



# Dakota Catholic Action

Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941

## Christ's humble servants



Diocesan seminarians (l-r) Logan Obrigewitch, Ben Wanner and Paul Gardner, currently studying at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis, will be ordained to the transitional diaconate on May 24.

## Three seminarians to be ordained transitional deacons on May 24

By Sonia Mullally  
DCA Editor

Three men studying to be priests for the diocese will be one step closer in their journey as they are ordained to the transitional diaconate on May 24.

Diocesan seminarians Paul Gardner, Logan Obrigewitch and Ben Wanner are currently studying at the Theology III level at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis. They will soon put their knowledge into practice as deacons, true servants of the Church.

"Theology III has been a year marked by a focus on becoming true and faithful leaders," Seminarian Paul Gardner noted. "At this stage of seminary formation, we are being taught how to imitate Christ the Good Shepherd, more particularly, taking what we have learned theologically and seeing what it will look like in parishes. We have been given more opportunities to practice preaching, teaching and making pastoral decisions so as to become instruments of Christ's

own pastoral work."

Classmate Logan Obrigewitch said the foremost preparation is their continued relationship with Jesus. "Gratefully, we participate daily in the sacraments and prayer. An experience that has helped me prepare for diaconate ordination is being aware of Jesus' daily and consistent faithfulness through my time of seminary formation. I desire to imitate Jesus' generous fidelity by serving His Church as a deacon and later on as a priest. In order to prepare for the diaconate, our Theology III class takes a deacon and homiletics' practicum course, allowing us to preach and walk through the deacon's role at the Mass."

This pending important step toward the priesthood has these men in awe of their upcoming first sacred ordination.

"As I approach the moment in which I will lay down my life for the Church in the Diocese of Bismarck in a permanent and definitive way through ordination to the diaconate, there are a few things that keep coming to my

mind and heart as a third-year theologian," explained Seminarian Ben Wanner. "The image of the Good Shepherd certainly permeates my imagination as I notice an ever-growing desire to conform myself to Christ the Servant who lays down His life for His sheep. A perfect imitation of Christ in this vocation truly calls for a radically available and unconditional love for the whole flock."

The trio will be ordained by Bishop Kagan at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck almost exactly one year before their scheduled priestly ordination in the same spot.

"I frequently run up against an emerging awe of the gravity of sacred ordination," Ben added. "Although I will not yet be a priest, I realize more and more how profoundly a deacon

can influence others through humble service, good preaching, reverent liturgies (especially baptisms and marriages), and, of course, through mature Christian friendship. My capacity to build up the kingdom of God will increase significantly."

They are joyfully anticipating being able to serve the faithful this summer in their parish assignments within the diocese, preaching, teaching and baptizing, as well as following along in the daily life of a parish priest. For Logan, he's excited to serve as a deacon at his sister's wedding this summer.

"Since the deacon is a 'living icon of Christ the servant,' I am excited to serve the Church in our local diocese," Logan explained. "What a humbling and free gift from God to serve Him at the altar for Mass and ambo to proclaim

*Continued on page 3*

### A LOOK INSIDE



#### Return to Mass

The faithful are attending Mass again with the obligation reinstated after COVID closures ..... Page 3



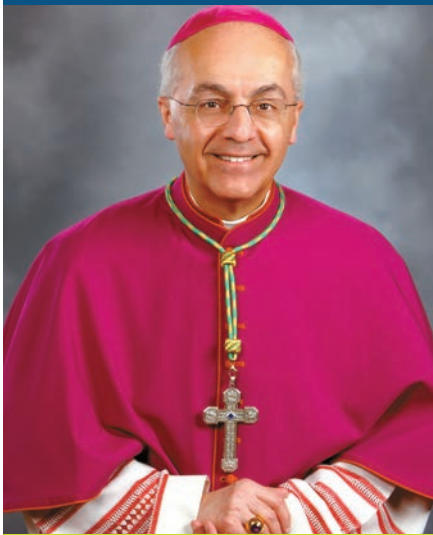
#### God's Share Appeal

The 64th annual diocesan appeal will be conducted May 1-2 in parishes throughout the diocese ..... Pages 5-7



# What does it mean to be Easter people?

## FROM THE BISHOP



Bishop David D. Kagan

“We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our hymn of praise!” Do you know who said this? Do you know that the great St. Augustine was the first to proclaim this fact in an Easter Sunday sermon to the Catholic people of his Diocese of Hippo?

With the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and after keeping the discipline of Lent of intense prayer, active good works of charity and the doing of

sincere penance, is this great proclamation ours? If we say yes, then for this yes to be true and sincere, we must actually live like Easter makes a difference in our lives. That is what St. Augustine was preaching in that Easter Sunday sermon.

If we say no to this proclamation, that is truly a great sadness. We have literally wasted Lent and more. We have wasted the time the merciful God has given us to use His grace to correct our faults and to conform our very lives and persons more closely to Jesus. In essence, we have admitted that Easter does not really matter in our lives; we prefer to go the way of the world rather than follow faithfully Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

However, no matter what, the Lord does not abandon us but continues to offer us the opportunity to return to Him with our whole hearts. If we neglected the discipline of Lent, we could still do it if we choose. We can still go to confession and receive

worthily Holy Communion and be faithful to our obligations as Catholics.

What St. Augustine meant in that Easter Sunday sermon when he taught his people what it means to be “Easter people,” was simply this: their faith in Jesus Crucified and Risen must be lived by imitating Him in daily life by the way they spoke, thought and acted. Anything else was a betrayal of Jesus and their faith. It was true then and

is just as true today and will always be true.

Pope Benedict XVI put Easter Sunday this way: “God lives!” This should help us understand what St. Augustine was preaching. We have a hope that only the Risen Savior can reveal to us and to the world. With this faith and hope what else could we possibly need?

Have a most Blessed and Holy Easter and Easter Season!

## BISHOP’S SCHEDULE

APRIL 2021

|           |   |          |   |
|-----------|---|----------|---|
| April 1   | • Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 6 p.m. | April 16 | • Mass for the Knights of Columbus Convention, Church of St. Leo the Great, Minot, 4 p.m. |
| April 2   | • Good Friday Service, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 6 p.m.                     | April 18 | • Confirmation at the Church of St. Martin, Center, 2 p.m.                                |
| April 3   | • Easter Vigil Mass, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 8 p.m.                       | April 19 | • Women’s Care Center Board Meeting, 5 p.m.   |
| April 7   | • Real Presence Radio interview, 9 a.m.   | April 22 | • Confirmation at the Church of Christ the King, Mandan, 7 p.m.                           |
|           | • Kenrick- Glennon Seminary Board of Trustees Meeting, 3 p.m.                             | April 23 | • Cabinet Meeting, Chancery, Bismarck, 10 a.m.  |
| April 11  | • Confirmation at the Church of St. Joseph, Beulah, 10 a.m.                               | April 23 | • Confirmation at the Church of Saint Anne, Bismarck, 7 p.m.                              |
| Apr 12-15 | • Spring Clergy Conference, Bismarck  | April 24 | • Confirmation at the Church of St. Patrick, Crosby, 10:30 a.m.                           |
|           |   | April 25 | • Confirmation at the Church of St. Bernard, Belfield, 1 p.m. MT                          |

## BISHOP IN ACTION



Photo by Deacon Joe Krupinsky

The Rite of Election took place at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in late February. The catechumens were chosen by Christ and the Church, and accepted by Bishop Kagan, to become “the elect,” to receive baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

## Holy Father’s Prayer Intentions for April



### Universal intention - Fundamental rights

We pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



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



Bishop David Kagan @VescovoDDK

Following

Lent, Week Five, Sunday: the shadow of the Cross looms large over Jesus and yet He loves his enemies and tells them the truth of God and themselves so they will believe. Meditate on the Crucifix and listen to Him.



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



Visit our website at [www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com) Get news, photos, videos and more from around the diocese.



Like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/BismarckDiocese](http://www.facebook.com/BismarckDiocese) Get status updates, photos, videos, and links and share them with your friends.



Dakota Catholic Action



Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941

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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.**



# Return to Mass

## Ministering to the faithful amid COVID concerns

By Monica Hannan  
Special Contributor to the DCA

The Easter Season is a time to rejoice, and for Catholics in western North Dakota there is also good reason to celebrate after a long year of restrictions brought about by COVID-19. Churches are open, the Sunday obligation has been reinstated and the faithful have returned to what some call a “prudent” new normal.

“I know that Ash Wednesdays are the beginning of Lent,” said Monsignor Patrick Schumacher, Pastor at Corpus Christi in Bismarck, “but to me it felt like Easter because we were back.”

Msgr. Schumacher had twice the reason to rejoice after a difficult first year at Corpus Christi. He arrived at the parish on July 1, 2020, and just four weeks into his new assignment he became the first priest in the diocese to be diagnosed with COVID-19.

“I felt awful because it was a difficult time; we were already restricted with directives and then I’m the one who gets sick. And people had adverse reactions, which I completely understand, but some of them were overreactions.” He had people in the parish telling him he needed to close the church, and others who advised him to do a deep clean. “None of which was accurate,” he said. “People were afraid of something I might have touched, but surface contagion is very rare with COVID. COVID is passed through respiratory particles.” Msgr. Schumacher had not been in the church for several days before his diagnosis, and when he got sick, he immediately self-quarantined.

It wasn’t long before the number of those infected began to rise throughout North Dakota, and other priests joined the ranks of the sick. Among them was Cathedral of the Holy Spirit Rector Fr. Josh Ehli.

“I was the second priest in town (to fall ill), and I hadn’t known

many at that point who had had it,” he said. “Shortly thereafter we started hearing a lot more. And then we did implement other protocols around that time. It changed us. We were hearing about people who were normally in the pews, who were no longer there.”

Priests in the Bismarck Diocese were also called on more frequently to conduct funerals for those who succumbed to the virus. COVID restrictions put extra hardship on grieving families. Father Ehli said having had the illness himself and recovered from it fostered empathy for others who were sick. “It’s been a really tough time for a lot of people.”

But it also brought some relief. “It changed me, too. When you come out of it you feel like you have this golden ticket. It made it real for me, but at the same time I thought, ‘well, now I’m good.’ Since then, I’ve had to step back and realize there are still a lot of things we don’t know.”

He had to learn as a leader how to encourage others to behave prudently, “until we know for sure what we’re doing.”

Those prudent measures kicked in early in the Bismarck Diocese, when the first in-person services resumed in May 2020, after being closed to the public in mid-March. Precautions such as voluntary mask wearing, hand sanitizing and distancing were adjusted over time with the changing COVID numbers.

Then, in early February of this year, Bishop Kagan announced that “in light of the decreased number of cases of COVID-19 in North Dakota and the distribution and administration of vaccines,” the obligation to attend Sunday Mass would resume on the first Sunday of Lent. The announcement was a surprise to many. Some welcomed it, but there were others in the diocese who simply weren’t ready. Fr. Ehli encouraged those who were reluctant to return to reach out.



Father Josh Ehli (center), rector of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, had ashes placed on his head at Ash Wednesday Mass by Fr. John Paul Gardner, assisted by Deacon Tony Ternes (in background) and Deacon Brent Naslund (right).



Father John Paul Gardner, Father Ehli and Deacon Brent Naslund distributed ashes during the Ash Wednesday Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck.

“The Mass obligation isn’t absolute in and of itself,” he explained. Parishioners are “also learning catechesis over the Sunday obligation just in these phone conversations. It’s not worth putting people at risk. The easiest thing to do is for people to just call the pastor.”

Plus, he says for some, a relaxed Sunday has become a bit of a habit, so the return of the obligation provided a needed push as well. “People have told me, ‘We started off dressing up in our finest, kneeling, observing the proper postures while we’re watching at home, and then with time we’re a little more distracted. Eventually it’s no longer the Sunday best -- it’s jeans and finally, it’s on the couch with a cup of coffee.’” So, some “needed that nudge to get back in,” he added.

Msgr. Schumacher says the return of the obligation came a bit sooner than he expected, but he agrees that the sense of normalcy has been helpful. “There’s always going to be a segment of the population that doesn’t want to return,” he said. “But if you think about it, I don’t know in my 30 years as a priest if there’s ever been a safer time to go to Mass.” He points to the safety precautions put in place in late spring, when modified in-person services resumed—many of which remain in place today.

“We don’t shake hands, we don’t drink from a common Communion cup, I sanitize my hands, I wear a mask when I distribute Communion, and I have people here being vaccinated every day. And on top of it, there’s no flu,” monsignor added.

He admits it will take time for

people to get used to being around each other again, but he says the in-person experience is vital. “The word ‘church’ means ‘gathering,’” he explained. “A church is not a building; this is a house of worship, but the Church is actually when people are here. So Mass is important.”

Corpus Christi parishioner Heather Bullinger agreed. “For me, it’s being able to experience taking Jesus into my body during the Holy Eucharist,” she said. “We can watch at home, but to receive the Holy Eucharist is a different experience.”

When she attends daily Mass, she still wears a mask, as do many in the congregation. Monsignor Schumacher says he is among those hoping for and waiting to return to a mask-less society, but not yet. Priests in the diocese, and those who engage in liturgical ministries are still wearing face coverings and are being careful to sanitize their hands when distributing the Eucharist. “I think I’m going to wear a mask for a while,” he said, particularly in settings where people are vulnerable.

But not every outcome of the pandemic has been unwelcome. It’s offered new avenues to evangelize. Many parishes plan to continue streaming services even after the pandemic abates. Father Ehli said they are reaching a new set of people. “Some who were not Mass goers who began to tune in daily to listen to a homily and get a little nourishment.”

Among the lessons learned perhaps, is a greater appreciation for resurrection—community and Church.

## Christ’s humble servants

Continued from page 1

the Gospel. I also look forward to meeting and praying for the parishioners at the church I will be assigned.”

Paul added that he’s particularly eager to begin the ministry of preaching—to proclaim and explain the Gospel to those who are longing for Christ so that He may enter hearts with His freedom, hope and consolation. “At this point before ordination I have been guided by two general questions in my own thoughts and prayer. The first is this: ‘Am I doing my very best to prepare for this mission?’ The ordained ministry is never to be taken lightly since it is influential upon the salvation of souls, so I, of course, take this question very seriously. The second question that guides me is, ‘Do I have the

humility to be ordained?’”

After spending the summer here in the diocese, the men will return to St. Louis for their final year of priestly formation. As deacons in Theology IV, they will serve in the Archdiocese of St. Louis at an assigned parish on the weekends.

Before returning to St. Louis, all three men are looking forward to attending the ordinations of their classmates where possible to celebrate the strong bond of brotherhood among seminarians. Ben noted that it will take them all over the country but will be well worth it. “The Kenrick class of Theology III has 13 men representing 10 dioceses from Bismarck to Belize, so there will be a lot of traveling!”



# Living in a new apostolic age

## Monsignor Shea’s book goes viral

By Patti Armstrong  
DCA Writer

The challenge of evangelization at this time in our Church was an ongoing discussion between the President of the University of Mary, Msgr. James Shea and some of his friends.



Msgr. James Shea

“We became convinced that Pope Francis’ observation that ‘we do not live in an age of change, but in a change of age’ really was true in a striking, transformative way,” Msgr. Shea explained. “That realization brought into much clearer focus the emphasis that Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI put on the New Evangelization.”

The reaction he received from audiences in several states after giving talks on the topic, revealed that the issue struck a chord with Catholics truly worried about the rapid secularization of our culture. It inspired him to publish his thoughts in a book titled, “From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age,” released by University of Mary Press in May of 2020.

The basic vision of the book is that societies have a moral and spiritual “imaginative vision” that impacts everything about that society. In the U.S., we have experienced a dramatic shift in recent decades from a “Christendom imaginative vision” to a secular one. As a result, the Church needs to re-think her strategies for spreading the Gospel. “It’s urgent,” according to Msgr. Shea.

**A life of its own**

Msgr. Shea’s goal of writing the book was simply to have something to pass on to the faculty. What followed was a big surprise. The book took on a life of its own with over 20,000 copies sold in less than a year through word of mouth; there was zero advertising.

“Our main motive in publishing the book was as an encouragement and explanatory piece for those working here at the University of Mary,” he said. “We want to have a common vision and sense of purpose in our important work of Catholic higher education. We did put it on Amazon, but that’s because all of our University of Mary Press books are on our Amazon account.”

The orders trickled in at first but kept increasing so that 20,000 copies later, the book has been averaging 100 sales a day since November. It has been discussed on a number of podcasts and gotten the attention of a few bishops.

“Dioceses were calling to order thousands of copies at a time,” Msgr. Shea said. “The Diocese of Sioux Falls did a video series on the book and then a study guide, with book clubs meeting in all of the parishes of eastern South Dakota. The Archdioceses of Oklahoma City, Portland, Detroit, Omaha, and Denver all placed large orders. Our bookstore has never been so busy.”

According to Audrey Anderson at the Office of Discipleship and Evangelization in Sioux Falls, “After the parish and school staff were able to read the book, Bishop invited pastors to share it with the laity to study during Lent. Pastors ordered what they needed for their parishes through our office in one big bulk order— almost 2,500 additional copies.”

In the Archdiocese of Denver, Fr. Matthew Magee, Vice Chancellor and Secretary to Archbishop Samuel Aquila, stated that after the Archbishop read it, he ordered 500 copies to give as gifts to priests, seminarians and others. “Some of the priests and Curia staff have since ordered more copies for their respective staff,” he said. “The book has had a positive impact on our Archdiocesan initiative of moving from ‘maintenance to mission.’ Archbishop made it a central discussion-point for our monthly deanery meetings and also wrote a ‘Pastoral Note’ entitled Our Apostolic Moment, which indirectly references the book.”

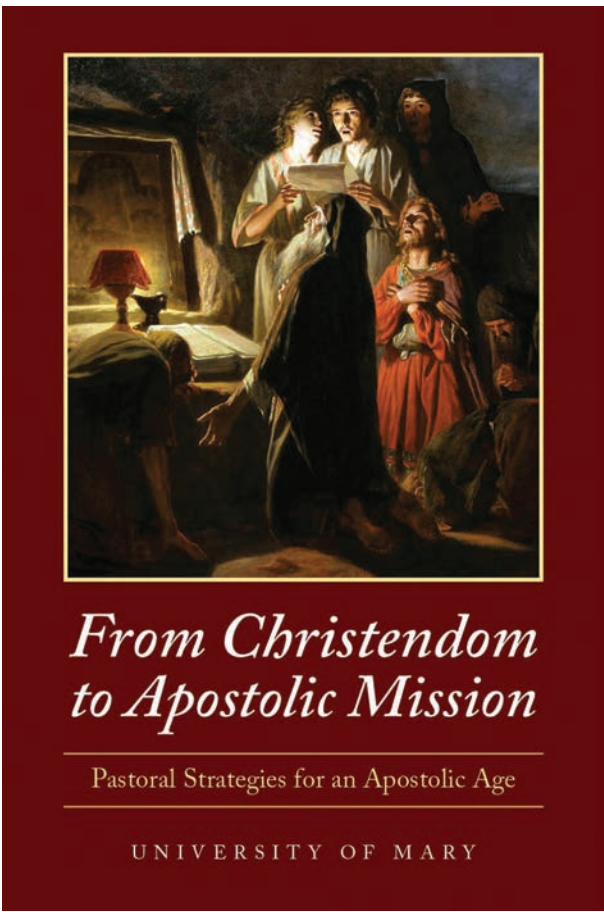
**Struggle of the ages**

The book opens by explaining: “At every point, the One who came as light into darkness to establish a kingdom of truth and love has been opposed by the darkness. The light continues to shine; its origin is in God himself, and the darkness cannot overcome it (cf

Jn 1). But the extent of that light, the way it sheds its rays, the kind of opposition it encounters and therefore the means it uses to keep its light shining and shed its influence abroad, changes from place to place and age to age. It is therefore important for those who are members of Christ’s body, who share in his divine life and so are called by him to be the light of the world (cf Mt 5), to take thought for the times in which they live and to devise pastoral and evangelistic strategies suited to those times.”

The book walks us through history beginning with a time where zeal, the truth, and the Holy Spirit was all the Church had...that and 11 apostles. We see the waves of evangelization spreading to create cultures of Christendom where Christianity becomes the prevailing wind only to eventually slip into the culture through complacency. Once the culture smothers much of the spirit that should set the Church apart from the secular world, the mission must again become apostolic to overcome it.

Pastoral strategies include rethinking education and also rejecting social analysis that expects defeat. “They leave out faith and miracles and the Holy Spirit by a necessity of their method and so they will necessarily be inaccurate concerning the activity of a spiritual organism with its roots in heaven,” Msgr. Shea wrote. “What sociological survey could have predicted the conversion of an ancient and sophisticated civilization at the hands of a small group of uneducated laborers? What numerical analysis could



Submitted photos

have surmised the explosion of the monastic movement? Or the conversion of all the pagan peoples of Europe? Or the appearance of a St. Francis and his thousands of followers in a few short years? Or the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the conversion of Mexico? Or, for that matter, the conversion of a single soul?”

Thus, Msgr. Shea states that our task is simply to understand that we are living in a new apostolic age, to trust that the Holy Spirit is at work and as St. Paul says, the more evil that is present, the more grace abounds. And ultimately, he explains, we are to seize the adventure of working with the Holy Spirit to live and share the saving message given to us by Jesus Christ.

**Where to get the book**

“From Christendom to Apostolic Mission” is available at the Mayo Pharmacy and Rainbow Shop Parable Christian Store in Bismarck, at the University of Mary bookstore and online at Amazon.

## Prime Matters website launched

A new project at the University of Mary is the website Prime Matters.com.

“Prime Matters is a Catholic Studies initiative to awaken the Catholic imaginative vision in Catholics and all people of goodwill,” the homepage announces. “We promote content that provides clear articulation of the first principles of the Catholic imaginative vision and applies them to various academic disciplines, professions, and current events.”

It began as a resource for students with a vast repository of the principles and perspectives undergirding the Church’s intellectual efforts through the centuries and up to the present day. The information is presented in a number of formats. For instance, the audio project at primematters.com/narrative has an extensive array of audio presentations of the whole Christian story, hosted on the site but also extending onto their Prime Matters YouTube

and podcast channels. The interview “There Will be Light” is an interview with Dr. James Link, a Catholic psychologist in Bismarck, and Bishop James Conely of Lincoln, Neb., discussing the relationship between Catholic spirituality and psychology. There is even a punchy weekly update, “The First Draught,” with insights on the news, notes on the coming Sunday Scriptures and highlights.

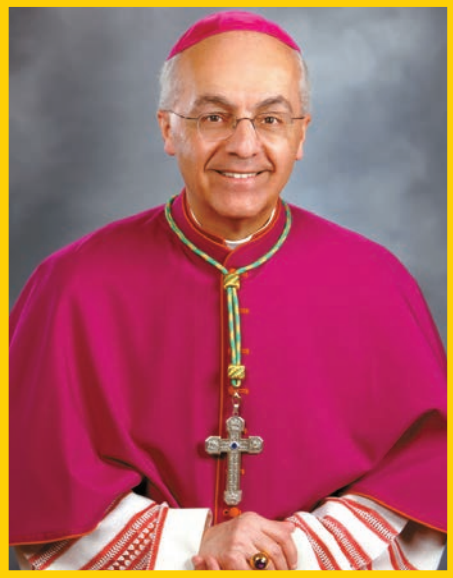
Prime Matters is published by an editorial panel chaired at Mary College at ASU in Tempe, Ariz., a satellite campus and partner in educational outreach with the University of Mary.





God’s Share Appeal

“Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness”



My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each and every day, I give thanks to our Lord for giving me the gift of my vocation to be a priest and specifically, to be your Bishop and be of service to

you and all the Catholic faithful people in western North Dakota. As your Bishop, I am committed to serving you and providing our 97 parishes with the necessary programs and services so that today, we can have vibrant parish faith communities and also build the next generation of families who are equipped to give witness to Jesus Christ.

Our 64th 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 \$3,258,000. With your donation, we will be able to form our 22 seminarians and 13 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.

Please read this brochure to learn how your gift makes such a large impact on thousands of individuals and families in our diocese. Our website, bismarckdiocese.com has additional information on our offices and programs, as well as materials that will inform, educate and inspire you.

St. Paul urged the Corinthians to “Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness.” That is the theme I have chosen for our 2021 God’s Share Appeal. Our loving and generous God has given each of us 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 invite you to work as co-laborers with me in building God’s house here in western North Dakota.

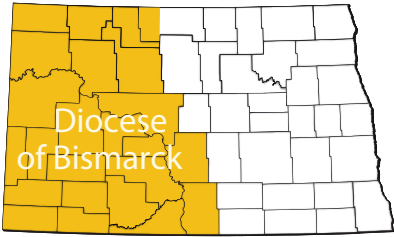
Sincerely yours in our Lord, Jesus Christ,

*David D. Kagan*

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.



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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.

Diocese of Bismarck  
May 1-2, 2021

“Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness”



Your donation to the 2021 God's Share Appeal supports all of the programs and services provided by the following offices:

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

“Dedicate yourselves  
to thankfulness”

# God's Share Appeal

May 1-2, 2021

## WE ARE...

60,297 Catholic people  
97 Parishes  
1 Bishop  
58 Priests  
11 Retired Priests  
22 Seminarians  
83 Permanent Deacons  
13 Men in Diaconate Formation  
1 Diocese

## LIVING AND SHARING OUR FAITH IN 2020, WE CELEBRATED:

859 Baptisms  
643 First Communions  
658 Confirmations  
228 Marriages  
754 Deaths

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.

Our four seminarians that will be Ordained to the Priesthood.

A group of seminarians praying together.

Bishop Kagan confirms over 650 people each year.

Youth from western North Dakota attend the first #NDMarchforLife event at the State Capitol grounds.

### Office of Vocations

Your donation supports the Office of Vocations. Last year, Fr. Mark Aune and Fr. Christian Smith were Ordained to the Priesthood. On June 11, 2021, four of our seminarians, Deacon Ben Franchuk, Deacon Nicholas Vetter, Deacon Jacob Degele, and Deacon Greg Hilzendegeer will be Ordained to the Priesthood. The other 18 current seminarians are scheduled to return to the seminary in August. In addition, Bishop Kagan is still visiting with several other possible new seminarians. For a small diocese of our size, we are extremely blessed with the number of seminarians we have.

### Office of Catechesis and Youth

Your gift supports the Office of Catechesis and Youth which provides valuable training and information to all of the parishes 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 High School and Middle School Youth Rallyes; March for Life Pilgrimage; Search weekend; Steubenville Youth Conferences; and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) wanting to enter the Catholic Church.

Corazon

Second Marriage Seminar

Parishioners of all ages demonstrating Respect for Life.

Bishop Kagan with our new Deacon, Ron Zachmann.

Bishop with 6 retired priests.



### 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; Courage; Hannah's Hope Ministry; Rachel's Vineyard; Struggling Marriages – Corazon; Second Marriage Seminars; 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 13 men in formation and 83 deacons.

### Retired Priests and Bishop

Your contribution supports all of our 11 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.

### 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 social media including Bishop's Twitter account.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training.

Zoom meeting.

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

Bishop Kagan holding the Precious Blood Chalice.

Bishop Kagan at Liturgy.

### 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. Zoom meetings became very popular during the past year.

### 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.

# Doing God's Work

For more pictures and information on each office, please visit our diocesan website:

**bismarckdiocese.com**

Diocese of Bismarck • 520 North Washington Street • Bismarck, ND 58501 • (701) 222-3035 or Toll Free 1-877-405-7435 • **bismarckdiocese.com**

## 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  
“*Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness*”

Our faith teaches us that the way we came to know of Jesus' love for us, was that He laid down his life – as an example for us to follow. By making a gift to this year's God's Share Appeal, you are expressing your 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 on your parish's APP.
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 2021 God's Share Appeal. Make your pledge today. Thank you for being good stewards of God's varied grace.

## PRAY FOR OUR 2020-2021 SEMINARIANS

|   |  |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| <br>JACOB DEGELE<br>Theology IV<br>St. Joseph<br>Dickinson    | <br>BEN FRANCHUK<br>Theology IV<br>Queen of Peace<br>Dickinson   | <br>GREG HILZENDEGEER<br>Theology IV<br>Cathedral<br>Bismarck      | <br>NICK VETTER<br>Theology IV<br>St. Anthony<br>Linton | <br>GRANT DVORAK<br>Theology III<br>Cathedral<br>Bismarck   | <br>PAUL GARDNER<br>Theology III<br>St. Mary's<br>New England |
| <br>JAKE MAGNUSON<br>Theology III<br>Little Flower<br>Minot   | <br>LOGAN OBRIGEWITCH<br>Theology III<br>St. Joseph's<br>Beulah  | <br>BENJAMIN WANNER<br>Theology III<br>St. Joseph's<br>Mandan      | <br>JOSH HILL<br>Theology II<br>Cathedral<br>Bismarck   | <br>DUSTIN JOHNS<br>Theology II<br>St. Leo the Great<br>Minot   | <br>RYAN MARTIRE<br>Theology II<br>Cathedral<br>Bismarck      |
| <br>STEVEN VETTER<br>Theology II<br>St. Bernard's<br>Beafield | <br>JOHN WINDSOR<br>Theology II<br>St. Mary's<br>Bismarck        | <br>KONNOR PETERSON<br>Pre-Theology II<br>Spirit of Life<br>Mandan | <br>ERIC ARIZ<br>Theology I<br>Little Flower<br>Minot   | <br>ISAIAH FISCHER<br>Theology I<br>Cathedral<br>Bismarck   | <br>COLTON STEINER<br>Theology I<br>St. Joseph<br>Dickinson   |
| <br>ISAIAH JILEK<br>College II<br>St. Wenceslaus<br>Dickinson | <br>CHARLES REICHERT<br>College II<br>Corpus Christi<br>Bismarck | <br>JOSEPH RICHTER<br>College II<br>St. Anne<br>Bismarck           | <br>JOE SCHON<br>College I<br>Ascension<br>Bismarck     | <p>The Office of Vocations, on average, has the largest office budget. Through your donations to the annual God's Share Appeal, Bishop Kagan is able to pay for the education and formation expenses of our 22 seminarians. The average cost for one seminarian in the major seminary is \$37,500 each year. Please continue to pray for our 22 seminarians and for everyone else that is considering a call to the Religious Life</p> <p> DIOCESE of BISMARCK<br/>BISMARCKVOICATIONS.COM</p> |   |



# Women’s retreat in New England



Fr. Gary Benz, pastor of St. Mary’s in New England and St. Elizabeth in Lefor, addressed those in attendance at a spiritual retreat for women at the parish in New England on Feb. 27.

**By Vivian Hernandez**  
**Special Contributor to the DCA**  
Area women enjoyed a spiritual retreat at St. Mary’s Parish in New England on Feb. 27.

Some 68 women from Williston, Bismarck, Dickinson and the New England area attended the event that featured speaker Dr. Ann F. Brodeur, Professor of History and Catholic Studies at the University of Mary. The morning began with Mass followed by Dr. Brodeur’s opening talk, “The Loveliness of Bethany: The Importance of Prayer.” Bethany was the home of Martha, Mary and their brother Lazarus. Dr. Brodeur asked those in attendance to imagine what this home that Jesus visited must have been like and why He spent so much time there. The home must have been a place where Jesus and the 12 felt welcomed, they could relax, and Mary and Martha would be sure to feed them. Dr. Brodeur encouraged all to make our homes, our hearts a place where Jesus can come, rest and be one of the family. Following the opening talk, there was adoration of the

Blessed Sacrament, the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary led by Fr. Gary Benz, pastor of St. Mary’s, with time for silent reflection and prayer. Men from St. Elizabeth’s of Lefor and St. Mary’s served lunch in the parish faith and family rooms. These men were certainly “Blessed among women!” The group then returned to the church for Stations of the Cross and the next talk, “Finding Christ in the Little Things of Each Day.” It’s easy to get caught up in the busyness of the world that we miss Jesus in everyday things. Ann reminded everyone to take time everyday to be silent and just be with Jesus. We need to slow down, be intentional about listening and seeing Christ in the Little Things. The final talk, “The Roots and Practice of Joy,” followed. This talk offered tools and habits which will enable us to find joy even in the midst of difficulties and sadness. Our challenge now is to take what we’ve learned into our messy lives and choose to live a joy-filled life.

## OBITUARY

### Sr. Mary Walker, OSB

Sister Mary Walker, 81, a member of Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, died Tuesday, March 9, at St. Vincent’s Care Center.



Sr. Mary Walker, OSB

Sister Mary, known as Sister Matthew in her first years as a sister, was born in Mott, ND, on October 21, 1939, but grew up in Bismarck as the fourth of seven children born to William and Lillian (Behrenfeld) Walker. She was elected Governor of Girls State while a student at St. Mary’s High School and, after graduation, began college at Mount Marty in Yankton, S.D. In the fall of 1959, Sister Mary was among the first class of postulants to enter the newly completed Annunciation Priory (Monastery). Education continued at Mary College (University of Mary), at St. Louis University, Mo., where she received her master’s degree in social work, and at Boston College, where she

completed a master’s degree in theology. Earlier, as an instructor for six years at the Sisters’ Priory High School, Sister Mary often wrote and produced original Advent and Lenten dramas with students as the cast. With a love of learning, Sister Mary was an avid reader and always had recommendations for a good book or sources of material for a particular topic when consulted. Her students remember her as “Sister Mary Handout” related to the many articles distributed for their study. Out of the riches gained through reading and experience, she wrote poetry and reflections, and had a great concern for the disheartened and despairing that resulted from violence and unjust conditions in our world. Sister Mary is survived by her sisters, Wanda (Dennis) Doppler, Bismarck; Zona Easton, Edina, Minn.; and Dorothy (Jim Mowbray), Port St. Joe, Fla., nieces and nephews, and the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. She was preceded in death by her parents, her sister, Frances, and brothers William “Billy Jack” and David.



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

#### An invitation from the Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| April 1 Deacon David Crane                         | April 16 Deacon Keith Due         |
| April 2 Br. Alban Petesch, OSB                     | April 17 Br. Symeon Rubbelke, OSB |
| April 3 Sr. Gemma Peters, OSB                      | April 18 Fr. Roger Synek          |
| April 4 Sr. Krista Ferral, OSB                     | April 19 Deacon Victor Dvorak     |
| April 5 Fr. Jason Signalness                       | April 20 Sr. Idelle Badt, OSB     |
| April 6 Deacon Robert Dangel                       | April 21 Fr. Craig Vasek          |
| April 7 Seminarians & those in Religious Formation | April 22 Seminarian Paul Gardner  |
| April 8 Seminarian Nick Vetter                     | April 23 Fr. Josh Waltz           |
| April 9 Sr. Kathleen Kuntz, OSB                    | April 24 Deacon Richard Fettig    |
| April 10 Fr. Christian Smith                       | April 25 Br. John Seiler, OSB     |
| April 11 Sr. Kathleen Atkinson, OSB                | April 26 Sr. Melissa Cote, OSB    |
| April 12 Deacon Dennis Dean                        | April 27 Sr. Paula Larson, OSB    |
| April 13 All Lay Ministers                         | April 28 All Lay Ministers        |
| April 14 Sr. Annette Dobitz, SSND                  | April 29 Fr. Justin Waltz         |
| April 15 Fr. Keith Streifel                        | April 30 Bishop David Kagan       |

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Living Chaplet of Divine Mercy April 11**  
The CCD students at Queen of the Most Holy Rosary in Stanley will present the Living Chaplet of Divine Mercy on Sunday, April 11 at 3 p.m. The public is invited to attend. Refreshments will be served afterwards.
- Corazon weekends**  
The diocesan program for troubled marriages called Corazon will be available on two upcoming weekends—April 30-May 2 and August 20-22. Couples who may be in a marriage in crisis are encouraged to attend a weekend. All confidences are kept and privacy for anyone inquiring about or attending a Corazon retreat is a priority. For questions, contact Amanda at 204-7205. For couple registration or additional information, visit [bismarckdiocese.com/corazon](http://bismarckdiocese.com/corazon).

- Caritas Award luncheon May 11**  
The public is invited to join the Catholic Charities ND’s Annual Caritas Award Luncheon on Tuesday, May 11 from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. for lunch and a program. The event will be held at Spirit of Life Church in Mandan, with special guest Bishop David Kagan, as Catholic Charities North Dakota honors Marci Loomis for her leadership and service to the poor through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Visit [www.CatholicCharitiesND.org](http://www.CatholicCharitiesND.org) to learn more. Due to social distancing requirements, guests need to RSVP by emailing [dinner@catholiccharitiesnd.org](mailto:dinner@catholiccharitiesnd.org) or calling 701-235-4457 no later than Tuesday, May 4.
- 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.
- 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 weekends in the region are April 16-18 in Olivia, Minn. and Nov. 12-14 in Medora. 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.

- 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.



Balancing Church & State

CHRISTOPHER DODSON



Discrimination against state-run campus groups

Did you know that some of the campuses of the North Dakota University System prohibit Catholic student clubs from being truly Catholic?

This is one of those “I didn’t think it would happen here” stories.

Freedom of association goes hand-in-hand with freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Free speech and religious liberty mean little if people cannot join together under a shared belief and unite in their messaging and activities. Indeed, Jesus called us to come together. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Mt. 18:20)

Free speech, religious freedom and freedom of association are also part of the university experience. A college is a place where ideas can be shared, debated and analyzed with respect for each other. It is also a place where students can unite with other students of similar interests and beliefs. This is why colleges and universities have so many student clubs.

How, then, did colleges and universities, including here in North Dakota, decide it was acceptable to infringe upon the right of student clubs to preserve

their own mission? It started some years ago. Under the guise of “diversity” and “inclusion,” campuses started to require clubs to accept “all comers,” even if the “comer” did not agree with the club’s mission. If the club has a policy that restricts who can become a member or leader, the club is denied the same benefits as other clubs, such as access to meeting rooms, posting space and use of student activity fees.

The Christian Legal Society (CLS) at Hastings College of Law, a part of the University of California, had a statement of faith that, among other things, required the members to be Christian and believe in traditional marriage. The law school said that the statement of faith violated the school’s all-comers policy. CLS challenged the policy and in 2010 the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court. In *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez*, the Supreme Court, in a 5-4 opinion authored by Justice Ginsberg, found that these policies do not violate the U.S. Constitution.

Some colleges and universities viewed the decision as an invitation to enact more such policies. We now know that some of North

Dakota’s state-run campuses did just that.

Legislators introduced House Bill 1503 to protect students’ free speech and religious rights in several ways, including prohibiting the North Dakota University System from enacting “all-comers” policies. To the surprise of many, the university system admitted during testimony in the House that some of the campuses have already enacted such policies and it did not appear willing to change that practice. In fact, it opposes HB 1503 in its entirety.

The Trump Administration enacted a regulation prohibiting state-sponsored campuses from enacting all-comers policies that discriminate against religious clubs. The North Dakota University System testified that it was in the process of revising its policies to comply with the regulation.

The proposed revision, however, does not remove the need for HB 1503. For one thing, it is apparent that the system is only making the change because it is required to by federal law, not because it is the right thing to do. The Biden Administration could rescind the rule and we would have no guarantee that religious clubs would be protected.

Second, the federal regulation applies only to religious clubs. Clubs based on ideas have no protections. Democratic clubs could not guarantee that their members be Democrats. Republican clubs could not guarantee that their members be Republicans. Pro-life clubs could not require that members and leaders believe in the sanctity of human life.

Insisting that student clubs be free to adhere to their own mission is not condoning undue discrimination. Nor is it about allowing discrimination based on race, sex or even sexual orientation. It is about the preservation of the group’s beliefs. Student groups on the state-run campuses should not be discriminated against because of what they believe.

By the time this column appears in print, the fate of HB 1503 might be decided. Whatever the outcome, we must be vigilant about these creeping attacks on free speech and religious liberty.

■ *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.*

Stewardship

RON SCHATZ



Do you remember your first Holy Communion?

In which month did you make your first Holy Communion? Most parishes celebrate the sacrament of First Holy Communion in the springtime. Why?

Spring is the time of year that gives us many wonderful examples of new life around us. The trees begin to bud, the grass starts to turn green, and the flowers start to show their beautiful colors. It seems that all of nature is shouting, “Alleluia! The cold, dark dreary days of winter are over!”

Within this season, the Church places the highest holy day of all holy days—Easter Sunday. Easter is the ultimate example of death being conquered and new life beginning. Jesus died on the cross but was raised from the dead to bring us all eternal life after we die to this earthly life.

Before Jesus suffered and died to save us from our sins, He celebrated Passover with His disciples. During the Passover meal, Jesus transformed the bread and wine at the table into His own body and blood. The Eucharist is Jesus’ gift to each of us. Every time we receive Communion at Mass, we are actually receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This gift of Jesus renews and strengthens us to live our lives as Jesus has

instructed us, as stewards of His abundant gifts—to love God with all our heart, mind and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

It is fitting then, that during this time of new life, that most parishes celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist through first Holy Communion. Something seems to have been lost for many of us, however, between our first Communion experience and now. At our first Communion we eagerly awaited, in awe and wonder, for the moment that we would receive Jesus in the Eucharist. We reverently rose and processed up the aisle to receive the Eucharist. We then proceeded back to our pew and thanked God for the gift we had just received. How does this compare with our actions today?

Last March, when public Masses were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, that was the first time I experienced that I couldn’t receive the Eucharist, and I really missed it. I appreciated receiving the spiritual Communion offered. I heard from many people that they, too, greatly missed receiving the Eucharist, as we always had in the past.

Do we still believe that we are truly receiving Christ’s body and

blood? Do we return to our pew to prayerfully thank God for this wonderful gift?

As we celebrate new life around us during this spring and Easter season, let us remember the gift that Jesus has given each of us which brings us eternal life—the gift of the Eucharist. May we have the faith to truly believe in Christ’s presence in the Eucharist and to receive Jesus with the reverence, awe and respect we showed at our own first Communion.

Let us thank God for the gift of the Eucharist and may we, through its reception, be good stewards of God’s love and place God first

in our lives as members of Christ’s body. Let us also thank God for all the gifts and blessings He has bestowed upon us by returning, in gratitude, a portion of our time, talent and treasure to Him. Let us all share a portion of our time, talent and treasure with our families, our local parishes, our Diocesan Church, our local communities and with our favorite charities.

■ *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.*

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>.



# Catholic Charities

CHAD PROSOSKI



## Seeing the good and bad in life

When you think of our winter weather, what comes to mind?

For me it's mostly the work of shoveling snow and the long stretches of freezing cold. Yet, for my children, it's the fun of sledding and the excitement of building snow forts. When they play outside in the snow, they don't seem to mind the temperature half as much as I do. In fact, they'll gladly help shovel first if I'll help with their snow forts after. And while I couldn't wait for winter to finally end, they were sad to see the snow melt.

Why do I talk about the weather? Well, our changing weather is much more than a conversation starter. I think it reminds us of a very important lesson. We always have the choice whether to complain about the difficulties in our lives or whether to rejoice about the blessings. North Dakota winters may be tough, but the other seasons can be absolutely beautiful. Which side of that coin do I want to focus on, and more importantly, what type of person do I wish to be?

Think of those people you

admire the most, and those who you enjoy spending time around. Are they the ones who always complain about their misery, or do they seem to find a way to enjoy life in spite of their suffering and problems? Don't get me wrong, when you are going through a true trial in life it's not very helpful—and often quite annoying—if someone carelessly tells you it's no big deal. But how do we react to all the more numerous little things, the daily aches and pains, we experience in our everyday lives?

We don't always choose what challenges or crosses we will face in life. What we can choose, however, is our attitude and how we want to respond to those burdens. How many times in life do we have the choice to focus on the positives or the negatives? Yet why is it so much easier to focus on the bad over the good? Perhaps this fairly strong tendency to see the negatives may have something to do with our fallen nature and concupiscence, or humanity's inclination to sin.

But like everything, even this tendency to focus on the bad

can have a silver lining. Without seeing and feeling strongly about the many problems in our world, how could we use our creativity and gifts to address them? Doesn't seeing the worst aspects of society and all the injustices allow us to respond to them? For instance, many of you just helped make a difference by participating in Giving Hearts Day in February when over 40,000 people donated more than \$22 million to over 500 different nonprofit organizations serving North Dakota. Catholic Charities North Dakota and many other Catholic organizations, such as our schools, benefited from your great generosity.

Another way our faith helps us respond to the true injustices in our society is by offering us the principles of Catholic social teaching. These issues include respect for life and human dignity, the option for the poor, rights to participation, worker rights, care for creation, solidarity with each other and subsidiarity. The body of Catholic social teaching, which I have discussed often in this column, offers us established

principles to help us fight for justice and the most vulnerable in a more helpful and systematic fashion.

No matter what conditions we face, we can always find ways to help someone. In the midst of the frozen temperatures outside, we witnessed the joy of giving from tens of thousands of North Dakotans during Giving Hearts Day on Feb. 11. As a charity, our hearts were warmed by the generous response of so many individuals working together as one. Many other great Catholic entities and other nonprofits also met their goals, successfully raising the dollars they need to serve the most poor and vulnerable in our communities. If you gave on Giving Hearts Day, thank you again for being part of this collaborative effort to make a difference!

■ Prososki 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.

## Questions

### I was afraid to ask

FR. JOHN PAUL GARDNER



**Q: When evil seems to triumph, what can I do?**

**A:** Often enough, people ask, father, when evil seems to triumph in my life, what can I do?

Those who know their own poverty and sinfulness know all too well that the world is fraught with evils and that their own efforts at dealing with it are quite futile and miserable indeed. In the face of such evil and personal helplessness, options seem quite limited and so often we choose to sin. But this choice only leads to greater poverty, futility and misery...evil seems to triumph.

Biblical figure, Job, puts it succinctly "Man's life on earth is a temptation." This experience brings us to our knees, and in the doors of the Church at the beginning of every Holy Mass we hear the faithful praying amidst their misery... "Miserere Nobis" (Lord Have Mercy).

To answer the question clearly, there is much we can powerfully do to deal with the evil that seems to triumph in life: to frequently and ardently ask Jesus for His mercy.

God has unlimited mercy available for each and every one of us. In fact, St. Faustina (who is his Secretary of Divine Mercy in Heaven) tells us in no uncertain terms that the amount of mercy that God has for us is so immense it can be compared to all the waters of the oceans! How vast and wide and incomprehensible are the waters of the sea? (About 352,000,000,000,000,000 [quintillion] gallons give or take a couple billion.)

If we could fathom that, perhaps we could begin to glimpse how much mercy God wishes to pour out upon us. And, yet there are so few who ask Him for it. It is like a hidden treasure. Jesus talks about this in the Gospel...the Kingdom of God is like a man who finds a

treasure in a field and goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. What the man sold were his possessions and his life of sin. The treasure that he found in the field that caused him to act so radically is nothing less than the superabundant mercy of God.

The mercy of God can be seen most perfectly in the Most Holy Eucharist and in the sacrament of reconciliation. In particular, it can be seen in the precious blood of Jesus which was shed for our salvation by the whips that tore His sacred and innocent flesh at the scourging, by the crown of thorns which adorned and ravaged His head in mockery, in the wounds endured by the nails which pierced His sacred hands and feet on the cross, and, particularly and most especially, in the glorious wound He endured when the soldier pierced His side by thrusting his spear to ensure Jesus was dead on the cross.

In these places particularly we can see the mercy of Almighty God pulsating and gushing forth in order to wash away our sins and the sins of the whole world. This precious blood is the mercy of God and it is truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist, The Host, that we receive from the priest during the Holy Mass. It is also exactly this precious blood of Our Savior that washes us clean of our wicked deeds and heals us in the sacrament of reconciliation (by His wounds we are healed).

But we hesitate to believe, to practice all of this. We easily become distracted by the allurements in life, and we begin to doubt. The wounds our sins have incurred and the experience of our poverty and weakness bring us distress. Here, in our doubts, the Risen Christ appears to us as He did to St. Thomas the Apostle and invites us into His wounds. Did you ever think what St. Thomas must have felt when Jesus, risen from the dead, pressed his hand into His wounded side?

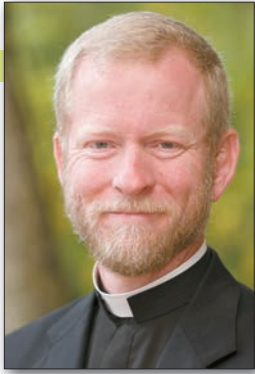
And so, when evil seems to triumph in life, we need to turn ardently to our Lord for mercy: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner!" Or better yet, let our Blessed Mother, Mother of Mercy, beg it from Jesus for us when we pray: "...Turn then most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus! O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!"

■ Fr. John Paul Gardner is parochial vicar at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck. If you have a question you were afraid to ask, now is the time to ask it! Simply email your question to [info@bismarckdiocese.com](mailto:info@bismarckdiocese.com) with the "Question Afraid to Ask" in the subject line.



# Making Sense out of Bioethics

FR. TAD PACHOLCZYK



## Should we take whatever vaccine is offered?

On March 1, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker told residents in the town of Mattapan that when it comes to the various COVID-19 vaccines, “These are all very effective. People don’t need to pick one from another. People should get vaccinated. If you have a chance to get a vaccine, you should take it, whatever it is.”

The governor’s sweeping statement seems to imply, first, that everybody should get a COVID-19 shot, and second, that it’s not necessary to distinguish among the different vaccines currently on the market, like Moderna, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and eventually others.

Such a perspective fails to acknowledge the important factors that are part of deciding whether to receive a particular COVID-19 vaccine or any other vaccine.

When new or experimental treatments become available, including novel vaccines, and we have limited knowledge of their side effects, adverse events, efficacy and long-term consequences, it’s important to realize that such treatments are never morally obligatory for an individual, nor for a whole population. Achieving herd immunity, while clearly an important goal, in no way demands that everyone must be immunized.

For those individuals who are young and in good health, for example, and with no comorbidities, the risk of adverse outcomes from a COVID-19 infection, statistically speaking, are very low, on a par with the generally low risks of being vaccinated. They may reasonably, therefore, decide to decline receiving an inoculation.

For those, meanwhile, who are more vulnerable to the coronavirus and its potentially damaging effects, like those who are obese, elderly, diabetic or facing other comorbidities, it makes sense for them to consider the potentially safer path of vaccination, rather than risking a harmful (or

deadly) encounter with the virus itself. Each person must make a careful determination about whether a COVID-19 vaccination is appropriate for his or her set of circumstances.

This is no different from making decisions about other vaccines like the shingles vaccine or the annual flu shot. When people get older, their chance of getting shingles, for example, increases and the CDC recommends the shingles vaccine for those over 50. Similar to COVID-19, the older you are, the greater the risk, and the greater the need to consider the possibility of vaccination to avoid the painful effects of shingles.

But it is not mandatory that everyone should take the shingles vaccine — or the flu shot or the COVID-19 vaccine — because not everyone faces the same risks or would benefit from it to the same degree.

When deciding which vaccine to receive from among the FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines, some may be considerably more effective than others, and some may incur side effects for certain individuals.

For example, a compound called polyethylene glycol (PEG) has been identified as a possible trigger for rare allergic or anaphylactic reactions in some vaccine recipients, even in trace amounts. According to FDA documents, both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines contain PEG, while the Johnson and Johnson vaccine does not. Thus, individuals with a PEG allergy effectively have only a single choice among the three emergency-use authorized vaccines in the U.S.

Another distinction among vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson is their association with cell lines that were originally derived from human abortions. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are not directly produced or manufactured by relying on these abortion-related cell lines while the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is directly grown in such cells. All three vaccine manufacturers, however,

have carried out ancillary or side-testing procedures using these cell lines. Using abortion-derived cell lines in scientific research and industrial development raises significant ethical concerns.

When several vaccine candidates are available that are equally safe and effective, Catholics may discern in conscience the need to receive a candidate that is not associated at all, or more distantly associated, with abortion-derived cell lines. People at relatively low risk may also decide to wait for a vaccine with no connection to abortion if one is not yet available. They can make these choices as matters of conscience to avoid entanglements with the morally unacceptable practice of abortion. All of us have a right to vaccines with no connection to these cell lines. Nonetheless, the Church also reminds us that we are permitted to take, under protest, any of the currently available vaccines, even those most directly associated with cell lines from abortions, if we discern in conscience that there is a serious or proportionate reason to do so. We need to give each of these options real prayerful and thoughtful discernment.

Taken together, these considerations show us how it is important not to gloss over the distinctions among various COVID-19 vaccines and imply, as Governor Baker does, that everybody should get the first version that is available.

Rather, each of us needs to make careful decisions about our own health while also making conscientious choices in the light of legitimate moral concerns.

■ *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)*

# Ag Attitudes

JAMES ODERMANN



## Lenten commitment should spring up year-round

This is one of my favorite times in the year. New life is springing up, whether it be livestock, green grass, seeded annual crops, trees becoming laden with leaves or flowers blooming. Spring just seems to bring optimism that can permeate the spirit and move one forward with joy.

Personally, I have a front row seat watching the wonders of new life spiral forth from the air, water and soil. I feel privileged to be part of less than two percent of the United States population that feeds over 300 million mouths annually—and shares the production across the globe.

This dedication requires much and means sacrifice on the part of many producers. The acceptance

of this responsibility, in many cases, means my sisters and brothers (mostly the sisters who hold the family together, balancing demands of time and making sure deadlines are met) do forego many of the leisure luxuries that non-agricultural producers enjoy.

So, as was I enjoying the sight of geese flying north, I thought of fellow producers with the “spring” in their step moving equipment and supplies to fields, placing their faith in the fact that growing conditions would be positive. I thought about the hope, the commitment, the dedication my friends and neighbors displayed. This universal concept reaches across the globe as the growing season in the Northern

Hemisphere takes off.

As I walked across the fields and pastures, I reflected on the season of Lent just completed. Lent is the time for me to change my ways, my attitudes, my approach to my fellow sisters and brothers. Did I get the job done? Did I falter on my Lenten resolutions? Is the end of Lent the conclusion of my commitment to reform my life?

Lent ended with the Easter Triduum, those three days of agony, death and resurrection of Jesus. I felt guilty because my earthly sacrifices pale in comparison to what Jesus did. Jesus died on the cross for me. Jesus rose from the dead so I could be saved. The Easter Triduum is a Christian celebration of that

belief, that commitment God made for me.

The least I can do is to honor that gift by making sure I continue to attempt to reform, to make the Lenten resolutions part of my daily life and routine. In fact, my life should be a commitment to God’s desires for me. I need to extend my resolutions as part of my lifestyle—and commit to more improvements. I need to show more faith in 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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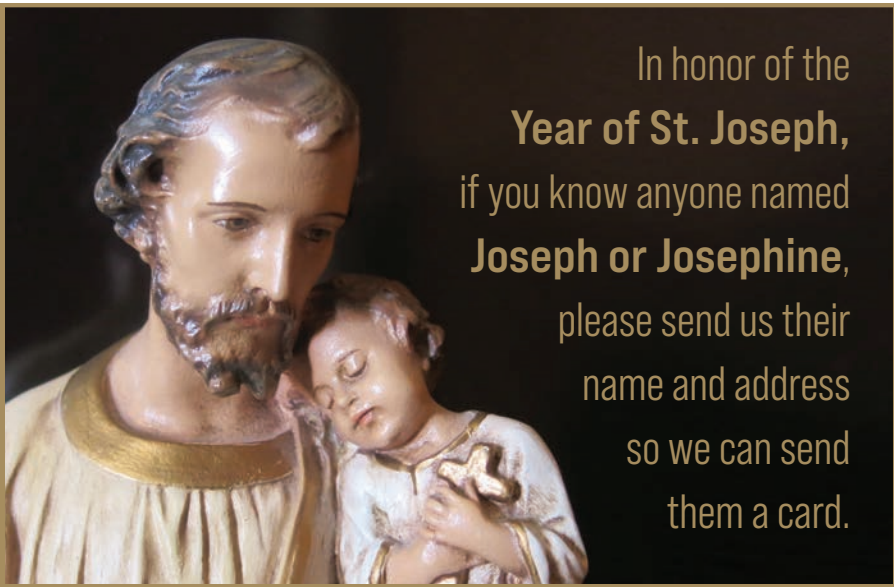
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