

New Earth

October 2025 | Vol. 46 | No. 9



The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo

Will you give your desire for children to me?

Infertility and the desire for fulfillment

4

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streets: Sharing the Gospel
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Pope Leo XIV proclaims
Carlo Acutis and Pier
Giorgio Frassati saints

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ON THE COVER:
(Photo by Cathopic)

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NEW EARTH

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Mission

Our mission is to inform, teach, and inspire readers about the Catholic faith and the life of parishioners in Eastern North Dakota.

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Young saints for our times

On Sept. 7, Pope Leo XIV canonized two young men as saints of the Church. With this action, he recognized the holiness of St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis, inscribing them in the long list of holy heroes of the faith who have gone before us. After a long process of prayer and discernment, the Church acknowledges that, by God's grace, they had lived lives of exemplary faith and charity, and they now enjoy eternal life in God's presence.

St. Pier Giorgio Frassati was born in northern Italy in the year 1901. He was born into a prominent family in Turin, but the family as a whole was not particularly religious. Aside from cultural aspects of Catholicism, the Frassati household was quite secular. But Pier Giorgio charted his own path. His faith was very much alive, and he lived it with gusto. He was outgoing, athletic, and had many friends. He enjoyed mountain climbing, hiking, and swimming. He was also intensely prayerful and had a particular love for Christ in the Eucharist. He attended Mass every day, whenever possible. He was active in Catholic organizations in his parish and community, and advocated in a special way for workers and the poor. Without his family knowing it, Pier Giorgio routinely visited poor families around the city of Turin, bringing money, food, and clothing, anything that would help them in their need. His naturally friendly demeanor and devout faith were attractive to many people, and he set an example of fervent devotion and sincere charity for his friends.

One of Pier Giorgio's favorite sayings among friends was "*Verso l'alto*,"—"to the heights!" This was certainly a reference to their mountain climbing excursions, but even more so, he meant this in a spiritual way. Pier Giorgio believed that we must always strive upwards to God, reaching for holiness, directing our lives to the eternal life that awaits us in heaven. He encouraged his friends to live always according to their Catholic faith, and with God's help to keep climbing towards the beautiful calling to sainthood that we have all received. At the young age of 24, Pier Giorgio contracted polio, and died shortly thereafter. His family expected the funeral to be attended by the circle of their prominent friends and other family members, but they were surprised when thousands of people lined the streets to pay their respects, all those who had been helped and befriended by Pier Giorgio during his short lifetime.

Carlo Acutis was born in 1991 into another Italian family. Once again, aside from cultural experiences like Baptism and

First Communion, Carlo's parents were not really practicing the Catholic faith. But as a young child, Carlo manifested a lively fascination with God, the saints, and especially the Holy Eucharist. Like many ordinary boys his age, Carlo loved games, sports, and had an avid interest in computer technology, but he used this interest in a unique way. He gathered all the information he could find about Eucharistic miracles, and began to share this through websites that he constructed with all his friends and classmates, and many others as well. He wanted everyone to know about Jesus in the Eucharist, and at every opportunity he attended Mass and Eucharistic adoration.

Through Carlo's influence, his family began to actively practice the faith once again, and some employees and acquaintances of the family, including a Hindu governess, were influenced to embrace Christ and join the Catholic Church. Through the ordinary things of his daily life, Carlo became an evangelist, and in his own youthful way he attracted many others to draw near to Jesus. He lived a normal, modern life, but he had his eyes on our Lord, and he wanted to be with him. Carlo said, "To be always united with Jesus, this is my life program." Then, at the young age of 15, Carlo contracted an aggressive form of acute leukemia. He died in 2006 after a short illness, but people immediately recognized the holiness of his life, that he truly was a young saint of our own time.

In his homily at the canonization Mass, Pope Leo said the new saints Carlo and Pier Giorgio understood that friendship with Jesus and faithfully following God's plans is greater than any other worldly pursuits. To the thousands who had gathered he said, "Dear friends, 'Sts. Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis are an invitation to all of us, especially young people, not to squander our lives but to direct them upwards and make them masterpieces.' The pope said that "even when illness struck them and cut short their young lives, not even this stopped them, nor prevented them from loving, offering themselves to God, blessing him and praying to him for themselves and for everyone."

Pier Giorgio and Carlo were ordinary young men of their times, and in many ways they led quite ordinary lives. But each of them, in his own way, lived a holy life and brought the extraordinary adventure of friendship with Christ into the ordinariness of daily living. In that way, St. Pier Giorgio and St. Carlo are wonderful models of goodness and holiness for all

of us, especially young people. Not many of us are called to be martyrs or missionaries who go to the far reaches of the earth, but we are all called to be saints. We are all called to holiness, and these two ordinary young men have shown us that it's within reach for anyone. Who knows? There might be another Carlo or Pier Giorgio among us already!

Jubilee 2025 Prayer

Father in heaven, may the *faith* you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of *charity* enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed *hope* for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally.



May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

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BISHOP FOLDA'S CALENDAR

Oct. 9 at 2 p.m.

Diocesan Pastoral Council, Pastoral Center, Fargo

Oct. 12 at 11 a.m.

Mass at St. Elizabeth Church, Sykeston

Oct. 13 at 6 p.m.

Closing Mass for Our Lady of Fatima Tour of Peace, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Oct. 14 at 5:30 p.m.

Operation Andrew Dinner, Bishop Residence, Fargo

Oct. 15 at 7 p.m.

Mercy Hour Service for Young Adults, St. Joseph Church, Moorhead, Minn.

Oct. 16 at 9 a.m.

Mass for St. JP II Schools Staff Development Day, Sacred Heart Auditorium, Fargo

Oct. 19–21

USCCB Liturgy Meeting, Washington, D.C.

Oct. 22 at 9 a.m.

Mass for St. JP II Schools Feast Day, Shanley, Fargo

Oct. 22–24

Catholic Benefits Association Meeting, Denver, Colo.

Oct. 24 at 5 p.m.

All Saints Schools Gala, Ralph Engelstad Arena, Grand Forks

Oct. 25 at 5:30 p.m.

St. John Academy Hope Dinner and Auction, Jamestown

Oct. 28–Nov. 6

Rome Jubilee Pilgrimage

Nov. 9–13

USCCB Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

Nov. 15 at 10 a.m.

Permanent Diaconate Ordination, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Prayer Intention of Pope Leo XIV



For collaboration between different religious traditions

Let us pray that believers in different religious traditions might work together to defend and promote peace, justice, and human fraternity.



Harvest prayer

By Catholic Rural Life

Lord, let us follow the blessed farmer Isidore's example of patience and humility, and walk so faithfully in his footsteps that by his intercession in the evening of life, we can offer You a rich harvest of merits and good works, through Christ our Lord.

O God, who taught Adam the simple art of tilling the soil, and who through Jesus Christ, the true vine, revealed Yourself the husbandman of our souls, deign, we pray, through the merits of blessed Isidore, to instill into our hearts a horror of sin and a love of prayer, so that, working the soil in the sweat of our brow, we may enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, through the same Christ our Lord.



DIOCESE OF FARGO
PODCAST
HOSTED BY BRAD GRAY
& STEVE SPLONSKOWSKI



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How do I explain the Mass to a non-Catholic?



ASK A PRIEST

FATHER STEVEN WIRTH

Pastor of churches in Fessenden,
Esmond, and Maddock

This is a great question, one that strikes at the core of what it is to be Catholic. The Second Vatican Council called the Mass “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium* 11). Thus, for a non-Catholic to understand us, he or she will have to understand the Mass.

Many non-Catholic Christians emphasize the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus, and rightfully so. Our personal relationship with Jesus is a vital and non-negotiable part of our life with God. But Jesus also clearly established a community of the faithful, which we call the Church. In other words, it is not enough to have “me and Jesus.” We must also have “we and Jesus.” The Mass is when we gather as the community of the Church. This is why Sunday Mass is obligatory for Catholics. If you are not coming to Mass, then you are not living as an active member of the Church.

The Mass is presided by the bishop or by a priest. St. Paul calls the Church the “Body of Christ.” Jesus himself is the Head of this Body. The role of the Head is to unite the Body and give life to it. Bishops and priests are not merely educated and trained professionals for a job. They are men who have been ordained and consecrated to act “in the person of Christ the Head.” They have been authorized to do so by the bishops that have come before them, tracing all the way back to the Apostles themselves who were commanded by Jesus at the Last Supper to “Do this in memory of me.” Thus, it is the role of the bishop or the priest to gather the faithful and to preside over the Mass in the person of Christ the Head.

While the Mass has varied in Church’s history and geography, its most basic two-part structure of Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist is both ancient and universal. You will find this structure in every Catholic Mass, Eastern Christian Divine Liturgy, and even most traditional Protestant Communion Services. This structure most likely goes back to the Apostles themselves, predating the writing of the New Testament. In the Liturgy of the Word, the first Christians read from the Old Testament, from the letters of the Apostles, and listened to orally transmitted stories of Jesus that were eventually written

down in the four Gospels.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the heart of the Catholic Mass. At the risk of oversimplifying, I want to break the Eucharist into two aspects: Sacrifice and Communion.

Sacrifice is the universal act of worship in every religion. We are all called to worship God, and we can do so in many different ways. But they all fall short of the glory of God. There has only been one act of worship in all of history that is truly worthy of God. That is the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ’s sacrifice becomes present to us in a mysterious way through his Body and Blood in the appearance of bread and wine. We, as the people of God led by the priest, offer that sacrifice of Christ on the altar at every Mass. (No, we do not kill Christ again. But that’s for a different article). In the Mass Christ allows us to participate in his worthy worship of the Father.

I like to use the comparison of a toddler baking cookies with Mom. The toddler is completely incapable of making the cookies himself. Mom is the one capable of making the cookies, but in order to empower the child she allows the toddler to participate. At the end, when the child presents the cookies to Dad he says, “I made these.” And indeed, he has, but only because Mom let him partake. So too, in the Mass we truly offer God worthy worship, but only because Christ allows us to participate in his act of worship.

Second, the Eucharist is Communion. The very same Jesus who invites us to participate in his worship of the Father is also present in the Eucharist: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. And he allows us to receive him into our very self. Through Holy Communion Jesus pours into us his very life, and we are united to him. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him” (John 6:56).

As we go forth from the Mass, we are meant to take its lessons into our daily lives as Christians. St. Paul tells us, “To offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1). Having just seen and participated in the sacrifice of Jesus’ Body and Blood and having received that same Jesus in Holy Communion, we are now empowered to imitate Jesus in our moral life through self-sacrificing love to God and to our neighbor.

The Mass is our source and summit because it is the gathering of the Church to offer Christ’s worthy worship to Father, to receive Christ in Holy Communion, and by the example and power of Christ in the Eucharist to love God and to love our neighbor.

19 Stanislaus	15 Peter	10 Isidore	4 Martin	14 Ignatius	7 Joan	3 Francis	Down
17 Nicholas	11 Vincent	13 Patrick	9 John	16 Teresa	8 Helena	5 Dominic	1 Josephine
18 Bernadette				20 Lucy	12 Phillip	6 Moses	2 Benedict



OUR VOCATIONS

Answering God's call to the priesthood, religious life, and diaconate

SEMINARIANS



Dcn. Garrett Aberle

Hometown: Minot
School: SPS
Year: Theology IV



Dcn. Brendon Schneibel

Hometown: Manvel
School: MSMS
Year: Theology IV



Dcn. Pat Sorrells

Hometown: Fargo
School: SPS
Year: Theology IV



Dcn. Richie Stenger

Hometown: Fargo
School: MSMS
Year: Theology IV



Dcn. Taylor Ternes

Hometown: Devils Lake
School: MSMS
Year: Theology IV



Paul Zach

Hometown: Rosholt, S.D.
School: SPS
Year: Theology III



Matthew Follis

Affiliation: Fargo
School: SPS
Year: Theology II



William Gerads

Hometown: Ham Lake,
Minn. **School:** MSMS
Year: Theology II



Kade Palmer

Hometown: Portland
School: SPS
Year: Theology I



Matthew Samson

Hometown: Park River
School: MSMS
Year: Theology I



Joseph Kern

Hometown: Lisbon
School: SPS
Year: Pre-Theology II



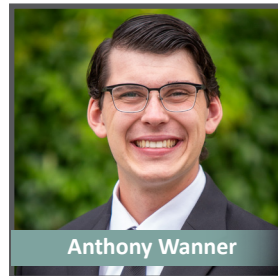
Quincy Marchand

Hometown: Harvey
School: MSMS
Year: Pre-Theology I



Dalton Booth

Hometown: Fargo
School: SGGS
Year: College IV



Anthony Wanner

Hometown: Fargo
School: SGGS
Year: College IV



Joseph Splonskowski

Hometown: Glyndon, Minn.
School: SGGS
Year: College II



Joseph Gray

Hometown: Moorhead,
Minn. **School:** SGGS
Year: Propaedeutic Year



Gavin Haut

Hometown: Jamestown
School: SGGS
Year: Propaedeutic Year

MSMS: Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.

SGGS: St. Gregory the Great Seminary, Seward, Neb.

SPS: Saint Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

What is a Propaedeutic Year?

Propaedeutic means "to teach beforehand." Prior to entering seminary, a man spends a year of discernment and prayer to deepen and clarify his call to the priesthood. He lives at a house of formation, generally offsite from the seminary building. He establishes a regular routine of prayer, meets regularly with a spiritual director, addresses vices or character flaws that will inhibit priestly formation, attends retreats and pastoral work, and grows in community with other men.

IN FORMATION FOR RELIGIOUS & CONSECRATED LIFE



Katherine Buckley

Hometown: Glendale, Ariz.
Aspirant
Society of Our Lady of
the Most Holy Trinity,
Dunseith



Nayeli Ruiz

Hometown: West Palm
Beach, Fla. Aspirant
Society of Our Lady of
the Most Holy Trinity,
Dunseith



Maria Schmitz

Hometown: Harvey
Aspirant
Society of Our Lady of
the Most Holy Trinity,
Dunseith



Ariana Onchuck

Hometown: Wahpeton
Postulant
Carmel of Mary,
Wahpeton, N.D.



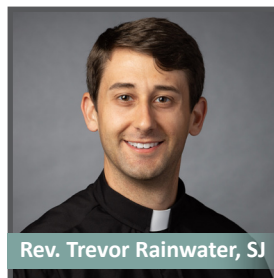
Sara Lahr

Grand Forks
Candidate
Order of Consecrated
Virgins



Rev. Br. Conan
Rainwater, SJ

Hometown: Fargo
Theology
Society of Jesus,
Midwest Province



Rev. Trevor Rainwater, SJ

Hometown: Fargo
Theology
Society of Jesus,
Midwest Province



Br. Joseph Maria
Thaelke, KHE

Hometown: Crystal
Temporary Professed
Knights of the Holy
Eucharist, Lincoln, Neb.

Ordinations

Permanent Diaconate

DIOCESE OF FARGO

November 15, 2025 at 10:00 am | Cathedral of St. Mary



Steve
Splonskowski

Cathedral of St. Mary
Fargo



Tom
O'Keefe

St. Anthony of Padua
Fargo



Shawn
DeKeyser

Blessed Sacrament
West Fargo



Ted
LeMier

Sts. Anne & Joachim
Fargo



Brian
Herding

St. Anthony of Padua
Fargo

Knights of Columbus take part in a Rosary ride

By Knights of Columbus Council 4951 - Carrington

Knights of Columbus Council 4951's first Rosary Ride was conducted on Aug. 16, 2016. Unbeknownst to the organizer Paul Murphy, a "rosary ride" has been done before. He came up with the idea when participating in other fundraiser/fun runs on his motorcycle. Little did he know that there had been a few other "rosary rides" in other states but none locally.

The premise of the ride was to get riders together for a day of prayer and meditation from the seat of their motorcycles. The plan was to pray and meditate on a decade of the rosary at five locations on a motorcycle run around the area. Another ride was conducted this year on Aug. 16.

"Since our parish priest rides motorcycle as well as some of our members, I thought it would be a good way to increase visibility, reach out to local parishes, and enjoy a great day," said Paul Murphy, event coordinator. "As it turned out we were able to incorporate corporal and spiritual works into the trip in visiting the nursing home."

At Subway in Carrington, who helped sponsor the ride, riders from Carrington, Garrison, and Bismarck discussed how these rides could benefit the Church in the future. Overall, it was a positive experience for everyone involved. Two parishes provided snacks and beverages for the riders: St. Boniface, Esmond and



Participants and riders stand in front of St. Boniface Church in Esmond for the Rosary Bike Ride. (submitted photo)

Seven Dolors Mission, Fort Totten.

The ride was planned for mid-August to coincide with the birth and death day of Knights of Columbus founder Fr. Michael McGivney, as well as planning around the busy harvest season. Next year's event will be on the Feast of the Assumption, Aug. 15, with a Mass planned so riders can attend.

Anyone interested in taking the ride may also attend the Peace Garden Mass as a 4th degree honor guard the next day at the Peace Garden.



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ENDERLIN	SMP Health - Maryhill
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FARGO	SMP Health - St. Catherine South
HARVEY	SMP Health - St. Aloisius
JAMESTOWN	SMP Health - Ave Maria
ROLLA	SMP Health - St. Kateri
VALLEY CITY	SMP Health - St. Raphael

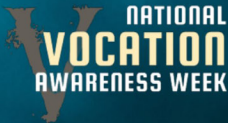
Pilgrims gather for Man of the Shroud exhibit

Parishioners of St. David’s, Ashely; St. Andrew’s, Zeeland; and St. Patrick’s, Wishek and their pastor Father Katanga took a pilgrimage to the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo for the “Man of the Shroud” exhibit that was on display Aug. 24–31. The group gathered for Mass and were treated to a special presentation by the Shroud expert, Jim Bertrand, who gave an overview of the known history and facts of the Shroud and answered questions from the audience. Afterwards, the group went to dinner together, celebrating a successful pilgrimage. (submitted photo)



GRACIOUS AND LOVING GOD, OPEN THE HEARTS OF MANY,
RAISE UP FAITHFUL SERVANTS OF THE GOSPEL, DEDICATED
HOLY PRIESTS, SISTERS, BROTHERS AND DEACONS, WHO
WILL SPEND THEMSELVES FOR YOUR PEOPLE AND THEIR
NEEDS.

PRAY FOR VOCATIONS



NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK

November 2–8

From the Cathedral to the streets: Sharing the Gospel at the Fargo Street Fair

By Lynette Noyszewska | Parish Life & Evangelization Coordinator at Cathedral of St. Mary

“I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *ad gentes*. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 3).

St. Mary’s Cathedral took these words to heart during its recent evangelization at the Fargo Street Fair. Over three days, more than 50 parish and community volunteers joyfully shared Christ with tens of thousands on Broadway. Several hundred people encountered His presence through conversation, prayer, and the beauty of the Cathedral—all because of the shared goal to be the visible, welcoming presence of Christ.

The Cathedral block was alive with activity as practicing Catholics, lapsed Catholics, people of other faiths, and the unaffiliated were drawn in by God’s beauty, goodness, and truth. A booth with free rosaries, medals, and pamphlets sparked many conversations. Priests, religious, and laity offered prayer with those in need, while the Cathedral’s open doors and guided tours drew hearts to Christ’s Real Presence.

Monsignor Joseph Goering shared, “What I noticed the most about my time in the prayer booth was the visible effect of the open church doors and the number of people who felt free to walk in on their own or take advantage of the tours. As for the prayer encounters, it was the wonderful—and usual—mixture of seeing who God prompted to come ask questions or seek prayers.”

Real Presence Radio also joined in proclaiming the Gospel and interactive chalk art engaged many children. Volunteers selling parking tickets and water spread Christ’s love through simple acts of kindness. Countless moments of grace were encountered—for Catholics uplifted by our public witness, for the curious, and for those searching.

Many times, the fruit of one’s efforts aren’t made visible in this life, but God gave glimpses of His work at the Street Fair. A woman, who had lost her job said, “It’s so awesome that you are here. Can I give you a hug?” A young Lutheran, when asked if he was Catholic, said “No, but I know beauty when I see it.” A young Assembly of God man eagerly asked, “Where can I find information on the Catholic Church?”

A former Baptist didn’t think it mattered which faith a person belonged to if they shared belief in Jesus Christ. Small talk led to a personal conversation, and he shared many trials from his past. He acknowledged that, in his experience, Catholics had treated him the best. I told him that without his past trials, we would not be there talking.

I gave him several blessed items. He asked if the church was



Emeric and Jessica Erickson welcome and help visitors at the Street Fair. (Lynette Noyszewska)

open during the week since he works Sundays. I gave him a welcome brochure and said he was always welcome. Then I pointed out the Divine Mercy image, explaining its history—from St. Faustina’s revelations to its significance that dates to the cross, when Jesus’ heart was pierced and the fountain of His love and mercy opened for all humanity. He was moved to tears, thanked me, and left with a full heart.

Seeing people’s response to the Catholic presence at the Street Fair leads one to reflect: Why do we evangelize? Christ commands us to “go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16: 15). As Catholics entrusted with the fullness of truth, we have a responsibility to share it. If we do not, people will encounter only fragments of truth or distortions, never enjoying the fullness of life in Christ as we do. “The number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase (*Redemptoris Missio*, 3).” Many think life does not make sense. Sadly, many believe life is not worth living. They need Jesus, who gives true life and purpose.

When we hear Christ’s call to evangelize, we may say, “I’m afraid,” or “I won’t know what to say.” But by Baptism, we receive the powerful gift of the Holy Spirit who gives us the courage and the words we need. What’s needed from us is a humble, willing heart that desires to share Christ, a joyful spirit, and a listening ear. Then, with prayer and faith, we trust Him to do the rest.

Monsignor Goering noted that “making myself available outside probably led to some visits that would not have happened if the person needed to come to the parish office.” Not everyone is called to evangelize on the street, but all of us are called to seek opportunities to bring Christ to others—whether by smiling to

a stranger, praying with another, or inviting someone to Holy Mass. It may mean leaving one's comfort zone to meet people where they are, just as Christ did for us.

May these positive encounters at the Street Fair inspire each of us to step out in faith and proclaim Christ to all—in the mission fields of daily life and in public spaces where “the harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:2).

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Will you give your desire for children to me?

Infertility and the desire for fulfillment

By Kristina Bloomsburg | Assistant Editor of New Earth

Will you give your desire for children to me? That was the question I heard Jesus asking me one morning at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo. I was contemplating the posture of a statue of Jesus to the right of the sanctuary. Both hands are held out, waiting for me to place my hands in his.

My reply to his question was, *Well, Jesus, do you want the right answer or the honest answer?*

I felt that the right answer would be to say, *yes, of course, you are the fulfillment of all desire. I give all my desires to you.*

But the honest answer that day was a big no.

At this point, my husband and I had been trying to conceive a child for about a year. We were both in our mid-30s and knew before we were married that we may have some difficulties conceiving. After a few doctor visits, those difficulties were confirmed but were by no means definitive. It was still possible for us to have children, but after hitting that one-year mark, the possibility started to feel lower and lower.

I found myself gazing at that statue every few weeks where Jesus would gently ask the same question. Slowly, my answer changed from *no*, to *maybe*, to *yes, but only if you tell me what your plan is. What will our lives look like?* My husband and I were considering more options, including NaPro (Natural Procreative) Technology restorative surgeries through Pope Paul VI Institute to rule out endometriosis or other complications. We knew couples who chose these options and were blessed with healthy pregnancies and babies as a result.

While restorative methods are consistent with Catholic teaching and we recognized they may be helpful in our case, my husband and I discerned that God wasn't calling us to this. Every time the topic came up in conversation, we were both left feeling sad, uneasy, and frustrated. Whenever I went to Sts. Anne and Joachim, I encountered Jesus's love concerning my fertility in a particular way that ultimately brought hope and peace. I began making my visits to this place in prayer more frequent, sensing that Jesus wanted to work something out in my heart.

Six months later, I could authentically say to Jesus, *yes, I give my desire for children to you.*



**Statue of Jesus at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church, Fargo.
(Kristina Bloomsburg | New Earth)**

A few months after that, my husband and I were surprised to find I was pregnant, but that's not the reason why I share this story.

God reaches out to us and loves us as individuals. How he speaks and acts in one person's life may have similarities to others, but it won't be exactly the same. God knows us so intimately and desires our salvation so deeply that he will speak and act in just the way that we need to ultimately draw us closer to him. His timing may not always feel perfect, but through scripture, we know God has a specific plan for each of us, his children.

If my husband and I were able to conceive a child right when we wanted, I would not have experienced the freedom that Jesus wanted to give me. I was free from the feeling that I was unworthy of motherhood or that my life would be less meaningful if I wasn't a mother with my own biological children. I was free from feeling "less than" when I saw large families at Mass. I was free from the looming disappointment every month. I was free from the guilt of not doing more to make this dream a reality. That time wrestling with Jesus over my desire brought a different kind of life that I hadn't anticipated.

I'm now thankful for those two years of waiting. I can recognize God's wisdom in allowing my husband and me to strengthen our marriage before the difficulties of pregnancy and eventually caring for an infant.

If you carry the particular cross of infertility, see the article *Seven considerations while navigating infertility*. Allow me to add three more considerations to the list.

1. Recognize that your desire for children is real and good. God did not plant this desire on your heart just to vengefully withhold it from you. Seek to understand how God is moving in your heart today and how he might be using that desire to draw you closer to him.

2. Pray for those also experiencing infertility. Each night my husband and I continue to pray for couples that experience infertility, pregnancy, and new parenthood. Before pregnancy, this practice reminded us that we were not alone in our journey and helped us rejoice in the good news of others rather than being jealous.

3. Be aware of any tendency in your heart to grasp for solutions. The movements of God brings peace and security, not anger, resentment, or despair. Bring all your thoughts and emotions to God and ask him to bring you clarity and healing from any wounds you've endured during your journey with infertility. Strive to learn and follow the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality, fertility, and life.

For more resources on navigating through infertility, visit www.fargodiocese.org/infertility. For a concise overview of the teachings of the Church on infertility, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2373–2379.



Seven considerations while navigating infertility

By United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

We often assume parenthood happens easily after “I do,” but for many married couples, it does not. For some, the joy of conception never happens. Others suffer repeated miscarriages. Still others experience secondary infertility: after giving birth to one or more children, they are unable to have another.

If you experience difficulty bringing a child into your family, know that you are not alone. God is with you, and his Church desires to walk with you. The following suggestions may be helpful to you on this journey.

1. Start with prayer: God has a beautiful plan for your life as a married couple. Seek his guidance, and let the healing power of prayer, a conversation in which “heart speaks unto heart,” strengthen you. Pope Francis encouraged us to pray not only

with commonly known prayers, “but also to pray in our own words.”

2. Connect with others: A mentorship, a faith-based support group, or spiritual direction can offer comfort and provide new perspectives. Sharing your struggles with family, friends, or a therapist can also help ease the pain. Ask the saints for their intercession, and reflect upon the biblical stories of Sarah and Abraham, Hannah and Elkanah, and Elizabeth and Zechariah.

3. Seek to understand the Church's teaching: The sexual act expresses the marital covenant, repeating over and over again, “I give myself to you entirely, unreservedly, holding nothing back.” In this mutual gift of self, so all-encompassing that it includes their potential for procreation, a husband and wife are united as one, giving full expression to their love. These two aspects

“To couples who cannot have children of their own I say: you are no less loved by God; your love for each other is complete and fruitful when it is open to others, to the needs of the apostolate, to the needs of the poor, to the needs of orphans, to the needs of the world.”

—Pope John Paul II, Homily at the Mass for Families on Feb. 13, 1982

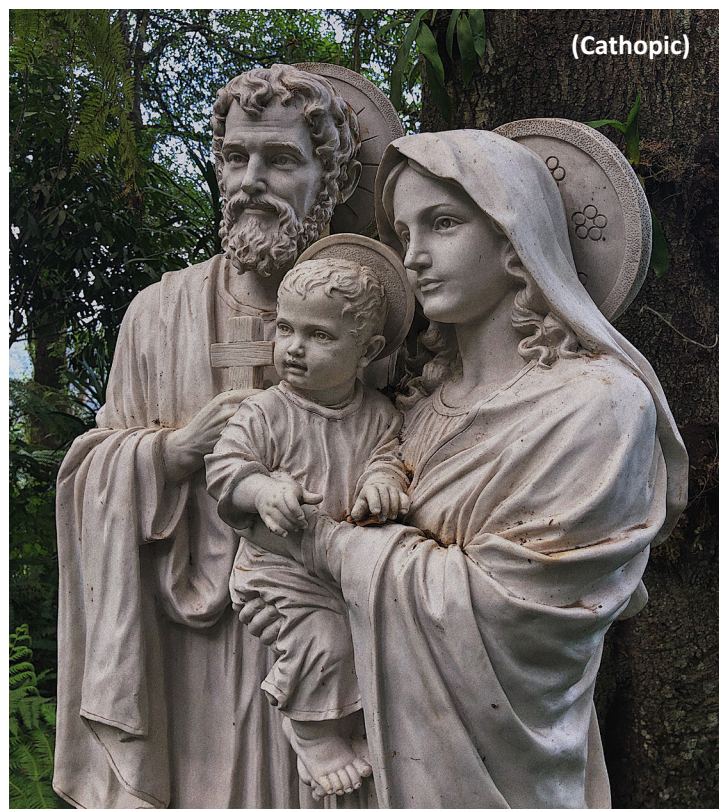
of sexuality, the unitive and the procreative, are intertwined and are not meant to be separated.

Suppressing the possibility of conception (i.e., contraceptive use) and creating life outside the marital sexual act (i.e., use of some reproductive technologies) both work against God’s plan for married love and the gift of life. Pope Francis explained that “a child deserves to be born of that love” expressed between a husband and wife in intercourse, “and not by any other means, for ‘he or she is not something owed... but is a gift.’”

4. Learn the difference between ethical and unethical interventions: Applying the Church’s teaching means that, in short, procedures that introduce a third party into the process (such as surrogates or sperm/egg donors) are not morally acceptable. Additionally, substituting a laboratory action or anything else for intercourse, such as artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization (IVF), is also morally unacceptable. However, treatments that help facilitate conception through marital intercourse are morally ethical.

5. Be aware of “treatments” that destroy life: Some procedures are problematic for multiple reasons. For example, beyond its unethical nature (as per the previous section), in vitro fertilization (IVF) often involves the tragic loss of human life. Children in the embryonic stage are frequently discarded—or frozen—without ever being implanted into their mother’s womb. And if multiple babies are implanted, doctors may suggest performing a “fetal reduction” by killing one or more to increase the survival chances of the strongest child in utero. While a baby might eventually be born, his or her tiny siblings may be destroyed in the process.

6. Make a plan: Do you know there are medical options consistent with Church teaching that have statistically significantly higher rates of achieving pregnancy than IVF? Learn about these, fertility awareness practices, and other treatments that also respect your marriage and any children who may be conceived. If you have sought to bring a child into your family through ways not



in keeping with God’s plan for life and married love, have hope. The Lord welcomes us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we can receive the loving mercy and forgiveness we each need. With prayer and an informed conscience, work together as a couple to create a plan that takes into consideration the desire for children along with moral principles, finances, medical realities, and your overall well-being (both individually and as a couple). Locate a trained specialist or doctor who honors your plan and has training in methods of assistance that are in keeping with Church teaching.

7. Keep your marriage healthy: Handling the uncertainties of infertility is a challenge for even the strongest marriages. Once engaged in treatment, it can become easy to focus more on the process than on each other. However, communication and mutual decision-making are vital. Staying intimately connected can help make it easier to manage lifestyle changes, reordering of priorities, physical discomfort, career disruption, and difficulties with insensitive people.

Hold fast to the constant truth of God’s love for you. “To couples who cannot have children of their own,” St. John Paul II affirmed, “you are no less loved by God; your love for each other is complete and fruitful when it is open to others” and their needs. In times of suffering, Pope Francis noted, “we sense a powerful need for someone to be close and feel compassion for us.” You are not alone: “Jesus ‘does not abandon those whom he loves.’”

Even if we ourselves do not experience difficulty bearing children, we can be channels of God’s mercy for those who do.

University of Mary launches tuition-free academies rooted in faith, excellence, and workforce readiness

By University of Mary

The University of Mary in Bismarck, is redefining what Catholic higher education can look like in the 21st century. Following the resounding success of its Nursing Academy, the university is expanding its pioneering, tuition-free academy model with two new programs: the Accounting Academy and the Elementary Education Academy. All three academies are grounded in Catholic values, academic rigor, and career preparation—and they’re transforming lives. For students seeking a university where faith formation is integrated into rigorous academics and career preparation, these academies provide a unique and life-shaping opportunity.

At the heart of this model is the University of Mary’s nationally recognized Year-Round Campus (YRC), which allows students to complete their undergraduate degrees in just 2.6 years by taking courses during fall, spring, and summer semesters. Each academy offers full-tuition scholarships to select incoming freshmen from across the country. In total, the university now offers 56 tuition-free scholarships annually.

In addition to the Nursing, Accounting, and Elementary Education Academies, the university also offers generous full-tuition scholarships to high-achieving students entering the Hamm School of Engineering and the humanities. While not formally structured as academies, these programs uphold the same high standards of Catholic formation, academic excellence, and career readiness.

Rachael Brash, vice president for Public Affairs, sees the academies as both a response to and a solution for today’s educational and workforce challenges. “For students serious about their vocations and their futures, this model is simply unmatched,” Brash explained. “They graduate faster, reduce student debt, and gain a competitive edge in their careers. And because the academies are drawing high-caliber students from across the country, they’re not only transforming lives—they’re also strengthening our regional workforce and fueling long-term economic growth.”

Students like Savanna Fredrickson, a Nursing Academy scholar from Powers Lake, N.D., represent the heart of the program. Set to be among the first academy cohort to graduate in spring 2026, she already has a job lined up at Sanford Medical Center in Bismarck. “This program has not only eased the financial burden, but it’s helped me grow as a person and as a future nurse,” Fredrickson said. “Each lecture starts with a reflection or prayer which sets our minds on things above. As we are learning about what it takes to be a great nurse, we are challenged to grow in other areas of our life.”



(University of Mary)

A hallmark of the academies is their integration of Catholic identity, academic excellence, and professional training. Students receive direct freshman admission into competitive programs, experience personalized mentorship, and participate in a European pilgrimage—an opportunity designed to deepen cultural understanding and spiritual growth. Academy students will visit Italy, Germany, and France, spending time at the University of Mary’s Rome campus, taking in the colorful sights of Munich, and experiencing the breathtaking French mountain village of Lourdes.

The new academies are housed in the Gary Tharaldson School of Business and the Liffrig Family School of Education and Behavioral Sciences. Students will graduate from the YRC undergraduate program and move directly into graduate studies such as the MBA or MEd, entering the workforce with both degrees in just four years.

For families seeking both affordability and a deeply Catholic environment, the University of Mary’s tuition-free academies remove financial barriers while providing a strong foundation for career success.

With workforce shortages in critical fields like healthcare, business, and education, the University of Mary’s innovative model is answering the call—offering students not just a degree, but a Catholic formation for service, leadership, and eternal purpose.

To learn more or apply, visit www.umary.edu/TuitionFree.

TATTERED PAGES

A review of books, movies, music

An examination of faith for the doubter in all of us

By James Kerian | Layman, Grafton N.D.

Introduction to Christianity by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI, is remarkably accessible for such a profound theological work. Published in 1968, it offers a systematic exploration of Christian faith through the Apostles' Creed, making it both a theological treatise and a guide for Christians navigating a secular world. Among its key themes, Ratzinger emphasizes the unity of Jesus' self and mission, presenting Christianity as a call to unite one's God-given mission with one's identity.

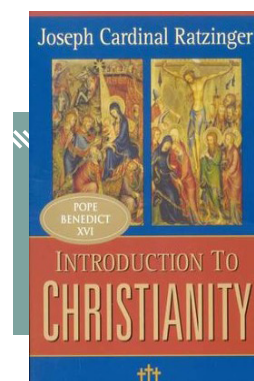
Ratzinger begins with "I believe," which he frames as a relational act of trust in God, not mere intellectual assent. He dedicates sections to God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church as each line of the Apostles' Creed is carefully examined and analyzed both historically and theologically. Central to Ratzinger's Christology is the idea that Jesus' self—his identity as the Son of God—and his mission—redemption through the Incarnation and Cross—are inseparable. Ratzinger writes, "In Jesus Christ, being and acting are one; his mission is not something external to his being but flows from it." To be a Christian, he teaches, is to emulate this unity, integrating one's self with one's God-given mission of love and service.

What surprised me most was Ratzinger's pastoral sensitivity to the struggles of faith in a secular age. He acknowledges doubt as a universal human experience, shared by believers and atheists alike. Early in the book, he writes, "Nobody can completely avoid doubt, least of all the believer. The believer is not a man who has never felt the oppressive power of unbelief, but one who has made a decision in favor of faith in spite of it." Faith, he explains, is not static certainty but a dynamic choice, a "casting of oneself into the open expanse of God's truth, a decision to entrust oneself to what cannot be fully grasped or verified." He compares the believer to someone on a raft amidst a stormy sea: "The believer does not live immune from doubt but is always threatened by the plunge into the void; faith is a decision, a judgment, a venture."

Ratzinger confronts the temptations against faith even more directly when reflecting on God's silence, drawing a vivid comparison to the priests of Baal in 1 Kings 18, mocked by Elijah for their god's unresponsiveness. He writes, "The believer can identify with those priests of Baal who called out in vain. How often does God seem absent, silent, asleep? The mockery of the world echoes Elijah's taunt: 'Perhaps your God is asleep or

on a journey!'" He acknowledges the pain of this experience: "There are moments when God's silence is deafening, and the believer stands with the priests of Baal, crying out to a God who does not seem to answer." Yet, he reframes this silence as an invitation to deeper faith: "It is precisely in this silence that faith is tested and purified, where the believer learns to wait on God, to seek Him in the stillness." This perspective transforms doubt into an opportunity for spiritual growth, reflecting Ratzinger's understanding of faith as courageous perseverance.

I recommend *Introduction to Christianity* to anyone seeking a deeper understanding of Christianity, but especially to those who feel they are struggling with their Catholic faith, or those with loved ones who seem to be struggling with their Catholic faith. The book offers a profound examination of the faith the Church calls us to, while providing an insightful and pastoral acknowledgment of doubt's challenges and the courage required in "casting oneself" for Christ and His Church.



"Introduction to Christianity"
by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger,
1968.



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The Pilgrims Page

A look at Catholic pilgrimage sites

The Holy Stairs in Rome that can only be climbed on your knees

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

Just across the street from the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome is an unusual sacred site for pilgrims that they access on their knees. *Scala Santa*, or Holy Stairs, is a set of 28 marble steps encased in wood for preservation. These are the stairs that led up to the Praetorium in which it is believed Jesus climbed before standing before Pontius Pilate.

The stairs were brought to Rome by St. Helena in the 4th century along with other sacred relics of the Passion. St. Helena could have reconstructed the Praetorium, but she didn't. She was only concerned with the stairs that touched the feet of Christ. Their authenticity cannot be completely confirmed but the marble is of the same type as found in Jerusalem and the steps do appear to be missing from the ancient site in Jerusalem.

Pilgrims are allowed to ascend the steps only on their knees as an act of penance. The wood encasement was a later addition after the marble became so warped from pilgrims doing this for so many centuries. It is not as easy as it looks, and Americans tend to have a task orientated, even if prayerful, attitude toward the climb whereas other nationalities wouldn't think twice about praying a rosary on each step. It is best not to get behind those pilgrims unless you plan to do the same as "road rage" on the Holy Stairs defeats the purpose. Just when you feel the aches in your knees part way up, a little old Italian nun scoots by you with ease like she has been doing this penitential act daily for many years.

The stairs lead to the "Holy of Holies" which was the personal chapel of the early popes. Today there is a busy street between St. John Lateran and the Holy Stairs, but in the Middle Ages, this was one complex. The Holy of Holies was the most venerated sanctuary in Rome and contained many relics of the saints and one of Rome's most venerated images called the Acheropita (Image of the Most Holy Savior) that is "not painted by human hand." The relics have since been dispersed around Rome's churches and the Vatican, but the Archeropita remains and can be seen today once the pilgrim emerges from the top of the stairs.

For those who cannot climb on their knees, there is a parallel set of stairs that people use like a normal set of stairs. If you are in Rome and get a chance to visit St. John Lateran, make sure to first check the hours of when the Holy Stairs are open because the hours are limited.



The stairs that led up to the Praetorium which Jesus climbed before standing before Pontius Pilate. (submitted photo)

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A melted blender and the man on a motorcycle

By Adaire Reinpold | Homeschooling mother of four; liturgy, sacred music, and chicken enthusiast, parishioner of St. Rose, Hillsboro

“Just hide them in the oven!” I yelled to my husband as we were preparing to have company over. We had just had a baby, and were in the “just hide the clutter” stage of preparing for guests (are we the only ones who do that?). I couldn’t let anyone know my sink sometimes had dirty dishes!

Fast forward to the next day when I was making supper. I was preheating the oven, and began to smell burning plastic. I ran into the kitchen, shut off the oven, and pulled out the dirty dishes I had forgotten from the previous day. Among them was the plastic body of our expensive high-powered blender, now wiggly as it was in the process of melting.

When my husband, Robert, got home, I told him of the incident. “I’m sorry I’m so stupid,” I said. He just hugged me. “You’re not stupid. We all make mistakes.” No condemnation. No rubbing it in. He even had the good sense not to laugh at this rather funny situation. He just loved me. In all of my messiness. In all of my imperfections. That small moment was huge for me as it reminded me of the Lord’s deep love and mercy. No condemnation. In my mind and heart, I had condemned myself for most of my life. There was no room for mistakes or weaknesses. I had always—for the most part—been able to push through weakness as a machine and not as a person. How could I possibly be loved if I wasn’t perfect?

I am a recovering perfectionist. I was always a “high-achiever:” valedictorian of my class, on the board of various organizations, started my own business. It wasn’t until college that I was told for the first time that I didn’t have to perform or be “perfect” anymore. I’m sure someone had told me this before, but I either didn’t hear or believe them. I was told that I could embrace my weaknesses and failings and receive them as a gift to draw me to the Father. It sounded awful. *Embrace* my weaknesses? I had spent my whole life trying to hide my weaknesses or pretend I didn’t have them. Perfectionism had permeated my whole life, including discerning my vocation. When I began seriously discerning my vocation in college, I figured I had to be a nun. That was the “highest achievement” for a woman in the Church, right?

Then a young man from the Newman Center came crashing into my life (literally, he crashed my car when we were on a date). We had been friends for years, and our senior year he asked me out and challenged me to forget about being “perfect.” He was just going to take me out on a date. After one date, I could get back to my plan of being a nun if I so chose. It was through this relationship (and spiritual direction) that the Lord began chipping away at my hard heart, revealing how heavy and miserable I had made my vocation out to be. I desired marriage, but felt I had to give that up if I wanted to be truly holy, truly perfect.

The “one date” turned out to be many, but in the end, that relationship didn’t work out. In the years that followed, the Lord continued to heal me of perfectionism and self-condemnation. He brought in some reinforcements, including a man on a motorcycle.

My friends and I were at a bonfire at a Catholic men’s house when one of the men came home on his motorcycle after work. I asked for a ride home (I love motorcycles!) and it all took off from there. Robert stopped by my house quite often to pick me up for a ride, and it didn’t take long before we were engaged.

Now we’ve been married for ten years, have four beautiful children whom I homeschool, and we live on a farm with a big garden and a bunch of chickens. My life looks like one big failure to the world. I don’t have a social media following, I don’t make any money because I gave up my business to be a stay-at-home mom, and I still have dirty dishes in the sink. I have never been so “imperfect.” Yet, I have never been so happy! In ten years, the man on a motorcycle has seen my best and my worst and he hasn’t run away yet. How beautiful is the sacrament of marriage! Through it, the Lord has brought abundant healing and freedom to my heart. Freedom from the chains of performance and perfection. Freedom to be me and to be loved in all my imperfect glory!

My birthday was shortly after the melted blender incident. I got a card from Robert with a homemade coupon inside that said, “Good for one kitchen appliance of your choice.” If that’s not true love, I don’t know what is.

My eyes have seen the king



SEMINARIAN LIFE

WILLIAM GERADS

Theology II; Mount St. Mary's Seminary,
Emmitsburg, Md.

One of the things that seminarians have to confront in their years of formation is a general feeling of unworthiness at the thought of the reception of Holy Orders. While it is true that we are all in the process of constant transformation as we strive for holiness, the reality of what God makes of a man presented for ordination begins to strike the heart and the conscience of many of us. The words of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, have been particularly striking to me as I contemplate this reality myself: "O, how great is the priest!... if he realized what he is, he would die... God obeys him: he utters a few words and the Lord descends from heaven at his voice, to be contained within a small host."

I had the opportunity this past summer to wrestle with many areas of poverty in my heart as I made the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. This 30-day silent retreat intended to help the retreatant implore every possible method of examining his or her conscience so to rid themselves of any attachments that are keeping them from greater union with God. The daily schedule looks different for each retreatant. For me it included five holy hours, spiritual direction, Mass, recitation of the Rosary and Breviary, as well as some time for recreation, all—with the exception of direction and Mass—in silence and solitude with the Lord.

Within the 30 days, there are four general movements of God, each with various components. The first is experiencing the love of God, the second is praying through the life and works of Jesus, the third is the passion and death of our Lord, and the fourth is his glorious resurrection.

While in that first movement, I realized the profound reality, that Jesus speaks a very intimate language to each of our own unique personalities and life experiences. The Lord seeks me out, that I might turn to him and love and serve him. One particular holy hour that will be forever imprinted in my memory was praying with Psalm 116. As I entered into prayer, I was weighed down, recalling the sins of my youth that made me feel so unworthy of his love, and of course unworthy of his priesthood. I saw myself as a young child, and a loud voice said, "who would want that one." At that moment I felt greatly distressed. Immediately Jesus picked me up and in the following 50 minutes Jesus showered me with his love. I heard in my prayer, "William

I love you because of your weaknesses"; "William I want you to serve me because of your weaknesses."

With each sentence, Jesus spoke to my heart, showing me that my weakness, my struggles, each of my flaws, is the very reason he loves me and wants me to serve him as his priest. When we allow the Lord to heal our wounds, and see our scars, he reveals to us his heart, and the depths of his love for each of us. In examining all of the ways he has saved me from my own sinfulness, my own faults, I cannot help but cry out, "how shall I repay the Lord for his goodness to me" (Ps. 116:12). The answer comes so clearly in the following verses "I will lift up the chalice of salvation and call on the name of the LORD... O Lord I am your servant; I am your servant the son of your handmaid. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord" (vv. 13, 16, 17).

The reality is that Jesus is famished for our love. He desires me and you. There is no amount of sin, no personality trait, or quirk that can take away the Lord's love for each of us. The *Spiritual Exercises* revealed to me the heart of the Father. I now, like Isaiah, can cry out with joy, "My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Take me Lord and do with me as you will!



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"I have been in grief groups before and wasn't sure if this one would be different. It really was. The faith aspect was a game changer. I didn't realize how stuck I was. I feel like I am back to 'normal' and doing things I enjoy again." -J.F.

Some thoughts on the Minneapolis school shooting



CATHOLIC ACTION

DAVID TAMISIEA, JD, PHD

Executive director of the ND Catholic Conference, which acts on behalf of ND Catholic bishops to respond to public policy issues of concern to the Catholic Church.

On the morning of Aug. 27, I attended Mass with my two youngest children at the Catholic Church where they attend school. You could sense among the parents, children, and teachers the excitement, nervousness, and anticipation associated with the first days of school. After Mass, I gave my kids a hug before they gathered their bookbags and headed to school. I left feeling happy and gratified for my children and their wonderful Catholic school.

Soon after I got to my office, I learned the horrific news about the deadly school shooting at the all-school Mass at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis. Early on, we all learned that two young children had been shot and killed. The gunman also injured 18 other schoolchildren and three senior citizens attending the Mass and killed himself at the scene. Later, we learned that the shooter was a 23-year-old young man who identified as a transgender female and had graduated from the school in 2017.

Since the Columbine school shooting in Littleton, Colo., in 1999, where two high school seniors took the lives of 13 of their fellow students and one teacher, there have been hundreds of school shooting events in the United States. Sadly, we are all too familiar with some of the higher profile names—Sandy Hook (Conn. 2012), Parkland (Tex. 2018), Uvalde (Texas 2022), Covenant School (Tenn. 2023), and now, Annunciation School (Minn. 2025).

All these school shootings are terrible tragedies. Mothers and fathers drop their children off at school in the morning, only to learn later in the day that one of their most precious gifts from God had been taken from them by the senseless and cowardly action of a deranged person. My heart breaks for the children, parents, teachers, and others affected by these school shootings.

Why do these school shootings keep happening? Many things come to mind—a secularized culture that rejects God, too easy access to guns, the breakdown of the family, rising cases of mental illness in young people, an epidemic of isolated young men filled with despair and anger, and a culture of death that disregards the value of human life.

While we should exercise caution in trying to point out just one cause, there are some contributing factors that seem just plain obvious in the case of the Annunciation school shooting that any reasonable person should be able to recognize.

First, it was too easy for the shooter to obtain a military-style assault weapon and high-capacity magazines. The shooter used a legally purchased AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle and high-capacity ammunition magazines, which allowed him to fire more rounds without stopping to reload in just a two-minute period, increasing the number of victims. Investigators discovered three used shotgun shells at the scene, but the overwhelming majority of shots fired into the Church (116 rounds) came from the assault rifle.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has long supported a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, as part of a broader call for common-sense gun control measures to curb gun violence. While the Church respects the right of citizens to own firearms, weapons that are increasingly capable of inflicting great suffering on large numbers of people in a short period of time are simply too accessible. Semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines are effectively weapons of war, so that making them easily accessible to civilians is opposed to our duty to promote the common good, protect human life, and preserve peace in society.

The Second Amendment protects the right to keep and bear arms, but like most rights it is not absolute. Public safety demands common-sense limits on gun ownership that allow communities to live without fear of violence at church, school, work, or in other areas of daily life. By way of comparison, the First Amendment protects free speech, but it is not an absolute right either. It does not allow a person to engage in defamatory or fraudulent speech or to cry “fire” in a crowded theater for amusement. Similarly, the right to religious freedom under the First Amendment has guardrails that prohibit harmful religious practices like human sacrifice, polygamy, use of illicit drugs, or violent attacks on non-believers.

Second, the Minneapolis school shooting cannot simply be chalked up to easy availability of dangerous firearms. Deeper spiritual and cultural causes led to the shooter’s violent behavior. The young man was angry, deeply troubled, and in the grip of a dangerous ideology. The shooter, born male but identifying as a female, ensnared by the delusions and psychopathology of the trans movement, made a desperate bid for attention through a hateful act of violence against Catholic schoolchildren. The young man was profoundly conflicted over identifying as a woman. After the incident, investigators discovered that he had left behind a manifesto in which he wrote that he was “tired of being trans” and wished he had not “brainwashed myself”

into being trans. He wrote he could not cut his long hair, meant to make him look female, “as it would be an embarrassing defeat.” The shooter also wrote, “I know I am not a woman, but I definitely don’t feel like a man.”

To be clear, the vast majority of persons who consider themselves transgender do not commit public acts of violence. It would be wrong to paint all transgendered persons with such a broad brush. The Church insists that all persons who are confused about their gender must be treated with compassion, kindness, charity, and respect, and therefore opposes any form of hatred, violence, or unjust discrimination toward them.

Even so, the Church adamantly opposes the trans movement as a false and dangerous ideology that is wreaking havoc in our culture. It is aggressively promoted by academia, the media, popular culture, and a politicized medical establishment, and often fosters in those who consider themselves “trans” a sense of victimhood, resentment, and even hatred toward those who do not accept these lies. But the idea that one can be born in the wrong body or transition to the opposite sex is a metaphysical and biological impossibility. The human person is not a soul trapped in a body, but rather a body/soul unity, made either

male or female. While our Christian faith reveals that human beings are created male or female (Gen. 1:27), it is also obvious according to the order of nature. Gender ideology, however, denies this reality and convinces vulnerable young people they can transition to the opposite sex by presenting themselves as the opposite sex, taking puberty blockers, receiving cross-sex hormones, and undergoing sex-change surgeries. Instead of helping troubled young people, these ideological falsehoods and medical mutilations compound and exacerbate their mental health issues and inner conflict.

Let’s pray for wisdom, courage, and truth in our leaders and in our communities as we grapple with these difficult issues in the wake of another school shooting. In the midst of our pain and sorrow, we should heed the hopeful words of Archbishop Hebda of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocese, after the Annunciation tragedy: “While we need to commit to working to prevent the recurrence of such tragedies, we also need to remind ourselves that we have a God of peace and of love, and that it is his love that we will need most as we strive to embrace those who are hurting so deeply.”



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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.

I have just returned from a rather extraordinary European journey that involved three countries, six separate plane trips, and seven hotels. Now, it wasn't exactly a vacation; rather, it was a multifaceted exercise in the evangelization of the culture. The first leg of my trip took me to France, a country where I lived for three years while pursuing doctoral studies. My purpose was to film a documentary on the Gothic cathedrals, so as to answer a basic question: Why did the Notre-Dame fire from six years ago so grab the attention of the world and galvanize so many to restore the damaged building? My instinct was (and is) that many people, especially in the secularized West, realized, however inchoately, that if Notre-Dame were destroyed, something of incalculable *spiritual* value would be forever lost.

And so, our film crew visited Amiens (the most voluminous of the French cathedrals), Reims (where the kings were crowned), Saint-Denis (the first truly Gothic church and the burial ground of the French monarchs), Notre-Dame (the jewel of Paris), and finally, Chartres (the greatest and most splendid of the cathedrals). What struck me over and over again as I toured these buildings was how different they are from the churches constructed when I was coming of age. In the 1960s and 1970s, the aesthetic governing ecclesiastical architecture was basically Bauhaus modernism: brick walls, no decoration, a paucity of visual symbols, a hyper-stress on the value of the congregation over the church building. In illustration of that last point, I might draw attention to a sentiment expressed in a very influential liturgical document from the seventies to the effect that the building itself is but the "skin" for a liturgical action. Well, I think it's fair to say that the architects of the great Gothic cathedrals would have had no truck with any of that. For them, the cathedral was meant to be a symbolic representation of heaven and of the transfigured earth envisioned by the author of the book of Revelation. That is why they are filled with angels, saints, and idealized elements of nature and why their stained glass is meant to resemble the jeweled walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. How wonderful that church architects with a sensibility more medieval than modernist are on the rise today.

The next stop on my itinerary was Münster, Germany, where I was to be presented with the Josef Pieper Prize. Pieper, an intellectual hero of mine, was one of the most significant Thomist philosophers of the twentieth century. His books on the virtues,

on Aquinas's philosophy, and perhaps most importantly, on the relationship between leisure and culture had a profound impact on many Catholic thinkers of my generation. So, I was deeply honored to receive this recognition, which acknowledged a link between my work and Pieper's. The two days of the ceremony were rich indeed and included learned presentations on Pieper's thought as well as an onstage discussion between me and two German Catholic academics. After receiving the prize, I gave a paper on Pieper's notion of the philosophical act and why that intellectual move is of supreme importance today. A lovely touch: At the conclusion of the ceremony, a classical pianist came forward and performed a medley of Bob Dylan songs for me! I am deeply grateful to the organizers of the event and to the leadership of the Pieper Foundation for two unforgettable days.

Now, just before I arrived in Münster, I received word that I would be met by protesters unhappy with my receiving the Pieper Prize. Their principal complaint seemed to be my participation, at the invitation of President Trump, in a commission dedicated to formulating policy in regard to religious liberty in our country. Because I was representing a Catholic perspective at the table where a matter of great importance was being discussed, I was accused of fomenting American imperialism and of neglecting the human rights of immigrants! I mean, it was just so much nonsense. The intellectual level of the protesters was made evident in the crude slogans they spray-painted on the walls of the hall where I was speaking and on the façade of the church. That they felt the best way to express their dissatisfaction was through an act of desecration shows how corrupt they are. But I must say, little better were the objections expressed by certain members of the theology faculty at the University of Münster. They, too, accused me of Trumpism and, of course, being insufficiently "inclusive," though their letters betrayed absolutely no engagement with any of my work. And I've published thirty books, over a hundred articles, and thousands of videos. When I was a young man, American students of theology looked eagerly to German academics for inspiration. If these professors in Münster are any indication of the state of the German academy, I would tell American students today to look anywhere else.

From Münster, I made my way to Rome for the Jubilee of Young People. On my first day in Rome, I concelebrated a Mass for "Catholic influencers," at the conclusion of which Pope Leo made a surprise appearance, which delighted everyone in attendance. Just after Mass, I had a chance to meet him and shake his hand. I will admit that it was surreal to realize that the successor of Peter is a Chicagoan who grew up about twenty minutes from where I did. That night, under a beautiful Roman sky, Archbishop Fisichella celebrated Mass for over a hundred thousand pilgrims,

and I concelebrated that Mass as well. Afterward, once again, the pope made a surprise appearance, motoring through the massive crowd in the popemobile, accompanied by the screams of the throng of kids.

The next morning, it was my privilege to address about five hundred young people from my ancestral home of Ireland. Though their country is marked by a rather extreme secularism and anticlericalism, these youthful sons and daughters of Ireland exhibited no cowardice of spirit. I encouraged them to return to Ireland under the inspiration of Saint Patrick, who managed, many centuries ago, to convert an entirely pagan country to the faith. Finally, that evening, I spoke to around four thousand young Americans who had gathered in the massive basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. Speaking only about twenty yards from the tomb of Saint Paul himself, I led the crowd in a little imaginative exercise. I invited them to think of the glory and power of ancient Rome, the civilization that once dominated the world and whose rulers put to death both Peter and Paul. Then I asked them, "But where is Nero's successor? Where is the mighty Roman Empire?" The answers came readily enough: "nowhere and turned to dust." "But where," I continued, "is the successor of Peter?" The answer: "We all saw him last night in

Saint Peter's Square!" I told that army of young Catholics that critics and enemies of Christianity have been predicting our demise for centuries. But we're still standing—while they are gone with the wind.

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(Act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685)
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Paul Braun, Editor

Sister Joseph-Marie O Carm passes away Sept. 3



Sister Joseph Marie of the Child Jesus, Incarnate Wisdom, O.Carm., Carmelite Nun from the Carmel of Mary Monastery, rural Wahpeton entered eternity Sept. 3 after a several month bout with cancer.

Joanne was the daughter of Ovide and Marie Bedard living in Berwyn, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Brothers Bob and Ray rounded out the family. Their parents were totally and lovingly devoted to their youngsters and thought nothing of the sacrifices made for them.

When she was 6 years old, the family was traveling to Tucson, Arizona at night and crashed into a trailer truck. They had just prayed the Rosary, Act of Contrition, and a prayer to their Guardian Angels when they crashed and were thrown from the car. When the police arrived and saw the disaster, they said it was a miracle they were not all killed as their car was totally demolished.

Joanne attended St. Leonard's grade school. Taught by Sisters of St. Joseph, then Nazareth Academy and Sacred Heart

Academy taught by Benedictine Sisters.

In high school, during a retreat given to the students the retreat masters told them to ask God what their vocation would be. Joanne, who was very popular with the boys knew her vocation for certain: marriage and a family. She stayed clear of the table containing literature about religious life.

Then during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, as the Sacred Host was raised in Blessing a powerful grace entered Joanne's heart and soul, and she knew for certain that she had found the all-perfect lover: Our Blessed Lord.

From then on, she knew she was called to become a Religious. Her spiritual director encouraged her to write to several monasteries. The response to her letter to the Carmelite Nuns in Allentown, Pa., suggested that she write to the Carmel of Mary, founded the year before in Wahpeton.

Joanne entered the Community July 16, 1956, receiving the name, Sister Joseph Marie of the Child Jesus. She would say, "The quota in the novitiate doubled overnight," for there has been only one novice before her entrance.

Novitiate—Jan. 23, 1957; Simple Vows—Feb. 2, 1958; Solemn Vows—Feb. 2, 1961.

Her funeral took place Sept. 12 at St. John's Church, Wahpeton.

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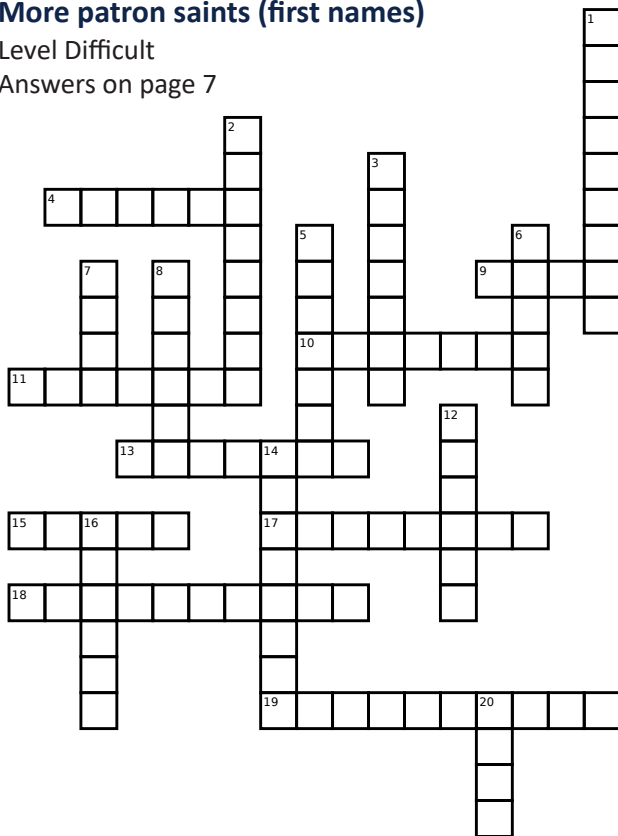
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Level Difficult

Answers on page 7



Down:

- 1 Sudan
- 2 monks, students
- 3 animals, stowaways, ecologists
- 5 Dominican Republic, people falsely accused
- 6 nonviolence, Africa
- 7 France, the military, people ridiculed for their faith
- 8 archaeologists, divorced people, new discoveries
- 12 joy, laughter, speakers
- 14 spiritual retreats, soldiers, educators
- 16 Missionaries of Charity
- 20 the blind, salesmen, writers

Across:

- 4 beggars, soldiers, tailors
- 9 contemplatives, mystics, poets
- 10 agriculture, farmers, day laborers
- 11 charities, hospitals, social workers, seminary professors
- 13 Ireland, against fear of snakes and snakebites
- 15 people in slavery, sea travelers
- 17 children, brides, givers of anonymous gifts
- 18 Lourdes, poverty, shepherds
- 19 Poland, soldiers in battle, moral order

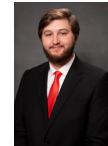
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LIFE'S MILESTONES



Ken and Idey Breidenbach, parishioners of St. Leo's in Casselton, will celebrate 60 years of marriage Oct. 23. They are blessed with 12 children, 46 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren, and another sweet great-grand-baby on the way.



Roger and Marilyn Gilbertson, parishioners of Sts. Anne & Joachim in Fargo, will celebrate their 50th anniversary Oct. 11. They were married at St. Elizabeth in Dilworth, Minn. They have 1 daughter and 2 grandchildren.



Ed and Bonnie Miller, parishioners of St. Joseph's in Devils Lake, will celebrate 60 years of marriage Oct. 9. They were married at St. Joseph's. They have 2 children, 6 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren.



Francis and Marilyn Praska, parishioners of St. Joseph's in Lankin, will celebrate their 60th anniversary Oct. 16. They are blessed with 3 children and their spouses and 7 grandchildren. They were married at St. Joseph's.



Dallas Boeddeker, parishioner of St. Rose of Lima in Hillsboro, celebrated his 90th birthday Sept. 26. He and his wife MarAnn have been married for 69 years and are blessed with 3 children, 5 grandchildren, and 4 great-granddaughters. Dallas is a lifetime member of the Hillsboro Knights of Columbus and a 4th degree Knight.



Dorothy (Leier) Brown, parishioner of St. Boniface in Esmond, celebrated her 90th birthday Sept. 25. She was married to Reuben Brown for 59 years until his death in 2016. She has 5 children, 15 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren, and 5 great-great-grandchildren.



Angela Sauvageau, parishioner of the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo since 1947, will celebrate her 100th birthday Oct. 29. She was married for 74 years to Edward before his passing in 2015. They have 11 children, 24 grandchildren, 52 great-grandchildren, and 30 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, two months prior, or one month following. Send a photo with text to Susan.Noah@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 Nov. issue is Oct. 14. Deadline for the Dec. issue is Nov. 11.

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Quotable

St. Faustina

Feast day Oct. 5

"I fixed my gaze upon His sacred wounds and felt happy to suffer with Him. I suffered, and yet I did not suffer, because I felt happy to know the depth of His love, and the hour passed like a minute."

Fall Dinner and Bazaar

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Most Reverend John T. Folda, Celebrant

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 — 1950

Official 1950 Diocese of Fargo Holy Year Pilgrimage to Rome: A 26 day Pilgrimage to Rome to be made entirely by air, open to the general public. Cost of the trip is \$1198, round trip from Fargo and includes: airline tickets, comfortable hotel rooms, meals, baggage transfers, conducted sightseeing, transportation in Europe and tips. Tour includes stopovers in Holland, Germany, Italy, France, England, and Ireland. Full itinerary sent on request.

50 years ago — 1975

The Rural Ministry Workshop, convened at Maryvale, Valley City, Oct 22 & 23, provided 75 priests of the Diocese of Fargo an opportunity to examine the events taking place in rural America and to reflect on their implication in regard to ministry and styles of leadership. Lectures by four nationally known priests highlighted the meeting, which also included deanery-level discussions and an action agenda session for Diocesan Commission.

20 years ago — 2005

Catholic youth and advisors pulled into the welcoming town of Harvey on Oct. 21 to take part in this year's Catholic Youth Celebration. Whether through service projects, speakers or reconciliation, this year's theme of service floated from the halls of St. Cecilia's to the farthest corners of Harvey. Youth Celebration was evaluated by many that attended as a complete success. We came to serve one another as God asks and found friends in faith. Those involved were left with only good things to say.

Diocesan policy: Reporting child abuse

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

Fall parish events

Thompson: St Jude's will host a fall turkey dinner Oct. 5 from noon to 5 p.m. Bake sale.

6 miles east of Dazey: St. Mary's will host a Fall Supper Oct. 5 from 4 to 7 p.m. Turkey dinner includes homemade sauerkraut. Adults \$15, ages 6–12 \$6, ages 5 and under free. Take-out available. Chair lift. Gift baskets and Oliver's Pumpkin Patch.

Medina: St. Mary's will serve a Chicken Dinner Oct. 5, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Medina Legion Hall. Oven-baked chicken, baked potato, side dishes, relishes, and dessert. Adults \$12.50; ages 6-12 \$6; ages 5 and under free. Country store with baked goods and crafts for sale.

Argusville: St. William's Church invites you to their annual fall dinner, bake sale, country market, and raffle at the Argusville Community Center Oct. 5 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Suggested \$15 donation. Contact (701) 261-4800 or tim.keckler@gmail.com.

Milnor: St. Arnold's will host their annual Chili & Pie Supper Oct. 8, from 5 to 7 p.m. in their social hall. Homemade chili with toppings plus homemade pie. Take-out meals available.

Kindred: St. Maurice Annual Turkey Dinner will be held Oct. 12 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dinner includes turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, coleslaw, and dessert. Adults \$15, ages 5 to 10 \$6, and ages 4 and under free. Take-out meals \$15.

Langdon: St. Alphonsus will host their turkey and ham dinner Oct. 12 from 4 to 7 pm. Adults \$15; Kindergarten to 6th grade \$8; pre-k \$5; Take-out meals \$16. Cake walk.

Hunter: St. Agnes will host their fall dinner Oct. 12 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Turkey, homemade mashed potatoes, carrots, stuffing, and dessert. Adults \$15, ages 10 and under \$12. Take-out available for additional \$1.

Fingal: Holy Trinity will host a turkey dinner and bake sale Oct. 12 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, dressing, cranberries, corn, buns, coleslaw, dessert. Adults \$15. Grades K-6 \$7. Pre-school free.

Harvey: St. Cecilia's will host its Annual Fall Supper Oct. 19 from 5 to 7 p.m. Turkey, homemade mashed potatoes, dressing, green beans, rolls and dessert. Adults \$12, ages 6-12 \$8, ages 5 and under free. Take-out meals available 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Silent auction held during the meal.

West Fargo: Holy Cross will host its Oktoberfest celebration all weekends in October. Raffle, 50/50, chance baskets, silent auction, books & puzzles, cork pull, baked & canned goods, kids activities, and more. Bingo games Oct. 12. On Oct. 19, a Yankee pot roast or baked chicken tenderloin dinner will be served 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Adults \$15, ages 10 & under \$7. Take-out available. Contact church for more info (701) 282-7217.

Reynolds: Reynolds Knights of Columbus will host a Fall Supper and Bazaar Oct. 26 from noon to 4 p.m. at the Reynolds KC

Hall. Turkey, ham, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, and corn. Adults \$15, ages 6 to 12 \$5, pre-school \$2. Take-out available.

Fargo: Holy Spirit is hosting their fall festival Oct. 26. Turkey dinner from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Kids games, bingo, silent auction, and bake sale. Free will offering.

Minto: Sacred Heart Church is hosting a fall dinner Nov. 2 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Minto Community Center. Ham, meatballs, potatoes, gravy, sauerkraut, pork, carrots, dinner rolls, pies, desserts. Bake sale, quilt raffle, and mini raffle. For take-out, call Dawn (701) 360-3858 or Lynn (701) 430-8956.

Cassellton: St. Leo's Fall Dinner will be held Nov. 2 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. To go meals available. Roast beef, mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, coleslaw, dessert.

LaMoure: Holy Rosary will host their Annual Buffalo Supper Nov. 2 from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Adults \$18, ages 6–12 \$9, age 5 and under free. Reserve your dine-in, take-out, or delivery meals by calling (701) 883-5987. Menu includes buffalo, mashed potatoes, gravy, coleslaw, corn, dessert, and beverages.

Hillsboro: St. Rose of Lima will host their fall dinner Nov. 2 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, dressing, carrots, pie, and all the trimmings. Adults \$15, ages K-6 \$5, preschool free. Take-outs and gluten-free meal available.

Grand Forks: Holy Family Church Altar Society is hosting their 65th annual Christmas Tea Nov. 8 from 1 to 4 p.m. Fresh baked pie, tea, coffee, and cider will be served, bake sale with lefse and raffle. Contact parish at (701) 746-1454.

Fargo: Nativity Church will hold its annual Fall Festival Nov. 9 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Padre's Chicken and "all the fixin's," dessert, featuring Chef Fr. Jim Meyer (served 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.) Suggested cost adults \$15, ages 4-11 \$6. Raffle, bake sale, heavenly basket silent auction, jeweled treasures, book nook, games, cake walk, square boards, and more.

For all diocesan events,
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and click on the "events" tab.



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Bishop Andrew Cozzens opens cause for Sister Annella Zervas, OSB

By Diocese of Crookston

The Sister Annella Guild is pleased to announce the opening of the cause for the canonization of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB. A professed Benedictine of Saint Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, Sister Annella died in 1926 at the age of 26 after a life marked by profound faith, virtue, and patient endurance of great physical suffering. Her witness to Christ continues to inspire the faithful today. Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens, S.T.D., D.D., formally announced the opening of the cause Aug. 20 in an official video statement.

After completing the necessary preliminary investigation, Bishop Cozzens has received a *nihil obstat* from the Holy See, indicating that there is no objection to formally opening the diocesan phase of the cause. This phase will include:

- Collection of testimonies regarding Sister Annella's life, virtues, and reputation for sanctity.
- Consideration of any reported favors attributed to her intercession.
- The establishment of a historical commission in accordance with the norms of Canon Law.

The Mass will be celebrated in person and via livestream on Oct. 9, at 6:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Crookston, Minn. Doors open at 4 p.m. for an exhibit on the life of Sister Annella. At 5 p.m., Patrick Norton will share his story, followed by an organ recital at 6 p.m., and the Opening Mass at 6:30 p.m. Food will be available for purchase. The faithful of the diocese and beyond are invited to participate in the cause by:

- Offering prayers for the progress of the cause.

OPENING MASS
FOR THE CAUSE OF

SISTER ANNELLA ZERVAS, OSB

Thursday, October 9, 2025
Activities Start at 4:00 PM CDT
Opening Mass at 6:30 PM CDT

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
702 Summit Ave N, Crookston, MN 56716

Learn more at sisterannella.org/mass



- Sharing personal testimonies or historical information about Sister Annella's life, impact, or virtue.
- Reporting any favors, graces, or healings received through her intercession.

Information about the cause—including how to submit testimonies or favors, report graces received, and become a member of the Guild—is available at sisterannella.org. Updates on the progress of the cause will be shared regularly through diocesan channels and the Guild's website.

The opening of Sister Annella's cause reflects the Church's careful discernment and the enduring devotion that has remained strong since her death nearly a century ago. Her example of surrender to God's will, patient endurance of suffering, and love for the Holy Eucharist serves as a model for Christian life today.



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Pope Leo XIV proclaims Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati saints

By Kristina Millare | Catholic News Agency

Pope Leo XIV proclaimed Italians Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis as saints of the Church on Sept. 7, decreeing their veneration among the Catholic faithful.

The canonizations of the two men, promulgated before an estimated 70,000 people in St. Peter's Square, were the first of Leo's pontificate.

The congregation, which included the family of Acutis, applauded after Pope Leo pronounced the rite of canonization and declared the two patrons of young people as the Church's newest saints.

In his homily, the Holy Father reflected on a passage from the Book of Wisdom, which was read by Acutis' younger brother Michele, during the Mass celebration.

"[Lord], who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?" Leo said, quoting the Old Testament passage. "This question comes after two young blessed, Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, were proclaimed saints."

"This is providential because in the Book of Wisdom, this question is attributed to a young man like them: King Solomon. Upon the death of his father David, he realized that he had many things: power, wealth, health, youth, beauty, and the entire kingdom," he continued.

Leo spoke extensively about the two new saints in his homily, departing from his predecessor's practice. Pope Francis normally said little on such occasions about the people he had just canonized.

Like Solomon, Leo said, the new saints Carlo and Pier Giorgio understood that friendship with Jesus and faithfully following "God's plans" is greater than any other worldly pursuits.

God "calls us to abandon ourselves without hesitation to the adventure that he offers us with the intelligence and strength that comes from his Spirit," Leo said Sept. 7.

"We can receive to the extent that we empty ourselves of the things and ideas to which we are attached, in order to listen to his word," he continued.

The Holy Father also spoke of other young saints throughout history, including St. Francis of Assisi, who saw it was wise to prefer the love of God and others over riches.

"Today we look to St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis: a young man from the early 20th century and a teenager from our own day, both in love with Jesus and ready to give everything for him," he said.

"Dear friends, Sts. Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis

are an invitation to all of us, especially young people, not to squander our lives but to direct them upwards and make them masterpieces," he added.

Describing their "winning formula" for holiness, the Holy Father spoke about the ordinary circumstances through which they dedicated their lives to God.

"Pier Giorgio encountered the Lord through school and church groups—Catholic Action, the Conferences of St. Vincent, the FUCI [Italian Catholic University Federation], the Dominican Third Order—and he bore witness to God with his joy of living and of being a Christian in prayer, friendship, and charity," he said.

"Carlo, for his part, encountered Jesus in his family, thanks to his parents, Andrea and Antonia—who are here today with his two siblings, Francesca and Michele—and then at school, and above all in the sacraments celebrated in the parish community," he added.

According to the pope, the two Italian saints cultivated their love for God and for their brothers and sisters through "simple acts" of "daily Mass, prayer, and especially Eucharistic adoration," which are available to every Catholic.

At the end of the Mass, which he concelebrated with approximately 2,000 other priests, Pope Leo invoked the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary for peace, "especially in the Holy Land and in Ukraine and in every other land that is facing blood."

"I invite all the authorities to listen and to put down the weapons that lead to destruction and death... they never bring peace and security," he said.

"God does not want war. God wants peace. God sustains those who fight for peace and who follow the path of dialogue," he added, before leading the congregation in praying the Angelus. Leo closed out the event by making a circuit of the square in his popemobile, waving at the crowd and stopping frequently to bless babies handed to him by his bodyguards.

One pilgrim present in the square, Australian Caroline Khouri, told CNA the celebration was one she would "remember forever."

"The joy in the atmosphere here is incredible," she said.



Pope Leo canonizes Sts. Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Sept. 7. (Vatican Media)



How about we talk about “thoughts and prayers?”



SIDEWALK STORIES

ROXANE B. SALONEN

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

Every once in a while, I zoom out from the sidewalk to discuss issues outside of it, yet still very much connected to it.

Here in October, Respect Life Month, we're in the middle of the fall 40 Days for Life campaign to pray and fast for an end to abortion, while still reeling from the tragic shooting at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis at the end of August. These two are not unrelated. Let me explain.

In the aftermath of the abovementioned shooting, some politicians responded with, “Enough with the thoughts and prayers,” which immediately troubled me. I raised this concern on a local Facebook page for area Catholics and was shocked when several people popped in to defend that sentiment.

Since when have thoughts and prayers become superfluous to Christians? Are we not the foremost promoters of prayer? Of making our first appeal to our God?

Thankfully, Bishop Robert Barron and others took issue with those who intimated that prayer is ineffective, since the children who were killed or hurt were at school praying. In other words, their pleas to God apparently fell on deaf ears.

Well, that's not the way prayer works, the good bishop said, and I wholeheartedly agree. I would go a step further and say we actually need more thoughts and prayers. I agree with those who've called this moment, above all, a spiritual crisis.

Just hours after the shooting, a friend from Minneapolis began touting the “It's all about guns” bit. While we do need to examine how the young shooter ended up with these weapons, there's so much more to examine here.

If it were just about guns, 9-11 wouldn't have happened. The killers for that tragedy used planes, not guns, to do their dirty deeds. Evil can be creative to a point and it will find a way. But love can be even more creative, if channeled rightly.

So what's the source of love? God. God is love. So it is to God that we must make our first appeal in the fight against

evil. Suggesting that we “stop with the thoughts and prayers” in these times is not a sentiment God would hold or utter. Only Old Scratch himself would suggest such a thing.

The abortion escorts have made such a suggestion to us many times. “Aren't you supposed to pray in secret?” and “You should just go home and pray.” An interesting proposal, don't you think? Why would they want us to leave so badly if our “thoughts and prayers” were not making a difference?

And here, we find the connection between the Minneapolis school shooting and the sidewalk of our area's only abortion facility, where too many of our smallest citizens are discarded every week. When we do experience a “save” there, it is largely because of—that's right—thoughts and prayers. The politicians have their objectives, but we are there, first and foremost, with our *thoughts and our prayers*.

We longtime advocates know well that we can't do anything without the power of God. He is the one who saves. We can have conversations, we can offer resources, but the most efficacious thing we can do is pray; pray to the almighty God, who made heaven and earth.

That is what we do there each week primarily, and why we continue to ask others to join us in this fight. Politicians have their part to play, but for us common Christians, our first defense in helping save precious children in the womb should be—as anytime we are fighting for life—prayer.

As Vice President J.D. Vance said soon after the shooting, in response to those who were demeaning prayer in those early hours, “We pray because our hearts are broken. We pray because we know God listens.” Amen!

The fall 40 Days for Life prayer and fasting campaign to end abortion continues until Nov. 2. If you cannot be on the sidewalk with us, we thank you in advance for your thoughts and prayers from home. They mean so much to us, especially on Wednesdays when abortions are generally scheduled. But if you've ever been moved to bring your thoughts and prayers forward, toward the very door at which death beckons to our little ones, please join us.

Our thoughts absolutely matter, and our prayers, even more. For “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:24).

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Where in the diocese are we?

Last month's photo is of
St. Agnes Church in Hunter.