New Earth

May 2026 | Vol. 47 | No. 5

The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo



May the month of Mary

Religious communities honor Our Lady through prayer and service

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April 18, 2026	Evangelization Training: St. Paul's Street Evangelization
May 7-9, 2026	Women's Silent Retreat with Fr. Sean Mulligan
May 29-31, 2026	Work Out Your Salvation Retreat with Fr. Wade Menezes
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ON THE COVER:
A statue of the Virgin Mary at Queen of Peace Retreat Center in Belcourt.
(Paul Braun | *New Earth*)

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NEW EARTH

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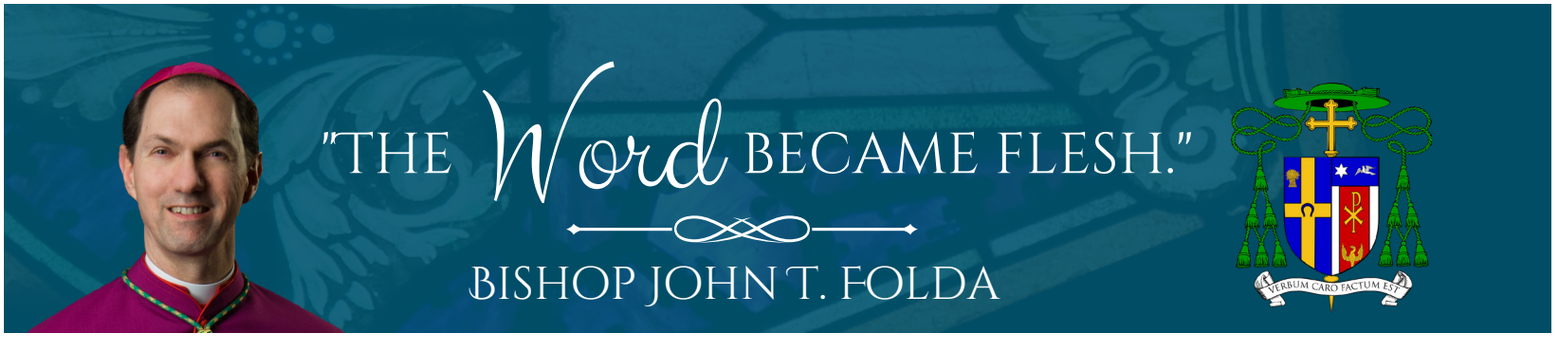
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The Church's ministry to Native Catholics

As a bishop in the United States, I am a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Like most large organizations, the full membership doesn't try to deal with every specific issue, and it delegates specific work to a number of standing committees and subcommittees. One of those is the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs, which I am now serving as chair. Along with nine other bishops who serve with me, our subcommittee gives special attention to the needs of Native peoples and assists the bishops and dioceses of our country in their own ministry to Native Catholics.

In my role as chair of the subcommittee, I had the privilege recently to participate in the International Conference on Catholic Indigenous. This gathering included delegations from the United States, Canada, Australia, and the host country of New Zealand. All of these countries, and others too, have substantial populations of Indigenous, or Native, peoples, many of whom are Catholic. This conference, which meets every two years, is an opportunity for Church leaders to meet, pray, and share information and wisdom about our ministries to the Native peoples of our countries. At the recent conference in New Zealand, I was joined by other representatives from the United States, most of whom are Native Americans and are actively involved in ministry to the many Native communities in our country.

Throughout the course of our gathering, we heard testimonies from all the participants and learned about the challenges, opportunities, and graces experienced by Indigenous Catholics. I was impressed by the love of our Catholic faith that was so evident among all the participants, and their desire to witness to that faith as widely as possible among the Native peoples of their own countries. I was also struck by the stories of tragedy and injustice that are common to all the Native communities represented at the conference. But overall, it was an occasion of hope and celebration of the vibrant faith of our Native brothers and sisters here in the United States and abroad. It also reminded me once again that the Church is truly Catholic, that is, universal. It embraces people of all nations, races, and cultures. Jesus truly is the Lord of all peoples.

Part of my role at the conference was the presentation of a document from the USCCB, *Keeping Christ's Sacred Promise: A Pastoral Framework for Indigenous Ministry*. This Pastoral Framework was developed by the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs and approved by the entire body of bishops in 2024. The document recounts the rich history of the Catholic faith among Native peoples in the U.S., but it also acknowledges the suffering experienced by these same peoples over the years. It offers guidance for healing of past wounds, and for reconciliation and transformation through our relationship with Jesus Christ. It also offers a call to mission among Native Americans, and acknowledges the remarkable contribution they have made to the life of the Church in this country. The Pastoral Framework recognizes that there is enormous diversity among Native Americans, and the Church must work to equip Native Catholics for ministry and service to their own people.

In keeping with the objectives of the Pastoral Framework, our subcommittee is also preparing a conference in 2027 that will address the challenges of substance abuse, addiction, and suicide among Native peoples. Across the United States, Native communities are facing a serious health crisis with rates of addiction and suicide several times higher than the national average. The Church has much to learn, but it also has much to offer in serving the needs of Natives. But once again, our hope is to help develop Catholic leaders in the Native communities who will be able to address the needs of their own people more effectively than outsiders could.

I will also attend a conference in May to be held in Edmonton, Alberta on the so-called "doctrine of discovery." As the European powers explored different parts of the world in past centuries, they encountered Indigenous peoples of those newly "discovered" regions. The civil authorities desired to colonize those lands, and the Church endeavored to evangelize and share the gift of our Christian faith with the Native peoples. There is no actual "doctrine of discovery" in Catholic teaching, but nonetheless, Native peoples were profoundly affected by the influx and dominance of settlers, their governments, and their cultures, including their Christian faith. This push to expand into territories inhabited by Natives is sometimes described as a "manifest destiny" and caused considerable harm and hardship to the tribal nations. The upcoming conference will include presentations from Native and non-Native scholars, and it will be an opportunity to learn more about this important part of our national and Church history.

The subcommittee is also working on a resource document for bishops and priests regarding the liturgy in Native communities. We are collaborating with Catholic Native leaders to develop appropriate catechetical resources for Native young people and adults. We also hope to foster forms of evangelization that will complement Native culture and address the specific needs

of Native communities. These are just a few of the many objectives that are highlighted in the Pastoral Framework.

Bishop John Shanley, the first Bishop of Fargo, recognized the needs of Natives in our state, and he also worked zealously to share the Catholic faith with them. He had a deep affection for the Native Catholics of his young diocese, and the last photograph ever taken of Bishop Shanley was with a group of Native Catholics at the Spirit Lake Reservation two days before he died. Many Natives of this region embraced the Catholic faith even before our diocese was founded, and they continue to have a beautiful place in the life of the Church. It is my privilege to serve them as bishop in the Diocese of Fargo and to play a small leadership role in the wider Church here in the United States.

Official Appointments/ Announcements

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

I hereby appoint the

Rev. Martin M. Kilonzo parochial vicar of St. Joseph's Church, Devils Lake, effective February 13, 2026 and continuing *ad nutum episcopi*.

Matthew Kensok, who was ordained to the diaconate for the Diocese of Fargo in 2021, received the favor of a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state from Pope Leo XIV, effective March 5, 2026.

BISHOP FOLDA'S CALENDAR

May 9 at 10 a.m.
Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Stephen, Larimore

May 9 at 5 p.m.
Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Leo, Casselton

May 14-15
Catholic Rural Life Meeting, St. Paul Seminary
St Paul, Minn.

May 15 at 5 p.m.
Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Joachim, Rolla

May 16 at 10 a.m.
Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Therese, Rugby

May 16 at 5 p.m.
Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Ann, Belcourt

May 17 at 2 p.m.
Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Alphonsus, Langdon

May 18 at 10 a.m.
Mass for St. Carlo Acutis Middle School
St. Michael, Grand Forks

May 18 at 11:30 a.m.
Groundbreaking for St. Carlo Acutis Middle School
St. Michael, Grand Forks

May 20 at 10 a.m.
Shanley High School Baccalaureate Mass
Holy Spirit, Fargo

May 20 at 6 p.m.
Shanley High School Graduation, Shanley Gym, Fargo

May 23 at 5 p.m.
Pentecost Vigil Mass, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

May 25-30
Doctrine of Discovery Symposium, Edmonton, Canada

May 31 at 5 p.m.
Mass for Msgr. Daniel Pilon 50th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination, St. Michael, Grand Forks

June 4 at 7 p.m.
Holy Hour with Vespers, St. Paul Newman Center, Fargo

June 5 at 7 p.m.
Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate
Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

June 6 at 10 a.m.
Ordination to the Holy Priesthood
Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

June 7 at 9:30 a.m.
Procession and Mass for Corpus Christi
Blessed Sacrament, West Fargo

June 8-12
USCCB Spring Conference, Orlando, Florida



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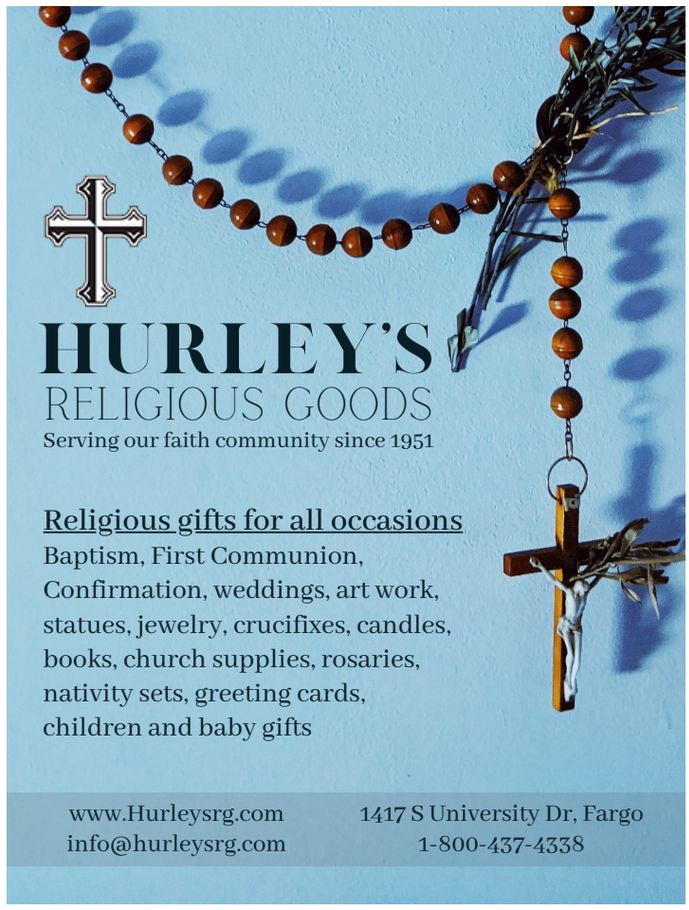
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Joy, gratitude and great love: honoring Deb Black, 2026 Fargo Caritas Award recipient

By Catholic Charities North Dakota

The Fargo Caritas Award Luncheon held March 17 was a joyful and inspiring celebration, one filled with gratitude, faith, and the quiet power of service lived out each day.

This year, we were honored to recognize Deb Black as the 2026 Fargo Caritas Award recipient, a woman whose life beautifully reflects the heart of Catholic Charities North Dakota's mission.

The Caritas Award honors individuals who live out extraordinary compassion through humble, faithful service. As those gathered at the luncheon quickly witnessed, Deb embodies that spirit in every sense. The room was filled with warmth, laughter, and deep appreciation—not only for Deb herself, but for the countless ways her life has touched others.

Faith in Action

A lifelong member of St. Therese the Little Flower Church, Deb's faith has always been active and visible. She is a member of Christian Mothers and Catholic Daughters and served for several years as a high school catechist, helping young people grow in their faith.

In 2014, Deb felt a strong call to serve through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) after hearing a presentation following Mass. Drawn by a deep love for serving those experiencing poverty, she became one of the founding members, and the first president, of the local SVdP conference. In 2024, she was elected president of the SVdP's Fargo District Council, where she continues to cherish the person to person home visits and the relationships built through collaboration with community partners.

Deb's service extends to her work as a board member of the Pierce County Food Pantry and through her involvement with Great Plains Food Bank Commodity Supplemental Food Program distributions, quietly ensuring that neighbors have what they need.

"Do Small Things with Great Love"

One of the most powerful moments of the luncheon came through Deb's words and the guiding philosophy she lives by: "Live the Little Way. Do small things with great love."

It is a simple message but one that resonated deeply with everyone in the room. Deb reminded us that meaningful impact doesn't always come from grand gestures, but from showing up, listening, and serving faithfully, one person, one moment at a time.

True to her humility, Deb shared that she was deeply grateful to be nominated for the Caritas Award by Father Frank Miller, and she views the honor not as recognition of herself, but as a reflection of the many faithful people she has been blessed to serve alongside.

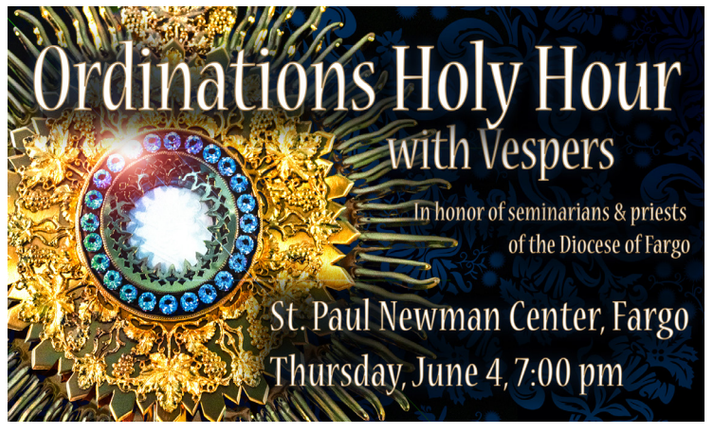


Caritas award recipient Deb Black with Bishop John Folda. (submitted photo)

A Heart That Reflects Caritas

The Fargo Caritas Award Luncheon was more than a celebration. It was a reminder of the joy found in service, the strength of community, and the beauty of living with great love in small, faithful ways.

Please join us in congratulating Deb Black and celebrating a life that so clearly reflects the heart of Caritas and the mission of Catholic Charities North Dakota.



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US Catholics Join the Church in Guatemala to Provide Safe Shelter to the Suffering Poor

Cross Catholic Outreach is asking U.S. Catholics to become part of a major effort to provide safe housing for destitute families in Guatemala.

The U.S.-based ministry, which has been recognized by the Vatican for its relief and development work in more than 90 countries, seeks to build storm-resistant homes while also reaching needy families with nutritional, educational and health care support. (See the related story on the opposite page.)

While this appeal has many technical objectives, Cross Catholic Outreach President Michele Sagarino is focused on the individual families that will be impacted.

"This is really about Santiago and Carmen and families like theirs. The challenges they face every day are heartbreaking. They live with their five precious daughters in a flimsy dwelling and fear for their health because rain often floods their house, turning the dirt floor to mud. It's also easy for vermin like scorpions and rats to crawl through the gaps in its walls," she said. "It's a situation that must grieve God — so it should be unacceptable to us too!"

According to Sagarino, Cross Catholic Outreach is working alongside Catholic leaders in the dioceses of Santa Rosa de Lima, Sololá-Chimaltenango and Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu to find solutions for families like Santiago and Carmen's. The plans they have developed can produce life-transforming results — if U.S. Catholics will step forward to help support their work.

"Our primary goal is to construct durable concrete-block houses for the poorest families," Sagarino explained. "The homes will have two bedrooms and a common area that can serve as a dining room and living room. Each will have a concrete foundation and walls, a galvanized metal roof, a sanitary latrine, a secure metal door and shuttered windows, providing a level of comfort and safety these families have never experienced."





Father Garcia stands with the Ramirez family outside their leaky makeshift home — one of the many in his Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima that he hopes to replace with the help of Cross Catholic Outreach supporters.

Because the design is simple, the construction of one of these homes costs less than $9,000.

"That is a large sacrificial gift for one donor or family to make, but many have done that and were so happy they got involved. Most had been looking for something specific and significant they could do to bless others," Sagarino said. "This outreach was exactly what they were looking for because a home does more than offer safe shelter. It gives families a foundation for building a better life."

For Sagarino, serving the poor through the local Church also has an evangelistic purpose.

"When people learn local Church leaders love them and want a better life for them, it strengthens their faith and restores their hope," she said. "Many have felt isolated and unseen. They need to know we care about them."

Father Alejandro Garcia, director of the local Caritas ministry in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima, has these words of encouragement for U.S. Catholics: "We pray for you. We pray that you continue to be generous, that you continue to be a valiant hand to those who are so needy among us. As Jesus said, 'What you have done for the least of these, you have done also for me.'"

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach's housing programs and other outreaches can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC06043, P.O. Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. Those interested in making gifts on a monthly basis can indicate that on the brochure in order to become a Mission Partner, or write "Monthly Mission Partner" on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.

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Guatemalan Families Living in Extreme Poverty Look to the Church for Renewed Faith and Hope

In the rural Guatemalan community of Laguna Seca, a cluster of dirt-floor homes with scrap-metal roofs sits in the low spot of a valley. Steep hillsides send floods of water that inundate these makeshift shelters during the rainy season, turning floors into mud and soaking families' belongings.

Brenda and René have raised their daughter, Ana, in one of these unstable dwellings, rebuilding time and again as storms wreak havoc. Inside the house, a wood fire poses an extra health hazard. Looking at the soot-blackened sheet-metal ceiling, Brenda lamented, "Imagine what our lungs look like!"

Ana is a bright grade-schooler and takes this challenging way of life in stride. But after she put the family's new chicks into their cage, she sat on the dirt floor next to them and imagined what it would be like to live in a home like her dollhouse, with a solid roof and floor. She made her own clay figurines to stand in that toy house and enjoy the security within.

"It's heartbreaking to meet children like Ana who have never known what it's like to be protected from the elements. In rural Guatemala, many families are trapped in extreme poverty, with few opportunities to improve their situation," explained Michele Sagarino, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, a trusted Catholic relief and development ministry recognized by the Vatican for its effective humanitarian and spiritual programs. "When we witnessed the extreme needs of Ana's family and so many others, we felt compelled to provide help — and our hope is that compassionate Catholics in the U.S. will want to get involved too."

Sagarino said that many of the communities Cross Catholic Outreach wants to serve can only be reached by dirt roads. These villages have little or no infrastructure, so parents there are raising their children without running water, suitable sanitation facilities or reliable electricity.

Most of the men and women in these rural areas are subsistence farmers, defenseless against unpredictable weather as they work long hours planting, tending and harvesting corn and beans.Their hard work may provide simple meals for their children, but it is rarely enough to fully cover their housing, health and educational expenses.

Families without access to land for farming face even greater challenges. They often take



Ana's dollhouse represents her hope for a safe home in the remote village of Laguna Seca, Guatemala.

work as day laborers, earning about $10 a day when jobs are available. The Church in Guatemala reports that those families typically earn between $125 and $190 a month — far too little to afford adequate housing. Ultimately, these families must make do with what they have, cobbling together plastic sheets, scrap metal and wood planks to build flimsy, unsafe shacks.

"Our ultimate goal is to improve living conditions in those communities. We want to help families break free from the cycle of poverty that has plagued them for generations," Sagarino said. "We've learned that providing safe housing plays a major part in improving lives, so we are making that our priority. As families move into safer, sturdier homes, their hope is restored and they have a foundation for building a better life."

Cross Catholic Outreach has been partnering with Guatemalan dioceses since 2013 to help rescue families from the poverty that keeps them malnourished, sick and devoid of hope. With the help of U.S. supporters, the ministry has built more than 800 homes in Guatemala, in addition to providing educational scholarships for children, microenterprise investments for adults, feeding programs for the malnourished and more.

This year, Cross Catholic Outreach aims to surpass 1,000 homes built since it began serving in Guatemala. It is rallying U.S. Catholics to serve as God's instruments of mercy by funding house construction and other important development and spiritual programs in three Guatemalan dioceses.

"The homes we will build are simple but sturdy, secure and sanitary," Sagarino said. "They will change the lives of these families in profound ways, and the benefits will be lasting. Generational poverty has been a major factor in the hardships these families have been facing. Opening this door to generational prosperity will be a major step in the right direction. My prayer is that Catholics in the U.S. will want to play a role in that restoration of hope. Imagine what a powerful testimony of God's love that would be!"

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach's effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper, or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC06043, P.O. Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than is needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.



Holy Week 2026 in Pictures



Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo. (submitted photo)



St. Mary's, Grand Forks (submitted photo)



St. John's, Wahpeton. (submitted photo)



St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center, Grand Forks (submitted photo)



St. John's Church, St. John (submitted photo)



Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo (submitted photo)



St. John's, Wahpeton (submitted photo)



St. Benedict's, Horace. (submitted photo)



St. Maurice, Kindred. (submitted photo)



Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Reynolds. (submitted photo)



St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center, Grand Forks. (submitted photo)



St. Timothy's, Manvel. (submitted photo)

From our backyard: meet Servant of God Annella Zervas

By Amanda Zurface, JCL. Diocesan Postulator for the Cause of Sister Annella Zervas

In October 2025, Bishop Andrew Cozzens of Crookston officially opened the cause for canonization of Servant of God Annella Zervas, OSB. Because she was both born and died within the Diocese of Crookston, her cause falls under the competency of his diocese. This makes Sister Annella especially significant not only as a beloved local figure, but also as the first candidate for canonization from both the Diocese of Crookston and the state of Minnesota.

And for those of us in the Fargo-Moorhead area, that means something deeply personal: she is one of our own.

Right here in Moorhead—near where her family home is believed to have stood, close to the Hjemkomst Center—a young girl grew up whose life would become a remarkable witness for all of us. Born Anna Cordelia Zervas on April 7, 1900, she was raised in Moorhead and belonged to St. Joseph's Catholic Church. She attended St. Joseph's elementary school and later Sacred Heart Academy, the forerunner of Shanley High School.

From an early age, it was clear that Anna belonged entirely to God. At just 15 years old, she entered the Benedictine convent in St. Joseph, Minn., where she became Sister Annella. Though she died young, on Aug. 14, 1926, at only 26 years old, her brief life became a radiant witness of complete surrender to Christ.

Sister Annella is remembered in a particular way for how she embraced suffering. She endured a mysterious and debilitating illness, along with a painful skin disease and severe stomach problems that left her able to eat very little. Her condition caused violent chills, high fevers, intense itching, and daily skin loss. Yet in the midst of all this, she did something that has brought her life to the Church's close attention: she united it to Jesus.

Instead of turning inward, Sister Annella united her suffering to the Passion of Christ, offering it in love for her own salvation and for the salvation of others. Her life gives witness to a central teaching of our faith: that suffering, when given to God, is never wasted.

But Sister Annella is not only a witness to suffering. She is also a witness to joy.

She was known for her sweet smile, her sense of humor, and her musical gifts. She loved Jesus deeply in the Eucharist and had a tender devotion to the Blessed Mother. Even in great pain, she remained peaceful and joyful.

Her life reminds us that holiness is found in everyday faithfulness: in youth, in hiddenness, in weakness and in love.

To help share her life and support her cause, the Sister Annella Guild was established under the leadership of Bishop Cozzens. The guild works to promote her story and help fund the canonical process as her cause moves forward.

Today, people can take part in the cause in many ways: by joining the guild, signing up for updates, accessing free downloadable prayers and parish or school resources, supporting the cause financially, or attending prayer gatherings and special events. The guild is also helping lead efforts to mark the centennial of Sister Annella's death, including a recollection day, a centennial celebration in Moorhead, Minn. on Aug. 8 and a pilgrimage to Rome.

For those who want to learn more, her official biography, *Ticket for Eternity* by James Kritzeck, offers a rich and moving account of her life.

Sister Annella is from here. She walked our streets, prayed in our churches, and sat in our classrooms. She is one of our own.

So let us learn about her, become friends with her, pray for her intercession, and support her cause. In a world searching for meaning, courage, and hope, Sister Annella's life speaks clearly: God is good, suffering can become love, and a life fully given to Christ bears fruit far beyond what we can see.

We don't need to look farther than Sister Annella for a local example on how to live totally for God.

For more information, please see the Sister Annella Guild website at sisterannella.org.



Sister Annella Zervas (Sister Annella Guild)


Diocese of Fargo
Ordinations
Holy Hour & Vespers
June 4, 7:00 pm, St. Paul Newman Center
Diaconate Ordinations
June 5, 7:00 pm, St. Mary Cathedral
Priestly Ordination
June 6, 10:00 am, Sts. Anne & Joachim Church


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One year with Pope Leo XIV

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



Pope Leo XIV greets the faithful in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Sunday, April 12, 2026. (Vatican Media)

One year after Pope Leo XIV's election to the papacy, Catholics have had the opportunity to reflect on his unique personality and his special regard for both evangelization and outreach to the poor. The first American pope has sparked interest among both Catholics and non-Catholics, creating a unique opportunity for the faithful to show the joy of their Christian faith and invite others to go deeper.

Leo XIV's election on May 8, 2025 put the man formerly known as Cardinal Robert Prevost on a global stage. His status as the first American to be elected pope has had an impact.

"An American is, for the first time, our pope, the successor of Peter, and so I think there's a great deal of joy and excitement about that fact all by itself," Bishop John Folda told *New Earth* April 15.

"People are paying attention to what he does and says because he's an American," the bishop continued. "People feel, I think, a certain affinity or kinship with Pope Leo."

"I hate to use the word 'relatable,' but he is relatable to us in a way that perhaps popes have not been in the past," he said. "Not because of any fault of theirs, it's just difference of nationality and culture."

Hannah Brockhaus, Deputy Vatican Editor at EWTN News, also spoke with *New Earth* about the first American Pope.

"Being an American has helped Pope Leo be heard in the United States, not only because he's a native English speaker, but because he understands the culture and political context of the country," Brockhaus said in an April 15 email. "People can't dismiss him as an outsider."

"At the same time, his ability in various languages, including Spanish and French, his experience traveling around the world as prior general of the Augustinian Order, (and) living in Peru when he was bishop there, have all given him a perspective and approach that have garnered him a huge amount of respect both from ordinary Catholics and world leaders," she added.

Brockhaus, who hails from Nebraska, has been working in Rome on the Vatican beat for almost a decade. She has firsthand experience of many papal audiences and events.

"During the first year of his pontificate, Pope Leo XIV has received an enthusiastic response from pilgrims and tourists to the Vatican," she said. "He does not have the same charisma and big personality as his immediate predecessor, but he has warmed up to crowds and has an unpretentious way of engaging with those who have come to see him that is disarming and genuine. He has a charming smile and a good sense of humor."

"Those who have been fortunate enough to have one-on-one encounters with Pope Leo all say that he gave them his full attention, whether for one minute or ten, and never felt rushed to move on," Brockhaus reported.

During Pope Leo's first year, she has noticed "a change in tenor and tempo" in papal life.

"For one, for much of his first year, Pope Leo has made it a habit to spend one day out of every week at his residence in Castel Gandolfo, outside of Rome," said Brockhaus. "He also spent time there resting in the summer. While his schedule, as any pope's, is full, it doesn't feel frantically so, as it sometimes felt under Pope Francis. Things appear organized and systematic."

"Pope Leo XIV strikes me as a very thoughtful person, who seeks to listen and to understand before speaking," she continued. "With the start of 2026, I think we are beginning to see more and more what a Leo papacy will look like, and that includes a pope who is quiet, but willing to speak clearly in defense of the Gospel, who is strong on governance and canon law, and who cares deeply about evangelization and the formation of Catholics. His media savvy is also apparent."



Bishop Folda meets Pope Leo in St. Peter's Square May 28, 2025 during a diocesan pilgrimage to Rome. (Vatican Media)

Bishop Folda too reflected on Pope Leo's public persona.

"He strikes me as being very at peace with his new role and responsibility in the Church, this ministry, as Pope. He seems confident. He seems serene. He's articulate," the bishop said. "We're still learning about him, but it's interesting how, in his own way, he's already putting his own imprint on the role of the papacy, which is natural. I think that's true for any new pope."

Bishop Folda pointed to Pope Leo's Oct. 4, 2025 apostolic exhortation "*Dilexit te*", calling it his "first significant document." In the bishop's words, this document "reiterated the importance of the Church's ministry and outreach to the poor," a point of continuity with Pope Francis and previous popes.

The document is about the "option for the poor" and the love of the poor, the bishop continued. It recognizes "the fact that the poor are part of who we are as a Church" and that "they deserve our attention and our care."

"That's been significant, in terms of his teaching magisterium," said the bishop, using the formal word for the pope's authoritative body of teaching.

As for non-Catholic reaction to Leo, Bishop Folda thinks that non-Catholics are "very interested in Pope Leo because he is an American." His election has brought interest in the Catholic Church "in a way that maybe we have not seen before."

Catholics should respond to this interest with "gratitude," the bishop advised.

"We need to live our faith with joy, with a spirit of welcome, and with a willingness to reach out, because people do have questions," he said.

"His election has led people to ask questions about the Catholic Church in a way that maybe they didn't before," he said. "We have to be ready and willing to answer whatever questions they might have, and welcome them to learn more." In response to the Leo papacy, the bishop recommended Catholics show a spirit of invitation, welcoming and outreach.

"Most of it, I think, begins and ends with just living our faith joyfully and expressing our unity with Pope Leo. That all by itself sends a very, very strong message to our own faithful, but to non-Catholics as well," the bishop said. "Both Catholics and non-Catholics are fascinated and want to learn more about him, so that's happening. It's taking time."

Pope Leo's election to the papacy came more than two weeks after Pope Francis' death on April 21, 2025 at the age of 88. Pope Francis, who served as pontiff for 12 years, was the first pope to come from the Americas and the first to come from the Society of Jesus.

Bishop Folda reflected on Francis' papacy, saying "I think there was great affection for Pope Francis. He had a very human touch. There was a certain down-to-earth character to him that people loved and admired."

"Obviously, he had a great concern for the poor, as he would say, the 'people on the margins.' I think that will be his legacy in a lot of ways: to always remind us of the need to reach out to those that are perhaps on the peripheries, on the margins, both materially, but also spiritually. To reach out of our comfort zone, you might say," the bishop continued. "Every pope does challenge us in that way, but Pope Francis did so, I think, in a very, very vivid and colorful way."

"He had great emphasis on the call to evangelization. His first major teaching document was on what was called the Joy of the Gospel, '*Evangelii Gaudium*.' It was on the Church's call to evangelize," said the bishop.

"I think we'll be continuing to unpack what he had to say. And Pope Leo has carried it forward," Bishop Folda said. "It's not like that door was closed when Pope Francis passed away. The call to evangelize, the call to go out into the world with our faith is just as real now as it was the day he was elected."



Youngsters crown a statue of Our Lady at St. Catherine's Church in Valley City. (submitted photo)

May, the month of Mary

Religious communities honor Our Lady through prayer and service

By Paul Braun | Editor of *New Earth*

For centuries, the Church has reserved the month of May to honor the Blessed Virgin. From crownings of statues of Mary with flowers, to altars and grottoes dedicated to Our Lady, daily rosary recitations and special feasts, the Church has long set aside the entire month to honor Mary.

Father David Caron, O.P., reflected on the May Crowning devotion in a February essay for Cross Catholic Outreach: "Early in May, statues and paintings of Mary are crowned with flowers or, sometimes, simple gold trim. This tradition began sometime in the 1600s when Pope Clement VIII added two crowns to the *Salus Populi Romani*, a painting of Mary holding the Child Jesus. In 1838, Pope Gregory XVI reinstated the crowning of the image during the Feast of the Assumption, popularizing the practice of crowning icons of Mary. Churches in the West later adopted the practice during the nineteenth century, often using flowers to crown statues of Mary. Crowning is a physical depiction of Mary as the Queen of Heaven and Earth, the Queen of May, Queen of the Apostles and the Queen of the Universe."

Tradition also holds that the Church sets aside the month of May for the veneration of Mary because May represents new life and new beginnings, and Mary represents new life through the birth of her Son, Jesus Christ, entering the world.

"Those who venerate Mary have a deep respect for her place in God's plan," wrote Father Caron. "They recognize her holiness and see her as a mother figure of the Church. Mary is a model of faith because of her obedience, humility, and complete trust in God."

For examples of veneration and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, you don't have to look very far in the Diocese of Fargo. Several religious organizations located throughout the diocese are specifically devoted to Mary. As May arrives, we at *New Earth* thought it would be the perfect time to recognize these religious orders and communities. *New Earth* asked them about the history of their organizations, how they came to the Fargo Diocese, what the future holds for their organization and why they devote themselves to Mary.

Union of Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary-Fargo

The order now known as the Presentation Sisters was established on Christmas Eve, 1775, by Honoria ("Nano") Nagle and three companions in Cork City, Ireland. The foundation, which received initial papal approval in 1791, was originally named Sisters of Charitable Instruction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is not known why the order was renamed Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary when Rome granted final approval in 1805.



Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary community attend the dedication of the Nano Nagle statue erected at Holy Cross Cemetery North in Fargo. (submitted photo)

Presentation Sisters were invited by Bishop James O'Gorman to establish a school and charitable works in the Apostolic Vicariate of Nebraska. They made a religious foundation among indigenous people in what is now South Dakota. In 1882 after the nomadic people left the area, the Sisters accepted an invitation to move to Fargo. Thus, they became part of the Diocese of Fargo (then known as the Diocese of Jamestown) when it was created in 1889.

"Today Presentation Sisters minister in 20 countries on six continents," according to Sister Mary Margaret Mooney, PBVM. "However, vocations are fewer than in the past. Our numbers are decreasing. Presentation Sisters may well be an endangered species, but I am confident that consecrated religious life will be sustained because it is necessary for the fullness of the Church. I am equally confident that the flavor of Presentation spirituality will remain in ecclesial and civil society. We continue to our last breath doing what needs to be done remembering '…the Almighty permits everything for the best.' (Nano Nagle, Letter IV, 3). Although Our Blessed Mother was not our original titular patron, devotion to her has been strong and constant throughout our history. Until Vatican II, we all received "Mary" as part of our 'sister' name. Her feasts are observed in our communities. In all the successive iterations of our rule of life, a section has been devoted to Mary. The Magnificat is proclaimed daily in the Liturgy of the Hours. Fifteen of the prayers compiled in our community prayer book are directed through Our Lady. Our mission, as was Mary's, is to contemplate the Word as we strive to become a prophetic presence and voice. We endeavor to ensure the dignity of persons and to engage in compassionate service in today's world."

The order was instrumental in establishing Catholic schools in the Diocese of Fargo. In 2024, two statues honoring the order's founder, Nano Nagle, were created and placed at the entrance to Shanley High School in Fargo and at Holy Cross Cemetery North, the final resting place for many of the sisters of the order.

Sisters of Mary of the Presentation – Valley City and Harvey

Not to be confused with Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation began in 1828 in Broons, France after the French Revolution, in which all religious had been persecuted and suppressed. Two young women, sisters Louise and Laurence LeMarchand, felt called to religious life. At the same time, the parish priest Father Joachim Fleury saw the need to teach the people about faith in Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church.

The sisters also saw that young women were not being educated and that the sick were not being cared for in their homes. Thus, the sisters started by leading retreats which hundreds of people would attend, teaching the young girls in the sisters' home and going to people's homes to care for the sick and dying. Anti-clericalism again took power in France in the early 1900s and any schools or works that the Sisters had were confiscated and suppressed. Thus, the Sisters of Mary of



The Sisters of Mary of the Presentation located in Valley City and Harvey. (submitted photo)

the Presentation moved to other countries to serve the French immigrants. In 1903 they came to the United States. They served with Holy Cross Fathers in their schools. They then taught in Wild Rice, N.D. (south of Fargo) and cared for the sick in Spring Valley, Ill.

"Currently, we continue to be leaders in Catholic health care," Sister Suzanne Stahl, SMP, told *New Earth*. "Throughout North Dakota through SMP Health we have ministries in Bottineau, Rolla, Harvey, Jamestown, Valley City, Enderlin and Fargo. We pray for all the retreatants that come to Maryvale and serve as chaplains and pastoral ministers. Our foundresses and founder had a devotion to Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus. The remembrance of Mary, being presented in the temple, is from tradition and is celebrated Nov. 21 of each year. We celebrate this day each year, remembering our founding and asking for the guidance of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We try to imitate her as: first disciple, bearer of life, dedicated to God by being open to life, witnessing to others of Jesus Christ and consecrated life. Our motto is: 'Do all for the Glory of God!' This is how we serve, pray and live community life together."

The order is also well known throughout the diocese for their beautiful Maryvale Retreat Center north of Valley City. The Sisters graciously donated the property to the Diocese of Fargo. The complex operates as a retreat center, but it still remains the home to the Sisters.

Sister Suzanne serves as the leader of the Sisters in North Dakota and is also on the leadership team for their International Congregation. She told *New Earth* that the Sisters have women joining the congregation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon, both in Africa. These Sisters serve some of the world's poorest people by providing health care, teaching, jail ministry, evangelization and more. The order continues to have Sisters in Quebec, Canada; Belgium, and France providing pastoral ministry.

Carmel of Mary – Wahpeton

The order began in the early thirteenth century in the Holy Land and spread throughout the world. Nuns were first admitted into the Carmelite Order in 1452. The story of the foundation of the Carmel of Mary in Wahpeton begins with the Carmelite community in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The community had grown quite large, over 40 nuns, and they were considering sending out some new foundations and searched around the surrounding area for a suitable location.

Mr. Patrick Flood, a professor at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, knew of this desire of the nuns. He asked Fargo Auxiliary Bishop Leo Dworschak if he would be interested in having a cloistered Carmelite monastery in the Fargo diocese. Bishop Dworschak and Archbishop Aloisius Muench, the ordinary of the diocese, were wondering what they could do to celebrate the upcoming Marian year of 1954. Bishop Dworschak contacted both Mr. Flood and the nuns in Allentown with an affirmative reply. With that, the Carmelite community prepared for seven nuns to travel to North Dakota.

The Fargo bishops received permission from the Holy See for the establishment of the new foundation. The name of the new monastery would be Carmel of Mary. After searching the diocese for a suitable location, they learned that the Franciscan Sisters from Little Falls, Minn. were ready to sell their hospital building in Wahpeton. Bishop Dworschak offered the first Mass at the Carmel of Mary in Wahpeton on Nov. 1, Feast of All Saints in the Marian year of 1954.

"Our mission in North Dakota is prayer," the current prioress, Mother Madonna, O.Carm. told *New Earth*. "We receive many prayer petitions, which we take to heart, and prayer reaches to the ends of the earth. Many people also pray for us and with us. By our presence we make the Carmelite Marian charism present in the Diocese of Fargo. It is fitting that our diocese, like our religious community, is under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that the cathedral in Fargo is named St. Mary's. We remain here in the same diocese our entire lives in our devotion to the bishop, the priests, and all the people of this land."

Mother Madonna said that young people are the order's future, which gives them great hope. She said they bring new joy and energy to the Carmelite Order and to the Church.

"We pray every day for vocations to our community, trusting that Our Lord and Our Lady will grant our earnest petition," said Mother Madonna. "It is so important for parents to encourage vocations. They can help their children by teaching them that they were made to seek God and His plan for their lives. When one family member is called, the entire family is blessed through that one."



Two sisters of the Carmel of Mary order in Wahpeton pray in their private chapel. (submitted photo)

Third Order of Franciscans of Mary Immaculate – Minto/Warsaw

Father Joseph Christensen, while serving at the Cathedral of St. Mary, revealed to then-Bishop Samuel Aquila his desire to live a religious life and to establish a religious community. The Third Order of Franciscans of Mary Immaculate is based in Minto. A great part of Father Christensen's many ministries is serving as chaplain at St. Gianna and Pietro Molla Maternity Home in Warsaw, where he looks out for the spiritual needs of those residing there. He also assists as a priest when needed at parishes in Minto and Warsaw.

"I have had a deep devotion to Our Lady since my earliest childhood, passed down from my parents, especially from my father," Father Christensen told *New Earth*. We prayed the daily rosary as a family; we never missed a day. We also always had images of Our Lady in the house, and my father taught me to carry a rosary with me all the time as a sacramental and doing so would give the opportunity to pray it whenever possible. St. Maximilian Kolbe is our patron, and he had a very great devotion to Mary Immaculate, and in conjunction with this Polish saint, Our Lady of Częstochowa is our patroness. And so, from my early formation in the family and in founding this religious community with these patrons, I could not but include devotion, especially in regard to total consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary as part of our daily consecrated life."

Moving forward, Father Christensen said the Franciscans of Mary Immaculate will continue to bring the love and the mercy of Christ to those they serve, especially through Our Lady's gentle and motherly care. There are currently 22 lay members of a secular Third Order under his care as well.

"Whoever God puts in front of us," said Father Christensen, "and wherever Our Lady sends us to evangelize in her name and by her power and intercession, we will help bring healing, truth, courage, formation, and God's Divine Mercy to our brothers and sisters to help them on their way to heaven."

Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (S.O.L.T) – Dunseith and Belcourt

The Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, founded by Father James Flanagan in 1958 and based in Corpus Christi, Texas, has been serving the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and Pembina near Belcourt since 1995, when S.O.L.T. priests came to serve in the Fargo Diocese at the invitation of Bishop James Sullivan. The S.O.L.T. Sisters arrived soon after in 2001, serving at St. Ann's Catholic school in Belcourt, and in parish ministry in the local parishes of the Turtle Mountains that are part of St. Ann's mission. Within the first year, the aspirancy first-year discernment program for the sisters was started in Dunseith, N.D., where the sisters now reside.



Father Joseph Christensen, FMI, leads a Eucharistic Procession for a Juvenes Mariae Immaculatae youth camp put on by the Third Order of Franciscans of Mary Immaculate. (submitted photo)

From its inception, the community's emphasis has been to be disciples of Jesus through Mary, to live a Marian-Trinitarian spirituality, and to serve on ecclesial family teams in areas of deepest apostolic need. Their ecclesial family teams have members of the three branches of S.O.L.T.: priests, religious, and laity.

"At the heart of our charism is our Marian-Trinitarian spirituality," said Sister Mary Ann Ruchwald, S.O.L.T. "Father Flanagan built the foundation of that spirituality on the total consecration to Jesus through Mary of St. Louis de Monfort. Each member of the community makes that consecration during their time of formation and strives to live it out in their daily lives. Each of our sisters takes the holy name of Mary as part of their religious name to honor Our Lady."

Sister Richwald said the sisters and priests continue to serve in various areas in the Turtle Mountains. At St. Ann's Catholic School in Belcourt they teach religion classes, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd faith formation and art and music. In parish ministry, the sisters bring Holy Communion to the homebound, visit the local nursing home, serve St. Mary's Mission thrift store, assist and direct the religious education program at St. Michael's in Dunseith, and help with ministries to the homeless and those in need of assistance. During the summers, they also serve St. Ann's Summer Camp on the reservation.

The Fargo Diocese is rich with the blessings these orders bring through prayer and service. If you or someone you know is looking into religious life, contact the Diocese of Fargo vocations office. Its website is www.fargodiocese.org/vocations.



S.O.L.T. Sisters MaryAnn Richwald (left) and Maria Faustina Collart fishing at Armadale Dam in North Dakota. (submitted photo)



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Our Bodies Tell His Story

Theology of the Body and You



TOB, freedom and the law (part two)

By Timothy Mosser | Respect Life Director of the Diocese of Fargo

In last month's column on the relationship between freedom and the law, we spoke of a little-discussed truth: rules do not exist to suppress our freedom and flourishing, but to protect them. We take for granted that a basketball game requires boundaries and that a symphony requires a specific key. Without these "constraints," the game becomes chaos and the music becomes noise.

Here's another scenario: you're standing before a room of high school students with two volleyballs. One is old and tattered. The other is in perfect shape. Ask students which they prefer as a gift. The choice is unanimous. They want the new one.

Yet the conversation takes a turn when we discuss ownership. If that ball is theirs to keep forever, they admit they might eventually get lazy. They might leave it in the rain, let the dog chew it, or toss it into a dusty corner. Because it is "theirs," they feel entitled to mistreat it. But then the premise shifts: "What if I gave you this ball to use for fifty years, but with the condition that one day, you must return it to me?"

Suddenly, the students' attitude transforms. They would take better care of it. Why? Knowing that an object must be returned to its rightful owner changes how we treat it.

This is a starting point of a spiritual understanding of the body. In a world that screams, "My body, my choice," the Gospel offers a more profound and demanding reality: You are not your own. Your body and all its attributes are a gift from God!

The modern "cultural chaos" we experience today—evidenced by the devaluation of life through abortion, the confusion of gender, and the rise of euthanasia—stems from a misunderstanding of ownership. We act as if we are the absolute owners of our bodies. But St. Paul offers a radical correction in his first letter to the Corinthians: "The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord... your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God... you are not your own. You have been bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." (1 Cor. 6:13-20)

St. Paul isn't just giving a suggestion; he is outlining the "rules of the game" for human existence. If our bodies were merely biological machines, we could do with them as we pleased. But if they are temples—sacred spaces where the Creator dwells—then how we treat them becomes an act of worship.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* echoes this: our very dignity demands we treat our bodies with profound respect (CCC 1004). Jesus himself provides the ultimate "rulebook" for the body during the Last Supper. He doesn't say, "This is my body, I'll do what I want." He says, "This is my body, given up for you." This is the pivot point of the Theology of the Body. True freedom is not the power to use our bodies for our own selfish whims; it is the power to make our bodies a gift, a "living sacrifice" (cf. Rom 12:1-2).

When students hear the word "rules" in a religious context, they often envision "spiritual straitjackets" or "holy handcuffs." Many see the Church's teachings on sexuality—the prohibition of contraception, fornication, and pornography—as arbitrary walls built to keep them from having fun.

To return to a sports analogy: is the "out of bounds" line a barrier wall? No, it's what makes the game possible. In the realm of human sexuality, God has established an objective meaning. He made the sexual union to be reserved for a man and a woman within the covenant of marriage, always open to the gift of life. This isn't a "rule" the Church made up; it is a Body of Truth written into our very design as male and female.

Consider the parallels with sports: just as James Naismith invented basketball, God designed humanity, our boundaries, and our standards for success. He knows how the "equipment" works best. I can't walk onto a court and decide that a basket is now worth fifty points just because I feel like it. Similarly, we can't redefine marriage or the meaning of the "one-flesh union." We didn't create the design, so we don't have the authority to change it. If a player doesn't know the rules of basketball, they will still be called for a violation. Similarly, breaking God's laws for sexuality—even out of ignorance—causes real harm to the soul and the community. It leads to the "cultural chaos" we see today: broken families, wounded hearts, a loss of identity.

We often define freedom as "the ability to do what I want." But a higher, more beautiful definition of freedom is "the disciplined desire to do what is good." A virtuoso pianist is "free" to play a complex Mozart concerto because they have spent years submitting to the "laws" of scales and rhythm. A person addicted to their impulses is not free; they are a slave to their desires.

How, then, are we "free" from God's law? We are free from the law when we no longer desire to break it—when our hearts are so aligned with God's love that we look at the boundaries of marriage and chastity not as handcuffs, but as the very things that allow love to flourish and stay protected. We leave behind a game of chaos and start living the masterpiece we were created to be.



Vibrant Paradoxes: the Both/And of Catholicism

By Matt Komprood | Parishioner at St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center, Grand Fork

Bishop Robert Barron has emerged in the last decade as one of the best communicators of the Catholic faith in the English-speaking world, demonstrating a knack for making the Faith seem both reasonable and accessible. The collection of essays found in *Vibrant Paradoxes* is no exception. Bishop Barron's great gift is taking current cultural issues and drawing out from them the spiritual lessons and deeper meanings that can be otherwise easily missed, drawing lessons from current themes as well as events from history.

The format of *Vibrant Paradoxes* is short, two-to-three-page vignettes on a variety of topics, suitable for reading with your morning coffee, or as a devotional. They are all individually contained, so don't worry if a couple days go by in between readings, or if you're the type of reader that likes to skip around until you find something that hooks you.

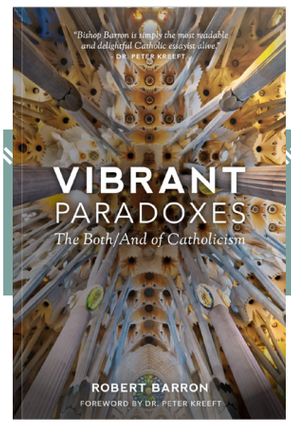
Admittedly inspired by G.K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, Barron's *Vibrant Paradoxes* is a celebration of, in Barron's words, the "both/and" of Catholicism, of the paradoxes that make Christianity and the teachings of its saints such a deep well of wisdom. One of my favorite essays in the book is a take on C.S. Lewis' famous argument from desire, in which Lewis argues that we can come to know of God's existence by looking inward, to see the desires that are eternally in our hearts. We experience a desire for food, and food exists, we experience a desire for love, and love exists. We don't experience deep innate desires for things that can't be satisfied. In the same way, we experience a desire for God, so then God must also exist. This is an oversimplification of Lewis' point, but the overall idea should be clear.

The paradox, in Barron's telling, is that God would instill in us a desire for himself that cannot be fulfilled by anything in the created world. This leads some to write off this argument the way we might write off a desire for a billion dollars, or some other unreachable goal. However, it is the very existence of a desire that can only be fulfilled by something outside what is achievable in this world that gives the argument its power. Barron goes on to make the distinction between an innate and natural desire, and a contrived desire born of external circumstances; we might call them intrinsic and extrinsic desires. I can wish I had the ability to fly and desire wings. This is an extrinsic desire, born of something outside the human condition. In contrast, the desire for food is an intrinsic desire; I don't need anyone to tell me to be hungry, I just am. In the same way, we don't really need anyone to tell us that we need God, we just do.

As Barron writes: "And this gives the lie to any attempt…to write off the object of this desire as a wish-fulfilling fantasy, as a projection of subjectivity. In a word, the longing for God participates in God, much as hunger participates in food. And thus, precisely in the measure that the desire under consideration is an innate and natural desire, it does indeed prove the existence of its proper object." (84)

I chose this example because I love C.S. Lewis, and I love this argument. Of course, I had to read this essay more than a few times to grasp Barron's point, but it serves as a good setup for the rest of the essays in this collection. There is a lot to draw on, even in the fourth and fifth readings. In fact, it took me a fourth and fifth reading to feel that I could truly grasp his arguments.

The rest of the essays in this book cover a wide range of topics, from politics to heaven and hell, to whether phone apps can replace going to confession (spoiler: no). Even if not every topic grabs you at first read, you're sure to find something in this collection to challenge and edify you.



Vibrant Paradoxes
by Bishop Robert Barron

The Christian virtue of patriotism



CATHOLIC ACTION

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

This year our country celebrates its 250th anniversary which began with the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. We are rightly proud of our country's founding principles, storied heritage, and monumental achievements, while at the same time we feel shame about its moral failures, social injustices, and historical dark spots.

How should we as Catholic Christians view our country considering both its accomplishments and failures? As this year unfolds, it provides a good opportunity for us to consider the Christian virtue of patriotism.

Patriotism is commonly understood as love and respect for one's own country. While some today dismiss it as overly sentimental, uncritically naive, or even bigoted, the Catholic Christian tradition teaches that patriotism is a moral virtue necessary for living a good and holy life and that its absence is a vice.

St. Thomas Aquinas explains in the *Summa Theologiae* that patriotism is a form of the virtue of piety, which is itself a sub-virtue of justice, one of the four cardinal virtues (along with prudence, temperance, and fortitude) around which all other moral virtues are grouped. Justice directs us to give God and neighbor their due, that is, what we owe them as a matter of right. Whereas religion is a special kind of justice which entails giving honor and love to God "as the most excellent of all and the first principle of both our being and existence," piety is a special kind of justice whereby we give the appropriate honor and love owed to our parents and homeland on account of their also being, in a secondary and lesser way, "principles of both our being and governance" (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 101, a. 1).

Every one of us owes God, our parents, and our country different degrees of love and respect because each in some manner is a source of our existence. God deserves our highest honor and love because our entire existence depends completely upon him. Yet parents and country are also owed love and honor in a secondary and lesser way because they too in some way give us life. Parents give life to their children and raise them, and the country supports and shapes the lives of its citizens.

Our country forms and supports us more than we often realize: the laws and institutions, freedoms and rights, organizations and associations, traditions and customs, cultural and historical heritage, and other innumerable benefits of being a citizen of the United States all go towards shaping us into the persons we are and supporting us in everyday life. The pagan philosopher Socrates expresses the indebtedness every person has to his homeland in Plato's famous philosophical dialogue, *Crito*. In the *Crito*, Socrates argues from his prison cell with his friend Crito to explain that he will not attempt to escape an unjust death sentence because of his duty to his homeland. In answer to Crito's objections, Socrates personifies what the laws of Athens might say to him if he were to try to escape: "It is not just for you to try to do to us what you're now attempting. For we gave birth to you, brought you up, educated you, and gave you and all the other citizens everything we could that's good" (*Crito* 51d).

While we might disagree with his decision, Socrates nevertheless expresses well the moral obligation each person owes to his home country.

Patriotism is a kind of familial love that parallels the love and honor owed to parents. Just as one owes a special debt of gratitude and honor towards one's own parents, so too does one owe a special debt of gratitude and honor to one's own country. In fact, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* places its teaching of patriotism under the Fourth Commandment that requires children to honor their father and mother: "[This Commandment] extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it" (CCC 2199).

The *Catechism* further emphasizes that the duty to be patriotic flows from our indebtedness to our homeland: "The love and service of one's country follow from the duty of gratitude and belong to the order of charity" (CCC 2239). While good and evil are found in every nation, true patriots are still obliged to love their country. Just as the Fourth Commandment's demand for children to honor even imperfect parents is unconditional, so too patriotism requires love and respect for even a morally flawed nation.

Does this mean we ought to accept and condone everything our nation does or stands for? Absolutely not. Like every moral virtue, patriotism stands as a mean between two corresponding vices of excess and defect: extreme nationalism (excess) and hatred and ingratitude for one's country (defect).

Excessive nationalism is a vice of excess marked by idolatry of one's country and hatred and contempt for other countries. Extreme nationalism can lead to the conquest of other sovereign nations and trampling upon the rights of other peoples. As G.K. Chesterton observes, the expression, "my country, right or wrong" is like saying "my mother, drunk or sober" and a thing that no patriot would think of saying (*A Defense of Patriotism*).

It involves whitewashing national sins and involves a kind of narrow, even egotistical, pride in one's own nation over others. A patriot who truly loves his country cannot be indifferent to its faults, however, but rather wants it to be good and recognizes the good in other countries. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, was a true patriot insofar as he challenged America to live up to its ideals of liberty and equality in his fight for civil rights for black Americans.

Hatred and ingratitude of one's country is a vice of defect also opposed to patriotism. Sometimes this defect can manifest itself in selfish egoism whereby a person has no concern for the good of his country or his fellow citizens. Other times, this defect in patriotism can lead to violence against one's fellow citizens and actions aimed at creating chaos and havoc in society. This defect can also be expressed in a kind of global humanitarianism where a person claims to love humanity but has no special loyalty towards his own country.

Chesterton argues this detached humanitarianism is much like those who say nobody should go to Church, since God is everywhere. It removes a person from those concrete links that bind men together in the same homeland. As Chesterton puts it, "They are ceasing to be human in the effort to be humane. … A man who loves humanity and ignores patriotism is ignoring humanity" (*The Patriotic Idea*).

The real patriot feels pride for his country's merits and achievements but also shame for its moral lapses and failures. In this year dedicated to our 250th anniversary as a nation, let's commit ourselves to fostering in ourselves true Christian patriotism that loves and honors the United States of America, upholding with pride all that is noble and good in our country and opposing vigorously all that is shameful and wrong.

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Praying and volunteering as a retired Presentation Sister



SISTER'S PERSPECTIVE

SISTER SHARON ALTENDORF, PBVM
Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary

"God, what are we going to do today?"

How is the Holy Spirit working in me today as a consecrated woman in retirement? Perhaps I could say it is the same today as it was in my youth since I pray to the Holy Spirit daily to guide and strengthen me. Personal prayer time, reflection, spiritual reading and daily exercise keep me balanced and ready for each day.

The last couple of years I've been using the USCCB reflections on the scriptures of the day. I love how Deacon Arthur L. Miller ends each session with "God, what are we going to do today?"

After spending several years in teaching English as a second language and doing justice advocacy work in Texas, I returned to Fargo and am part of the Riverview Place retirement community. Each day there is designated time for prayer and interaction with my Presentation Sisters. Eucharistic liturgy and other prayer is celebrated with Sisters and other residents. We celebrate life and even upcoming death as we walk each other home.

Nano Nagle, our foundress of the Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, said, "Spend yourself for the poor." It is a gift that my health is good and I can volunteer with an endeavor of advocacy for vulnerable women, men and their children. I can use my time with whatever energy is available!

In my former ministries of education and pastoral care there was a lot of listening to people and helping them find a way forward. Today I do a lot of listening to my Sisters in community and to my neighbors here at Riverview Place.

When I worked at the United Nations in New York City as our first International Presentation Association Non-Governmental Representative, I honed my ability to listen to the views of people from other cultures, languages and those with other life experiences. Today I continue to listen to and accompany refugees and asylum seekers from various cultures.

I was fortunate that my religious community began working with migrant farm workers over 80 years ago in this area. So, when I was in the novitiate the sisters taught us to speak and pray in Spanish. Then I was able to become more proficient during my years of ministry in two different places in Peru and continued in San Antonio, Texas. Today these skills continue to be put to good use enabling me to assist the Spanish speaking community in this local area. Sometimes that means visiting people before and after Mass, in their homes, the hospital, and the local jails to share the love and joy our God has for them in these trying times. I've even been called to support some unaccompanied minors as they navigate life in Fargo.

In addition, I write letters and visit with our local and federal officials on issues that affect the lives of the vulnerable, and volunteer weekly at the Jeremiah Project, mainly at the front desk welcoming the young moms and their little ones. I'm on the vocation committee for the Presentation Sisters' USA unit. And I'm very happy to be on the Board for Catholic Charities of North Dakota continuing the work begun by our Sisters nearly 100 years ago.

For fun I read, listen to music and play card games and keep in contact with my family even every two weeks on zoom since the covid time!

Sister Joyce Rupp in her new book, *The Years of Ripening,* in the chapter "Holding out the Chalice," provides a wonderful image! "Like lily pods giving away the potential for new flowers to grow, we elders allow our ripened goodness and giftedness to pour forth from us."

This is retirement! Thanks be to God!



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Reflections of a seminarian on the cusp of ordination



SEMINARIAN LIFE

DEACON TAYLOR TERNES
Theology IV
Mount St. Mary Seminary
Emmitsburg, Md.

Throughout my life I have been blessed with tremendous examples of holy, joyful and faithful priests. My parish priests always instilled in my mind that the priesthood is a happy and fulfilling life. Furthermore, my parents explained the great gift priests are for our faith lives. My dad always calls priests "real-life superheroes" because they bring us Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

Naturally, children want to be just like their heroes. Because of this, I often played Mass at home, using a throw blanket as my vestments and vanilla wafers as hosts. Although my siblings would help, I was always sure to be the main celebrant!

My parents were always very supportive and even purchased things to make my play Mass more realistic. I look back on these cherished memories of my childhood with joy and realize, now that I am mere weeks from priestly ordination, how much the Lord has blessed me throughout my life and in my time at seminary.

When people ask me about my time in seminary, I find it can be difficult to explain. Life in seminary can be so different from life outside seminary. The days seem long while the weeks continue to fly by. I feel that my eight years of priestly formation have gone so quickly, while at the same time my life outside of seminary seems like forever ago. It truly is paradoxical, and difficult for me to understand as I reflect on it! This time in seminary is limited, although the road at times seemed long, I look back on it with gratitude for the many blessings it has brought.

If you compare the wide-eyed high schooler who just entered seminary to the man I have become, you can see how the various dimensions of formation have taken hold and influenced every aspect of my life. Seminary taught me how to pray, how to be a good Catholic man, how to communicate, and, yes, taught me many things in the classroom. I have learned many things about myself. I have become more comfortable with who I am as a person and I have fallen more in love with Jesus and his Church throughout the years.

In all the preparations for the priesthood, I realize more now than ever just how weak and feeble I am. This realization is the best thing for me, as it has forced me to lean into that relationship with Jesus even more. I know more than ever that I cannot rely on my own abilities but instead must surrender everything to his providential guidance.

In this last semester of seminary, much of the formation program is geared toward practical preparation for the priesthood. We practice the Mass, confessions and other sacraments and activities common to the daily life of a priest.

The first time I practiced Mass at the seminary, I was immediately drawn back to those early memories in the lower level of our family home, playing Mass. In June, God-willing, I will put aside the throw blanket from twenty years ago and put on the priestly vestments for the first time.

My heart is filled with gratitude, and I am humbled that the Lord has chosen to work through me. I am no superhero, not even close, but I hope that I can live as Jesus' holy priest and be his humble instrument of grace to our broken world. Please continue to pray for me as I finish my final preparations for priestly ordination this summer. I look forward to laying down my life for God and for all of you.

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Four reasons to advance a bequest



STEWARDSHIP

STEVE SCHONS
Director of Stewardship and Development
Diocese of Fargo

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

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

1. Increase your income now.

One of the more important benefits of a gift annuity is the attractive rates we are able to offer, especially for our older donors. For example, an 80-year-old person qualifies for an annuity rate of 6.8 percent. Thus, establishing a $25,000 annuity would provide $1,700 every year for the duration of life. A 90-year-old annuitant would fare even better with a rate of nine percent.

While a person may be able to obtain a higher rate with a commercial annuity, it's important to remember that we're talking here about money that has already been "earmarked" for a Catholic parish or other ministry as a bequest.

2. Reduce your taxes now.

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

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

3. Stabilize your retirement now.

Gift annuity payments are fixed. Once the payment dates are established (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually) you will receive the identical amount with every check. No need to guess or worry about the ups and downs of the financial markets. Your annuity will be backed not only by our scrupulously maintained annuity reserve fund but by the entire capital assets of the Catholic Development Foundation.

Why miss out on the "joy of giving"? Give while you live.

4. Enjoy your giving now.

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

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

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



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Diocesan policy: Reporting child abuse

The Diocese of Fargo is committed to the protection of youth. Please report any incident or suspected incidents of child abuse, including sexual abuse, to civil authorities.

If the situation involves a member of the clergy or a religious order, a seminarian, or an employee of a Catholic school, parish, the diocesan offices or other Catholic entity within the diocese, we ask that you also report the incident or suspected incident to Msgr. Joseph Goering, vicar general, at (701) 356-7945 or the victim assistance coordinator, at (701) 356-7965 or by email at victimassistance@fargodiocese.org.

To make a report of sexual abuse of a minor and related misconduct by bishops, go to ReportBishopAbuse.org or call 1-800-276-1562.

Deacon James Hunt passes away March 25



Deacon James Allyson Hunt of Hankinson passed away at his home surrounded by family March 25. Deacon Hunt was born Sept. 13, 1947 in Hallock, Minn., to Verne and Sarah (Baldwin) Hunt. He attended school in Humboldt, Minn. and Hallock, Minn., graduating in 1965.

He enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1966 and was stationed at Lakenheath Air Base in England, serving as a medic. He met the love of his life, Valeria, at an airmen's club dance there, and they were married in 1970. Together they had eight children: six girls and two boys.

Deacon Hunt worked in the agriculture and transportation industries throughout his life but later answered the calling he felt from a young age to serve the Lord. In his own words, he said it may have taken time to fulfill the calling, but it was orchestrated perfectly by God. He was ordained a Deacon for the Diocese of Fargo in 2006. This calling brought him great joy and many opportunities to put service into action beginning in 2012 when he served as chaplain at the Rosewood long-term care facility on Broadway in Fargo. He retired from Rosewood in 2021 and continued serving the Lord and parishioners of St. Philip's Catholic Church in Hankinson for almost 20 years.

Deacon Hunt taught his children about Jesus, to believe he hears our prayers, and to look to him first in good times and in trials, that God is good all the time. He lived that example fully. After his wife's stroke in 2011, he set the best example for his children and grandchildren by his dedication and devotion to her and her care.

He battled his own illness valiantly for several years with steadfast faith and trust in God's perfect timing, saying he was ready whenever God decides. He touched countless lives as a Deacon and servant of the Lord. He is survived by his wife, Val, and his children. He was preceded in death by his parents and a son, Sean.

A Mass of Christian burial took place March 30 at the St. Francis Convent Chapel in Hankinson, with internment with military honors at Calvary Cemetery in Hankinson.

Sister Mary Andrea Arendt passes away April 4



Sister Mary Andrea Arendt, PBVM, passed away on Holy Saturday, April 4 after a courageous fight with Parkinson's Disease. A Mass of Christian burial was held at St. Joseph's Chapel at Riverplace in Fargo April 10 with burial at Holy Cross Cemetery North in Fargo.

Sister Andrea was born in Bremen on March 7, 1945 to Francis and Adeline Arendt. She was baptized at St. Joseph's Church in Bremen and attended elementary school in Bremen. After graduating from St. James Academy in New Rockford, she entered the Presentation Sisters in Fargo and made her perpetual vows in 1971.

Sister Andrea attended Sacred Heart Junior College and NDSU. She graduated from the College of St. Catherine with a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Her holistic approach to healing led her to enroll in clinical pastoral education at St. Luke's in Fargo and to complete a master's degree in pastoral studies at Loyola University Chicago. For a total of 12 years, she ministered as a nurse in hospitals operated by the Presentation Sisters and in Sacred Heart Convent Infirmary.

She filled administrative and liturgical positions in the Sacred Heart Parish Community of East Grand Forks for ten years. During these 20-some years, Sister Andrea also served her religious community in leadership roles and as a member of governing boards of sponsored institutions.

In 1993 she was assigned to Presentation Prayer Center through which she conducted numerous retreats and days of reflection. She served on the governing board of Retreats International and was instrumental in establishing the practice of Taizé Prayer in the area. At the request of the Diocesan Finance Council, Sister led a series of hearings focused on articulating the mission and vision of the Fargo Diocese.

Sister Andrea taught many sessions of FM Communiversity and worked closely with interfaith and ecumenical groups. She also taught a class in spirituality at the YWCA Emergency Shelter, volunteered in Befriender programs and organized a conference for church office workers. Sr. Andrea was a spiritual director and contributed to the training and mentoring of other practitioners of this art. She wrote columns and articles on faith and faith-related issues for church bulletins, agency newsletters, *The Forum* newspaper and the *Journal of Ideas, Arts and Activities*. In 1992 she received an Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation Scholarship and in 2008 was named YWCA Woman of the Year in the Faith Community Category.

Her calm, listening presence was a balm to the soul in distress and a tonic to many on their faith journey. She will long be remembered for her ability to empower others to share their gifts in building communities of support and mutuality.

LIFE'S MILESTONES



Rich and Donna Bernhardt will celebrate their 50th anniversary June 5. They were married at St. Phillip's in Bemidji, Minn. and are parishioners at the Newman Center in Grand Forks. They have been blessed with three sons and nine grandchildren.



John and Cheryl (Miller) Dougherty, parishioners of St. Mary of the Assumption in Lakota, celebrated their 60th anniversary April 13. They were married at St. James in Warwick. They have three children, ten grandchildren and ten great grandchildren with four more on the way!



Janet and Richard Gemmill, parishioners of Sts. Peter and Paul in Bechyne, celebrated their 50th anniversary May 1. They were married at St. Alphonsus in Langdon. They are parents of three children and ten grandchildren.



Karen Gapp, parishioner of Our Lady of Peace in Mayville, celebrated her 85th birthday May 8. She was married to Wilfrid for 50 years until his death in 2017. They have been blessed with five children, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.



Ron Pich, parishioner of St. John the Evangelist in Grafton, celebrated his 90th birthday April 30. Ron and his wife, Catherine, will be married 67 years on June 6. They are parents of four children, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



Raymond Walter, a parishioner of Sts. Peter and Paul in Karlsruhe, celebrates his 100th birthday May 24. He was married to his wife Catherine for 67 years before her passing in 2013. Raymond has 12 children, 34 grandchildren, 51 great-great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Life's Milestones includes anniversaries for marriages, ordinations, and religious vows for 25, 40, 50, 60, 65, and 70+ years and birthdays for 80, 85, 90, 95, and 100+ years for those in the Diocese of Fargo. Submissions 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 June issue is May 12.



Quotable

St. Philip Neri
Feast Day May 26

"Charity and cheerfulness, or charity and humility, should be our motto."

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

In the month of May the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, Fargo Assembly, will pray the rosary over KFGO, Fargo; the rosary broadcast will be heard from 10:15 to 10:30 every weekday evening and from 9:15-9:30 on Sundays. The rosary will be recited to Our Lady of Fatima for world peace and will again be led by members of the Fargo Assembly with a group of Knights present in the studio for the response. Catholics and non-Catholics alike will be invited to join in the recitation of the rosary in their homes, in their automobiles, wherever they may be. The response to the radio rosary last October was way beyond expectation. Over 300 letters were received in the studio of KFGO commending the program and expressing appreciation to the station for the free time given the Knights for the prayers.

50 years ago — 1976

May 17 was celebrated as Appreciation Day and 50th Jubilee of Priestly Ordination for retired Bishop Leo Dworschak. At the invitation of Bishop Justin Driscoll, Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis joined in the observance and was the principal concelebrant at the Eucharistic Liturgy. Bishop Dworschak was ordained a priest May 29, 1926, in St. John's Abbey Church, Collegeville, Minn. Although ordained for the Fargo Diocese, he is a native of Independence, Wis., and the youngest of thirteen children. In 1960, he became Bishop of Fargo, resigning and retiring because of failing health in 1970. He was responsible for a number of projects: Shanley High School, Villa Nazareth, and Cardinal Muench Seminary were built and many churches, schools, rectories, hospitals and convents were erected and remodeled throughout the Diocese. He brought the cloistered Carmelite Nuns to Carmel of Mary, near Wahpeton, in 1954. Bishop Dworschak now resides at Villa Maria Nursing Home in Fargo.

20 years ago — 2006

Msgr. Brian Donahue was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his service as a battalion chaplain in Iraq. The narrative for the award reads in part: "Chaplain Major Brian G. Donahue, U.S. Army, distinguished himself with exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service to the United States as battalion chaplain, 3-133rd Field Artillery Battalion, FOB Danger, Iraq, Feb. 5 to Nov. 5, 2005, during Operation Iraqi Freedom III. He exhibited outstanding professional ability, knowledge, courage, and selfless service above and beyond his duty requirements as battalion chaplain. He voluntarily provided comprehensive Catholic and non-denominational coverage for the entire 42nd Infantry Division Area of Operations, which covered all of North Central Iraq."

Events

Moorhead, Minn.: Catholic Man Night. Evenings begin at 6 p.m. with adoration and confession. A light, free-will offering meal is served at 7 p.m. Speakers begin at approximately 7:30 p.m. This a great opportunity for men to share in prayer and fellowship. Series to return after summer.

May 12: St. Joseph's Church, Moorhead, Minn. Speaker Brad Gray.

Hankinson / Online: Deepen your prayer life. Join Sr. Mary Ruth for a weekly series, "Lord, Teach Me to Pray," based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Mondays from 6 to 7:15 a.m. at St. Francis Retreat Center (or online). For more information or to register, contact Sr. Mary Ruth: (701) 242-7195 or srmaryruth@sfcretreats.org.

Grand Forks: Mass and groundbreaking for St. Carlo Acutis Middle School. Mass at St. Michael's Church, Grand Forks, 10 a.m., May 18. Groundbreaking to follow.

Grand Forks: Msgr. Daniel Pilon celebrates his 50th anniversary as a priest May 31 at St. Michael's Church. Mass begins at 5:00 PM. Reservations for the dinner after Mass have closed.

Moorhead, Minn.: Sister Anella Guild Recollection Day. May 31, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. at St. Joseph's Church. Free with monthly guild membership of $50. More information at sisterannella.org/recollection-day/.

Hankinson:

Silent directed Retreats. A week of silence and reflection on the beautiful prairies of eastern North Dakota, where you can listen for the Holy Spirit's guidance and experience his grace in a special way. Dates for 2026 include June 3-10, July 1-8, and August 12-19. Enjoy daily spiritual direction, our beautiful chapels & grounds, Mass & Adoration (optional) and comfortable accommodations.

Franciscan Sisters Mother-Daughter Days. Share some time together. Strengthen your relationship. Learn about your Catholic faith and gain exposure to the religious life. June 11-13 and July 9-11, 2026.

For more information contact Sr. Mary Ruth at srmaryruth@sfcretreats.org. Register at ndfranciscans.org.

A Beginning Experience weekend. A program for widowed, separated and divorced. June 26-28 at the St. Francis Retreat Center in Hankinson, starts Friday at 6:30 p.m., ends Sunday at 4 p.m. "Let go of the pain and get ready to live again. Real results, real hope." For more information and an application, contact Bonnie (Fargo) at 701-318-0949, or leave a message on our hotline at 701-277-8784.

Franciscan Sisters Come & See Weekend. Young women, "Come & See" what life is like as a Hankinson Franciscan. Learn more about the religious life that we live in our community. Explore your vocation. June 26-28 and Aug. 21-23. 102 6th St SE, Hankinson. Sign up at our website at ndfranciscans.org/

vocation-events.html If you wish to arrange another time, please reach out to Sr. Mary Ruth at srmaryruth@sfcretreats.org

West Fargo: Holy Cross Church is throwing a going away/retirement party for Father Phil Ackerman on Wednesday, June 17 from 6-8 p.m. at the church social hall.

Between Linton and Wishek. June 6 Pilgrimage to The Grotto of the Bells. Start at the Bichler Farm located NE of the Grotto, signs easily visible. 9:30 a.m. registration. 10 a.m. Walk and/or drive ATV to assist with transportation. Lunch/fellowship: 12:30 to 1 p.m. Please volunteer with your ATV. For additional information, contact Lori Bichler at bichlers@drtel.net.

Casselton: Retirement celebration for Fr. James Ermer on Sunday, June 21 at St. Leo's Church in Casselton. Evening prayer at 4 p.m. followed by a picnic. Hosted by parishes of St. Leo's and St. Thomas.

Aneta: Sacred Heart Brunch. Free Will brunch will be held at the Aneta Auditorium on Sunday, June 21 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. All are welcome.

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

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Holy See calls on UN to eradicate surrogacy ‘in all its forms’

By Almudena Martínez-Bordiú | EWTN News

The Holy See has reaffirmed its position against surrogacy in a statement to the United Nations, urging the complete eradication of the practice and calling for the protection of women and children from exploitation.

Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, apostolic nuncio and permanent observer of the Holy See mission to the U.N., highlighted the urgency and sensitivity of the issue, lamenting that “technology and practice have run laps around the law and ethics.”

Although he acknowledged that many view surrogacy “as a compassionate solution for those wishing to be parents,” he urged the adoption of measures that respect the dignity and rights of women and children.

Caccia lamented that because of financial need, many women agree to carry a child in their womb and subsequently hand the child over to others for money. This situation could be remedied through the development of “social protection, education, and economic opportunities,” he said.

The statement asked whether the surrogacy industry could survive if poverty were eradicated. It warned that the demand for this practice “already exceeds the supply” and that many women who do not wish to participate may find themselves pressured or even coerced into doing so by family members.

The text also addressed the rights of children, who are reduced to an item to be ordered “within an industrial and dehumanized logic.” The statement from the Holy See also denounced the commodification of babies and the fact that many are considered “a defective product” when they have a disability.

This attitude “runs contrary to a just society in which children can grow and flourish. Children, in fact, possess rights and interests that must be respected, beginning with “a moral right to be created in an act of love,” as well as the right “to know their parents and to be cared for by them,” according to the statement.

Although the Holy See acknowledged the “very real and understandable desire to have children,” it maintained that these issues cannot simply be resolved through the regulation of surrogacy.

The Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the U.N. commended the decision of the Hague Conference on Private International Law not to proceed with the drafting of a convention on legal parentage in cases of surrogacy.

Caccia also recalled the words of Pope Leo XIV, who affirmed that, by transforming gestation into a negotiable service, one “violates the dignity both of the child, who is reduced to a ‘product,’ and of the mother, exploiting her body and the generative process, and distorting the original relational calling of the family.”

The Holy See urged that new steps be taken “toward ending this practice in all its forms and at all levels,” with the aim of protecting women and children “from exploitation and violence.”



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Pope Leo on the dignity and mission of the laity: they are the body of Christ

By Almudena Martínez-Bordiú | EWTN News

The laity are not "a formless mass, but the body of Christ," endowed with dignity and responsibility in the Church and in the world, Pope Leo XIV said in his catechesis at the general audience on Wednesday.

After riding around a packed St. Peter's Square in the popemobile on April 1, the Holy Father recalled the nature and mission of the laity, who for centuries had been defined simply as "those who are not part of the clergy or the consecrated life" in a reflection based on the Second Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*.

The pope explained that Vatican II broke with the former understanding of the laity by affirming the equality of all the baptized and emphasizing both the dignity and the mission of the laity in the Church and in the world.

"Naturally, the greater the gift, the greater the commitment too," the pontiff said.

In light of *Lumen Gentium*, Leo affirmed that, by virtue of baptism, "the lay faithful participate in the very priesthood of Christ."

He recalled the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, in which St. John Paul II emphasized that "the council, with its rich doctrinal, spiritual, and pastoral patrimony, has written as never before on the nature, dignity, spirituality, mission, and responsibility of the lay faithful." In this way, the saintly pope "relaunched the apostolate of the laity," Leo noted.

He also stressed that the vast field of the lay apostolate "is not confined to the Church but extends to the world" and that the Church is present "wherever her children profess and bear witness to the Gospel."

As examples, he cited workplaces, civil society, and all human relationships, "wherever they, through their choices, show the beauty of Christian life, which foretells here and now the justice and peace that will be accomplished in the kingdom of God."



Pope Leo XIV gestures as he greets people in St. Peter's Square for the Wednesday general audience April 1 (Daniel Ibáñez | EWTN News)

Quoting *Lumen Gentium*, the Holy Father stated that "the world needs to be permeated by the spirit of Christ, and more effectively fulfill its purpose in justice, charity, and peace." He added: "And this is possible only through the contribution, service, and witness of the laity!"

This, the pontiff explained, is the invitation to be the "outgoing" Church spoken of by Pope Francis: "a Church embodied in history, always open to mission, in which we are all called to be missionary disciples, apostles of the Gospel, witnesses of the kingdom of God, bearers of the joy of Christ whom we have encountered!"

During his greeting to pilgrims, Pope Leo XIV encouraged them to remain close to the tomb of Christ and to be faithful in the hour of silence and trial.

He also encouraged the faithful to strengthen their faith during Holy Week and to ask the Lord that the paschal mystery renew in them the grace to be joyful witnesses of the Risen One, confident that love and peace are stronger than death.

"Indeed, the Church is present wherever her children profess and bear witness to the Gospel."
-Pope Leo XIV

Prayer Intention of Pope Leo XIV



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‘Life is always God’s choice, solution,’ bishop says



SIDEWALK STORIES

ROXANE B. SALONEN

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

When eight-year-old Romeo began beating his small digital drum set at the closing ceremony of the first local spring 40 Days for Life event on March 29, Bonnie Spies, sidewalk coordinator, couldn’t stop smiling.

“I’m distracted by his joy,” she said, nodding toward the mini musician, who, with his father, Tim, led inspirational tunes for the event, helping evoke a spirit of celebration from the back of a pickup truck.

The opening songs were just the beginning of the good news.

Spies recounted details of the “save” that happened on the vigil’s first day, as noted in last month’s issue of *New Earth*, before handing the microphone to sidewalk advocate Ginger Kallander, who told of another “hopeful but not confirmed” potential save the week prior.

A father had come with his significant other, apparently not knowing what kind of an appointment it was. He quickly realized something was up, and approached the advocates, asking, “What is this place anyway?” she recounted. After learning it was an abortion clinic, he retrieved the mom and they got into their vehicle and exited. On the way out, he had some terse words with the abortion escorts, accusing them of lying to him.

“I don’t know what happened after that,” Kallander said, “but praise God, that baby drove out of the driveway alive!”

Bishop Andrew Cozzens of the Crookston Diocese, the closing ceremony’s special guest, advanced to the makeshift, outdoor stage. First he noted the congruency between the 40 Days for Life campaign and the 40 days of Lent just past, and how “the Lenten sacrifice is an imitation of Jesus’ sacrifice and 40 days in the desert, where he went out to do battle with the devil.”

Likewise, he said, “This is the place where we know that the enemy has a lot of power in the world, and so we come here to witness to Jesus and to his life, and give thanks for it, and to continue that struggle—which Jesus desires—the struggle against evil.”

The bishop then spoke of a woman who was 20 weeks pregnant when her water broke and had to be hospitalized. “The next morning, the doctor came in and said, ‘I’m sorry to inform you that the child in your womb is severely deformed, and I think we should induce labor,’ which would have been effectively an abortion at this point.”

Being Catholic, he said, the woman said she didn’t care if her baby had deformities, because he was a gift from God. “You don’t understand,” the doctor replied, as the bishop shared. “This child is a freak.” To which the woman replied, “You don’t understand. I want a new doctor.”

From there, she was placed in the care of a retired physician, a specialist, and put on bed rest. But because the new doctor wasn’t covered under her health insurance, he suggested they strike a deal with the first doctor: if the baby were to come out healthy, he’d have to pay the bill. If deformed, he’d cover it.

The child was born about a month early, Bishop Cozzens said, but was healthy except for some allergies. “Go get the other doctor and let him come see this freak,” the new doctor said, admiring the beautiful newborn.

“You might have figured out by now that that baby was me,” Bishop Cozzens said. “And that woman was my mother.” He’s heard the story many times, he said, and because of that, and how his life “almost didn’t happen,” he’s “always had this place in my heart for the prolife movement and importance of it.”

In fact, he said, when he became a bishop in 2013, one newspaper headline reported, “Freak becomes bishop,” and went viral, translated into Italian as “Il mostro diventa un vescovo.”

“I got emails from all around the world when I was named a bishop,” said Cozzens.

“Of course,” he added, “what that woman would do is what any of you would do—which is, simply, love the child God gives us,” no matter its health status. “That’s actually secondary to the truth that we know—which is the dignity of a human life.”

“That’s why we stand here today, praying that our culture would just recognize the dignity of a human life,” he said. “That’s a dignity that’s inalienable, we say, because it comes from God.”

In this Culture of Death in which we find ourselves, he remarked, death becomes an acceptable solution to problems, but death is never a solution to problems. “Life is always God’s choice, and always God’s solution.”

Bishop Cozzens then read the prologue of St. John’s Gospel. After the closing prayer and blessing, the band played on, with little Romeo at the drums, smiling away.

NEW EARTH

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Do you know where we are?

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Where in the diocese are we?

Last month's photo is from the Carmel of Mary in Wahpeton