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On New Year's Eve, Saint Stephens Indian Mission, as well as a few other Wyoming parishes, rang the church bells in remembrance of lives lost during the pandemic. Go to Page 4 to read more. (Photos courtesy of Father Jim Heiser and Saint Stephens)

A Lent of Forgiveness

Bishop Steven Biegler

Lower the temperature. How often have we heard that lately? It is one thing for a politician to speak eloquently about mending fences, it is quite another to accomplish it. It is not enough to sit around and wait for others to do it; each one of us needs to work at it. What will help us to overcome the frustration, discord, bitterness, and hate in our world? How can we be a leaven of peace in society?

First, trust that providence is always at work. The Lord anticipated this difficult time, and we have the grace to navigate

these stormy waters. One seed of grace was planted 150 years ago. Pope Pius IX proclaimed Saint Joseph the Patron of the Universal Church on December 8, 1870. In the decree he wrote, "in this most sorrowful time the Church herself is beset by enemies on every side and oppressed by heavy calamities, so that impious men imagine that the gates of hell are at length prevailing against her."

Does that sound familiar? Today many people feel "beset by enemies on every side and oppressed by heavy calamities." According to God's providence, on the 150th

anniversary of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis declared the Year of Saint Joseph. He is a role model for anyone living in trying times.

The Holy Father has granted a plenary indulgence to those who meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Lord's Prayer, or who, following Saint Joseph's example, perform a spiritual or corporal work of mercy, and for families or engaged couples who pray the Holy Rosary. It is essential to understand that the spiritual practices associated

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"Bring the peace of Christ to those who cannot participate in Eucharistic celebrations."

Go to Page 8 to learn more.

Some say the Church should stay out of politics. Is that what we really want?

Learn more on Page 10.

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he said, *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”* (Lk. 23:24). He did not react with anger and say, *“Father, crush my enemies.”* Jesus never merely reacted; rather, he acted out of his relationship with his Father. He was “Father-centered.”

A Debtor Unaffected by Forgiveness

The clearest teaching about forgiveness is in Matthew 18:21-35. Peter asked Jesus, *“How often must I forgive, seven times?”* Jesus replied, *“Not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”* Then Jesus told a parable of a debtor who owed a king 10,000 talents. One

talent was 6,000 silver coins, or 6,000 days’ wages. Thus, 10,000 talents was an astronomical sum, something like \$10 billion today. The only way out for the debtor was for the king to forgive the loan. Think of the debt of sin we have before God. Forgiveness is our only way out.

After being forgiven 10,000 talents, the servant went to a man who owed him 100 silver coins. But he refused to forgive him, even though he was forgiven 60 million silver coins. Why did he refuse to forgive? He could not have internalized the king’s forgiveness. The moral of the parable is that if you do not embrace the Father’s mercy, you will never be able to forgive others.

Now here is what is really interesting. The word in the parable for “debtor” only appears twice in Matthew’s gospel. In the parable of Mt. 18 and in Mt. 6 when Jesus teaches the disciples the Our Father. The words that we pray are, *“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,”* but a literal translation is, *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”* (Mt. 6:12).

For the first Christians, the petition *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”* called to mind the debtor forgiven 10,000 talents. When I pray the Lord’s Prayer privately, I recite the literal translation with the words “debts” and

“debtors.” It reminds me of how readily the Father forgives my debt of sin, and it inspires me to be merciful like the Father is merciful. We cannot forgive others, unless we live inside of the Father’s mercy.

Mercy Flowering into Forgiveness

There are two main reasons why people do not forgive others. One is that they have not let the Father’s mercy into their hearts. The second is that they are so hard on themselves. Often, people will say, *“I know that God forgives me, but I can’t forgive myself.”* But that is a sneaky form of pride. God’s job is to forgive. Our job is to receive forgiveness. So, when we start to decide whether we are eligible for forgiveness, then we are taking on God’s job.

Forgiving offenses is a spiritual work of mercy. It can only be practiced when we let mercy sink into our hearts. We need to be mercy-centered. Pope Francis said, *“It is not God who tires of forgiving man, but we who tire of asking for forgiveness. Let us never tire, let us never tire! He is the loving Father, who always forgives, who has that heart of mercy for all of us.”*

Once a 21-year-old man named Adrian told me that he had been angry with both parents for his entire life. They were addicted to alcohol, and his dad was absent for most of his life. Yet he decided to tell his mom “I forgive you. I love you.” He said, “I felt my soul for the first time in years. I felt so good inside.”

Adrian was active in his faith. He found the grace to forgive because he had worked on his relationship with God. He attended youth retreats, went to Mass every Sunday, and regularly celebrated Reconciliation. Eventually, the Father’s mercy flowered into forgiveness toward his parents.

Saint Paul wrote, “Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ” (Eph. 4:32). If you practice forgiveness daily, both receiving the Lord’s mercy and extending it to others, then Lent will be a huge success. You will be a leaven of peace in your family, the Church, and the world. ✚

with an indulgence require a heart of charity and a spirit of conversion. The section on indulgences in the Catechism states, “A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner” (CCC, 1472).

This Lent, I especially encourage you to practice one spiritual work of mercy – forgive offenses. How well do you forgive? This is a litmus test for disciples. Saint Paul often urged his fellow Christians to forgive. He wrote, “As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Col. 3:13). Families, the Church, and the world need to be renewed with forgiveness. Without it we remain stuck in resentment, grudges, and anger. Without forgiveness our prayer is anemic or stifled. The unforgiving person is unable to receive God’s love in prayer.

Being Father-centered

We not only struggle to forgive but also harbor anger. We think about the hurt all the time. We repeat the story of being wronged over and over. The hurt occupies a central space in our hearts. When we hold grudges, we give free rent in our hearts to our enemies. Then we live an “enemy-centered” life by thinking about a wrong more than anything else.

The opposite is a “God-centered” life. This is what Jesus modeled on the cross when

Una Cuaresma del Perdón

Baja la temperatura. ¿Con qué frecuencia hemos oído eso últimamente? Una cosa es que un político hable elocuentemente sobre hacer las paces, es otra muy diferente lograrlo. No basta con sentarse y esperar a que otros lo hagan; cada uno de nosotros necesita trabajar en ello. ¿Qué nos ayudará a superar la frustración, la discordia, la amargura y el odio en nuestro mundo? ¿Cómo podemos ser una levadura de paz en la sociedad?

Primero, confía en que la providencia siempre está en el trabajo. El Señor anticipó este difícil momento, y tenemos la gracia de navegar por estas aguas tormentosas. Una semilla de gracia fue plantada hace 150 años. El Papa Pío IX proclamó a San José patrono de la Iglesia Universal el 8 de diciembre de 1870. En el decreto escribió: “Y puesto que en estos tiempos tristísimos la misma Iglesia es atacada por doquier por sus enemigos y se ve oprimida por tan graves calamidades que parece que los impíos hacen prevalecer sobre ella las puertas del infierno”.

¿Te suena familiar? Hoy en día muchas personas se sienten « atacada por doquier por sus enemigos y se ve oprimida por tan graves calamidades “. Según la providencia de Dios, en el 150 aniversario de San José como Patrono de la Iglesia Universal, el Papa Francisco declaró el Año de San José. Es un modelo a seguir para cualquiera que viva en tiempos difíciles.

El Santo Padre ha concedido una indulgencia plenaria a aquellos que meditan durante al menos 30 minutos el Padre Nuestro, o que, siguiendo el ejemplo de San José, realizan una obra espiritual o corporal de misericordia, y para las familias o parejas comprometidas que rezan por el Santo Rosario. Es esencial entender que las prácticas espirituales asociadas con una indulgencia requieren un corazón de caridad y un espíritu de conversión. La sección sobre indulgencias en el Catecismo dice: “ Una conversión que procede de una ferviente caridad puede llegar a la total purificación del pecador ” (CIC, 1472).

Esta Cuaresma, los animo especialmente a practicar una obra espiritual de misericordia: perdonar las ofensas. ¿Qué tan bien perdonas? Esta es una prueba de fuego para los discípulos. San Pablo a menudo instaba a sus compañeros cristianos a perdonar. Él escribió: “ Así como el Señor los perdonó, perdonen también ustedes ” (Col. 3,13). Las familias, la Iglesia y el mundo necesitan ser renovados con perdón. Sin él seguimos atrapados en resentimientos, rencores y enojo. Sin el perdón, nuestra oración es anémica o sofocada. La persona que no perdona es incapaz de recibir el amor de Dios en la oración.

Estar Centrado en el Padre

No solo luchamos por perdonar, sino que también guardamos rencor. Pensamos en el dolor

todo el tiempo. Repetimos la historia de ser agraviado una y otra vez. El dolor ocupa un espacio central en nuestro corazón. Cuando guardamos rencor, damos a nuestros enemigos una renta gratuita en nuestros corazones. Entonces vivimos una vida “ centrada en el enemigo ” pensando en un mal que nos hicieron más que en cualquier otra cosa.

Lo contrario es una vida “ centrada en Dios ”. Esto es lo que Jesús modeló en la cruz cuando dijo: “ *Padre, perdónalos porque no saben lo que hacen* ” (Lc. 23, 34). No reaccionó con ira y dijo: “ *Padre, aplasta a mis enemigos* ”. Jesús nunca se limitó a reaccionar; más bien, actuó fuera de su relación con su Padre. Estaba “ centrado en el padre. ”

Un Deudor no afectado por el Perdón

La enseñanza más clara sobre el perdón se encuentra en Mateo 18: 21-35. Pedro le preguntó a Jesús: “ ¿Cuántas veces debo perdonar siete veces? ” Jesús respondió: “ *No te digo hasta siete, sino aun hasta setenta veces siete* ”. Entonces Jesús contó una parábola de un deudor que le debía a un rey 10,000 talentos. Un talento eran 6,000 monedas de plata, o el salario de 6,000 días. Por lo tanto, 10,000 talentos era una suma astronómica, algo así como \$10 mil millones en la actualidad. La única salida para el deudor era que el rey perdonara el préstamo. Piensen en la deuda del pecado que tenemos ante Dios. El perdón es nuestra única salida.

Después de recibir el perdón de 10,000 talentos, el siervo fue a ver a un hombre que le debía 100 monedas de plata. Pero se negó a perdonarlo, a pesar de que le perdonaron 60 millones de monedas de plata. ¿Por qué se negó a perdonar? No podría haber internalizado el perdón del rey. La moraleja de la parábola es que, si no acoges la misericordia del Padre, nunca podrás perdonar a los demás.

Ahora, esto es lo realmente interesante. La palabra en la parábola para “ deudor ” solo aparece dos veces en el evangelio de Mateo. En la parábola de Mateo 18 y en Mateo 6 cuando Jesús enseña a los discípulos el Padre Nuestro. Las palabras que oramos son: “ *Perdona nuestras ofensas como nosotros perdonamos a los que nos ofenden* ”, pero una traducción literal es: “ *Perdónanos nuestras deudas, como nosotros perdonamos a nuestros deudores* ” (Mt. 6:12).

Para los primeros cristianos, la petición “ Perdona nuestras deudas, como nosotros perdonamos a nuestros deudores ” recordaba al deudor perdonado de los 10,000 talentos.

Cuando rezo el Padre Nuestro en privado, recito la traducción literal con las palabras “ *deudas* ” y “ *deudores* ”. Me recuerda la facilidad con que el Padre perdona mi deuda por el pecado, y me inspira a ser misericordioso como el Padre es misericordioso. No podemos perdonar a los demás, a menos que vivamos dentro de la misericordia del Padre.

Misericordia que Florece en el Perdón

Hay dos razones principales por las que las personas no perdonan a los demás. Una es que no han dejado que la misericordia del Padre entre en sus corazones. La segunda es que son muy duros consigo mismos. A menudo, la gente dirá: “ *Sé que Dios me perdona, pero yo no puedo perdonarme a mí mismo* ”. Pero esa es una forma disimulada de orgullo. El trabajo de Dios es perdonar. Nuestro trabajo es recibir perdón. Entonces, cuando comenzamos a decidir si merecemos el perdón, estamos asumiendo el trabajo de Dios.

Perdonar las ofensas es una obra espiritual de misericordia. Solo se puede practicar cuando dejamos que la misericordia entre en nuestros corazones. Necesitamos estar centrados en la misericordia. El Papa Francisco dijo: “ *No es Dios quien se cansa de perdonar al hombre, sino nosotros los que nos cansamos de pedir perdón. ¡No nos cansemos nunca, no nos cansemos nunca! Él es el Padre amoroso, que siempre perdona, que tiene ese corazón misericordioso para todos nosotros* ”.

Una vez, un hombre de 21 años llamado Adrián me dijo que había estado enojado con ambos padres durante toda su vida. Eran adictos al alcohol y su padre estuvo ausente la mayor parte de su vida. Sin embargo, decidió decirle a su mamá “ Te perdono. Te quiero. ” Dijo: “ Sentí mi alma por primera vez en años. Me sentí tan bien por dentro. ”

Adrián estaba activo en su fe. Encontró la gracia para perdonar porque había trabajado en su relación con Dios. Asistió a retiros de jóvenes, iba a misa todos los domingos y celebraba regularmente la reconciliación. Finalmente, la misericordia del Padre floreció en el perdón hacia sus padres.

San Pablo escribió: “ Más bien, sean bondadosos y compasivos unos con otros, y perdónense mutuamente, así como Dios los perdonó a ustedes en Cristo ” (Efesios 4:32). Si practican el perdón a diario, tanto recibiendo la misericordia del Señor como extendiéndola a los demás, la Cuaresma será un gran éxito. Serán levadura de paz en sus familias, la Iglesia y el mundo. ✚

Parish News

Ring church bells to remember those we've lost to COVID-19



Native American drum group listens as the bells toll more than 300 times.
(*Courtesy Photo*)



A Saint Stephens' parishioner takes his turn ringing the bells on New Year's Eve.
(*Courtesy Photo*)



Courtesy Photo



Courtesy Photo



The drum group sings to remember and honor those who have died due to complications of COVID-19. (*Courtesy Photo*)

On New Year's Eve, Saint Stephens Indian Mission, as well as a few other Wyoming parishes, rang the church bells in remembrance of lives lost during the pandemic. Saint Stephens' parishioners initiated the idea to ring the bells more than 300 times to represent lives lost across Wyoming and the more than 300-thousand lives lost nationally at that point.

The solemn event began with a Native American drum group

singing a memorial song. After the ringing of the bells, the drum group beat the drum 25 times—one beat for each tribal member lost (at that time) due to COVID-19. The drum group then sang an honor song for all who had lost their lives. Everyone left in silence.

For parishioners of Saint Stephens, the ringing of the bells was a symbol of unified commitment to honor lives lost and the resolve to continue to

practice social distancing and personal safety methods that will eradicate the virus. To those grieving the loss of friends, family members, and loved ones, the bells carried a message of solidarity—that we all grieve together. The bells symbolized prayers of health and healing to those who were battling the virus at home or in hospitals.

Gratitude and thankfulness were carried through the sound of the bells to those on the front

lines—medical professionals, law enforcement personnel, grocery store workers, mail carriers, educators, and everyone else who places the needs of others before their own during these trying times. To the lonely, isolated, homeless, depressed, or those suffering from mental illness and addiction, the sound of the bells was intended to bring hope, serenity, and empathy.

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Foundational mantras for social justice guide campus ministry

Lillie Rodgers, Director of Campus Ministry, Saint Paul's Newman Center, Laramie

Masks on! Maintain six feet of distance! Don't eat that cookie until you're outside!

These have been some of the guiding mantras for Campus Ministry this past fall; yet they are not the only ones, thankfully! More important, we have been asking students to:

- Dialogue honestly, respectfully
- Pray with words *and* actions
- Love creatively, beyond touch

These last three mantras have guided our weekly Cowboy Catholic discussions, which have centered on pertinent social justice issues of our day: racism, the death penalty, care for creation, immigration, abortion, and disability. Though the group is smaller than normal, given illness and quarantines, the students nevertheless have engaged this challenging set of topics with remarkable openness and vulnerability. We are prone to seeing things simplistically – black vs. white, good vs. bad, right vs. wrong – yet our discussions have reminded each of us that these issues are, in fact, mightily complex, for they involve real people, God's beloveds. To be a disciple of Jesus requires that we too love God's people by working for justice in our own little corner of the world, Laramie, Wyoming.

Beyond Cowboy Catholic, the fall semester also featured two stellar retreats that took place in Laramie – an adapted Search Retreat, and a new day-long silent retreat. Coupled with a host of student and staff-led small groups (Bible studies, book studies, etc.), students have had many outlets to prayerfully process and discuss their life situations amidst COVID and online classes.



Lillie Rodgers



Devon James

Perhaps the best part of Campus Ministry this past fall has been the leadership of Saint Paul's Newman Center's newest staff member, Devon James, whom we welcomed in July as the associate director of Campus Ministry.

Coming to us from Chicago and Michigan, Devon brings a zest for ministering to students and sharing her faith, particularly her love for all things Jesuit! With fewer programs to manage and additional staff power, Devon and I have happily attempted to connect with more students on a one-to-one basis. These meetings for spiritual direction and mentorship have proven fruitful, even when undertaken via Zoom. There simply is no way to limit or restrain the Holy Spirit, it seems, who is constantly doing something new!

And with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we certainly can love creatively, as God loves us. Even with masks on.



Saint Paul's Newman Center students sing Christmas Carols to a woman who lives in a small RV. (Courtesy Photo)



Joe Melia, Vada Burns (middle), and Kimberly Solti rake leaves for an older member of Saint Paul's Newman Center parish. (Courtesy Photo)

Parish News

Saint Edmund Mission remembers Father Carl Beavers

Monique Barron, Secretary, Saint Edmund Catholic Church, Ranchester

We find ourselves at the one-year anniversary of the COVID pandemic, and life has drastically changed for all of us. The Saint Edmund family would like to share some words that Father Carl Beavers wrote to us, his home parish, when we celebrated the 70th Anniversary of Saint Edmund Catholic Church in 2018.

We continue to miss our beloved Father Carl, but we believe that his words are still prophetic even now during this time of pandemic. His words follow.

“For me, Saint Edmund was *the Church*. I did not know Saint Edmund from Saint Desmond, but Saint Edmund was *the Church*; not just one church among many churches. I was rooted here, and only here, on this corner in Ranchester. It was a tree which stood next to my family tree, growing from the same soil, nourished from the same nutrients; the tree

of life feeding into both, and so into me.

“For me, it would not be possible to find a life source other than faith and family. There was no other source of sustaining energy anywhere to be found. Saint Edmunds provided the third component: friends. For me, Saint Edmund was my first awareness of the Church as the Body of Christ in the world, the prolongation of His definitive entrance into our history, the clear demonstration of His lasting life as Savior.

“We are the Body of Christ to whom Jesus says, ‘I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father’ (John 15:15). I am grateful for having grown up among a people who knew what the Master was doing. They too, knew what they were

doing because of that perspective. That is what friends have always done, do now, and will do forever. Thank you for your Friendship. People make an event. Friends make a celebration.”

Father Carl Beavers was such an important part of Saint Edmunds' community in his retirement. He voluntarily offered to say three daily Masses per week, covered Sunday Masses when needed, and was always a source of strength and insight for the parish family. As a member of our building committee, he offered much advice and was looking forward to the eventual completion of the new church building. When

COVID-19 hit in March 2020, and Saint Edmund had to limit capacity to 30 to 40 persons each Sunday, Father Carl encouraged us all the more not to lose hope for this project. When he passed away in July, we all felt his loss and regretted that Father Carl would not be here to see the church become a reality. As matters continue to fall into place, however, we realize he still is helping—just from a different place.



Courtesy Photo

Father Ronald Stolcis rest in peace

Father Ronald Arthur Stolcis, age 78, passed away Friday, January 22, at Sheridan Memorial Hospital.

He was born August 13, 1942, in Sheridan, as the only child to Fiore Stolcis and Alice Des Jarlais Stolcis and was baptized September 6, 1942. He attended Holy Name School and graduated from Sheridan High School with honors.

Father Ron attended Saint Thomas Seminary in Denver, receiving a B.A. degree in philosophy in 1964 and a Master of Religious Education in 1967. His student teaching was completed at Saint Francis High School in Denver.

Bishop James Casey officiated at his diaconate ordination. His priestly ordination, the first one ever in Sheridan, was presided over by Bishop Newell on May 31, 1968, at Holy Name Catholic Church, and his first Mass was held in the Holy Name School gym.

Father Ron spent more than 40 years in service to the Diocese of Cheyenne, serving in Powell, Casper, Greybull, Riverton, Worland, and finally retiring from Holy Name in Sheridan.

Father Ron had an aptitude from an early age for covering all bases. In the first grade, he wanted to be a priest during the day and a fireman at night.

Father Ron loved to travel. He especially enjoyed Rome, the holy shrines of Europe, and exploring his family roots. Father Ron had Tyrolean ancestry and was interested in the Italian, German, and French languages.

The large number of Polish immigrants in the Sheridan area enhanced his desire to embrace more of that culture, culminating in several trips to Poland and the compilation of old family records from the local parish from which many of the parishioners' ancestors originated.

Father Ron was responsible for obtaining three relics of Saint Faustina, one of which now graces Holy Name Catholic Church; the

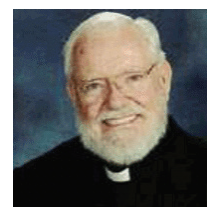
others are elsewhere in the diocese.

Father Ron enjoyed retiring at his family country

home and continued to indulge in his lifelong joy of tinkering with electronics and esoteric gadgets of all types and applications.

Memorial suggestions are:

Holy Name Parish, 9 South Connor, Sheridan, WY 82801; Holy Name School, 121 South Connor, Sheridan, WY 82801; St. Edmund Building Fund, P.O. Box 217, Ranchester, WY 82839



Courtesy Photo

A time for every season: Newman Center recognizes a retirement

Myra Belser, Communications Coordinator, Saint Paul's Newman Center, Laramie



Courtesy Photo

For more than 40 years, Saint Paul's Newman Center has been graced by a woman who has given her all to a faith community. Sandy Gaddis is retiring from her position as parish business manager. That title in no way describes what her job encompassed over four decades, nor does it portray the manner of service, wrapped in love, with which she professionally represented Saint Paul's. Neither does it depict the way she interacted with those

she greeted daily: students needing recommendations for a dentist or mechanic, parishioners grieving a personal loss, parents tearfully dropping off a freshman, or someone off the street needing a hand up. No matter who walked into the parish office, Sandy welcomed them with open arms and an open heart.

Sandy has donned many hats over the years. One of her great loves was caring for and being a part of property maintenance. That is when the "Joanna Gaines" (co-star of HGTV's *Fixer Upper*) in her surfaced as she consulted on real estate transactions, renovations, remodels, and property upkeep. She, like no other, took great pride in the visual presentation

of the Newman Center facilities, inside and out. She saw that the grounds were pristinely manicured. She was often seen picking up trash, watering flowers, or shoveling icy walkways. She saw to it that the Worship Space truly rendered an atmosphere of sacredness and holy presence through her gifts for choosing artwork, textiles, and religious articles to enhance the environment.

As parish accountant, Sandy often said her cultural heritage was responsible for her frugality. She respected the generosity of the community's financial stewardship and would look for any means to make a dollar stretch. She was a proponent of expenditures necessary to keep the ministry functioning but also was quick to question those that were not. Graciously accepting the gifts hand delivered by parishioners, she was quick to say, "We will put your money toward good works."

Undeniably, it is her faith witness that will most be remembered. She has been a witness to staff with whom she served alongside and to members of the Body of Christ with whom she has worshiped and celebrated Eucharist. Faith has been foundational in seeing her through broken boilers, budgets, and even pandemics.

As Father Rob Spaulding shared Sandy's retirement with the parish, he said, "The news of Sandy's full retirement is indeed bittersweet. While we are delighted that Sandy will have more time with her husband, David, and family, it is very difficult to imagine the office without Sandy. Words cannot express our gratitude for all that she has done."

Notes of congratulations are welcome and may be sent to:

Saint Paul's Newman Center,
1800 E Grand Avenue, Laramie,
WY 82070

Father Tom Sheridan rest in peace

Father Tom Sheridan, 82, who ministered to Wyoming Catholics for 48 years, died Monday, February 15, 2021, at Central Wyoming Hospice.

Father Tom pastored in ten Wyoming communities: Rawlins, Newcastle, Powell, Casper, Sheridan, Ranchester, Saratoga, Cheyenne, Rock Springs, and Green River.

Ordained on June 7, 1964, at Saint Kieran's Seminary, Killarney, Ireland, Father Tom retired from Immaculate Conception parish in Green River on July 1, 2012.



Courtesy Photo

He considered himself the last of the "Irish Connection," priests born in County Cavan, Ireland, and ordained in Ireland who spent their lives ministering in the Diocese of Cheyenne.

When Father Tom first arrived in Rawlins in 1964, almost half the priests serving in Wyoming were known as FBI, "Foreign Born Irish."

In addition to his pastoral duties, Father Tom was diocesan youth director from 1975-1980, traveling constantly, sometimes 90,000 miles a year.

Father Tom was born on a farm and both his parents were Sher-

idans, although from different clans. He was the second of 11 children. When he was eight, he contracted polio and was sent to Dublin to a "fever" hospital. He was left with no visible physical abnormalities, but he realized decades later that the consequences of the polio for him had been emotional.

When he attended high school, Minor College as it was known in Ireland, from 12- to 17-years old, he rode a bicycle to Cavan nine miles each way, six days a week.

Survivors include siblings and their spouses, Julia (Seamus) Laheen, Margaret (Jack) Casey, Eamon (Anne) Sheridan, Char-

lie (Maura) Sheridan, Paddy (Patricia) Sheridan, and Gerry (Kathleen) Sheridan; as well as sister-in-law Angela Sheridan and brother-in-law John Haughey; and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Anne Sheehan and her husband John; sister Christina Haughey; and brothers Sean Sheridan and Seamus Sheridan.

Memorials may be made to:

Saint Joseph's Society for retired priests for the Diocese of Cheyenne; Diocese of Cheyenne Vocations Office; Saint Patrick's Catholic Church, Casper, WY, 82609.

“With your spirit”

Joseph Wotawa, Director of Pastoral Formation, Diocese of Cheyenne



Now that I am able to participate in celebrations of the Eucharist, my participation is still incomplete because I know that others are not as fortunate as I am in my ability to be present at the church house. Even during the celebrations, I feel an absence because I know that not all the People of God are free as I am to act on their desire to celebrate, for COVID-19 poses too great a risk to them despite the ways we try to protect their health.

This absence strikes me very pointedly at

the same moment of each celebration: the Kiss of Peace. The Communion Rite begins with the assembly praying together the Our Father, proclaiming in the Doxology that God reigns over all time and that as part of that sovereignty Christ has bestowed his peace on us. At this point, the priest prays on behalf of the assembly:

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever.

After this prayer to Christ, the liturgy continues with the words, “The peace of the Lord be with you always,” to which the assembly responds, “and with your spirit.” This dialogue recalls the twentieth chapter of the Gospel of John, when Jesus “breathed on them [the Apostles] and said to

them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit’” (John 20:22).

When we exchange the sign of peace, we Catholics show our communion with each other as an outward sign of our preparedness to receive the Blessed Sacrament. This communion also emerges in the form of love, concern, and personal care within the celebration of God’s love for us. In short, it is an expression of who we are – a people shaped by grace through participation in the sacraments – and whose we are – God’s.

The fact that we exchange the sign of peace after praying the Our Father connects this peace directly to how God acts in our lives and deepens the communion with God and each other that we celebrate in the Eucharist.

So, when I share the sign of peace these days, I notice those who cannot celebrate at my side because of the risk the pandemic poses to their lives. Our prayer during the Kiss of Peace has its roots in the Communion we celebrate and the words of the Gospel of John, so we must be careful to remember how Jesus presents himself to the Apostles when offering them peace.

Immediately after Jesus says for the first time, “Peace be with you,” we see that “he showed them his hands and his side” (John 20:19-20). Part of this greeting of peace is the revelation of woundedness. Though he has risen from the dead, Jesus carries his wounds with him to this encounter with the Apostles.

When I offer the sign of peace to those with whom I celebrate, I cannot help but remember those with whom I have celebrated in the past. Since we Catholics are often creatures of habit, I remember who would normally sit in a particular spot in the church

house, watching them extend the sign of Christ’s peace to those around them and approach the altar to say “Amen!” to the Body of Christ.

I do not see many of these individuals and families now because they have decided to remain at home for their safety. So, when I offer the sign of peace, I must also remember Christ’s wounds. Those who cannot join our celebrations remind us of Christ, who offers us his peace while still bearing the wounds of the cross that he received after the Apostles abandoned him.

My prayer these days, both for myself and for our Church, is that through the communion we celebrate we can bring the peace of Christ to those who cannot participate in Eucharistic celebrations. In celebrations of the early Church, ministers would bring the *fragmenti* to those members of the Mystical Body who could not join the celebration – who were fragmented from the body because of illness. Our sign of peace must do similarly now; we cannot forget those whom we do not see, and we must seek them out to share this peace, which is a mark of the communion we share, in a way that is also safe for their health.

Servant of God Dorothy Day has stated, “We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of the bread, and we know each other in the breaking of the bread, and we are not alone anymore.”

Let us ensure that all know the peace of Christ. Let us bring the peace of Christ to the spirits of our neighbors, and let us use these occasions of sharing Christ’s peace to know our neighbors better and, together, know Christ.

It has been a great relief: after consultation with my doctor, I have been able to resume regular participation in the celebration of the Eucharist! Having to remove myself from these celebrations for close to nine months truly tested my spiritual life. I am also grateful for the culture of our diocese and my parish that allows me to participate safely, knowing that in other locations of our country the same would not hold true, and I would still be at home on Sundays.

Not having the ability to celebrate the Mystery of our Faith with my local parish has tested me. Gratefully, my fiancé and I share a commitment to our faith, so we would pray the Liturgy of the Word, reflect on the lectionary readings together, and watch a pre-recorded homily from our pastor. Of course, this celebration of the Word is not the same as the Eucharistic celebration, but it did connect our prayer to the prayer of the Church.

Lay Ministry Spotlight

Wyoming Catholic Register occasionally features a lay minister. These reflections give witness to how individuals from across the state respond to the call of Christ to serve the Church using the gifts and skills with which God has endowed them. No story is identical to another, but all ministers serve the same mission of proclaiming God in our Catholic tradition.

Bryan Thoman, Pastoral Assistant, Saint Margaret's Parish and School, Riverton

I was called to ministry in my early twenties when I was asked to assist with the Youth Ministry. At that time, I was helping with the family farm and was beginning to build a client base and business structure as a self-employed mechanic.

I was extremely introverted and lacked confidence, but I knew that God had given me gifts, and I needed that invitation and guidance to offer those gifts for the service of His Church. If someone had told me then that I would be where I am today, I would have told them they were crazy! But little by little, through others' invitations, God has called me to step out of my comfort zone and into greater service.

He has prepared me in small steps over the years to be able to accept the responsibilities He has asked of me. I have said "no" several times, but He continues to invite me and push me to serve Him in His

What I greatly appreciate about our faith is that we are not on our journeys alone, and that we all are working together to build up God's kingdom!

Church, until it has now become my main vocation in life. My responsibilities include serving on the Parish Leadership Team, directing Parish Faith Formation, serving as the RCIA catechist, and teaching Religion and PE at the school.

It is not always easy, I am not always comfortable, and I don't always know what to do, but I trust God will guide me if I continue to do the best I know how and allow Him to work through me. I know God is not finished with me yet, and sometimes it scares me to think of what He might call me to next! I work closely with our parish priest, and communicate regularly about parish leadership, religious education, sacramental preparation, during Sunday Services, and with the operations of the parish.

What I enjoy most about my ministry is making connections and having opportu-

nities to help people. I get to share in others' faith journeys and witness the recognition of the Holy Spirit at work in them; I see people investing in each other and helping the Body of Christ grow stronger; I see or hear how God is working amazing things in others' lives; and I get to witness the emotion of someone receiving Sacraments for the first time—those are the moments that bring me the greatest joy!

My faith and ministry have always been closely integrated with the rest of my life. Even as a mechanic, the desire to serve people's needs has always been inspiration in my life. I've had people want to have conversations about God or the Church in the most unusual places. It has now become fairly commonplace that my daily conversations include faith sharing and prayer requests with others. What I greatly appreciate about our faith is that we are not on our journeys alone, and that we all are working together to build up God's kingdom!

VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR FAITH FORMATION

Are you interested in opportunities for your own formation? The Diocese of Cheyenne has partnered with the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation through the University of Dayton, and all of the faithful in the diocese may access a discounted rate for their learning.

For more information about this opportunity, or if you want to learn about certification in the Diocese of Cheyenne, email Director of Pastoral Formation Joseph Wotawa: jwotawa@dioceseofcheyenne.org To learn more about the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation, visit the website: <https://vlcff.udayton.edu/?lang=en>

Para obtener más información sobre esta oportunidad o para comenzar un programa de certificación, envíe un correo electrónico al Director de Formación Pastoral Joseph Wotawa: jwotawa@dioceseofcheyenne.org Hay oportunidades para participar en español e inglés con el VLCFF. Visite el sitio web: <https://vlcff.udayton.edu/?lang=es>



Some say the Church should stay out of politics. Is that really what we want?

Deacon Mike Leman, Legislative Liaison, Diocese of Cheyenne



Those who participate in Catholic advocacy often hear, “The Church should stay out of politics.” I realize there are legitimate reasons why people feel this way, even if I don’t agree with their conclusion. Below, I list five common reasons why some say the Church should stay out of politics, and I offer answers to those objections.

1) Widespread misunderstanding of the First Amendment seems to be prevalent. Many assume that the statement “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” prohibits religious advocacy.

In fact, the intention of the writers was to make clear that the state cannot show favoritism to one religion over another, and it also cannot punish religious people by favoring non-religious people. Finding the balance of “free exercise” without violating the “establishment” prohibition is an imperfect and ongoing effort of the Supreme Court, but it is a dangerous error to suggest that the First Amendment prohibits believers from participating in the political process.

2) A misunderstanding of what Catholic social teaching (CST) seeks to do also is common. The Church’s social teaching does not favor any one governmental system or political party. Her principles do not spell out “how” we are to achieve human flourishing but, rather, identifies “what” is necessary for humans to thrive by highlighting human rights and responsibilities. This includes the political realm but extends well beyond politics. The hope is that Christians around the world will internalize CST and be enabled to live principled lives both privately and publicly. And, hopefully, Christians and other people of goodwill will be better equipped to fortify human rights protections within their own political systems.

3) History has shown that politics are a messy business. We don’t like the idea of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church associated with such business. But Jesus did not stop short of our broken humanity, he entered fully into it to redeem it. If there is one area severely in need of Christ’s redemptive grace, it is the political realm.

4) We don’t like having our own political views questioned. When people tell me, “The Church needs to stay out of politics,” I ask them questions. I often discover that the individual isn’t against the Church’s involvement with politics; in truth, the individual only wants the Church to speak about the issues with which he or she agrees.

St. John Paul II’s influence contributed to the end of Communism in Poland, and, long before that, the Church’s influence encouraged the abolition of slavery. Can we honestly say we would have preferred a silent Church in either case? Or do we assume that every Catholic was on the right side of these issues back then and, by default, we would have been one of them?

5) Religious leaders, yes, even Catholic leaders have tried to use faith to further their own preferred partisan agendas. This is unacceptable. But just because something has been done poorly does not give us reason to give up. It just means we need to do it better moving forward. Below are some suggestions.

Certainly, the clergy needs prayers so that we will have the courage to preach against the many injustices facing our world. We also should pray that all of us will have the courage to listen, especially when our own partisan loyalties may be contributing to those injustices. This is uncomfortable, but it is the only way the Church can hope to bring healing to our wounded nation.

We need to focus on human persons impacted by bad policy rather than attacking politicians who support those policies. Too many Americans do this, and they often lose sight of the people they set out to protect in the first place.

Our advocacy should not be manipulative or coercive—this means excluding even subtle

forms of manipulation like “Catholic guilt.” Of course, when we point to the truth using facts and science and show how bad policy negatively impacts vulnerable populations, sometimes people will feel guilty. Their conscience may be awakened, but that is different from intentionally trying to shame someone into submission during a debate. “Catholic guilt” may win an argument today, but in the long run it breeds resentment. And if our advocacy creates resentment toward Christ and his Church, then we will have failed in a more serious realm than that of politics.

We should pray for perseverance. Jesus gives us the perfect model for prayer and advocacy with the parable of the persistent neighbor. He says, “I tell you, if he (the neighbor) does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.”

This gives me peace of mind because I know that no matter what happens, the Church will persevere through these difficult days. We may wish for a more unified or louder voice, but the Church will never stop speaking out against injustices. Long after you and I are gone, the Church will go on defending the defenseless. Knowing that helps me to continue to take up the task with hope and joy, which are significantly more effective when trying to influence others than being an angry “prophet of doom.”

As Mother Teresa said, “God has not called me to be successful; He has called me to be faithful.”

We strive to succeed in building up the Kingdom of God, but the results belong to Him. Our part is putting forward a faithful effort. How blessed we are to be entrusted by Him with so much work.

Wyoming’s 66th Legislature convened for an eight-day virtual session in January, during which they debated committee bills from the interim. The legislature reconvened in person March 1 and started consideration of bills brought by individual legislators. Members of the public may participate in meetings virtually by going to <https://www.wyoleg.gov/>. For news and updates during the session, go to <https://dioceseofcheyenne.org/legislative-liaison-and-catholic-social-teaching>.

Social Media: Blessing or Curse, Good or Bad—Your Choice

Diana Marie Waggener, Director of Communications, Diocese of Cheyenne

When I was an undergraduate at the University of Wyoming, among my favorite classes was “The History of Mass Media.” In this class we explored communication evolution, beginning with movement from oral societies to those that developed the technology of writing, progressing into the invention of the printing press, zooming from “radio days” into the “television era,” and concluding with a relatively new technology called the World Wide Web. At that time, Google did not exist; we used what now is an archaic search engine called “gopher,” and no one I knew predicted that one day people would “post on Facebook,” “tweet on Twitter,” and “follow someone on Instagram.”

Besides requiring new words and modifying the meaning of existing words (as illustrated above), novel communication technology alters the extent and form of information, and the speed at which it travels. It also changes how society defines and classifies knowledge, influences other modes of communication, and shapes personal identity and self-worth. For example, teenagers living in the early-to-mid-1900s had few peers with whom they could readily compare themselves, in stark contrast to teenagers living now, who spend an average of nine hours daily on digital technology and are privy to myriad “influencers.”

This leads us to the age-old question: are the Internet (as we now call the World Wide Web) and, in particular, social media for good or for ill? Socrates is known to have told a story about the Egyptian King Thamus and the Egyptian “god” Theuth discussing what influence writing would have on human kind. Theuth argued that it would improve memory and result in great wisdom, but the king pointed out that, in fact, writing would introduce forgetfulness and only an appearance of wis-

dom because people would have *more* information but not necessarily meaningful understanding. This discussion led to the conclusion that writing is both blessing and curse; good and bad.

The same conversation and conclusion can be applied to every subsequent communication technology. Whether or not communication technologies lead to good or bad results depends on the user. In other words, we assign the consequences of our interaction—not the other way around.

With that in mind, we all would do well to understand that social media platforms are designed to keep users engrossed, activating the brains’ “reward center,” which releases dopamine and leads to addictive behavior. This type of engagement with social media is similar to the calculated rhythm of television programming and advertising developed to keep viewers tuned in hour after hour. Where social media are concerned, the interactive aspect of scrolling and posting and re-posting and reacting is where users achieve satisfaction. As a result, users focus more on the repetitive movement of the medium, than they do the content; hence, communication theorist Marshall McLuhan’s phrase: “The medium is the message.”

And the message is this: The interactive nature of social media buries content under perpetual streams of posts, ads, and videos. When relied on for political and civic information and discussion, social media hinders extended, rational debate and, ultimately, transforms all discourse.

In addition, according to the Pew Research Center, in 2018, 68 percent of Americans gathered at least a portion of their news via social media. This is problem-

atic because algorithms used on social media platforms employ artificial intelligence (AI) to serve users content and run ads directly to them based on demographic information (age, gender, political affiliation, etc.) and behaviors (what individual users “like” and “post,” as well as what websites they visit and web searches they conduct). AI systems have incredible processing power and instant analytical abilities, and they constantly are “working” to feed users exactly what they *think* users desire, while also discarding information that they *think* conflicts with user interests and biases. This pattern eventually results in active social media users virtually living in “echo chambers.”

What is wrong with that, you may ask? In short, echo chambers tend to lead those living in them to lose the ability to develop original thought and critically analyze information. The constant reinforcement of users’ viewpoints without any sort of challenge leads to the division and polarization that we currently are experiencing in the U.S. In more extreme cases, echo chambers are incubators for conspiracy theories.

Because of the addictive nature of social media and the resulting consequences of diminished self-worth, life in echo chambers, and, more recently, cancel culture, studies have shown that some users develop mental health issues, including depression, poor sleep, and memory loss. Many people develop a fear of missing out (FOMO), and experience anxiety when they look online and see that they “missed out” on a post or joke or “breaking news.”

Clearly, knowing the possible negative consequences of using social media platforms is not enough to change behavior. If that were so,

everyone would have closed their accounts quite a while ago. Also, in this modern world, it would not even be realistic for users to completely “go off the grid.” Many users depend a great deal on social media to maintain connections with friends and family who live far away, and all businesses and public entities are expected to have some presence on social media.

In an article, “The Social Dilemma: Social Media and Your Mental Health,” on the McLean Hospital website, Jacqueline Sperling, Ph.D., a psychologist at McLean Hospital, encourages users to monitor their behavior to see how their use affects them. She urges users to “conduct their own behavior experiments by rating their emotions based on a scale of 1-10,” with 10 being the highest intensity of emotion that a person may feel.

Users should do this before and after engaging in social media platforms at the same time each day of the week and compare how they feel *before* visiting the site with how they feel *afterward*. Sperling suggests that users who find that they experience anxiety or anger after being on social media, should visit sites less frequently and use the time doing something that truly enriches their lives.

Monitoring use helps with mental health issues that may arise, but that does not speak to how to climb out of an echo chamber. One way to begin that process is not to take every piece of information that shows up at face value. Users can do their own research, and, hard as it may be, check sources other than those they prefer. When it all is said and done, understanding how these platforms work and responding, rather than reacting, can move society toward more civil and helpful communication.

Summary of diocesan finances for fiscal year, ending June 30, 2020

Dan Placke, Chief Financial Officer, Diocese of Cheyenne

As the Diocese of Cheyenne focuses on its path toward *Vision 2030: Communion for Mission, One Body in Christ, One Paschal Journey*, its financial health is stable thanks to the Wyoming Catholic community's continued generosity. Your gifts and sacrifices shared with your sisters and brothers throughout Wyoming during such a trying year are truly fruits of the Spirit harvested from fertile soils of deeply rooted Catholic tradition and faith.

Overall, as shown in the Statement of Activities (below), the change in the Diocese of Cheyenne's Net Assets was a decrease of \$98,829 versus an increase of \$476,404 in the prior year, totaling just over a \$575,000 negative swing year over year. However, the prior year change in Net

Assets were skewed from normal results, as it included a nonrecurring noncash gain of \$384,000 and a large one-time personal trust proceed receipt of \$463,000. Excluding these two revenue items, Fiscal Year 2020 fared well in comparison, albeit the diocese clearly must have its change in Net Assets to be at least breakeven for sustainability in the future.

Of further note, management and general expenses included \$500,000—or 14 percent of the total operating expenses—for Accrued Post-retirement Benefit Obligation for actuarial cost for all incardinated priests and bishops of the diocese. This occurred on the heels of \$532,000 for this item in the prior year for this unfunded plan.

Despite the current challenging economic conditions, the Diocese of Cheyenne recently reached the 92 percent mark of the 2020 *Living and Giving in Christ* financial pledge goals. Besides generous continuing support of the annual *Living and Giving in Christ* appeal, the Wyoming Catholic Ministries Foundation (WCMF) continues to be the largest annual contributor to support the diocese. Pie charts on the facing page illustrate Revenue and Expenses for this past fiscal year.

A copy of the full audit, complete with notes to the financial statements, is available at: <https://dioceseofcheyenne.org/office-of-finance>. Direct questions or requests to Dan Placke, PO Box 1468, Cheyenne, WY 82003, (307) 638-1530 ext. 111.

DIOCESE OF CHEYENNE				
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2020				
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total Fiscal Year 2020	Total Fiscal Year 2019 (Restated)*
Revenue and Support				
Contributions	\$ 182,745	\$ 183,037	\$ 365,782	\$ 194,197
Living & Giving In Christ	847,101	1,036,980	1,884,081	1,871,746
Grant Revenue, Net of Pass-through Payments	592,579		592,579	912,502
Program Revenue	248,024		248,024	275,807
Investment Income	291,167		291,167	316,404
Other Income	73,985		73,985	575,862
Net Assets Released From Restrictions	1,455,177	(1,455,177)	0	-
Total Revenue and Support	\$ 3,690,778	\$ (235,160)	\$ 3,455,618	\$ 4,146,518
Expenses				
Evangelization and Outreach			519,554	595,888
Vocations, Seminarian and Diaconate Formation			366,594	276,976
Other Program Services			148,204	172,843
Chancery			881,467	789,293
Management and General			1,483,396	1,570,380
Fundraising			155,232	264,734
Total Expenses			3,554,447	3,670,114
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS			\$ (98,829)	\$ 476,404
*2019 restated for \$75,900 in Outreach contributions expense required to be included in Accounts Payable at June 30, 2019 with such prior period adjustment reducing Net Assets accordingly for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019.				
Please go to the website at dioceseofcheyenne.org for notes and the balance sheet as well as for the complete audited financial statements and notes.				

Revenue

Living and Giving in Christ (56 percent):

This appeal funds the majority of the costs of the Chancery. The Bishop and his staff provide the infrastructure behind all of the parishes--doing what single parishes could not do alone and enabling them to function.

Endowments (9 percent) and Grants (8 percent):

Funds totaling \$585,000 were received from primarily the WCMF, Catholic Extension Society, and Catholic Home Missions. These dollars support programs such as seminarian education, clergy support, and the U.S. Latin American Sisters Exchange Program at St. Anthony in Casper.

Business Insurance Revenue (7 percent):

The Diocese of Cheyenne received nearly \$246,000 from insurance proceeds. Much of this money was offset by expenses for submitted property damage claims throughout the diocese.

Expenses

Clergy Support (19 percent):

Clergy Support includes costs incurred supporting clergy throughout the diocese. Examples are the costs of bishop support and retired priests, including a \$500,000 charge for Accrued Post-retirement Benefit Obligation for actuarial cost for all incardinated clergy of the diocese.

Parish and School Ministries (13 percent):

Funding for legislative liaison, pastoral ministries, catholic schools, the Tribunal Office, campus ministries, and Hispanic ministries.

Administration Services (11 percent):

These are the expenses for primarily the Offices of Finance, Parish Services, and the Chancellor, as well as information technology costs.

Vocations, Seminarian and Diaconate Formation (7 percent):

The costs of the Office of Vocations, seminarian education, and diaconate formation increased during the year primarily due to the number of seminarians increasing from three to five.

Tithing (4 percent)

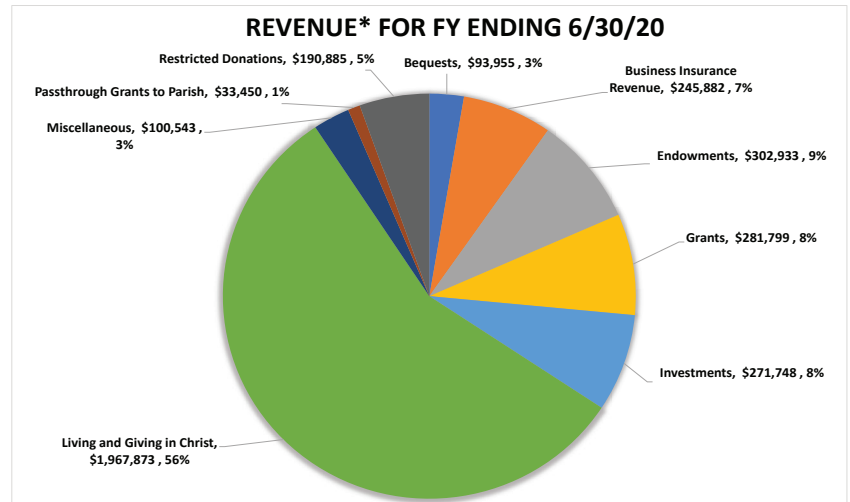
The Diocese of Cheyenne contributes 10 percent of the annual *Living and Giving* appeal total to national collections and to not-for-profit state, national, and international entities.

Outreach (4 percent):

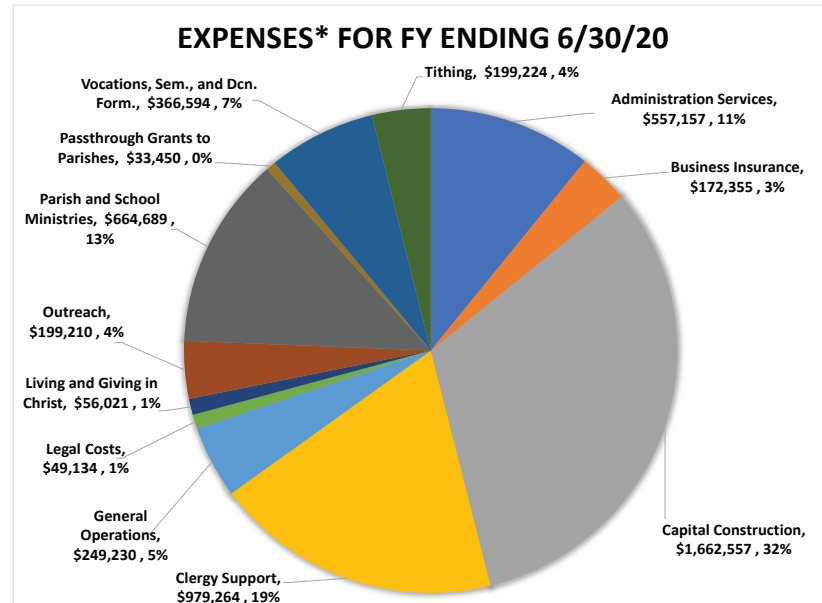
Outreach costs include primarily the production of the *Wyoming Catholic Register* and giving \$100,000 to Catholic Charities of Wyoming.

Capital Construction (32 percent):

In 2017, the diocese purchased a building across from St. Mary's Cathedral to be the future offices of the Chancery Office. This project is being done gradually over the course of years.



*Includes \$33k passthrough grants to parishes for presentation purposes only.



*Includes \$1,601k capitalized costs of capital construction and \$33k passthrough grants to parishes for presentation purposes only.

**EAT.
STAY.
PRAY.**



We offer peaceful lodging for your overnight stays. For groups traveling to the Black Hills, we also have on-site food service. All guests enjoy beautiful spaces to meet & pray as a group, or on your own. We invite you to come away & rest in God!

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The 2021 Living and Giving in Christ: Unity through Diocesan Ministries appeal will kick off the first weekend of May!

Thank you to those who generously contributed to the 2020 appeal. Every gift to the Diocese of Cheyenne is appreciated and matters.

Saint Joseph's Children's Home gives hope to youth in crisis

Jim Gleason, Executive Director, Wyoming Catholic Ministries Foundation, Casper

A recent visit to Saint Joseph's Children's Home in Torrington gave me the opportunity to learn about its founding as an orphanage in 1930 to its evolution as a residential facility serving kids experiencing serious psychological conditions and behaviors. While services and treatments offered today differ greatly from its original mission of assuming guardianship of children who were orphaned or abandoned by their families, the Saint Joseph's Children's home continues the Catholic tradition of rejoicing in the dignity of all people as priceless in the eyes of God and compassionately caring for the most vulnerable among us.

In declaring the "Year of Saint Joseph," Pope Francis writes: "Joseph did not look for shortcuts but confronted reality with open eyes and accepted personal responsibility for it. For this reason, he encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak."

I observed a member of the admissions team welcoming a boy who was no more than 12-years-old. They stood in the foyer, and the elderly man who brought him carried the boy's belongings. I saw uncertainty in their faces but imagined a sense of hope in their hearts. I don't know how far they had traveled or if the man was a father, grandfather, or guardian. I wondered what hardships, fear, and uncertainty the boy and those near him might have faced. What were his inner struggles? How many sleepless nights have those around him endured in worry and agony? How many people are praying for this boy and his future?

Saint Joseph's Children's Home provides a residence hall for boys and one for girls, and each hall is divided into pods. Boys are separated by

age, but the younger girls and older girls are together. Each child has a single room, with few amenities. For safety reasons, decorations and auxiliary items such as lamps, radios, and movable furniture are not allowed. These kids are in crisis, so their time at the facility is not about "lollipops and unicorns." Safety and meeting their basic and most primary needs are the first priority.

During my visit, I learned about the promise of hope and how the staff of Saint Joseph's Children's Home holds a graduation ceremony when a resident completes the program and will be returning to his/her community. Family members, guardians, therapists, and fellow residents gather in the Chapel to reflect on the graduate's growth and to celebrate his/her future. What an amazing experience this must be!

For years, advocates have worked to raise awareness of mental health issues and to dispel the stigma and shame that often plagues those suffering from psychological conditions. Those among us suffering from mental illness and behaviors often aren't afforded compassion and understanding. Keeping mental health issues in the closet tend to make matters worse. Who will speak for the suffering and call attention to their pain? What can we do to address the stigma of mental illness and make it easier and more acceptable for people to seek help?

Saint Joseph's Children's Home is giving hope to the most needy and vulnerable among us.

As the pandemic continues, and many of us face economic uncertainties, families continue to struggle financially. Chemical dependency, child abuse/neglect, and a plague of other issues will grow. State funding cuts place deeper pressure on



Courtesy Photo

service providers like Saint Joseph's Children's Home.

The average length of stay for residents of Saint Joseph's is four months, which often is dictated less on the progress and needs of each child and more on the availability of funding from the state of Wyoming and private insurance companies that decide what services will be paid for.

To make matters worse for Wyoming children in crisis, Yellowstone Boy's and Girl's Ranch in Billings has announced that it no longer will accept Wyoming children on Medicaid because the state of Wyoming has reduced the allowable daily rate reimbursements. A for-profit residential facility in Sheridan will be closing in March because of financial woes. Sadly, greater numbers of kids in crisis are being crammed into an overburdened and underfunded system.

Please pray for the children in desperate need of the compassionate care and advanced services offered at Saint Joseph's Children's Home. Contact your legislators and encourage them to support kids in need.

To learn more about Saint Joseph's Children's home, go to: <https://stjoseph-wy.org/>.

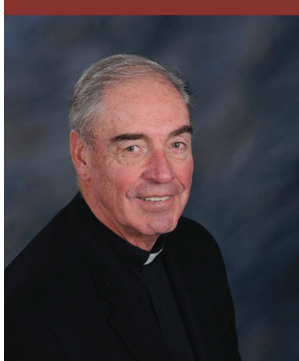
If you'd like to make a financial gift to Saint Joseph's Children's Home, please e-mail or call Executive Director Jim Gleason, Wyoming Catholic Ministries Foundation (WCMF): jgleason@wycmf.org; (406)925-9296.



Saint Joseph's Children's Home

Thank You!

Our hearts overflow with gratitude for your memorial gifts to honor our friend and mentor, Fr. Beavers. We know he is looking down upon the children in our care and surrounding them with love, comfort, and peace. Thank you for your outpouring of support.



Immaculate Heart of Mary OCDS Community of Park County receives canonical approval

Mary Lou Cummings, OCDS, Formation Director, Immaculate Heart of Mary OCDS Community

A new community of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelite Order (OCDS) has been established in the Diocese of Cheyenne, with members residing in both northern Wyoming and Montana. The Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) OCDS Community of Park County received canonical approval from Rome on June 29, 2020, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. The community is grateful to Bishop Steven Biegler for his approval given to the friars of the Western Province of the Discalced Carmelite Order, who in turn, sent the final paperwork into the Generalate, Father Saverio Cannistra, OCD, Superior General. Until recently, Reverend Vernon Clark, pastor of the Church of Saint Anthony of Padua, Cody, served as spiritual assistant to the community.

Fourteen years have passed since the initial small study group of two Definitely Promised members (persons who embrace, through spiritual guidance, study, and prayer, a deeper immersion in the spiritual tradition of Teresian Carmel as exemplified by the Carmelite Doctors of the Church) began meeting monthly for study and prayer. Two became five within a year; five increased to eight a couple years later; and membership numbers continued increasing to the current 20 members, with 18 of them having made their Definite Promise.

Three steps are required to establish an OCDS community. First, a study group is formed, typically with at least one Definitive member and under the guidance of a larger community. This particular study group began under the umbrella of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a recognized group in Cheyenne. Second, a recognized group is approved by the Provincial Delegate, an OCD Friar appointed to administer to the secular members of the Order, after stability and growth of the study group is well established. The IHM OCDS community was blessed to be approved as a recognized group on the Feast of Saint Teresa of Avila (foundress of the Order) October 15, 2015, at her 500th birthday celebration in Holy Hill,



Pictured above are the founding members (Left to Right): Joyce Franck, Donna Ferguson, Diana Kalt (kneeling), Mary Lou Cummings, and Deb Simpson. (Courtesy Photo)



Reverend Vernon Clark, who served as spiritual assistant to the IHM OCDS, joins in celebrating the canonical approval. (Courtesy Photo)

Wisconsin, during a National OCDS Congress. Finally, full community status is requested when a minimum of ten members have joined, and at least two members have made their Definitive Promise. This requirement was met by the Immaculate Heart of Mary group approximately eight years before approval was achieved—an example of how one cannot rush the work of Our Lady.

The IHM OCDS Community of Park County often is asked if it is associated with the Monks of the New Mount Carmel in Meeteetse. These groups are not associated, but the monks have Carmelite Spirituality as one of the pillars of community life in the tradition of St. John of the Cross, making them brothers in Carmel.



The entire group poses for the camera. (Courtesy Photo)

Seculars, however, live under different Constitutions; those of the Discalced Carmelite Order.

During these challenging times, the IHM OCDS community is happy to live this life of prayer and study to draw all who are in distress closer to God, while praying for the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel for the world.

Those interested in learning more about the Secular Carmelite Order, may contact:

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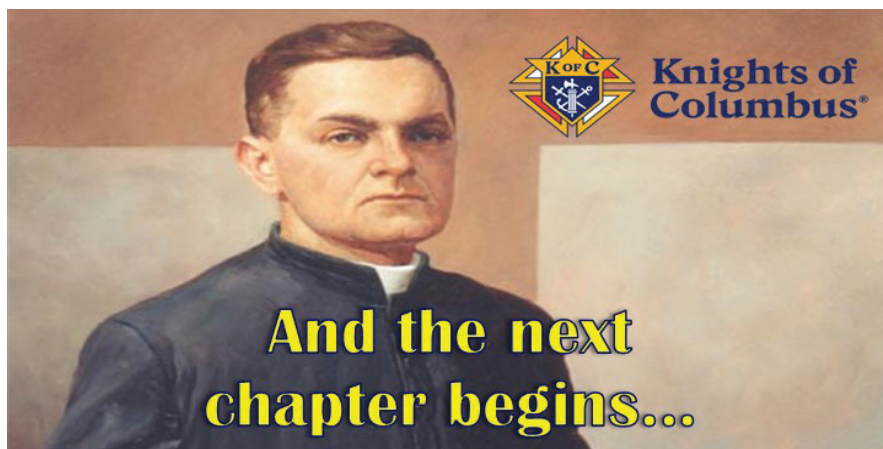


OFFICIAL ASSIGNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Effective April 7, 2021

Rev. Hiep Nguyen will be assigned as Parochial Vicar of Saint Patrick in Wheatland and the mission of Mary Queen of Heaven in Chugwater. As of July 1, 2021, he will be named Administrator of Saint Patrick and Mary Queen of Heaven.

Rev. Tom Kadera will retire.



Blessed Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus, was Beatified Oct. 31, 2020.

Be a part of this new chapter and his legacy by becoming a Knight of Columbus today!

FREE ONLINE MEMBERSHIP*

For new online membership applications submitted until June 30, 2021.

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Ordinations 2021



**Diaconate Ordination of
Buffalo native Seth Hostetler**

**Friday, May 14, 6:30 p.m.
Holy Name Church, Sheridan**

The ordination will be livestreamed and attendance will be by invitation only.



**Ordination to Priesthood
Deacons Dan Kostelc and Linh Vu**

**Thursday, June 24, 6 p.m.
Cathedral of Saint Mary, Cheyenne**



More information about these ordinations will be provided in the June issue of the Wyoming Catholic Register.

PROMISE TO PROTECT



PLEDGE TO HEAL

If you have been abused or victimized by church personnel,

Please believe there is hope and healing. We encourage you to come forward and make a report. Our diocesan victim assistance coordinator is available to help you obtain support for your needs.

If you suspect abuse of a minor, your first call should be to law enforcement or the Department of Family Services.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of sexual abuse by a member of the clergy or an employee or volunteer of a parish or the Diocese of Cheyenne, contact:

Mary Adams

Victim Assistance Coordinator

307-220-0485 or adamsmaryj@outlook.com

FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT:

Jean Chrostoski, Chancellor

jchrostoski@dioceseofcheyenne.org or 307-638-1530, ext. 105

Please understand that the Diocese of Cheyenne is bound by civil and canon law to report sexual abuse of a minor to civil authorities. Anyone who believes that they have been sexually abused is strongly encouraged to report as well.



Si ha sido abusado o victimizado por personal de la iglesia,

Por favor crea que hay esperanza y sanación. Le animamos a que se presente y haga un reporte. Nuestra coordinadora diocesana de asistencia a víctimas está disponible para ayudarle a obtener apoyo para sus necesidades.

Si sospecha abuso hacia un menor, su primera llamada debe ser a la policía o al Departamento de Servicios para la Familia.

Si usted o alguien que conoce ha sido víctima de abuso sexual por parte de un miembro del clero o un empleado o voluntario de una parroquia o la Diócesis de Cheyenne, comuníquese con:

Mary Adams

Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas

307-220-0485 or adamsmaryj@outlook.com

PARA OBTENER ASISTENCIA INMEDIATA, COMUNÍQUESE CON:

Jean Chrostoski, Chancellor

jchrostoski@dioceseofcheyenne.org o 307-638-1530, ext. 105

Por favor, comprenda que la Diócesis de Cheyenne está obligada por leyes civiles y canónicas a reportar el abuso sexual de un menor a las autoridades civiles. Se recomienda encarecidamente a cualquier persona que crea que ha sido víctima de abuso sexual que lo reporte también.

PROMESA DE PROTEGER



COMPROMISO PARA SANAR