



# Dakota Catholic Action

Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941

## Cathedral marks 75th



The early stages of construction and concrete work that began in the fall of 1941.

### Iconic structure completed in 1945

By Sonia Mullally  
DCA Editor

The early establishment of the Bismarck Diocese concentrated on bringing priests to serve the new settlers of Western North Dakota. When Bishop Vincent Ryan took over in 1940, his focus on providing more priests remained, but his added strength for fundraising was soon put to the test.

Bishop Wehrle, the first bishop of Bismarck, had a dream of

building a cathedral and began planning for it in 1922. He bought land and commissioned a design of the Cathedral, but harsh economic conditions prohibited his dream from becoming a reality. The St. Mary's parish in Bismarck, it's only church at the time, had been serving as the diocesan pro-cathedral.

Construction on a cathedral was held off because of the Great Depression. When Bishop Ryan became bishop in 1940, he set

the wheels in motion to begin construction, which would also provide the city with a second parish. By the fall of 1941, Bishop Ryan could see that the diocesan fund appeal was meeting its quota, so he ordered construction to begin—breaking ground in September of 1941. Within two months, the nation was at war, yet despite an acute shortage of men and materials, construction continued throughout the next four years.

#### Completed in 1945

A group of seven men worked away through the war at pouring

the monolithic concrete walls by hand. The skeleton crew utilized the help of teenagers during summer vacation from school. Yet, the real drama of the building lay hidden in a nearby slough. Just before the war, the steel roof beams were shipped to Bismarck. But, soon the government requisitioned all steel for the war effort.

As it's written in the book dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the diocese, Bishop Ryan apparently felt that patriotism could only go so far, so he had the steel hidden away lest it be

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### A LOOK INSIDE



#### Parish outreach

The Mother Teresa Outreach in Mandan sees a spike in demand due to COVID-19 pandemic..... Page 6

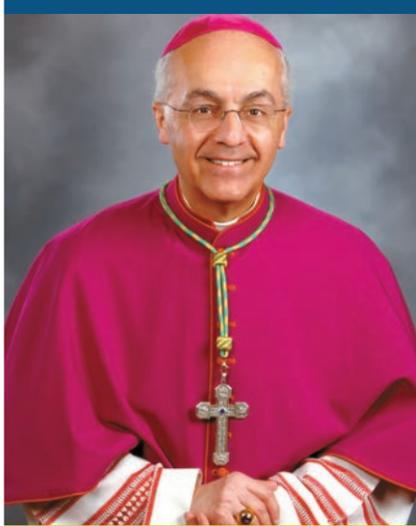


#### Mass of Thanksgiving

The 63rd annual appeal is being held this fall to gather donations for diocesan programs ..... Page 7-9

# Take up His cross daily and follow Him

## FROM THE BISHOP



**Bishop David D. Kagan**

This month of September will be a bit different for all of us in the diocese because this month we will have our annual God's Share Appeal. You recall that due to the COVID-19 pandemic which necessitated the suspension of all public liturgies and devotions until early May, I decided to transfer the appeal to the weekend of Sept. 12-13. As you have always been so generous

to this appeal which has been made for the diocesan Church for more than 60 years, I come to you with gratitude and I ask for your continued and generous support. In advance, I thank each and everyone of you for your prayers and financial support and do know that I pray every day at Mass for all of you and your special intentions.

However, I do not want to let this month pass and the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross pass without giving it its rightful place and attention. Each year on Sept. 14 the Holy Catholic Church celebrates this magnificent feast and asks us to not just recall the Crucifixion of the Lord, but to make the Cross of Jesus Christ that outward sign of our baptismal consecration in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. His Cross is literally our standard by which we are to live His life and to be His disciples. Recall that Jesus so clearly said that if anyone wishes to be His disciple, he must take up His cross daily and follow Him.

If we take the time and try to remember one of the first prayers we learned as little children, I think it would be the Sign of the Cross. With a little practice, we got the words and actions coordinated and it was so easy that it is second nature for us to make this beautiful prayer in word and action. It should remind us every time of what Jesus has done for love of us but also what we are to do for love of Him.

I close with a beautiful prayer composed by the great St. Francis de Sales about the Cross. Be consoled and strengthened every time you meditate on the Cross.

"The everlasting God has

in His wisdom foreseen from eternity, the cross that He now presents to you as a gift from His inmost heart. This cross He now sends you He has considered with His divine mind, tested with His wise justice, warmed with loving arms and weighed with His own hands to see that it be not one inch too long and not one ounce too heavy for you.

He has blessed it with His holy Name, anointed it with His consolation, taken one last glance at you and your courage, and then sent it to you from heaven, a special greeting from God to you, an alms of the all-merciful love of God. Your cross."

## BISHOP IN ACTION



Photo by Deacon Joe Krupinsky

Bishop Kagan with Archbishop Samuel Aquila (left) of the Archdiocese of Denver, and Bishop Austin Vetter of the Diocese of Helena at the transitional diaconate ordination Mass for Diocesan Seminarian Rev. Mr. Nick Vetter on Aug. 15 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

## BISHOP'S SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 2020

Sept. 5	• Installation Mass of Msgr. Patrick Schumacher for Church of Corpus Christi, Bismarck, 4 p.m.	Sept. 18	• Home On The Range Board Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 12 p.m.
Sept. 7-10	• Fall Clergy Conference, Medora		• Confirmation at Church of the Ascension, Bismarck, 7 p.m.
Sept. 12	• Confirmation at Church of Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Stanley, 10:30 a.m.	Sept. 19	• Confirmation at Church of St. Bonaventure, Underwood, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13	• Confirmation at Church of St. Wenceslaus, Dickinson, 9:30 a.m. MT	Sept. 20	• Confirmation at Church of Holy Trinity, Hettinger, 10:30 a.m.
	• Confirmation at Church of St. Patrick, Dickinson, 12:30 p.m. MT	Sept. 22	• Real Presence Radio Interview, 9 a.m.
Sept. 14	• Confirmation at Church of Christ the King, Mandan, 7 p.m.	Sept. 25	• Cabinet Meeting, Chancery, Bismarck, 10 a.m.
Sept. 15	• Women's Care Center Event, Sixteen 03 Main Events, Bismarck, 5:30 p.m.	Sept. 27	• Confirmation at Church of St. Vincent de Paul, Crown Butte, 9 a.m.
Sept. 17	• Confirmation at Church of St. Joseph, Mandan, 7 p.m.		Confirmation at Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 2:30 p.m.
		Sept. 29	• Confirmation at Church of Spirit of Life, Mandan, 7 p.m.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



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



**Bishop David Kagan**  
@VescovoDDK

Following

Twentieth Week, Sunday: the Gospel is such a clear teaching in how to persevere in prayer but more, it is clear in how merciful the Lord is to all who go to Him. May we have the faith to do the same!



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**Publisher:** Most Reverend David D. Kagan, D.D., P.A., J.C.L.,  
Bishop of Bismarck

**Editor:** Sonia Mullally, [smullally@bismarckdiocese.com](mailto:smullally@bismarckdiocese.com)  
Center for Pastoral Ministry - Diocese of Bismarck USPS0011-5770  
520 N. Washington Street, PO Box 1137, Bismarck, ND 58501-1137  
Phone: 701-222-3035 Fax: 701-222-0269  
[www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com)

The Dakota Catholic Action (0011-5770) is published monthly except July by the Diocese of Bismarck, PO Box 1575, Bismarck, ND 58502-1575.

Periodical postage paid at Bismarck, ND, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to address below.

Dakota Catholic Action, PO Box 1137, Bismarck, ND 58501-1137

The Dakota Catholic Action is funded in part by the annual God's Share Appeal.

# Deacon Vetter

## Seminarian ordained before returning to Rome

By Sonia Mullally  
DCA Editor

The coronavirus pandemic has forced many of us to switch our schedule on a moment's notice.

Imagine finding out your ordination will be in a few short days. That's a change that diocesan seminarian Nick Vetter was faced with just two weeks from packing up to leave for Rome.

The plan was for Nick to be ordained to the transitional diaconate with his classmates in October at the Pontifical North American College in Rome where he's been studying for the past few years. As a bonus, his uncle, Bishop Austin Vetter, of the Diocese of Helena, was to be the main celebrant for the ordination Mass.

"Although I have been preparing for this for six and a half years, the ordination to the diaconate came about within the last few days," Nick explained. "We found out from the Pontifical North American College that guests would not be allowed into Italy for the October 1 ordination date. Within two days, in consultation with Father Dosch and Bishop Kagan, we decided to do the ordination on the Solemnity of the Assumption, August 15."

Instead of no guests attending his ordination Mass in Rome, Nick was surrounded by his extended family, fellow diocesan seminarians and friends, including uncles Bishop Vetter, Msgr. Thomas Richter and Fr. David Richter.

Nick and three others are scheduled to be ordained priests for the Diocese of Bismarck next summer. Deacons Jacob Degele, Ben Franchuk and Greg Hilzendeger were ordained to the transitional diaconate by Bishop Kagan in May at the Cathedral.

"All of this came about really fast! As Father Josh Waltz and I were talking, this is a similar experience to how I joined the seminary as well. When God wants to do something, He gets things moving," Nick said.

While he's had to move up the schedule just a bit, Nick is ready to take on the new role as a deacon.



The newly-ordained Deacon Vetter (second from left) with uncles (l-r) Fr. David Richter, Bishop Austin Vetter and Msgr. Thomas Richter. Diocesan seminarians in the background were (l-r) Jacob Magnuson, Grant Dvorak and Steven Vetter. All three seminarians will be joining Nick in Rome to continue their formation this fall.

"As a deacon, I am looking forward to preaching the Word of God," Nick expressed. "We often forget that the Word of God is a Person, Jesus Christ. We preach Him to the faithful people of God as their salvation. I look forward to sharing with people my own experience of Jesus through my preaching. Jesus is real and He acts in our lives every day."

Nick and five other diocesan seminarians—Grant Dvorak, Jake Magnuson, Josh Hill, Steven Vetter and Isaiah Fischer—will travel to Rome in early September amid COVID-19 concerns.

"We are still returning to Rome as we have a student visa,"

Nick explained. "Students are considered essential travelers in Italy. I return September 3 to begin my last year of formation, which heavily revolves around sacramental formation. I am looking forward to my last year

of formation, in particular, being with my brother Steven and the other Bismarck seminarians. They are some of the best seminarians I know. Bismarck fraternity is great and it is a tremendous blessing for all of us."

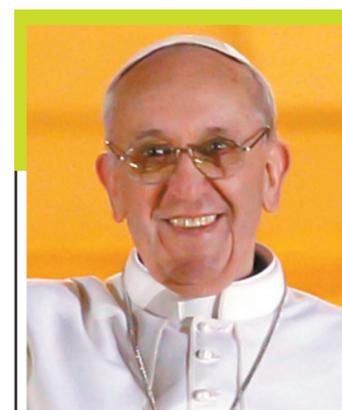


Bishop Kagan is assisted at the altar by Deacon Nick Vetter during the ordination Mass.



Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky

Bishop Kagan handed the newly-ordained Deacon Vetter the Book of the Gospels commissioning him as a herald of Christ.



### Holy Father's Prayer Intentions for September

#### Respect for the Planet's Resources

We pray that the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner.

# Iconic structure completed in 1945

*Continued from front page*  
commandeered. As the walls went up and up, people wondered to what purpose? Then one day in 1944, the beams appeared out of nowhere and the building was enclosed.

In January 1945, Bishop Ryan wrote in the Dakota Catholic Action, the diocesan newspaper he created in 1941, "When our cathedral is completed, as it will be in 1945, all the people who gave will rejoice; for their contributions made the cathedral possible. They can truly say 'Our Cathedral,' and they will then understand better the phrase 'Our Diocese,' so often repeated in the columns of this paper. God has blessed the people of the diocese with good crops during the past four years. The cathedral will remain as symbol of their gratitude and their trust in God."

At the first Mass on Aug. 30, 1945, there was much that was incomplete, especially interior decoration and furnishings. These were added as materials became available after the war.

## Symbolic of Bishop Ryan's vision

Although the Cathedral was already designed in Bishop Wehrle's time, it suited Bishop Ryan's idea of what a cathedral should be. He commented several times that travelers on both the railroad and the highway would see its shining white tower above the skyline as they approached Bismarck. He was proud of the fact that the building is virtually fireproof and should outlast most of the other buildings in the city. All this was symbolic of his vision of the Church itself: prominent, articulate, outlasting the vagaries of worldly turmoil.

A critical shortage of workers was a key reason the project took so long. At the peak of the construction, the general laborers made \$26 per week. The general contractor,



James Guthrie, Fr. John Guthrie a staunch Catholic from Bismarck, was said to be a stern taskmaster, sharp-tongued but fair. Sadly, James died suddenly and unexpectedly shortly before the completion of the project. James's son, Bob was also a member of the crew before he was drafted into war to eventually fight as a U.S. Marine pilot in the South Pacific. Grandson and son of these two men, Father John Guthrie who is currently pastor at parishes in New Salem, Center and Almont, served as the third pastor of the Cathedral from 2008-2012.

"That building has a very deep link to my family," Father Guthrie said when asked about the Cathedral. "And, not just to me personally. My family is on the ground floor of that place."

His grandfather had established his construction business in St. Paul in the 1910s before coming to Bismarck to work on Boniface



Cathedral in the 1950s.

Credit: Bob Feickert Photo, Mandan

Hall at St. Alexius hospital and the World War Memorial building in downtown Bismarck. James Guthrie moved to town in the 1920s. After Bishop Ryan arrived in 1940, the two struck up a friendship. That's likely why the bishop came to James with his idea to build the new chancery in 1940 as a sort of prototype for the Cathedral.

The pair worked with William Kurke of Fargo, an architect who had worked on the state capitol building. The idea to build with that much concrete and in the art deco style was something quite new at the time, Fr. Guthrie explained. The men wanted to try out the concept on the chancery completed in 1941, located on Raymond Street just south of the Cathedral School. Today, it still functions as the bishop's residence.

Following in the family business, Father Guthrie's father ran his own construction company building several iconic structures in Bismarck including the Church of Saint Anne, Annunciation Priory and the Civic Event Center.

## Establishing a parish

The Cathedral parish was formed on Jan. 1, 1947 with 250 registered families. By 1950, there were 410 families and, as the area of town developed, the parish grew quickly to 715 families by 1955. Today, the parish is home to 1,491 families.

There was only one parish prior to the construction of the Cathedral—St. Mary's. The "cutoff" boundary at the time was 5th street, Fr. Guthrie explained. "And, we lived on the west side of that street so our family became members at the Cathedral. The neighbors across the street remained parishioners at St. Mary's."

From the beginning, the



A seven-man crew of workmen who did the greatest portion of the work on the Cathedral. Most of them had been on the job for more than three years. Pictured are (front, l-r): Carl Bachmeier, Frank Gustafson, and (back, l-r) John Shafer, Christ Delzer, Pete Hartwick, Bill Brier and Jake Newhart.

building was special to the Guthrie family especially for Fr. John and his seven siblings. "As a kid, I was raised knowing that we took great pride in my family being involved in the construction of the Cathedral," he said. "I received all my sacraments there from baptism to holy orders and everything in between. It was a great sense of pride knowing that our grandfather, who we never had a chance to meet, built that building."

## A major renovation

Much of the Cathedral, inside and out, remained virtually unchanged through the 1980s. When Bishop Kinney arrived in 1982, he wanted to renovate the churches of the diocese to conform to the directives of Vatican II. In most parishes, the changes meant replacing the altars, removing the canopies over the altars, eliminating the communion rails and simplifying interiors. In many churches, the

tabernacles were moved to Blessed Sacrament chapels. Following the annual Chrism Mass in April 1992, Bishop Kinney broke ground for the Cathedral renovation project, saying it would "carry the diocese well into the 21st century." It was the first major renovation of the Cathedral to be carried out.

Father Tom Kramer, pastor of the Cathedral from 1976-2008, oversaw the \$1.7 million project. Some of the most notable changes were adding a gathering space, moving the baptismal font to the center of the church, creating a side chapel for smaller services, renovating the interior of the church and converting the former front entrance into a Blessed Sacrament chapel.

Recently, a small-scale renovation took place. In mid-August, the baptismal font was moved from the center to what had been recently the Blessed Sacrament chapel and originally

*Continued on page 5*

# Iconic structure completed in 1945

**Continued from page 4**  
the main entrance before that. The space was converted into the area for baptisms. Placed near the entrance, baptism is the symbol, theologically and sacramentally, as the entrance into the life of grace—into the family of God. The pews in the area where the font was will be extended to add more seating.

Ordained in 1990, Fr. Guthrie began his ministry as an associate in the very building that meant so much to his family. During those first years of the priesthood, he watched Fr. Kramer put in many hours researching and consulting on the renovation project in the early '90s. He returned as pastor years later in 2008 which he said was an incredible blessing.

“Both Msgr. Garvin, in the early years, and then Fr. Kramer were the only two pastors of the Cathedral until I was appointed there in 2008. When planning for that renovation began, I was a newly ordained priest and Fr. Kramer was a role model for me to watch him manage that kind of a project,” Fr. Guthrie expressed.



The Cathedral was last painted in 2016. The images of the bell tower openings were also changed.

“He understood that this church belongs to the people and watching him work, with Bishop Kinney, of course, but with the people in that process that took years, made an immense impact on me.”

Father Guthrie recalled that he, Fr. Kramer and Bishop Kinney had the rare opportunity to get a true “bird’s eye” view from the top and leave their mark for posterity at the steeple during the painting portion of the renovation project. “There was a crane on site for the painting, so we were able to go to the very top inside the steeple near the iron cross. While we were up there, we were able to sign the cross beam. When I signed that beam, I signed ‘grandson’ in parentheses under my name. That was a special moment for me.”

### Preserving history

Three diocesan seminarians, John Windsor, Greg Hilzendeger

and Josh Hill, spent their summer break from the seminary working at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. Among their duties was to compile a history of the Cathedral in commemoration of the 75th anniversary. The trio did so in

the form of a series of scrapbooks documenting the historical building and life of the parish. There are plans in the works for a public celebration of the anniversary possibly this fall, but details are tentative.



Father John Guthrie (second from the left) celebrates at the altar during his installation Mass as pastor of the Cathedral parish in 2008. With him were (l-r) Bishop Paul Zipfel, Fr. Tom Kramer and Fr. Paul Eberle.



The gathering space was added to the south side in 1992-93.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### THIRST 2020 and Diocesan Youth Conference

The men’s THIRST and the Diocesan Youth Conference scheduled for Sept. 11-12 in Bismarck has been cancelled due to COVID concerns. Please watch for details and updates in the October issue of the Dakota Catholic Action regarding the future of THIRST and diocesan youth conferences.

### Dakota Hope Clinic fundraisers Sept. 21-22

Minot’s pregnancy help clinic invites you to their annual Dakota Hope fundraising banquet on Monday, Sept. 21 at the North Dakota State Fair Event Center. New this year, a second banquet night will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 22 at the Mountrail County South Complex in Stanley. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. in Minot and 6 p.m. in Stanley. Dinner is at 6:30 p.m. for both venues. One of the youngest speakers on reproductive issues, Rebekah Hagen, will be the guest speaker for both evenings. Please RSVP by Sept. 7 to your table host or register at dakotahope.org. Live-streaming of the Sept. 21 banquet is available for those who wish to participate from home. Upon registration at www.dakotahope.org, a link will be sent to access the

event. For more information, call 701-852-4675.

### Dakota Hope Clinic tours offered

Dakota Hope Clinic, the pregnancy help clinic in Minot, is offering tours to church youth groups on the first Wednesday of each month during the school year. During the tour, students will have the opportunity to rotate through different learning stations. Each station will be approximately 15 minutes in length. Church leaders will obtain permission slips from parents of the students who would like to attend. Parents are encouraged to attend with their students. Tours will be from 6-7:30 p.m. unless a youth group needs a specific time, arrangements can be made. Different levels of tours will be offered so that student groups that have already been on the tour, will have different presentations. Call Dakota Hope Clinic at 701-852-4675 to schedule a free tour.

### Marriage Encounter Weekends

A Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend is a private weekend away from the distractions of daily life for couples in good marriages. Give your marriage this gift. The next available

weekends in this area are Sept. 25-27 in Windom, Minn. and Nov. 13-15 in Medora. Early registration is highly recommended. For more information, visit ndwwme.org or contact Rob and Angie at Applications@ndwwme.org or 701-347-1998.

### Discover Peace group meets Sept. 28

Dakota Hope Clinic of Minot offers small group sessions for women and men who seek peace and healing after a past abortion experience. The seven-week group session will begin Monday, Sept. 28 from 6-8 p.m. Anyone interested can call Dakota Hope at 701-852-4675 and ask for Shelly, go to www.dakotahope.org and click on events or send a confidential text to 978-705-3421 for more information or to register. Pre-registration is required and the location will be disclosed upon registration. Sessions are free and confidential.

### Real Presence Radio fund drive Oct. 6-9

The Real Presence Radio network serves almost 1,000 parishes throughout 10 dioceses. Tune in to Real Presence Radio Oct. 6-9 from 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. to hear more

about these incredible parishes, inspirational stories of faith and hope, and your chance to win one of the daily drawings including books, gift cards, RPR gear and a few surprises.

### Catholic Daughter Sunday Oct. 18

Catholic Daughter Sunday is celebrated on the third Sunday in October—on Oct. 18 this year. Spirituality and service is the heart and soul foundation of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas providing spirituality and shared activities under the support of a vibrant national organization. Members donate to charities, administer scholarship programs and strive to be helping hands. They embrace the principle of faith working through love in the promotion of justice, equality and the advancement of human rights and human dignity for all. Catholic Daughters worship together, pray together and help each other be the best Catholic women they can possibly be. For more information, go to the N.D. CDA website at, northdakotacatholicdaughters.org or on Facebook at ND Catholic Daughters of the Americas.

# Pandemic impacts parish outreach

By LeAnn Eckroth  
DCA Writer

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred a serious spike in demand at a Mandan food bank and community outreach program.

The use of services offered by the Mother Teresa Outreach at Spirit of Life Church has nearly tripled in most categories according to June 2020 data compiled by the mission.

The outreach served 1,677 households, said Sr. Mary Michael, faith formation director, who adds many new people are seeking help. "There are so many 'first-time' people," she noted.

In June, the outreach program distributed food to about 956 adults, 824 children and 194 senior citizens, Sr. Mary Michael said.

## More help needed

"A lot of people have had to use our resources who have never been to a food bank before. Maybe, because of layoffs, job interruptions or the businesses were just shut down. A lot of those people are looking for additional resources to try to bridge until they either find another job or they go back to their original employer," said Cheryl Hansen, business and finance manager for the Spirit of Life Parish, who also oversees the church's outreach program.

Migrant farm workers and the homeless are also among those in need, said Sr. Mary Michael.

The mission provided 2,859 daily meals in June. "A year ago, that would have been a thousand something," Sr. Mary Michael said. "These are daily lunch bags."

Hansen estimates the outreach was previously serving about 70 people per day, but that has jumped to 300 daily.

"It's the same thing for poundage of food. ... On a normal month, we used to provide 35,000 to 40,000 per month. Now, we are up to 75,000. In the last month, that has probably gone higher. I haven't determined July yet. June went up," Hanson said.

Despite help from Great Plains Food Bank, area restaurants, businesses and generous parishioners, the pandemic has spurred a much higher demand from the mission's resources.

"We need!" Sr. Mary Michael said. "We need more household items, cleaners, beds, mattresses, pillows, furniture, tables. We need more for cleaning, for showering, shampoo, soap, conditioner, toilet paper. We gave it because they couldn't find anything from the stores. That was an essential item. We also need more canned food, fruits, nuts."

The mission has the means to store frozen meats, produce, fresh garden vegetables, dairy products and cheese and these donations are welcome to the outreach program.

Sister Mary Michael is quick to thank parishioners, the community and businesses for what they can do. Other donations come from local parishes in the area, she said.

## Safety practices

The spike in demand is complicated with necessary safety practices to guard against COVID-19 at the church and gathering spaces. Large gatherings

for meals, food distribution and most mission programs have been tabled indefinitely.

"Because of COVID, we have certain arrangements: social distancing, using the hand sanitizers and cleaning everything often," Sister said.

Meal and food distribution also changed to discourage close contact among patrons. The weekly soup kitchen has been suspended since the lockdown started mid-March. Daily hot meals once offered throughout the week have been replaced with cold sandwiches. Soup may be added to sandwich packs later when cold weather returns, said staff.

"They come, grab and go. We pack the sandwich, cookies, banana depending upon how many they need," said Sister Mary Michael.

## Spiritual food

Despite extra restrictions and protocols, the organizers of the Mother Teresa Outreach have not lapsed in the spiritual mission. Sister Mary Michael still prays with people as she finds them the goods from the food pantry. Counseling is still done one-on-one and morning prayer services continue weekdays at a safe distance inside the church.

"I find what is their need, what we have and what I can do, I do," she explained.

Sr. Mary Michael distributes multiple prayer leaflets, Bibles, rosaries and even masks sewn by parishioners as well to keep up morale.

"The sisters do a great job of letting the people be heard if they need to talk, pray with them. That's a real important part of outreach. It's not just food for the body. It's spiritual food as well," Hansen said.

## Technology helps

Longer-term food supplies apart from the sandwich packs have been expedited by a new software and card system for clients. It was launched in early 2020 before the pandemic loomed.

Regulars and newcomers fill out a form detailing the needs of their household, home occupants and ages. They are then issued a scanner card and given the right amount of supplies to support them. Dry, imperishable foods are prepacked according to family/household need. Additional items like frozen, produce and other available items are added accordingly upon pickup day.

She added, "We give 200 to 300 lunch packs a day. If there are 10 people in their household, they grab 10. If there are five, they grab five. Homeless people may take enough for their lunch and dinner."

While they wait for their completed box, those receiving donations mill around the donated clothing and furniture items available, said Sister Mary Michael.

Sister Mary Michael makes it her business to get to know the people getting help. They are much more than a number to her.

"Since I handle registration, I know how many members are in their house. One family has nine children, one adult and two senior citizens. One box is not enough. I will tell them to give two boxes. Then, we add more vegetables

and fruit and meat," Sr. Mary Michael said.

A box might include 40 to 50 pounds, depending on what is available, she explained.

Funding donations also can be leveraged a long way to fill more gaps in supplies, said Hansen. She credits the church outreach office for fielding financial donations, ordering food from the Great Plains Food Bank and coordinating donations from local grocery stores, big box stores and surplus from restaurants, leaving the sisters time to tend to people in need.

## Volunteers welcome

With more demand for mission services, comes more work packing and loading. The volunteers have proven even more essential to the cause and more are welcome, said Sister. In June, there were 14 volunteers who logged 179 hours, beyond the work the four Carmelite sisters do at the outreach. A University of Mary student group was among those who provided extra assistance recently.

## Modern miracle

Sr. Mary Michael likens the outreach mission to popular scripture.

"Jesus was very compassionate and gave the multitudes food," she said. "That was 5,000 men, not including women and children. Then, you see how many were there, how many who lacked."

She said in the same way, the mission provides care of people. "That is a miracle," she said.

In the past six years, Sister Mary Michael said she has gotten to know the clients by name and they have grown close. "That makes me so happy. As Jesus said, 'my sheep I know. I call them by name and they know mine.'"

## Grateful for help

A few people who utilize the services provided by the outreach program attest to the need and are grateful for the help.

Harlan Feist has been utilizing mission services at least two years for his household of three, including a son. Among the services is a regular food basket. "It's been great. I just get disability. So, it's not really a lot of money. 'It's food and clothing, dental work.'"

Ida Rivera uses the food bank for food, groceries and clothing about once per month. Hurricane Maria caused hard times for her and she lost three family members



Since the pandemic, the daily meals are packaged to "grab-and-go" for those in need.



The Carmelite Sisters and the many volunteers log countless hours each month to make sure anyone in need gets a meal (or two) each day.



Volunteers are taking extra precautions due to COVID-19 including wearing masks during distribution times.

in Puerto Rico. "I get food services. I love the people here."

Janelys Correa has used mission services for the past four years. Help is necessary with three children and most of her husband's income going to house payments alone. She is a homemaker and does not qualify for food stamps. Every two weeks, she collects a food box from the mission. "It helps us get stuff we need," she said.

She added that her family had stopped coming to the food pantry because of the COVID-19 outbreak for about three months.

"We were scared about being safe. We just came here to get food and get back home."

Hansen said the COVID-19 pandemic has definitely impacted ordinary people who do not usually rely on food bank services. That has factored into the increased demand at the mission.

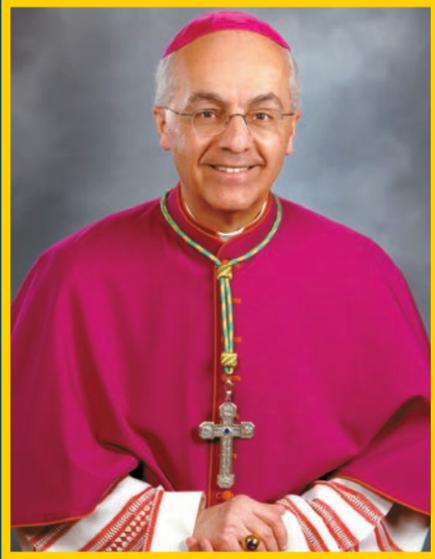
People may help the outreach via donations, and praying for the program and the mission sisters, she said. "Financially, they can support us. We take donations of certain kinds of clothing, depending on season, and furniture."

"Those who show mercy will receive double. God provides," Sr. Mary Michael added.

# God's Share Appeal

“All good giving and every perfect gift is from above.”

James 1:17



## My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our 63rd Annual God's Share Appeal is upon us. This appeal is very important to the diocese as your gift helps to fund the spiritual, pastoral,

educational and temporal works critical in forming our families, children and all individuals yearning for the love and mercy of God.

This year's goal is \$3,261,100. With your donation, we will be able to provide the necessary funding that enables the Catholic Church in western North Dakota to form our 21 seminarians and 8 diaconate candidates; train our religious education catechists and adult faith formation leaders; help our young people grow in faith and prepare for the reception of the Sacraments; promote the dignity of life and marriage, and so much more. Our faith is lived in our parishes and around our dinner tables. Our faith touches everything we do and everything we have.

As Catholics, we are called to share our faith, love and gratitude for all we have been given. Your gift to the God's Share Appeal helps provide all of the vital programs and services that are highlighted in this brochure. Please read this brochure to learn how these offices dispense the Lord's tender mercies to thousands of individuals and families in our diocese. Our website, [www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com) has additional information on our offices and programs, as well as materials that will inform, educate and inspire you.

I have chosen, “All good giving and every perfect gift is from above,” James 1:17 as our theme for our 2020 appeal. Our loving and generous God has blessed each one of us with so many blessings. Through God's infinite grace, each of us possesses special gifts meant to glorify Him and his kingdom here on Earth. As baptized Catholics, one way we show our appreciation for God's blessings in our lives is by sharing those gifts and talents with others.

You play a very important and necessary role in our diocesan family! I need you and your prayers and financial support to keep our church alive and vibrant to serve you and your loved ones for generations to come. We simply cannot continue to do the Lord's work without your support.

I am so deeply grateful to you for your continued prayers and financial support you give to the Annual God's Share Appeal. May the Lord's abundant blessings be yours today and always.

Sincerely yours in our Lord, Jesus Christ,

Most Reverend David D. Kagan  
Bishop of Bismarck



The Diocese of Bismarck is not just one person, it is not just one parish, it is an entire diocese which is the Kingdom of God in western North Dakota.

We are...

- 61,862 Catholic people
- 97 Parishes
- 1 Bishop
- 59 Priests
- 9 Retired Priests
- 21 Seminarians
- 85 Permanent Deacons
- 8 Men in Diaconate Formation
- 1 Diocese

Living and Sharing our Faith  
In 2019, we celebrated:

- 1,106 Baptisms
- 912 First Communions
- 710 Confirmations
- 237 Marriages
- 778 Deaths

## We Respond as Disciples . . .

After reflecting on the importance of the vital works of formation, outreach and education funded through the God's Share Appeal and how you can help,

Please **reflect** on the many gifts you have received from God, including your family and financial blessings.

Next, **pray** about how God wants you to use the gifts He has entrusted to your care.

Then, **decide** how you will share your blessings with those in need and to support the mission of your Diocesan Church.

Please prayerfully discern how you respond to God's generosity in your life by making a generous pledge to the God's Share Appeal that impacts thousands of lives in western North Dakota each year.

“All good giving and every perfect gift is from above.”

James 1:17

*Diocese of Bismarck*  
*September 12-13, 2020*

Your donation to the 2020 God's Share Appeal supports all of the programs and services provided by the following offices:

- Archives
- Bishop's Office
- Catechesis and Youth
- Chancery Office
- Communications and Media Services
- Continuing Education for Clergy
- Family Ministry/Respect Life
- Finance
- Internal Auditor
- Missionary Activity
- Moderator of the Curia/Vicar General
- Permanent Diaconate
- Planned Giving
- Safe Environment Program
- Stewardship and Resource Development
- Tribunal and Canonical Services
- Vicar for Presbyters
- Vocations
- Worship

**"All good giving and every perfect gift is from above."**

**James 1:17**

# God's Share Appeal

September 12-13, 2020

**WE ARE...**

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- 97 Parishes
- 1 Bishop
- 59 Priests
- 9 Retired Priests
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**LIVING AND SHARING OUR FAITH IN 2019, WE CELEBRATED:**

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The Diocese of Bismarck is not just one person, it is not just one parish, it is an entire diocese which is the Kingdom of God in western North Dakota.

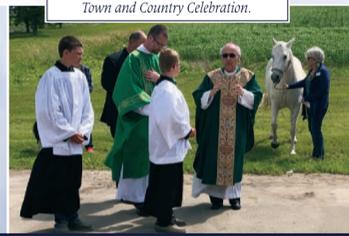
Bishop Kagan poses with our two new priests after their Ordination.

Four seminarians are scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood in June 2021.

Husbands and wives struggling in marriage participate in Corazon weekends to strengthen their marriages.

Bishop Kagan blesses the crops, livestock, equipment and people at the Annual Town and Country Celebration.

Bishop Kagan with our three new Deacons: Jim Belohlavek, Ross Reiter and Mohn Koble.



**Office of Vocations**

Your donation supports the Office of Vocations. This year, Fr. Christian Smith and Fr. Mark Aune were ordained to the priesthood. In June 2021, four of our seminarians, Deacon Ben Franchuk, Deacon Nick Vetter, Deacon Jacob Degele and Deacon Greg Hilzendegeer will be ordained to the priesthood. The other 15 seminarians will return to the seminary this fall. In addition, Bishop Kagan has accepted three additional men who are also beginning formation this fall.

**Office of Family Ministry/Respect Life**

Your contribution supports the Office of Family Ministry/Respect Life which provides informational resources for marriage preparation, marriage encounter, sponsor couple training, respect life, natural family planning, marriage enrichment and several other opportunities. There are numerous programs and services offered by this office that include the Town and Country Celebration; Cana Dinner; Courage; Hannah's Hope Ministry; Rachel's Vineyard; Struggling Marriages - Corazon; and others.

**Office of Permanent Diaconate**

Your gift supports the Office of Permanent Diaconate which assists men who are studying to become deacons in the five-year formation program. This office also coordinates the on-going formation weekends for our Ordained Deacons throughout the year. Currently, we have 8 men in formation and 85 deacons.

**Stewardship and the God's Share Appeal**

The God's Share Appeal is based on the concept of Christian Stewardship. Stewardship is centered on the daily recognition that we are not the absolute owners of ourselves, our time, our talents, or material goods. Rather, we have received every gift of nature and grace from God. Through Baptism we are called to use our time, talent and treasure in a responsible manner for our families, our parish communities, the pastoral, educational and religious ministries of the diocese, and for the global ministries of the universal Church. Stewardship is not about just giving in order to fill a need. It is about living a life that shows gratitude to the Lord for our lives, our skills and our resources.

**Stewardship is . . .**

- Receiving God's Gifts Gratefully
- Nurturing God's Gifts Responsibly
- Sharing God's Gifts Justly
- Returning God's Gifts Abundantly

This year's God's Share Appeal theme is

**"All good giving and every perfect gift is from above." James 1:17**

Every good thing we have comes from God: our families, our careers, our Catholic faith, our children and grandchildren. Being thankful for all those gifts we have received, we share a portion of our treasure, expressing our love as a Christian steward - supporting Christ's work here in western North Dakota.

**Consider Different Possibilities**

1. Make a pledge rather than a one-time gift.
  2. Have your gift automatically deducted from your checking or savings account.
  3. Use your credit card or debit card to make your gift.
  4. Make your gift on-line at [www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com)
  5. Make your gift by "Text-to-Give": text the \$ amount to 701-401-1247.
  6. Make your gift by a percentage or a specific dollar amount.
  7. Increase last year's gift by a percentage or a specific dollar amount.
  8. Pledge one percent of your income.
7. Make your gift using stocks, bonds, grain, livestock, securities, real estate, or other personal property, which may have greatly increased in value. Should you be considering this type of gift, contact the Office of Stewardship and Resource Development at (701) 222-3035 for assistance.

Annual Household Income	1% Pledge	Down Payment	11 Monthly Payments
\$12,000	\$120	\$10.00	\$10.00
\$24,000	\$240	\$20.00	\$20.00
\$48,000	\$480	\$40.00	\$40.00
\$60,000	\$600	\$50.00	\$50.00
\$90,000	\$900	\$75.00	\$75.00
\$120,000	\$1,200	\$100.00	\$100.00
\$180,000	\$1,800	\$150.00	\$150.00

Please consider 1% of your income as a gift to the 2020 God's Share Appeal. Make your pledge today. Thank you for being good stewards of God's varied grace.

Participants of the 2019 Steubenville Youth Conference gather for a group picture.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Members of the Diocesan Youth Council giving a talk at the Diocesan Youth Conference to high school and middle school students.

Diocesan Educational and Training Workshops



**Office of Catechesis and Youth**

Your gift supports the Office of Catechesis and Youth which provides valuable training and information to all of the parish Religious Education programs. This office also coordinates the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training for the parishes and Catholic schools using this special Religious Education program; the Diocesan Youth Conference for high school and middle school youth; March for Life Pilgrimage; Search weekend; Steubenville Youth Conferences; and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) wanting to enter the Catholic Church.

**Office of Communications**

The Office of Communications assists Bishop Kagan in communicating with people of all ages in a variety of ways - through the Dakota Catholic Action newspaper, weekly video messages on the diocesan website and through several social media platforms including his Twitter account.

**Diocesan Educational and Training Workshops**

Educational workshops are offered by several diocesan offices to a variety of parish groups throughout the year. Our priests, deacons, parish employees, parish and finance council members are among the many who benefit from the education provided.

**PRAY FOR OUR 2020-2021 SEMINARIANS**



REV. MR. JACOB DEGELE, Theology IV, St. Joseph Dickinson; REV. MR. BEN FRANCHUK, Theology IV, Queen of Peace Dickinson; REV. MR. GREG HILZENDEGER, Theology IV, Cathedral Bismarck



REV. MR. NICK VETTER, Theology IV, St. Anthony Linton; PAUL GARDNER, Theology III, St. Mary's New England; GRANT DVORAK, Theology III, Cathedral Bismarck; JAKE MAGNUSON, Theology III, Little Flower Minot; LOGAN OBRIGEWITCH, Theology III, St. Joseph's Beulah; BENJAMIN WANNIER, Theology III, St. Joseph's Mandan



JOSH HILL, Theology II, Cathedral Bismarck; DUSTIN JOHNS, Theology II, St. Leo the Great Minot; RYAN MARTIRE, Theology II, Cathedral Bismarck; STEVEN VETTER, Theology II, St. Bernard's Beulah; JOHN WINDSOR, Pre-Theology II, St. Mary's Bismarck; KONNOR PETERSON, Pre-Theology II, Spirit of Life Mandan



ERIC ARTZ, Theology I, Little Flower Minot; ISAIAH FISCHER, Theology I, Cathedral Bismarck; COLTON STEINER, Theology I, St. Joseph Dickinson; ISAIAH JILEK, College II, St. Wenceslaus Dickinson

**New Seminarians**  
Joseph Richter  
Charles Reichert  
Joe Schon

Bishop with 6 retired priests.

Msgr. Patrick Schumacher, director of the Office of Continuing Education for Clergy and Mr. Tom Bair, Diocesan Attorney instruct our new priests.

Bishop Kagan visits with Pope Francis during his Ad Limina visit.

Bishop Kagan visits with a resident of a retirement community.

Bishop Kagan at Liturgy.



**Retired Priests and Bishop**

Your contribution supports all of our 9 retired priests who are a tremendous gift to our diocese. Through the ministry of the Office of the Vicar for Presbyters, we desire to reaffirm them and offer encouragement to them as they experience their sunset years. Bishop Kagan poses with some of our retired priests.

**Continuing Education for Clergy**

The Office of Continuing Education for Clergy provides for the continued spiritual, intellectual and pastoral growth of our clergy by planning the Annual Fall and Spring Clergy Conferences, Annual Retreats for Priests, and the New Priest Workshops.

**The Chancery Office**

The Chancery Office provides administrative and clerical assistance for Bishop Kagan and maintains official diocesan records and reports in the Archives.

For more pictures and information on each office, please visit our diocesan website: [bismarckdiocese.com](http://bismarckdiocese.com)

# Doing God's Work

# Students return to University of Mary

By Patti Armstrong  
DCA Writer

Students from across the country are returning to college campuses for a fall semester that look very different from fall in 2019. According to a survey by the website, The Chronicle of Higher Education, of the 1,200 schools contacted, 55 percent plan for in-person learning, 10 percent will remain exclusively online, and the rest plan on a combination.

The University of Mary in Bismarck will bring students back into the classroom this semester. Freshman move-in date is Sept. 5. But, even as they return to classrooms, online instruction will be available for flexibility. Safety protocols and a five-level system has also been put in place to ease students back while balancing health, safety and optimum learning. Adaptations include: classes getting moved to larger rooms or split up and staggered, improved room ventilations, directed traffic flow and increased sanitation. Wearing masks will be mandatory only when social distancing is not possible.

## Students eager to return

Jerry Richter, Executive Vice President at UMary said that after being forced to switch to classes online in March, students repeatedly expressed the message: "Thanks for caring about us, you did a good job online, but please don't do that to us again." Restricting education to exclusively online takes out the human element, according to him. "Every good Christian knows that relationship is important and you learn that through community," he said. "That is what students missed and what they want."

Benjamin Helget, a senior double majoring in psychology and Catholic studies wholeheartedly agreed.

"The university, staff, and students handled that transition very well, but it was, by all means, a stressful time of change," he said. "I believe that UMary's plan to be in person with the option of online is a very good solution to an unprecedented and difficult problem. I will be the first to admit that I am excited for in-person classes to begin, but by no means do I want that at the expense of my fellow students or faculty's safety."

Katelyn Schmidt, a junior majoring in elementary education and minoring in Catholic Studies, studied on the Rome campus last fall (as did Helget), so she said it was a big disappointment to have spring semester back home cut short.

"It felt like summer had arrived early," she said. "I am extremely excited to be back on campus. The students, professors, and religious on campus are one of my favorite things about UMary, so it will be great to see them and be with them in person."

## Athletic programs

Football, volleyball, and soccer players usually start arriving on campus in early August, but this year, the fall seasons will be canceled or postponed.



University staff followed safety protocols when giving tours of campus to prospective students and their family members this summer.

As for fall sports, the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC), with 16 member schools including the University of Mary, terminated the 2020 season in all sports through December 31. The announcement comes days after its governing body, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), cancelled all 2020 fall championships. This decision currently allows for the start of the winter season and training on November 27, with competition beginning January 1, 2021. Seniors have the option of postponing their final year of competition until the fall of 2021.

"While I'm disappointed with this necessary outcome, I want to be clear that this decision has been made to best ensure the health and safety of everyone involved in Marauders Athletics," University of Mary Athletic Director Dale Lennon said in a release issued by the university on the day the cancellation announcement was made on Aug. 13. "As director of athletics, I vigorously pursued the opportunity to compete until we no longer had another option. The safety and well-being of our scholar-athletes was the driving force in our decision to cancel or suspend fall competition. Provisions are in place to assure that athletes will not be put in a compromising situation of having to make participation decisions that make them uncomfortable. Therefore, all athletes have the choice to 'opt out' of the fall workout phase and retain their athletic scholarship for the year."

## The plan

Before the COVID-19 pandemic even hit the United States, at the direction of UMary President Monsignor James Shea, they became one of the first universities to assemble an on-campus, 10-member COVID-19 emergency response team chaired by Richter and assisted by retired Brigadier General Dave Anderson, coordinator of Military Student Services at the UMary. The team developed the "Returning to Campus General Guidelines, Protocols and Monitoring System," an 18-page document that features a five-level color-coded risk/action



Safety protocols and a five-level system has also been put in place to ease students back while balancing health, safety and optimum learning.

levels monitoring system which allows the university to turn the dial up or down depending on infection rates on campus and in the community.

Each progressive level involves increased precautionary measures. For instance, Level 1-New Normal would resume usual activities under heightened hygiene and cleaning standards. Level 2-Low Risk reduces seating and self-service in the cafeteria, and online instruction becomes available upon request. The tightest restrictions would be at Level 5-Critical where all classes move to online with only essential employees working from campus.

The goal, according to Richter, is for the college experience not to be interrupted and for it to take place in an atmosphere most conducive to learning.

"We are fully committed to have as much of a normal school year as possible and looked at the totality of what is best for the students," Richter said. "A lot of study, discernment and prayer went into this. Life needs to go on and we believe that they can be safe and healthy."

In a statement, Msgr. Shea pointed out some of the advantages at UMary during this time such as its location outside of the city and the fact that it is one of only a handful of campuses

across the United States to offer 24/7 dining. Its Crow's Nest restaurant seats over 600 people for less crowding and allows students to eat wherever they wish.

"With large-sized classrooms, but a small 14 to 1 student-to-faculty-ratio, the University of Mary doesn't have huge, crowded, elbow-to-elbow learning quarters with large auditorium-style classes of 200 to 300 students, that could otherwise cause safety challenges," Msgr. Shea said. "Our strong online capabilities, remote location, on-campus healthcare services and spacious campus with overflow residence hall capacity, give us the capabilities to quarantine students, if needed, for a mandatory period of time, while still allowing them to learn online, before transitioning back into the classroom."

He also noted that last spring, before students left campus and among the small number that needed to stay, there was no outbreak among their students and or any community transmission traced to the University of Mary.

"Our campus is meant to be experienced as a true home for students, a place of stability where they can learn and grow, not a temporary place of residence," he said.

# Back to school

## Seminarians return to formation

The Bismarck Diocese has been blessed with 22 seminarians studying for the priesthood this academic year. The men are attending four seminaries across the nation and abroad in St. Louis, Denver, Washington, D.C. and at the Pontifical North American College (PNAC) in Rome.

In June, Fathers Mark Aune and Christian Smith were ordained to the holy priesthood by Bishop Kagan. Three new seminarians joined this summer. The new seminarians are Joseph Richter, Charles Reichert and Joe Schon. All are Bismarck natives and alumni of St. Mary's Central High School.

Richter and Reichert will be entering at the College II level and Schon at College I and all are studying at St. John Paul II Seminary in Washington, D.C. this fall. In addition to these new men, diocesan seminarian Isaiah Jilek will also be studying at JPII Seminary.

Seminarian Konnor Peterson will be attending St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver. Eleven men will be studying at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis including Colton Steiner, Eric Artz, Ryan Martire, John Windsor, Dustin Johns, Ben Wanner, Logan Obrigewitch, Paul Gardner

and Deacons Jacob Degele, Ben Franchuk and Greg Hilzendeger.

The diocese will send six men to Rome this year. Those returning will be Deacon Nick Vetter, Grant Dvorak, Jake Magnuson, Josh Hill and Steven Vetter. Seminarian Isaiah Fischer is also attending the PNAC in Rome this year. He is among the three men advancing to major seminary, along with Artz and Steiner.

Amid COVID-19 concerns and restrictions, all the seminarians will be attending classes in person. Those men traveling to and from Rome, according to Diocesan Vocations Director Fr. Jordan Dosch, will be doing so on their travel visa already in place.

### Diaconate ordination

Seminarian Deacon Nick Vetter was scheduled to be ordained to the transitional diaconate in October. His uncle, Bishop Austin Vetter, of the Diocese of Helena, was scheduled to be the main celebrant for the ordination at the PNAC, where he had served on the faculty years earlier. However, due to the uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic and international travel, Bishop Kagan ordained Vetter on Aug. 15 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (see photos and story on page 3).

—Staff report



Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky

Diocesan seminarians, Deacon Nick Vetter, Grant Dvorak, Paul Gardner, Logan Obrigewitch and Deacon Jacob Degele, led the procession into the priestly ordination Mass of their brother seminarians, Fathers Mark Aune and Christian Smith (in the back), in June at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.



Twenty-two diocesan seminarians are headed back to school for the academic year this fall across the nation and abroad in St. Louis, Denver, Washington, D.C. and at the Pontifical North American College (PNAC) in Rome.

## Dakota Hope Clinic fundraising banquet

Minot's pregnancy help clinic invites you to their annual Dakota Hope fundraising banquet on Monday, Sept. 21 at the North Dakota State Fair Event Center.

New this year, a second banquet night will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 22 at the Mountrail County South Complex in Stanley. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. in Minot and 6 p.m. in Stanley. Dinner is at 6:30 p.m. for both venues. Please RSVP by Sept. 7 to your table host or register at dakotahope.org. For more information, call 701-852-4675.

One of the youngest speakers on reproductive issues, Rebekah Hagen, will be the guest speaker for both evenings.

Raised in a Christian home where abortion was never discussed, Rebekah's role in the pro-life movement was

unplanned and fueled, instead, by firsthand experience. She became pregnant at 17 with her son, Eli, and with a second child while in her first year of college.

Feeling ashamed and fearing that she would lose her family's support and have to drop out of school, Rebekah thought that raising two children alone would be impossible. At just over seven weeks pregnant, she began a medication abortion that would later change her life.

Her story, however, did not end after taking the abortion pill. Minutes after leaving the clinic, she experienced a radical change of heart and turned to the internet to search for a way out. Feeling determined to reverse her mistake, Rebekah underwent what most thought would be an impossible attempt to save her baby.

At age 20, she began speaking across the United States and sharing her own story of hope and redemption. A passionate advocate for grace-centered outreach, Rebekah Hagen uses her story to unravel the mindset of women in unplanned pregnancies, and to equip and encourage others to lead with hope and compassion.

Rebekah is a graduate of William Jessup University, and she and her family reside in Roseville, California where she works for her local pregnancy center.

Live-streaming of the Sept. 21 banquet is available for those who wish to participate from home. Upon registration at www.dakotahope.org, a link will be sent to access the event.

### About Dakota Hope

Dakota Hope Clinic is the only



Rebekah Hagen

life-affirming pregnancy help center in northwestern North Dakota. The Christian non-profit organization was formed to help women and men involved in an unintended pregnancy. Because of God's grace and generous donors, they have seen more than 90% of their pregnant clients make a choice for life since opening in 2013. All services at Dakota Hope Clinic are 100% free and confidential.



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

An invitation from the Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club

- Sept. 1 Fr. Benedict Fischer, OSB
- Sept. 2 Deacon Joseph Mattson
- Sept. 3 Sem. Deacon Nick Vetter
- Sept. 4 All lay ministers
- Sept. 5 Sr. Eleanor Stockert, OSB
- Sept. 6 Sr. Anna Rose Ruhland, OSB

- Sept. 7 Fr. John Guthrie
- Sept. 8 Fr. Steven Folorunso
- Sept. 9 Br. George Maufort, SDS
- Sept. 10 Sr. Claire Schmitt, OSB
- Sept. 11 Fr. John Paul Gardner
- Sept. 12 Deacon Stephen Mays
- Sept. 13 Br. Gregory Senger, OSB
- Sept. 14 Sr. Hildegarde Urlacher, OSB

- Sept. 15 Sr. Dolores Heidt, OSB
- Sept. 16 All seminarians and religious in formation
- Sept. 17 Msgr. Chad Gion
- Sept. 18 Deacon Rex McDowall
- Sept. 19 All liturgical ministers
- Sept. 20 Sisters ministering in Fort Yates
- Sept. 21 Sem. Paul Gardner
- Sept. 22 Br. Elias Thienpont, OSB

- Sept. 23 Deacon Robert Stockert
- Sept. 24 Sr. Susan Lardy, OSB
- Sept. 25 Fr. Tom Grafsgaard
- Sept. 26 Deacon Joel Melarvie
- Sept. 27 Fr. Paul Becker
- Sept. 28 Fr. Brian Gross
- Sept. 29 Deacon Mike Mellmer
- Sept. 30 Br. Benet Tvedten, OSB

# Dwelling in the heart of the Church

Some find a secondary vocation as a lay Carmelite

By Amanda Evinger  
DCA Writer

At times, we desire to launch out “into the deep” with the net of our Catholic faith. We might feel that our prayer life is a little dull, and we may be seeking more meaningful conversations with Our Lord. Or, we may simply want to offer our life back to God in the fullest, most beautiful way that we possibly can as lay persons amid this dark world, so desperately in need of His mercy.

Many of us have these longings, but we aren’t sure where to turn, and this is where a lay order membership can come in.

“When I was in formation about 20 years ago, a religious sister told me that the lay Carmelite vocation is a secondary vocation, and that I need to take it seriously,” said Billy Wolf. “She reminded me that although it comes after my vocation to take care of my family, I shouldn’t make light of it. It is not just something I do, it is something I am, and there is much more to it than just saying prayers.”

Looking back, Billy is grateful he’s had his lay Carmelite commitment to turn to over the years. It has given him the graces he needs to serve his family the best he can.

“My wife Theresa and I have five children, and I first became a lay Carmelite when my oldest child was 17,” he shared. “I made sure I didn’t take too much time away from the family to say my prayers, so I would get up early before work and make a Holy Hour, and go to daily Mass when I was able to. Having a great prayer life has really helped guide me, and give me the strength and wisdom to raise my children. It has allowed me to guide my children in the right direction. Overall, it has helped tremendously!”

Today, Billy continues to embrace the Carmelite spirituality with all his heart, finding great serenity and hope by doing so. When he isn’t spending time with his family or getting some work done, he can be found praying his breviary, in the adoration chapel, or at Mass.

“I began praying three offices of the breviary from the very beginning, and I have never stopped since,” Billy said. “Now that I am retired, I pray all seven offices every day. I am really drawn to silent prayer as well, and I love spending time alone with Jesus. My prayers keep me up to tune all the time. We are all called to prayer, community and ministry, but without putting prayer first in our lives, the rest is not going to work out. If we pray, God will steer us in the right direction.”

No matter what life seems to throw at him, Billy is profoundly grateful that he has the sturdy foundation of his lay Carmelite commitment to lean upon. And, he’s also glad he can share the “spiritual wealth” with others.

“During the coronavirus lockdown, my wife Theresa and I were home a lot together, so we started praying the breviary together,” Billy said. “I am so thankful for my prayers. I can’t

imagine what life would be like without prayer. It would feel so empty.”

Billy finds the strength he needs to live out his “secondary vocation” through fellowship with other lay Carmelites who gather monthly at Spirit of Life Church in Mandan. The group, named Our Lady of Divine Providence, includes several dedicated members who commit themselves to praying at least two offices of the breviary and the rosary daily, coming to monthly meetings, attending daily Mass if possible, wearing the Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and spending time in meditation every day.

Most of all, they strive to offer their entire lives to Our Lord, serving Mother Church and all those around them and entrusting their souls to the protection of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

“Our Lady called me to look deeper into the contemplative aspect of Catholic spirituality, and this is what led me to join the lay Carmelites,” said Cheryl Hanson, who serves as the contact person for Our Lady of Divine Providence lay Carmelite group. “Overall, it has helped my spiritual journey so much, and given me what I needed to live out my faith. It has been a very important, powerful experience for me.”

Lay Carmelites like Cheryl appreciate the many ways in which their secondary vocation helps them live out their primary vocation.

“It is all about helping you live out your Catholic faith to the best of your ability, during your everyday life,” Cheryl said. “Being a lay Carmelite has really helped me be a better wife and mother. My husband, Barry, is also a lay Carmelite. Even though he is a very active guy, and not necessarily contemplative, he saw the fruit of my Carmelite vocation, and decided he wanted



The group, named Our Lady of Divine Providence, are lay Carmelites who gather monthly at Spirit of Life Church in Mandan

to be a lay Carmelite, too. It really strengthens our marriage, and impacts the way we live out our lives together.”

The desire to be a lay Carmelite is not just something that comes to a person, it is something rooted in a divine call from God the Father.

“God truly calls us out!” Cheryl explained. “If you look at the history of the Carmelites, and how unique they were, you see that they had to be true contemplatives. Being a lay Carmelite helps me see how God is working things out in my life, even if I don’t always understand. It allows me to keep a good perspective. Becoming a lay Carmelite isn’t just about professing something or becoming ‘someone else.’ It is about becoming who God created you to be.”

Throughout the history of Catholicism, numerous canonized saints and faithful souls dedicated themselves to lay orders, finding in them a path to sanctity.

## Devotion of St. John Paul II

“St. John Paul II was a lay Carmelite, and this fostered his great devotion to Our Lady,” Cheryl commented. “He did a beautiful job of weaving his own contemplative Marian spirituality into everything he did.”

Given what is happening in the Church and in the world now, people need to turn to prayer like they never have before, with tremendous dedication and fervor. Prayer is a lifeline, the native breath of those who sincerely follow Christ. By belonging to a lay or third order, a Catholic can help lift Mother Church up from her struggles, and give hope to all those around them.

“The world we live in right now

is so confused and broken,” Cheryl explained. “It is a very difficult time in history. The things of the world are being idolized, which is against the first commandment to honor and serve God. Now, more than ever, the Church really needs lay people to be lights of Christ’s love. We all need to pray a lot, and help one another to grow closer to God.”

Cheryl wants to encourage other Catholics to consider joining the lay Carmelites, so that more souls can be “love” in the heart of the Church, as was St. Therese of Lisieux.

“I hope that people will be willing to just come and see what Our Lady is offering to the lay Carmelites,” Cheryl said. “I hope our group can be an answer to prayer for them. I invite anyone, married or single, who has a desire to look deeper into Carmelite spirituality, to visit us and learn what it is all about.”

## Informational meeting on Sept. 9

Those who are interested in becoming a lay Carmelite must: be a practicing Catholic living in communion with the Church (no marriage irregularities); be at least 18 years old; obtain a recommendation from their parish priest or another priest that knows them well; not currently be a lay member of another third order or lay community; have good moral conduct; and desire to live and act in the spirit of the Carmelite charism. The next informational meeting and registration for formation is scheduled on Wednesday, Sept. 9 at 6:30 p.m. at Spirit of Life Catholic Church in Mandan. For further information or to register, please contact Cheryl at 701-527-4022.

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## Balancing Church & State

CHRISTOPHER DODSON



# Helping Catholics discern their vote

Another election season is upon us. There exist five “rules” or facts that we should keep in mind between now and the election.

**Rule one:** The Catholic Church does not support or oppose political candidates or political parties.

Remember that, share it with your friends, affix it to your refrigerator, email it to yourself.

Between now and the election, we will hear and read claims that the Catholic Church supports or opposes a candidate or party. In fact, it is against federal law for the Church to take a position on a candidate or political party. The Church is not interested in partisan politics. Instead, the Church seeks to bring attention and clarity to the moral and human dimensions of the issues.

The dioceses of North Dakota go further than the law by directing that materials that mention specific candidates or political parties in any manner may not be distributed at or by any parish or diocesan entity, even if the materials do not explicitly support or oppose a candidate.

**Rule two:** Talking about issues is not the same as endorsing or opposing a candidate or party.

The Church, including its leaders, has an obligation to talk about the issues. Pope Benedict XVI wrote: “The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.” (*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28)

In our candidate and party-centric world, merely speaking on issues is perceived as code for talking about candidates and parties. In truth, this is backwards. The Church’s social doctrine stems from transcendent and universal truths. It was there before any candidate or party took a position on the issues. If a candidate or party falls on the wrong side of Catholic doctrine, that is of their doing, not the Church’s. The Church will not and cannot change just because politicians want her to follow their lead.

**Rule three:** Don’t believe everything you hear.

Every election cycle, we hear about priests or deacons who supported or opposed a candidate or party in his homily. Investigation usually shows that the claim is not true. Usually, the priest actually talked only about issues.

Social media poses difficult problems. Already, posts are circulating stating that Catholics must vote in a particular way. Some of those posts come from organizations claiming to be “Catholic.” In truth, those posts are not officially Catholic. Remember, Catholic organizations cannot legally oppose or support a

candidate or party. (See rule one.)

**Rule four:** People make mistakes.

Admittedly, priests, deacons or Catholic representatives have, on rare occasions, said something they should not have said about candidates or parties. If you think this has happened, make sure you have all the information and contact the diocese. In charity, remember that the statement does not represent the position of the Church.

**Rule five:** In the United States, we vote for individuals, not parties.

Unlike most western nations, the United States is not a parliamentary system. In those countries, people vote for a “government” represented by a party. The party has a platform which it will implement while in government. The parties rarely allow elected officials to stray from the party program.

In the United States, including the individual states, we vote for individuals who happen to belong

to a party or maybe no party at all.

Proofs of this political practice abound. Not all Republicans are pro-life and not all Democrats are pro-abortion rights. Not every Democrat supports greater restrictions on guns and not every Republican opposes limiting gun ownership. Republicans in some states are very pro-school choice while in other states, like North Dakota, Republicans have been resistant to the idea. Within the North Dakota House of Representatives, Republicans can be divided into three or more distinct voting groups.

Nevertheless, when it comes time to vote, we lump all Democrats into one group and all Republicans into another group. Worse, we assume that all of them believe everything that was thrown into a party platform statement adopted long before or we assume that every candidate agrees with his/her party’s presidential nominee.

This has consequences for how

we vote as Catholics.

For one thing, it is not informed voting. Find out where the candidate really stands and do not make assumptions. Between now and the election, the North Dakota Catholic Conference will provide questions for you to ask the candidates. Make use of them. Second, drawing assumptions about candidates based on parties plays into a tribalism and division that is not good for American politics.

The North Dakota Catholic Conference has developed a website to help Catholics discern their vote. It is called “Your Faith, Your Vote.” It will be periodically updated between now and the election. You can find it at [yourfaithyourvote.org](http://yourfaithyourvote.org).

■ 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.



## Why Children Don't Tell About Sexual Abuse

We often hear the question, “Why don’t children tell someone when something bad is happening to them?” and many parents believe, “My child would tell me if someone was abusing them.”

Statistics show that 73% of children do not tell anyone about sexual abuse for at least one year. The grooming process is manipulative and designed to keep children silent. Frighteningly, it is also effective.

- Relationship of Child to Abuser - Only 7% of child sexual abuse cases involve abuse by a stranger. It is most likely that the child knows, trusts, and loves his or her abuser.
- Shame and Fear - In many cases, victimized children blame themselves for sexual abuse. This is often encouraged by abusers, who may tell the children that they are at fault or that no one will believe them. Abusers may tell them that it’s a “secret,” and threaten to harm the child or their loved ones if the secret is told.
- Erosion of Boundaries – Sexual abuse is generally a process rather than an immediate action. Abusers build relationships with children and their families. They challenge boundaries with hugs, swats, rubs, and pats can be made to look like innocent actions. By the time sexual abuse occurs, the child is dependent on and emotionally controlled by the abuser, confused as to what behavior is acceptable and whether boundaries have been crossed.
- Adults don’t ask. It is imperative to encourage children to discuss things that make them feel uncomfortable, to talk about secrets, and to help them understand safe and unsafe touching. If your child or a child in your care does disclose abuse, listen. False reporting is rare, between 2 and 10 percent. Believe the child and get them help.

For more information on keeping kids safe, call (701) 323-5626.



## Catholic Charities

CHAD PROSOSKI



# The beauty of repurposing and restoring

Despite practicing social distancing, we remain social creatures. How then should we live together in society with others? Thankfully, we have a gift from the Church about how to live together in this world. These teachings are often referred to collectively as Catholic social teaching. Amid our lives, it can be helpful for us to look back at these principles as a guiding light from time to time.

Care for God's creation is one of the main themes of Catholic social teaching. According to the USCCB's materials, "We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored."

Right now, much of our focus is on preventing the spread of COVID-19. Thus, we are taking many extra precautions as a society. These steps can be good and necessary to slow the pandemic, but have we considered

the possible environmental impact of so many disposable items? And, if we start thinking deeply about all the extra items we are throwing away, then what about the normal trash we throw out?

This summer, I made a trip to the landfill for the first time in years and was shocked with the enormous scale of it. While others have told me stories of going to the junkyard years ago to salvage old parts, I had forgotten about how much garbage there is because we rarely see it. As I reflected on this, I wondered how we could help, and how often do we try to restore or repurpose before replacing?

While we often think of recycling and not being wasteful there is so much more to being good stewards of the earth. In fact, even recycling isn't free from problems. This past year, there were national reports about too many recyclables in the United States because China and other countries have stopped importing them. This could possibly impact the availability of options for recycling in the future.

When we think of caring for the environment we are challenged to look beyond the simple answer to reduce, reuse and recycle. What if

we made a more intentional effort to repair and restore items before replacing them? It seems there are how-to videos for everything these days so you don't always have to be a professional. What a blessing it is to see experts (and some not-so-experts) share their tips on all sorts of repairs.

We may be surprised by what we can do to restore or repurpose things when we try. For instance, a co-worker let me know some free bikes were available from a neighbor. Some needed new tubes, tires or break repairs. At first it was tough fixing up those and other old used bikes I had collected. It took a couple weekends and at least a few evenings of learning, but soon enough my kids all had working bikes with others to grow into and even some extra bikes to give away.

Everyone understands what it means to repair appliances or restore worn furniture, but what about repurposing them? Repurposing can simply be finding another use for something before getting rid of it. At Catholic Charities North Dakota, we recently moved around some offices. This challenged us to

repurpose what we have as good stewards of the environment—and of our donor support. Tables became printer stands and desks or chairs that no longer fit worked great in another employee's office.

Catholic social teaching also reminds us that people are more important than things. There is a strong satisfaction in restoring the beauty of physical goods or making them work again, but how much more is the beauty and satisfaction in restoring the lives and souls of others? Catholic Charities North Dakota's adoption, pregnancy, counseling and guardianship services offer hope and healing to restore human dignity, remembering that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Our supporters help make this possible. What an important and rewarding mission to become a part of!

■ Prosocki is the Director of Development and Community Relations for Catholic Charities North Dakota (CCND). For more than 90 years, CCND and its supporters have been putting their faith in action helping people and changing lives. Chad can be reached at [info@catholiccharitiesnd.org](mailto:info@catholiccharitiesnd.org) or 701-235-4457.

## Ag Attitudes

JAMES ODERMANN



# The ultimate goal is sunset with God

"How many more sunsets will you get to see?" a long-time friend asked me as we visited about how crops and livestock were growing. The question certainly brought the concept of my mortality front and center, the reality that change is inevitable.

This kind of frankness springs up often in rural settings, but the underlying message is the same—time continues moving ahead. One axiom in the agriculture industry is "next year." The adage is the admission that better times are in the future, that quitting this vocation of farming and/or ranching is not going to happen—at least not this year.

The roller coaster of ups and downs in production agriculture is constant. Two choices are obvious: scream or enjoy the ride. The other is to get off the ride, but that is not

possible while the roller coaster is in motion when crops need to be planted, tended for and harvested, livestock needs to be cared for and fed.

So, I thought I would go and enjoy the sunset. The view was like many others that I had seen: the heat of the day lessens, the colors of yellow recede, the orange hues of evening creep into the view, the air (usually) becomes more still and the softness of dew creeps upon the land.

The buttes of the badlands jut up in the distance, some over 20 miles away, and begin to slowly disappear as the sun loses its glow and disappears on the horizon, leaving me with the wild animals. Deer emerge. Sounds of various vermin that inhabit the landscape materialize and move about cautiously at first and then more

rapidly as darkness approaches.

I reflect, "How many more sunsets do I have?" For me, I have the blessing of seeing spectacular sunsets and enjoying God's native beauty close up.

Yet, I reflected and many questions floated through my mind as I viewed the day turn into night. Do I enjoy the native beauty of family, friends, associates, strangers? Am I receptive to others like Jesus was while here on earth? Has my life been an answer to God's call? Would Jesus welcome me as a disciple? Would my earthly sisters and brothers say they saw my thoughts, words and actions as

extensions of grace given by the Holy Spirit?

And, the most life defining question: "Am I ready for what lies ahead?" God gave me life, showers me with infinite love and extends unconditional forgiveness. I need to acknowledge this because the ultimate sunset is with God.

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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### 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>.

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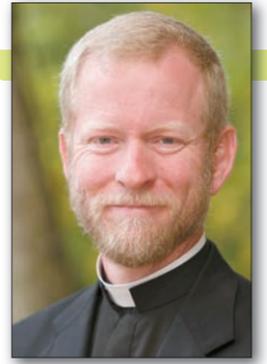
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# Making Sense out of Bioethics

FR. TAD PACHOLCZYK



## Tragedies in human medical experimentation

Between 1932 and 1972, a series of highly unethical medical studies were performed on a group of 400 African-Americans by doctors from the U.S. Public Health Service.

Officially referred to as the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male, the research protocol enrolled 399 impoverished sharecroppers from Macon County, Alabama, all of whom had syphilis, and a control group of 201 others who were free of the disease. The 399 were never told that they had syphilis or that their condition was sexually-transmitted, but only that they had “bad blood.”

The study began at a time when no effective treatments for syphilis existed, but as penicillin became the standard of care during the mid-1940s, the infected men were not offered the new drug; in fact, it was withheld from them during the next 25 years, to enable researchers to track the progression of their disease.

The outcry that followed the public revelation of these unethical research methods, described in an investigative report in the Washington Star, resulted in the study’s finally being shut down. By then, there had already been widespread devastation, with 28 participants having died from syphilis, 100 more having perished from related complications, and the subjects’ having transmitted the disease to at least 40 spouses and 19 of their children.

In May, 1997 President Clinton issued a public apology to the victims and their families, stating, “The United States government did something that was wrong—deeply, profoundly, morally wrong.” Many afterward questioned how such ethically offensive research could have continued unabated for so many decades.

In the final analysis, the Tuskegee syphilis experiments relied upon a defective theory of ethics, still popular today, known as “utilitarianism.” Utilitarianism seeks to

determine right from wrong by focusing on a calculation of consequences (and so is sometimes also called “consequentialism”), asserting that the best ethical choice is the one that produces “the greatest good for the greatest number” and maximizes “usefulness.”

For the Tuskegee experiments, the usefulness was the knowledge gained through studying the progression of syphilis in human patients, including what consequences (like blindness, insanity) typically can be expected to occur, at what stages, etc. This basic medical knowledge could end up serving the interests of thousands or millions of other individuals in the future, it was asserted, even as doctors overlooked the litany of sufferings and harms inflicted on an unfortunate few.

A utilitarian approach to justifying scientific research on humans usually implies that we need to “balance” the value of new scientific discoveries against the dignity of human experimental subjects. In this view, the two represent “competing values,” and in a world with no moral absolutes, some individuals may emphasize one set of values, while others will give more weight to another. Compromise can then open up a “middle” solution, allowing for some experimentation on humans to be carried out for the good of research, even if it might at times be harmful, debilitating or lethal to its subjects. In any real-world setting, this means that those who are most vulnerable—the poor, the weak, the disenfranchised and the sick—become rife for exploitation whenever particular research goals are declared worthy of pursuit.

This utilitarian approach to “balancing values” provides a highly flawed ethical framework that has been used to justify other immoral biomedical research projects like the German medical experiments on prisoners during the Second World War, human embryonic stem cell research and other forms

of exploitative human experimentation.

In each of these, researchers have been motivated by good goals like learning about disease, developing treatments and helping others. Finding treatments and making progress against disease is clearly very praiseworthy. But a good end cannot justify an immoral means. That is where the need for a non-utilitarian ethical understanding becomes paramount. Maintaining immovable negative ethical norms against the abuse of research subjects is key, including norms like: “Do no harm,” “do not kill,” “always secure informed consent,” etc.

The rights of patients to these protections should not be taken as values to be balanced against the goals of research. This risks sweeping away the vital interests of human subjects in a tide of appeals to societal utility or medical progress. The negative norm, which requires that one should never harm, exploit or destroy human life in the pursuit of laudable research goals, can only be fulfilled in one way: by refusing to violate the norm.

These kinds of negative norms serve the essential role of setting fixed and clear boundaries for ethically acceptable research, strict limits on the pursuit of even the most worthwhile of scientific goals. This helps assure that humans, who are endowed with an absolute value and a unique dignity in themselves, are appropriately protected from any forms of utilitarian reckoning.

■ *Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. He also serves as a professor of bioethics at the University of Mary in Bismarck. See [www.ncbcenter.org](http://www.ncbcenter.org)*

### Questions

## I was afraid to ask

FR. JOSEPH EVINGER



### Q: Why can't some people receive Holy Communion?

A:

There are three groups of people who cannot approach Holy Communion. Non-Catholics and non-Orthodox are not able to approach Holy Communion. All those who have committed grave sin and are unrepentant cannot approach Holy Communion. And, those who have not fasted from food and drink for at least one hour cannot approach Holy Communion.

Before we continue, there is one truth we must wholeheartedly believe: The sacrament of Holy Communion is God. The reception of Holy Communion hinges on this great truth.

To approach the Most Blessed Sacrament, we must be ready for communion with God. God is always ready to receive us, but there are many human beings who, whether purposefully or through no fault of their own, are not ready to receive God. God always takes us as we are and then slowly and patiently transforms us into who He created us to be, namely saints in heaven. We often try to do the same with God. We want to take God as He is and then turn Him into what we want Him to be. We want to manipulate God our Creator. Of course, God can change us into good, but we can't make God better than He already is. He is the good. If I don't want to change my life to be in accordance with God's will, I'm not ready for Holy Communion with Him.

When we were baptized, we, or our godparents, made a profession of faith. We promised that we would give our hearts to God. Every Sunday since then, we have done the same when we profess the Creed before God and the whole Church. We say we believe in God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which means we say we give our hearts to God. We say we believe in “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,” meaning we promise to obey all the teachings which Jesus passed down to us through the Church. If our actions say that we are giving our hearts to God and the Church, then we are ready to receive Holy Communion.

If I do not believe in God, nor believe Holy Communion is God, nor in full communion with the Church He established, then I'm not ready to receive Holy Communion. Therefore, the first group mentioned above cannot receive Holy Communion. They either don't believe in God, don't believe Holy Communion is Who it is and/or don't believe in the Church Jesus established. Of course, anyone can change their heart and believe in God and the Church. Once they have made this change, and it has been declared so in public, then they can approach Holy Communion.

Now, let's look at the second group. If a Catholic Christian has knowingly gone against God and his Church, it's simple to understand that they are not in communion with God and His Church. Therefore, they cannot approach Holy Communion. For by approaching Holy Communion one is stating publicly that one is in communion with God and His Church.

For example, a Catholic gets married in a Catholic Church, then gets divorced and then attempts another marriage at the courthouse. That person's public action of getting married at the courthouse or anywhere outside the Church tells the whole world that they do not want to listen to Jesus' words on marriage and divorce found in Matthew 19, Mark 10, and in other places. That person cannot approach Holy Communion until he or she stops living married life with the new person, or the first marriage is found to have been invalid and their present union is validated in the Catholic Church. This may sound harsh to some ears but Jesus' words on marriage and divorce cannot be any clearer. One has to obey Jesus or one can't approach Holy Communion. This goes for all grave sin, public or private. We must obey Jesus to have Holy Communion with Him.

The third group of people who cannot approach Holy Communion are unable to do so because the Church wishes us to prepare our minds before approaching this Sacred and Holy Sacrament. Fasting from all food and drink (medication and water not included) remind us that the food we're about to receive isn't ordinary food. No, this is the God of the Universe. No one without preparation walks half-heartedly into the ocean. No, one prepares oneself, mentally and with any gear necessary to stay safe.

To approach God in Holy Communion my heart, soul, and mind must be ready. And, my actions must be in accordance with God and His Church. If I'm not ready to be obedient to God and be in full communion with Him, then I'm not ready to approach Him in Holy Communion. This doesn't mean that I don't love God. It just means that I don't love God fully nor do I want to follow His will completely. And, of course, God always loves us and tugs at our hearts every day. He wants us to receive Holy Communion even more so than we do. But, He wants us to be in actual communion with Him. The great sacrament of confession gives us that grace of full communion with God and his Church.

■ *Fr. Evinger is pastor of St. Joseph in Killdeer, St. Paul in Halliday and St. Joseph in Twin Buttes. 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.*

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