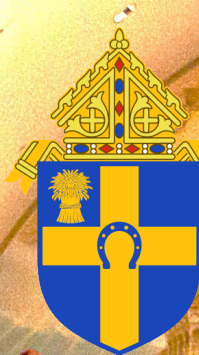


New Earth

July/August 2026 | Vol. 47 | No. 7

The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo



Send out laborers for his harvest

Five new priests ordained in Fargo



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Artificial Intelligence and
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Magnifica Humanitas:
Pope Leo XIV's encyclical
responds to rise of AI

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ON THE COVER:

A scene from the Ordination Mass of five priests in Fargo's Sts. Anne and Joachim Church (Kevin J. Jones / *New Earth*)

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NEW EARTH

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Mission

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

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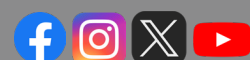
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Artificial Intelligence and the Human Person

Every development of technology, even from the days of antiquity, has changed the way we live, work, build, and communicate. Numerous examples come to mind: the block and pulley, the printing press, the telephone, the computer chip and countless medical discoveries.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has exploded on the scene of information and culture in a big way. It will undoubtedly have a profound impact on our lives for many years to come. Some say that artificial intelligence is ushering in a whole new era and way of life. This could be a good thing, or it could turn out badly. It all depends on how we use it, as thinking human beings.

Like all new technologies, AI has great promise and potential. Already it is being used to further the work of medical care, weather prediction and engineering. AI could potentially help to solve complex and intractable problems and thus alleviate immense suffering and hardship. It can also assist us in our daily work and save us considerable time in the completion of mundane tasks. In its best form, it could open paths for bettering the lives of people all over the world.

However, AI could also be used to exploit and dominate. Like many other technologies, AI could be hijacked by malicious actors to harm others and to create division and strife. It might also be used to mislead and deceive, as many people have already discovered. As it becomes more versatile and powerful, the moral evaluation of AI will become even more important. And this is where human reason and conscience become indispensable. AI can be very creative and even eloquent, but it does not have a conscience. It can offer recommendations on various actions and strategies, but these are based on the underlying assumptions that are built into the system. AI does not actually know whether an act is good or evil, right or wrong, in the same way that a human person does. Every human person has a God-given conscience that allows one to evaluate the morality of a given act. AI can approximate this, but conscience is unique to our humanity.

In every era, the Church reflects on developments that affect the human family, and does so in light of our faith in God. The Church enters into this discussion of AI not with technical answers and expertise but with the wisdom granted us by God, with care for all of humanity. Pope Leo XIV has frequently spoken of the revolutionary changes that will come with advancements in technology, especially artificial intelligence. He also warns that such changes must always respect the unique dignity and individuality of the human person. He urges that this very

advanced and powerful technology should be used not for the benefit of the few, but for all, for the common good. Underlying his exhortation, he appeals once again to the “civilization of love” rooted in our relationship with God, who is love itself.

The Holy Father recently issued his first encyclical letter, a teaching document addressed to the entire Church and the world, entitled *Magnifica Humanitas*, which means “Magnificent Humanity.” In his extensive letter, he addresses the opportunities available to us through this new technology. He also points out the risks associated with it. His principal purpose is to remind us of the dignity of every human person in the light of these new developments and to caution against losing this dignity in the enthusiasm for AI and its innovations. The human person is sacred and cannot be reduced to a set of numbers and statistics. The human person has God-given dignity and rights and must always have primacy in our decisions and actions.

We read of great advances through the use of AI, but we also hear of AI as a sort of replacement for the individual person, in the workplace, in culture, in conversation and even in relationships. Even in the light of its amazing potential and new opportunities, we have to remember that AI is a technological construct. It cannot replace the reality of the human person. Indiscriminate use of AI runs the risk of dehumanizing our society. We can become so enamored of AI and its marvels that we marginalize the real human person right in front of us.

Pope Leo tells us: “...every person is unique and irreplaceable, a free and intelligent subject with a conscience, capable of seeking God, serving one another, caring for our common home.” Even as AI promises to bring enormous change to our culture and our world, we must work together to build a more human and fraternal society, and never lose sight of the unique, God-given dignity of each one of our brothers and sisters.

Some claim that the advent of AI will launch a new golden era. Others warn that AI will take over and be humanity’s doom. These forecasts seem rather extreme. I won’t attempt to predict the future. But AI is here, and we will have to deal with it. Technology can be a useful tool, but it can never substitute for the genius and creativity of the human person. It cannot love sacrificially or aspire to the transcendent life that God has prepared for us. As with all new things, we should approach AI with a firm grounding in our faith, in the truths that God has revealed to us, and in the light of the saving love of Jesus Christ. Let us pray for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as we continue our journey together.

BISHOP FOLDA'S CALENDAR

July 17 at 7 p.m.

Redhawks Game with Knights of Columbus, Fargo

July 18 at 5 p.m.

Mass of Installation, St. John, New Rockford

July 19-25

Retreat Master, Lincoln, Neb.

Aug. 3 at 11:30 a.m.

Putt for a Purpose, Rose Creek, Fargo

Aug. 4-7

Knights of Columbus Convention, Denver, Colo.

Aug. 7 at 4:45 p.m.

Admission to Candidacy Vespers followed by Mass
Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

Aug. 15 at 4 p.m.

Mass for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin
Maryvale, Valley City

Aug. 16 at 4 p.m.

70th Annual Pilgrimage to Our Lady of the Prairies
Carmel of Mary Monastery, Wahpeton

Aug. 23 at 10:30 a.m.

Mass for 70th Jubilee Celebration of PVBM Sisters
Paula Ringuette, Georgiana Sprunk, Marie Glennon,
Riverview Chapel, Fargo

Aug. 29 at 11 a.m.

Mass for God's Children, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Aug. 31- Sept. 4

Leadership Immersive Training for Acts XXIX
Detroit, Mich.

Sept. 11 at 7 p.m.

Shanley Deacons vs. Bismarck Demons Football Game
Shanley, Fargo

Sept. 12 at 5 p.m.

Mass and reception with Bishop Ernesto of Chimbote
Holy Family, Grand Forks

Sept. 14 at 5 p.m.

Mass and reception with Bishop Ernesto of Chimbote
Holy Cross, West Fargo



Official Appointments/ Announcements

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

I hereby release

Rev. Jason Asselin for temporary priestly ministry in the
Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis effective June 24,
2026. The Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda, Archbishop
of St. Paul and Minneapolis, has appointed the **Rev. Jason
Asselin** as parochial vicar of the Church of the Nativity in St.
Paul, effective July 1, 2026 and continuing *ad nutum episcopi*.

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St. Anthony's Church
Fargo

Have you ever gone for a walk in the rain? Sometimes this can be a fun experience. Then there are times when it is not so fun. It can also be an experience that God uses to remind us of his presence in our lives, especially when we are open to his guidance.

This past week I went on retreat to the Broom Tree Retreat Center near Irene, S.D.

Irene is a small town of about 450 people near Sioux Falls. It's surrounded by open country. There are plenty of corn fields, hay meadows and a herd of mooing cows. It's a beautifully quiet setting in God's amazing creation. The only cars I saw were in the parking lot. They were harmless when there was no one driving them at breakneck speed.

The retreat itself followed the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola and was meant to be kept in silence. Many people who know me well ask if it is even possible for me to do this kind of retreat.

If I were to be perfectly honest, earlier in my life I would have said "no." I do enjoy them now, though, and God always has a few surprises in store as the days progress. The priest who led our retreat gave us Scripture passages to meditate on during our personal prayer time and told us we should pray for a gift. He reminded us that the greatest human activity is receiving the love of God. A basic question to ask ourselves is if we are

Walking in the rain

truly open to all the gifts our Father wishes to pour into our lives.

The retreat center itself sits high on a hill. When you walk into the backyard there are swings and a gazebo. Then below the yard is a meadow. There are walking trails throughout the meadow with a set of the stations of the cross. Then along the trail are also benches and more gazebos in which to sit and pray.

I started along this trail as the mist began to fall. It felt so light there seemed to be no need to turn around and head back to cover. I noticed the shelters but didn't pay too much attention, thinking the rain could be fun. Then the rain started getting heavier. I quickly realized it would soon soak me. It was time to head for one of the shelters.

The one I ducked into had a sign out front with the shelter's name. It was the Divine Mercy shelter.

The rain outside wasn't so bad when I was surrounded by Divine Mercy.

There are a lot of different types of rain that enter our lives and threaten to soak us. It can sometimes be our own fault, like when we sin. There are also times it is just a normal part of life. The most common example can be illness or the death of a loved one. It may be a time of job loss or many other things that we need to deal with in our lives.

These situations, while still painful, are easier to handle when we allow the Lord to assist us. We often end up realizing that he is not just assisting but rather carrying us, through these burdens or times of rain. As Hebrews 4:15-16 reminds us: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help."



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Seminarians triumph over Shepherds at Collar Classic baseball game

Under beautiful, sunny skies, more than 200 softball fans gathered at Elmwood Park in West Fargo on Father's Day to watch the annual Shepherds versus Seminarians softball game. This year's "Collar Classic" went to the Seminarians by a score of 14-7, despite two towering home runs by Shepherds' star Father Jayson Miller, pastor at Holy Rosary in LaMoure.

Members of the Knights of Columbus Council 9642 at Holy Cross in West Fargo cooked up free burgers and hot dogs for those attending the game. The game is a way for the priests and seminarians to have fun and fellowship together before the seminarians return to their studies in the fall.

(Photo by Fr. Kyle Metzger)



At Memorial Day Mass, prayers for the fallen



Bishop John Folda celebrated Mass at Holy Cross North Cemetery in Fargo on Memorial Day, Monday May 25. The Mass is held each year at the veterans' section. An honor guard made up of members of various military service organizations provided a 21-gun salute before Mass. About 200 of the faithful gathered to pray for and honor those who gave their lives serving our country. The Mass was hosted by Blessed Sacrament parish in West Fargo.

(Photo by Paul Braun / New Earth)

Diocesan priests come together for spiritual retreat

More than a dozen priests of the Diocese of Fargo came together at the Maryvale Retreat Center, June 1-5 for a special retreat

The retreat was led by Father Wade Menezes, C.P.M. and was titled: "In Defense of Truth and Faith: Priests Faithful to the Bride of Christ, Preaching, Teaching, Growing in Holiness." Together, the priests celebrated Mass, prayed together and took part in exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Maryvale Chapel.

The retreat was also a time for fellowship and celebration. A special Jubilee Cake listed priests' names and ordination dates spanning more than 50 years from 1973 to 2025. There was also an opportunity to relax outdoors and sit around the bonfire.



A Weekend of Connection and Community

By Bailey Kitko | ND Post Adopt Network Supervisor, Catholic Charities North Dakota

In June, the North Dakota Post Adopt Network hosted its tenth annual summer camp, Camp Connect, offering a vibrant and meaningful weekend for adoptive and guardianship families across the state. The camp provides an opportunity to step away from the busyness of everyday life, spend time together, learn and connect with others who share similar experiences. Events like Camp Connect are an important part of Post Adopt's mission to support families and create a welcoming, encouraging community.

The weekend kicked off Friday evening as families arrived, settled in, and reconnected. They quickly made new participating families feel at home. After dinner, parents gathered with the weekend speaker, Sarah How, an adoptive mother, certified school psychologist, and advanced trainer in the Nurtured Heart Approach parenting style, for an introductory session where they created "Dare to Dream" vision boards. While parents met, children enjoyed a movie. This gave everyone a chance to relax and ease into the weekend.

On Saturday, parents continued sessions with Sarah. Her blend of professional insight and experience resonated strongly with families. One parent shared, "I loved that the speaker had first-hand knowledge and was open to sharing," while another described their key takeaway as "empowerment and encouragement." Parents left feeling supported, with practical tools and reassurance, including the reminder that "no one is getting (parenting) perfect, and we are all doing a lot better than we give ourselves credit for."

While parents attended sessions, children spent the day with Post Adopt staff and volunteers enjoying crafts, games, water play and outdoor activities. The welcoming environment stood out, with one child sharing, "Everyone was very nice and welcoming." Another added: "my favorite part was meeting new kids that shared the same experience that I went through."

Saturday evening wrapped up with families and staff gathered around the campfire for s'mores, conversation and time together. These simple moments provided space to reconnect and reflect, and they remain an important part of the Camp Connect experience.

Sunday morning included a final breakfast and one last session for parents, while children enjoyed playing together before saying their goodbyes. As one parent shared, "Expectations were exceeded, as usual!"

This year, Camp Connect welcomed eight families, including three first-time families, with a total of 28 youth and 13 parents participating. Together, they built relationships and strengthened a sense of community that continues to support families beyond the weekend.

At its core, Camp Connect offers families a place to rest,



Camp Connect participants, Post Adopt staff and volunteers.
(submitted photo)

recharge, and spend time with others who understand. This year's event highlighted the value of that shared time and the lasting impact it can have.

We are grateful to the Post Adopt staff and volunteers who made the weekend possible. Their care, energy, and commitment are essential to creating a positive experience for families.

We also thank the families who attended and shared their vulnerability and experience, as well as Sarah How, for her insight and leadership throughout the weekend.

As we reflect on Camp Connect 2026, we are thankful for the time shared and the encouragement that came from being together. We look forward to gathering again in the year ahead!

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Retired priest home in Fargo ready for residents

By Paul Braun | Editor of *New Earth*



Monsignor Brian Donahue, pastor at St. Philip's in Hankinson, relaxes in a priests' residence apartment during an open house. (Paul Braun / *New Earth*)

Ordination weekend in Fargo on June 5 and 6 brought priests together from all across the diocese to welcome a new transitional deacon and five new priests. But there was another significant event that will impact the lives of current and future priests of the Diocese of Fargo.

On Friday, June 5, several priests took a private tour of the newly completed priests' home, built on diocesan land south of the Diocesan Pastoral Center, near Sts. Anne and Joachim Church and the Sacred Heart Middle School/Shanley High School campus.

The new 13,525-square-foot home built especially for retired priests features eight fully furnished one-bedroom apartments with full kitchens, a handicap-accessible bathroom and large walk-in closet. Each apartment is also assigned a one-stall garage with a storage room. The modest rent resident priests pay per month also includes one cooked meal per day.

Those meals will be served in the main dining area, which has a full kitchen next to it. Other community features include a sitting room with a fireplace, a room for visiting or quiet contemplation, a guest room with a bathroom for visitors, a laundry facility in each of the two wings, an office, a mail room and, most importantly, a chapel in the center of the residence.

Two retired priests of the diocese have already made plans



The sitting room, located just off the main entry, is designed for visiting, relaxation and quiet time for residents. (Paul Braun / *New Earth*)

Bishop John Folda will host an open house for the general public at the new retired priests' home Sunday August 23 from 1 to 3 p.m.

to move into their apartments this summer. For current and future retired priests, the home will give them greater access to amenities that the Fargo area offers, like healthcare, transportation and shopping. It is a welcome addition to the diocese now and for generations to come.

The residence was made possible through the generosity of those who contributed to the recent "Living our Faith, Building our Future" capital campaign. The capital campaign raised \$3 million to cover the construction costs. The campaign also boosted the priest retirement fund and raised money for renovations to the Maryvale Retreat Center in Valley City. The campaign contributed to the Maryvale endowment fund and also individual parish support.

An open house for the general public will be held Sunday, Aug. 23 from 1 to 3 p.m., hosted by Bishop John Folda.

The harvest is abundant: Rural Life Mass celebrates God's Creation

By Paul Braun | Editor of *New Earth*

On a beautiful day near Clifford, over two hundred of the faithful gathered at a local farmstead to celebrate nature, rural life, and faith.

The ninth annual Rural Life Mass and Celebration was held on the Kurt and Cheryl Elliott farm, parishioners of Our Lady of Peace Church in Mayville. Rev. Eric Olsen of Our Lady concelebrated the Mass with Bishop John Folda, along with other visiting priests from around the Diocese of Fargo.

In his homily, Bishop Folda pointed out how often Jesus, in the gospels, referred to rural life.

"Have you noticed how often Jesus speaks to his people with images from rural life? The harvest, the sower planting seed, the wheat and the weeds, the vineyard, the sheep and the goats, and so on. From the beginning of our history, the human race has lived on the land, planting and harvesting, tending the herd and the flock. In one way or another, every single person has a certain dependence on the fruits of the land, even those who live in urban areas. So rural life, the life of the farm and the ranch and the field, is a primordial part of God's plan for his creation. He has placed us on this earth to bring forth the fruits of the earth, to share those fruits with others, and finally to dwell with him forever."



Nearly two-hundred gathered for the annual Rural Life Mass and Celebration at the Kurt and Cheryl Elliott Farm.
(Kevin J. Jones / *New Earth*)

The day also featured the blessings of soil, farm animals and machinery that attendees brought with them to bring back to their own homes and fields. It was a testament to the faith that farmers and ranchers still hold dear as they toil on the land, which was not lost on Bishop Folda.

"One of the great blessings of rural life in our diocese is our community of faith, the great number of rural and small-town



Bishop Folda prepares to bless farm machinery and pray for the safety of machine operators. (Submitted photo)

parishes that we find everywhere," Bishop Folda said during his homily. "Our ancestors who built the communities, the farms, and the parishes that we now have were people of great faith. They endured many challenges and hardships, but they persevered. They put their faith in God, and they passed that faith along to their families, their children and grandchildren. I'm always delighted to visit the parishes of our diocese and to meet the faithful who are the heirs, like I was, of faith that was cultivated and flourished in rural America.

After Mass and the blessing ceremonies, dinner was served under a large tent. God provided the perfect weather for a day dedicated to his gifts of the land, and to his faithful stewards of the land.

"I know rural life isn't easy," said Bishop Folda. "It's hard work, sometimes it's disappointing, and it seems like everything is against us at times. But God is with us, and he calls us his friends and his companions. The harvest is great, the harvest of the fields and the harvest of the Kingdom. Let us be the laborers that Jesus needs to bring in a great harvest."

**"...rural life, the life of the farm
and the ranch and the field,
is a primordial part of God's plan
for his creation."
-Bishop John Folda**

Monsignor Pilon celebrates 50 years of priesthood

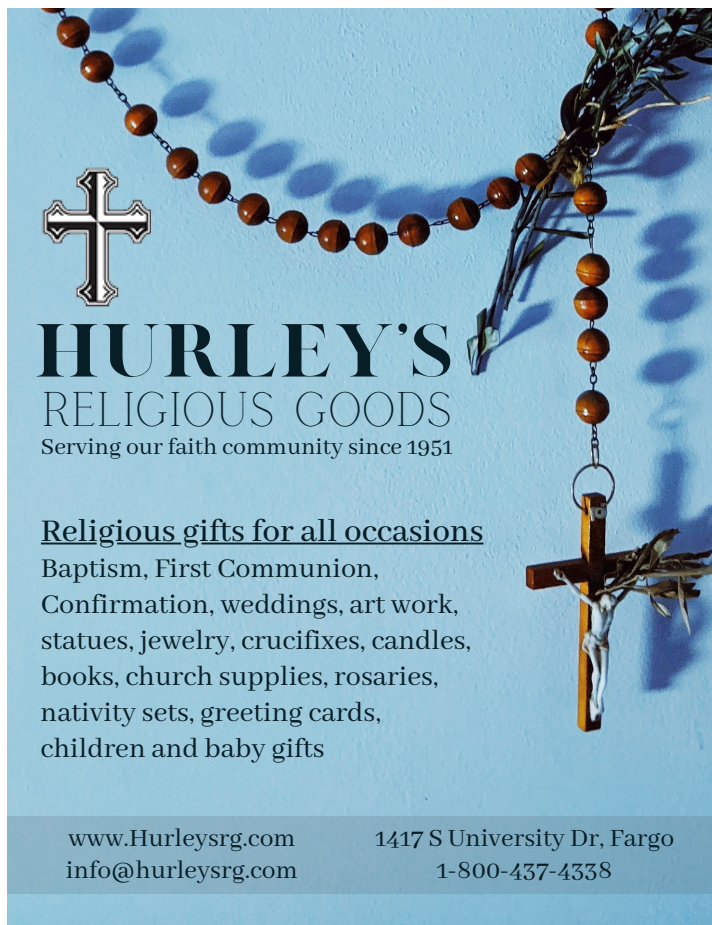
On May 31, parishioners, family, and friends of Monsignor Daniel Pilon gathered at St. Michael's Church in Grand Forks to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Monsignor Pilon celebrated his anniversary Mass and Bishop John Folda delivered the homily. They were joined at the altar by many brother priests and deacons from across the diocese. Following the Mass, 210 guests gathered for a celebratory meal in his honor.

Monsignor Pilon, a native of Drayton, was ordained May 30, 1976. He served as parochial vicar at Holy Spirit in Fargo, St. James in Jamestown, and St. Mary's in Grand Forks before becoming pastor of the parishes of Lankin, Bechyne, and Lomice. After two years of canon law studies, he went on to serve 19 years as pastor of St. Benedict's in Horace, and five years serving Enderlin, Fingal and Sheldon. He continues his 20 years of service with the diocesan tribunal. He was named a monsignor in 2006. His final assignment was in Mayville, where he served until his retirement in 2018. Along with the late Monsignor Wendelyn Vetter, he brought the Beginning Experience ministry to the Diocese of Fargo in 1979 and has remained dedicated to it ever since.

Congratulations, Monsignor Pilon, and thank you for 50 years of faithful priestly ministry!



Monsignor Daniel Pilon (front center) joined by Bishop John Folda, concelebrating priests, deacons, and altar servers following his 50th anniversary Mass. (submitted photo)



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Corpus Christi in pictures

Catholics across the U.S. observed the Feast of Corpus Christi on Sunday, June 7.

Several parishes in the Fargo diocese held Eucharistic processions to honor the day. Here are a few scenes from across the diocese. (submitted photos).



Blessed Sacrament, West Fargo



Sacred Heart, Carrington



St. John's, St. John



St. Brigid's, Cavalier



St. John's, Wahpeton



Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo (submitted photo)

Around the diocese



Bishop John Folda with the Shanley High School Class of 2026 after the Baccalaureate Mass at Holy Spirit Church in Fargo celebrated for the 64 graduates May 20. Congratulations to all! (Photo courtesy JP II Schools)



Father Casey Kopacz's final Mass at St. Stephen's Church in Larimore. He retired June 23. The parish held a farewell reception June 21 to share memories, fellowship and best wishes. (St. Stephen's Church)

Congratulations to the Shanley High School Deacons girls soccer team for winning the 2026 North Dakota State High School Girls Soccer Championship, played in Bismarck May 30. The girls completed a perfect no-loss season by shutting out the defending state champion and West #1 seed Mandan Braves 3-0 to take the title. Named to the All-EDC and All-State teams were Danica Clasen, Molly Flaherty, Hudson Hofer and Emma Rohrich. Also named to the All-EDC team was Carly Hulstein. (Photo courtesy Taylor Schmitt Photography)



Quotable

St. Bridget of
Sweden
Feast Day July 23

"Eternal praise and honor be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for each and every hour that you endured such great bitterness and anguish on the cross for us sinners."

Let there be light: Chimbote mission continues, Peruvian bishop to visit Fargo

By Todd Mickelson | Development Director, Friends of Chimbote

Engagement between the Friends of Chimbote and the people and clergy of the Diocese of Fargo will soon hit a high point with the visit of the Catholic Bishop of Chimbote to Fargo. The visit comes as more North Dakotans take part in the Friends of Chimbote mission to help poor Peruvians escape poverty and become self-sustaining members of their community.

Bishop John Folda's February 2025 mission experience with Friends of Chimbote was a turning point. Bishop Folda took part in the corporal works of mercy around Chimbote and witnessed the severe poverty of rural Peruvians. He met Bishop Angel Ernesto of Chimbote, a gracious, welcoming host who spoke about the extreme poverty challenging both his flock and his priests. His love for the poor was evident and genuine.



Volunteers on the St. Charles Borromeo team erect a street light in Cambio Puente (Friends of Chimbote)

When Bishop Folda returned to North Dakota, deeper engagement began immediately. Priests, parishes and schools received information on the work of the Friends of Chimbote and the history of the Fargo diocese's cooperation. Solidarity between the Fargo diocese and the Chimbote diocese is set to deepen with Bishop Ernesto's upcoming visit. He will be in Fargo Sept. 11-15, accompanied by Chimbote priest Father Jertzi Riofrio Ojeda and Jorge Villar, the longtime executive director of Asociación Civil Apoyo Familiar (ACAF). ACAF is the Friends of Chimbote's in-country NGO partner and employs 90 professionals who serve the poor daily.

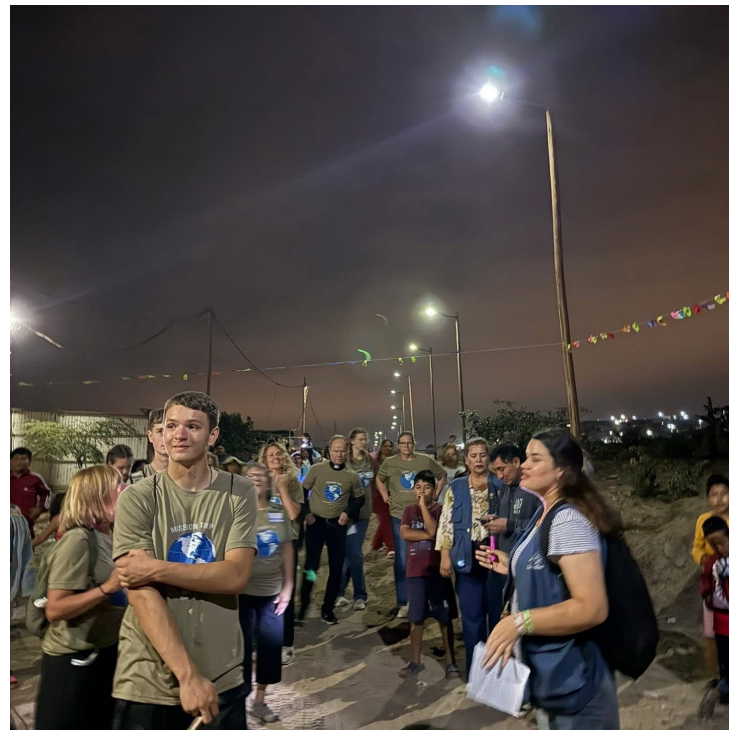
The visiting bishop's daily schedule, as of this writing, includes visits to Fargo-area schools and the Shanley High School football game on Friday, Sept. 11; Mass and a gathering in Grand Forks at Holy Family Catholic Church on Saturday, Sept. 12; and a farewell Mass and gathering at Holy Cross Catholic Church in West Fargo on Monday, Sept. 14, which is the Feast of the Holy Cross and Pope Leo XIV's birthday.



Locals celebrate the new streetlights (Friends of Chimbote)

He has shared his gratitude with us and invites us to continued solidarity with him and the people of the Chimbote diocese. We joyfully invite everyone in the Fargo diocese to join us to welcome Bishop Ernesto and his companions on their visit.

These developments come amid continued mission trips to Peru. Father Tim Schroeder and members of St. Charles Borromeo Church of Oakes and St. Mary's Church of Forman completed a mission trip in June. The group's 24 missionaries built two houses, helped distribute fish, loaves and water and completed a solar lighting project that will change the lives of thousands of residents of the community of Cambio Puente.



The new lights in Cambio Puente (Friends of Chimbote)

For years, the community wanted a lighting project for safety and security reasons. The streets were completely dark at night, severely limiting safety and quality of life.

This lighting project dream came true because our generous supporters donated new technology, their skills, their labor and their time. A skid steer loader with auger, shipped on a Friends of Chimbote container, was provided by Tom McCormick and Northern Improvement Company. The engineering of our ACAF team and the generosity of the Oakes and Forman communities also made these dreams come true.

“Our group came together in a way that was moving in the journey together,” Father Schroeder said in his parish bulletin: “The reflections at night moved my heart. I still think about different wisdom from that group. Everyone’s light shined, but I have to mention Monica Heimbuch who coordinated our trip and she gave so generously to make this happen.”

“The fruit of joy was abundant and generosity abounded from our donors here in North Dakota to make all this happen,” Father Schroeder continued.



The St. Aloysius team builds a home in Chimbote. (Friends of Chimbote)

He said the group’s lighting project called to mind the gospel passage “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

“The joy and happiness that night was palpable,” he said. “We did not do it to be noticed or popular in the eyes of others, to receive the glory, but we all saw it and gave glory to God.”

Another group made the trek to Chimbote. Father Riley Durkin and his team of 20 from St. Aloysius Church in Lisbon built two homes, distributed fish and loaves to more than 250 families and hosted a meal and community party for the poor of the parish. Father Durkin celebrated the first-ever Mass in Upper Cambio Puente at the Learning Center, filled to capacity by grateful neighbors happy to attend a Mass so close to home.

The team from St. Aloysius reflected on how they can



A volunteer distributes fish. (Friends of Chimbote)

continue to live in mission upon their return. They cherished their experience, and the connection they felt across language and culture. They recognized the universality of the Church with our brothers and sisters.

The engagement with the Friends of Chimbote and Chimbote’s poor continues this summer, when two more North Dakota parish teams will travel there to be the hands and feet of Christ. Monsignor Dennis Skonseng and St. Rose of Lima of Hillsboro will complete their mission in June, while Father Gerard Braun and St. Anthony’s of Padua of Fargo are going in July. For 2027 there are already scheduled mission trips with Fargo teams from Nativity Church, Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church and Shanley High School.

Our friends do so much to support our mission. Parishes, schools and Knights of Columbus Councils hold collections, provide items for our container shipment and witness to the miracles happening on the ground in Chimbote.

All of this support will provide a wonderful experience for Bishop Ernesto as he travels around the Fargo diocese.



Bishop John Folda and Bishop Angel Ernesto bless parishioners in Cambio Puente in February 2025. (Friends of Chimbote)

Before their ordination as priests, five deacons lay prostrate before the altar at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo. (Ann Losinski Photography)



Send out laborers for his harvest

Five new priests are ordained in Fargo

By Paul Braun | Editor of *New Earth*

“The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few” (Matt. 9:37).

Bishop John Folda quoted the Gospel of Matthew as he addressed those gathered for the ordination of five new priests for the Diocese of Fargo on Saturday, June 6 at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo.

“We have indeed asked the harvest master, and he has indeed heard it,” Bishop Folda continued. “He has sent us these five men who will soon take their places at the altar as priests of Jesus Christ. Today, our diocese is extraordinarily blessed by our Lord, the master of the harvest, and we have every reason to rejoice and to give thanks to God.”

The ordinations of Revs. Garrett Aberle, Brendon Schneibel, Patrick Sorrells, Richard Stenger and Taylor Ternes mark the largest ordination class in the diocese over the past two decades. The Mass was celebrated at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church because the Cathedral of St. Mary would not be able to accommodate such a large congregation. Brother priests, deacons, and the family and friends of the ordinands filled the church to capacity.

Also in attendance was Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for Military Services. Archbishop Broglio was on hand to support Rev. Brendon Schneibel, who will be commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Navy and will serve as a Navy chaplain.

During his homily on Saturday, Bishop Folda reminded the new priests how they can act in the person of Christ.

“Always remember who this Christ is that now calls you to this ministry,” said Bishop Folda. “Remember then to foster the virtue of humility, knowing the truth of who you are and to be ready and willing to go wherever he might send you, wherever he needs you.

“Remember to reach out to those whom the world despises. Always be merciful and remember that you are called to be an instrument of God’s mercy. Resist the temptations that will come your way, the temptations to earthly pleasure, satisfaction, and honor, the easier way. Always be present for his people, ready to give of yourself and your time without counting the cost.

“Always be courageous in your own proclamation of the gospel and in standing firm for God’s truth,” the bishop continued. “And be willing, my sons, to give your life without holding back, making yourself an oblation to God just as Jesus did.”

Summing up ordination weekend, Bishop Folda asked the congregation to pray “fervently for these men.”

“The harvest truly is abundant, said Bishop Folda “That gives us great hope. Jesus has called these men at this moment in history to be his friends, his coworkers, and now to be his priests. Let us pray that they will go forth rejoicing and bring in a



Fargo's five new priests stand with Bishop Folda after ordination to the priesthood. (Ann Losinski Photography)



Bishop Folda lays his hands upon Deacon Taylor Ternes during the ordination Mass. (Ann Losinski Photography)

bountiful and glorious harvest for our Lord.”

On Friday evening, the day before the ordinations to the priesthood, another seminarian made his next step towards the priesthood. At the Cathedral of St. Mary, Bishop Folda ordained Paul Zach to the transitional diaconate. Deacon Zach, originally of South Dakota, will spend his final year of formation preparing for his own ordination to the priesthood in June 2027.

“Remember to reach out to those whom the world despises. Always be merciful and remember that you are called to be an instrument of God’s mercy.”
-Bishop John Folda



Rev. Brendon Schneibel, who will serve as a U.S. Navy chaplain, with Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services.
(Ann Losinski Photography)



Newly ordained transitional deacon Paul Zach is vested by his former pastor, Rev. Dale Lagodinski, at his ordination Mass June 5 at the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo. (Ann Losinski Photography)



CONGRATULATIONS, *Father Garrett Aberle and Father Patrick Sorrells*

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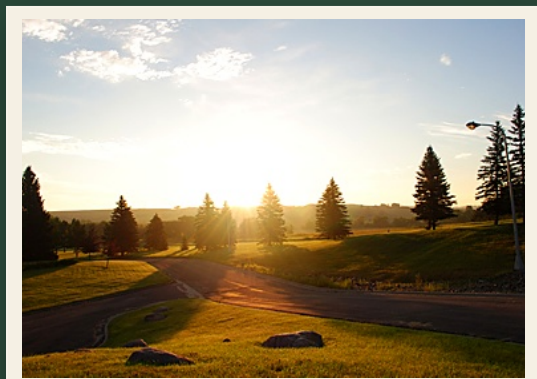
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New Jesuit priest Fr. Conan Rainwater's Fargo links

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

Conan Rainwater was ordained a Jesuit priest Saturday, June 13, 2026 at Church of the Gesu in Milwaukee, Wis. He was one of nine men ordained priests for the Society of Jesus by Archbishop Jeffrey S. Grob of Milwaukee.

Priests in attendance at the ordination Mass included his older brother Father Trevor Rainwater, S.J., who was ordained a priest in June 2021. His older brother vested him with his stole and chasuble, according to the ordination Mass booklet posted to the website of the USA Midwest Province of the Society of Jesus.

The newly ordained priest grew up in Bismarck, but his parents moved to Fargo about ten years ago. They are currently parishioners of Sts. Anne and Joachim Parish.

Father Rainwater got to know the Jesuits through his interactions with them as an undergraduate at Creighton University, the Midwest Jesuits' website says. He took part in campus ministry, he studied abroad in Peru and he was active in the Creighton University Knights of Columbus Council. After he graduated from Creighton University in 2015, he began his formation in the fall of 2015 with the Jesuits' Midwest Province.

He studied at the University of Loyola-Chicago and the Boston



**Rev. Conan Rainwater, S.J. with parents
Linda & Les (Photo supplied)**

College Clough School of Theology and Ministry. He taught at St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati. He served as a missionary in Peru for two years, working at the Jesuit parish and teaching high school in Urcos, a small town an hour outside of Cusco. His most recent work in the U.S. includes men's prison ministry.

Father Rainwater will now be based in Omaha, where he will serve as a vocation promoter for the Midwest Jesuits.

Father Paul Ruge, former pastor of St. Michael's, dies at 96



Father Paul Ruge, a retired priest of the Diocese of Fargo who had been living in New Jersey, died on June 17, 2026, at the age of 96.

"He will be remembered for his kind heart, great storytelling and his ability to amaze his family with his memorization and recall skills," said his obituary, published on Legacy.com by the Bradley Funeral Home of Marlton.

"Wherever he was, he was the happiest saying daily Mass," his obituary continued.

He was born Robert John Ruge on May 18, 1930, to Paul and Katherine Ruge in Lake Orion, Mich. He was the second oldest of six siblings, including his twin brother Fred.

After graduating from high school in 1948, he and his twin brother ran a bait and motor repair shop until 1951, when they were drafted to serve with the U.S. Army during the Korean War. After his honorable discharge in 1953, he moved to Saginaw, Mich. and became a supermarket manager. While in Saginaw he was an active member of Holy Family Parish, taught CCD and mentored young adults.

He joined the Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate in 1984 and was formed as a Franciscan, taking the religious name of Brother Paul. He attended Holy Apostles Seminary and was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Fargo in 1997, one of 12 men ordained that year.

He taught at and helped run the Seraphicum Boys Boarding School and substituted for priests at parishes while also leading Third Order Franciscan groups.

In 2004, Father Paul was assigned to St. Michael's Catholic Church at the Spirit Lake Tribal Nation in North Dakota. He served there until his retirement in 2014. He was the oldest serving pastor in the diocese at that time. He moved to Asbury, N.J. and held the position of chaplain for the World Apostolate of Fatima. He retired from this role in 2017 and moved to Cherry Hill, N.J. to be closer to family.

Father Paul was an uncle to 12 nieces and nephews and many great- and great-great-nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his brothers and sister and his niece Janet Ruge.

His funeral Mass was celebrated at the St. Mary's Center in Cherry Hill, N.J. on June 24. He was buried at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Berlin, N.J.



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OUR BODIES TELL HIS STORY

Theology of the Body and You



Where the Theology of the Body meets Mister Rogers

By Timothy Mosser | The Catholic Coach

Quick, what do a saintly 20th-century pope and a children's TV star have in common? More than you may think. Over the past few years, I have been reliving parts of my childhood by watching episodes of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" with my young son. One thing that always amazes me about Fred Rogers is his insight into the human person. He was a Protestant pastor, but much of what he said and did, especially in his music, echoes Theology of the Body. Who would have thought that a Polish pope leading the Catholic Church and an American Protestant minister talking to children in his TV living room would come up with the same ideas about the human person, unless there is a universal, underlying truth to it all?

One vital concept of Pope St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body is the distinction between the person and the qualities of the person. In his personalistic norm, he says that persons are always to be loved and never to be used or treated as means to an end. He goes on to explain that when we reduce people to their qualities, such as their attractiveness, strength, abilities, and so on, we begin to use them for those qualities. We can certainly appreciate the qualities of the person, but we can never reduce the person to those qualities alone. True love affirms the entire person for his or her own sake, entirely separate from what that person can perform or provide.

Fred Rogers looks at this same idea in his television program, especially in his music. For example, let's take a look at his song "It's You I Like." Here are some of the words. They read like a simple and beautiful statement of the personalistic norm.

"It's you I like; it's not the things you wear,
it's not the way you do your hair, but it's you I like.
The way you are right now, the way down deep inside you,
Not the things that hide you. They're just beside you.
But it's you I like, every part of you..."

In one TV episode, Mister Rogers sang this with a boy in a wheelchair. It brought tears to my eyes to realize the great value he placed on every human person, regardless of that person's abilities or qualities.

Mister Rogers affirmed that a child's worth is way down deep inside of them: the whole person. Qualities and abilities are things that can change or be lost, but the value of the person can never change. Both Mister Rogers and John Paul II agree that each person is worthy of love simply because they exist. Both men shared a deep conviction regarding the integrated nature of the human person. John Paul II often stated that the

human body is not a machine or a shell, but an intrinsic part of the person that makes the invisible spiritual reality visible. Simply put, the body expresses the person and expresses it as either male or female. In fact, he titled his main work *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*.

Mister Rogers reflects this concept in his song "Everyone Is Fancy." in a time of cultural upheaval, he reassured children of their physical identity as either a boy or a girl. He sang:

"Only girls can be the mamas.
Only boys can be the papas.
Everybody's fancy. Everybody's fine."

In playful and lyrical language, Mister Rogers expressed the same fundamental truth of the human person as being made male or female. He affirmed the child's physical structure as an intrinsic, authentic, and unchangeable part of their God-given identity. To truly love someone means to love the whole person as they were created as a gift: body and soul.

Ultimately, the Theology of the Body and Mister Rogers' view of the person both converge on what John Paul II called the nuptial meaning of the body. He argued that human beings fulfill themselves only through a sincere gift of themselves, and he points to Christ's sacrifice as the ultimate gift. But in order to give oneself to others, everyone must recognize their own worth and the worth of all other persons.

When Mister Rogers looked at a child through the camera and said, "You've made this day special, just by being you," he was delivering a profound truth rooted in the personalistic norm. He was affirming that every person is unique, unrepeatable, and irreplaceable—just as Pope John Paul II did in his work. In this day and age, when people are increasingly viewed and valued only for their efficiency, functionality, and utility, it's refreshing to know that St. John Paul II and Fred Rogers both taught the same truths about the human person in their work. Whether those truths were expressed in a dense philosophical treatise or through simple melody and words, they both proclaimed the same message: The human person is always a masterpiece to be loved and never an object to be used.

So if you are feeling ambitious, read some TOB. If you want a more relaxed version, watch Mister Rogers with your kids. You'll be surprised, or maybe not so surprised, at the similarities. The careful viewer will find opportunities to relate his show to the Theology of the Body. Yes, these two men expressed the same universal and unchanging truths, each in his own way.



TATTERED PAGES

A review of books, movies, music

Sister Annella: a life of faithful humility

By Father James Gross | Pastor, St. Mary's Church of Grand Forks

October 8, 2025 was truly a day of rejoicing for the local church. Bishop Andrew Cozzens of our neighboring Diocese of Crookston celebrated the opening Holy Mass on that day and the first session of the diocesan inquiry into the canonization cause of Annella Zervas, O.S.B. (1900-1926), who has been formally given the title Servant of God. In the past century, this Benedictine Sister's example of holiness has steadily drawn the attention of faithful who have made pilgrimages to her grave in St. Joseph, Minn. and have prayed for her intercession. What better place for me to learn about her than by picking up her official biography, *Ticket to Eternity*?

Anna Zervas (Sr. Annella's birth name) was born and raised in Moorhead, Minn. Her father Hubert immigrated from the Rhineland region of Germany and her mother Emma's heritage was French-Canadian, hailing from the province of Quebec. The Zervas family were devout members of St. Joseph's Parish, where Hubert served as the choir director for decades.

At the young age of 15, Anna sought to enter the Benedictines in St. Joseph, Minn. Two of Anna's sisters would later join the same order. Although she took to the religious life with deep joy, her tardiness would be an ongoing struggle. One fellow aspirant recalled that "she found it very difficult to be punctual" in attending communal prayers. When her superior assigned the name of Annella to her, Anna's mother protested that there is no "Saint Annella." Her daughter firmly replied, "Then I shall have to be the first one!"

Sr. Annella no doubt inherited her father's love for music. The assignment at which she was able to spend the most time, beginning in 1919, was teaching music to schoolchildren at St. Mary's School in Bismarck, and regularly played the organ at liturgies. St. Mary's was the diocesan Cathedral church at that time. In 1922, Sr. Annella professed her final vows with the community, which during that decade became the largest Benedictine community in the world, numbering an amazing 940 sisters.

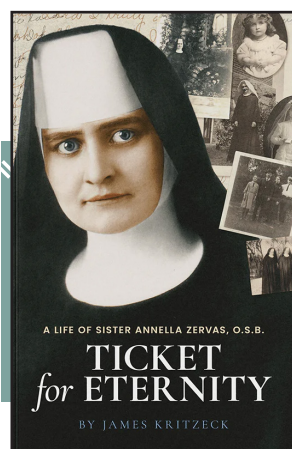
Sr. Annella began experiencing discomfort in 1923 due to an itchy blotch on her arm, as well as digestive problems. Rapidly the symptoms grew worse, to include a disfiguring bodily swelling and sores all over her body. When visiting their daughter in the hospital, not having seen her for many months, they did not recognize Sr. Annella at first and thought they entered the wrong room: she implored them, "Don't you know me?" The University of Minnesota hospital officially diagnosed Sister Annella the year before she passed away with pityriasis

rubra pilaris, a rare skin disease. Very few medicinal or home remedies provided any relief from her extreme pain.

The final chapters of the biography were rather difficult for me to read because of the detail with which Kritzeck described the physical effects of Sr. Annella's illness. Many would prefer to gloss over the accounts of extreme weight loss and the volume of skin (including a portion of her scalp) shedding off the young sister's body. However, the author paints a vivid picture of the corporal suffering she endured so boldly, as well as the ways her family and fellow sisters compassionately shared in Sr. Annella's sufferings as they ministered to her.

What comes shining through in the example of Sr. Annella is how generously she dedicated her life (and eventually the fate of her deteriorating health) to Christ. One may well argue that she bore her disease heroically. Her father recounted several occasions in which his bed-ridden daughter, presumably tempted by Satan, would suddenly exclaim "Begone!" However, the testimony of Sr. Annella's eleven years as a Benedictine is not a glitzy or overpowering display. It is the testimony of a young woman returning the gift of her life and talents to Almighty God humbly and faithfully. Who of us cannot imitate that same disposition in our own walk of life?

We can learn a great deal from the account of Servant of God Sr. Annella Zervas, and we pray that God will see fit in His time to raise her to even higher acclaim in the Church on Earth.



Ticket to Eternity
by James Kritzeck

American ideals of Equality and Liberty through a Catholic lens



CATHOLIC ACTION

DAVID TAMISIEA, J.D., PH.D.

Executive Director
North Dakota Catholic Conference

G.K. Chesterton famously observed that “America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed.” This creed, of course, is the Declaration of Independence. Chesterton further observed that America “has the soul of a church” because of its adherence to this creed. Unlike other nations that developed organically through a shared ethnic background, culture, and history, the United States began with a distinct set of values and principles articulated by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence.

The most famous line in the Declaration of Independence is found in the second paragraph: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” Among other things, this profession emphasizes two American ideals our country is known for around the world: equality and liberty.

Our country recently celebrated its 250th anniversary that began with the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, it would be good to reflect upon the meaning and significance of equality and liberty and see how our Catholic Christian faith helps us understand more clearly these quintessential American values.

As the Declaration makes clear, equality is rooted in our common human nature that comes to us from God the Creator. It does not mean that we hold that all people are the same or even that we are striving for everyone to have all the same advantages in life. Individuals differ so widely in their innate talents and deficiencies and inherited advantages and disadvantages, that it would be impossible to level the playing field in every way. Being created equal does, however, mean that every person has in common certain inherent natural rights that must be protected: rights like the right to life, to practice our religion freely, to think on our own and speak our mind, to associate with others with whom we choose, and the like.

Our Catholic faith can help us see more clearly the meaning of the Declaration’s proclamation that “all men are created equal.” As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, “Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls,

Our Catholic faith can help us have a deeper and more precise understanding of these fundamental American values so that we can live them out more fully and better flourish as a nation.

all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity” (CCC 1934). The fundamental principle being pointed out here is that every human person has equal dignity, that is, the same immeasurable value and worth, from the first moment of conception until natural death. The equal dignity of human persons is not something that can be earned or taken away but rather is intrinsic to every person and a gift from God the Creator.

The corollary to man’s transcendent dignity is that all human life is sacred, from “womb to tomb,” since every person is a living icon of God, an “image of God,” whom God wills to share in his own divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). The lofty dignity of the human person and the sacredness of human life demand we treat others with honor, respect, and love, uphold and defend basic human rights, and work to establish conditions in society for the full flourishing of every person. It also means that we should have laws that uphold and protect the life and dignity of each person and uphold basic human rights.

The other fundamental American value upheld by the Declaration of Independence is liberty or freedom. Liberty has always been central to the American identity, and America is renowned for being the freest country in the world. Our country’s commitment to liberty is evident not only in the Declaration of Independence but also in the preamble to the Constitution, where the Founders established our form of government to “secure the Blessings of Liberty.” Our national devotion to liberty is expressed in our national anthem, the “Star Spangled Banner,” as we sing about our country as the “land of the free, and home of the brave” and in other patriotic songs like “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” which refers to America as a “sweet land of liberty.” It is also professed in our Pledge of Allegiance to the United States, where we pledge our fidelity to our nation that provides “liberty and justice for all.” The word “liberty” is printed on our currency to remind us of our country’s dedication to this value, and the Statue of Liberty greets newcomers to our land. Liberty or freedom is at the core of who we are as a people.

Liberty is a principle that shapes America's political and social foundations. Our country prioritizes individual rights, self-governance, and democratic participation in civic life. The Constitution safeguards essential freedoms like speech, religion, the press, association, and assembly. Throughout our nation's history, the United States has attracted immigrants from around the world who seek greater opportunities and economic independence in our land. America is seen as a land of opportunity where, if a person has talent and determination and works hard, he or she can achieve great success, because he has the freedom to do so.

But what at its core is liberty or freedom? Freedom is a property of the human will that gives human beings the capacity to make choices, to do this or do that, to act or not to act at all (CCC 1731). Unlike irrational animals that are driven to perform actions by their instincts, passions, and appetites alone, human persons have agency that gives them mastery over their own actions. Through the exercise of his freedom, man can deliberate over possible actions, make a choice, and thereby direct himself toward his desired goals and, ultimately, his final end: "By free will one shapes one's own life" (CCC 1731). For this reason, man is responsible and accountable for the free choices he makes.

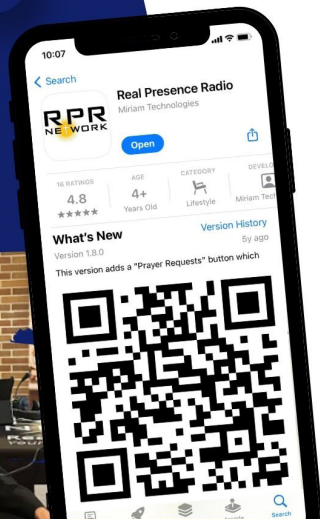
While human beings are free, they are not absolutely autonomous in the choices they make. Human persons are not a "law unto themselves" but are subject to the universal moral law established by God. Freedom, in other words, is not a license to do anything one pleases. The moral law provides a set of guardrails to the kinds of choices a person can make. The irony is that, if a person transgresses the limits imposed by the moral law, it leads to the loss of freedom: "To choose to disobey the moral law and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to 'the slavery of sin' (Rom. 6:27)" (CCC 1733). Anyone who has struggled with serious sin knows how easily it leads to enslavement and ends up controlling the person.

America has not always lived up to its ideals of equality and freedom. Slavery in the past and abortion in the present are examples where human beings have been denied equal dignity and basic freedoms in violation of the universal moral law governing all people. Our Catholic faith can help us have a deeper and more precise understanding of these fundamental American values so that we can live them out more fully and better flourish as a nation. Let's remember how blessed we are to live in a country that was founded upon equality and liberty as we observe our 250th anniversary as a nation.

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A spirit of adoption



A SISTER'S PERSPECTIVE

SISTER MARIA FAUSTINA OF THE CHILD JESUS

Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity

"You received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15).

Recently I went with my Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT) team to see a movie called *The Mandalorian and Grogu*. Several of the priests and the religious brother on my team love superhero movies and Star Wars, so it was a lot of fun spending time with them and hearing them laugh throughout the movie. I had not watched any of the series that preceded this movie, but Sister MaryAnn sat next to me and filled me in so I was not too confused, and Father Michael shared his popcorn, so overall it was a good time. I was struck by the fatherhood portrayed by the main character, the Mandalorian, towards his adopted son, Grogu. In the movie, the Mandalorian wears a helmet, and his face is not revealed until towards the end, yet I was surprised by the level of character and love I was able to see in him before seeing his face. Simply by hearing the tenderness in his voice when he talked to his son and by seeing the way he taught, protected, and cared for him, I felt like I already knew the character even before seeing his face. I knew that he was a good father.

When I watch a new movie, I like to think about what it can tell me about God. With this one, I have been thinking of the similarities in my relationship with my Heavenly Father. Psalm 42 says "My soul longs for you, O God...when can I go and see the face of God?" I identify so much with this longing to see the face of my Heavenly Father. Yet even now, I know the sound of His voice and know he is teaching, protecting, and caring for me through the gift of His Holy Spirit.

In the movie, the Mandalorian is constantly teaching his son to be like him. On many of their adventures, though, little Grogu seems to just know and do his father's will, even without being told. They work together with the same spirit. It made me think about how my Heavenly Father is also teaching me to be like Him and sharing His Spirit with me. Sometimes what He is teaching me is very clear and direct through inspirations in prayer, the commandments of the scriptures, or obedience to those in authority over me. However, most of the time He guides me not through direct commands, but through a sharing in His Spirit which is so gentle and tender that I sometimes do not even realize I am being taught and guided until afterwards.

For example, I remember once being lost in an unfamiliar city. I had no map or GPS, my phone had died, and I was trying to make it to a 7 p.m. Mass at a church I had never been to before. I tried stopping for directions at a gas station, but it was not very helpful. I ended up just driving and praying, and right before 7pm, my eyes fell upon the church entrance. I pulled into the parking lot and heaved a sigh of relief. I hadn't even known I was close, until I saw the sign and realized I had arrived! At no point did I hear God's voice giving me directions, or feel any particular inspiration to take a certain road. I felt like I was just driving aimlessly. But even though I didn't feel the sensible presence of the Holy Spirit, He was truly with me and guiding me the whole time.

I haven't forgotten that day, because it was a lesson for me on the Providence of my Heavenly Father, and the ever-present guidance of His Holy Spirit. Sometimes, I do feel the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit, especially in the big decisions of my life. However, 99 percent of my life is not spent making extraordinary decisions, but ordinary ones. The experience of feeling lost and then finding my way reminds me that the Holy Spirit of my Father is working with me at every moment, even when I don't feel Him. I know that as long as I am in the state of grace, He dwells within me. As long as I have the sincere desire to please Him, He is guiding me. Growing in awareness of this has given me so much more confidence in missionary life. When I first started serving in mission, I used to feel so timid about stepping out to serve, because I felt like I would not know what to do. I still feel like this, but I have the confidence to step out anyway, because I trust that the Holy Spirit lives within me and is working.

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Carmel of Mary Monastery, Wahpeton

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3 p.m. Rosary/Confessions

5 p.m. Mass

6 p.m. Picnic

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Living out our identity as Children of God



SEMINARIAN LIFE

DALTON BOOTH

Theology I
Pontifical North American College
Rome, Italy

This summer I spent six weeks in Omaha, Nebraska participating in the Institute of Priestly Formation (IPF) summer program for seminarians. During this program, I went on an eight-day silent retreat where I attended Mass and met with a spiritual director daily, prayed several holy hours each day, and embraced a challenging interior disposition of silence and receptivity.

While there were many graces from the retreat, one particular grace I'd like to share was the persistent invitation from our Lord to live out of my identity as a son. In the pattern of life, I'm often tempted to seize a greater amount of control over the situation that's in front of me. Whether it be in prayer, schoolwork, or other tasks of life, self-reliance does not bring me greater stability and "power" over a situation, but often greater anxiety and distress.

During retreat, I was gently reminded by our Lord of how I, in truth, don't have control over the circumstances of my life. I was invited to re-embrace a disposition of humility and littleness as a child before him, surrendering to God all of myself and all my joys and sorrows.

This may be easy to say but living it out is difficult and not perfectly realized during our earthly life. Remaining small and dependent on God is not how the world shows us to live. The world tells us to claim our life as our own, living autonomously and by our own will.

However, I was reminded during retreat of the great peace that results from moving toward total abandonment to God. Entrusting ourselves to his will allows us to live out of the identity He created us for.

Saint Augustine is often cited for his description of peace as the "tranquility of order." When our lives are ordered in right relationship with God, humbly recognizing him as our loving and merciful Father and ourselves as his dependent children, we can find the tranquility that we were made for. Now, this peace does not promise freedom from all suffering and hardship. However, with the difficulties that come, we know we can rely on our Lord to provide the necessary graces to support us.

This poverty of spirit continues to show me my own limits, encouraging me to open my mind and heart to receive the ways in which God desires to lead and act in my life. When we remain in this disposition of poverty of spirit, everything in life comes from the hands of the Lord. We are simply invited to

receive from him, relying upon God for everything. There is a great freedom that comes from this.

In terms of discerning a vocation to the priesthood, receiving this call from God and trusting his providential care is foundational. I can't rely upon myself in my vocation. Humbly embracing my poverty before God gives room for him to act through me in whatever vocation he calls us to. Whether it be priestly ministry in a parish or raising a family at home, the flock entrusted to my care is not my own but belongs to God.

Before embracing a vocation to priestly fatherhood, I must first learn how to be a son. Putting my faith and trust in God instead of myself and other earthly things allows me to live out the freedom of my identity, to live as a child of God. The vocation and ministry that he calls me to is only secondary to the relationship which I have with him and the identity I receive from him. The reminder to reclaim this sonship was a merciful grace I received during retreat and I'm grateful to God for the tender care he continues to shepherd me with as his child.



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How to give to your Church for 100+ Years



STEWARDSHIP

STEVE SCHONS

Director of Stewardship and Development
Diocese of Fargo

Would you like to make a gift to your Church 100 years from now? You can! Here's how:

Simply add up your annual gifts for the year and multiply by 20. Then, make an estate gift for this amount (through your will or other device) and designate it to your parish church endowment fund. That's all there is to it.

The endowment will provide an annual gift to your Church at roughly the same dollar value you are giving now. Long after you are gone, even 100 years from now, your Church will continue to receive your annual gift.

Our managers invest the principal of the endowment, always being careful to make enough income to meet the payout requirements of the fund. Since the principal is kept intact, the endowment never dries up. It's like an artesian well. Your giving to your church goes on and on and on.

Here's an example of how this works: Mary gives her church \$500 every year. She may give it in smaller chunks or as one annual gift. She realizes that her church depends on her giving and wonders how her church will fare when she's no longer alive to send the \$500.

Mary talks to the Fargo diocese's director of planned giving and learns about our "Endow Your Giving" program. She then instructs her attorney to add a codicil to her will, providing a \$10,000 bequest to her Church Endowment Fund.

The initial income from her endowment gift will be \$500, assuming a five percent return, and income will grow as the endowment appreciates over time. She is pleased because she knows that money from the endowment fund will be given to the annual fund every year, just as though she were still sending a check herself to her Church.

The idea of an endowment fund may captivate you to the point you will want to establish a larger fund, bearing your name, for either a restricted or unrestricted purpose. This can be done now, or through an estate gift when you are gone.

If you would like to learn more about endowment funds, or establishing an endowment fund in your name, please contact me at 701-356-7926.

Ways to stay connected with the Fargo Diocese



Receive messages from Bishop Folda twice a month:
<https://fargodiocese.flocknote.com>



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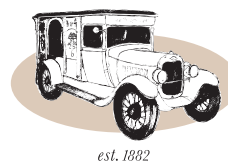
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Diocesan policy: Reporting child abuse

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.

CELEBRATING MARYVALE

-FAITH & FUN DAY-

August 15, 2026 10am-5pm

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- 5K/1M Trail Run or Walk
- Yard Games
- Bouncy Houses
- Outdoor Live Music
- Bake Sale
- Silent Auction
- Food
- Vigil Mass with Bishop Folda



\$5.00

Hamburgers, Brats,
Hotdogs, Chips,
Potato
Salad & Coleslaw:



LIFE'S MILESTONES



David and Donna Bremer, parishioners of St. Olaf's in Finley, will celebrate their 50th anniversary July 31. They are the parents of four children, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.



Gene and Barbara (Hassler) Carew, over 50 years parishioners of Holy Spirit in Fargo, celebrate their 70th anniversary July 21. They were married at Mather Air Force Base chapel in California. They have five children, 12 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren and one-on-the-way!



Ken and Susan (Klein) Didier, parishioners of St. Catherine's in Valley City, celebrated their 50th anniversary July 3. They were married at Sacred Heart in Sanborn. They are proud parents of five children and seven grandchildren.



Jim and Carolyn Exner, parishioners of St. James Basilica in Jamestown, celebrate their 65th anniversary Aug. 19. They were married at St. Mathias in Windsor. They have been blessed with three children, six grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.



Steven and Michelle Fehr, parishioners of St. John the Evangelist in Wahpeton, celebrated their 40th anniversary on July 5. They have three sons (one deceased) and are looking forward to celebrating their sons' weddings in the coming year.



Jerry and Sheila Laturnus, parishioners of Sacred Heart in Cando, celebrate their 50th anniversary July 16. They were married at Sacred Heart as well. They are blessed with four children and eight grandchildren.



Jim and Sharon Lunski, parishioners of St. Michael's in Grand Forks, celebrate their 60th anniversary July 21. They were married at St. Michael's in 1966. They have been blessed with three sons, five grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.



Charlie and Sue Mauch, parishioners of Sts. Peter & Paul in Mantador, celebrated 40 years of marriage on May 31. They were married at the same parish they still attend today. They are blessed with two children, five grandchildren and one on the way.



Scott and Cindy Sobolik celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary Aug. 14. They were married at St. Mary's in Park River and are parishioners of Holy Spirit in Fargo. They are blessed with three sons and four grandchildren.



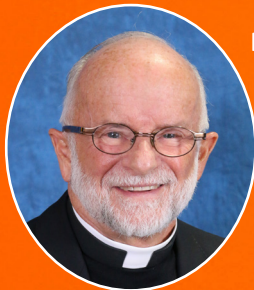
Fred Bingham, parishioner of St Joseph's in Devils Lake, celebrates his 90th birthday July 17. Fred was married to Ann for 58 years before her passing in 2019. They have been blessed with four children, 15 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, and a great-great grandchild due in December.



Allen "Bud" Devine, a longtime parishioner of St. Timothy's Church in Manvel, celebrated his 80th Birthday June 18 in Fargo with his family. He has two sons, Shane and Michael. He and his late wife Joyce were married for 46 years until her death in 2017.



Anita Dobbs, parishioner of Holy Spirit in Fargo, celebrates her 90th birthday Aug. 11. She and husband John will be married 67 years Aug. 1. They are parents of five children (two deceased), seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



Fr. Dale Lagodinski, retired priest of the Fargo diocese, celebrates his 80th birthday Aug. 2. He has been a priest for 54 years. Mass will be celebrated at Transfiguration in Edgeley at 11am with lunch and gathering to follow. All are welcome.



Anna (Gerszewski) Seeba, parishioner of Sacred Heart in Oakwood, celebrates her 104th birthday July 25. Anna and her late husband Cyril were blessed with six children, eight grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren. She still lives on the family farm.



Shirley Sobolik, parishioner of St. Mary's in Park River, celebrates her 100th birthday Aug. 2. She was married to her husband Deacon Gerald (Bud) Sobolik for 63 years before his passing. She has two sons, two daughters and four grandchildren.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Life's Milestones includes anniversaries for marriages, ordinations, and religious vows for 25, 40, 50, 60, 65, and 70+ years and birthdays for 80, 85, 90, 95, and 100+ years for those in the Diocese of Fargo. Submissions only accepted for milestones occurring during the month of publication, two months prior, or one month following.

Send photo and text announcement to Susan.Noah@fargodiocese.org or to Diocese of Fargo, *New Earth*, 5201 Bishops Blvd S, Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104. If you would like your photo returned, please include a self-addressed stamped return envelope (that fits your photo) and phone number. Deadline for the September issue is Aug. 11.



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Events

Belcourt: St. Ann's Day July 26. Eucharistic rosary procession at 11 a.m. followed by Mass in outdoor grotto. Community meal and bingo to follow. Outdoor fair with lawn games and hot dogs for the kids. Bring your lawn chairs! St. Ann Catholic Church 1115 Louis Riel Drive.

Edgeley: Father Dale Lagodinski, retired priest of the Fargo diocese, celebrates his 80th birthday Aug. 2. He has been a priest for 54 years. Mass to be celebrated at Transfiguration Church in Edgeley at 11 a.m. with lunch and gathering to follow. All are welcome. RSVP not required but will help us plan. Email dale.lagodinski@fargodiocese.org.

Fargo: Putt for a Purpose: Bishop's 20th Annual Charity Golf Classic. Faith. Fellowship. Fairways. Monday Aug. 3 Rose Creek Golf Course.. 10 a.m. registration. 11:30 Shotgun Start. Social and dinner begin about 4 p.m. Proceeds benefit Fargo diocese's seminarian education and youth programs. Register online: www.fargodiocese.org/puttpurpose or call 701-356-7928

Moorhead, Minn.: Sister Annella Guild Centennial Celebration Day. Join us Aug. 8 as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Servant of God Annella Zervas, OSB. We will honor her life and witness to the Catholic faith and support her cause for canonization through prayer, fellowship, and celebration.

3:45 p.m. Zervas Family Monument blessing at St. Joseph's Cemetery, 2700 N. 11th St., Moorhead, Minn.

5 p.m. Mass with Bishop Cozzens at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, 601 15th Ave N., Moorhead

6 p.m. Reception at St. Frances de Sales Parish Hall. Reception ticket \$30/person, please purchase in advance. Register at <https://sisterannella.org/centennial-celebration-day/>

Valley City: Catechist Retreat 2026 "Go Make Disciples"

Friday Aug. 28 or Saturday Aug. 29 9-4 p.m.

Have a day of retreat at Maryvale Retreat Center. Make time for silent reflection, Holy Mass, lunch, and sharing amid the beauty of the grounds. The day is primarily for those who serve in catechesis — yet all are warmly welcome.

Register by Aug. 14. www.fargodiocese.org/catechistretreat or call 701-356-7909

Hankinson: Silent directed Retreats. A week of silence and reflection on the beautiful prairies where you can listen for the Holy Spirit's guidance and experience his grace in a special way. Aug. 12-19. Enjoy daily Spiritual Direction, our beautiful chapels & grounds, Mass & Adoration (optional), and comfortable accommodations.

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. 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 srmmaryruth@scretreats.org

Dunseith: the 61st International Peace Garden Mass Sunday Aug. 16 at noon at the Burdick Center building at the International Peace Garden located north of Dunseith on the U.S./ Canadian border. A rosary, said in five languages, begins at 11:30 a.m. Catered lunch served after Mass for \$20.

This is the only place in the world where two countries meet and participate in the Holy Mass to pray for world peace. Two forms of ID (passport, birth certificate or driver's license) required to re-enter the United States. Park admission must also be purchased. Event sponsored by the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus of Canada and the United States.

Mandan: Marriage Retreat--Becoming One. Join retreat leaders, Peter & Theresa Martin, founders of the Wojtyla Community & Institute, JP2Rule.com, for a powerful weekend retreat designed to help married couples step away from the busyness of everyday life and invest intentional time in their relationship and spiritual life together. Inspiring talks, private couple dialogue, prayer, and fellowship drawing on St. John Paul II's 'Rule for Marriage' to help spouses discover practical ways to grow in deeper love and unity. Early bird registration available. <https://www.ctkmandan.com/marriage-retreat> Text or call Joanne at 701-527-0607 for retreat questions.

Jamestown: Community Corn Feed St. James Basilica presents the third annual event. Stutsman County Fairgrounds. Aug. 23 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. \$10 at the door, kids six and under free. Bounce houses, corn hole, raffle prizes and more!

Fargo: Open House, new retired priests' home hosted by Bishop John Folda. Aug. 23 1-3 p.m. Open to the general public! Tour where our retired priests will live. South of the chancery at 5201 Bishops Blvd.

Ft. Ransom: Conscience & Courage in Law retreat for judges, lawyers, law professionals and law students. Sept. 11-13 Stiklestad Lodge, Ft Ransom. Keynote by Dr. Teresa Collett. Panel discussions and liturgy. Details and Registration at www.conscienceandcourage.org/

Valley City: Catholic Faith Institute class: The Human Person, the Foundation of All Rights & Dignity. Maryvale Retreat Center. Sept. 18-19. Saturday lunch provided with registration. <https://fargodiocese.net/cfi-classes>

Drayton: Classical Desserts Fall music recital features the return of cellist Dr. Gregory Hamilton and pianist Dr. Jay Hershberger. Featuring the music of Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Brahms. Performance will be followed by our dessert buffet social. St Edward in Drayton on Sunday, Oct. 3 at 3 p.m.

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



U.S. bishops consecrate nation to Sacred Heart of Jesus

By Gigi Duncan | EWTN News

The U.S. bishops consecrated the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 11, entrusting the United States to Christ's merciful love during a solemn Mass as part of their spring plenary assembly.

"We gather not first to celebrate ourselves, but to consecrate, to entrust... and to place our whole nation into the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ," Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore said in his homily.

The liturgy took place in Orlando on the final day of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' spring plenary meeting, during the nation's 250th anniversary year.

In the hours leading up to the Mass, bishops concluded their assembly with reflections that centered on the meaning of devotion to the Sacred Heart in contemporary life.

Archbishop Alexander Sample of Portland, Oregon, described the devotion as a response to modern forms of spiritual strain, including loneliness and the pressure to measure personal worth by achievement or failure. Drawing on Pope Francis' encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, he said contemporary culture often unsettles identity itself.

"The Sacred Heart of Jesus answers that question decisively," Sample said. "When we know that we are loved by Christ, we no longer need to build our identity on achievements or failures."

Shortly before the Mass, bishops spent time in Eucharistic adoration and benediction and venerated the relics of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the 17th-century French nun whose visions helped spread devotion to the Sacred Heart throughout the Church.

'The Sacred Heart does not divide'

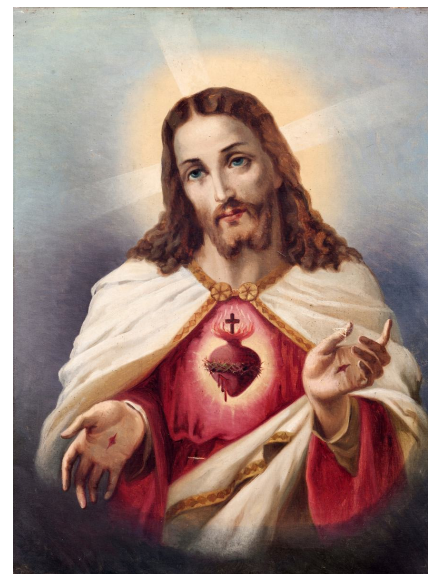
In his homily, Lori placed the consecration within the broader moral and spiritual tensions of Church and national life, framing it as an act of trust rather than achievement.

"To love as Christ loves is the true measure of Christian discipleship, and it is the true measure of our humanity," he said.

He acknowledged that this measure has often not been lived out. "Indeed, it has sometimes obscured it almost beyond recognition," he said, noting the reality of division, sin, and failure alongside moments of grace.

Lori said the act of entrustment is not an assertion of strength but an admission of dependence on mercy. "We cannot come to the heart of Christ while pretending we have no need of his mercy," he said.

The future, he emphasized, cannot ultimately be secured



Sacred Heart of Jesus, oil on canvas

19th-century Portuguese school. (Wikimedia Commons)

by human systems or planning. "The future belongs to God, not to political movements, economic forces, or human plans," he said.

He then described the Sacred Heart as the source of reconciliation itself, not merely a devotional image but a living reality that reshapes those who turn to it.

"The Sacred Heart does not divide, it reconciles," he said. "It does not harden hearts, it transforms them. It does not simply invite us to receive love; it sends us forth to share it." Reflecting on the Gospel, he described Christ as fully entering the human condition with "a heart that has known joy and sorrow, friendship and betrayal, suffering and sacrifice."

"The Sacred Heart reveals a savior who desires not merely our obedience, but our friendship," he said. "Not simply our service, but our communion with him."

That communion, he added, is meant to shape the whole of Christian life. "To remain in his love and allow that love to shape everything we do," he said.

Prayer of entrustment

Following the homily, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, led the solemn prayer of consecration, placing the moment within a wider historical and theological tradition.

He recalled that 127 years earlier Pope Leo XIII consecrated the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, presenting the Orlando liturgy as a continuation of that same act of entrustment.

"In that same spirit, we now consecrate the United States

of America,” Coakley said, noting that Christ “in his own blood has removed all divisions and made of many nations one people of God.”

He led repeated invocation throughout the prayer: “Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.”

The consecration prayer addressed Christ as the “Desire of Nations and Center of History,” asking him to bless the United States, heal the nation’s wounds, and bring reconciliation, justice, and peace where they are lacking.

It also gave thanks for the blessings bestowed upon the country, affirmed the dignity of every person as a gift from the Creator, and made reparation for offenses against God and human dignity.

The prayer further asked that the Church in the United States be a visible sign of Christ’s presence in the world, pointing “all people to [his] infinite love.” It prayed for peace in families and communities, the reconciliation of broken relationships, the repair of injustices, and the healing of the nation through a deeper union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

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

The ladies Altar Societies of St. Augustine’s Church, Fessenden, and St. Joseph’s mission at Bremen have instituted a lovely custom in connection with baptisms in their parishes. The ladies have designed an infant’s baptismal robe that is given as a gift to each child in that parish at its baptism. All the garments are sewn by the ladies. The robe is conferred on the child at the point in the baptismal ceremony following the pouring of the waters when the white garment represents the innocence of the soul. A gift of the pastor, Rev. Wilfrid Shannon, to each child is a decorated candle, which held lighted by the sponsor, symbolizes the light of Faith conferred by the Sacrament.

50 years ago — 1976

Many spectacular events took place in the “City of Brotherly Love” during the 41st International Eucharistic Congress, which opened with the solemn pontifical Mass celebrated in the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul, Aug. 1. Many Fargo priests, sisters, and lay faithful attended the eight-day Congress. Speakers included: Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day and Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. The Charismatic Renewal Liturgy in Veterans Stadium was attended by more than

‘A powerful moment in our national story’

President Donald Trump also issued a message marking the consecration, calling it “a powerful moment in our national story” and linking it to Bishop John Carroll’s post-Revolutionary consecration of the United States to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

He described the moment as part of a broader spiritual inheritance, noting that American history has long been shaped by public expressions of faith.

“As Catholic bishops consecrate the United States of America to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in this 250th year of our independence, we recommit ourselves,” he said, calling for renewed attention to the nation’s “spiritual identity and great civilizational inheritance.”

Trump called the consecration “a poignant reminder that America has always been guided by the loving hand of God,” framing it as both reflection and renewal during the semiquincentennial year.

This article has been edited for length.

40,000 people. Bishop Justin Driscoll of Fargo characterized this experience thusly: “This was the fun night. The Charismatics are joyful, wonderful people. They speak in tongues; they wave their hands about—so what!” Summing up the Congress, Bishop Driscoll said, “I pray that what happened in Philadelphia, in some small measure will be realized throughout this diocese by an increase of love and veneration for the priceless gift we have of Jesus, the Bread of Life. This is my prayer.”

20 years ago — 2006

Parishioners at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Devils Lake witnessed the dedication of a new crucifix in the Devils Lake Cemetery July 4. The traditional German-Russian iron cross, which stands 12 feet tall, was constructed by Ardell Loken of Devils Lake. The cross was placed directly south of the granite altar in the cemetery. In 2005, St. Joseph’s Church purchased several lots in the Devils Lake Cemetery where the altar from St. James Catholic Church of Minnewaukan was erected. During the dedication Mass Father Wilhelm, pastor of St. Joseph’s, praised the contributions of former and present military members. Those soldiers have given Americans the right to worship openly, he said.

Magnifica Humanitas: Pope invokes justice to combat ‘antihuman vision’ in AI

By Hannah Brockhaus | EWTN News

In his encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, published May 25, Pope Leo XIV calls on society and AI developers to implement “shared standards of social justice” in order for artificial intelligence to respect human dignity and serve the common good.

AI is not a morally neutral tool; it matters not only how it is used but how it is designed, Leo writes in “*Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*.” *Magnifica humanitas* means “magnificent humanity” in Latin.

He also warns that “a more moral AI is not enough if that morality is determined by a few ... In fact, as with every major technological shift, AI tends to amplify the power of those who already possess economic resources, expertise, and access to data.”

The first encyclical letter of Leo XIV covers a wide range of social issues, focusing heavily on the impacts of AI in the areas of education, the economy, unemployment, work, the development of young people, human trafficking, and war.

He proposes the principles of Catholic social doctrine, the dignity of the person, the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity and justice as guidelines for decision-making and the “criteria for judging whether technologies truly serve humanity or are subjugating it.”

While rejecting dichotomous thinking that pits the opportunities of AI against its risks, or enthusiasm against fear, Leo offers a stark assessment of the technological paradigm the world finds itself in today and describes a path of progress that serves people “or a progress that subjects them to the mentality of power.”

“The risk extends beyond the misuse of certain technologies. More gravely, the pervasive technocratic paradigm in which we are immersed, and that is amplified by the digital revolution and AI, threatens to normalize an antihuman vision,” he writes. Leo borrows the term “technocratic paradigm” from Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’*, in which, Leo writes, Francis critiqued a paradigm “that seeks to reduce everything to an object to be dominated.”

In that antihuman vision, he continues, “the fullness of life is equated with having more, reducing weakness, eliminating uncertainty, and exerting total control. When efficiency becomes the ultimate measure of value, human beings are tempted to see themselves as a project to be optimized rather than as persons called to relationship and communion.”

According to Pope Leo, the central question — safeguarding our humanity — is something everyone should have a role in



Pope Leo XIV signs his first encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* on May 15, 2026, in the apostolic palace at the Vatican. (Vatican Media)

answering.

He invokes one of his spiritual guides, St. Augustine of Hippo, quoting from *The City of God*: “‘Two loves have built two cities: the earthly city, the love of self even to the contempt of God; the heavenly city, the love of God even to the contempt of self.’ As throughout history, these two loves continue to contend for dominance in our hearts today.”

From Catholic social doctrine to the fight for power

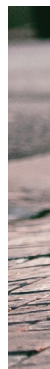
The encyclical’s 245 paragraphs are broken down into an introduction and five chapters, with the first two dedicated to an explanation of the development of the Church’s social doctrine from Pope Leo XIII to today, the main principles of that doctrine, and how they can be applied to the current technological age.

Chapter 3 introduces “the technocratic paradigm” of artificial intelligence and the imbalance of digital power.

Chapter 4 turns to the importance of safeguarding truth, democracy, work, education, and human freedom in the age of AI, while the fifth chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the normalization of war, the fight for power, and how everyone has a responsibility to help build a civilization of love through the cultivation of peace and justice.

Throughout the encyclical, Leo draws on the image of construction to ask how humanity will respond to the new technological age. Humanity, he says, must choose between building the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) and building a city where God and humanity can dwell together, as Nehemiah gathered together people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile (Neh. 2-6).

“In light of these two images, the Holy Spirit challenges



us today regarding our relationship with technology and the ongoing digital revolution,” he writes. “Technology has the power to heal, connect, educate, and protect our common home; but it can also divide, exclude, and generate new forms of injustice.”

Pope Leo XIV draws on quotations from prominent 19th- and 20th-century thinkers, both Catholic and Jewish, including St. John Paul II, Victor Frankl, Hannah Arendt, J.R.R. Tolkien, Giorgio La Pira, and Father Romano Guardini, to argue that while technology is not a solution in itself to humanity’s problems, nor is it inherently evil.

“In practice, however, technology is never neutral, because it takes on the characteristics of those who devise it, finance it, regulate it, and use it,” he writes.

The choice, he continues, is not between a “yes” or “no” to technology but “between constructing Babel or rebuilding Jerusalem; between a power that claims to dominate the heavens and a people who work together in the presence of God to rebuild the walls of fraternal coexistence.”

Frequently cited sources for the encyclical letter include Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* and the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

Writing that he does not wish to give a comprehensive overview of AI, the pope points readers to previous writings by the Church on AI, in particular, the 2025 note “*Antiqua et Nova*” by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education and “*Quo Vadis, Humanitas?*,” published earlier this year by the International Theological Commission — both of which are cited often in the footnotes of *Magnifica Humanitas*.

Christian humanism and the technocratic paradigm

The pope writes about the mindsets of transhumanism and posthumanism and how they are the ideological vision underlying technology.

He proposes a Christian humanism, where human beings “are not confined by the boundaries of their own nature; rather, they are called to self-transcendence, not through an escape from reality or a contempt for their limitations but through their fulfillment in love.” He also expresses concern about the “new monopolies of AI.”

“To speak of the common good means exposing this new form of epistemic, economic, and political asymmetry,” he writes.

The key question, he says, is that posed by St. John Paul II: Does AI “make human life on earth ‘more human’ in every aspect of that life? Does it make it more worthy of man?”

Leo writes that “a decisive test for the ethical discernment of AI and digital transformation” is in the fight against new forms

of slavery, such as human trafficking. The pontiff goes on to “sincerely ask for pardon,” in the name of the Church, for the “immense suffering and humiliation endured by so many” before slavery was unequivocally condemned in the 19th century.

“This development offers a clear example of the Church’s growth in understanding the perennial truths of revelation that she safeguards. Although there was not always consistency in practice,” he writes, “there has been a continuous affirmation throughout history of the dignity of every human being, created in the image of God, even if it took 18 centuries for its full incompatibility with slavery to be explicitly recognized.”

The memory of past blindness and complicity regarding the injustice of slavery is “a call to vigilance,” the pope says. “What we have learned must be translated into discernment and responsibility in the present.”

‘A violent culture of power’

A large section of the pope’s letter is devoted to what he writes is “a troubling revival of war as an instrument of international politics,” AI use in warfare, a crisis in multilateralism, and the erosion of ethical principles that used to limit war.

“Humanity is slipping into a violent culture of power,” he warns. “Today, more than ever, without prejudice to the right to self-defense in the strictest sense, it is important to reaffirm that the ‘just war’ theory which has all too often been used to justify any kind of war, is now outdated. Humanity possesses far more effective and capable tools for promoting human life and resolving conflicts, such as dialogue, diplomacy, and forgiveness.”

“The modern Babel can be seen not only in the globalized technocratic paradigm but also in the remote clash between opposing imperialisms, between powers that wish to preserve their supremacy and those that aspire to seize that supremacy, resulting in a multiplicity of local conflicts. Moreover, there seems to be no limit to the race — driven by a dehumanizing ambition — to develop evermore powerful technologies or to secure control over them,” Pope Leo writes.

But the pontiff does not conclude on a negative note. He adds that, “despite this downward spiral, we can also glimpse a great part of humanity that is striving to remain human and working to build the holy city of coexistence and peace.”

Concluding the document, he expresses the hope that, “[i]n the humble fidelity of daily life, even the era of AI can become a time in which the Holy Spirit brings about the civilization of love in our lives.”

“Indeed, the Lord continues to make all things new and offers every era the possibility of becoming part of salvation history in the light of the Incarnation.”



YouTuber touts abortion of his son; the public reacts



SIDEWALK STORIES

ROXANE B. SALONEN

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

There's a viral YouTube video: a man and his wife are sitting on the floor hunched over a phone reading their ultrasound prognosis. Soon thereafter, the man announced that, because of their baby's diagnosis of Trisomy 21, they had decided to "terminate" their son at five months along.

The video produced a barrage of reactions: some revolting, but others laudable. I loved seeing so many sharing stories of their special-needs children and how much love they've brought into the world and their lives.

The story gets more insidious, though, because several days after the blast of reactions, some online influencers began suggesting the couple may have faked the whole thing. This YouTuber has a record of producing videos with shock value, apparently, so the emerging theory suggests it was all contrived solely for clicks.

Either scenario is ghastly. If this couple thought it a good idea to publicly share the moment they learned their baby was diagnosed, *in utero*, with Down syndrome, then announced their decision to end their own child's life, that would be unsettling enough. Why bring us into this private moment anyway?

But it's even more concerning, perhaps, if it were all fake, with the exception that it would mean a child didn't actually die. However, those who responded with revolt believed it was real, and many reacted with tears and powerful emotions. How low can one go to fake a video of something as sacred as this, knowingly deceiving the public?

Let's give him the benefit of the doubt that it's all true. Stick with that as you read my sampling of what the dad, whom I'll call "J," put out to the public, initially with an explanation that Trisomy 21 is a "glitch" in cell division.

He went on to say that though initially he was hopeful because, "If they're a little slow intellectually, then we'll make it work. I signed on to be a parent, come what may."

But, he admitted, he didn't know enough about the syndrome, and after being educated, realized these children have many physical issues. Listing the possibilities, he added, "Down

Syndrome isn't a 'blessing,' it is objectively [EXPLETIVE DELETED] from a health perspective."

He just didn't realize how rough it would be for the child, he said, let alone the family. "More often than not, they would be fully dependent on others for the rest of their life." And to make matters worse, the diagnosis includes a 50 percent chance of miscarriage, which would further put his wife at risk, and the baby "may never see the light of day" anyway.

He then quoted the high percentage of women who abort these children, 90 percent, and said he was surprised at that number. This seemed to bring him comfort in their decision; they were, after all, in the majority here.

Before concluding, "J" sent out a "soothing" word to "all of my fans who have weighed in on this topic who have autism, Down syndrome, or any other condition," noting that "we appreciate you. You matter a lot and we're glad you're here," commending their families for having had "the courage to push forward."

However, he maintained, this decision was most beneficial for their family. "Thankfully, we had a choice." He ended by saying that they are excited for a "hopefully better outcome" next time around.

Some points to consider in his sad justification of having ended his own child's life:

He signed on to become a parent "come what may," but in the end, just didn't have the integrity to follow through when the rubber met the road, which signals an unfortunate lack of courage; the kind any parent needs to raise a child of any sort.

Every child is a blessing, because every child is made in the image and likeness of God, as we know. But "J" seems to have missed this important memo.

As far as the child being dependent for life, that is a hard thing to consider, but love requires sacrifice. Thinking about this more, having a special-needs child might have hampered his YouTube production. Of course, he also could have turned it around and made his channel about the joys of new life and fathering a child with special gifts.

Whether "J's" video was fake or real, his words and actions are depraved. However, in the end, I believe the whole thing is going to backfire or has already. Because the more the Culture of Death shows itself, the more people will be drawn toward the light. For as we read in John 1:5: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

NEW EARTH

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Do you know
where we are?

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



Where in the diocese are we?

Last month's photo is from
St. Joseph's Church
in Devils Lake.