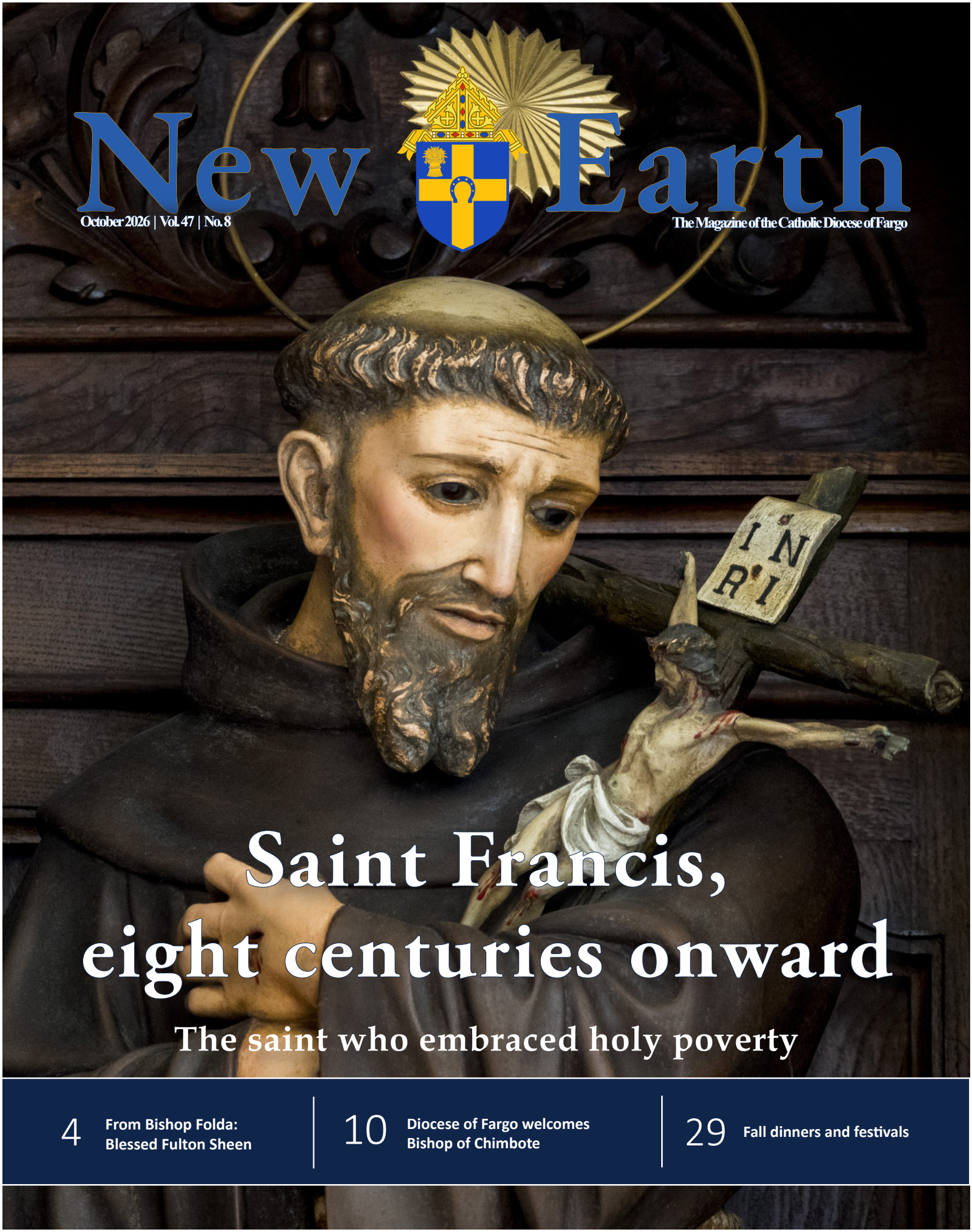
New Earth

October 2026 | Vol. 47 | No. 8

The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo



Saint Francis, eight centuries onward

The saint who embraced holy poverty

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29 Fall dinners and festivals

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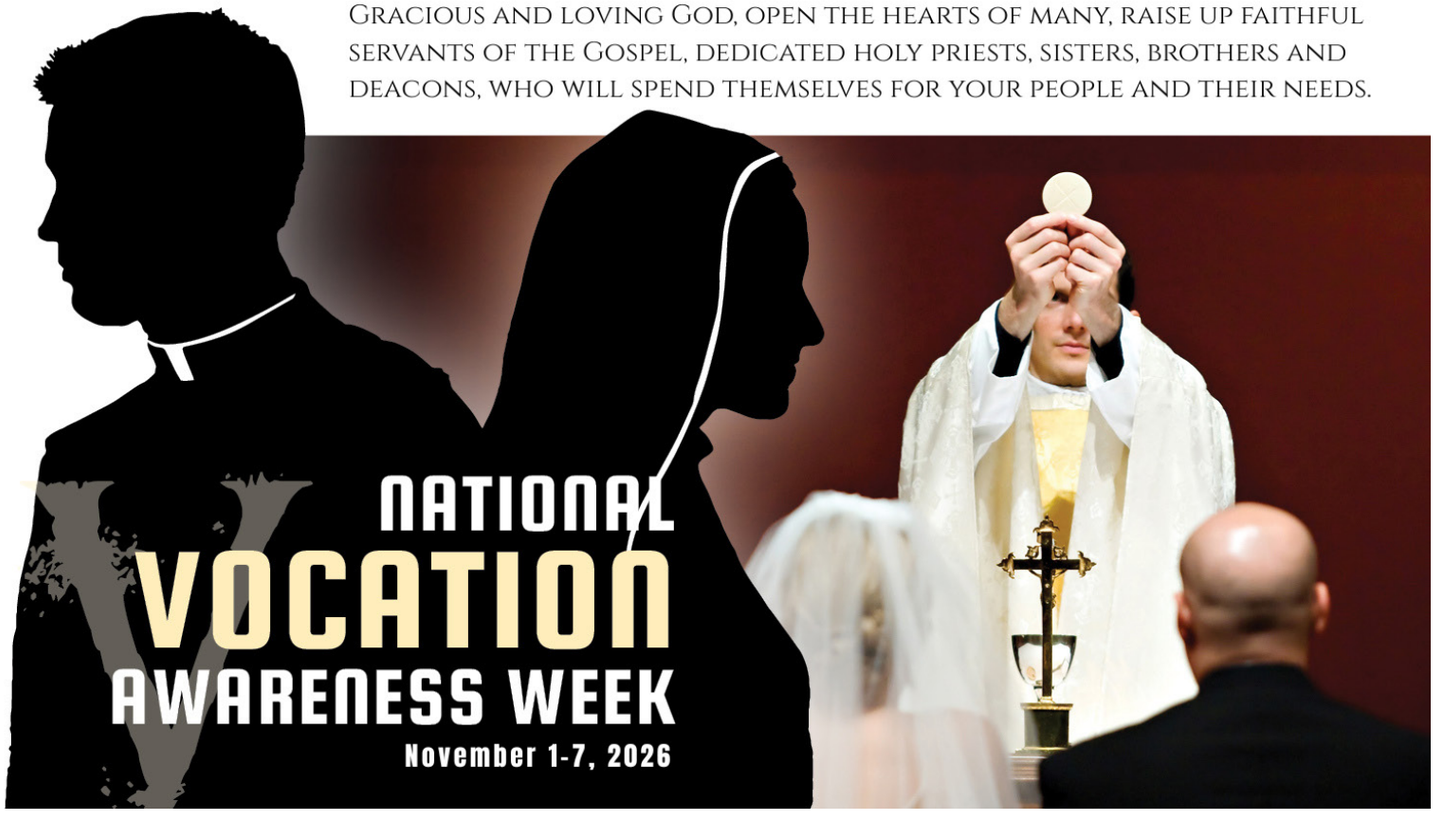


Led by:
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ON THE COVER:
A statue depicts Saint Francis of Assisi embracing the Crucifix. (Cathopic)

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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. *New Earth* is the official monthly publication of the Diocese of Fargo.

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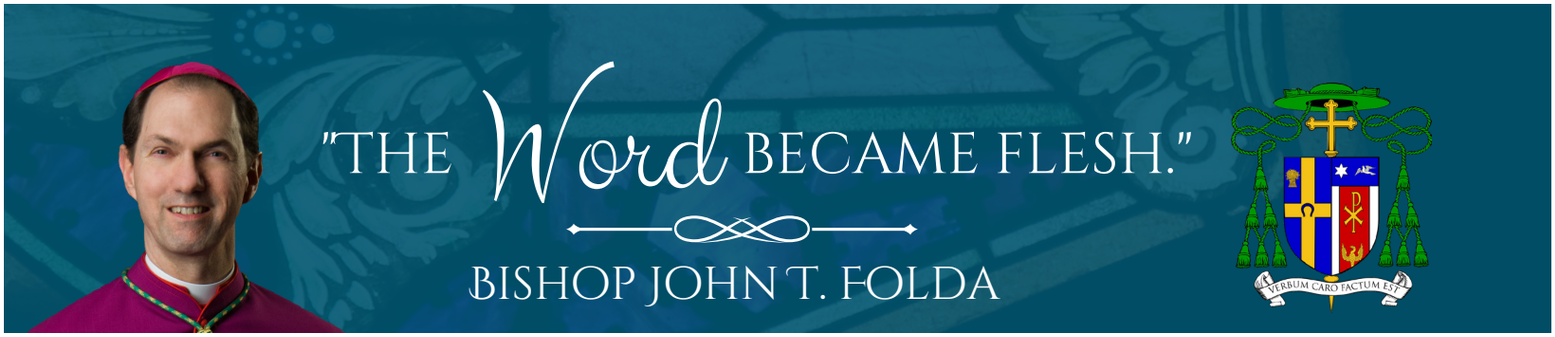
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Blessed Fulton Sheen

The Church in the United States recently rejoiced to celebrate the beatification of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, the first American-born bishop to be declared "Blessed." Bishop Robert Barron counts Archbishop Sheen as one of the "pivotal players" in the history of the Church. There is no doubt that he had a profound impact on the life of the Church in this country.

Fulton Sheen was born in rural Illinois, a small-town boy who knew at an early age that he was called to the priesthood. After his ordination as a priest, he did parish work and was sent by his bishop for advanced studies. He was known to be a gifted teacher and communicator. This talent would play an important part in his entire life as a priest and bishop. As a young priest, he recognized the value of radio as a means of sharing the faith with great numbers of people. He launched a radio program that soon reached nationwide into the homes of millions of people, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. With his eloquent but understandable style, he spoke about every aspect of the Catholic faith. He helped millions come to a deeper knowledge of God and the gift of faith. In a similar way, when television became the dominant medium of communication, he realized that he needed to take his ministry in a new direction. He started a television program called "Life is Worth Living." He reached millions of homes with his weekly explanations of the faith. He even won an Emmy award for his program. With good humor, he gave credit to his writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John!

During this time, Fulton Sheen was appointed a bishop, and this gave his work of sharing the faith even greater fame. He became the most prominent and original Catholic evangelist in this country and beyond, using the mass media to share the faith with countless souls. Pope Leo XIV gave his own personal witness to the importance of the new "blessed," saying, "Archbishop Sheen was a light of faith, hope, and love that shone through the radio and television media for decades. I myself am a witness of his evangelization when I was growing up. His broadcasts touched millions with the hope of the Gospel, and his initiatives and efforts resulted in enormous spiritual and material aid to the Churches in areas of the first evangelization."

But underlying his popularity as a well-known evangelist was a deep, personal faith. He was especially drawn to our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. Early in his priesthood, he resolved to make a Holy Hour every day of his life. Wherever he was, no matter what his schedule demanded, he always made time to spend an hour in prayer with our Lord, preferably in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. He called this "the hour that makes my day." He maintained that this daily time of prayer is what allowed him to reach so many souls through his preaching and teaching. In the many retreats and priest conferences that he gave throughout his life, he always urged priests to adopt the habit of a daily holy hour, assuring them that the hour they gave to the Lord would bear abundant fruit in their priestly lives. I think most priests would agree that he was right.

Archbishop Sheen had a special zeal for the mission work of the Church. He served for many years as the national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In this role, he was the public face of the Church's efforts for the foreign missions. He encouraged every Catholic to support the Church's missions through prayer and sacrificial giving. Archbishop Sheen understood that the Church was founded by Jesus to go out into the world for the salvation of souls. He was convinced that every Catholic, whatever their state in life, had a part to play in the missionary work of the Church, both here at home and throughout the world. In this way, he anticipated the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and all of the recent popes, who call all members of the Church to be missionary disciples. Fulton Sheen lived this in his own life as follower of Jesus who gladly went wherever he was sent to share the Gospel.

His missionary journeys also helped Archbishop Sheen to understand the plight of the poor. He actively worked to address the needs of those in poverty. Using his gifts as a communicator, he advocated for justice as well as charity for the downtrodden, recognizing in each of them the person of Jesus walking among us. He quietly gave of his own personal resources and actively lived what he preached.

In many ways, Fulton Sheen was a man ahead of his time. He could see the decline of Christian civilization in the twentieth century, so he adopted the means available to him to build up the faithful and address the challenges of the modern era. He was a prophetic voice, but also was a humble man who took no credit for the successes of his ministry. In all things, he put his faith entirely in Jesus. For all of his forward thinking, he knew that his foundation was the ancient apostolic faith of the Church, with Christ himself as the cornerstone. Fulton Sheen was a holy man who still speaks to our own times, nearly fifty years after his death. As the Church recognizes his holiness, he continues to lead us to Jesus, as he did so well during his long life here on earth.

Blessed Fulton Sheen, pray for us!

BISHOP FOLDA'S CALENDAR

Oct. 5-17
Greece Pilgrimage

Oct. 20 at 5:30 p.m.
Operation Andrew Dinner, Bishop Residence, Fargo

Oct. 21 at 6:30 p.m.
Mercy Hour with Bishop Cozzens
St. Paul Newman Center, Fargo

Oct. 22 at 9:30 a.m.
Mass for Feast Day of St. John Paul II
Shanley High, Fargo

Oct. 23 at 5 p.m.
All Saints Gala, Ralph Engelstad Arena, Grand Forks

Oct. 24 at 9 a.m.
Musicians Workshop, St. Paul Newman Center, Fargo

Oct. 24 at 4:30 p.m.
HOPE Dinner, St. John's Academy, Jamestown

Oct. 27 at 6:30 p.m.
An Evening with the Shepherd, Maryvale, Valley City

Oct. 28 at 3 p.m.
St. JPII Board Meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo

Oct. 29 at 2 p.m.
Diocesan Pastoral Council, Pastoral Center, Fargo

Oct. 30-1
Beatification of Pedro de Corpa and Four Companions
Savannah, Ga.

Nov. 9-10
Catholic Rural Life, St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

Prayer Intentions of Pope Leo XIV



For the mental health ministry

Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.

Official Appointments/ Announcements

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

I hereby grant:

Deacon John Bredemeier permission to retire from active ministry as a Permanent Deacon of the Diocese of Fargo effective September 8, 2026.

I hereby appoint:

Rev. Kevin J. Boucher Dean of Deanery 6, Diocese of Fargo, North Dakota for a term of five years beginning September 9, 2026.

Rev. Matthew J. Kraemer Dean of Deanery 5, Diocese of Fargo, North Dakota for a term of five years beginning September 9, 2026.

I hereby recognize the appointment of:

Fr. Edwin Arul as a member of the Presbyteral Council. The appointment is effective September 28, 2026 and concludes on September 28, 2029.

Fr. James A. Meyer as a member of the Presbyteral Council. The appointment is effective September 28, 2026 and concludes on September 28, 2029.



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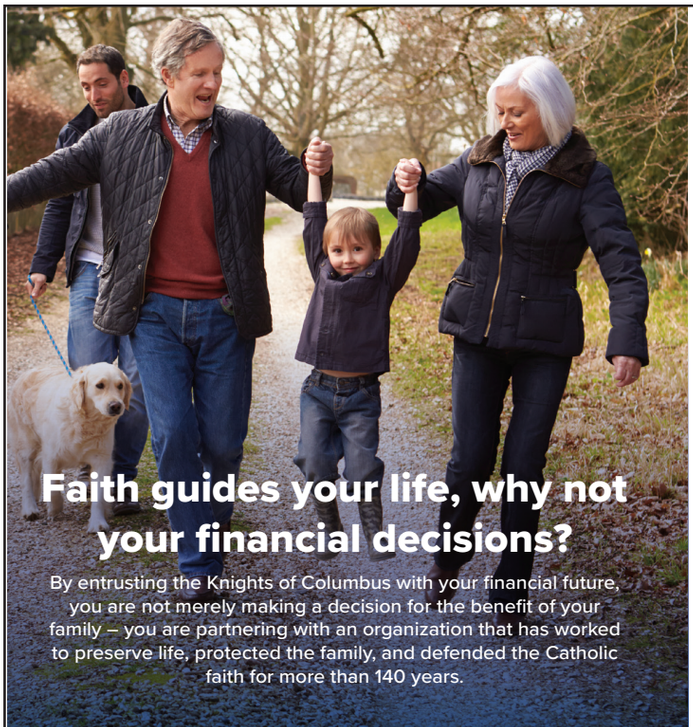
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St. John's in Wahpeton gives new moms extra help

Connie S. Brandt | Pro-Life Chair -St. John's Church, Wahpeton

"We did it again," said volunteers with St. John's Walking With Moms in Need, (WWMIN) ministry as they completed their third Bundle Up Your Baby Bump (BUYBB) with Catholic Charities North Dakota on Saturday, Sept. 12, at St. John's Catholic School Gym in Wahpeton.

The free baby item giveaway welcomed all new and expectant parents to shop. The gently used and donated items had all been inspected and sorted into sizes and categories every Tuesday afternoon throughout this spring and summer.

The items encompassed newborn to 5T clothing, blankets, infant swings, backpacks, pack and play sets, cribs with mattresses, strollers, highchairs, toys, books and maternity clothes.

The local school gym was fully lined with tables filled with the sorted, giveaway, donated clothing, furniture and toys. The donations came from the Wahpeton community and a number of parishes of Deanery One in the Diocese of Fargo.

St. John's WWMIN ministry previously hosted the BUYBB program with Catholic Charities in 2022 and 2024 with Aaron and Brenda Morman once again chairing the events.

After gifting every mom who came to our event with diapers and baby wipes, we had diapers and wipes filling our parish shelves for the months to come. We donated diapers in various sizes to our local food pantry.

This event was truly supported by our pastor Rev. Father Greg Haman, St. John's parish, parish staff, parish Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters, local media, sponsorships from local businesses, men, women, and youth of the Wahpeton community.



Guests browse through baby items at St. John's school gymnasium Sept. 12 at the Bundle Up Your Baby Bump event. (submitted photo)

Our WWMIN ministry was organized four years ago and has joined the nationwide effort to increase outreach and support for pregnant and parenting mothers. To offer encouragement and assistance locally as they seek to answer God's call in their lives. WWMIN is a program introduced by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Benedictine monk becomes lector

Abbot Valerian of Assumption Abbey in Richardton on Aug. 24 conferred the ministry of lector upon Brother Stephen Johnson, praying to God: "Grant that as he meditates constantly on your word, he may grow in its wisdom and faithfully proclaim it to your people."

Brother Stephen, who grew up as a parishioner at Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church in Fargo, professed solemn vows as a Benedictine monk in July 2023. As a lector, he is specially tasked to proclaim scripture in liturgy.

He is continuing studies and discerning ordination to the priesthood. In October he begins his second year of theology in Rome at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm, known in Italian as "Sant'Anselmo."

"Sant'Anselmo is the central hub for the Benedictine order," Brother Stephen told *New Earth*. "The Abbot Primate is based there, and it includes a residence for monks studying in Rome supervised by a prior."

"Despite the natural difficulty of studying in a foreign language, it has proven to be golden opportunity to make connections with monks from around the world," he added.



Abbot Valerian and Brother Stephen Johnson, O.S.B. at Assumption Abbey Aug. 24. (Assumption Abbey)

Youth encounter Jesus through summer discipleship

By Brady Borselein | Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Diocese of Fargo

Five years ago, the Diocese of Fargo launched a renewed vision for youth ministry through the Cor Christi Missionaries—Cor Christi meaning "Heart of Christ." The mission was simple: to reach young people throughout every corner of the diocese and invite them into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

To accomplish this mission, the Cor Christi team focused on three primary areas of ministry: weekly XLT gatherings, summer camps and conferences. Through these opportunities, young people are able to encounter Christ, build authentic friendships, and grow in their faith.

This past year, seven young adult missionaries served on the Cor Christi team and maintained a full ministry schedule. They organized 14 XLT events, launched a new camp for high school students and led Camp Summit, the Diocese of Fargo's flagship summer camp experience. Through their dedication and commitment, hundreds of young people had opportunities to deepen their relationship with Christ.

XLT, which stands for Exalt, combines recreation, fellowship, and prayer into one evening experience. The night begins with a high-energy game known as "Shtick," followed by a shared meal. Participants then gather in the chapel for the heart of the evening, which includes a presentation, Eucharistic Adoration and the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Throughout the summer, participation continued to grow. Weekly attendance increased from about 75 students to more than 100 middle and high school youth. Young people came from communities across the diocese, including Napoleon, Rugby, Hillsboro, Jamestown and Grand Forks.

This growth reflects a genuine desire among young people to know Jesus more deeply, to grow within a faith-filled community, and to find a welcoming place where they belong. It is also a testament to the work of the Cor Christi Missionaries, who invest countless hours preparing events, leading discussions, mentoring youth and creating opportunities for life-changing encounters with Christ.



Cor Christi missionaries Aiden Bruck, Anna Jennen, Maia Langseth, Erika Wanner, Kelly Roberts, Claire Splonskowski and David Hollcraft (photo supplied)



Eucharistic adoration at D-Week with Father Reese Weber in Red Willow Chapel June 2026. (Photo supplied)

Through their witness, leadership, and commitment to evangelization, they help create opportunities for youth to encounter Jesus Christ, deepen their faith, and build lasting relationships rooted in Christian community. We are grateful to offer these transformative experiences through the missionary team, but sustaining this ministry comes with ongoing costs. From missionary stipends to daily operational expenses, supporting the team requires both prayer and financial support.

If you feel called to partner with us in the mission of forming young disciples, we invite you to support the Missionary Endowment Fund. Contributions to this fund help ensure that the work of the Cor Christi Missionaries can continue to impact the lives of young people throughout the diocese for years to come.

To make a gift, please scan the QR code or contact Brady Borslien or Haley Smith at the Diocese of Fargo for more.information.

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Price: $1520 (based on shared room without air ticket). A group flight option will also be made available. See details on website. The price Includes accommodations with breakfast near St. Peter's Basilica, bus/train tickets, museums and all but 5 meals on your own.

Registraion and information on the website
www.fargodiocese.org/youngadultpilgrimage
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Faith, friendship and solidarity: Diocese of Fargo welcomes Bishop of Chimbote

By Paul Braun | Editor of *New Earth*

For over four decades, parishes in the Diocese of Fargo have supported the needs of the Diocese of Chimbote in Peru through an organization called Friends of Chimbote. That support has included monetary donations, donations of food and materials, mission trips to Chimbote to build much needed infrastructure and, of course, prayer.

The Chimbote area is one of the most impoverished in Peru. Fishing is a primary industry there, but it has been impacted by overfishing and climate change including the El Niño phenomenon.

In February 2025, at the invitation of Bishop Ernesto Bances of Chimbote, Bishop John Folda of Fargo visited Peru to see for himself the fruits of the labors put in by the many Fargo diocese volunteers over the years. That visit resulted in an invitation to Bishop Bances to come to Fargo. In mid-September, Bishop Bances attended events in Fargo, Grand Forks and Wahpeton. He used the opportunity to see for himself the efforts of the faithful in the Fargo diocese, and to thank them personally for their support and prayers.



Bishop Bances readies the coin toss for the Shanley Deacons vs. Bismarck Demons football game Sept. 11 at Shanley High School in Fargo. (Father Kyle Metzger / JP II Schools)

"The Diocese of Fargo has been a partner with the Diocese of Chimbote for years, but to have the two bishops understand the impact the mission has and the impact it has on the universal Church and the individual lives of people is very significant," said Mike Smith, executive director of Friends of Chimbote in the United States. "Not only does it help the people of Chimbote materially, but as Bishop Ernesto has said many times, it also helps them spiritually to know that they're not forgotten."

Over the decades, many parishes in the Fargo diocese have sent missionaries to Chimbote, and those efforts are ever increasing. Many diocesan priests have made multiple mission trips with their parishioners. This year has seen the most mission trips recorded by Friends of Chimbote. Scheduled trips have already filled the calendar for 2027 and have nearly filled up 2028. But Friends of Chimbote is careful not to overwhelm the Chimbote area with missions.



Bishop Folda and Bishop Bances concelebrate Mass at Holy Family Church in Grand Forks Sept. 12, with pastor Father William Gerlach looking on. (Paul Braun / *New Earth*)

"One of our biggest roles is to make sure that it doesn't become too much for our partners in Peru," said Katie Smith, Mike Smith's wife and co-executive director of Friends of Chimbote. "That's not what this is about. It's not poverty tourism. It's just feeling that connection, (letting them know) they're not alone, they're not isolated, and making a relationship with them. So we love that there are more groups going, and we love all that support, but we also want to know that as we go forward, we want to go slow enough and not overburden our Peruvian partnership."

Mike and Katie affirm that supporting parishes receive something in return as well. When parish missionaries return, they share their experiences with others, which can form a bridge between the two cultures, and eventually the universal Church. It was something Bishop Folda experienced during his stay in Chimbote last year.

"It's a great gift to have Bishop Bances visit us and just to take the time and to spend time with us," said Bishop Folda. "Bishop Bances personifies the Diocese of Chimbote. He brings that human presence of Chimbote. It's not just the name of a place now, but it really is a visit of the Church of Chimbote to us. He really makes that relationship personal. And that, I think, is the most important thing that has been fostered. The friendship, the relationship that has grown over the years. I think there's a real bond between us of a brotherhood as bishops, but also our two dioceses now have a stronger relationship as well.

"Personally, I feel it's a richness, an opportunity for me, from the human perspective, but spiritually as well to make this visit,"

Bishop Bances told *New Earth* through his interpreter. “The Church means joy, that we all are together as one Church. I want to thank all the people that have been supporting us. I think it’s the essence of every Christian to be grateful. What you’re doing is because you have a feeling of faith. To see missionary groups going to Chimbote fills my heart. I’m very grateful for that. Priests, religious people, lay people, it’s the best love to the universal Church.”

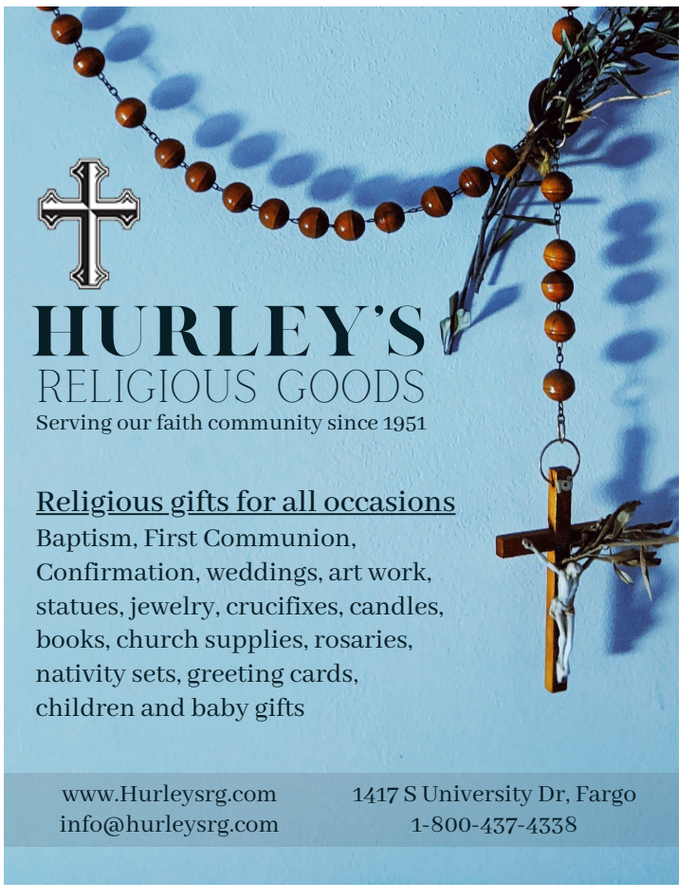
If you wish to support the needs of the faithful in the Diocese of Chimbote, visit www.friendsofchimbote.org.



Bishop Folda and Bishop Bances stand with nearly 100 backpacks collected by St. John the Evangelist Church in Wahpeton Sept. 13. (Paul Braun / *New Earth*)



Bishop Bances with students from Trinity School in West Fargo. Left to right are fourth grader Quinn Brown, first grader Bailey Kawasaki and fifth grader Elsa Foerster. (Paul Braun / *New Earth*)







Building On Faith



The newly decorated sanctuary at the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo. (Paul Braun / *New Earth*)

Cathedral of St. Mary renovation is a two-for-one

By Paul Braun | Editor of *New Earth*

In late fall of 2022, Monsignor Joseph Goering, then-rector of the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo, and diocesan properties manager Earl Wilhelm, saw several cracks forming on the ceiling of the cathedral. The decision was made to apply drywall over the entire ceiling to prevent falling debris, and work began in late spring of 2023. Unfortunately, it also meant covering up the existing artwork in the cathedral. But in reality, this was a blessing in disguise.

With the new ceiling came the opportunity for new artwork that would be specially created, designed and themed for the cathedral alone, as the former artwork was originally designed to be placed in a different church. The diocese contacted liturgical artist Paige Stransky, designer and principal of New Jerusalem Liturgical Design. She has worked on several projects for the diocese, most recently Holy Cross Church in West Fargo.

"When I think about the sacred art program, what strikes me most is that this project became about far more than adding beautiful murals to the building," said Stransky. "It became an opportunity to ask a larger question: What should the mother church of a diocese communicate through its art?"

For the cathedral, Stransky selected themes that reflect the history of the Catholic faith, the story of salvation, the Incarnation,

the apostolic foundation of the Church, and the faith that has been handed down through generations.

According to Stransky, murals of the prophets look forward to the fulfillment of God's promise. The Annunciation mural brings forward the moment the Word became flesh. At the heart of the sanctuary, Christ is enthroned in glory, with the Blessed Virgin Mary crowned beside him. Stransky added that the final addition of the four Gospel writers completes that story, and through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the life and teachings of Christ are recorded and handed on.

"There is a beautiful continuity in that progression," said Stransky. "The prophets anticipate Christ, the Annunciation announces his coming, Christ reigns at the center, the apostles carry his mission forward, and the evangelists preserve and proclaim his life and teaching to the Church. A cathedral should not simply contain sacred art. Through its art and architecture, it should help tell the story of the Church."

The renovation and artwork were completed in mid-summer of 2026.



The prophet Daniel depicted with a lion on the ceiling of the cathedral. (Paul Braun / *New Earth*)



The mural of Matthew the Apostle at the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo. (Paul Braun / *New Earth*)

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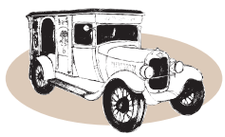


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Year: Theology II



Hometown: Park River
School: MSMS
Year: Theology II



Hometown: Fargo
School: PNAC
Year: Theology I



Hometown: Lisbon
School: SPS
Year: Theology I



Hometown: Fargo
School: SPS
Year: Theology I



Hometown: Jamestown
School: SGGS
Year: Pre-Theology II



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



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



Hometown: Moorhead, Minn.
School: SGGS
Year: College I



Hometown: Rosemount, Minn.
School: MSMS
Year: Propaedeutic Year



Hometown: Grand Forks
School: MSMS
Year: Propaedeutic Year



Hometown: Mitchell, S.D.
School: MSMS
Year: Propaedeutic Year



Hometown: Devils Lake
School: SGGS
Year: Propaedeutic Year

MSMS: Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.
PNAC: **P**ontifical North American College, Rome
SGGS: St. Gregory the Great Seminary, Seward, Neb.
SPS: Saint Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.
SOLT: Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity

What is a Propaedeutic Year?

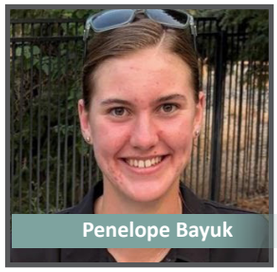
Propaedeutic means "to teach beforehand. Prior to entering any level of seminary, a man spends a year of discernment and prayer to deepen and clarify his call to the priesthood. He lives at a house of formation, generally offsite from the seminary building. He establishes a regular prayer routine, meets 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.

Seminarians with a previous college degree in another area of study complete their propaedeutic year and then take two years of philosophy courses during their "Pre-Theology" or "Discipleship" stage of formation. This is followed by four years of theological studies during the "Configuration" stage of formation for a Master of Divinity degree.

RELIGIOUS AND CONSECRATED LIFE



Hometown: Katy, Texas
Aspirant
SOLT
Dunseith, N.D.



Hometown: Kennewick, Wa.
Aspirant
SOLT
Dunseith, N.D.



Hometown: Alexandria, Va.
Aspirant
SOLT
Dunseith, N.D.



Hometown: Poway, Calif.
Aspirant
SOLT
Dunseith, N.D.



Hometown: Grand Forks
Candidate
Order of
Consecrated Virgins



Hometown:
Ann Arbor, Mich.
Aspirant, SOLT
Dunseith, N.D.



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



Hometown:
Clearwater, Florida
Aspirant, SOLT
Dunseith, N.D.

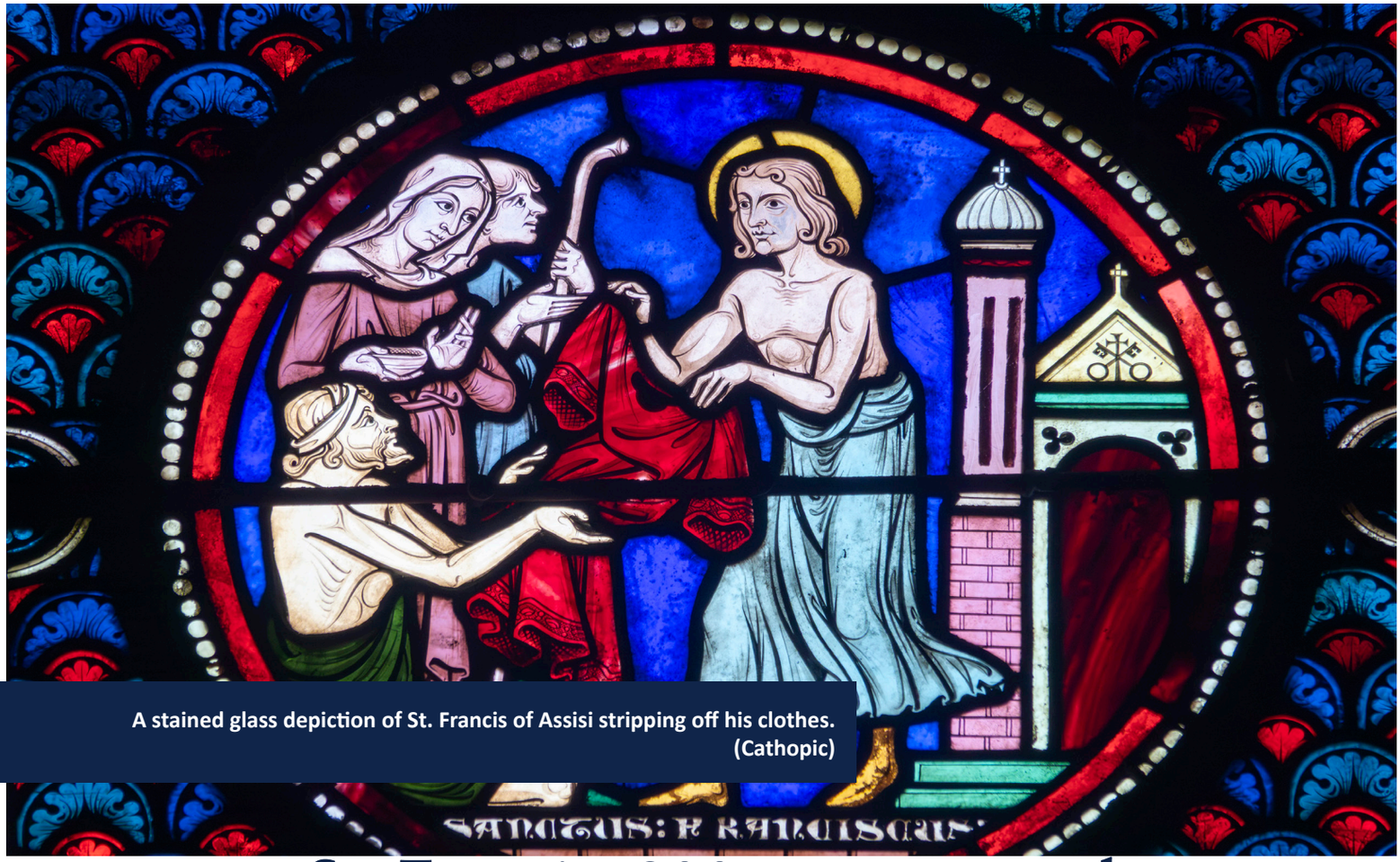


Hometown: Crystal
Temporary Professed
Knights of the Holy
Eucharist
Lincoln, Neb.

PERMANENT DEACON ASPIRANTS

Please pray for these men as they begin the five-year formation program for the permanent diaconate.

Brian Chandler	Andrzej Noyszewski	Ed Schwind	Kent Wanner
St. James Basilica Jamestown	Cathedral of St. Mary Fargo	Nativity Church Fargo	St. Paul's Newman Center Fargo



A stained glass depiction of St. Francis of Assisi stripping off his clothes. (Cathopic)

St. Francis, 800 years onward

The saint who embraced holy poverty

By Kevin J. Jones | Assistant editor, *New Earth*

St. Francis of Assisi died eight centuries ago, but his faith in God and his dedication to prayer and poverty continues to echo across the globe.

Sister Sara Marie Belisle, O.S.F. told *New Earth* that St. Francis' simplicity and poverty, as well as the youth outreach of Franciscan friars, inspired her to join the Franciscan Sisters of Dillingen in the 1980s.

"You're drawn to people that just leave everything and trust the Lord so much, in all his providence," she said of St. Francis. "His gift, and God's gift to the world through him, has certainly touched hearts. He inspired people to seek peace, live simply, and, you know, to not take this world so seriously that you can't let go of it."

"Even wealthy people love St. Francis, and they maybe are more charitable because of that," Sister Belisle said. Francis of Assisi "crosses all borders," she added. "I can't tell you how many people I know that aren't Catholic that admire St. Francis."

In a January 10 letter to Franciscan leaders, Pope Leo XIV declared a Franciscan Jubilee Year to mark 800 years since St. Francis' death. He said St. Francis reminds us that "peace with God, peace among people and peace with creation are inseparable dimensions of a single call to universal reconciliation."

There are about 650,000 members of Franciscan religious orders in more than 100 countries today.

St. Francis of Assisi was born in the year 1181 to the family of a wealthy cloth merchant in the Italian city of Assisi, according to the website of the Order of Friars Minor. His father, out of admiration for the leading role that France had in contemporary life, called him Francis instead of his baptismal name.

Francis led a life of luxury and pleasure-seeking and dreamed of being a successful knight. After he was captured in battle between Assisi and the city of Perugia, he spent a year in prison then spent more time recovering from illnesses. This gradually drew him deeper into Christian life and devotion to God.

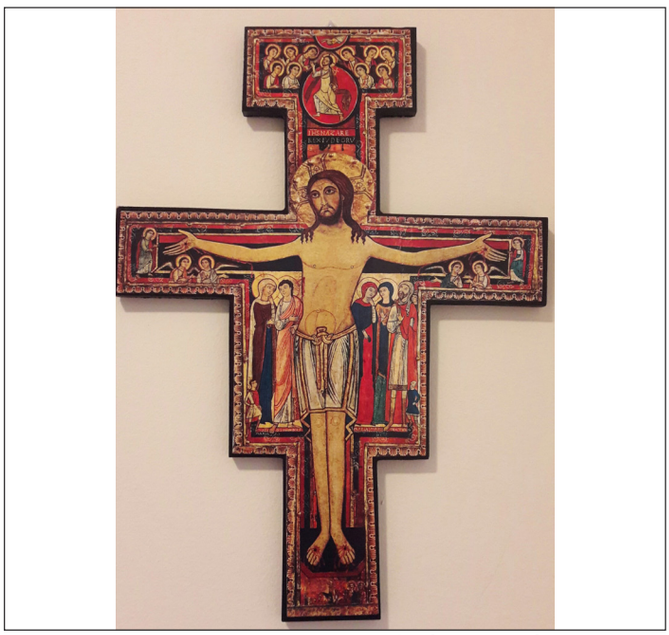
In the year 1205, while in prayer before the Crucifix of San Damiano, he famously had a mystical vision indicating that God wanted him to rebuild his Church. After physically rebuilding several church buildings, he later realized that God was calling him to restore and revive the Catholic Church as a whole.

In conflict with his father, St. Francis stripped off his clothes as a sign of rejection of a life of wealth and worldliness. He embraced lepers and lived with them despite their disfiguring, contagious disease and the ostracism they suffered.

Others, including priests, began to join St. Francis' movement



Franciscan sisters and others pray vespers July 13 in the Sacred Heart Chapel, Hankinson. (Franciscan Sisters of Dillingen)



The San Damiano Crucifix (Cathopic)

and they went out to preach penance. St. Francis set down the first rule for himself and eleven friars, a rule approved by the Pope. Women like the future saint Clare of Assisi joined his movement, forming what would become the Poor Clares and other Franciscan women religious. Francis himself never sought ordination to the priesthood, but he was ordained a deacon.

In 1219, he sailed for the Holy Land and met with the ruling sultan, challenging the Muslim leader to convert to Christianity. The sultan declined but was so impressed by the friar that he gave to the Franciscans the oversight of Christian holy sites under his control. The future saint returned to Italy to continue to preach and minister.

The saint left a legacy of concrete Christian devotion. On Christmas Eve in the year 1223, St. Francis organized the first Nativity scene in the Italian village of Greccio, a tradition that lives on in Christmases today. Despite failing eyesight, Francis wrote the "Canticle of the Sun" prayer that praises God and his creations like Brother Son, Sister Moon, Sister Mother Earth, even Sister Bodily Death. His prayer warns against dying in mortal sin, praises God and encourages the reader to thank God and serve him with "great humility." Pope Francis took the canticle's Italian language phrase "Laudato Si'" as the title for his 2015 encyclical on care for creation.

Father Joseph Christensen, a priest of the Diocese of Fargo and superior of the Warsaw, N.D.-based Franciscans of Mary Immaculate, also reflected on the inspirational life of St. Francis. "He has made such an impact because of his total gift of himself to God, totally giving up the world and any part of it for the love of God and to get to heaven. And he was totally free by that," he told *New Earth*.

Father Christensen said Francis' example is a challenge for all of us, and for him personally.

"He served God, loved God, and whatever God wanted, he did," the priest said. "He turned the world upside down."

"God took Francis because the world needed him and the Church needed him," the priest continued. "There were some bad popes at the time and things weren't going great. And God took him and converted him and used him to turn that all upside down."

"Why did people come to him? Because of his simplicity, because of his freedom, because he wasn't weighted down with the worldly wealth, power, pleasure, all those things that most people seek… he sought nothingness and freedom from things and humility and simplicity and people flocked to him," he said.

"He had 5,000 men in five years," Father Christensen repeated. "Five thousand. That's more than most towns in North Dakota."

Here in North Dakota, the Franciscan of Mary Immaculate focus on evangelization and spiritual assistance, continuing St. Francis' example of preaching and devotion to the Holy Eucharist. They run summer camps and day camps to help evangelize young people and provide opportunities for Mass, confession, spiritual talks and fun. They help care for the staff, mothers and children at St. Gianna and Pietro Molla Maternity Home in Minto, and also lead local Third Order Franciscans, a lay community dedicated to total consecration to Mary.

Sister Belisle's Franciscan Sisters of Dillingen, founded almost 800 years ago in Bavaria, has been in Hankinson since 1928. However, a lack of vocations here means the sisters in Hankinson are taking a prayerful approach to change.

"We're certainly trusting God for direction. We're praying daily," she said. "Because we're lower in numbers now, [we are asking God] what does he want from us, our charism."

"We're not locked into nursing and teaching," she said, referring to previous occupations of Franciscan sisters. "We'd love to be there again," she said, deeming the central question to be "what can we do for the Church today?"

The Franciscan sisters continue to host events and retreats.

"They meet us, and we minister that way," she said.

Franciscans from many different organizations prepared to celebrate the Transitus, marking the Oct. 3 death of St. Francis. Sister Belisle said the Transitus is "how we observe the death of St. Francis and his birth into eternal life."

"It's a prayer that starts with the Divine Office and then we have a prayer service. We'll have supper, then a prayer service celebrating the Transitus. We have Franciscan readings, scripture, and invite people to come to that," she said. Their retreat center in Hankinson hosted Transitus events Oct. 2-4.

Father Christensen said the Franciscans of Mary Immaculate will hold a Transitus over a three-day period, allowing youth camp attendees, Third Order Franciscans and the general public to participate.

As yet another facet of St. Francis' great legacy, he is famously a patron saint of animals. He is said to have tamed a predatory wolf near the village of Gubbio and preached the gospel to the birds. To this reputation, Father Christensen encouraged a spiritual interpretation.

"He used creation to praise God and saw God's goodness in creation," he explained. "And creation responded to him. [Animals] showed almost an obedience or an affection, flocking around him and so forth, because he was a magnet of God's love."

"He was filled with God's love," the priest said. "Even the animals recognized that."





Someone in her corner

By Catholic Charities North Dakota

At Catholic Charities North Dakota, many of the most meaningful successes happen quietly. They are the moments when a crisis is resolved, a burden is lifted, or a vulnerable individual receives the support they need to move forward with confidence.

For one client served through Catholic Charities North Dakota's Guardianship Division for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, that moment came after an unexpected accident. The client had been receiving guardianship services for many years and was living independently in an apartment with support from a residential service provider.

When a battery in the client's cell phone overheated and caused a fire in the apartment, the situation quickly became overwhelming. Although the fire was accidental, the resulting damage left the client facing a repair bill totaling several thousand dollars. For someone living on a very limited income, the cost was far beyond what could reasonably be afforded. Without assistance, the client would have faced years of payments to repay the damage, creating financial stress and uncertainty that could have affected long-term stability and independence.

That's when the client's Catholic Charities guardianship worker stepped in to help. Working alongside the residential service provider, the guardianship team explored options and advocated on the client's behalf. Through persistence and careful investigation, they identified the battery manufacturer as a potential source of assistance and pursued coverage for the damage. After continued follow-up, the manufacturer agreed to cover the full cost of the repairs.



A Catholic Charities staffer meets with a beneficiary. (Catholic Charities North Dakota)

The outcome brought tremendous relief and gratitude. What could have become a long-term financial hardship was resolved through the support and advocacy of people committed to helping the client navigate a situation that would have been difficult to manage alone.

"In our work, it's often the small victories that matter most," said Donna Byzewski, Director of the Guardianship Division for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities. "When someone is able to maintain stability, preserve their independence, and avoid a hardship they couldn't have overcome on their own, that's success." While every situation is different, Catholic Charities guardians regularly help individuals navigate challenges involving housing, healthcare, finances, and personal well-being. Sometimes that support means helping someone access critical services. Other times, it means advocating through a complicated situation that could threaten a person's stability and quality of life.

For this client, that advocacy meant avoiding years of financial hardship and preserving financial stability and independence. It is a reminder that guardianship is about far more than paperwork or decision-making. It is about ensuring that clients have someone in their corner when challenges arise and a trusted advocate to help protect their rights, dignity, and well-being.

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Deacon Arlen Blessum of Rugby dies at 92



Arlen Cornell Blessum was born at Good Samaritan Hospital in Rugby on March 30, 1934 to Casper and Helen Blessum. He died at his home Aug. 27 at the age of 92, with his family nearby.

Arlen lived all his life on the farm which his Norwegian immigrant grandparents, Hans and Bessie Blessum, homesteaded in 1902. He graduated from Rugby High School in 1952, where he had played basketball and showed cattle for Future Farmers of America(FFA). He was named State FFA Farmer in 1951.

On December 26, 1956, Arlen married Charlotte Bickler at Little Flower Catholic Church in Rugby. They raised six children together on their family farm.

He was actively involved on the Rugby elevator board, Center Mutual board and the FFA advisory board. He was a 4-H leader, a Knight of Columbus and taught CCD for many years. He was ordained to the diaconate in 2003 and served as a deacon at Little Flower Parish for many years.

When he wasn't farming, Arlen enjoyed hunting, fishing and camping. He loved playing games, watching and playing sports, collecting antiques and rocks and driving his John Deere gator with Charlotte beside him. He loved pinochle and spending time with the many family members who stopped at the farm.

Arlen is survived by his wife of 69 years Charlotte; children, Brian (Sue) of Rugby, Jody (Colette) of Danville, California, Jim (Kris) of Rugby, Laura (Mike) Swanson of Rugby, Stuart of Rugby and Alan (Karleen) of Rugby; 24 grandchildren; 39 great-grandchildren; sisters Marlys (Harold) Ostrem, Diane (Herb) Mittelstedt and Lois Smutzler; nieces and nephews; other relatives and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, his sister Beverly, brother-in-law Ben Bakkum and brother-in-law Lee Smutzler.

Arlen will be remembered for his quick wit, his passion for being a good steward of the land and for being a man of strong faith who loved his ever-expanding family. The family prefers all memorials to go to Little Flower School in Rugby.

Mass of Christian burial was held Sept. 4 at St. Therese Little Flower Church in Rugby with burial in the church cemetery.

Remembering Sister Peggy, teacher and missionary



Sister Peggy Byrne passed away Aug. 30 at the age of 89. She was born in Wexford, Ireland June 2, 1937 as Margaret Frances Byrne, the daughter of John and Margaret Doyle Byrne. In 1953 she came to the United States to join the Sisters of the Presentation, Fargo. On reception into the community, she was given the name Sister Regina Marie. She made profession of vows in 1957. Following Vatican II she reverted to her baptismal name and once again bore the nickname "Peggy."

She graduated from Shanley High School, then earned her baccalaureate degree from the College of St. Benedict and her master's degree from Creighton University. For 25 years she taught in North Dakota parochial schools: St. Mary's, St. Anthony's, Holy Spirit and Nativity Schools in Fargo and St. Alphonsus School in Langdon. She was inducted into the Red River Valley Historical Society Educators Hall of Fame and published work in the North Dakota Council of Teachers of Mathematics Journal.

From 1982 to 2015 she worked in Chimbote, Peru, creating educational and social service programs and overseeing sanitation projects. She established the Asociation Civil Apoyo Familiar (ACAF), a family support organization praised by the U.N. NGO Committee for Social Development as an example of the power of grassroots endeavors. For the children of Chimbote, she established the Margaret and John Byrne Scholarship in memory of her parents. She co-founded the Friends of Chimbote, which has established the Sister Peggy Scholarship.

Her presence was felt from the soup kitchen to the classroom to the boardroom. Her friendships extended from well-to-do benefactors to those burdened by poverty and included most people she met along her journey. She greeted one and all simply as "Hon."

She received the Caritas Award from Catholic Charities North Dakota and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Fargo-Moorhead YWCA. Peru's Province of Santa recognized her "extraordinary" service to vulnerable women. She is one of the few women to be awarded the Keys to the City of Chimbote.

Her biography *Twice a Missionary* was published in 2007. Following her retirement, Sister Peggy continued to advocate for the Chimbote mission. While a hard worker, she also knew how to have fun and help others enjoy any gathering. If the music was playing, she was dancing whether it was a polka or Irish step-dance.

Sister Peggy is survived by her sister Pacelli (Jimmy) Whelan, nieces and nephews and their families in Ireland and the Presentation Sisters and associates. Her parents preceded her in death as did her brothers James and William Hendrick, Gerald, Paddy and Toddy Byrne and her sisters Eileen Kendrick and Peggy Byrne.

Mass of Christian Burial was held on Sept. 11 at Nativity Church in Fargo, with burial at Holy Cross Cemetery North.

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Paul Braun, Editor



Our Bodies Tell His Story

Theology of the Body and You



The Catholic vision of human dignity: I am beloved

By Timothy Mosser | The Catholic Coach

One day I sat in the chapel contemplating the question "What does it mean to be human?" In answer to my prayer that day, the Holy Spirit sent me the acrostic "I AM BELOVED" which synthesizes this vision of the human person into ten foundational truths, defining human identity and dignity from creation to eternity. Here we draw on the Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (*CCC*)* and the 2022 Church document *Dignitas Infinita.*

I — Image of God (*Imago Dei*). Human identity rests on Gen. 1:27: "God created man in his own image." The *Catechism* emphasizes that of all visible creatures, only the human person is "capable of knowing and loving his Creator" (CCC 356). *Dignitas Infinita* reiterates that this image of God grants every person an inherent worth that cannot be earned, lost or revoked by any earthly power. Before God formed you in the womb, He knew you (Jer. 2:5). You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14) by our loving God.

A — "Ani-gels": A Combination of Animal and Angel. Humanity's unique position in creation, as the *Catechism* notes, means the human person unites both the material and the spiritual (CCC 355). We share biological life with animals, yet we have a spiritual, immortal soul like the angels. St. Thomas Aquinas described humanity as a horizon where the physical and spiritual meet: a creature rooted in the earth yet oriented toward the heavens.

M — Male and Female. "Male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). The Church teaches that sexual difference is an intentional gift from God, reflecting His wisdom and goodness (CCC 369). Man and woman are created in perfect equality as human persons, yet with a dynamic complementarity. *Dignitas Infinita* affirms this gift: accepting our biological reality as male or female honors the Creator's design and forms the foundation for human relationships.

B — Body and Soul Unity. Human beings are not souls trapped in physical containers, nor are we mere biological machines. As the *Catechism* explains, "the human body shares in the dignity of 'the image of God': it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul" (CCC 364). *Dignitas Infinita* warns against dualistic views that reduce the body to disposable matter, emphasizing that what affects the body affects the soul.

E — Exchange of Love. Humans are made for communion. Genesis reveals that "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Because God himself is a Trinity, an eternal exchange of love, humanity is created to reflect that love. *Dignitas Infinita* notes that human dignity manifests fully in self-sacrificing love, seeking the good of others in family, friendship and community. As John Paul II taught, we image God especially in our moments of communion.

L — Limited Power and Freedom. God granted humanity real freedom, but it is not absolute. Genesis 2 warns against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a reminder of our finite creaturely limits. The *Catechism* teaches that true freedom is not the ability to do whatever we want, but the capacity to choose the good (CCC 1731). *Dignitas Infinita* points out that when freedom is detached from moral truth and limited human nature, it degenerates into self-destruction.

O — Own Sake. The Second Vatican Council famously declared that the human person is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 24; CCC 356). People are never tools, resources or instruments to be used for economic or political ends. *Dignitas Infinita* grounds its critique of exploitation, including human trafficking, poverty, and war, in this truth: every person must be treated as an end, never a means.

V — Very Good. After creating humanity, God looked at creation and declared it "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Despite the entry of sin into the world, human nature remains fundamentally good, though wounded. The *Catechism* reminds us that redemption in Jesus Christ restores and elevates this original goodness (CCC 1701), reaffirming the nobility of human existence.

E — Eternal Destiny. Human life does not end at physical death. God made us to share in his eternal divine life and we never stop searching for the happiness we will only find in God (CCC 366, 27). St. Augustine captured this longing: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." *Dignitas Infinita* highlights that our destiny in heaven gives earthly life its ultimate meaning and urgency.

D — Dignity is Infinite and Desire is Infinite. Pope St. John Paul II affirms that human dignity is "infinite," rooted in the worth God places on every person. Alongside this infinite dignity is an infinite desire: the human heart has a capacity for truth, goodness and love that no finite, earthly reality can satisfy. Only the infinite God can fulfill the infinite desires he placed within us.

So, the next time you are contemplating your dignity, and everyone else's dignity, just tell yourself "I AM BELOVED" and rest in that beautiful truth!



How my godson Jeff found his way home



SEMINARIAN LIFE

JOSEPH KERN
Theology I
St. Paul Seminary
St. Paul, Minn.

As I start my fourth year of seminary, one series of courses really stands out: "apostolic works." My last assignment was especially impactful on my formation.

My assignment was with the Missionary of Charity Sisters, founded by Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Another seminarian and I would pick up two of the sisters on Wednesday afternoons. We'd go to a care center for the poor, elderly, mentally ill and those suffering with alcohol and drug addictions. We would visit and pray with them for a couple of hours.

I remember meeting Jeff, a 63-year-old man, for the first time in early September 2025. He was not paralyzed but he used a wheelchair. He and I visited for about an hour that first time we met. Each week afterward, I would usually see him and visit with him for a varying length of time. He was in a lot of pain and suffering physically and spiritually. He had had a lot of trials in his life. But he knew the Bible very well and was always citing scripture verses to fight off what he called the "enemy attacks." He was very much in tune with spiritual warfare. He really grew to like the Saint Michael the Archangel prayer after I prayed that with him from time to time.

In February, one of the sisters told me that Jeff wanted to become a Catholic and asked if I would be willing to meet with him one-on-one to prepare him. She had a Baltimore Catechism book with lessons and questions that I could use as my guide. I felt I had a pretty good relationship with him and said yes. I'd be comfortable doing that.

The sisters sought the bishop's permission to bring him into the Church on April 11, faster than the normal OCIA process. Our meetings went very well. After one month I told sister he was ready. Shortly after that, Sister called me saying the bishop gave his approval. She asked if I would be his godfather and sponsor as he was going to receive the sacraments: a conditional baptism (we weren't sure he'd been properly baptized), confession, confirmation, and First Communion. Of course, I said yes!

I last met with Jeff the second Wednesday of April, before he would be received into the Church on Saturday April 11. I read Jeff the Bread of Life discourse from the Gospel of John (John 6:22-59).

Afterwards, he immediately said that he couldn't wait to receive the Eucharist. He said, "I'm gonna be healed." I thought he meant physical healing. "Did he think he'd be able to get up from his wheelchair and walk?" I wondered. His faith was real and he was confident. The Mass was that Saturday at 1 p.m. at the care center on the second floor. It was well attended by other residents and workers. It was truly amazing.

The next Wednesday, I went right up to his room as soon as we got there. I was excited to see how he was doing. His door was open. I could tell something was off. I went to the front desk on the second floor and said to the worker "I'm here to visit Jeff." I asked if he knew where he was. He said they took him to the hospital Monday morning.

"Do you know when he'll be back?" I asked.

"Were you one of the church people here Saturday?" he said. "I think I can tell you." His eyes teared up.

"He died on Monday," he said. He told me how that Sunday Jeff was dressed up in a white button-up shirt going around singing in his wheelchair all day, happy as could be. I was overwhelmed with God-filled awe and shock and joy.

The next week I found the administrator and left my name and number and asked if she could give it to Jeff's family. If they wanted to reach out to me, I wanted to talk to them.

Jeff's sister Luanne called me, and we had a great conversation. She asked if I'd speak at his upcoming memorial service at the funeral home in Pequot Lakes, Minn. I agreed. It was a great privilege to be able to do this. It was a great privilege also to meet Jeff's family and one of Jeff's sons, who hadn't seen his dad since he was about six years old. His son told me they had been talking on the phone a lot recently.

It was so good to share with them how Jeff and I got to know each other over the year. I told them that because Jeff received all the sacraments right before he died, he was wiped clean of all his past sins. Our Catholic belief is that he is a saint in heaven.

Maybe Jeff wasn't just referring to being physically healed like I thought when he made that comment about being excited to receive the Eucharist. He was thinking of being completely healed in body, mind and soul. I am still in awe and wonder with how God took Jeff to his eternal home the way he did after Jeff received all those sacraments.

As much as I've enjoyed and been challenged with the philosophy and language classes in my first three years in the seminary, this whole experience with Jeff has really put it all into perspective.

The priesthood is all about building relationships with people, being a facilitator or a vessel that God can work through to give people the sacraments and to help save souls for God's Kingdom. In order to carry all that out, you must continue to grow in deep relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. You do this through staying rooted in prayer. I thank God and my godson Jeff in heaven for the special gift of being able to be a part of his journey home.

The most important collection of the year?



GUEST COLUMN

MICHAEL MITCHELL
World Mission Sunday Director
Pontifical Missions Society-USA

In 2025, Diocese of Fargo support for the Pontifical Missions Societies totaled over $42,000.

Many of us often do not really know precisely what the money we contribute to these collections is going to be used for. If the Church endorses it, and the basket is passed, we try to give something.

But if we knew more about the collection, its connection to our faith, and its impact, we might want to give more generously.

I think that's definitely the case with regard to the World Mission Sunday collection that will take place this year on Oct. 18.

The World Mission Sunday collection helps the Church spread the Gospel in missionary lands. These are places (1,130 of them to be exact) where the Church basically barely exists, or where she is so young, poor, or persecuted that she cannot support herself in terms of personnel and resources.

World Mission Sunday is first and foremost a day of prayerful solidarity for missionaries and mission Churches. But it's also a day on which we try to help them succeed. World Mission Sunday features the only collection mandated in the Church's canon law, because it's essential to the Church's carrying out the mission Jesus entrusted to us to proclaim the Gospel to all people and nations.

What's raised on World Mission Sunday is used to make possible the heroic work of missionary bishops, priests, religious sisters, and lay catechists who labor, sometimes under threat of death, to share our faith. It helps build churches, seminaries, convents, and catechetical centers. It provides for basic needs like transport, food, and shelter. It helps pass on the faith to children and to their parents.

Nowhere is this reality more vivid than in a place like Mongolia. This is one of the youngest Catholic communities on earth. If you don't count the occasional forays by missionaries in times long past, Mongolia has only had a stable Catholic community for just over 30 years.

It was in 1992, following the fall of communism, that three Catholic missionary priests arrived from Italy. At the time, there were zero Catholics except them. But today, thanks to the hard work of these missionaries, supported in large part by World Mission Sunday, about fifty Mongolians a year have become Catholic. As of Easter Sunday, there are exactly 1,575 baptized Catholics in a nation of over 3.5 million people.

The Church in Mongolia is the missionary frontier in the fullest sense, and most of this work has been made possible by the support the missionaries receive from abroad, especially World Mission Sunday. The first three missionaries, and the two dozen or so missionaries who have followed after them, are literally building the Church from scratch. Even today, the first seminary is still in its planning stages, and the first native priest was ordained only in 2016. These Catholics are in the exhilarating but fragile phase of first-generation faith.

Last year, support from U.S. Catholics helped the Church in Mongolia expand a formation center to train catechists and Church workers to bring the faith more effectively throughout their vast country, as well as a study center where the Christian classics can be translated into Mongolian. Right now, only the Bible exists in Mongolian; at the new study center, the translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is underway, together with writings of the popes and classics from the saints.

Pope Leo XIV recently said, speaking about World Mission Sunday, that it helps "remind people in the older churches, if you will, in the established churches, how important it is that they too join in the missionary spirit of the whole Church" (June 1, 2026).

This Oct. 18, when your parish takes up the World Mission Sunday collection, I hope you will join this "missionary spirit" of the Church, considering the people in Mongolia. Their names and faces, and their dreams, are the names, faces, and dreams of World Mission Sunday.

Praying for Vocations through the intercession of
Michelle Duppong



Ken and Mary Ann visited Carmel of Mary
and shared many beautiful stories about Michelle.

carmelofmary.org
carmelofmary@gmail.com

CARMEL of MARY

17765 78th Street SE
Wahpeton, ND 58075

Why you should vote "Yes" on Constitutional Measure 1



CATHOLIC ACTION

DAVID TAMISIEA, J.D., PH.D
Executive Director
North Dakota Catholic Conference

According to the Church, every human society by nature needs a governing authority, and the government's primary role is to promote the common good of its citizens (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1897–98). The Church defines the common good as "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily" (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* § 26). Some examples of common goods include things like safe neighborhoods, accessible healthcare, decent housing, opportunities for work, free speech, religious liberty, and the like.

One element for ensuring the common good of society is good governance itself. It is just common sense that the government itself must function well to foster the common good. If the government is dysfunctional, poorly organized, or badly run, it will fail to carry out its duty of promoting the common good as well as it should. In a real sense, good governance is itself a common good necessary for society to flourish.

But we have a problem in our state government: It is just too easy to amend North Dakota's Constitution. This is bad governance.

Did you know the North Dakota Constitution has been amended a whopping 168 times over the past 137 years since it was ratified by voters in 1889? By contrast, did you know the U.S. Constitution has been amended only 27 times over the past 237 years since it was ratified by the first states in 1789? Ten of these amendments make up the Bill of Rights passed in 1791, so that means the U.S. Constitution has been amended only 17 times since then.

What this means is that the North Dakota Constitution has been changed more than six times more frequently than the U.S. Constitution in 100 years less time. There is something wrong with this. The North Dakota Constitution should not be that easy to change.

A constitution is meant to do what it says: constitute the government. Like the U.S. Constitution is for the nation, the North Dakota Constitution is for the state. It is the supreme law of the land that establishes the basic framework of our state government and sets forth our citizens' fundamental rights. State constitutions are passed at the time the state is founded and are meant to be stable and difficult to change.

A statute, on the other hand, is a specific law enacted by a state legislature. Statutes are subordinate to the Constitution and deal with the ongoing, day-to-day issues in a state. Statutes are meant to be responsive to the changing needs of citizens over time and therefore should be easier to change.

Political activists and interest groups from outside North Dakota lick their chops when they realize how easy it is to change our state Constitution. Too often they flood our state with outside money to influence our ballot measures.

Right now, the North Dakota Constitution can be amended by a simple majority of votes cast. A simple majority works for ordinary laws, but there should be a higher threshold to change a constitution. By contrast, the U.S. Constitution is much harder to amend. Changes to the U.S. Constitution require a two-thirds vote of the U.S. House and Senate, followed by ratification of three-fourths of the states.

Constitutional Measure 1 aims to remedy this defect in our law. It would increase the threshold for approving constitutional amendments to the North Dakota Constitution from a simple majority to a modest 60 percent threshold. If this amendment passes, only changes with widespread, strong support from North Dakotans would become part of our basic governmental framework and fundamental rights. This does not mean we cannot make changes at all, just that our foundational document will not be so easily subject to outside influences and the political whims of a given election cycle.

Vote "Yes" on Constitutional Measure 1 to make it harder to change our constitution for the common good of our state.



A Catholic Voter's Guide



On Tuesday, Nov. 3, North Dakota voters will elect public officials and decide ballot measures.

When it comes to candidates, the Catholic Church does not support or oppose any candidate or political party. Instead, the Church encourages Catholics to examine carefully the candidates and the issues through the eyes of faith and reason and then to exercise their right to vote.

Be a Responsible Voter

No political party responds perfectly to the demands of faith and Christian life (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 573). Catholic voters therefore have a responsibility to find out where the candidates stand on the issues. To help Catholic voters, the North Dakota Catholic Conference provides questions that Catholics should ask about their candidates or, if the occasion arises, ask the candidates directly. Some of the questions concern issues that are more important than others. Some concern policies, like attacks on human life, that a Catholic could never support. Catholics can, however, legitimately disagree about how to address some other issues. All the issues deserve our attention.

Where Does the State Candidate Stand on . . .

Creating a Sanctuary for Life

- Promoting and funding policies and programs that help pregnant women, mothers, and newborns?
- Maintaining bans on abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, human embryo research and commercial surrogacy?

Religious Freedom

- Protecting the exercise of religion?
- Protecting the right of religious organizations to serve the public in accordance with their beliefs?

Family and Education

- Enabling parents, financially and in other ways, to choose the best educational setting for their children?
- Opposing policies that mandate acceptance of false gender ideologies?

Poor & Vulnerable

- Ensuring access to health care while respecting human life, human dignity and the religious and conscience rights of health care providers?
- Providing services to those in need, especially families facing financial hardship, victims of human trafficking and persons with disabilities, mental illness and addictions?
- Protecting families and communities with a criminal justice system that focuses on restoration, rehabilitation and prevention?
- Welcoming properly-vetted refugees, regardless of race, nationality or religious affiliation?

Economy and Environment

- Ensuring a just wage, economic initiative and pro-family work policies?
- Promoting family farms, rural communities and a food system that respects the dignity of labor and workers?
- Respecting the right of local communities to manage their own affairs for the common good?
- Fostering stewardship of our natural resources?

Where Does the Federal Candidate Stand on . . .

Human Life

- Protecting unborn human life and ending abortion nationwide?
- Repealing the federal government's use of the death penalty?
- Prohibiting the use of federal funds to pay for abortions?
- Protecting the right of the states to create sanctuaries for life by legally protecting unborn human life?
- Promoting and funding policies and programs that help pregnant women, mothers and newborns?

Religious Freedom

- Protecting the exercise of religion?
- Protecting the right of religious organizations to serve the public in accordance with their beliefs?

Family and Education

- Enabling parents, financially and in other ways, to choose the best educational setting for their children?
- Opposing policies that mandate acceptance of false gender ideologies?

Immigration

- Achieving comprehensive immigration reform that includes family reunification, border security and humane border enforcement?
- Welcoming properly-vetted refugees, regardless of race, nationality or religious affiliation?

The Poor and Vulnerable

- Ensuring access to health care while respecting human life, human dignity and the religious and conscience rights of health care providers?
- Providing services to those in need, especially families facing financial hardship, victims of human trafficking and persons with disabilities, mental illness, and addictions?
- Maintaining and increasing funding for poverty-focused development assistance to poor countries?

Economy and Environment

- Ensuring a just wage, economic initiative and pro-family work policies?
- Promoting family farms, rural communities and a food system that respects the dignity of labor and workers?
- Respecting the right of local communities to manage their own affairs for the common good?

Guided by faith and reason, Catholic voters in North Dakota have a serious responsibility to critically evaluate the candidates and issues and then make voting decisions on Nov. 3 that best uphold the dignity of the human person and promote the common good in our state and in our country.

Four reasons to advance a bequest



STEWARDSHIP

STEVE SCHONS
Director of Stewardship and Development
Diocese of Fargo

Pastors and parish leaders are always encouraged to learn that their parish has been named in a will or estate plan. Even simply knowing that a parishioner intends to include their parish can be incredibly uplifting.

Whether you already included your parish in your will or you are currently planning your estate, there are distinct advantages to moving a bequest forward and giving all or part of it today. In particular, it may be worthwhile to consider a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA), which remains one of our most popular and impactful methods of giving. Here are four reasons to consider advancing your bequest through a CGA:

1. Increase your income now

One of the most significant benefits of a gift annuity is the attractive payout rates available, especially for our older donors. For example, an 80-year-old donor qualifies for an annuity rate of 6.8 percent. Establishing a $25,000 annuity would provide $1,700 every single year for the rest of your life. A 90-year-old annuitant qualifies for an even higher rate of 9.0 percent.

While commercial annuities might sometimes offer different rates, remember that a CGA utilizes funds you have already earmarked to support a Catholic parish or ministry after your lifetime. Advancing it simply puts that asset to work for both you and the Church today.

2. Reduce your taxes now

The IRS provides a charitable income tax deduction for gifts made to ministries during your lifetime. For those who itemize deductions, this can directly reduce your income tax burden. Lower taxes mean more financial flexibility for you to spend—or to give.

Because a significant portion of a Charitable Gift Annuity qualifies for this immediate tax deduction, transferring assets now that you already intend to leave later is a highly tax-wise strategy.

3. Stabilize your retirement now

Gift annuity payments are completely fixed. Once you select your payment schedule (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually), you will receive the exact same amount with every check. There is no need to worry about the volatile ups and downs of the financial markets. Your annuity is securely backed not only by our carefully monitored annuity reserve fund, but by the entire capital assets of the Catholic Development Foundation.

4. Enjoy your giving now

When you establish a gift annuity, you experience the immediate joy and satisfaction of completing a meaningful gift during your lifetime. Why miss out on seeing your legacy in action? You can truly “give while you live” and witness the impact on your parish.

Of course, everyone’s financial situation is unique. We highly encourage anyone considering a Charitable Gift Annuity to consult their own financial, legal, or tax professional.

Learn More About CGAs

If you would like a free, personalized Charitable Gift Annuity illustration or more information, please reach out to us:

- Email: steve.schons@fargodiocese.org
- Mail: Steve Schons, Catholic Development Foundation, 5201 Bishops Blvd, Fargo, ND 58104

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 — 1951

Dorothy Day, Catholic social lay apostle and editor of The Catholic Worker, addressed a crowd of nearly 450 people in Shanley High gymnasium on the evening of Oct. 18. Miss Day outlined the background of the Catholic Worker movement and spoke of the necessity of voluntary poverty as a Christian virtue in the world today. It was during the depression year of 1933 that Dorothy Day, then a recent convert from Communism, joined Peter Maurin in a plan of service of the poor through houses of hospitality. It was the Christian conviction of Peter Maurin that care for the destitute in city slums was an obligation that lay heavily upon all who claimed a belief in God and a love of Christ. Along with the exercise of the works of mercy, went an intellectual apostolate that took the form of the monthly publication, The Catholic Worker. Today there are twelve houses of hospitality in U.S. cities, supported through the generosity of friends and staffed by volunteer workers.

50 years ago — 1976

This fall the Turtle Mountain Community College in Belcourt received a grant from the National Science Foundation to encourage more students to continue in the fields of natural science and mathematics. The grant was requested by Sister Margaret Pfeifer, S.M.P., Maryvale, Valley City, who is a member of the college staff. Because of this assistance, the college can expand its laboratory and science facilities and increase its course offerings in the advanced medical, agricultural, engineering and nursing fields. Turtle Mountain Community College was established for the Indians of the Turtle Mountain Reservation to assist those who desire advanced educational training.

20 years ago — 2006

A granite monument of the Ten Commandments was dedicated Oct. 2 on the grounds of Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church in Fargo. The monument encompasses both Old and New Testament teachings: the Ten Commandments are on one side and the Beatitudes on the other. It was placed north of the church along 52nd Avenue South, which will eventually be expanded to a four-lane road with a bike path. "Having a strong, visible monument in a highly prominent place reminds all of us of the principles we are to live by and upon which our great nation was founded," said Father Brian Bachmeier, pastor of Sts. Anne and Joachim. The Knights of Columbus raised funds for the $8,000 monument through pancake breakfasts and other fundraising events and dedicated many volunteer hours to the project.



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Fall dinners and festivals

West Fargo: Holy Cross Church hosts its Oktoberfest celebration all weekends of October before and/or after Masses. Oct. 3-4: Blessings & Angel Pop Pull; Oct. 10-11: Bake Sale & Fall Market; Oct. 17-18: Books & Puzzle Sale; Oct. 18, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.: Kids activities & Fellowship Picnic with grilled Brats or Hot Dogs. Various toppings, sauerkraut & other delicious picnic fare, beverages & homemade cookies. Free-Will Offering for the meal. Oct. 3-18: Cash Raffle, 50/50 Raffle, Chance Baskets, and Silent Auction.

Fingal: Holy Trinity Church Turkey Dinner and Bake Sale. Sunday Oct. 11 Dinner 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Menu: turkey, potatoes, gravy, dressing, cranberries, corn, buns, pickles, coleslaw, dessert and beverage. Adults $15, Grades K-6 $7, Pre-school age free. Take Outs Available. Rada Cutlery Available.

Grafton: St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church's Fall Dinner Oct. 11 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Menu: Turkey, Carrots, Dressing, Potatoes, Gravy, Bun, Pies. Free will offering. Dine in, drive thru and delivery available.

Hunter: St. Agnes Catholic Parish Fall Turkey Dinner. Oct. 11 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Serving buffet style. Cost is $15 for adults, children 12 and under $10.

Kindred: St. Maurice Catholic Church hosts its annual turkey dinner Sunday, Oct. 11, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 5313 165th Ave SE, Kindred. Come enjoy a full turkey dinner that includes turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, coleslaw, cranberries and pie. Adult and take-out meals for $16. Children 4 to 10 for $6. For a take-out order, call 701-428-3094.

Langdon: St. Alphonsus Church Fall Supper. Oct. 11 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Turkey ham and all the trimmings. Cake walk and raffle. 209 10th Ave.

McHenry: Soup & Sandwich Supper at St. Peter & Paul Catholic Church. Oct. 11 6:30-7 p.m. Homemade soups, pies and sandwiches. Adults $10, 6-12 years $5, Preschool free.

Sykeston: St. Elizabeth's Church annual Fall Dinner/Bazaar Oct. 11. Meal served 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. includes roast beef, mashed potatoes, scalloped corn, glazed carrots, relish, buns, dessert, and refreshments. Adults/Sr & Jr High $15, K-6 $7, and Preschool $3. Take Outs available. Gift bucket, cake walk starts at 1 p.m. At 2 p.m. begins 20 games of bingo, including two blackouts for $50 each.

Milnor: St. Arnold's Church will host their annual Chili & Pie Supper on Wednesday, Oct. 14 from 5 to 7 p.m. in their social hall. Homemade chili with toppings and homemade pie. Takeout meals will be available.

Harvey: Fall Festival & Supper at St. Cecilia's, Oct. 18, 5-7 p.m. Turkey, dressing, and all the trimmings + pies. Adults $14, age 6-12 $8, age 5 and under free. Take out orders 4:30-5:30 p.m. Silent Auction during the meal

Fargo: Holy Spirit Church in Fargo hosts their fall festival Oct. 25 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Turkey dinner with "all the fixin's" served from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., take-out available until 1:30 p.m. Kids games, raffle, bingo, silent auction and bake sale. Free will offering for the meal. 1420 7th St N.

Hankinson: St. Philip's Church Fall Dinner Sunday, Oct. 25 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the church's Fellowship Hall. Serving ham, parmesan chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, broccoli craisin salad, corn, dinner roll and pie. Adults $15, children 8 to 12 $8. Take out and deliveries available by calling 701-899-2327. Check out our 50/50 raffle tickets and bake sale!

Reynolds: Knights of Columbus Fall Supper and Bazaar Sunday Oct. 25 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Reynolds KofC Hall. Buffet style serving Ham, Meatballs, Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, Corn, Coleslaw and Buns. Adults $15, Kids 6-12 years $5, Preschool $2. Take-outs available! Questions call 701-741-5092.

Casselton: St. Leo's Church hosts its annual Fall Dinner Sunday, Nov. 1 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Serving Roast Beef.

Minto: Sacred Heart Church Fall Dinner. Nov. 1 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Minto Community Center, 114 Harvey Ave.
Ham & Meatballs, Potatoes & Gravy, Sauerkraut & Pork, Carrots, Dinner Rolls, Pies and Desserts
Adults $15, Children Ages 6-12: $5, Children Under 5 Free.
For takeout call Dawn at 701-360-3858 or Lynn at 701-430-8956

Fargo: Nativity Church (1825 South 11th St.) Annual Fall Festival Sunday, Nov. 8 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dinner menu: Padre's Chicken and "all the fixin's" and Dessert. Served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free Will Offering.
Other activities: Raffle, Bake Sale, Heavenly Basket Silent Auction, Jeweled Treasures, Games for Youth, Cake Walk, Square Boards and much more. Please join us for a day of family, friends, and fun!

LaMoure: Holy Rosary hosts their 39th Annual Buffalo Supper Sunday Nov. 1, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the Holy Rosary Parish Hall. Adults $18, 6-12 yrs. $9, age 5 and under free. Please 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.
Don't miss the Bake Sale, Quilt Raffle and Mini Raffles.

Oakes: St. Charles Borromeo Church Fall Dinner. Sunday, Nov. 15 11 a.m. until gone. 410 7th St N., Oakes.
Turkey dinner with all the fixings, including pie! Adults $15, children 6-12 $7, kids 5 & under free. To-go orders available, call/text 701.290.7753.

Grand Forks: Holy Family Church Altar Society's 66th Annual Christmas Tea. Nov. 17 1-4 p.m. Fresh baked pie, tea, coffee and cider will be served, bake sale with lefse and raffle.

LIFE'S MILESTONES



Larry and Jolene Hoffert, parishioners of Sacred Heart in Cando, celebrate their fiftieth anniversary Oct. 15. They were married at Sacred Heart. They are blessed with three children and two grandchildren.



Eric and Sandy Mack, parishioners of St. Cecilia's in Velva, celebrate their fortieth anniversary Oct. 18. They were married at Holy Rosary in Kranzburg, S.D. They are blessed with four children and two grandchildren.



Matt and Kara Murphy, parishioners of Sts. Anne and Joachim in Fargo, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary Aug. 4. They were married in Minot and are blessed with four children.



Joseph and Judy Neiber, parishioners of St. Martin in Geneseo, celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary on Sept. 4. They had a small celebration with their children and grandchildren.



Diane and Mike Opdahl, parishioners of Sts. Anne and Joachim, celebrated their fiftieth anniversary Sept. 25. They have been blessed with three children and ten grandchildren (one in heaven).



Jeff and Tanya Schneider, parishioners of St. Philip's in Napoleon, celebrate their 25th anniversary Oct. 20. They were married at St. Anthony's in Selz. They are blessed with five children and one grandchild.



Gerry and Karen (Zacher) Schumacher, parishioners of Nativity in Fargo, celebrate their fiftieth anniversary Oct. 30. They were married at Holy Spirit in Fargo. They are blessed with two sons and one grandson.



Kim and Gary Soper, parishioners of St. Michael's in Grand Forks, celebrate their fiftieth anniversary Oct. 23. They are blessed with two sons, two daughters-in-law and five grandchildren.



Kevin and Mary Vetter, parishioners of St. John the Evangelist in Wahpeton, celebrated their fortieth anniversary Sept. 27. They have three daughters (one deceased), three grandsons and one on the way.



Jason and Heidi Wiberg, parishioners of St. Joseph's in Devils Lake, celebrate their 25th anniversary Oct. 20. They are blessed with three children.



Mary Frelich, parishioner of St. Joseph in Devils Lake, celebrates her ninetieth birthday Nov. 3. Mary and her late husband Alex were married 50 years before he passed in 2005. Mary has seven children, 27 grandchildren and 57 great-grandchildren.



Alice Lagein, parishioner of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Rock Lake, celebrates her 100th birthday Oct. 16. Alice and her late husband Ray were blessed with four children, 15 grandchildren (with a few heavenly angels) and 15 great-grandchildren with one on the way.



Willie J. Piatz, parishioner of St. Philip Neri in Napoleon, celebrates his ninetieth birthday Oct. 21. He was married to his late wife Tillie for 61 years. Their wedding anniversary was also Oct. 21. They were blessed with three children, nine grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren.



Virginia Stein, parishioner of St. Joseph in Devils Lake, celebrates her 80th birthday Oct. 17. Virginia and her husband Joel have two children, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



Ted Harles, parishioner of St. Boniface in Lidgerwood, celebrated his 95th birthday Aug. 29. Ted recently celebrated his 70th anniversary with his wife Eleanor in June. They are blessed with ten children, 18 grandchildren, and 30 great-grandchildren.



Bonnie Miller, parishioner of St. Joseph's in Devils Lake, celebrates her 80th birthday Oct. 31. Bonnie has been married to Ed for 61 years. They have two children, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.



Bernetta Ritter and her twin brother Bernard Schommer celebrate their 85th birthday Oct. 15. Bernetta, a parishioner of St. Joseph's in Devils Lake, and Bernard, a parishioner of St. Mary's in Munich have been very blessed.



Pius Volk, parishioner of St. Cecilia's in Harvey, celebrated his 90th birthday Oct. 3. He was married to Angie for 62 years until her passing in 2022. Pius has been blessed with two children and four 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 only accepted for milestones occurring during the month of publication, two months prior, or one month following.

Send photo and text announcement to Susan.Noah@fargodiocese.org or to Diocese of Fargo, *New Earth*, 5201 Bishops Blvd S, Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104. If you would like your photo returned, please include a self-addressed stamped return envelope (that fits your photo) and phone number. Deadline for the November issue is Oct. 15.

Events

Grand Forks: Rescue Live with Fr. John Ricardo.
Join Bishop Andrew Cozzens and Catholics from across the upper Midwest for Rescue Live Oct. 10, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. at the Alerus Center Ballroom in Grand Forks. Internationally known Catholic evangelist Fr. John Riccardo of Acts XXIX will lead this day-long Catholic Revival for adults. A powerful experience of the good news, worship and fellowship. Music ministry provided by acclaimed singer-songwriter Sarah Kroger. To register, go to www.crookston.org/rescuelive.

Hankinson: Days of Reflection - St. Francis & the Our Father
Join us for a time of prayer and reflection, inspired by St. Francis' spirituality. Different content each month. Consider joining us online or in person at St. Francis Retreat Center in Hankinson, ND. The third Saturday of each month through May. The suggested donation is $30. Visit sfcretreats.org/register-online for more information or contact Sr. Mary Ruth: (701) 242-7195 or srmaryruth@sfcretreats.org.

Fargo: Volunteers needed for Baby Clothes Sorting for Catholic Charities' Bundle Your Baby Bump. Make a big difference for families in need! Pastoral Center, 5201 Bishops Blvd South. Come and go at your convenience Nov. 3 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Contact Kris at 701-561-8412.

Valley City: Women's Silent Retreat for Beginners at Maryvale Retreat Center. November 19-22. Go deeper with the Lord in prayer and learn the basics of Ignatian prayer. Father Andrew Jasinski serves as retreat master. Learn more at www.fargodiocese.org/womens-retreat.

Rachel's Vineyard Retreat: Hope and Healing. Nov. 20-22
Have you, or someone you know, suffered from the physical, emotional, or spiritual effects of a past abortion? Rachel's Vineyard offers a safe, non-judgmental and confidential weekend retreat for anyone – including women, men, couples, grandparents or siblings - who struggle with the feelings of loss or guilt that can accompany an abortion experience. The weekend begins on Friday evening and concludes on Sunday afternoon. For more information, contact Sherry at 701-520-1229 or email rvregister@yahoo.com. All inquiries are strictly confidential.

For all diocesan events, go to www.fargodiocese.org and click on the "events" tab.

New Earth

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Contact Paul at (701) 356-7958
or paul.braun@fargodiocese.org

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 Rev. Luke Meyer, 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.

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In Twin Cities, an evening with Annunciation parents

By Josh McGovern | The Catholic Spirit, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

The church was packed during Mass, with many guests filtering into the narthex, during a gathering at Our Lady of Grace (OLG) in Edina, Minn. Aug. 19. Parishioners and visitors came for an event called "An Evening with Annunciation Parents: Faith, Hope and Resilience."

After the parish's evening Mass in the church, with Archbishop Bernard Hebda presiding, the gathering in OLG's Cassidy Hall featured a panel discussion with three parents from Annunciation in south Minneapolis and a recent graduate of the school recounting their experiences and their journey following the fatal shooting at Annunciation during an all-school Mass Aug. 27, 2025. Two students were killed in the shooting, ten-year-old Harper Moyski and eight-year-old Fletcher Merkel.

The adult panelists were Laura Eiden, a kindergarten teacher at Annunciation, and parents Tara Keegan and Dan Brady. The Annunciation Light Alliance — a parent-led advocacy group — helped organize the event. Father Kevin Finnegan, pastor of OLG, helped moderate the discussion and concelebrated the Mass. Father Dennis Zehren, pastor of Annunciation, also concelebrated.

In his homily, Archbishop Hebda reminded the congregation that "we have a God who is generous with us."

"We can never be envious of his generosity," Archbishop Hebda said. "Instead, we have to trust that the Lord is treating us in a generous way, even if it doesn't seem that way. Even if there are those times when it seems like we're being treated unjustly, we have to trust that God is being generous to us."

Archbishop Hebda encouraged everyone to trust that God "is treating us as that good shepherd," a shepherd with a deep heart for his sheep, "who makes sure that there is nothing that we would want for in those green pastures to which he leads us."

"Now, my brothers and sisters, there are times when the pastures don't seem so green, and certainly for so many families in our archdiocese, it's been tough to see the greenness of the pasture since last Aug. 27," Archbishop Hebda said. "And yet, we also see blessings. We see those hints of God's goodness, of his generosity and his (shepherd's) heart, and we trust that he's going to continue to lead us into a deeper vision of how it is that he's generous with us and how it is that he loves us with a shepherd's heart."

With Father Finnegan moderating, all four panelists shared their experience of Aug. 27. Some were in the church during the tragedy, and others were on their way after hearing the news. All speakers shared their pain.

During the panel discussion, (Dan) Brady said that for him, hope is found in moments like the event at Our Lady of Grace,



Archbishop Bernard Hebda celebrates Mass Aug. 19 as part of an evening with Annunciation parents. (Dave Hrbacek / *The Catholic Spirit*)

with "people continuing to gather to hear these stories and to bear witness to it, and to take action." People coming together and staying together with "a mind towards doing better" gives him hope, he said.

"People ask me all the time how we are doing, how are the kids, how are the teachers," (Laura) Eiden said. "The reality is that I can only answer that question for myself. Since this journey toward healing is incredibly personal, no one's story from that day is the same, and no journey is either. What I can see for myself is that my Annunciation community, my children, and my students keep me going. They need me, and I need them. There were many days this past year when I looked down at my Hope and Joy T-shirt (Annunciation shirts specially made after the tragedy), feeling anything but hopeful and joyful. Yet my students would show up with smiles on their faces."

"Every time I feel that anger, I remind myself that what happened was not part of God's plan," (Tara) Keegan said. "He did not just sit back and allow this to happen. This happened because of evil, and so when I'm feeling that anger, when any of us are feeling anger, it's up to us to choose what we're going to do with that anger. … The devil, evil, darkness wants nothing more than for us to be angry at God. He wants nothing more than for us to turn our backs on God and to never enter a church again. It's up to us to take that anger and do good with it. Take what the enemy meant for evil and turn it to do good."

Father Finnegan said he was grateful for the boldness and honesty with which the guests shared their hearts.

"It's a powerful reminder that we all carry grief and hurt and pain differently," Father Finnegan said. "But we can also learn and grow from that as well."

Joe Eiden, an Annunciation parent and parishioner and Laura

Eiden's husband, spoke on behalf of the Annunciation Light Alliance. He said the group continues to look to Annunciation staff and leadership for guidance on "how to find strength to move our feet toward a safer future for all of you."

"Just a month and two days after the shooting in the rec room of a south Minneapolis school, the first meeting of what is now the Annunciation Light Alliance took place," Joe Eiden said. "In the midst of the grief and the trauma that you heard this evening, dozens of parents and Annunciation community members gathered with a burning desire to transform this tragedy into a hope that might have lasting change. We did this for Harper and Fletcher. We did this for our Annunciation kids and for every single child across the state of Minnesota."

Under each chair was a bag with a commitment card for each person. The cards included personal pledges to promote positive change in local lives.

"Take some time to reflect on what you've said, offer your words of wisdom and guidance, and decide how you can commit to bringing up this world," Joe Eiden said. "It doesn't have to be something big. In fact, lasting change often begins with this. What's important is that you make a commitment, hold yourself accountable, put it on your refrigerator, put it on your dashboard, and continue this conversation with others. Share what you've heard tonight with a friend, a family member, a neighbor, or someone who sees the world differently."

The night concluded with Archbishop Hebda and Father Finnegan holding candles and leading a procession from Cassidy Hall to the church for time in silent prayer.

This story has been edited for length.



Quotable

St. Francis of Assisi
Feast Day Oct. 4

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Saved by a blizzard: miracle baby shares her story



SIDEWALK STORIES

ROXANE B. SALONEN

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

Despite October being Respect Life Month, news stories like the Lindsay Clancy murder trial—not to mention the many life defeats in our own backyard—can cause those in the pro-life trenches to feel disheartened. "The world doesn't see what we see," we might think, and be tempted toward despair. But God doesn't want us in this state for long, and sometimes, he'll go to great lengths to prevent us from giving up. Which is what he did recently for me.

Hope arrived this time in a note sent through the 40 Days for Life email portal geared toward our area. Since I was part of our local group helping spread word of this year's fall campaign, I was privy to any emails coming in.

This particular message, however , was different; not like the usual notices that someone had signed up for an hour of prayer. And it turned my funk-filled day into one of unencumbered joy.

Though I won't use her name, I let the note-writer know I'd be sharing her story here.

"My mother and father were on their way to the old WHO clinic in Fargo in 1996 to abort my twin brother and I," she began. "There was a huge snowstorm that shut down 94 (coming from Bismarck) and when my mother returned home my grandmother made her go into the hospital to have an ultrasound. My mother's heart was changed and here I am today. I would love to share my story and connect with other people in the area."

"And here I am today." Those words instantly made anything negative I was experiencing completely vanish for a while. It felt like the most beautiful gift straight from God.

I reached back, wanting to know a little more about her, and she offered more details, sharing first that her mother was only 17 when she learned she was pregnant. Her father was only 21.

"My dad… told her right away he wanted her to have an abortion," she wrote. "They tried saving up enough money, but eventually my grandmother gave them her credit card, and they left for an appointment scheduled at the old clinic in Fargo." Living in Bismarck then, she continued, it would be a several-hour drive. But that morning, something thwarted their plans.

"There was a snowstorm so bad…that they couldn't even see the road in front of them," she shared. "It took them an hour just to get to the next exit."

Eventually, authorities determined the roads were not drivable and closed the interstate, forcing them to turn back. "When they got home, my grandmother insisted that my mother go to the clinic to at least see how far along she was," she continued. "That's when they saw that there was two of us!"

Upon seeing the babies, and understanding that she was carrying twins, she said, her mother's heart changed, and "she walked out of the office with information about a couple on a farm outside of the city that wanted to adopt."

It was one option, different than the only one she'd been given earlier; however, as she noted, her mother did not follow through. "We were born April 17, 1997."

I pause here, thinking of my own second child, my firstborn daughter, born just a few months later in October 1997. She turns 29 this month, is married, and works as a teacher in Minnesota. Now, I am picturing about where this young woman must be in her life, realizing that her mother and I were pregnant with our babies that year at the same time for several months.

"My dad never helped and was never a part of our lives," she continued, noting that her mother ended up getting a job at a plant in Minnesota and "worked long, hard hours to take care of us. We're very close to this day."

Though they all live in the Twin Cities now, she said, they travel often to see family in Fargo and Bismarck. So she's still tied to this area, and the place where her life almost ended. Thanks be to God, however, it didn't! Not only was her life spared, but her brother's as well.

If that wasn't enough, she ended with something that caused my smile to widen even more. "I am now married and have four children!"

At the receipt of these words, the hope that had begun to be challenged in my own heart and soul was rekindled, and I said in response: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

It can be hard to persevere in holding life up before the Culture of Death, but the God of life remains with us, bringing refreshment when it feels like we're languishing in the desert—or a blizzard, as the case may be.

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Last month's photo is the Ten Commandments tablets in front of the St. Alphonsus parish office in Langdon