daughter, sister, spouse, and mother will be used as a springboard towards maturing in a life of grace. Opportunities for personal reflection, praise and thanksgiving, Eucharist, and Reconciliation will be given. A basic introduction to the working of the Holy Spirit is part of the Retreat Experience.

Attend one retreat or all of them. Each Retreat, emphasizes one particular natural relationship, but is presented in the context of the whole. This is an opportunity to grow in self-knowledge and intimacy with the life of grace.

Registration is \$50. Cost: \$200–\$250.
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Begins with lunch on Thursday at noon
Ends with lunch on Saturday at noon

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Register at www.Maryvalend.org
Contact Amanda.Kunze@Maryvalend.org



Fr Lefor is a priest of the Diocese of Fargo.

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The ever-changing face of the diocese

New construction, renovations taking place at several parishes

By Paul Braun | Editor of New Earth

Readers of *New Earth* who live or pass through the West Fargo area have undoubtedly seen the major construction project at Holy Cross Church just south of Interstate 94 and the Veterans Boulevard intersection. The new, 1,000 seat church currently under construction is one of several projects, as of January, either just completed or underway across the diocese.

With over 200 churches, rectories and schools in the Fargo Diocese, one can imagine the daunting task of keeping the buildings and grounds in good repair. That job is the responsi-

bility of each local pastor and the Diocese of Fargo Properties Manager, Earl Wilhelm. With the input of the diocesan building committee, the properties manager works with each local pastor, determining the needs of parishes and schools and prioritizing those needs into actual projects.

In December 2023, *New Earth* highlighted the opening and dedication of the new chapel at the St. Paul Newman Center near the North Dakota State University campus. Other projects include minor updates to existing facilities and several large-scale projects.

Holy Cross new church building – West Fargo

As previously mentioned, Holy Cross Catholic Parish is building a new church as well as expanding its office space to better serve the over 1,900 families that call Holy Cross their home. Ground was broken in May 2022 on the \$26.5 million church. The new parish offices are now open and occupied by parish staff, the frame of the new structure is complete, and the top half of the 138-foot bell tower was lifted into place in January. During the winter, construction crews will be working on the interior details. Exterior brickwork will continue in the spring. Depending on weather and other factors, parishioners hope to be in their new church in December 2024.



Work continues during winter on the interior of the new Holy Cross worship space. (Paul Braun | New Earth)



The top half of the 138-foot bell tower was lifted into place on Jan. 10. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

Sts. Peter and Paul new social hall – Mantador

Parishioners at the small parish in Mantador are very excited about their new social hall. Small by other standards around the diocese, the new hall is a major improvement over what the faithful had before. Larger social events were held off-site at a local establishment. Smaller social gatherings and church bathroom facilities were in the old rectory house



The new social hall in Mantador was designed to blend in aesthetically with the existing Sts. Peter and Paul church. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

next door. That house came down in 2022 to make room for a new 1,800 square foot social hall, complete with handicapped access to the church, new public restrooms, a new kitchen, and more seating capacity at a cost of about \$600,000. The hall was completed in January 2023.



A new kitchen, increased seating capacity, modern restrooms, and wheelchair access to the church are some of the features of the new hall. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

St. Benedict's social hall/worship space and parish offices – Horace

When plans for the Fargo Flood Diversion were being devised, it was clear that the project would affect the existing St. Benedict's church, offices, and education center south of Horace. That and the projected growth of the Horace area over the next decade prompted the parish and diocese to purchase land in Horace for a new church. The \$10 million Phase 1 project is nearly complete. A new social hall,

which will accommodate just under 400 people and double as a temporary worship space, is set to open at the end of March. New parish offices will also be ready for staff to occupy at that time. Altar furnishings from the current St. Benedict's church will be moved to the social hall for Mass. Phase 2 of the St. Benedict's project will include a new church building and possibly a new school.



Work will soon wrap up on the new St. Benedict social hall, located just south of the new Horace High School. (Paul Braun | New Earth)



Final Additions are being put in place in anticipation of the opening of the St. Benedict social hall in late March. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

St. Charles church and rectory renovation – Oakes

Parishioners at St. Charles in Oakes realized the church and rectory needed improvements and upgrades to allow for more efficient office space, improved living and sleeping quarters in the rectory, a more comfortable gathering area for families of a deceased loved one before funerals, and larger,

more efficient restrooms. The improvement project began in 2021 and was completed May 2023 at a cost of \$1.5 million. In addition to the previously-mentioned improvements, a new east entryway was created with an adjoining office for the parish secretary to be able to monitor who comes into the office.



The parish rectory was remodeled for comfort and with a better layout for smaller gatherings and entertaining. (Paul Braun | New Earth)



A gathering space to provide for smaller events and privacy for grieving families before funeral Masses was a major part of the project, along with larger, more modern restrooms. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

Seven Dolores Indian Mission – Fort Totten

For decades, Seven Dolores Indian Mission has suffered from neglect to the point where the roof on the church and rectory leaked, causing cracks in the ceiling and walls. The water damage became so severe that a portion of the plaster ceiling has come down over where the presider sits in the sanctuary during Mass. Enough money was collected and raised to allow for the installation of a metal roof to replace the old wood shingles that had deteriorated. Also, an under-

ground tunnel that connected the rectory to the church that had started to give way was closed and filled in. Funds are currently being raised to place new drywall in the church to repair the cracks and holes in the plaster. This past summer, pews, altar furnishings, and a side altar were donated to Seven Dolores by the parishioners of the recently closed St. Bernard's Church in Oriska, adding a more sacred feel to the church.



A more efficient metal roof was installed on the church and rectory at Seven Dolores Indian Mission. (Paul Braun | New Earth)



The beautiful altar pieces, side altar and pews, courtesy of the parishioners of St. Bernard's Church in Oriska, now grace the worship space at Seven Dolores Indian Mission. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

Cathedral of St. Mary interior renovations – Fargo

Anyone who has attended Mass at the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo recently has undoubtedly noticed large sheets of plastic covering a massive structure of scaffolding along the north wall. This is the beginning of a multi-phase project to repair and improve the interior of the Cathedral. Phase 1 includes new drywall placed on walls and ceilings. The walls will be repainted and redecorated, new woodwork for the baseboards and chair rails will be installed, new flooring will be placed under the pews, and new artwork

will be applied to the ceilings. Phase 2 will be the same work done on the south side of the Cathedral, with another two to three phases to come. Expected completion of the \$2.25 million project is Fall 2024, but construction factors and unknown structural issues could come into play when dealing with a 125 year-old building.



The large sheets of plastic coverings in the Cathedral of St. Mary are hard to miss. (Paul Braun | New Earth)



Behind the plastic sheets is a massive scaffolding structure rising to the ceiling. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

Holy Spirit School emergency renovations – Fargo

At the end of the 2021–2022 school year, staff at Holy Spirit School in Fargo noticed the brick on walls starting to crack and push inwards. Inspectors determined the walls were failing and the building was unsafe for occupation. Corridor walls in the original building, built in the 1950s, were stripped out and rebuilt. Corridor floors were removed and replaced, which also allowed for the necessary upgrade of wastewater lines. In addition, a federal program assisted with

the installation of the schools' new green energy geo-thermal heating and cooling system. New sheetrock and flooring was installed along with new LED lighting. During the renovations, students spent the 2022–2023 school year at the Cathedral of St. Mary's Wanzek Center, formally St. Mary's School. Students and teachers moved back into their newly renovated and safer school building in August 2023.



One of the newly renovated corridors at Holy Spirit School in Fargo (Paul Braun | New Earth)



Some classrooms also received a new facelift during the Holy Spirit School renovation. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

Diocesan schools celebrate Christmas with pageants and song

It's a Christmas tradition that students and their families in our Catholic schools across the diocese look forward to each year. After practicing throughout the fall, December

brought the joyous season of Christmas to life. Here are some examples of how some of our Catholic schools helped put their audiences into the Christmas spirit through pageants and song.



St. Alphonsus School,
Langdon. (submitted photo)



Shanley High School choir
concert at Sts. Ann and
Joachim Church in Fargo.
(submitted photo)



Holy Family/St. Mary's
school, Grand Forks.
(Paul Braun | New Earth)



St. Ann's School, Belcourt. (submitted photo)



Trinity Elementary School, West Fargo. (submitted photo)



St. Joseph School and St. Mary Academy, Devils Lake.
(submitted photo)



Holy Spirit School, Fargo. (submitted photo)



Holy Cross Church, West Fargo. (submitted photo)



Little Flower School, Rugby. (submitted photo)



St. John's Academy, Jamestown. (submitted photo)

"By his wounds you have been healed"

New ministry provides healing
for adult children of divorce

By Kristina Bloomsburg | Assistant Editor of New Earth

Every single year, over a million children in the U.S. experience the divorce of their parents, and one-quarter of all young adults in the U.S. are children of divorce.

Recently, the name of an upcoming diocesan retreat at Maryvale Retreat Center near Valley City caught my attention. It was the Life-Giving Wounds retreat. It was such an interesting name that I immediately needed to ask a coworker what it was.

Life-Giving Wounds is a ministry for adult children of divorce or separation. While this may sound like a niche group of people, the numbers say otherwise. We are living in an unprecedented time of familial brokenness, and there is an urgent need today for healing and addressing these wounds.

Founders of the ministry, Dr. Daniel and Bethany Meola, recently published the book *Life-Giving Wounds: A Catholic Guide to Healing for Adult Children of Divorce or Separation*. In it, they state this statistic, "Every single year, over a million children in the United States experience the divorce of their parents, and one-quarter of all young adults in the U.S. are children of divorce. Add to that the growing number of people whose parents never married but later separated, and we reach a startling statistic: 'less than half of the children in the United States today will grow up in a household with continuously married parents.' And that doesn't account for the burgeoning phenomenon of 'gray divorce,' when parents call it quits after their children are grown" (p. 21).

Dr. Daniel and Bethany Meola met at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Washington, D.C. They've been married 12 years and live in Bowie, Maryland with their two daughters. Dan is an adult child of divorce, and through many twists and turns, the Holy Spirit put it on his and Bethany's hearts to found an outreach to others like Dan looking for support, guidance, and healing from the heart of our faith for the family wounds like the ones he experienced.



"The name 'Life-Giving Wounds' was inspired in part by 1 Peter 2:24, 'By his wounds you have been healed,'" said Bethany. "Our ministry draws much inspiration from the Christian teaching of redemptive suffering, which tells us that God can transform any suffering or wound into something life-giving for ourselves and others. We encourage those we serve to allow Christ into the most wounded parts of their hearts, trusting that he can bring his peace and healing there, and show us how our suffering is not meaningless."

Despite the many adult children of divorce in the United States, until Life-Giving Wounds began, there was no Catholic ministry provided specifically for them. While individual situations vary widely, many adult children of divorce experience a "wound of silence," where they've been told (explicitly or implicitly) that their pain doesn't "count" or shouldn't be voiced for various reasons.

"Many have heard much 'divorce happy talk' in their lives," said Bethany, "spinning their parents' split positively—you get

two Christmases!’ etc. The wound of silence, not having someone who can truly receive their grief and authentic emotions about their family’s breakdown, paralyzes the healing process and makes it harder to accept and grieve how devastating the split of your parents is.”

Many adult children of divorced parents can also struggle with anxiety and fear about relationships, dramatically altering their vision of love, marriage, and family. Many did not see their parents’ live married love until “death do us part” but rather “for now.” This can create a false image of what a healthy marriage can be.

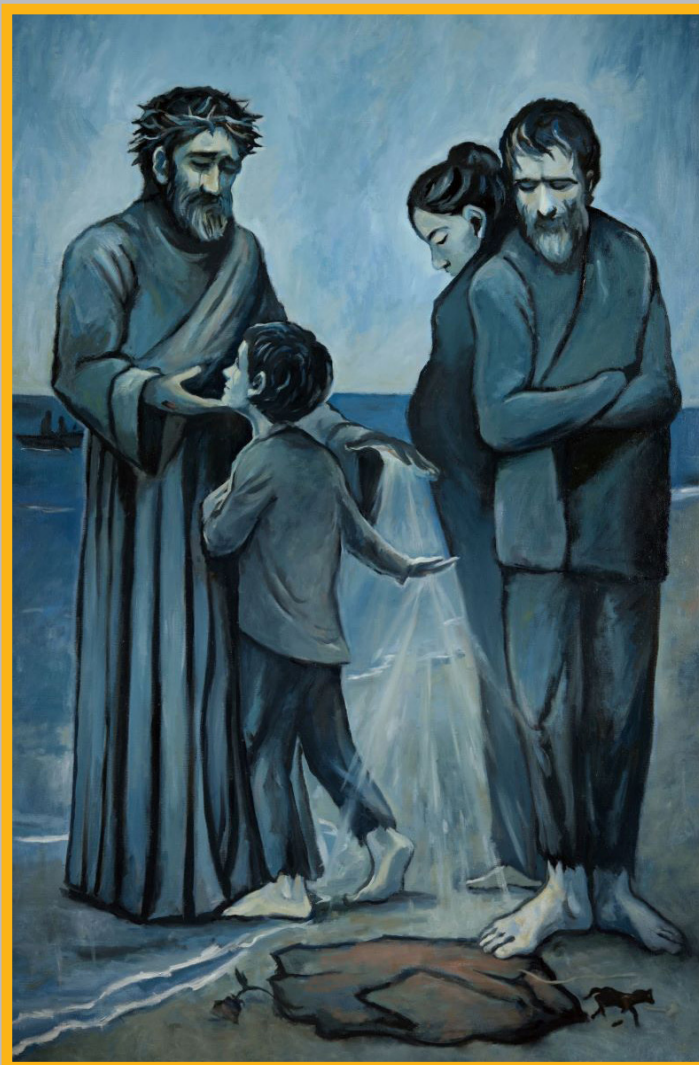
“For many, the possibility of a joyful marriage seems hopelessly out of reach. Is it any wonder that the marriage rate has fallen dramatically in recent decades, and that only 30 percent of young adults are married today, the lowest percentage ever recorded in the United States?” (p. 122).

Healing can be a long and complicated journey, with setbacks and disappointments along the way. We may think we are unaffected by our wounds or that we are simply “broken” beyond repair. But just as Jesus heals the blind man, the leper, and the lame, he can heal us to experience ever greater joy if we humbly seek his healing.

The upcoming April 19–21 retreat at Maryvale Retreat Center near Valley City is the first Life-Giving Wounds retreat in the area. This ministry honors the pain of men and women from broken homes and offers a path of spiritual healing through Christ’s healing, mercy, and love.

“One main goal of Life-Giving Wounds is launching local chapters around the country and the world,” said Bethany. “We’re thrilled to be doing that in the Diocese of Fargo this spring. Our retreats are places where adult children of divorce or separation can come and receive specific attention for whatever wounds or hurts are on their heart because of their parents’ divorce or split. The leaders are all adult children of divorce themselves who ‘get it.’ The retreat includes insightful, personal talks on topics like grieving, growing in trust of others, forgiveness, family boundaries, dealing with anger and anxiety, and more. There will be ample opportunities for prayer, journaling, and going to the source of healing in the sacraments and adoration.”

Bethany encourages anyone who is hesitant to attend the retreat to be open to the “more” the Lord wants for them, whether it’s finding greater peace in challenging family situations, growing closer to God the Father, or addressing how coming from a broken home has affected one’s own relationships. The season of Lent begins Feb. 14. As a spiritual exercise, consider bringing your wounds to Jesus in prayer and ask if he is inviting you to experience greater healing through this retreat and this season of Lent.



“Let the Children of Divorce Come to Me” by artist Michael Corsini. (Copyright Life-Giving Wounds, 2021.)

Despite the many adult children of divorce in the United States, until Life-Giving Wounds began, there was no Catholic ministry provided specifically for them.... many adult children of divorce experience a “wound of silence,” where they’ve been told (explicitly or implicitly) that their pain doesn’t “count” or shouldn’t be voiced for various reasons.

COVER STORY

"We believe this ministry is needed because adult children of divorce need a supportive, faith-filled place to grieve their losses, share with others who understand this pain, and discover ways to move forward with greater peace, hope, and joy," said Bethany. "Our retreats are gentle and compassionate. We meet people where they're at on their healing journey and walking together toward a more joyful life."

Throughout the *Life-Giving Wounds: A Catholic Guide to Healing for Adult Children of Divorce or Separation*, Bethany also shares her experience as someone from an intact home married to someone from a divorced home and how those from intact home can bless family and friends from broken homes. Often healing can start with a compassionate friend who genuinely wants to listen and learn without immediately providing a silver lining.

"We've learned so much in our marriage about grieving together and healing together, and we know that many couples have this 'mixed' experience," said Bethany. "Men and women from intact homes can bless their friends and family members from broken homes by first, being someone who can 'receive the wound' and make space for emotions, story, and voice. We can help raise awareness as a culture of how damaging divorce is to children, that it's not a quick fix or something easy to 'get over,' to help grow a culture where marriages last."



May
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at Maryvale, Valley City

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maryvalend.org/spiritual-retreat-registration



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TATTERED PAGES

A review of Catholic books, movies, music

Moderation not elimination focus of “digital minimalism”

By Kristina Bloomsburg | Assistant Editor of New Earth

As new apps, games, social media accounts, and any new online technology come to our attention, it's easy to jump in and just give it a try. Easier still is to convince ourselves that what we have already is insufficient compared to what's new.

Cal Newport's new book *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World*, asks readers to consider the following questions when encountering new technology: “what value is this bringing to my life? Will this make a task easier or more enjoyable? Or is it a distraction?”

Newport defines Digital Minimalism as “a philosophy of technology use in which you focus your online time on a small number of carefully selected and optimized activities that strongly support things you value, and then happily miss out on everything else.” In other words, minimalists don't mind missing out on small things but instead focus on the big things that are truly important to them.

Newport's goal is not to convince everyone to scrap their smartphone and pick up a “dumb” phone or delete all their social media accounts. He recognizes the many useful benefits that smartphones, social media, and technology in general can provide. Rather, he encourages that we examine our habits and consider how best to use the tools available to us. This starts by first examining what we value, what goals we have, and then considering if our technology use helps us fulfill those goals or secretly sabotages them.

The book includes practical tips such as silencing all notifications and texts except your ringer, so you're free to check and respond to messages only at designated times of the day. Another suggestion worth noting is to exchange 20 minutes of time on Facebook to “keep up with friends” with calling a friend for 20 minutes every day. Newport writes that this exchange for him resulted in a far more fulfilling and effective way to keep in touch with the relationships he cared about.

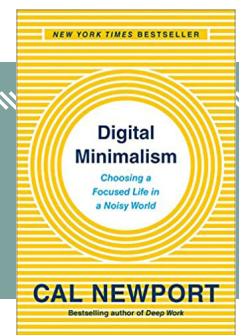
None of us signed up for how technology would affect our habits, relationships, and attention spans. I created a Facebook account in 2009 because I wanted to keep in touch with high

school friends after graduation. I don't think I ever used it for that reason. The friendships I've wanted to keep after high school, college, and onward, I've kept through other means. Facebook has evolved a lot since 2009, so there are plenty of reasons to use the tools it offers. This book helped me to reevaluate why I use certain social media platforms and apps. If it was truly fulfilling a role that I desired, it could stay. If it was merely a distraction or even something that drained my energy or caused frustration, it could go.

In 2016 when the Diocese of Fargo started an Instagram account, I downloaded Instagram on my phone, since at the time, I needed it to post to the page. A few years later, Instagram made it possible to post via computer. Since then, I never used the app on my phone to post to again. However, the icon was still on my phone and at some point, I found myself scrolling for 15 to 30 minutes a day on all the things the Diocese of Fargo follows. Even though the feed is full of news from Catholic sources, saint quotes, and scripture, this time wasn't edifying in any way. Fifteen minutes in silent prayer or taking a quick nap would be far more beneficial. I deleted the Instagram app from my phone, and with it, the temptation to mindlessly scroll through the feed.

Newport's book is well-researched and written, stretching beyond the common “phone addiction” narrative. He invites us to examine our personal and social lives in the early 2000s before smartphones and social media were commonplace. He invites us to consider what we've gained, what we've lost, and how best to proceed.

Digital Minimalism:
Choosing a Focused Life
in a Noisy World
by Cal Newport, 2019





The Pilgrims Page

A look at Catholic pilgrimage sites

St. John and St. Odelia provide pilgrimages in Minnesota

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

Our first pilgrimage stop in this article series will be at the Abbey of St. John in St. John, Minn. The abbey's history goes all the way back to 1856 when four Benedictine monks were sent from an abbey in Pennsylvania to establish a presence in the Minnesota Territory. By the 1860s they were settled amidst 2,400 acres of forest, prairie, wetlands and lakes. The Abbey was the first Benedictine Abbey in the Midwest. Today the property includes a full liberal arts college open to anyone.

However, there is so much more to this place than just a monastery and school. The monks also developed a place for artisans. You can visit the different buildings and see the woodworkers building organs, or you can visit the pottery shop at 3 p.m. for afternoon tea at the irori table. An irori is a traditional Japanese hearth and table used for heating tea water and food, as well as for generating warmth in the home. There is also a museum dedicated to the St. John's Illuminated Bible. This bible was made in the tradition of illuminated manuscripts, but with a combination of traditional images along with contemporary design that accompanies the handwritten calligraphy of the scriptures.

Finally, do not miss the opportunity to pray with the monks for the Liturgy of the Hours. This is where one gets a sense of the rhythm of the life of a monk. The prayer is done slowly with pauses for contemplation as if time blurs away and one has nowhere else to go. The schedule for visitors is available at saintjohnsabbey.org, and calling ahead for a tour is recom-



St. John Abbey. (Br. Felix Mencias, OSB)

mended. There is also a guesthouse for retreats.

For our second stop we head north of Minneapolis to the shrine of St. Odelia, Onamia, Minn. St. Odelia was a child of noble parents who lived on the border of France and Germany. She was born blind. Her father wanted her cast out, but her mother persuaded him to have the child raised by nuns. It was the nuns who baptized her at the age of 12, after which immediately her blindness was cured.

The story of her death places her in Colone, Germany where she encountered an unfriendly Germanic tribe. She was captured and martyred for her faith around 720 AD. In 1287 she appeared to a monk in Paris and directed him to collect her relics in Cologne as she was now to be their special protector of the order, the Crosiers. She told him the exact spot where to find them. In 1952 the Crosier monks brought some of her relics to Minnesota when they founded another monastery. Today you can visit her relics in the small chapel. Many pilgrims have come here to pray for a cure to eye problems (St. Odelia's specialty). There are healing Masses scheduled for the shrine as well. Visit crosier.org or call (320) 532-3103.



St. Odelia Shrine
(Jennifer Anderson)



A page from the St. John's
Illuminated Bible.
(Mary Hanbury)

The battle remains to defend the dignity of all human life



CATHOLIC ACTION

DAVID TAMISIEA, JD, PhD

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 fundamental principle governing all Catholic social teaching is the dignity of the human person. The dignity of the human person refers to the immeasurable value and worth of every single human being, from the first moment of conception until natural death. Human dignity is not something that can be earned or taken away but rather is intrinsic to every person and a gift from God.

The dignity of the human person is rooted in the fact that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–27). The Incarnation and Redemption testify to the pricelessness of human life—God loved us so much that he became a man like us and underwent excruciating suffering and death on the cross to redeem us from slavery to sin and eternal death. No other creature is valued so highly by God.

Above all, the dignity of the human person is based upon every person's calling to share in God's own divine life for all eternity. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, the human person "alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity" (CCC 356).

The corollary to man's transcendent dignity is that all human life is sacred, from "womb to tomb," since every person is a living icon of God, an *imago Dei*, whom God wills to share in his own divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). The lofty dignity of the human person and the sacredness of human life demands we treat other people with honor, respect, and love, uphold and defend basic human rights, and work to establish conditions in society for the full flourishing of every person.

The principle of human dignity touches on every public policy position of the Catholic Church, including issues like immigration, euthanasia, human trafficking, religious liberty, transgenderism, the death penalty, and other contemporary social issues. While each of these is important, the one issue that has a certain pre-eminence among them all is abortion.

The Church teaches that the intentional and direct taking of innocent human life in the womb by abortion is an intrinsically evil act that can never be justified. This has been the

consistent position of the Church from the first century onward and, as St. John Paul II makes clear in his encyclical on the life issues, *Evangelium Vitae*, an infallible teaching according to the Church's ordinary and universal magisterium (EV 62).

At the same time, no one can deny the difficult circumstances many pregnant women face, including extreme poverty, abusive relationships, pressure to abort the child, and even life-threatening conditions caused by the pregnancy. For this reason, the Church provides practical help to pregnant women in need and extends forgiveness and mercy to those women who may end up choosing abortion.

During the last legislative session, the North Dakota Catholic Conference introduced a comprehensive set of legislative proposals to provide practical assistance to pregnant women and babies called "Responding with Love." With the full support of our two bishops, my predecessor and co-director, Christopher Dodson, worked tirelessly with legislators to successfully pass these proposals into law and help build in North Dakota a sanctuary for life that is pro-family, pro-woman, and pro-child.

The *Dobbs* decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* in summer 2022 was a major pro-life victory. But the struggle is clearly not over and has morphed into a state-by-state battle for life. While no legal abortions are currently being performed in our state, the North Dakota Supreme Court last year found a fundamental right to abortion in the state constitution in cases where it is deemed necessary to preserve the mother's life or health. This should serve as a warning to us that much work remains to be done to defend unborn children and build a culture of life in North Dakota.

Please intensify your prayers and penances for the legal protection of unborn children in our state and country as we strive together to uphold the dignity and sacredness of all human life.



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SEMINARIAN LIFE

WILLIAM GERADS

Pre-Theology II; St. Gregory the Great Seminary; Seward, Neb.

At the beginning of January, I had the opportunity to attend the annual SEEK conference along with 20,000 other Catholics. The conference is put on by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), an organization that seeks to deepen the spiritual lives of university students. Through the course of the week, SEEK participants discover the poverty that is sleep deprivation as they cram as many talks from numerous Catholic speakers, such as Father Mark-Mary Ames, CFR; Father Mike Schmitz and Monsignor James Shea, into four days all with one goal: to share the hope and joy of the gospel with the world. It wasn't until the subsequent silent retreat put on by our seminary as we returned for the spring semester that I really discovered how the Lord was working in my time at the conference.

In one of my holy hours, I recalled a specific grace from the preceding week. I attended a session, which, little to my knowledge, would become the content of numerous holy hours, and countless conversations with one of my brother seminarians who attended the conference with me. The session was titled, "What it means for God to be Father," and in his talk, Father Mark-Mary unpacks what it exactly means for God to be our Father, and what we can know about the heart of the Father.

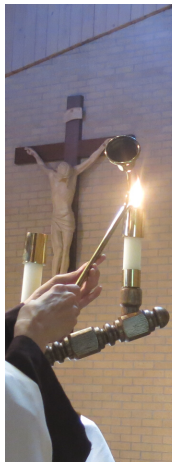
There is this story, a true story about a young girl who, after years of bouncing from foster home to foster home, orphanage to orphanage, was finally adopted. One day she walked downstairs with a hand full of cash, \$11 and some change, and she entered her father's office. He was sitting there reading some papers under a dim lamp, glasses on the bridge of his nose. His daughter standing in the doorway and said, "dad." As he looks up, she continues, "I don't have much, but I have been saving my allowance money, and I want you and mom to have it, to help pay the bills." Her father removed his glasses, set them on the desk, and said, "come here, honey." He wrapped his arms around her and with a tear in his eye said, "you don't need to pay rent to live in my house."

How often do we go about our lives as a tenant constantly trying to pay rent? There is a great fear that consumes many

of us that says, "If I don't do all the things my friends, parents, or God expect out of me, it will be as though I didn't pay rent, and I will be evicted, lose friends, jobs, or even my relationship with God." But the good news is we don't need to pay rent to live in the Father's house. For, "in my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14: 2-3). God being Father means we have the permission to be weak. God being Father means our hope is sure. God being Father means we have a forever home. God being Father means that when all is said and done, all will be well.

What is the significance of this? Well, the fact is that we are all wounded. We all have relationships in our lives that we wish were better. Some are so painful that they are the means of our sanctification. It is these afflictions which are making us saints. God desires to heal us, he desires us to go to him, and these afflictions can serve as a sort of emptying of our souls. It is when we are empty that we can truly rely on God for everything.


Over the course of the conference I discovered the depths of fraternal love. I discovered that at some point even coffee can't keep you awake, but most importantly I discovered that our Father is a jealous lover, who desires to provide for his children. We are all like the man in the story of the good Samaritan, beaten and bruised on the side of the road, left for dead. Our Father will always, *always* take pity on us, and come to our aide. The question is, will we allow him to do that?



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WORD ON FIRE

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

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

When I was an auxiliary bishop in the Los Angeles Archdiocese some years ago, the state of California was militating in favor of physician-assisted suicide. During the campaign, while driving through my pastoral region, I saw a pro-euthanasia billboard with the following message: “My Life, my Death, my Choice.” Immediately, I thought of St. Paul’s diametrically opposite remark in his Letter to the Romans: “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.” I do believe that in regard to the issue of assisted suicide, it comes down to this: Did the billboard get it right, or did St. Paul? Does my life belong to me, or is it a gift from God? Is my death a matter of my personal choice, or is it under God’s providence and at his disposal?

This great question has come to the forefront of my mind once again, since my current home state of Minnesota is considering legislation very similar to the one that California did indeed adopt. The proposal is couched in language designed to assuage moral anxieties: it will be offered only to those who have a terminal diagnosis and who are making the decision in complete autonomy. In regard to the first point, color me very skeptical. In many countries in Europe and in Canada, where physician-assisted suicide was approved in a similarly limited way, the restrictions on who can access it and the safeguards in place to prevent elder abuse, among other things, have been gradually lifted. In many of those places, the elderly, those with dementia, those experiencing depression or severe anxiety can all be candidates for this form of “treatment.” Though the advocates of medically assisted suicide will deny it until the cows come home, this law places the entire state directly on the slipperiest of slopes.

And in regard to the second point, we’re back to the California billboard. Though we place a huge premium on it in our culture, I don’t consider autonomy the supreme value. Authentic freedom is not radical self-determination; rather, it is ordered to certain goods that the mind has discerned. I become free, for instance, to play golf, not inasmuch as I swing the club any way I want, but instead in the measure that I

have interiorized the rules that properly govern the swing. A purely “autonomous” golfer will be a failure on the course. In precisely the same way, a sheerly autonomous moral agent will wreak havoc all around him and lose his ethical bearings. If I speak obsessively of “choice” but never even raise a question regarding the good or evil being chosen, I find myself in a moral and intellectual wasteland. True freedom is ordered toward moral value and ultimately to the supreme value who is God.

Some advocates of physician-assisted suicide will argue that autonomy over one’s body is of utmost importance for those who face the prospect of a dreadfully painful demise. But this consideration is largely beside the point, for palliative care is so advanced that in practically all cases, pain can be successfully managed. I say this with special emphasis in the state of Minnesota, which is justly famous for the high quality of its hospitals, including and especially the Mayo Clinic. The deeper point is this: even if a dying person found himself in great pain, actively killing himself would not be morally justifiable. The reason is that the direct killing of the innocent is, in the language of the Church, “intrinsically evil”—which is to say, incapable of being morally sanctioned, no matter how extenuating the circumstances or how beneficial the consequences. I have argued before that when this category is lost sight of, a dangerous relativism holds sway. And when even the direct taking of innocent life is a matter of personal choice, the entire moral enterprise has in fact collapsed into incoherence.

And so, could I ask all of my fellow citizens of Minnesota, especially those who are Catholic, to oppose this legislation (SF 1813/HF 1930) in any way you can: call your representative or senator, write to the governor, talk to your friends and neighbors, circulate a petition. And to those in other parts of the country, I would urge vigilance. If this legislation hasn’t come to your state yet, it probably will soon enough. If you stand for the culture of life, fight it!



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MARCH 12-14, 2024



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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

(Open to the Public)

Montse Alvarado

President and COO of EWTN News

Wednesday, March 13 at 7:00 PM

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Mar. 14 - 17	Women's Cursillo retreat
Apr. 4 - 7	Ignatian Silent women's retreat
Apr. 19 - 21	Life Giving Wounds retreat
Apr. 25 - 28	SEARCH youth/young adult retreat
May 2 - 4	Women's retreat by Father Jason Lefor
May 9 - 11	Theology of the Body & the Culture of Life

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God works and speaks in the smallest details

By Karen O'Leary | Parishioner of Holy Cross in West Fargo

It is not hard to believe in miracles working in critical care as a nurse for many years. Some people survived under unbelievable circumstances, something that cannot be explained by medical treatment. For example: a farmer collapsed in a field. His son could not arouse his father and started mouth-to-mouth resuscitation without any chest compressions. The man was put on a ventilator, not expected to live. Yet, he woke up and walked out of the hospital without any signs of brain damage.

At the hospital, miracles were easier to define and talk about within the context of someone else's life or when there were group "saves." Yet, when a miracle occurs in one's personal life, it's hard to share because it's easy to feel that people will call you crazy. The invitation to share personal stories in the December issue of *New Earth* prompted this turtle to stick her neck out.

I have chronic health issues in part due to the many viruses in my system. Years of nursing have taken a toll. During one particularly difficult time when my husband and I couldn't see me living through the end of the year, our eyes were opened in unique ways.

I bought a vine plant stapled to a plain piece of unfinished wood about three feet tall for my husband, Gayle's, birthday. The rough wood looked similar to the cross our Savior was nailed to. The plant sat on the top of a stand in our kitchen. I

noticed two leaves had a drop of water at the end of each of them. They didn't get bigger or fall off. The leaves rotated over the next weeks, but there always were two drops at a time. The plant gave us a reason to hope and brought us a sense of peace. Once I got better, the drops disappeared.

During this time, there was a dome shaped bubble on the table. It seemed a little strange, but I wiped it off then went about my day. There was a small plant on the table, and I dismissed the bubble as something to do with it but doubted that this was the answer either. A few days later, the bubble was back when Gayle was home to witness it with me. He looked up at the ceiling. I had to chuckle as that was my first reaction too. He wiped the bubble off the table and we waited. The bubble came back to its original size. Since this strange experience, asking God to show us what he wants us to see has become a part of our daily prayers.

It is my hope that you pause and spend some time in silent awareness. Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." How God will answer is up to him. There is no time clock. How and when God answers is not always what one wants it to be.

So, this turtle is tucking back into my shell for a nap before moving on. Wishing each of you an enlightening journey.



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LIFE'S MILESTONES



George and Shelly Piatz, parishioners of St. Catherine's in Valley City, will celebrate their 60th anniversary on Feb. 6. They were married at St. Catherine's and have been blessed with 5 children, 17 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.



William (Bill) Hardy, parishioner of St. Boniface in Walhalla celebrated his 90th birthday on Jan. 10. Bill and his wife, Lois have 6 children, 8 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.



Eleanor Harles, parishioner of St. Boniface in Lidgerwood, will celebrate her 90th birthday on Feb. 12. Eleanor and her husband, Theodore, are blessed with 10 children, 18 grandchildren, and 25 great-grandchildren.



Gerry Joyce, parishioner of Holy Family in Grand Forks, will celebrate his 100th birthday on Feb. 9.



Del (Delenore) Chaput, parishioner of St. George's in Cooperstown celebrated his 90th birthday Jan. 30. He and his wife, Evelyn, raised 4 children and are proud grandparents of 8 grandchildren, 2 step-grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren, 2 step-great-grandchildren, and 2 step-great-great-grandchildren.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Life's Milestones includes anniversaries for marriages, ordinations, and religious vows for 25, 40, 50, 60, 65, and 70+ years and birthdays for 80, 85, 90, 95, and 100+ years for those in the Diocese of Fargo. Submissions will only be accepted for milestones occurring during the month of publication, one month prior, or one month following. Send a photo with text to news@fargodiocese.org or to Diocese of Fargo, New Earth, 5201 Bishops Blvd S, Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104 with a stamped return envelope and phone number. Deadline for the Mar. issue is Feb. 6, and the deadline for the Apr. issue is Mar. 12.

Father Gerald L. Myers passes away Christmas day



Reverend Gerald Myers entered into eternal rest on Dec. 25, 2023. He was born Nov. 12, 1934, in St. Paul, Minn. to Agnes Lois Barney and Myron Harold Myers. His Irish heritage came from his mother and his Jewish from his father. His grandparents were Joseph Miles Barney and Marcella Jane Jackson, and Jacob David Myers and Ida Jacobs.

In 1952 he left St. Paul to join the Jesuits for 11 years. He received his Master's Degree at Marquette University. He re-entered the seminary and was ordained

a priest of the Diocese of Fargo on June 4, 1994, serving in North Dakota including at St. Boniface in Walhalla. He moved to the Diocese of Tucson in 2001, where he was assigned to parishes in Tucson, Yuma, Payson, and Nogales. In addition, Father Myers served as the Spiritual Director for the Magnificat Ministry and the Vine of Grace Retreat Ministry. He retired from active ministry in September of 2015 but retained close relationships with many of his former parishioners.

He was close to his three aunts: Ruth Hill, Ellen Rooney, and Mildred Barney, and to three cousins: Roxanne and Kathy Rooney and Carolyn Barney. He is survived by his only brother Keith Gregory, who accompanied him through his whole life. He is also survived by his son, David Lawrence Myers, and David's wife, Sanja, and his daughter Rachel Jane.

A glimpse of the past

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

75 years ago — 1949

“Contributions of the Catholic Church to the State” is the title of Bishop Muench’s 1949 pastoral letter which will come from the press before the beginning of Lent. The current pastoral may well serve not only for thoughtful consideration and pulpit use but also as a discussion club manual for Catholic Action groups. The five major contributions of the Catholic Church to the State are discussed very pointedly by the Bishop in five chapters, singularly entitled: Belief in God, Training of Conscience, Respect for Authority, Sacredness of Human Life, and Code of Social Ethics. Pointing a fearless finger at the blockade against religion in our school system and at the consequent growth of practical atheism, Bishop Muench shows the way in which belief in God leads to good citizenship, for “The State need not fear citizens that fear God.”

50 years ago — 1974

Since Holy Family Sunday, Dec. 30, 1973, the people of the Diocese of Fargo have been observing the Holy Year of Preparation: a year of prayer dedicated to personal and inner renewal. The Holy Year goals, set forth by Bishop Driscoll, are meant to enable all to be renewed interiorly and to grow in reconciliation with God and neighbor. They are: 1. To renew our commitment to Jesus Christ; 2. To profess that Jesus Christ is the source of all reconciliation; 3. To do personal penance and mortification; 4. To go out to others in forgiveness and kindness.

20 years ago — 2004

The AAA Pregnancy Clinic, a Fargo prolife service agency in existence for 20 years, has changed its name to FirstChoice Clinic. Pauline Economon, the clinic’s executive director, said, “In this age of legalized abortion, with the availability of quality, inexpensive home pregnancy tests and the accessibility of chemical abortions, including the morning-after pill, it is all the more important that we as an agency are able to empower women to choose life. Removing any obstacle that may keep women from coming through our doors helps us do that.” Economon said one of the main hurdles the staff has faced as a pregnancy help center was the name. The name with the three ‘As’ was cold sounding,” she said. “Many women facing their circumstance do not want to hear the word pregnancy initially. In fact, most are in a state of denial. That is why the name is so important—it needs to attract people rather than make them feel uncomfortable.”

Winter events

Cursillo retreat coming this winter

Cursillo is a simple program to help you get to know your Catholic faith and help you grow as a Christian spiritually, mentally, actively and in community with other faith-filled Catholics. Cursillo is offering a men’s retreat at the St. Francis Retreat Center in Hankinson Feb. 29–Mar. 3, and a women’s retreat at the Maryvale Retreat Center in Valley City Mar. 14–17. For more information, men contact Gary Bausch at (701) 490-0679, and women contact Natasha Volchenko at (701) 849-2040.

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Diocesan policy: Reporting child abuse

The Diocese of Fargo is committed to the protection of youth. Please report any incidents or suspected incidents of child abuse, including sexual abuse, to civil authorities. If the situation involves a member of the clergy or a religious order, a seminarian, or an employee of a Catholic school, parish, the diocesan offices or other Catholic entity within the diocese, we ask that you also report the incident or suspected incident to Msgr. Joseph Goring, 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.

“Search for beauty and truth” leads young adults to church, Ukrainian Catholic deacon says

By Paul Schratz | The B.C. Catholic. (Edited for content.)

When it comes to supporting Catholic education, the audience that came to hear Father Deacon Andrew Bennett’s fundraising talk for Catholic Pacific College (CPC) was as committed as it gets. By the time he had finished, they were not only aware of how much Canada needs inspired Catholic young people, but they could also see the path toward developing them: through truth and beauty.

Canada’s first ambassador for religious freedom, the ordained deacon—referred to as “Father Deacon” in his Ukrainian Catholic tradition—began his talk by dissecting Statistics Canada numbers that shed light on the country’s religious attitudes. He admitted things look troubling, with only 16% of Canadians claiming to be religiously committed—regularly attending services, reading sacred texts, and educating their children in their religious tradition.

Catholics, according to Statistics Canada, make up 28% of the population in Canada. Despite their numbers, just 9% go to Mass regularly. There also isn’t much good news when it comes to Canadians’ attitudes toward Catholicism in general: 24% of Canadians under the age of 40 believe that Catholicism is damaging Canada and Canadian society.

“These are troubling numbers, to say the least,” Bennett told the crowd. On the other hand, he said, “We are of the Resurrection,” and as we live out our baptism, “we always have hope.”

To have hope requires paying attention to what is going on and “recognizing that it is not I who am in control,” he said. Christ is the Savior, and “he is the one to whom I’ve joined myself in my baptism. And so, I have a responsibility as a faithful Catholic to do his work in the world.”

That work includes observing positive signs in society. For example, 18% of Canadians aged 18 to 34 claim to be religiously committed, slightly more than the Canadian average.

“I think increasingly young adults see what the world is offering them, and they realize it’s not what they want. They realize that it’s very transient. It’s not especially authentic; it’s very shallow. It’s all about them. There’s no transcendence.”

In short, a positive social reality in Canada is being overlooked. But in his conversations with Christian faith leaders across the country, most agree that “there’s something happening in that 18- to 34-year-old cohort.”

He shared the stories of two young people he knows whose lives testify to that reality.

Rory was a student at Ottawa’s Augustine College, where Bennett was dean and teaching Church history. The young man had a Christian background but no active faith life. What he had, however, was a love of singing that led him to accompany friends to a choir at a Ukrainian Catholic church. Soon he was joining them in singing the Slavic Byzantine repertoire.

Bennett described Rory’s first experience at choir practice in the darkened church. He would gaze at the icons on the walls. Before long, he was attending Sunday Divine Liturgy.

“There was Rory just looking around; he’d never seen anything like this,” Bennett said.

Rory attended faithfully, although he couldn’t receive the Eucharist. One day he told his instructor he wanted to become Catholic in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic tradition.

The deacon was eager to hear more about what led Rory to the Catholic faith. “I remember when you first came here; you were just enrapt by the iconography and beauty of the chant. Is that what has brought you to this decision?” he asked.

“No, it’s because of what’s happening on that altar,” the young man replied.

“Here’s a young man who had no background in Byzantine Eucharistic theology or Byzantine liturgy, but he intuitively understood that all of the icons, the beauty of the chant, pointed to that—the holy Eucharist—and he was hungry for it.” The young man had been led by “the path of beauty.”

A similar story involved Quinton, who showed up one day as Bennett led a weekly young adult discussion on the Nicene Creed with prayer.

“A young guy came who I’ve never seen before, and we are talking about some of the high Christology in the central part of the Creed, and I could see his face, and the wheels of his mind were racing.”

Afterward, Quinton introduced himself. Although baptized Catholic, he hadn’t been raised in the Church and became a self-professed atheist. After studying humanities in university, he began reading Plato, Aristotle, and then St. Anselm and St. Thomas Aquinas. He had many questions and visited various churches before coming to Bennett, with whom he had “many, many conversations.”

Finally, Quinton asked: “What do I need to do to come back to church?” Learning that Quinton had been baptized and confirmed, the deacon told him he only needed to make a solemn confession and then could receive the Eucharist.

"He became this amazingly devout, faithful young man who married a Ukrainian Greek Catholic girl." After the couple became mainstays at their college chapel church, Bennett asked Quinton what had drawn him back. "He said, 'It's the truth, and I wanted the truth.'"

Rory had been drawn by beauty, while for Quinton it was reason. "These two paths of reason and beauty are abundant in the Catholic tradition," the deacon said. Those who work with young adults need to "form them, to educate them in beauty, nurturing their reason."

The Church offers a "beautiful depth of tradition" for young

people's desire for truth and authenticity," he said. "We must focus on being holy, catholic, and apostolic in all things that we do, in every aspect of our faith, and in every aspect of our lives. In our sacramental lives, in our liturgical lives, and in our own personal prayer lives, we should always strive for excellence in everything."

The Church also has to respond to its apostolic call, he said. "We have to innovate, we have to surprise, and we have to be the Church fully in the world for the life of the world. We have to, as Catholics, completely rethink how we are active in the world today and do things differently."

Pope Francis baptizes 16 babies in Sistine Chapel

By Courtney Mares | Catholic News Agency

Pope Francis said Jan. 7 that if you do not know the date of your baptism, you need to look it up so that you can celebrate the anniversary of becoming a child of God and heir to the kingdom of heaven.

Speaking from the window of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace, the pope said that the anniversary of one's baptism should be celebrated each year "like a birthday." "At baptism, it is God who comes into us, purifies and heals our heart, makes us forever his children, his people and family, heirs to paradise," Pope Francis said. "Let us ask ourselves: Am I aware of the immense gift I carry within me through baptism?" he added. The pope spoke on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which commemorates Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist.

Earlier in the day, Pope Francis baptized 16 babies in the Sistine Chapel, where he said that baptism is "the most beautiful gift" that parents can give to their children. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes baptism as the "basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit... and the door which gives access to the other sacraments."

In his Angelus address, Pope Francis said that each sign of the cross is a reminder of one's baptism that "traces in us the memory of the grace of God, who loves us and desires to be with us."

Pope Francis urged people to reflect and ask themselves: "Do I acknowledge, in my life, the light of the presence of God, who sees me as his beloved son, his beloved daughter?" He also encouraged Catholics to thank God for their parents who brought them to the baptismal font and gave them the gift of the sacrament.

"It is important to remember the day of our baptism and also to know the date. I ask all of you, each one of you to think:



Pope Francis baptizes babies in the Sistine Chapel on Jan. 7. (Vatican Media)

"Do I remember the date of my baptism?" he said.

"If you do not remember, when you go back home, ask what it is, so as not to forget it anymore because it is a new birthday, because with your baptism you were born into the life of grace."

After praying the Marian prayer with the crowd huddled together under umbrellas in St. Peter's Square below, the pope urged people to continue praying for peace in Ukraine, Palestine, and Israel.

Pope Francis also asked for prayers for "the unconditional liberation" of all people who have been kidnapped in Colombia and expressed his closeness to the people affected by the recent flooding in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The pope wished a merry Christmas to the Eastern Orthodox Christians who are still following the Julian calendar and are celebrating Christmas this year on Jan. 7.

"With a spirit of joyful fraternity, I wish that the birth of the Lord Jesus fills them with light, charity, and peace," he said.

Report: Over 130 Catholic priests and religious arrested, kidnapped, or murdered in 2023

By Tyler Arnold | Catholic News Agency

Throughout 2023, more than 130 Catholic priests and religious were either arrested, kidnapped, or murdered, according to a new report on Catholic persecution published by Aid to the Church in Need.

The report published by the Catholic charity found at least 132 instances of arrests, kidnappings, and/or murders, which is slightly higher than the report from the previous year, which found 124. The uptick was mostly driven by arrests from authoritarian governments, which went up from 55 in 2022 to 86 in 2023.

Nicaragua President Daniel Ortega's crackdown on political dissent among members of the clergy was a primary driver of persecution throughout the year. The report found that the regime held 46 clergy in custody in 2023, including two bishops and four seminarians. This included 19 clerics arrested in December, including Bishop Isidoro de Carmen Mora Ortega of Siuna.

According to the report, many of the priests in Nicaragua who were arrested before December were either released or expelled from the country and refused reentry. The government also released two of the priests arrested in December, but the other 17 are still in custody.

Bishop Rolando Álvarez, who was arrested in August 2022 and sentenced to 26 years in prison after refusing to leave the country, is also still in custody.

Ortega's administration also expelled religious sisters such as the Missionaries of Charity and shut down Catholic schools and media organizations.

The report found that 20 members of the Catholic clergy were under arrest at some point in China throughout the year. However, the report also noted that "confirming the information is almost impossible" and some of the persecuted members of the clergy "remain unaccounted for after many years." The number could be slightly higher or lower, according to the report.

At least five Catholic clergy and one woman religious were arrested in India in 2023, which was mostly driven by anti-conversion laws, which the report noted "impede the work of the Church." All of them have been released but could still face charges and even prison time.

There have also been arrests in two European countries. The report found that 10 members of Catholic clergy were arrested in Belarus, three of whom are still imprisoned. Two Greek Catholic priests were also arrested by Russian forces in Ukraine, neither of whom have been released.



Nicaraguan Bishop Rolando Álvarez.
(Facebook Diocese Media - TV Merced)

The kidnapping of clergy and religious sisters went down in 2023, according to the report, but the problem "remains significant." The total number of kidnapped clergy and religious was 33 in 2023, which is down from 54 in 2022.

All but five of the kidnappings took place in Nigeria, where religious and ethnic conflicts have made the country dangerous for Christians. The 28 kidnappings in the country included three religious women.

There were also two kidnappings in Haiti. One priest was kidnapped in Mali and another in Burkina Faso. One religious woman was abducted in Ethiopia.

Murders of Catholic priests and other members of the clergy slightly decreased, from 18 in the previous year to 14 in 2023. This includes 11 priests, one bishop, one religious brother, and one seminarian. However, half of these murders were unrelated to persecution or have unclear motives.

Of the seven murders that are clearly tied to persecution, three were in Nigeria. This includes Father Isaac Achi and a seminarian named Na'aman Danlami, both of whom died in their residences when they were burned down during attacks. It also includes Godwin Eze, a Benedictine brother, who was killed by kidnappers.

Other murders linked to persecution included the murder of Father Pamphili Nada in Tanzania, who was killed by a mentally unstable man; Father Javier García Villafañá, who was shot dead in Mexico; and Father Leopold Feyen, who was stabbed to death in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"Many Christians," the report noted, "and especially clergy and religious, paid a heavy price for their commitment to common good, human rights, and religious freedom in the communities and nations they serve."



Aloneness of abortion helps fuel this sad industry



SIDEWALK STORIES

ROXANE B. SALONEN

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For years, I've been watching women walking into and out of the abortion facility here in the Red River Valley. But despite this scene playing out hundreds of times in my experience, I've only recently pondered the sheer aloneness of it all and how that very thing fuels so much of this sad industry. For they not only walk in and out, but they do so *alone*.

Recently, a friend sent me a segment of EWTN's "The Journey Home" with Kerstin Pakka as guest, which ran on June 5, 2023. Pakka is a convert who is also post-abortive and now helps run Project Rachel, a post-abortion healing ministry.

I always appreciate these conversion stories, but this one was especially touching—and troubling. Pakka shared how she and her husband decided to abort their second child because the pregnancy had come too quickly after their first was born. Additionally, one of her grandmothers had worked for Planned Parenthood and promoted abortion as a necessary and good option.

Despite an ill-formed faith, Pakka sensed that abortion wasn't right. Her husband could have stopped the procedure but didn't. After the abortion, they fell into a pattern of being angry at each other for years and not understanding the root cause.

But what struck me most in the story was when Pakka describes the day of the abortion. Though we are near the place of these procedures, we sidewalk advocates have little information about what happens inside the facility. We just see the walking in and out.

When Pakka shares how her husband dropped her off but wasn't allowed to come in, I thought of the many times we've seen the men waiting in their vehicles. I'd never really thought before about how this messes with the psyche.

In what other instance would a family member or spouse not be allowed even to walk into a clinic to be with their dear one

heading into a medical procedure? I suspect having another set of eyes and ears might be a problem. What if they try to talk her out of it?

So, Pakka was alone and led into a series of waiting rooms. "Every step you took in this building, you were alone," she said, describing a lifeless environment with no pictures of children or families. "You're just alone with your thoughts and your fears."

After watching a video to learn about the procedure, she was led into the ultrasound room. The technician forgot to turn the screen, so she saw her baby moving, but by then fear had made retreat unthinkable.

She was affirmed multiple times that the abortion would be safe and quick; she'd be home and back to her normal life in no time. But that wasn't the case. Pakka was further along than they'd thought, and there were complications, making for a terrifying experience.

The recovery room was the first time she was with other clients. "You're surrounded by a bunch of women who've been drugged," Pakka said, everyone "out of it," drained, and not themselves.

Once in the parking lot, she said, "I immediately realized that what I had done I wanted to undo," noting that she was aware of "missing someone," and feeling that God was angry. "This was not just a little mistake. This was a big deal. And I didn't know what to do with that feeling."

Her husband was waiting for her. She got into the car, their now-six-month-old child in the back seat. "And I just went back into my life," she said. "We didn't talk about it." She didn't think her husband would understand, after all, since he hadn't been there.

It took me a while to see, but now it's so clear. The aloneness of abortion is one of the Evil One's best tricks. If he can get us to be alone and stuck in our own heads, unable to access the voices of those who can bring life and hope, he can convince us to move toward death.

Pakka had chosen to go to the abortion facility that promised the absence of protestors. She didn't want to hear the voice of God, she said. Thankfully, she's since reconciled to him and helping others hear truth and love.

NEW EARTH

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*Do you know
where we are?*

The answer will be revealed
in the March *New Earth*.



Where in the diocese are we?

Last month's photo is from
the entrance to the Queen
of Peace chapel in Belcourt.