



# Dakota Catholic Action

Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941



Diocesan seminarians the Rev. Mr. Mark Aune and the Rev. Mr. Christian Smith will be ordained to the priesthood on June 11.

## Two to be ordained to the priesthood June 11

By Sonia Mullally  
DCA Editor

Vocations to the priesthood are living proof that God wants us close to Him and to know Him more personally.

This year, Bishop Kagan will ordain the Rev. Mr. Christian Smith and the Rev. Mr. Mark Aune on June 11 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

The coronavirus outbreak cut short the two men's studies—Christian in Rome at the North American College and Mark in St. Louis at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary. Both say the abrupt end to their seminary formation was difficult, but they are ready to look forward to their priesthood—reminded, once again, that God has control.

For Christian, leaving Rome in early March was bittersweet

and prompted him to leave most of his belongings there. "Once it was decided that we were to come back to the states, I think we had roughly 16 hours until our flight left," he explained. "During that time, I had to pack up what I could and say goodbye (maybe for the last time). I had a list of things I wanted to do and see before I left Rome.... but the list will have to wait until I can go back.

"About the same time, we bought plane tickets, I got an email saying that my first Mass vestment was ready to be picked up. They had been working on it for months and it happened to be ready. Being able to fly back with that in my hands was a small consolation, but there was something about it that felt right. God was saying to me, 'everything is in my hands.'"

Mark, too, looks back on his sudden exit from the seminary because of the virus pandemic with some regrets. A meeting on Monday, March 16 informed the men that they had to be out by Wednesday. "The announcement caught me off guard because I was mentally prepared to graduate and leave St. Louis in early May," he noted. "However, with the help of my diocesan brothers, we packed up my room with six years of possessions and left the seminary on Tuesday late afternoon.

"Because of the sudden move, I had no time for closure of friendships. Since being back in the diocese, I have reconnected

with professors and classmates via the internet. I am grateful for these life-long friendships."

### Where their vocation began

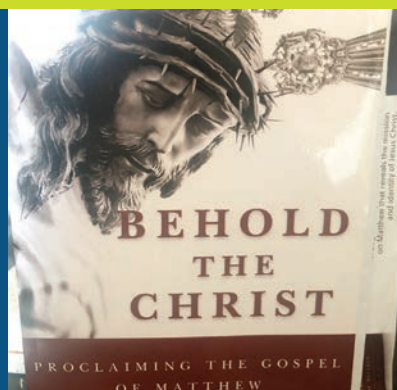
The "spark" each man felt for their vocation to the priesthood came in different ways, but both felt God was asking them directly to serve His people.

For Smith, it was more of a gradual realization that he was drawn to this holy calling.

"One of the biggest influences in my life was my Catholic education," Christian said. "I went to Cathedral Elementary and then St. Mary's Central High School. It

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## A LOOK INSIDE



### Local author

Leroy Huizenga's latest book, "Behold the Christ," examines St. Matthew's Gospel.....Page 4

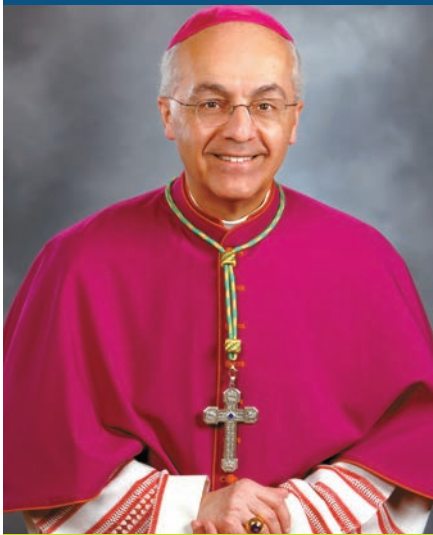


### Transitional diaconate

Three diocesan seminarians were ordained to the transitional diaconate on May 14 at the Cathedral .....Page 5

# Living proof of His love

## FROM THE BISHOP



Bishop David D. Kagan

The month of June marks the half-way point in our calendar year and, I dare say, we should not soon forget what we have been experiencing in the first half of this year. However, with this month, we will be blessed in a singular way as we celebrate the ordinations to the sacred priesthood of the Rev. Mr. Mark Aune and the Rev. Mr. Christian Smith on Thursday, June 11—the Feast

of Saint Barnabas, Apostle and Martyr. Amid so many worries, uncertainties, sickness and death, these ordinations stand as that undimmed light of God’s great and bountiful mercy and goodness to us. He has heard and answered our prayers for more priests after the heart of Christ who will serve Him by serving each of you with zeal, devotion and fidelity. What a tremendous gift the Lord has given to us in His priesthood. Immediately following upon His institution of the Most Holy Eucharist, He instituted the sacrament through and by which He is present to us, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. We begin this month with the feast Our Holy Father Francis established to be celebrated the day after Pentecost, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. Our ordinations are followed by the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the feasts of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the birth of St. John the Baptist, and the solemnity of Sts. Peter

and Paul. Every one of these liturgical celebrations draws our attention more keenly to the Person of Christ. In a very personal, yet public way, the ordinations of our two priests make clear to all who care to see and listen that it is Christ Jesus Who is the center of Catholic Church life and, in fact, He is the center of all life. Every one of our priests is a living witness to what St. Barnabas laid down his life for, the love of Christ and the burning desire to share this love for Christ with the world. This is done not so much in the once-in-a-lifetime event, but every day in the offering of Mass for you, in visiting the sick, in anointing the dying, in witnessing marriages and in just being there when you need him. I ask you to watch the ordinations of our next two priests and to find in their vocations your joy for our Church, your family and for yourself. Thank God, again, for His gift of the priesthood because we are assured by it to have the means He gives to us to save our souls and to help

others save their souls. I ask you to join me in praying daily for vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life for men and women. We know that God is never outdone in His generosity to those who love Him. Our two newest priests and all our priests are living proof of His love.

## NOTICE

*Masses are open to the public, with limitations and restrictions in place. Masses from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit can be seen on livestream at cathedralparish.com or via the diocesan website. Check with your local parish regarding the availability of local Mass on livestream. Sunday Mass at 8 a.m. (CT) from the Cathedral is also being televised on BEK until further notice. For channel listings, go to www.bek.coop.*

## BISHOP IN ACTION



Staff photo

Bishop Kagan reconsecrated the Bismarck Diocese to Mary, Our Blessed Mother, on May 1. This national movement was led by the USCCB that asked all dioceses across the country to do the same.

## Holy Father’s Prayer Intentions for June & July



**JUNE - The Way of the Heart**  
We pray that all those who suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus.

**JULY - Our Families**  
We pray that today’s families may be accompanied with love, respect and guidance.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



**Follow the Diocese on Twitter @BisDiocese and follow Bishop Kagan @VescovoDDK**



**Bismarck Diocese**  
@BisDiocese

Sunday, May 24, the Church celebrates the Ascension of the Lord. @VescovoDDK explains in this week’s video that it’s a reminder that because Jesus has gone before us in His earthly life, we strive to live a life worthy of eternal happiness in heaven.



Faith Matters 5.20.20  
Ascension of the Lord: a reminder that just as Jesus has gone before us, we believe and strive to live a life worthy of etern . . .  
youtube.com



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# Two to be ordained to the priesthood

Continued from page 1

was there that I took the faith as my own and really began to love it. The intellectual side of it was what always drew me deeper. Stuff like the philosophical proofs for God’s existence and the moral life became fascinating to me because they were putting into words all the things that I was feeling.”

For Mark, the calling began later in life while he was working in Phoenix as a physical therapist and the director of rehabilitation services. Already on a successful career path and in his 40s, he was a bit surprised by the desire to change course.

“My vocation to the priesthood grew out of an encounter I had with God about three years prior to beginning my seminary journey,” Mark shared. “In this encounter, the last thing God asked me to do was ‘evangelize His people.’ On a nearly daily basis, I contemplated these words with some confusion because I felt I was being used by God in my work as a physical therapist. I was very happy and fulfilled in my career. I felt that God was using me as an instrument to bring healing into people’s lives.”

This encounter was reinforced by his prayer life and drawing closer to God, Mother Mary and the Church. He became more involved in parish life and attended daily Mass. It was through prayer and the rosary, that lead Mark to follow God’s request and join the seminary.

“I wanted to make sure that I was following what the Lord wanted for me and that I wasn’t going through a ‘mid-life crisis.’ However, Jesus told me, ‘I expect more from you, you have more to offer’ and ‘I will not lead you where I will not sustain you.’ These words gave me the peace and strength to pursue my priestly vocation.”

Christian, too, pursued his vocation by getting closer to God through prayer.

“Ultimately, the decision to enter seminary came down to a few experiences in prayer,” he said. “As I was deciding what to do about college, I asked the Lord what he wanted for my life. In a kind of Augustinian ‘pick-up-and-read’ moment, I picked up a breviary and prayed evening prayer. It was a Sunday night, and the first Psalm on Sundays is always Psalm 110 which says, ‘You are a priest forever, a priest like Melchizedek of old.’ It was a stunning moment, and it was clear it wasn’t a coincidence. It was absolutely clear that it was God speaking to me. Again, it wasn’t something new, but it was a concretization of what I had been already feeling.”

Like Mark, he didn’t know if the call was real or not. “Admittedly, I didn’t know what to do about it. Or at least, I didn’t want it to be true and so I told myself I didn’t know what to do about it. I figured that if God

really wanted it, he would keep making that known to me. After a few years, I had another experience like the one I had in high school. In fact, it was exactly the same. The very same revelation and feeling from God came to me through the breviary. I still didn’t really want to go to seminary, but I decided to go. I knew I wouldn’t be able to live with myself if I didn’t.”

### Years of formation

Prayer and fraternity have been the two things that the men point to as what sustained them through the years of formation in the seminary.

“Through prayer, I have gained a great deal of strength, peace and reassurance from the Lord that the seminary is where He desired for me to be,” Mark said. “Anyone who has been an older student, like myself, knows the challenges of academic work, building relationships with peers much younger than yourself and the structure of seminary life. These components are comprised of many challenges and blessings. However, it is my prayer life that is my life-line and anchor that has sustained me, consoled me and deepened my priestly vocation during my seminary formation.”

Christian said having his brother seminarians along this journey has been extremely valuable. “I have always been blessed to have other seminarians from the Bismarck Diocese with me in the seminary. It makes a world of difference having people who understand North Dakota. That way, when someone says, ‘well, in New York, we do x, y and z,’ we can get together and say either ‘yeah that would be great’ or ‘there’s no way that would work in North Dakota.’ Having a Diocese of Bismarck night every Thursday gave us the chance to bounce things off each other and just hang out.”

### Priestly assignments

Both men have received their parish assignments that begin on July 1. Father Smith will be chaplain for Trinity Schools and part-time parochial vicar for St. Patrick, Dickinson. Father Aune will be parochial vicar for Corpus Christi, Bismarck, and part-time religion instructor for St. Mary Central High School.

The men are excited to be able to put into practice all



Deacon Smith at his transitional diaconate ordination in Rome last October.



Deacon Aune at his transitional diaconate ordination at the Cathedral in Bismarck last May.

they’ve been studying. “I look forward mostly to bringing the sacraments to God’s people,” Mark said. “The sacraments bring sanctifying grace into our lives and allow us to grow in holiness. I pray that I will be a holy, humble and joy-filled priest who will love God’s people with the same love and mercy that Christ has extended to me. I feel very honored and blessed to be assigned to my home parish of Corpus Christi. The seeds of my faith life and my love of the Lord, the Church and God’s people grew during my formative years there.”

Christian, too, said it’s the sacraments that he’s most looking forward to celebrating with the people. “The Mass and confessions—these are things we can practice all day long in the seminary, but it’s not the real thing. You can’t get the real thing until you are ordained.”

He added, that working at Trinity Schools will be special for him because of where his vocation began at that time in his life. “To be back in that setting and to give freely the same thing that I received is to come full-circle!”

### Ordination Mass

Not only did the coronavirus change the end of seminary life for the two men, it will also change the look of their ordination. They say they would love to have the faithful present to witness their ordination, but have accepted the fact that the ordination Mass might look a little different this year.

“I’m very excited! Because of the virus, much of the plans for ordination are uncertain,” shared Christian. “It was actually a really touching and challenging thing for me spiritually. I had

to come to grips with the fact that it might not go exactly how I wanted it to go. Whether it is livestreamed with only 10 people in attendance or there was a giant party with 500 people there, the point is the priesthood, and that will happen either way. The one thing I do know is that you never lose anything with the Lord, He always gives back more than He takes away.”

Mark, too, is hoping that some of the faithful will be able to celebrate with them and the Church. “Regardless of how many people can attend, Jesus will be present and a sacrament will be administered, which will be an awesome and humbling experience for the Church and me. On a selfish level, I desire for it to be public because so many of the faithful have been fervent in their prayers for me and my vocation and I desire for them to see the fruits of their prayers. This is their day to rejoice, as much as it is my day to thank God and the people of God who have supported me throughout my journey.”

Mark added one last sentiment to the people of the diocese, “I would like to ask the faithful to pray for Deacon Christian Smith and me as we prepare for our ordination and begin our priestly ministry. Please continue to pray for vocations of all ages to the priesthood and religious life. God needs many more workers in His vineyard!”

If the restrictions brought on by COVID-19 are still in place at the time of the ordination, a limited number of people will be permitted to attend the Mass. Plans are to livestream the Mass and it can be found at [www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com) by clicking on the Cathedral player module.

# Local author’s book examines St. Matthew’s Gospel

By Patti Armstrong  
DCA Writer

A tale of tragedy and triumph, from the advent of sin throughout the world’s hostility, right up until today. That is what Leroy Huizenga, Ph.D., writes about in his latest book, “Behold the Christ: Proclaiming the Gospel of Matthew.”

While much of the world has grown indifferent or even hostile to Scripture, Huizenga shines a light on the supernatural events in the Gospel of Matthew that hold the key to our salvation. “He is Emmanuel, God with us always, who saves His people from their sins by dying for them,” he wrote.

North Dakota native and Bismarck resident, Huizenga is Administrative Chair of Arts and Letters and Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Mary and author of “Loosing the Lion: Proclaiming the Gospel of Mark” (2017). He came into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil of 2011 after teaching at Wheaton College (in Wheaton, Ill.) for five years. Becoming Catholic at an Evangelical Protestant liberal arts college took an element of courage and great confidence in the teachings of the Church. It ultimately led him to teach at a Catholic university, bringing his deep love and knowledge of Scripture with him.

The writing is deep, but not difficult; academic, yet engrossing. And, after all, with the proper perspective, salvation and the supernatural is always riveting. Through an explanation of history and examination of the Gospel passages, Huizenga gives us that perspective. “In showing how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament, gave us a way to live, and taught us how to follow the narrow way to the kingdom of heaven, St.

Matthew modeled the fourfold way of reading Scripture according to letter and spirit,” he noted.

Through Matthew, Huizenga presents Jesus’ founding of the Catholic Church as a robust, rigorous religion with vibrant rituals, and the sacrificial Eucharist as sustenance on the narrow way to heaven. “Jesus demands much of His Church, but the same Jesus who commands His Church also promises and delivers much—above all, Himself,” he explains.

“Behold the Christ,” Huizenga explains, is an attempt at recovering St. Matthew’s story as he composed it. He believes that when we read it as a story with the convictions of St. Matthew’s Christian worldview, we will find it to be a compelling drama, narrating how Jesus the Christ came to save us by means of faith and the sacraments that the Church He founded delivers to the world.

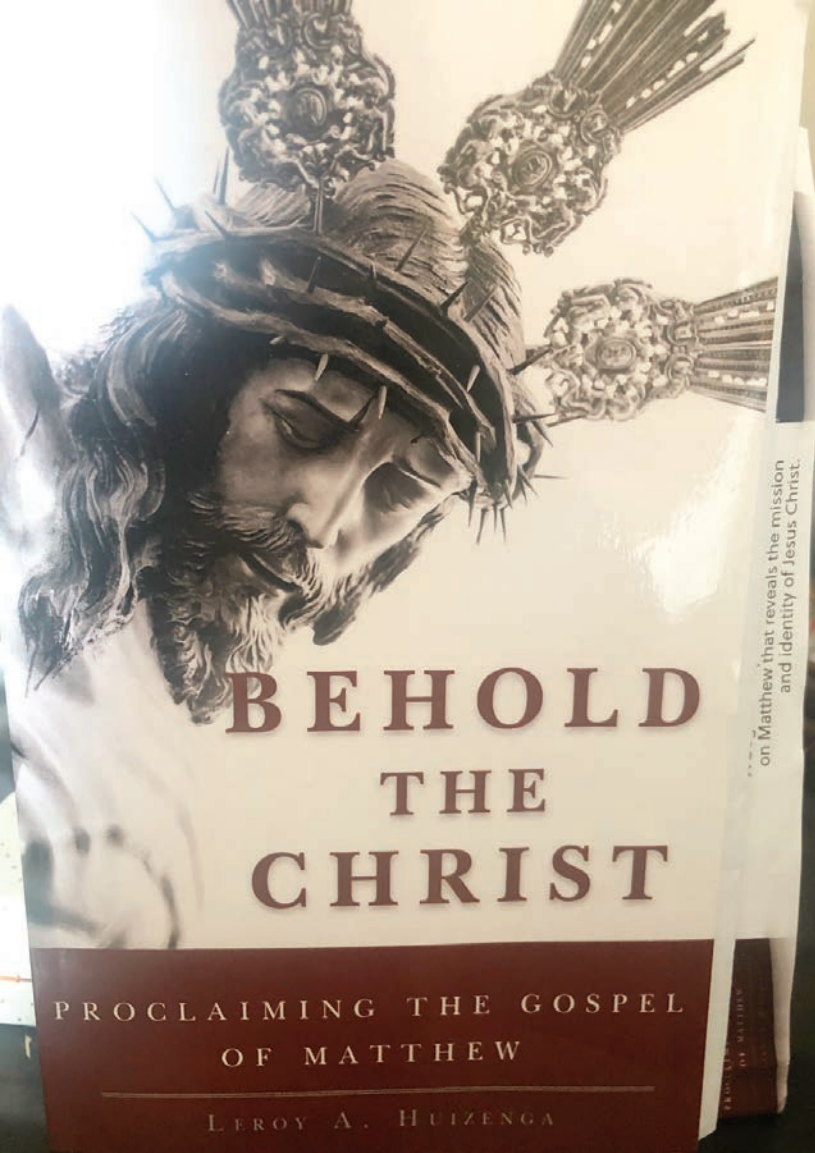
The book is separated into two parts. The first on religious discipline and ritual challenges the errors of our contemporary age. The second reads through St. Matthew’s story from the lectionary to help homilists and lay people get a better sense of it.

According to Huizenga, it was written “to present Jesus who teaches the disciplines that make for righteousness and institutes a decisive ritual, the Eucharist, for His Church over which the Apostles rule, with Peter at their head, holding the power of the keys. And, Matthew’s Jesus is no mere rabbi; He is the Christ, the Son of God, even God Himself came to be with His people (Matthew 1:23) and perfect them (Matthew 5:48), accompany them even until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). As such, St.

Matthew’s Gospel provides the perfect message for confronting the spirit of our times.”

*Behold the Christ is available*

*online at the St. Paul Center (stpaulcenter.com) and locally at the Mayo Pharmacy in Bismarck.*



## PRAY FOR THE PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS, DEACONS SERVING OUR DIOCESE AND THOSE IN FORMATION AND LAY MINISTERS

An invitation from the Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club

- |         |                            |         |                                  |
|---------|----------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| June 1  | Fr. Dan Berg               | June 17 | Seminarian Isaiah Fischer        |
| June 2  | +Deacon Ray Jilek          | June 18 | Msgr. James Braaten              |
| June 3  | Seminarian Colton Steiner  | June 19 | Deacon Ron Keller                |
| June 4  | Sr. Nancy Gunderson, OSB   | June 20 | Fr. Benedict Fischer, OSB        |
| June 5  | Sr. Patti Koehler, OSB     | June 21 | Sr. Ruth Margaret Karabensh, OSB |
| June 6  | Fr. Al Bitz                | June 22 | Bishop David Kagan               |
| June 7  | Deacon Ed Johnson          | June 23 | All music ministers              |
| June 8  | Fr. Damian Dietlein, OSB   | June 24 | Sr. Kathleen Kuntz, OSB          |
| June 9  | Sr. Marena Hoogland, OSB   | June 25 | Fr. Phillip Brown                |
| June 10 | All liturgical ministers   | June 26 | Deacon Ken Klein                 |
| June 11 | Fr. Dominic Bouck          | June 27 | Fr. Denis Fournier, OSB          |
| June 12 | All in religious formation | June 28 | Sr. JoAnn Krebsbach, OSB         |
| June 13 | Deacon Wayne Jundt         | June 29 | Fr. William Callery              |
| June 14 | Br. Nicholas Erikson, OSB  | June 30 | Deacon Leonard Kordonowy         |
| June 15 | All lay ministers          |         |                                  |
| June 16 | Sr. Andre Hushka           |         |                                  |

### PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

The Diocese of Bismarck is firmly committed to the health and protection of our children, young people and vulnerable adults. With the hope of healing the pain and suffering from sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, we encourage anyone who has suffered from this abuse to please come forward and let us know. To report allegations of sexual abuse, please contact: Dale Eberle, Chancellor, Diocese of Bismarck, PO Box 1575, Bismarck, ND 58502-1575. Phone: 701.223.1347 or 1.877.405.7435. Email the victim assistance coordinator, Joyce McDowall, at [victimassistance@bismarckdiocese.com](mailto:victimassistance@bismarckdiocese.com).

#### CODE OF CONDUCT

The Catholic Church must be exemplary: Clergy, staff, whether diocesan or parish, and volunteers are held accountable for their behavior. To enable the highest level of accountability, there must be a clear and unambiguous definition of appropriate behavior. To this end, this Code of Conduct is defined for the Diocese of Bismarck and it provides a foundation for implementing effective and enforceable standards for all personnel. View the Code of Conduct at <http://www.bismarckdiocese.com>

# Deacon Seminarians

Greg Hilzendeger - Jacob Degele - Ben Franchuk

Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky



Bishop Kagan ordained diocesan seminarians (l-r) Deacons Greg Hilzendeger, Jacob Degele and Ben Franchuk to the transitional diaconate on May 14 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.



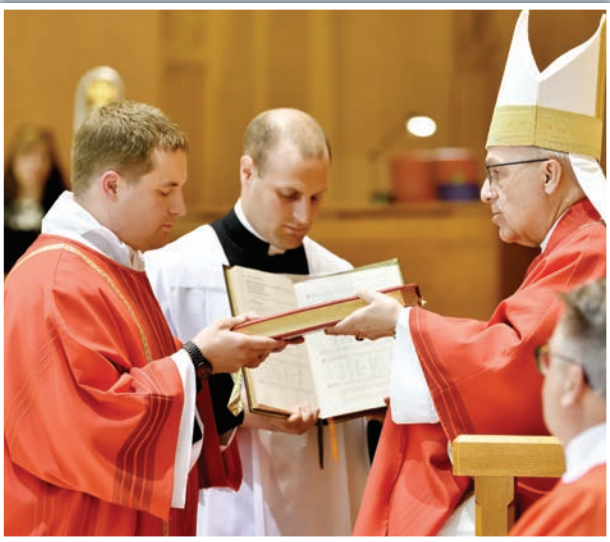
Seminarian Jacob Degele promised respect and obedience to the bishop and his successors.



The new deacons are congratulated by Bishop Kagan and the priests in attendance at the ordination Mass.



Bishop Kagan imposed hands upon the candidates, an ancient gesture designating the conferral of the gift of the Holy Spirit.



Deacon Greg Hilzendeger is handed the Book of Gospels from Bishop Kagan commissioned as a herald of Christ.



Deacon Ben Franchuk served in his deacon ministry for the first time alongside Bishop Kagan at the altar.



Submitted photo

## Serra Club meeting

Board members of the Serra Club of Bismarck-Mandan and the Serra Club of North Central North Dakota made history recently by meeting together for the first time. The gathering was at St. Leo the Great Catholic Church in Minot. Father Justin Waltz, pastor of the church, offered Mass prior to the meeting. Pictured are Donna Hartze, president of the Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club, and other board members Dave Leingang, Pete Deichert, Dan Mayo and Rose Mayo; Fr. Justin Waltz; Mike Ruelle, president of the Serra Club of North Central North Dakota, and other board members of that club, Beth Ruelle, Rob Lowe, Bertha Wald, Christine Morsfield, Karen Johnson and Grace Fisher.

# Balancing Church & State

CHRISTOPHER DODSON



## Awaken us from your sleep and see His light

Events that disrupt and radically alter our daily lives can also provide opportunities to see our world more clearly and then change for the better.

Quoting a hymn that was already sung in his time, St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Eph. 5:14).

The passage speaks to us on many levels. While the stanza may refer to those who have fallen asleep in the Lord, it also applies to us during our life now on this earth. To “awake” means to turn from sin, to turn to the Light of Christ.

There is another kind of sleep that affects human persons, especially in our times. It is a kind of malaise, or “mere” existence where we get stuck in the ordinariness of things. Indeed, writing in the early fourth century, one of the earliest commenters on St. Paul’s letters wrote that “by sleep [Paul] signifies a stupor of the mind.”

Big things like natural disasters or terrorist attacks can awaken us from this type of sleep. So, can little things. Catholic novelist and existentialist philosopher Walker Percy’s antagonists are often awakened by little things that cause the subject to reevaluate or see, for the first time, their entire life and the world they inhabit.

COVID-19 and the responses to it, however, have not been little things. The pandemic has upended our world, from our personal lives to entire economic systems and government. Moreover, the effects of this disruption will be long lasting.

With pain and struggles, however, can come awakenings. The things we have overlooked because we were lost in daily ordinariness might come into sharper focus or might be appreciated again. They might even be grasped for the first time. In times like these, we ask, “What really matters?”

Besides our own salvation and path to greater holiness, the Catholic view of the social world might gain greater appreciation.

In Catholic social doctrine, “what really matters” is the life and dignity of every human person. It is not the economy. It is not our individual freedoms. It is not governmental laws. It is not scientific advances. All of those “goods” have their importance and role, but all must serve and respect the life and dignity of every human person from conception to natural death.

Our response to COVID-19 has highlighted our natural ability to recognize this truth. It is natural, because it is part of the natural law written into our hearts (Rom. 2:14-15). We stopped what we were

doing and the way we were doing things to put the health and safety of others first.

Our response has also highlighted that we are social creatures. Humans were not created to be autonomous individuals. We are meant to be connected to each other and to creation. The response to the pandemic has brought this truth forth in several ways. The spread of the virus revealed the interconnectedness of our world. At the same time, it has become apparent that attacking the virus requires reaching out across communities, countries, professions and disciplines. Meanwhile, as we practice social distancing, staying at home and even missing Mass, we feel the pain of isolation. The pain tells us something about who we are as creations of a Triune God and made in His image.

We have also seen a refocus on what is the common good. Community responses to the pandemic, especially government responses, should always promote the common good. The common good, however, does not mean what is best for the highest number of individuals.

The common good means “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and

more easily” (Gaudium et Spes, no. 26). “The common good, in fact, can be understood as the social and community dimension of the moral good” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 164).

This means that the responses, in addition to always respecting the life and dignity of everyone in the context of community, should look at the broader, moral, aspects of human dignity and development. This includes the principles of solidarity, a preferential option for the poor, respect for creation, recognition of the dignity of work and the rights of workers and the importance of local decision-making when appropriate.

Catholic social doctrine does not provide answers to all the decisions that we must make during the pandemic or any other time. It does, however, provide principles for guidance. Straying from these principles harms human persons, our environment and God’s plan.

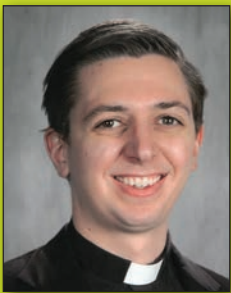
Too often, we do not realize that we have strayed until a disaster strikes. The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social consequences could awaken us from our sleep and, again, see His light.

■ Dodson serves as executive director of the N.D. Catholic Conference, the official liaison for the dioceses of Fargo and Bismarck in matters of public policy.

### Questions

## I was afraid to ask

FR. GREG LUGER



### Q: Why should I keep praying without seeing results?

**A:** This question is one which I think resonates with many people, and certainly one that they would be afraid to ask a priest. But, this really is a burning question that demands an answer. Why? Because we’ve all been in a situation in which we greatly desire something and aren’t getting it. What’s more, is that often the thing we want is something very good, (e.g. physical health, the conversion of a loved one, our vocation, etc.).

Then, going to our pastors, seeking advice in the matter, what are we told to do? Pray. And, you might be thinking, “I’m already doing that and it doesn’t seem to be working!” We can then ask ourselves why we should bother praying at all.

To get to the bottom of this, we need to look at Scripture.

First, Jesus Himself says, ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:7-11).

In another place, He puts it even stronger: “If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14).

What are we to make of this? St. Thomas Aquinas, noticing that the faithful ask and do not receive provides this helpful answer: [W]e should consider here that he first says, “in my name,” then adds, “I will do it.” The name of Christ is the name of salvation: “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Therefore, one who asks for something pertaining to salvation asks in the name of Christ. It does happen that someone asks for something which does not pertain to salvation. This happens for two reasons. First, because

one has a corrupt affection: when one asks for something to which he is attracted, but which he did not have, would be an obstacle to his salvation. One who asks this way is not heard because he asks wrongly: “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly” (James 4:3). For when someone, because of his corrupt affection, would badly use what he wants to receive, he does not receive it because of our Lord’s compassion. The reason being that our Lord does not just look at one’s desire, but rather the helpfulness of what is desired. For the good Lord often denies what we ask in order to give us what we should prefer (Aquinas, Commentary on John).

Here, Aquinas is talking about when we ask for something that does not pertain to our salvation: a new sports car, the ill fate upon someone we dislike, etc. But, what about when you ask for something good?

Aquinas continues: The second reason we may ask for something which does not pertain to our salvation is our ignorance. We sometimes ask for what we think is helpful, but really is not. But, God takes care of us, and does not do what we ask. Thus Paul, who labored more than all others, asked our Lord three times to take away a thorn in his flesh, but he did not receive what he asked because it was not useful for him (2 Corinthians 12:8)... Thus it is clear that when we truly ask in His name... He will do it.

Furthermore, he says that Jesus “sometimes postpones what we ask so that our desire for it will increase and so that he can grant it at the right time.” Finally, and this would pertain especially to those times when we are praying for a loved one who has gone astray, “it sometimes happens that we pray for people and are perhaps not heard, and this is because they put obstacles in the way.”

As a final point, we must also recall that Jesus teaches us not only to pray, but also to persevere in prayer when He gives us this parable: And He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,’ and he says in reply from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.’ I tell you, if he 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” (Luke 11:5-8).

Keeping all of this in mind, let us persevere in prayer.

■ Fr. Greg Luger is parochial vicar at the Churches of St. Joseph in Williston, St. John the Baptist in Trenton and St. Boniface in Grenora. If you have a question you were afraid to ask, now is the time to ask it! Simply email your question to [info@bismarckdiocese.com](mailto:info@bismarckdiocese.com) with the “Question Afraid to Ask” in the subject line.

*Making Sense out of Bioethics*

FR. TAD PACHOLCZYK



Accelerating vaccine development

Creating a new vaccine and bringing it to market typically requires more than a decade of research and clinical testing. Many companies and research groups are working overtime to shorten this timeline dramatically in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some have suggested it may be possible to develop a vaccine within a year or two, but such a feat would be a first, especially considering that no vaccine for any type of coronavirus has ever been successfully developed.

The former director at the Food and Drug Administration’s Office of Biotechnology put it this way: “Scientists have tried unsuccessfully for decades to develop a vaccine to prevent HIV/AIDS and a ‘universal’ flu vaccine that wouldn’t need to be reformulated and readministered every year. All have been duds.”

Another specialist in the field of infectious diseases, when asked about the prospects of a quick COVID-19 vaccine, demurred, saying it would require a “home run” and “nearly everything to go right.”

Some vaccines end up taking so long to develop that the original threat disappears by the time they become available, as happened, for example, with the Ebola vaccine after the original viral outbreak in Africa.

Nevertheless, scores of laboratories are now urgently working to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. Their haste in trying not only to save lives, but also to beat their competitors, raises the concern that biomedical researchers may succumb to temptations to cut corners ethically in the research and development phases of their work.

One concern involves safety testing. The bar for safety has always been very high for vaccines that are to be administered to healthy people, and typically tens of thousands of people need to be systematically tested before a new vaccine receives approval and becomes

widely available. The first rotavirus vaccine (RotaTeq) was tested on 72,000 healthy infants, while the newest shingles vaccine (Shingrix) underwent safety testing on about 29,000 people. And those tests were done only after extensive testing on animals had been completed.

Such large-scale testing is a formidable and meticulous task requiring a good deal of time and expense so that the purported treatment doesn’t unintentionally harm those it intends to help. In terms of COVID-19, the concerns about safety are even greater, since some developers are looking at novel and largely unproven technologies, like mRNA vaccines and DNA vaccines, raising further safety questions that may require additional time to sort through during the phase of clinical trials.

Another concern involves the proposal to shorten the timeline by soliciting young, uninfected volunteers who would be intentionally infected with the virus after having been given either the potential vaccine or a placebo. This “challenge trial” approach would enable researchers to assess the effectiveness of a proposed vaccine more rapidly than a traditional clinical trial, which would require waiting for some of the participants to become infected in the course of ordinary life.

Experts who favor this approach say that they have already heard from many people willing to volunteer. Carrying out a challenge trial for a virus with no known cure clearly involves risk. There is no way to predict what kind of reaction a volunteer may have from either the virus or the proposed vaccine; even the young and healthy could end up hospitalized or dying.

While it is not intrinsically unethical to take actions with a degree of risk for the good of the community, provided that it comes with the

patients’ full and informed consent, questions about whether it would be prudent to do so need to be carefully addressed. Given the significant competitive pressures arising from many dozens of companies and research teams trying to get to the finish line first, big pharma needs to remain vigilant about over-stepping the boundaries of reasonable risk.

A final concern in attempting to speed up vaccine development involves the use of human cell lines derived from abortions. A variety of cell lines are available for COVID-19 research and vaccine development, some originating from hamsters, mice or other mammals, some from insects and some from humans. The cell lines from humans may come from acceptable sources, like human skin, or from problematic sources, like direct abortions. Regrettably, several of the COVID-19 vaccine candidates that are being developed today have relied on cell lines that were harvested from aborted fetuses. Scientists have a duty to avoid the use of such unethically derived cell lines and should instead select available alternatives as they ramp up their research programs.

Vaccines, of course, are real “game changers” in public health. As a society, we must continue to insist that vaccine development and production be held to the highest ethical standards. This is especially true during the accelerated push arising from the present pandemic, lest we foster practices meant to save lives by risking the lives of other vulnerable human beings.

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*Ag Attitudes*

JAMES ODERMANN



The roots of life are with Jesus

Roots are the life line for plant growth. Roots are the conduit for the food, water and necessary ingredients from the soil and, when combined with sunlight, produce above-ground growth.

Roots have many other functions: holding plants in place, slowing or halting erosion of soil, tunneling through hardpan soils to allow air and water infiltration and producing organic matter, which feeds underground microbes. Roots are the canal, whether in soil or hydroponic growth, which produces food.

So, as I worked my way through spring planting and reviewed forage growth, I thought about family roots. History is full of failed civilizations that neglected to recognize its roots, to stay connected with basic tenets of self-

sacrifice and be respectful of each other.

Agriculture is the most basic of all lifestyles, whether it be agronomic based or livestock based. I am proud to be involved in food (root) production. The connection with the land—through plants and animals—is the core principle of sustenance for society and chronicles an important perspective on life, on roots.

Within this reflection on roots, I thought about my spiritual roots. More importantly, do I tend to my spiritual roots in a way that makes them flourish: prayer, acts of mercy, kindness, Eucharistic celebration and participation, loving those who refuse to love me, etc.?

Am I hopeful? Hope means believing God will take care of

me, but it also means that I have responsibilities to use the resources entrusted to my care in a wise and prudent manner. It means respecting nature, the air, water and land and all that is within nature.

Hope? How can hope solve the current pandemic that is scaring everyone—even those self-considered privileged? The playing field, in one sense, is leveled but there is no need for despair.

“How deep are my roots?” There is hope, a sort of immunization through a future good which recognizes that obstacles need to be overcome to reach solutions.

God has not abandoned me. God does not play favorites based on race, religion, gender, age—and for sure not political parties. God wants me to firmly root my life

with Jesus.

The discussion about freedoms challenged by the pandemic seems foolish. Will my life be changed? Was it changed by Sept. 11, 2001? The list of events that changed life and the world is long.

No event or happening, however, equals the opportunity that is presented by the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. I need to firmly root my life with Jesus, who provides hope through the Holy Trinity.

Care to join me?

■ *Odermann lives with his wife, Leona, on the family farm in Billings County. They are members of the Church of St. Patrick in Dickinson and assist with eucharistic celebrations there as well as at the Churches of St. Bernard (Belfield) and St. Mary (Medora).*

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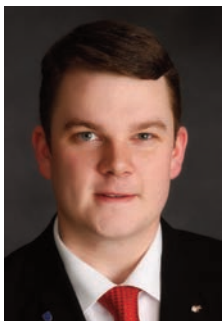
  
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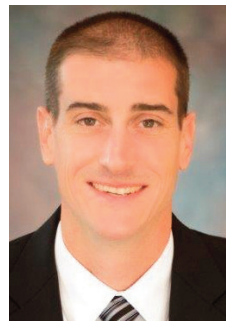
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