



# Dakota Catholic Action

Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941



## New religious sisters to serve Dickinson

The Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus are opening a house within the Diocese of Bismarck to serve in Dickinson.

### Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus established in Bismarck Diocese

Bishop David Kagan has announced the opening of a new house for the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus within the Diocese of Bismarck to serve in Dickinson.

Bishop Kagan made the announcement at a Nov. 6 Mass at Dickinson's Queen of Peace Parish. The Sisters will establish their house at St. Patrick's Parish in Dickinson starting this fall to serve all four parishes there including St. Joseph and St. Wenceslaus.

"What began as a discussion with Mother Mary Clare eight years ago now has come to fruition," said Bishop Kagan. "God has answered our prayers and I am most grateful to Him and to the Handmaids for this wonderful gift to our diocese and the Catholic faithful."

The Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus were formally established in 2010, in the Diocese of New Ulm, Minn., by Bishop John LeVoi. In accordance with canon 301 of the Code of Canon Law, the bishop formally established the Handmaids as a

public association of the faithful in hopes of becoming a religious community of diocesan right. This status allows them to be public witnesses and teach Catholic doctrine "in the name of the Church" while continuing to discover the fullness of this new charism. Eventually, they hope to apply to become a religious community of diocesan right which requires them to have at least forty members, half of which would be in perpetual vows.

Their motherhouse is in the New Ulm Diocese. They have convents in Duluth and Hopkins, Minn. and now Dickinson at the invitation of Bishop Kagan.

"Also, I want to thank Bishop LeVoi for his prayers and support for the Handmaids and his continued guidance," Bishop Kagan added. "It is a process of discernment of God's will for the Handmaids and for our diocese and we must be patient since God always works in mysteriously

*Continued on page 5*



The Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus bring a feminine consecrated presence to the parish family complementing the diocesan priesthood.

### A LOOK INSIDE



#### Life-affirming clinic

Bismarck's Women's Care Center provides early pregnancy and parenting counseling for clients ..... Page 3



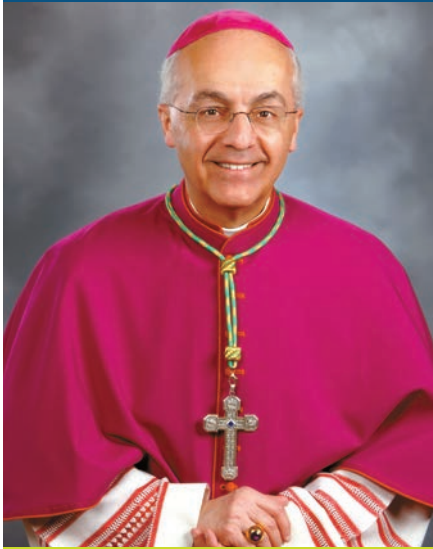
#### Altar dedication

Bishop Kagan blessed and dedicated the new altar at Queen of Peace parish in Dickinson ..... Pages 5



# Let's keep Christ in Christmas

## FROM THE BISHOP



Bishop David D. Kagan

With the beginning of our new year of grace and favor from the Lord on Nov. 28, 2021, the first Sunday of Advent, we enter the very heart of the mystery of our redemption. The Incarnation of God as a man happened entirely for our sake and each year, we remember this supreme act of mercy in the season of Advent. However, as spiritually enriching as Advent can be for

us, we must combat Satan's temptation to either ignore Advent or at least to set it aside in favor of spending all of our time and energy trying to keep up with the materialism with which we are bombarded. I am not saying that the nice things which occur each year at this time should not be enjoyed. I am saying that these nice things have a place but not the first place in our lives. The very word Christmas tells us Who is to be first in our lives, Jesus Christ. It is because of Him and what He did for us that we can enjoy the good things which Advent and Christmas present to us. However, there is nothing better than to know that God loves us so much that He sent His Son to us to save us from our sins and reunite us to Our Father. That is the greatest gift we receive at Christmas if we are paying attention. That is the greatest blessing we receive at Christmas and this blessing does not wear out or break or become obsolete, like all the material things we give and receive. This Advent, let us all decide that this year we will not just wait

for the Lord on Christmas, but we will wait on the Lord at Christmas. Waiting on the Lord in Advent is very active and means we are at Mass frequently, we receive the sacrament of penance as often as we need to, and that we spend more of our money on real charity than on material things and parties. During Advent, we see nice advertisements which urge us to "keep Christ in Christmas." That's good advice and the best we

Catholics can do is just that. We can make Advent and Christmas a time of spiritual and temporal renewal of our resolve to be faithful to Jesus by being more like Him in our daily lives. Let us pray for and with each other this Advent so that we are prepared for Him on Christmas Day, and every day thereafter. Have a most blessed and Merry Christmas and a holy and Happy New Year!

## BISHOP'S SCHEDULE DECEMBER 2021

- |         |   |         |  |
|---------|---|---------|--|
| Dec. 5  | • Confirmation at the Pro-Cathedral of St. Mary, Bismarck, 2 p.m.   | Dec. 10 | • Home On The Range board of directors' meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 12 p.m. |
| Dec. 6  | • Women's Care Center Board Meeting, Chancery, Bismarck, 5 p.m.   | Dec. 16 | • North Dakota Catholic Conference board meeting, St. James Basilica, Jamestown, 10 a.m.         |
| Dec. 8  | • Annual Visit and Mass at the University of Mary, Bismarck 10 a.m.   | Dec. 17 | • Mass for diocesan staff and Christmas gathering, 11 a.m.                                       |
| Dec. 9  | • Real Presence Radio interview, 9 a.m.<br>• Finance Council Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 10 a.m. | Dec. 25 | • Christmas Mass at Midnight, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 12 a.m.                    |
| Dec. 10 | • Cabinet Meeting, Chancery, Bismarck, 10 a.m.  | Dec. 27 | • Serra Club Christmas Gathering, Municipal Country Club, Bismarck, 11:30 a.m.                   |

## BISHOP IN ACTION



Staff Photo

Bishop Kagan, with Deacon Leonard Krebs, addressed the parishioners at Queen of Peace in Dickinson after the Nov. 6 vigil Mass to announce the opening of a house of the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus within the Diocese of Bismarck to serve in Dickinson.

## Holy Father's Prayer Intentions for December



**Intention for evangelization - Catechists**  
Let us pray for the catechists, summoned to announce the Word of God: may they be its witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



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



**Bishop David Kagan**  
@VescovoDDK

Following

Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time, Sunday: May we take to heart the Lord's revelation to us of what He will do on the last day. Better, let us not delay but prepare ourselves for that day. Fortify yourself with prayer, the sacraments, good works, and penance.



Search "Bismarck Diocese" on YouTube for videos from the Church in western N.D.



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Get status updates, photos, videos, and links and share them with your friends.



Dakota Catholic Action



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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.



# Women’s Care Center providing hope to families

## Life-affirming clinic now operated independently

By Leann Eckroth  
DCA Writer

The resolve to continue its high standards of a dignified, caring setting for clients resulted in big changes for a life-affirming clinic in Bismarck—a new name, new location and self-sufficiency.

Women’s Care Center became an independently governed entity Oct. 1 and will strengthen its legacy of early pregnancy and parenting counseling to women and men of the community in the future.

It first opened more than a decade ago as the First Choice Clinic at College Drive in Bismarck. In July 2019, the center moved to its current location at 614 N. Fourth Street. That same year, the clinic allied itself with a new organization, becoming a Women’s Care Center (WCC).

It joined Women’s Care Center—one of the largest, most successful pregnancy resource centers in the country with 34 centers in 12 states. For two years, the Bismarck center functioned as part of Women’s Care Center North Dakota. Fargo, Devils Lake and Bismarck locations were all governed by Fargo.

### Self-governed

On Oct. 1, the Bismarck Women’s Care Center became an independent center—no longer an offshoot of the center in Fargo, said Rebecca Obrigewitch, WCC development director.

“Because we have such great local support, and because we have been able to grow at the rate that we have, there is a need for local governance for our center and for us to be independent,” Obrigewitch explained.

The change was made to support continued growth in the Bismarck community. All funds raised in Bismarck have always gone to the Bismarck center, she assured, but the move will give Bismarck more ownership of the center and its governance.

### Mission

The WCC Bismarck’s mission is to help women choose life for their babies, have healthier pregnancies, become better parents and take those first steps for self-sufficiency for the family. According to statistics provided by the center, Bismarck served 447 women in the

past year and nine of 10 women chose life for their babies. In 2020, 145 babies were born to Bismarck moms in the program. The WCC staff projects these babies would fill seven kindergarten classrooms.

“Since becoming a Women’s Care Center, our center serves twice as many women. Over 500 babies have been saved!” Obrigewitch said.

Obrigewitch said the centers’ impact have been significant. “Our North Dakota Women’s Care Centers combined to serve 1,192 women (onsite and in person) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021. “Based on data from the state, our centers served 70 percent of all women who received services from pregnancy centers in North Dakota during this time.”

### History

The Bismarck center’s origins lie with Fargo’s pregnancy resource center that began in 1984. It ran under a variety of names before becoming First Choice Clinic.

Donors from Bismarck who had supported the Fargo mission found a need for life-affirming services in western North Dakota and raised funds to open a clinic here in 2010.

“First Choice Clinic knew that there were more women who could be reached,” Obrigewitch said. “Bismarck has always been a pro-life community. The community has always had a need and a desire for life-affirming services.”

### Services

Obrigewitch said the fourth street location in a renovated home gives clients a warmer, more approachable place to receive services and plan their next steps. The site is more visible than its previous office setting. “It says, ‘You are welcome here. You are wanted here.’”

Among the life-affirming services offered in Bismarck since the beginning are pregnancy



The center moved to its current location at 614 N. Fourth Street in 2019.

Staff photos

tests, ultrasounds, pregnancy counseling, parenting counseling and education incentives that help the women earn items for themselves and their babies.

Most women come to the WCC because they suspect they are pregnant, and to obtain a pregnancy test and ultrasound, but they also find love and support from counselors willing to journey with them through the entire process, said Obrigewitch. After a positive test, the woman is given an ultrasound as soon as possible to allow her to see the baby and the two to bond.

The Women’s Care Center uses an affirmation, strength-based counseling that helps the client see her strengths and recognize qualities in herself. The client shares with the counselor where she is at, what her needs are, and the counselor provides supportive education that she needs.

The changes haven’t come without growing pains. Dennis Prindiville, board president for the Women’s Care Center Bismarck, said the local center relies completely on donations to keep its doors open and will need them even more.

“Fundraising becomes paramount as we will no longer have the safety net of Fargo’s resources available to prop us up if we fall short of our operating needs,” he said. “We had to purchase our clinic building from Fargo.” That means paying off two loans for the newly independent center.

### Benefits of a life-affirming clinic

“It’s great for the woman to go where she can be received and loved unconditionally. It’s helpful to have a place that’s helping to build families in the community,” Obrigewitch said. It also allows donors, partners and volunteers to be part of the mission, she said. This raises focus on mothers choosing life.

“We are saving babies from abortion and providing essential services for those who choose life. We don’t drop these young families from our radar once the baby is born,” Prindiville said. “Our staff will continue to work with them until their youngest child is five years old. This support is priceless for young families getting started in our community.”

### Staff

Staffing at the Women’s Care Center includes two nurse

counselors/pregnancy counselors, one pregnancy counselor and assistant counselor who oversees adult education and the development director.

Parenting classes are offered once a week for people expecting, who already have children or both. This education addresses newborns through kindergarten-age children; guest speakers have even advised clients about budgeting.

One in six babies born in Burleigh County get their start at the Women’s Care Center, Prindiville said. He added that the center reaches beyond Bismarck with clients from South Dakota and Montana. “We currently are working with 157 expectant mothers. These women know they have a place to go where they won’t be judged and where they will be loved and supported during a very trying time of their life. Our staff is incredible in the work they do with these women.”

A data base at the center links clients to other services they may need such as food, clothing, emergency supplies, furniture, nutrition for children, Medicaid and a list of obstetricians to ensure full prenatal care during the pregnancy, Obrigewitch said.

### Adoption

Adoption services are not run through the center, but if requested, staff will refer clients to those who specialize in it.

“There are different adoption agencies in town and there are licensed social workers who function in that adoption counselor role,” Obrigewitch said. “If a client wants to do an adoption plan, we want to support her in that journey and connect her with the resources for that.”

### Outcome

“At the end of the day, we want to support and encourage moms to choose life for their babies and to have strong families,” Obrigewitch said. “We have amazing clients. It is amazing to see how strong and resilient these moms are—especially the ones who are facing a lot of uncertainty, a lot of obstacles—and that they’ve been loved, and they have hope.”

For more information about the Women’s Care Center, call 701-751-4575 or 1-877-908-2341 or email [rebecca@supportwcc.org](mailto:rebecca@supportwcc.org). Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## Women’s Care Center client testimonial

Because of donors who make the Women’s Care Center’s mission possible, Rachel received the support and encouragement needed to choose life for her daughter and thrive as a mother.

“My boyfriend originally told me he didn’t want to be involved, this ‘wasn’t part of his plan.’ I moved back to Arizona and planned to do it alone. Then, right before she was born, he said he was just scared, and he moved from Bismarck to Phoenix to be near us.

“My delivery was good — only pushed for 7 minutes! She is the best baby ever. Sleeps so well throughout the night. Wakes up happy every morning! Hitting all her milestones. 99th percentile height. Breastfeeding is going well. She started daycare a couple weeks ago.

“I was in NICU (working as an RN), and just recently switched to pediatric ICU. As scared as my boyfriend was, he’s actually really great with her.

“When I left my appointment, you told me, ‘If anyone can do all this, you can.’ Those words have stuck in my head and have helped me so much in the times that I felt so alone and lost. Thank you!”

— Rachel, a Women’s Care Center client



# Empress of the Americas returns to the Cathedral

19th annual Mass in Spanish for Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12

For the last 18 years, the Bismarck-Mandan area has had the honor of celebrating Mass in Spanish for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe every year on Dec. 12.

Continuing the tradition, everyone is invited to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit with two different events in honor of Our Lady. On Saturday, Dec. 11, after the 8 a.m. Mass, a special guest speaker and expert on Our Lady of Guadalupe, Isabel Fernandez, will give a talk, after which coffee and rolls will be served in the gathering space. On Sunday, Dec. 12, the 19th annual Mass in Spanish in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe will be celebrated at 1:30 p.m. Following the Mass, authentic Mexican food will be served in the basement cafeteria.

History of the event

The first Spanish Mass was celebrated in 2003 by Msgr. James Shea at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, where he served as associate pastor and chaplain of St. Mary’s Central High School. Monsignor Shea’s first experience of saying Mass in Spanish was in Antigua, Guatemala with the service teams from St. Mary’s Central High School, who were there serving the poor through the charity program “La Asociacion Nuestros Ahijados.”

Monsignor Shea describes his first Spanish Mass as “rough,” especially when having to give a homily to native Spanish-speaking children. He recalls giving a

simple, short homily, saying things like, “Dios es bueno” and “Maria es buena,” meaning “God is good” and “Mary is good.”

Loving the joy of the Latino culture and appreciating the deep allegiance of the faith of the Latinos, Msgr. Shea wanted to bring the Spanish Mass to the Bismarck-Mandan area. Asked if he thinks Our Lady of Guadalupe desires to evangelize the community, Msgr. Shea responded, “She is the Queen of the New Evangelization. She knows the importance of Christian values in permeating the whole culture, and she knows how hard it can be when there is great resistance to truth.”

Impact of Our Lady

To answer whether we can have too much devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Monsignor Shea said that every bit of our love for Mary increases our love for Jesus. He described the first words of the Virgin of Guadalupe to Juan Diego when she said, “Know and understand well” — and, another time, “Hear me and understand well” — as Mary asking us to open our hearts and minds to the voice of our mother. Mary’s opening words reminded him of the first word of the Rule of St. Benedict — “Listen.”

Monsignor Shea also commented on Our Lady’s words to Juan Diego when he expressed his fear that his uncle was dying from sickness. She told him, “Do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or anguish.” Monsignor said that we live in a

season of fear, but that fear is not of God. Fear is a failure of faith. Our faith says that all will be okay. We can trust Him with everything. We can take all to Jesus. And when asked if he thought that Mary might have been impatient when she asked for the temple in her name to be erected quickly, he immediately responded that Mary is in heaven, and so if she is in a hurry, it is for our sake.

Back to where it started

The first Spanish Mass in 2003 was relatively small and simple, with no procession. However, in 2004, the procession with Our Lady of Guadalupe was added, using a platform made by Deacon Woodie Wolf (now retired) and carried by children dressed in native clothes. When Msgr. Shea was transferred to Christ the King in Mandan, he began the Spanish Mass there. Later, when Msgr. Shea became the president of the University of Mary, the Spanish Mass took place at a university chapel. Later, Fr. Terry Wipf took over the Spanish Mass and brought it to Corpus Christi parish, where he was an associate pastor.

In 2019, Fr. Wipf was transferred to a parish outside the Bismarck-Mandan area, and the Latino community searched for another priest to say Mass in their native language. Answering the prayers of the Spanish-speaking community, Fr. Josh Ehli became the rector of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, where he invited the Spanish community back to where they started.



Submitted photo  
In 2020, a copy of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, donated by Cathedral parishioners, Mark and Patti Armstrong, was mounted permanently on the north wall for all who enter to see and venerate.

Just when the coronavirus pandemic threatened to cancel the Spanish Mass in 2020, the Holy Spirit moved Fr. Ehli to open the Cathedral’s doors to receive her. During Mass, a copy of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, donated by Cathedral parishioners, Mark and Patti Armstrong, was processed through the Cathedral and mounted permanently on the north wall for all who enter to see and venerate. The Holy Virgin’s words to Juan Diego consoles so many of us who are anxious and worried about the pandemic: “Am I not your mother?”

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



An invitation from the Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club

- Dec. 1 Fr. Christy Pathiala
- Dec. 2 Deacon Steve Streitz
- Dec. 3 Sr. Nancy Miller, OSB
- Dec. 4 Fr. John Pfeifer
- Dec. 5 Br. Alban Petesch, OSB
- Dec. 6 Deacon Tony Ternes
- Dec. 7 Deacon Dan Tuhy
- Dec. 8 Seminarian Steven Vetter
- Dec. 9 Br. Symeon Rubbelke, OSB
- Dec. 10 Sr. Michael Emond, OSB
- Dec. 11 Sr. Rita Miller, OSB
- Dec. 12 Seminarians & Religious in Formation
- Dec. 13 Fr. Ken Phillips
- Dec. 14 Deacon Jerry Volk
- Dec. 15 Sr. Agatha Muggli, OSB
- Dec. 16 Sr. Renée Branigan, OSB
- Dec. 17 Sisters Ministering in Fort Yates
- Dec. 18 Fr. Fred Harvey
- Dec. 19 Lay Ministers
- Dec. 20 Deacon Dan Wallach
- Dec. 21 Br. Gregory Senger, OSB
- Dec. 22 Music Ministers
- Dec. 23 Fr. George Pruys
- Dec. 24 Deacon Bob Wingenbach
- Dec. 25 Bishop David Kagan
- Dec. 26 Br. Elias Thienpont, OSB
- Dec. 27 Sr. Margaret Nelson, OSB
- Dec. 28 Fr. David Richter
- Dec. 29 Deacon Ken Wolbaum
- Dec. 30 Sr. Gemma Peters, OSB
- Dec. 31 Br. John Seiler, OSB



## Stay Connected... To Your Kids!

We know that a poor child-parent relationship increases the child’s risk of being sexually abused. While many parents are frustrated by the amount of time that their kids spend on their various devices, they might want to assess their own obsession and how they may have modeled that obsession for their children. Parents who are distracted by their electronic devices are not in tune with their child’s needs, which can make them vulnerable to predators who are. Whether verbally or non-verbally, distracted parents communicate that the distraction is more important than their child and their needs. Here are some suggestions to help you reconnect:

- 1. CREATE “DIGITAL FREE” BOUNDARIES  
Families, together, would do well to create “digital free” space and time. Families talk more over dinner without the distraction of devices. We sleep better without the glow of the screen next to or in our bed. We notice our surroundings more when we don’t feel the need to read every text or post. Start with a family discussion as how you can create these boundaries. Perhaps all phones are charged at night away from the bedroom, silence phones during meal times and study times, and silence devices when spending time with your child.
- 2. TURN OFF THE DEVICE OR SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS  
We’ve all been on the other side of a conversation when we’ve been ignored in deference to another’s notification. It doesn’t feel very good. Trust your smart device. It will record a message that you can get AFTER you have devoted undistracted time to your child.
- 3. MODEL HEALTHY DIGITAL USE  
It is virtually impossible to support your rules and boundaries with your children when you aren’t upholding those rules in your own life. Start with boundaries that you all can live with. Set goals. Find alternatives to using your smart device to pass the time. Try resisting the urge to look at every notification that comes in right away.
- 4. COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR WORDS RATHER THAN WITH YOUR THUMBS  
Reserve texting for logistical information – “I’m running late,” or “Can I go to my friend’s house after school?” – rather than texting emotional conversations that deserve a face to face conversation. Context, tone, language, and nonverbal cues are difficult, if not impossible, to communicate with thumbs.
- 5. TAKE SOME TIME OFF  
Many researchers and therapists are acknowledging that social media actually contributes to depression, anxiety, and a feeling that they just aren’t living up to standards and that they are missing out. Taking some time away from social media and devices may actually serve as a way to reconnect with oneself and with one’s family.

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





# New altar dedicated at Queen of Peace

Parishioners and visitors at Dickinson’s Queen of Peace were blessed to witness the sacred rite of the order of dedication of the altar within Mass. Bishop Kagan presided at the Nov. 6 Mass with parish clergy Msgr. Thomas Richter, Fr. Kregg Hochhalter and Deacon Leonard Krebs.

The beautiful rite within the Mass involves anointing of the altar where Bishop Kagan poured sacred chrism oil on the four corners and middle of the altar. Just prior to doing this, he recited a prayer, “May the Lord by His power sanctify this altar, which by our ministry we anoint, so that, as a visible sign, it may express the mystery of Christ, who offered Himself to the Father for the life of the world.”

After the anointing, he incensed the sanctuary saying, “Let our prayer rise, O Lord, like incense in your sight and as this house is filled with a pleasing fragrance, so let your Church be fragrant with the aroma of Christ.”

After this, ministers of the Church wiped the altar, covered it with a cloth and placed candles and an altar cross. Then, Deacon Krebs received a candle lighter from Bishop Kagan saying, “May the light of Christ shine upon the table of this altar and may those who share the Lord’s Supper shine with His light.”

Once the candles were lit by Deacon Krebs, the Mass proceeded as usual on the beautiful new altar to serve and glorify God with the sacrifice of the Mass for years to come.

—Staff report



Msgr. Thomas Richter concelebrated the liturgy of the Eucharist at the new altar for the first time.



Bishop Kagan poured sacred chrism oil on the altar, assisted by Fr. Kregg Hochhalter.



Incense was used to bless the altar.

During the dedication of the new altar at Queen of Peace in Dickinson, Bishop Kagan placed a first-class relic of three fragments of hair of St. Gianna Beretta Molla.

Gianna Beretta was born in Italy in 1922. She earned degrees in medicine and surgery, eventually specializing in pediatrics. In 1952, Gianna opened a clinic in the small town of Mesero, where she met and married Pietro Molla. Early in her final pregnancy, doctors discovered that Gianna had a tumor in her uterus. She allowed the surgeons to remove the tumor but not to perform the complete hysterectomy that they recommended, which would have killed the child. Seven months later in April 1962, Gianna Emanuela Molla was born, but post-operative complications resulted in an infection for her mother. The following week Gianna died at home. She was beatified in 1994 and canonized 10 years later. Her liturgical feast is celebrated on April 28.

Gianna Emanuela went on to become a physician herself and resides in Italy. She personally gave the relic of her mother with a letter that read:

“I, the undersigned Gianna Emanuela

During the dedication of the new altar at Queen of Peace in Dickinson, Bishop Kagan placed a first-class relic of three fragments of hair of St. Gianna Beretta Molla.

Molla, daughter of St. Gianna Beretta Molla, declare the authenticity of the fragments of hair of my holy mamma, placed in the little reliquary with my seal. I make a gift of it to Msgr. Thomas Richter, pastor of Queen of Peace Parish in Dickinson, ND, USA, so that these precious relics of my mamma the saint can be placed in the new altar of the parish.”

*Some information provided by franciscanmedia.org.*

## Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus established in Bismarck Diocese

*Continued from page 1*

wonderful ways for our spiritual and temporal welfare. I look forward to not only the arrival of the Handmaids in Dickinson and our diocese but to a long and deeply fruitful ministry by them for the love of God and His Church in western North Dakota.”

Mother Mary Clare started the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus after receiving the founding grace in December of 2006. Through this grace, she was inspired to help answer the need for a feminine consecrated presence in the diocesan life of the Church.

“Over the last several years, the Lord has blessed us with many beautiful relationships with the priests and people in the Diocese of Bismarck,” said Mother Mary Clare. “He has also given us several wonderful sisters who have strong ties to the diocese. These relationships have been such a source of support and encouragement for our community and such a beautiful experience of the diocesan Church family. Because

of these relationships, when we were discerning where the Lord was inviting us to go next, the Bismarck Diocese felt like a natural fit.”

The order’s four-part charism is Marian, diocesan, eucharistic and evangelistic. Simply put, they seek to emulate Mary by being spiritual mothers in the parish. They are a contemplative active community, which means they are deeply dedicated to the Lord in prayer while yet have an active apostolate in the local parish community.

As diocesan sisters, they bring a feminine consecrated presence to the parish family complementing the diocesan priesthood. Alongside the priests and the lay faithful, the Handmaids seek to build the Kingdom of God in the local diocese. Echoing Mary’s fiat, the sisters wish to bring her presence to the local Church by imitating Mary, the mother of God, as handmaid, virgin, bride and mother.

Their very presence attests to

their consecration to the Lord as they perform any function needed in the parish. The Handmaids apostolate could include the following: catechesis/faith formation, youth ministry, family life/marriage preparation, liturgy coordination, liturgical music, sacristy work, domestic care of churches and rectories, visitation of the sick and elderly and education in Catholic schools.

“We ask for your prayers for this new house, for all of those who are helping to make it a possibility, and for our sisters who will soon live and serve in the Diocese of Bismarck,” Mother Mary Clare noted. “We also ask that you pray that we remain faithful to our life and to the charism the Lord has entrusted to us. We eagerly look forward to all that the Lord has in store for our community and for the good people of North Dakota and we have great confidence that He will continue to lead us in His ways.”

The Handmaids will be easily recognizable in the Dickinson community by their distinct



Mother Mary Clare, who started the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus in 2006, addressed the parishioners at Dickinson’s Queen of Peace parish at the Nov. 6 Mass.

habit which they designed and made themselves. They wear a black tunic, white scapula and white veil which correlate to a priest’s garments and their parish-centered charism. Habits are worn as a reminder of each woman’s deliberate choice to retreat from the world and focus on God and prayer.



# Red Mass

Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky

The Red Mass is a long and venerable custom in the Church to celebrate for those involved in the administration of justice — judges, attorneys, law professors, law students and government officials. The term derives from the color of the red vestments worn by the priest-celebrant as well as from the red robes traditionally worn by judges in the Middle Ages. This custom originated in Europe in the 13th century. The Mass invokes the guidance of God the Holy Spirit, Who is the source of wisdom, counsel, understanding and fortitude, graces bestowed on all those who exercise judicial authority.



Bishop Kagan, assisted by Deacon Brent Naslund, venerates the book of the Gospel during the Red Mass.



Bishop Kagan processed down the center aisle at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit for the Red Mass on Sept. 4 with concelebrating priests, Msgr. Gene Lindemann (left) and Fr. Josh Ehli.

# White Mass

Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky

A long-standing tradition in the diocese is to celebrate the White Mass honoring physicians and those involved in the medical field held on or around the Feast Day of St. Luke the Evangelist, the patron saint of physicians. The Bismarck Catholic Physicians Guild welcomed nine new members at the White Mass held Oct. 18 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit celebrated by Bishop Kagan. It was the largest number of members taking the oath since its inception in 2010 bringing the guild membership from 19 to 28. Joining the Bismarck Guild at the Mass were three MDs, two nurse practitioners, three pharmacists and one nurse anesthetist.



Bishop Kagan with Bismarck Catholic Physicians Guild members after the White Mass on Oct. 18.

Bishop Kagan assisted at the altar by Deacon Harvey Hanel, who is also a pharmacist and Bismarck Catholic Physicians Guild member.

# Gold Mass

Photos by Grace Ballalatak

University of Mary hosted the fourth annual Gold Mass for scientists on Nov. 3 at Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel on campus celebrated by Bishop Kagan. This special Mass honors the partnership between religion and science. The Gold Mass, which follows in the tradition of special Masses for members of different professions, was selected because gold is the color of the hoods worn by individuals graduating with a Ph.D. in science. It is also the color associated with the patron saint of scientists St. Albert the Great, whose feast day is Nov. 15.



Bishop Kagan celebrated the Gold Mass at the Annunciation Chapel on the campus of the University of Mary on Nov. 3.

A good crowd of faculty and students attended the Gold Mass at the university campus chapel.





**November 30 - December 2, 2021**

**Donations up to \$25,000 of each diocese matched 1:1**

**What is it?**

An annual, joint fundraising event for the Diocese of Bismarck and the Diocese of Fargo, giving all Catholics in North Dakota an opportunity to support their favorite Catholic organizations and charities over three days.

**How does it work?**

Go to GiveNDCatholic.com to choose a Catholic organization, ministry or charity selected by each diocese. Bishop John T. Folda and Bishop David D. Kagan have selected the Catholic organizations and charities they want highlighted for this #GiveNDCatholic event.

**Why?**

This event helps kick off the charitable season, promotes year-end giving, and brings the North Dakota Catholic Community together to give thanks for all the blessings God has blessed them with and an opportunity to share their blessings with good Catholic organizations and charities.

**What Catholic organizations and charities has Bishop Kagan selected for this year’s event?**

- Priest Retirement Fund
- Diocesan Office of Catechesis and Youth
- Diocesan Office of Hispanic Ministry



**GiveNDCatholic.com**

**Office of Catechesis and Youth**



The Office of Catechesis and Youth provides information and resources for parishes in the areas of Pre-K through 12th grade catechesis/religious education, K-12 sacramental preparation, youth and young adult ministry, adult faith formation, and RCIA (becoming Catholic). The office also provides training throughout the year for parish DRE's, youth ministers, catechists, and pastors. The main goal of this ministry is to help young people of all ages encounter Christ and thrive as His disciples. Some of the programs and services provided/sponsored by the office include:

- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd
- Catechetical Leader Formation and Networking
- Catholic Youth Advisory Council (C.Y.A.C.)
- Diocesan Youth Conference
- March for Life Pilgrimage
- ND March for Life
- Rise Up Middle School Youth Conference
- SEARCH Retreats
- Seek Conference
- Steubenville Youth Conference
- The Cor Christi Institute
- The ROCK
- Videos, blogs and other resources
- Young Adult Ministry

**Priest Retirement Fund**



One of the greatest strengths of our diocese is the number of priests who have dedicated their lives to God and to the faithful people of western North Dakota. Our priests have baptized us, educated us, provided parish leadership, preached the Gospel, witnessed our marriages and buried our loved ones. As they grow older, they often face many years of retirement without a family to help care for them. They gave up family to serve us, so we must now come forward to care for them in their retirement years.

The Diocese of Bismarck has a Priest Retirement Fund. The official name, the Priest Benefit Association (PBA), is a defined benefit retirement plan covering all the retired priests in the diocese.

Currently, we have 12 retired priests. A total of 284 priests and bishops who have all passed away had also received retirement funds from the PBA.

The PBA is governed by a board of trustees who are all clergy. Over the years, the trustees have diligently strived to keep the retiree benefits at a level consistent with what was earned as an active priest. Annually, premiums are paid by the diocese and all the parishes to support the retirement fund. The board of trustees uses professional investment managers to invest their funds. The PBA has an annual audit by an outside accounting firm and every other year an actuary provides a valuation to make certain funding is on track to adequately cover the current retirees and all future retirees.

**Office of Hispanic Ministry**

Sr. Rosa is back! Sr. Rosa and two new members of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Guadalupe from Mexico (Sr. Alma and Sr. Norma) have started the Diocese of Bismarck’s first Office of Hispanic Ministry.

In 2014-2019, the diocese received a five-year grant from Catholic Extension Society which paid for the salary and benefits of three religious sisters from Mexico to minister in western North Dakota. Sister Rosa was part of the original group who were a tremendous help in our parishes as most of our priests, deacons and parish staff spoke little to no Spanish.

Hispanic families wanted their children to be baptized and receive the other sacraments, but prior to the sisters’ arrival, often were turned away because parish priests did not speak Spanish. Thankfully, these good sisters were able to minister to our Catholic Hispanic sisters and brothers which allowed them to fully participate in our Catholic



parishes. However, in June 2019, the five-year grant ended, and the religious sisters were required to return to Mexico as part of the grant guidelines.

Your financial support helps the Office of Hispanic Ministry with their salary and health insurance, their office travel expenses, and the Spanish educational materials they use in our parishes.



# New principal at St. Bernard Mission School

By Sonia Mullally  
DCA Editor

St. Bernard Mission School has welcomed a new principal this year—Lawrence Montclair.

He joins the Fort Yates Catholic school also teaching fourth and fifth grades in addition to administrative duties.

Montclair is a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and grew up in Fort Yates. He’s a graduate of Fort Yates/Standing Rock Community School and a U.S. Army veteran having served in Germany and Iraq.

He’s been married to his wife, Dawnette Faith, for 22 years and they have two children. He taught in both 5th and 2nd grade classrooms for 13 years and drove bus for the Standing Rock Grant School for 27 years. Currently, he is finishing up his master’s degree at Sitting Bull College.

Having grown up on the Standing Rock Reservation, Montclair has a deep appreciation for the people as well as a personal mission of equipping the youth with a good education. “The

success of each one of these students is the highest priority for me,” he noted.

In addition to the day-to-day administrative duties as principal, being a classroom teacher presents some challenges in the workload. He’s quickly learning to use his limited free time wisely. One of the other teachers takes his students to recess so he can catch up on phone calls and other tasks.

It’s that reliance on his fellow teachers that is helping him make sure all is covered. “We have great teachers here and I trust them,” Montclair said. “We are here for each other and especially for the children.”

Other major areas of focus for Montclair are the health and safety of the children amid COVID concerns as well as building a strong relationship between the community and the school.

“Obviously, we are very focused on health and safety with COVID screenings, making sure we have a safe and caring environment for the kids to show up each day.”

Regarding building the



Lawrence Montclair is the new principal and classroom teacher at St. Bernard Mission School in Fort Yates.

relationship within the community, Montclair said the goal is to just raise awareness about the great benefits of the St. Bernard Mission School. He’s been putting efforts toward things like flyers, radio spots and social media to make and keep people aware that the school is open for in-person learning and welcoming to students.

Montclair, who taught from home last year in the public

school system, can’t stress the importance of in-person learning enough. “It’s about getting more attention. We’re here. We’re open and we’re not closing.”

The Mission school has so much to offer the students in addition to in-person learning. “We have good, experienced teachers here and the one-on-one time the students get here is so valuable.”

## “... Live a Life Worthy of the Calling You Have Received. . .”

### Part Four: To the Culture and Society

**Editor’s note:** This article is a continuation of Bishop Kagan’s commentary (which began in the Aug. 2021 issue) on his recent pastoral letter regarding knowledge of the Catholic faith.

In this section of my recent pastoral letter, I address the culture and society in which all of us who are Catholic live daily life. If you have already read this pastoral letter or are doing so now, you will note that this is the longest of the sections because it addresses some of the most serious defects in our culture and how these defects or errors have a very bad impact on persons and institutions.

What is clear is that the Catholic Church has lived in and through every type of culture and society for more than two thousand years and has proclaimed the Gospel to them all and elevated all of them to a greater level of integrity and sanctity. At the same time, these cultures did not fully accept the truth of the Gospel and the Church suffered and continues to suffer

for the sake of the Gospel. Thus, we should neither be surprised nor discouraged today when the Church still suffers for the truth from both outside and from within.

We Catholics must remain faithful to Christ and His Church, and we do that best by our unwavering fidelity to the sacramental life and devotional life of the Church, to the Church’s moral and social teachings and the Church’s magisterium as the God-given authority to guide and direct us in holiness of life and communion with God and His people.

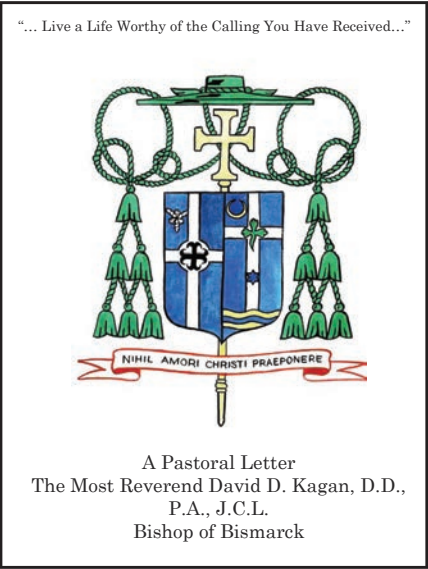
You will note that I address some of the more savage and pervasive errors which the culture and society are trying to promote as objectively true and good and, at the same time, trying to debunk the real truth and real moral good which the Church continues to propose and defend. Clearly, all clergy, religious and lay Catholics must be engaged in the battle to announce, to explain and live

the truth of the Gospel so that the present age and culture can be saved from a sure and certain death from secularism.

What we cannot allow is for us to be pitted against each other by ideologies and movements which advance the evil of secularism’s desire to rid us of God and substitute another as the only standard for truth and right living. This is what we are witnessing in our culture as every facet of it seems to be crumbling before our eyes. Secularism is nothing more than idolatry; it rejects the one true God as Lord and puts someone or something else in His place.

What are we to do? Fortify ourselves in our faith, hope and charity through prayer, the worthy reception of the sacraments and our sacrificial good works of corporal and spiritual mercy and then live the Christ-like life daily. God wants this for us and for His world and He will do the rest.

**Question:** How many books are



in the Catholic Canon of Sacred Scripture?

**Answer to last month’s question:** the two general categories of saints are Martyrs and Confessors.

To read the pastoral letter online go to the diocesan website at [bismarckdiocese.com/letters](http://bismarckdiocese.com/letters) and scroll to the bottom of the page.

## Becoming a Lay Carmelite

Eight local people were received into the Order of the Lay Carmelites at a Mass on Oct. 2 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. The Lay Carmelite is called to the family of Carmel to be deeply involved in the mission of the Church, to contribute to the transformation of the secular world. A Lay Carmelite does this by sharing in the charism of the Carmelite Order. They find in Mary, the mother of Jesus, and in the Prophet Elijah the models for this way of Gospel living. Profession of promises as a member of the Lay Carmelites is an intensified commitment to the living of one’s baptismal promises. Being a Lay Carmelite is not just a devotion added to life; it is a way of life, a vocation. By entering the order, the Lay Carmelite takes upon him/herself the Carmelite charism of prayer, community and service to others. The call to Carmel, a call to seek God’s will in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life, roots Lay Carmelites in a love of those with whom they live and work, in the recognition of God’s presence in all circumstances and in solidarity with God’s people everywhere. If interested in knowing more, contact Cheryl at 701-527-4022.



Submitted photo

Those recently received into the Order of the Lay Carmelites are (front row, l-r): Alice Golik, Amy Schmidt, Shelly Vecchia, Rachel Drewlow, Sara Jiras and (back row, l-r) Carl J. Meyer, Bryon Herbel and Albert Lukaszewski.





Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky



Bishop Kagan celebrated the Vigil Mass at the conclusion of the conference.



Sister Mary Joseph and Father Dominic Bouck entertained the students at the Diocesan Youth Conference with an informative “talk show” format.



Bishop Kagan was assisted by Deacon David Fleck at the vigil Mass at the conclusion of the Thirst Conference.



Dr. Ben Akers, Executive Director of FORMED at Augustine Institute, provided a talk about St. Joseph to the crowd.



Dr. Ray Guarendi, a Catholic father and clinical psychologist, was one of the keynote speakers.



Music for the Mass at the conclusion of the conference was provided by a number of local musicians.



Sister Mary Joseph, of the Saint Mary Sisters based in Bismarck, was greeted by one of the children attending the Vacation Bible School portion of the conference.



Matt Fradd, nationally known Catholic author and speaker, offered a keynote address to those in attendance.

Thank you!

The Thirst planning team would like to thank everyone who attended and volunteered for the 2021 conference.

View Videos

View videos from Thirst 2021 on the diocesan website at [bismarckdiocese.com/thirst-2021-talks](https://bismarckdiocese.com/thirst-2021-talks).

Give us your feedback!

Please take a few moments to take the survey found at [bit.ly/3n2urpS](https://bit.ly/3n2urpS) or by scanning the QR code. We value your feedback.



Questions

I was afraid to ask

FR. JASON SIGNALNESS



Q: Why would I need a plenary indulgence if I go to confession regularly?

A: While confession and indulgences are related, they help in different ways. Confession remedies an eternal problem while indulgences remedy a temporary one.

As the Catechism explains, “sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the ‘eternal punishment’ of sin. On the other hand, every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the ‘temporal punishment’ of sin” (CCC 1472). Thus, there are two types of punishment due for sin: eternal and temporal.

Confession removes the “eternal punishment” due for mortal sin, which is hell. If we confess our mortal sins, they will not prevent us, ultimately, from entering heaven. But that does not mean we will immediately enter heaven, even if we confess moments before death. As the Book of Revelation tells us, regarding heaven, “... nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who does abominable things...” (Rev 21:27).

Confession may restore our friendship with God, but it does not remove all our imperfections. Someone may, for example, have a habit of sleeping in and skipping Sunday Mass. They may confess the sin, and the guilt of that sin will be forgiven. If they died at that moment, they would not go to hell for it. But they would most likely still be lacking a love for our Lord in the Holy Eucharist and may have a habitual laziness, imperfections which prevent them from full communion with the Lord in heaven. Those flaws need to be

“purged,” which is what happens when we do penance in this life or when we suffer in purgatory before, ultimately, entering heaven.

If that doesn’t make it clear, consider this additional example of a kid who breaks a window at home. If he refuses to apologize to his dad, the father-son relationship might be strained. But if he apologizes, the guilt of the act is quickly forgiven. That is like confession forgiving the guilt of our sin. It restores our relationship with our heavenly Father. But, in the example, the window is still broken and needs to be repaired. The kid will be asked by his dad to help pay for the window, in reparation for the damage. In a similar way, our forgiven sins have lingering effects that must be repaired.

And that is where indulgences can help. An indulgence won’t forgive the guilt of a sin, but it will help repair the damage left by a sin after it is forgiven. The Church sets up indulgences to encourage us to carry out acts of penance or charity, the merits of which, along with the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ and all the saints, can offset the temporal punishment due for sin.

There are two categories of indulgences. If an indulgence remits all the punishment due for a particular soul, it is called a “plenary indulgence.” If it only remits part of the punishment for a soul, it is called “partial.” For example, the Church decrees we may obtain a plenary indulgence by going to confession, receiving Communion, praying for the pope, and then praying the rosary publicly in a group. It also declares that we may obtain a partial indulgence by meeting those same conditions, but by praying the rosary privately.

In short, the saving grace of Jesus Christ, dispensed in confession, will keep us out of hell, removing the eternal punishment. Indulgences, on the other hand, by applying the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints, will purify us for entry into heaven by removing some or all temporal punishment.

As is often the case, this is not an either-or situation. We should seek both regular confession and indulgences.

■ Fr. Signalness is pastor of Queen of the Most Holy Rosary in Stanley and St. Ann in Berthhold. 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.





Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky

# All Hallows Eve celebration

Bismarck’s Church of Saint Anne held their annual All Hallows Eve Celebration on October 31 in their parish hall. Children wore a costume of a saint and took part in a parade of saints. Children’s games and candy were also provided.

## Ag Attitudes

JAMES ODERMANN



# Practice patience emulating Jesus in daily life choices

The mind of a four-year old is constantly moving, as fast as the eyes can see something different, as rapidly as a new sensation is experienced. Energy seems endless, questions are so often that answers cannot be given before another is asked.

I am one of the lucky ones. I personally get to see a second generation enjoy the luxury of rural life, re-living the moments of the past.

“Oh, grandpa, let me drive the tractor. You are too slow. It takes too long when you are driving.”

Sound familiar? I heard those same comments (and more) a generation ago addressed to dad (me). And, I witnessed broken corner posts, wrangled panels and

broken corrals. It was simply a case of too much speed, too much power and not enough experience about what would could happen when speed and power are not constrained.

Yet, some of the blame rests on my shoulders. There never seemed to be enough time to get the daily check list done so we (my crew of working boys and I) had to hurry and get after the job so we could go to the next job so we could hurry and eat supper so we could hurry and get to bed so we could hurry and get up so we could continue to hurry. The hurrying is the antithesis of patience that Jesus exemplified.

I reflected as I enjoyed time with the grandchildren. Gone is

the desire to be rushing to the next job (partly because of age, partly because I want to listen and observe, partly because I wanted a more defining relationship, partly because I didn’t want to repeat stupid mistakes). Rather, I was enjoying the moment and the spontaneity of God manifested through the young, innocent minds who are truly gifts.

Yes, those youngsters are a sponge, observing body language, facial expressions and words. Young boys want to be like dad; young girls are imitations of mom. These simple expressions of redundancy have been taking place for generations—and will continue.

So, as I enjoyed the banter of youngsters, I had to wonder.

Wouldn’t it be satisfying if I tried to imitate Jesus? God gave me life. Shouldn’t I try harder to emulate for God, like children who want to mimic their parents?

God doesn’t force me to hurry along life’s trails. I need to remember that God is ever patient, ever loving and ever present. God sent Jesus. God gifts me with grace from the Holy Spirit. God gives me options. I need to represent God with my choices.

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).

## Stewardship

RON SCHATZ



# Christmas: A stewardship reflection

“Bah! Humbug!” was the attitude of Ebenezer Scrooge toward the two gentlemen who came looking for a Christmas donation to help the poor and homeless in the streets of London. “All I want to do is eat, drink and be merry!” was the attitude of the rich fool in Jesus’ parable.

Neither the wealthy but miserly Scrooge in Charles Dickens’ classic, “A Christmas Carol,” nor Jesus’ stingy person in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 12:16-21), would find good company with Christian stewards who know those attitudes draw us away from God, not closer.

As we await the coming of Jesus at Christmas, the Advent season is the perfect time to reflect on our attitudes toward the things we possess and our need to share with others who are less fortunate.

There is, of course, no season quite so full of wild abundance as the Christmas season. We are entering a joyful, exuberant time, full of music, family, parties, good food and friends. But every Christian steward knows that there is a dark side to abundance, particularly material abundance, which brings its own challenges.

A culture that is focused on consuming more and more and built on satisfying the self and ignoring the needs of other people is a culture that impoverishes the soul. A preoccupation with our own wants and possessions fosters a spiritual poverty that has no room for the Lord at its center. That kind of spiritual poverty neglects the true meaning of Christmas in its joy and abundance. Despite the great spiritual significance of this time in the Church calendar, the season becomes a time of

material excess.

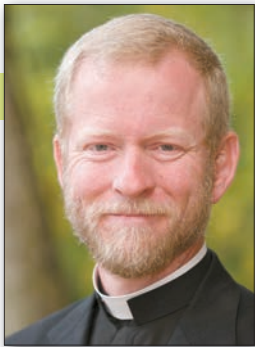
Scrooge told his charitable solicitors that he wished to be left alone, and all the stingy person from Scripture wanted was to be left alone with his material abundance. Christian stewards know that these attitudes are not compatible with being followers of Christ. Let us embrace the joy and the delightfulness of the Christmas season and, at the same time, remain mindful that the true joy of Christmas. It is not tied in to the wealth of goods under the tree, but to the abundance of love and generosity that fills our hearts and spills out to others, especially those most in need of our generous spirit.

■ Ron Schatz is the director of the diocesan Office of Stewardship and Resource Development. He has worked for the diocese for more than 29 years.



Making Sense out of Bioethics

FR. TAD PACHOLCZYK



Sexual atoms and molecules

A major issue in bioethics today involves “informed consent,” but some try to make everything about consent. This is especially notable when it comes to ethical discussions around the exercise of human sexuality.

In a thought-provoking 2015 article entitled “Liberalism Can’t Understand Sex,” author and researcher Jason Morgan challenges the reigning cultural view that sees sexual activity as acceptable between any two or more individuals as long as they freely consent to engage in it.

He notes that in such a framework, “all activities are equal, as long as we have obtained consent when those activities involve others.” This assumption about the equivalence of all consensual activities, however, is dubious at best, given that sexual activity affects and engages us in a way that is radically different from other human activities.

Morgan notes that “sex, unlike anything else we might do with another person, transcends the self while radically reorienting it within a new, shared context with our sexual partner. Consent assumes that sex will not do this, that sex will leave two people as fully autonomous after sex as they were before. But this is precisely the one thing that sex was designed not to do. Sex, even if entered into based on a free agreement between two autonomous people, by its very nature dismantles the autonomy upon which the consensual understanding of sex had been based.”

In other words, sex touches us at a deeper level than other activities, binding us to another and speaking a language not of autonomy or transient engagement, but of communion and enduring self-gift. To suggest that sex is just about being sure you gave consent before the clothes started flying is to leave young people unfulfilled. That’s what happens routinely in hook-up experiences and patterns of

cohabitation.

Morgan sums up the central flaw in consent-based notions of human sexuality this way: the ‘yes’ given to sex and premised on individual autonomy is “fundamentally different from the ‘yes’ in which human sexuality is designed to operate: a ‘yes’ to the other in his or her spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical entirety. Sex functions precisely to break down autonomy and overcome the overweening sovereignty of the self upon which consent is ultimately based.”

He continues: “By contrast, sex draws two people into the most intimate form of community, forming a new relationship based on a shared totality of existence. Where liberalism deals in a world of unjoinable, antagonistic atoms, human sexuality strives to bring two atoms together in order to make an entirely different molecule.”

By talking about consent ad nauseum, we misdirect young people down primrose paths, away from the unique anchoring power of love in marriage, wherein the full experience of the human sexual encounter, embodying both transcendence and sacrifice, is able to be lived out.

This plenitude of sex cannot be adequately captured by the vagaries of in-the-moment consent, which reduces and over-simplifies the bigger question of whether or not to have sex to the choice between “yes” or “no” regarding a particular act of intercourse.

Instead, the “yes” or “no” raised by sex is not just to the physical joining of two bodies, but to the richly rewarding and sacrificial intermingling of two selves becoming one entity in a life-long union of persons. This commingling automatically expresses the strongest and most authentic human affirmation each one can give to the other, even to the point of embracing each other not

only as spouses but also as parents in the potentially life-giving act of marital intimacy.

Those who partake of sex within a loosely committed relationship like cohabitation, on the other hand, sense — especially women — that the troubling absence of a marital commitment ultimately connotes an incomplete, inauthentic and unstable promise about love.

By pushing back against the hollow notion of “consent-for-tonight” and encouraging chaste continence until marriage, we initiate the process of restoring sex to its rightful place — not as contractual or bargained recreation, but as the unrestricted gift of one for the other and the reception of that same gift.

In this perspective, unique to the setting of marriage, men and women give of themselves for the sake of each other. Such a form of mutual honoring involves the sacrifice of oneself in an other-centeredness that can and often does elevate the dignity of each to a new and transcendent level.

The ethical issue, in sum, is not merely one of mutual consent, but of authentic interpersonal good. Consenting to harmonious hedonisms or reciprocal exploitation is obviously against the good of the individuals involved, as anyone who has ever been sexually objectified, used and discarded sadly knows. Consent is necessary, but not sufficient. What also is needed is to secure the mutual, lasting good of the parties involved.

■ 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)

Balancing Church & State

CHRISTOPHER DODSON



Recognizing the structures of sin around us

Many Christians, including Catholics, have difficulty understanding that “structures of sin” may exist separately from our own individual sins. I suspect that certain religious and political strains of thought in the United States that emphasize the individual as paramount contribute to this problem. The false idea that we are autonomous individuals acting in isolation prevents us from accepting and addressing the social consequences of our sins and the sins of others.

A sin is a personal act (CCC 1868). Only individual persons can sin. The consequences of sin, however, are always personal and social. Sin ruptures our relationship with God, but it also ruptures our relationships with each other.

Saint John Paul II put it this way: “The mystery of sin is composed of this twofold wound which the sinner opens in himself and in his relationship with his neighbor. Therefore, one can speak of personal and social sin: From one point of view, every sin is personal; from another point of view, every sin is social insofar as and because it also has social repercussions” (Reconciliatio et Paenitentia).

This is easy for us to understand when the sin is of a direct social nature, such as lying to your spouse or stealing from your neighbor. What is harder to understand is

how sin has a social consequence when the sin was not directed at another person, or we do not see the consequence.

One reason that is hard to understand is that it is part of the mystery of sin and the social nature of the human person. Created in the image and likeness of God — whom, being of three persons, is social by nature — we are social creatures, mysteriously connected to all persons, near and far, past and present. That connection is hard to see and even accept in this individualistic society, yet it exists, nevertheless. When we sin, therefore, we rupture that relationship, and the consequences of our sins become social in ways that we may never see in our life in this world. Saint John Paul II wrote: “[B]y virtue of human solidarity which is as mysterious and intangible as it is real and concrete, each individual’s sin in some way affects others.”

The social consequences of our sin can build up and become what the Catholic Church calls “structures of sin.” The Catechism describes it this way: “Sins give rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to the divine goodness. ‘Structures of sin’ are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn” (CCC 1869).

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church teaches

that these structures of sin “grow stronger, spread and become sources of other sins, conditioning human conduct. These are obstacles and conditioning that go well beyond the actions and brief life span of the individual . . .” (CSDC 119).

Structures of sin are rooted and have their origin in personal sin. We, personally, may not have created them. Other persons, sometimes many others over decades or centuries, might have created them. Still, as members of the human family and because we are called to solidarity, we have an obligation to address them and eliminate them.

Where are these structures of sin? This is where the teachings of the last three popes can be difficult for people to accept. Structures of sin may not be obvious evils like an abortion clinic or acts of genocide. They can exist in our laws, cultural customs, financial systems and business practices. Although these structures cannot themselves sin — only people can sin — these structures may be evil in and of themselves, further injustices, restrict the ability of people to develop to their full potential, impair the ability of people to freely choose what is right. This is what is meant when the Church talks about structures of sin “conditioning human conduct.”

Structures of sin, therefore,

can make systems of law, business and even technology that are racist, pro-abortion, anti-immigrant, hostile to the poor and threatening to the environment. Whether or not we intend to further the wrongs built into these systems or the sins that created them, we can find ourselves living, working and even perpetuating them.

In all forms, it is our responsibility to remove them. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, St. John Paul II wrote at length about how our common existence and the virtue of solidarity compels us to identify and address these structures of sin. The answer, he taught, does not rest solely in changing our own actions toward individuals, but also addressing the structures through the political process, but always with an eye on acknowledging our own sins and responsibilities.

During this Advent season, we should, in addition to taking time to acknowledge and confess our individual sins, identify and work to remove the structures of sin around us.

■ 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.



UPCOMING EVENTS

**Our Lady of Guadalupe feast**  
All are invited to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit with two different events in honor of Our Lady. On Saturday, Dec. 11, after the 8 a.m. Mass, a special guest speaker and expert on Our Lady of Guadalupe, Isabel Fernandez, will give a talk, after which coffee and rolls will be served in the gathering space. On Sunday, Dec. 12, the 19th annual Mass in Spanish in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe will be celebrated at 1:30 p.m. Following the Mass, authentic Mexican food will be served in the basement cafeteria.

**Christmas dinner at Ascension Dec. 24**  
Ascension in Bismarck is hosting their annual Christmas Eve Dinner on Friday, Dec. 24 from 5:30-7 p.m. in their parish community room. The menu includes roast turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetable, coleslaw, cranberries, relishes, rolls and dessert.

This is a free meal for individuals and families in need, alone or simply want to celebrate Christ's birth with others. Rides are available for those who need transportation. Call the parish office at 701-223-3606 to reserve a ride or if you have any questions.

**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 the region are Mar. 18-20, 2022, in Casselton, N.D. and Feb. 11-13, 2022, in Buffalo, Minn. Early registration is highly recommended. For more information, visit [ndwwme.org](http://ndwwme.org) or [Applications@ndwwme.org](mailto:Applications@ndwwme.org) or 701-347-1998.

**Search weekends**  
Search for Christian Maturity is a weekend retreat experience sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Bismarck. The weekends are for

anyone of high school or college age (at least 15 years old). Search weekends are held at the Badlands Ministries Camp just south of Medora. Upcoming weekends for 2022 are: Jan. 14-16; Feb. 25-27; and April 8-10. More information can be found at [www.bismarckdiocese.com/search1](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com/search1).

**Hannah's Hope infertility support group**  
Are you and your spouse, or someone you know, struggling with infertility? The Diocese of Bismarck Office of Respect Life facilitates a support group for couples suffering with infertility. The group is made up of other couples also walking the infertility path and is based on the teachings of the Church regarding infertility. The focus is on spiritual healing and moral support. Daily prayers are offered for all members by an appointed chaplain. For more information or to sign up, go to [bismarckdiocese.com/hope](http://bismarckdiocese.com/hope) or call Amanda at 701-204-7205.

**Patriotic rosary at Spirit of Life**  
Come in prayer to heal our nation. A patriotic rosary dedicates one Hail Mary in a traditional Catholic rosary to each state of the United States and asks God's protection and guidance for our nation. This will be said the 3rd Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at Spirit of Life in Mandan. Please join as we come together and unite to strengthen our nation.

**March for Life Jan. 21**  
The diocese is sponsoring a 2022 March for Life pilgrimage trip to Washington, D.C. (Jan. 18-23) and the 2022 North Dakota March for Life in Bismarck. Registration for the pilgrimage to Washington, D.C. can be found at [bismarckdiocese.com/march](http://bismarckdiocese.com/march). There are limited spots available for 9-12 grade youth for the trip to D.C., so be sure to sign up soon. More details regarding the ND March for Life, set for Friday, Jan. 21 in Bismarck, will be made available soon.

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### Become A Seven Sister

- One holy hour
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- one heart of prayer

Interested in more information or willing to join a Seven Sisters Apostolate group to pray for a diocesan priest or Bishop Kagan? Send an email to [sevensistersbismarck@gmail.com](mailto:sevensistersbismarck@gmail.com) or call Kathy at 701-389-2253. More information on the Seven Sisters Apostolate can be found at [sevensistersapostolate.org](http://sevensistersapostolate.org).

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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>.