



Dakota Catholic Action

Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941

Shamba taking shape



Workers are making progress on the three-acre plot of land purchased for the new home of the Bismarck Diocese African Mission in Kenya.

Bismarck African Mission relocating to three-acre plot

By **Sonia Mullally**
DCA Editor

The Bismarck African Mission is moving to a farm.

To better minister to the health and welfare of the 452 orphans they serve, a tract of land has been purchased to develop into the hub for the Mission in Kenya. The shamba, a term used in East Africa for a cultivated plot of land, is three acres to be transformed with buildings and resources for orphans and vulnerable people in need.

The new area is situated

about five miles from the current location settled in 1994. The Bismarck African Mission was established in 1990 by Bishop John Kinney near the border of Somalia in the Diocese of Garissa. Because of violence in that part of the country, four years later, the mission was moved to its current location near the Gekano Girls' school. Longtime Mission employee, Rogers Osoro, is heading up the relocation project to the shamba with assistance from missionaries, Wes and Kathy Pepple and Fr. David Morman.



Crews of local laborers have been working on clearing the land, installing a fence and gate, drilling a well and building an outdoor bathroom, as well as erecting a water tower and installing electricity. Work is expected to be completed by mid to late next year.

This colossal undertaking has been in the works for more

than two years. It began with a plan of action and discussions with Bishop Kagan and the local bishop of the Diocese of Kisii, the diocese that the African Mission lies within. The long, narrow piece of land was purchased from locals and is situated between neighboring shambas.

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A LOOK INSIDE



Diaconate ordination

Diocesan seminarian Steven Vetter will be ordained to the transitional diaconate on Sept. 29 at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome Page 3

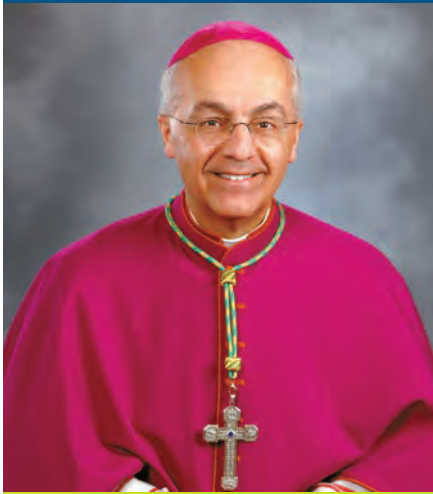


Town and Country

Photos of Town and Country Celebration held at Chavinda Honeybee Farms near Hague on July 24 Page 8

A direct link between knowing our faith and living it

FROM THE BISHOP



Bishop David D. Kagan

The month of September has always had nice memories for me going all the way back to my childhood years. It may seem a bit strange, but it was in September 1955 that I started first grade in my parish’s Catholic grade school. Since my sixth birthday was not until November of that year the Pastor let me begin early since I knew how to read!

It was a great day for me as it was the beginning of my Catholic school education and life. I am proud to state that I have gone to only Catholic schools for my

entire education: grade school, high school, college, post-graduate theology and finally, canon law studies. The entire period of time ran from 1955 to 1979, with a two-year break from 1975-1977 when I served as an assistant pastor at St. Patrick Parish, Dixon, Illinois (the hometown of Ronald Reagan).

While our Catholic schools began another academic year last month, it seems that everything really gets going after the Labor Day holiday. The reason I bring all this up is that I value my Catholic school education from beginning to end and can state, without a doubt, that it has prepared me for my life as a priest and bishop. It had a deep and abiding influence on my vocation, and I have my parents, my parish priests and the marvelous religious sisters and priests who taught me to thank.

Parents, if you have not considered a Catholic school education for your children, I urge you to do so. No doubt, it is more expensive than sending your children to a public school. However, a public school can never educate your child in our precious Catholic faith and help them to understand the direct link between knowing our faith and living it by regular Mass, regular

confession, our beautiful devotions throughout the year and by performing those necessary acts of charity. Only our Catholic schools do this and, in addition, our Catholic schools offer an excellent education in those secular areas our children will need as they grow and mature.

In a word, our Catholic schools exist to assist you in forming your children in our Catholic faith. To send your children to a Catholic school gives evidence of your own deep faith and fervent desire to have the very best for your children. Again, I urge you to consider our Catholic schools for your children if you have not yet done so.

BISHOP’S SCHEDULE SEPTEMBER 2022

Sept. 1	• Expansion Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck 11 a.m.
Sept. 5-8	• Fall Clergy Conference, Medora
Sept. 11	• Confirmation at the Church of St. Joseph, Dickinson, 9 a.m. MT
Sept. 11	• Confirmation at the Church of St. Wenceslaus, Dickinson, 11:30 a.m. MT
Sept. 16	• Home on the Range Board of Directors Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 12 p.m.
Sept. 22	• Real Presence Radio Interview, 9 a.m.
Sept. 25	• Mass at Sacred Heart, Wilton, 8:30 a.m.
Sept. 25	• Mass at St. Hildegard, Menoken, 10:30 a.m.
Sept. 28	• Confirmation at Church of the Little Flower, Minot, 6 p.m.
Sept. 29	• Bishop Ryan School Board Meeting, Bishop Ryan, Minot, 5:15 p.m.

BISHOP IN ACTION



Photo by Deacon Joe Krupinky

Bishop Kagan celebrated Mass at Christ the King in Mandan for the Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club summer gathering on Aug. 5 with diocesan seminarians, Deacon Dustin Johns (left) and Deacon Josh Hill.

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.

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>.

SOCIAL MEDIA



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



Bishop David Kagan
@VescovoDDK

Following

Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time, Sunday: What Jesus teaches us today should get and hold our attention. We can’t talk our way into Heaven. We can’t presume our salvation. We must repent often, take up our cross and carry it and imitate Jesus. All else is in His hands.



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



Visit our website at www.bismarckdiocese.com
Get news, photos, videos and more from around the diocese.



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



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Family of faith

Seminarian Steven Vetter will be ordained to the transitional diaconate on Sept. 29 in Rome

By Sonia Mullally
DCA Editor

Family has always had a strong influence on diocesan seminarian Steven Vetter. Most notably is his uncle, Bishop Austin Vetter, former priest of the Bismarck Diocese, and bishop of the Diocese of Helena, Montana.

Growing up in a large Catholic family laid the foundation for his strong faith. One of his nine siblings, Fr. Nicholas Vetter, was ordained a priest for the diocese in 2021. Steven will soon follow being ordained to the transitional diaconate on Sept. 29 at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and, God willing, to the priesthood in the summer of 2023. The upcoming ordination Mass will be extra special thanks to his connection to the bishop celebrant.

"I am excited to have my uncle, Bishop Austin Vetter, ordain me to the order of the diaconate along with 23 of my classmates," Steven said. "I look forward to having my uncle as the main celebrant of the Mass, and my brother, Fr. Nicholas Vetter, as the priest who vests me. All these wonderful gifts make my heart fill with gratitude for my parents and grandparents and their faithfulness to God in their own lives and vocations. It is also a good reminder to me that all the prayers that have been offered for me and my family by the faithful people of God have a real effect and have born much fruit."

Steven spent his summer getting a taste of parish life before returning to study for his final year of formation at the Pontifical

North American College in Rome.

"I spent the summer at St. Wenceslaus parish with Fr. Robert Shea. It is always a joy to serve the good people of western North Dakota, and this summer was a confirmation for me of the love that I have for the people of our diocese. The time spent in the parish also reminded me of the prayers and support that the faithful show to their priests and seminarians; it is a humbling experience and reminds me of the love that God has for me."

When Steven thinks about what it means to be preparing for ordination to the diaconate, he can't help but reflect about how fast the time of formation has gone.

"Seminary formation is a wonderful gift, and it has been some of the best years of my life," he said. "Parishioners have asked me this summer, 'Are you ready for ordination?' In a certain way, in all humility, I can say that I will never be fully prepared."

"The reason why Jesus gave His Church the sacrament of holy orders was to ensure that the men would receive His grace to live the life that they are called to live. And so, as I draw closer to ordination I recognize more fully my profound inadequacy, yet I realize that it is not so much about me as it is about Jesus and the work that He wants to do with and through me. It has also been abundantly clear to me that living a chaste, celibate lifestyle, filled with daily prayer and loving obedience to my bishop and the Church has made me a much better man."

Ordination to the transitional diaconate is a major step for seminarians on their path to the priesthood. The name itself comes from the Greek "to serve," and deacons exercise this service in a



Submitted photo

Diocesan seminarian Steven Vetter with his uncle, Bishop Austin Vetter, at the Rector's Dinner in the spring of 2022 at the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

variety of ways.

"What I look forward to most as a deacon is serving Mass and preaching," Steven noted. "My apostolate in Rome this year will be at the University of Mary Rome Campus, and I look forward to serving, teaching and growing as a deacon with the wonderful young people who join us in Rome. At the diaconate ordination I will make the promise of celibacy, prayer, and obedience to the bishop and although I know these are serious promises to make, I suspect it will be a new experience of God's grace to give my life to God and His Church in a permanent and lifelong way."

Steven is excited to be joined by brother seminarian Deacon Josh Hill in Rome as the two embark on their final year of formation. They will be ordained to the

priesthood together next summer with Deacon Dustin Johns who is studying at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis for his final year of formation. Seminarians Hill and Johns were ordained to the transitional diaconate in May in Bismarck by Bishop Kagan.

"I plan to be an intentional presence and encouragement to the other men in the house, especially those that are in their first years of formation," he said. "This year will have a lighter course load than the first three years which will be a great opportunity to spend time on sacramental practice and training for specifically priestly things. The year will also be a good time to review Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church as I begin preparing homilies and enter more into the teaching role of the clergy."

UPCOMING EVENTS

■ Eucharistic conference Sept. 23-24

The Diocese of Fargo is hosting a Eucharistic Conference "Redeemed" the weekend of Sept. 23-24 at the Delta by Marriott in Fargo. Speakers include Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Msgr. James Shea, Sr. Miriam James Heidland, SOLT, and Dr. Mary Healy. The weekend also includes a Eucharistic procession and healing service, Mass with Bishop John Folda and worship music by the Aly Aleigha band. Cost is \$50 for early registration and \$75 after Sept. 5. For more information, go to fargodiocese.com/redeemed or call 701-356-7900.

■ Serra Club breakfast Sept. 25

The Serra Club of Bismarck-Mandan is having their annual fundraising breakfast for religious vocations on Sunday, Sept. 25 at the St. Mary's Academy lunchroom (1025 North 2nd Street). The meal is served from 9 a.m. until 1p.m. This year, for the first time, enjoy a "build your own breakfast burrito," along with their popular bake sale. Cost: adults \$10; children (10 and under) \$5; and children under age 3 free. For more information, call Dan or Rose Mayo 258-1404 or Pete Deichert 391-5201.

■ 40 Days for Life begins Sept. 28

A 40 Day for Life prayer vigil will take place in Bismarck Sept. 28 through Nov. 6. All are invited to join this

worldwide mobilization to pray and fast for an end to abortion. The vigil will be at the outside corner of Boulevard Ave. and 6th St. North in Bismarck (near the state capitol building) from the hours of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day. For more information, contact Diane Huck at 701-527-3265 or 40daysbisnd@gmail.com. You may also get involved and sign up for prayer times at 40daysforlife.com/bismarck.

■ Search weekend dates

Search for Christian Maturity is a weekend retreat experience which provides youth an opportunity to think, talk, question and dive deeper into their faith. The weekends are for any high school or college age person at least 15 years old. The program is both rooted in the Catholic faith and open to young people of any denomination or creed. Search weekends are held five times throughout the year at the Badlands Ministries Camp just south of Medora. Weekends for the 2022-23 season are: Oct. 7-9; Nov. 18-20; Jan. 13-15; Feb. 24-26; and April 14-16. Find more information at bismarckdiocese.com/search1.

■ 5K fundraiser Oct. 2

Join the fun at the St. Vincent de Paul Society Friends of the Poor Walk/Run on Sunday, Oct. 2. The annual 5k

begins at Bismarck's Sertoma Park, shelter 7. Registration starts at 3:30 p.m. with the run/walk at 4 p.m. This is a non-competitive walk/run to raise money for the poor in the community. There is no registration fee, but a freewill donation is much appreciated. You can pre-register online at fopwalk.org. All the funds raised stay in the local community to help those living in poverty.

■ Fatima rosary rally Oct. 15

Everyone's invited to join the Fatima rosary rally on Saturday, Oct. 15 at noon near the grounds of the N.D. State Capitol building on the corner of 9th Street and Boulevard (in front of the water commission building). The rally includes public rosary with intentions, the Angelus, Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Prayer of Total Consecration and the Divine Praises. The event is sponsored by the Bismarck-Mandan Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Daughters.

■ White Mass Oct. 17

The public is invited to attend the Bismarck Diocese's annual White Mass, which will be held on Monday, Oct. 17 at 5:30 p.m. at Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck. The special Mass honors physicians and those involved in the medical field.

■ Diocesan Youth Conference Oct. 29

The Diocesan Youth Conference will be held Saturday, Oct. 29 at Trinity High School in Dickinson. The theme for this year is "Follow Me" and will allow attendees to dive deeper into Jesus' invitation as His disciple. Featured keynote speakers and local hosts include Chris Mueller, Eric Gallagher, Fr. Christian Smith and Ed Konieczka. There will be time for Eucharistic adoration and confession as well as music by a local band. The conference is open to middle school and high school age students in grades 6-12. For more information, go to bismarckdiocese.com/youthconference.

■ 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 Oct. 7-9 in Buffalo, Minn. and Nov. 11-13 in Medora. Early registration is highly recommended. For more information, visit ndwwme.org or contact Rob and Angie at Applications@ndwwme.org or 701-347-1998.

Bismarck African Mission relocating to three-acre plot

Continued from page 1

The large, main building to be constructed will feature a community hall with an office, library and storage, which will serve the orphans as a gathering space for Mission Saturdays held three times a month. The events give the orphans and mission staff a chance to “check in” to monitor their health, well-being, school progress and any other needs that arise for the orphans and their caregivers. Some children walk up to six miles to attend.

The new community building will also serve as an important gathering space for health screenings, the annual Christmas party for the orphans and could be used for training and follow-up sessions for the Water with Blessings program.

In addition, a barn will be built for livestock that are part of the mission programs—heifers, goats and chickens. There will also be an area reserved for growing napier, a perennial tropical forage grass, for the cattle. Plans are also to construct a home and guest house to accommodate the missionaries and visitors.

Kathy and Wes Pepple, missionaries from Williston, arrived in Africa in December and spent three months in Swahili language school before beginning their work at the mission. They have been assisting in establishing the shamba and look forward to the new home for the Mission.

“Right now, we gather for Mission Saturdays in the clinic area of the parish run by the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and for our Christmas and health screening gatherings we can be at the mercy of other things that are happening on the grounds,” Kathy said. “It will be nice to gather with the kids in a space of our own—to really make it their space.”

Serving the needs

Wes and Kathy had visited the Bismarck African Mission twice over the past few years and decided to make a three-year commitment as missionaries that began in December 2021. They were immersed in language school for the first three months and have now been working at the mission full-time on various projects.

Though learning was intense, the couple counts themselves lucky to have met priests and seminarians from all over the world while studying at the Swahili language school in Nairobi. They were more than ready to hit the ground running at the mission site and are heavily involved in the upcoming relocation project to the shamba.

“We’re looking forward to having this new space,” Wes shared. “It’ll be quieter. We’re in a busy area now. There will be lots of kids in the new neighborhood and great to have everyone in one location.”

Kathy, too, is optimistic about the new opportunities at the shamba. “It’s kind of like a hobby farm in a lot of ways,” Kathy added. “There are so many possibilities for raising animals and vegetables, even getting the orphans involved in those tasks with a vested interest in the Mission.”

The lives and struggles of the orphans continue to touch the hearts of Wes and Kathy—it’s impossible not to find a place in their hearts for every one of the orphans. “You can’t help but feel for them,” Kathy explained. “They’ve experienced things that no child should. We have no idea! Imagine losing their parents, and then some of them may lose their caregivers such as a grandparent and then may possibly be on their own.”

It’s not only the orphans, but also their caregivers that feel the impact of living and trying to survive in such a poor country. Kathy tells the story of an orphan named Faith and her caregiver who she accompanied to a medical appointment. “The caregiver gave me a hug and wouldn’t let go saying none of this care for Faith would be possible without the Bismarck Mission,” Kathy said. “We took them to a grocery store that had a deli and offered to buy her lunch. All she wanted us to buy her was some cooking oil, which has gotten so expensive there. You can’t imagine how grateful she was for that cooking oil.”

Kathy and Wes express how grateful the orphans and caregivers are for the Bismarck Mission and all within our diocese who donate toward the cause. “The amount of heartfelt ‘thank yous’ that we hear is just overwhelming,” Wes said. “We almost feel guilty because it’s really all possible through the people of the Bismarck Diocese who’ve given. We just get to hear the ‘thank yous.’”

Kathy said the happiness expressed on the faces of the children is thank you enough. “You step back and think of our lives as Americans and all that we have compared to them. We are actually the poor ones in many ways.”

Kathy added, “As many missionaries around the world experience, you go there thinking of doing great things and they end up doing great things for you. It touches your heart in ways you can’t imagine unless you’re there. It makes us grateful for the fruits of the labors of those who have come to the Bismarck Mission before us.”

Updates from mission

For more information on the African Mission and progress at the shamba, Kathy writes a regular “Life in Kenya” blog for their home parish, the Church of St. Joseph in Williston. Father David also posts a blog monthly titled “Notes from Africa” at notesfromafricablog.wordpress.com. Find links to them on the diocesan website at bismarckdiocese.com/african-mission. The annual African Mission Appeal in March 2023 will also provide further updates.



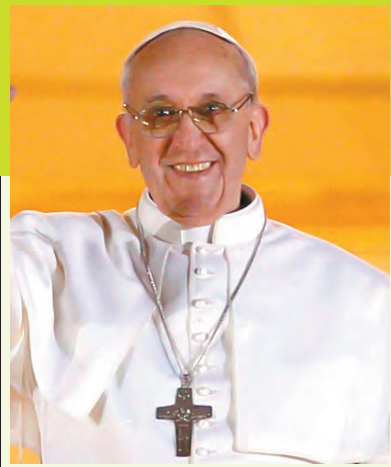
Missionary Wes Pepple with a woman at a Water with Blessings training session.



Missionary Wes Pepple entertained a child while the area women attended a water training.



Missionary Kathy Pepple with one of the children who attended the Water with Blessings training session.



Holy Father’s Prayer Intentions for September

For the abolition of the death penalty
We pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country.

Bismarck Mission Orphan Testimonial

The following is an interview conducted in July with Nancy Motachi, alumna of the Bismarck African Mission Orphan Education Program. Nancy speaks of missionaries past and present who helped her during the time while she was an enrolled orphan taking part in the various programs and services provided such as education assistance and scholarships, as well as basic living needs like food and shelter. Thanks to the work of these missionaries and the generous financial support of the people of the Bismarck Diocese, Nancy and many other orphans have a bright future.

Q: Say something about your background.

A: I am the last-born in a family of six children having two brothers and three sisters. Our mother died when I was very young; I do not remember her. I have been a total orphan since I was around two years old. It was at this time that we were enrolled into Bismarck Mission. My primary school years were spent at Motembe DOK where I finished STD 8. I then attended secondary school at Mokomoni Secondary School.

Q: In what ways has Bismarck Mission helped you?

A: Bismarck Mission has helped me with school fees, uniforms for school, allotment of maize, and an allowance. The Mission has encouraged us in other ways such as occasional seminars where we were taught to grow spiritually and to make good choices in our life.

Q: What is your favorite part of Bismarck Mission?

A: That it continues to help others.

Q: Say something about the people who work in Bismarck Mission?

A: I start with Evan, a good man, who provided our family with clothes and mattresses. He even gave us a goat and chickens. There is Rogers who encouraged to come together as orphans and reminded us that we are a part of Bismarck Mission. We need to follow the rules. Brent gave us encouragement by visiting us and helping us with material for school such as books and a calculator. Sr. Theresa always encouraged us to be honest and grow spiritually.

Q: You were a recipient of a post-secondary scholarship. What did you study?

A: I am going to college for two years to study Fashion and Design. At school, I learn skills needed to make clothes for people. They must be measured and properly fitted. Also, I learn about making decorations for special events such as weddings and thanksgiving celebrations and designing T-shirts for schools. School is held Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 6:00pm. Some days, though, we finish at 4:00pm. I will finish at the end of July.

Q: What are your plans once you finish school?

A: I want to start my own business of making school uniforms and designing logos for the uniforms and T-shirts. Also, I will make clothes for people.

Q: What are some of the challenges you have faced?

A: Growing up it was a place to stay. We did stay with an aunt who mistreated us. We had no time to study because she made us work all the time. There is the challenge of having the proper tools necessary for school. Also, accommodation—prices for food have really increased. Having enough to eat is a challenge.

Q: You mentioned you are a Catholic student. Say something about your faith.

A: My faith teaches me to be honest and humble and to help others. Not to be rude... I have faith that I will remain a Catholic all the days of my life. I am secretary of the Youth Choir at Kisii Town Parish. I like to sing and dance. At school, I teach others liturgical dance.

Q: How do you help others?

A: I am honest with them. Also, I encourage people to follow the rules. I help out at seminars sponsored by Bismarck Mission to give hope to younger people and help them. At school, I teach others liturgical dance.

Q: What would you like to say to the people of Bismarck?

A: I have benefited from the Mission from primary school, through secondary school, and into post-secondary school. You have supported me since 2002. Thank you. You have helped me to grow and mature.



Mission Saturday



Water with Blessings training



Water with Blessings training



Mission Saturday



Mission Saturday



We honor and celebrate the years of religious profession of the sisters and brothers who live and serve here and those who live elsewhere and have ties to the diocese. Join us in prayer and thanksgiving for all who have dedicated their lives in service to God's people.

60th Jubilee

Sr. Janet, OSB

Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck

Sister Janet Zander was born in Mandan. She made her monastic profession on July 11, 1962, celebrating 60 years as a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck. Her early ministries included teaching at Cathedral School, Bismarck, St. Patrick's in Dickinson and Christ the King School, Mandan. She was then called to the monastery to become the community secretary. After pursuing a degree in liturgy, she resumed her position as community secretary and added the role of liturgy coordinator. She was called to serve again in Dickinson as pastoral minister at Queen of Peace parish. In 1989, Sister Janet began her service as



Sister Janet Zander, OSB

assistant to the late Sister Thomas Welder, then president of the University of Mary, Bismarck, and continued in this role for Monsignor James Shea until her retirement in 2020. Currently, Sister Janet is community secretary to the prioress.

Sr. Barbara, OSB

Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck

Sister Barbara Weber grew up on a farm northeast of Hague and graduated from St. Mary's Central High School, Bismarck, in 1961. She made her monastic profession on July 11, 1962, celebrating 60 years as a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck. In 1977, with a degree



Sister Barbara Weber, OSB

in social work from Mary College, she began work as a social worker at St. Alexius Hospital. Other ministries include serving as assistant supervisor for Priory High work-study students, in the altar bread department, as operator of the multilith printing machine at the priory print shop, dietary service at the priory, at mission houses, at a boys' summer camp and at Mary College. As a social worker, she was a patient discharge planner at St. Alexius for approximately 30 years. In 2005, with a change in ministries, she continued her work at St. Alexius as a pastoral assistant on the telemetry and intensive care units where she offered a comforting presence to patients and staff. She currently volunteers her time in the business office and in mission advancement at the monastery. She serves her sisters by driving them to appointments.

Sr. Therese, S.P

Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

Sister Therese Whitsett celebrated 60 years with the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Indiana. The Indianapolis native currently ministers as a volunteer and nursing home visitor in the Indianapolis area. Sister Therese, formerly Sister Timothy Mary, entered the Congregation on Sept. 17, 1962, from St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis. She professed perpetual vows on Feb. 10, 1974. During her time in the Diocese of Bismarck, Sister Therese ministered as a teacher at the Catholic Indian Mission in Fort Yates from 1979-81. Sister Therese has also ministered in Indiana, Illinois and the country of Peru.



Sister Therese Whitsett, S.P.

70th Jubilee

Sr. Andre, OSB

Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck

Sister Andre Hushka grew up on a farm near Dickinson. She made her monastic profession on July 11, 1952, celebrating 70 years as a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck. She enjoyed rich opportunities to attend Marian conferences over the years and several trips abroad to the Holy Land. She received a 1983 Holy Year Pilgrimage gift from Bishops Hacker and Kinney, which included Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and France. In 1987, her travels took her to Our Lady of Guadalupe Basilica in Mexico City, to Fatima in 1992 and to Spain and Lourdes in 1995. Sister Andre's first ministry was at the laundry at St. Alexius Hospital, Bismarck. She also enjoyed working at the bishop's residence for 20 years, doing laundry, housekeeping and gardening. Her ministry of laundry continued at the monastery. She is currently retired and resides at a care center.



Sister Andre Hushka, OSB

Sr. Joseph, OSB

Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck

Sister Joseph Dukart was born in Dickinson. She made her monastic profession on July 11, 1952 celebrating 70 years as a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery. Sister Joseph's love of caring for others led her to serve as an LPN for many years at St. Alexius and Garrison Hospitals. She also provided healthcare to the sisters in the health center at Annunciation Priory/now Monastery, where she tended to infirmed or elderly sisters. She also served as an administrative assistant at the priory, providing switchboard help and coordination doing housekeeping, errands, driving and foot care. Sister Joseph now volunteers to help in the kitchen.



Sister Joseph Dukart, OSB

Dickinson. Sister Janeane's years of religious life have been primarily involved in some aspect of health care. She started out in x-ray and lab work at one of our hospitals. When she left that area of work, she remained in patient care and ancillary services in nursing homes, hospital, and at the Monastery. Currently she is a resident at St. Vincent's Care Center in Bismarck.



Sister Janeane Klein, OSB

Sr. Dolores, OSB

Sacred Heart Monastery, Dickinson

Sister Dolores Heidt celebrated 70 years as a Benedictine Sister at Sacred Heart Monastery in Dickinson. Sister Dolores began her religious service as a teacher for many



Sister Dolores Heidt, OSB

years in our mission schools. She enjoyed that work, but as middle age came around, she decided to switch to pastoral care work. She continued this until her retirement. Presently, Sister Dolores is a resident at the Richardton Health Care Center.

Sister Patricia, S.P.

Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

Sister Patricia Geis is celebrating 70 years with the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Indiana. The Chicago native currently ministers in prayer at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Sister Patricia, formerly Sister Anna Marie, entered the Congregation on July 21, 1952, from St. Mark Parish in Chicago. She professed perpetual vows on Jan. 23, 1960. During her time in the Diocese of Bismarck, Sister Patricia ministered as a teacher at the St. Bernard Mission in Fort Yates from 1976-79. Sister Patricia has also ministered in Indiana, Illinois and California.



Sister Patricia Geis, S.P.

60th Jubilee

Abbot Daniel Maloney, OSB

Abbot Daniel Maloney, OSB, was professed on July 11, 1962, and therefore celebrates a diamond anniversary this year as 60 years professed.

He was born on November 24, 1941, to Leo and Eileen (Kain) Maloney and given the name Leo at his Christmas baptism that same year on Dec. 25. He came to the Abbey School from Starkweather, N.D., and graduated at the top of his class in 1959. He continued to excel at studies for the next decade, earning a B.A. in philosophy with honors from St. John's University (then College), Latin studies during the summer of 1966 at Georgetown University, four years of theology at St. Meinrad Seminary, and when off to Fordham University in the Bronx for an M.A. in philosophy in 1968.

Abbot Daniel studied again at Georgetown for a summer of German, and then became a Ph.D. Candidate in Philosophy at Fordham in 1970. After he returned to the Abbey, he was prior for a few years. In 1977, he was appointed



Abbot Daniel Maloney, OSB

superior of a Montana foundation that Assumption Abbey proposed to establish in Billings, Montana. When the Abbey had to scrap those plans, he became chaplain of Mercy Hospital in Devils Lake.

Then, in 1980, Abbot Lawrence appointed him to head a retreat program at the Abbey. He also appointed him as half-time professor of philosophy at the University of Mary (then Mary College) in 1980. In 1981, he was named diocesan liaison for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In 1983, he became chaplain for the Monastery of the Annunciation, Benedictine Sisters in Bismarck teaching philosophy part time. In 1984, he became co-vicar of religious in the Bismarck Diocese. When he was elected abbot of Assumption Abbey in 2017, he had been chaplain for the Benedictine Sisters in Bismarck for nearly 35 years. Abbot Daniel's door is always open when he is home, and he is an excellent listener, practiced after years of counseling as chaplain of the local Beginning Experience, a program for those grieving various losses, often divorce.

It's interesting to note that the ninth abbot of Assumption Abbey originally hails from Starkweather, near Devils Lake, territory of the very first missions established by the founder and first abbot, Bishop Vincent Wehrle, back in the late 1890s.

70th Jubilee

Father Damian, OSB

Father Damian (Leo) Dietlein, OSB, was born on a farm near Braddock, N.D., in 1932, the youngest of five siblings. Leo was his baptismal name. He attended a one-room rural school two miles south of the farm.

In 1945, Leo followed his brother Francis to Assumption Abbey High School. He entered the novitiate at Assumption Abbey and was given the name Damian. He made simple vows at Assumption Abbey in 1952 celebrating 70 years professed and 65 years ordained.

He graduated from St. John's University, Collegeville with a double major in Philosophy and English Literature. Returning to Assumption Abbey, he taught for a year while studying theology as a cleric. Abbot Ignatius then sent him to Rome to study Scripture.

While in Europe, he was ordained a deacon at Sacro Speco, Subiaco Abbey, July 1956, and ordained simplex at Assumption Abbey in July of 1957. Immediately, he was sent back to school and earned a Licentiate in Theology in 1959 from Sant' Anselmo in Rome, and then a Licentiate in Sacred



Fr. Damian Dietlein, OSB

Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome in 1961. The summer of 1960, he was able to take a tour of Bible Lands, beginning with Egypt, then to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Greece.

After that, his career was mainly about teaching. Fr. Damian taught in the Assumption Abbey Seminary while it still existed (1961-1967), at Saint Teresa College in Winona, Minn. (1963-1964), at Assumption College, Richardton (1967-1968) and at St. Meinrad, Ind. (1968-2015). He became a member of the American Academy of Religion, the Catholic Biblical Association and the Society of Biblical Literature. On sabbatical at the Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, Calif., he studied feminist hermeneutics-theology, and developed Feminist Biblical studies at St. Meinrad which were popular with women lay-degree students. He became a member of the CBA Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics task force where he served as co-convenor.

After his long and intense career at St. Meinrad, Fr. Damian melted back into the life at Assumption Abbey quite naturally, living a monastic life that enables God to shine through ordinary living. He gives beautiful and thought-provoking sermons for the monks and has become a pillar of the community with his wise words at chapter and elsewhere.

Sister Phoebe marks 25th anniversary

On May 29, Sister Phoebe Schwartz, OSB, celebrated her 25th anniversary of her monastic vows with the Benedictine Sisters of Dickinson (formerly of Richardton). Prioress Sr. Paula Larson presided at the solemn vespers at the former monastery chapel in Richardton. With her many innate gifts, she has continued to grow in her monastic life throughout her commitment.

Born Barbara, the oldest child, in San Bernardino, Calif., and the only girl to Ferdinand and Joan (Boyer) Schwartz, she pursued learning even as a young child. When she was five, her family moved to Freeman, S.D. Her early years were full of helping in her family, but her leisure was spent reading, swimming, camping with her Girl Scout troop.

During and after high school, she worked at the local print shop until she enrolled at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion for two years. She then moved to Rapid City where she lived for 13 years, where she managed a group home for developmentally disabled adults. She was quite involved with her parish as liturgical minister and member of the liturgy committee, as well as serving on the diocesan retreat committee.



Sister Phoebe Schwartz, OSB

While in Rapid City, she enjoyed exploring the Black Hills, a prelude to spending time in Spain, Mexico and France.

Barbara first visited Sacred Heart Monastery near Richardton in November 1993 and immediately felt at home. She entered the monastery in January 1995. Upon becoming a novice the following year, she received her name of choice, Phoebe, a co-worker of St. Paul. She made her first monastic profession on January 19, 1997, and her final vows May 26, 2001.

In 1998, Sister Phoebe received a Bachelor of Arts from Dickinson State University in Spanish and history. From August 1997 through August 2003, she served as administrator of Marillac Manor in Bismarck. This independent living facility for the elderly is next to St. Vincent's Nursing Home that the sisters had started back in the 1940s.

After two years of graduate school in Colorado, she earned a master's degree in public history. She worked for eight years as director of religious education and liturgical coordinator for Queen of Peace Parish in Dickinson. She then served her monastic community in Richardton as director of the spirituality center, liturgist, director of oblates and part-time cook. Through her 12 years with the Old Red Scenic Byway Committee, she helped secure the designation of a scenic byway and enjoyed promoting the communities along the byway.



Sister Phoebe Schwartz (left), OSB, celebrated her 25th anniversary of her monastic vows with the Benedictine Sisters of Dickinson (formerly of Richardton). Prioress Sr. Paula Larson presided at the solemn vespers at the former monastery chapel in Richardton.

After the community moved from Richardton to the new Sacred Heart Monastery in Dickinson in 2019, Sister Phoebe now serves the community as liturgist, kitchen manager and member of the monastic board and council. She has completed training for spiritual direction and has several directees. This is an important ministry for her as she feels blessed to journey with people as they seek God.

Town & Country Celebration 2022

Hosted by Chavinda Honeybee Farms and Parishioners of the Church of St. Mary in Hague



Bishop Kagan at the altar with (l-r) Deacon Jerry Volk, Fr. Leonard Eckroth and Fr. Shannon Lucht.



Photos by Eric Jensen
Father Shannon Lucht (far left) and Bishop Kagan with Luis and Rita Elizondo, the host family for the Town and Country Celebration near Hague on July 24.



Deacon Jerry Volk distributed Holy Communion at Mass.

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



An invitation from the Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club

- Sept. 1 Fr. Kregg Hochhalter
- Sept. 2 Deacon Michael Marback
- Sept. 3 Br. Gregory Senger, OSB
- Sept. 4 Sisters of the Congregation of Teresian Carmelites
- Sept. 5 Sr. Janeane Klein, OSB
- Sept. 6 Sr. Nancy Miller, OSB
- Sept. 7 All Seminarians & Religious in Formation
- Sept. 8 Sr. Delores Heidt, OSB
- Sept. 9 Seminarian Deacon Josh Hill
- Sept. 10 Fr. Logan Obrugewitch
- Sept. 11 Deacon Gerald Martin
- Sept. 12 Br. Elias Thienpont, OSB
- Sept. 13 All Lay Ministers
- Sept. 14 Sr. Eleanor Stockert, OSB
- Sept. 15 Seminarian Deacon Dustin Johns
- Sept. 16 Fr. Ben Wanner
- Sept. 17 Deacon John Paul Martin
- Sept. 18 Br. Joseph Thorgeirson, OSB
- Sept. 19 Sr. Rita Miller, OSB
- Sept. 20 Fr. Jared Johnson
- Sept. 21 Deacon Joe Mathern
- Sept. 22 Sr. Hildegard Urlacher, OSB
- Sept. 23 Bishop David Kagan
- Sept. 24 Fr. Chris Kadrmas
- Sept. 25 Deacon Joe Mattson
- Sept. 26 Br. Benet Tvedten, OSB
- Sept. 27 Sr. Patti Koehler, OSB
- Sept. 28 All Lay Ministers
- Sept. 29 Fr. Tom Grafsgaard
- Sept. 30 Deacon George Maufort, SDS



Talking to Your Children About A Crisis

In today's news, we see and hear about terrible events regularly. Children hear these stories too! Though they may not fully comprehend what's happening, children are perceptive and understand when stories are frightening or cause distress in their parents. These events can cause a significant rise in the amount of stress that children are forced to deal with and as a parent, you can help them deal with their stress and negative emotions in a healthy way.

First, it is important to let children work out their emotions. It is important to answer the questions children have honestly and to allow them to express the full range of emotions related to it (including fear or sadness). Ask your children how they feel about the event, and have them label their feelings. When your child tells you about their feelings, ask them what they would like to do about them and what you can do to make them feel better. Remember that no response is incorrect.

Second, if your child asks you questions, it's okay to answer them. It's important to make your child feel heard and also to help increase their understanding of the event. Let them know that no matter what you will always have a plan and you will be there to care for them. Then, if your child has questions about the specifics of an event – such as how or why it happened – you can talk through those questions according to your own values and how well you think your child will understand. Again, what's most important is to make your child feel heard, nurtured and safe.

Third, it's important to give your child a sense of safety. Try to keep a normal routine. If school is dismissed because of the crisis try to keep some sort of structure at home. Increase nurturing activities like spending time together, doing things that make you laugh, and physical activities like going for a walk. Set aside time daily to answer questions and to just talk about what is going on, even if you only have answers for tomorrow. And remember not to make promises about things that are out of your control. It might feel comforting to say that things will go back to normal soon, but that might not be the case.

Some children will want help, others will want to play, and others may want to help! Children of all ages can help out by collecting supplies donations. They can draw, write poems, or letters to those affected. Older children can give blood and help volunteer.

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



Ryan Dobson to speak at banquets in Minot and Stanley

Dakota Hope pregnancy help clinic to host Sept. 19-20 events

Dakota Hope Clinic, a pregnancy help center in Minot serving west central North Dakota, hosts its 11th annual fundraising banquets in September. Ryan Dobson, adopted son of Focus on the Family founder James Dobson and his wife, Shirley, is the keynote speaker for both events.



Ryan Dobson

The first banquet will be Monday, Sept. 19, at the North Dakota State Fair Center, Minot. The following evening, Tuesday, Sept. 20, the second banquet will be held at the Mountrail County South Complex in Stanley. For more information or to register to attend one of the banquets, people may call 701-852-4675 or visit dakotahope.org/events. Reservations are required for these adults only banquets.

In addition to Dobson's message, attendees will hear a testimonial story from one of the

clinic's clients, share a meal and have the opportunity to donate to the work of the clinic.

Ryan Dobson is an advocate for youth, crisis pregnancy centers and adoption. He and his wife, Laura, host the REBEL Parenting Podcast and speak around the country in churches, strengthening families and marriages. In this work, they've watched as parents have become more and more concerned with the safety of their children. In response to this, they founded HomeSafe, a church-based program empowering

families with the strategies and tools they need to be willing, able and ready to combat the dangers facing families today.

Dakota Hope Clinic, Minot, is a charitable Christian ministry providing free and confidential pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, parenting education, clothing and supplies for babies and young children, and other support services to those who need assistance during an unexpected pregnancy.

—Submitted information

Fall festivals in the Bismarck Diocese

St. Hildegard fall dinner Sept. 11
St. Hildegard's Church in Menoken will host their annual fall dinner on Sunday, Sept 11 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The homemade dinner will feature traditional sausage, roast beef, pies, buns and all the trimmings. There will be fun for all ages including games, bingo, sale of home baked goods and fresh garden produce. Cost is \$15 for adults; \$8 for children ages 4 to 10 years; free for children ages 3 and under. St. Hildegard's church is located at 17200 Hwy 10, Menoken (10 miles east of Bismarck).

Social and raffle in Hague Sept. 11
St. Mary's in Hague is having a social and raffle on Sunday, Sept. 11, at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Hague. Knights of Columbus members will be serving hamburgers, hot dogs, beans, chips, bars and drinks starting at 5 p.m., with proceeds to benefit St. Mary's Church. Bingo starts at 7 p.m., followed by the raffle drawing. Raffle tickets will be available for purchase.

Fall festival in Linton Sept. 18
The Church of St. Anthony in Linton is hosting their fall festival on Sunday, Sept. 18 in the Our Club Hall. The meal of fried chicken, ham, hamburger rice, mashed potatoes and all the trimmings, pies and desserts will be served from 4 to 7 p.m. Doors open at 3:45 p.m., using the west entrance door. Cost is \$12 for adults, \$6 for children ages 6-12 and free for children aged five and under. There will be a

silent auction throughout the evening, bingo in the church basement from 5:15 to 7:15 p.m. and raffle drawing at 7:30 p.m. at the hall.

Fall supper in Underwood Sept. 25
St. Bonaventure Church in Underwood is hosting their fall chicken supper on Sunday, Sept. 25 from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Menu includes fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, salad bar, vegetable, homemade pies, desserts and beverage. Cost is \$15 for adults, \$10 for children ages 6-12, \$5 for children ages 3-5, and children under age 3 eat for free.

Sacred Heart Octoberfest Oct. 2
Sacred Heart in Wilton is hosting their annual fall dinner on Sunday, Oct. 2, at the Wilton City Hall. Dinner of roast beef, mashed potatoes, corn, salads, buns and pies will be served from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Cost is \$10 for adults; \$5 for children ages 4 to 10 and free for children ages 3 and under. There will be kid's games, a Chinese auction, and bingo.

St. Anthony fall dinner Oct. 2
The St. Anthony Church in St. Anthony will hold their fall dinner, fair and raffle on Sunday, Oct. 2. Dinner is served in the church basement after 11 a.m. Mass offering fried chicken, roast beef, potatoes, kuchen and trimmings. Dinner tickets: adults \$12, children 3-12 \$5, children under age 3 free. Verein Hall activities from 12:30 to 4:00 pm include bingo, silent auction, paddle wheel and other games, ending with drawings for parish and

Christian Mothers raffles. St. Anthony Church is handicap accessible.

St. Martin fall dinner Oct. 2
St. Martin in Hazen will be hosting their annual fall dinner on Sunday, Oct. 2 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The menu includes roast beef, potatoes, corn, coleslaw, pickles, buns and pie/ice cream. Cost is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors 65 and older, \$8 for children ages 6-12 years, and free for children ages 5 years and under. A basket auction and two raffles will also be offered.

Parish dinner in Glen Ullin Oct. 9
Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Glen Ullin will be hosting a parish dinner on Sunday, Oct. 9 at the Sacred Heart Parish Center from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. CST. They are serving turkey and roast beef and all the trimmings. The dinner is a free will offering. There will be children's games, bingo, Chinese auction and a cake walk.

St. Theresa Octoberfest Oct. 16
The Church of St. Theresa in Carson has their annual Octoberfest on Sunday, Oct. 16 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. MT at the Grant County Fair building. The menu offers fleischkuechle, strudel, sausage, kraut nip, German potato salad, glorified rice, knoephla soup, borscht soup, coleslaw, kuchen, blachenda. Cost is \$12 for adults, \$6 for children ages 4-12 and free for children ages 3 and under. There will also be bingo, midway booth, kid's games, raffle and silent auction.

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Balancing Church & State

CHRISTOPHER DODSON



How Catholics should approach claims of conspiracies

Conspiracy theories may have always existed. History is riddled with them, many of which were blatantly anti-Catholic. It seems, however, that the internet, mass media, and social media have made them more commonplace and they are finding their way into our political discourse.

How should Catholics respond to conspiracy theories? How do we recognize one?

A conspiracy is a covert plan involving more than one person, usually for a nefarious purpose and with the intent to keep the plan secret from the public. Secrecy itself is not a conspiracy and nor is a secret agreement for a legitimate purpose, like national security. Real conspiracies rarely stay secret, especially if they involve many people. By their nature, people are not good at keeping secrets, especially for wrongful purposes.

A conspiracy theory, on the other hand, is the belief that certain events or situations are secretly manipulated behind the scenes by powerful forces with negative intent. They are hypotheses that are not actually proven to be true. Nevertheless, these unproven theories can become powerful forces. Many people accept them as true and shape their actions, including political actions, around them.

As Catholics, we believe that there exists more than the material world. We believe in the invisible,

angels, demons, miracles and evil one. That does not mean, however, that we should succumb to superstition and conspiracy theories. Indeed, we are called to be on guard against them. Catholics are called to use reason and faith in all things. God gave us the ability to reason so that we can sort out facts and identify, to the extent humanly possible, what is true and what is false.

Saint Luke gives us a good example of putting those gifts into practice in the first verses of his Gospel. He wrote: "Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received" (Lk 1:1-4). He relied on eyewitnesses. He not only investigated, he investigated "anew." Finally, his purpose was to obtain "certainty." Saint Luke did not write down anything that was not proven accurate.

One feature of conspiracy theories is that they consist of allegations that, by their nature, cannot be proved or disproved. I recently heard of someone in North Dakota government claim that

the hospitals around the state—including the Catholic facilities—routinely perform abortions but hide them and do not report them to the Department of Health, as required by law. He claimed that the numbers were twice what is actually reported to the state. The claim has all the hallmarks of a conspiracy theory. It alleges a secret plot to hide abortions from the public, but the person cannot prove the plot is real because the abortions were "secret."

Applying reason, however, we can conclude that the claim lacks credibility. For example, as mentioned above, large groups of people can rarely keep something secret. It is hard to believe that hundreds of hospital staff persons—including those at Catholic hospitals—have successfully hid hundreds of abortions from the public, insurance companies and the state government for years.

Sometimes adherence to conspiracy theories contradicts truths or practices that we accept in other circumstances. For example, sometimes the same person who claims that health care entities and public health officials cannot be trusted based on a conspiracy theory has no problem turning to a physician or hospital when their own health is in danger. Another example is when someone alleges that a government agency, individual or corporation is hiding

the truth about something and then turns around and points to something said by the same government agency, individual or corporation as "proof" that they are lying. If they cannot be trusted to tell the truth, why would their "admission" be valid?

Something similar happens when self-professed conservatives believe in a large government conspiracy. One of the foundational principles of conservatism is not that government is always bad, but that is always imperfect. Accordingly, governments should be incapable of carrying out a massive conspiracy. Self-proclaimed conservatives that buy into conspiracy theories about governments are not really conservatives. Incidentally, the same principle applies to non-government entities. Claims that a select few billionaires or corporations are secretly controlling the economy are inconsistent with conservatism.

These are just some examples of how to apply the tools God has given us to spot conspiracy theories. Saint Luke used them. When approaching claims of conspiracies, we should be more like St. Luke.

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

Questions

I was afraid to ask

FR. GREG LUGER



Q: Did Mary have any other children besides Jesus?

A: The short answer to this question is "no." The only child that the Blessed Virgin Mary ever gave birth to is Our Lord Jesus Christ. Mary's perpetual virginity is something that we are obligated to believe as Catholics.

This belief, however, is often challenged by Protestants and they often use Scripture to argue their point. As I will point out in this article, we will see that Scripture actually proves Mary's perpetual virginity.

First, some Protestants will point to the following passage from Matthew: "He (Joseph) had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus." Some will claim that this implies that he did have relations with her after the birth of Jesus. On the contrary, what Matthew is trying to tell us here is that Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus, the use of the word "until" (heos in Greek) does not imply that he had relations with her at that time or later.

Consider, for example, the use of the same word in 2 Samuel 6:23: "Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until (heos) the day of her death." Would we be correct in assuming that Michal had a child the day she died or after? Clearly, this is saying that she never had a child her whole life long. The word "until" should be understood similarly in Matthew noted above.

Some might then point to where Luke clearly identifies Jesus as Mary's firstborn Son (Luke 2:7). However, being designated as the "firstborn son" does not imply that Jesus had younger brothers. Any

male child that lived his whole life as the only child or with only younger sisters would have been known as the "firstborn son." This is because the firstborn son had, according to Jewish law, certain rights and responsibilities.

Later, we do see that there are men in the Bible who are referred to as Jesus' "brothers." What are we to make of this? Simply put, these were Jesus' cousins. There are a few reasons as to why we believe this. First, Aramaic (the spoken language of the Jews at the time) had no word for cousin. Those whom we term "cousin," the Jews would have called "brother" or "sister."

This is further supported by the fact that Jesus, while on the cross, entrusted Mary to St. John. At this time, it was the duty of the eldest son to care for his mother once his father had passed. In the case of Mary, this was obviously Jesus. If a woman's oldest son died before she did, then her next oldest son would have to care for her. However, Jesus entrusts her to St. John. This implies that he had no brother to leave her to.

Then, in Acts of the Apostles (1:14-15), we see that the Jesus's brothers are more than 100 men! This should put each objection firmly to rest, but there is one more fact that points to Mary's perpetual virginity: the fact that she is the new Ark of the Covenant for being pregnant with the Son of God, she became the dwelling place of God. We see further that there are very clear parallels between the Ark being brought into Jerusalem and the Visitation. The Ark of the Covenant was the dwelling place of God in the Old Testament. And because of God's holiness, it could not be touched. In fact, a man was smitten for doing just that (2 Samuel 6:6-7). With this knowledge, would St. Joseph have dared to have relations with Mary? Certainly not! We see, therefore, very clearly that Mary had no other children besides Jesus and remained a virgin her entire life.

■ Fr. Greg Luger is pastor at the Churches of St. Jerome in Mohall, St. James in Sherwood and St. John in Lansford. 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 with the "Question Afraid to Ask" in the subject line.

Making Sense out of Bioethics

FR. TAD PACHOLCZYK



Homosexual men and chaste friendships

Catholic men facing same-sex attractions often struggle with how they are supposed to handle their homoromantic feelings. Some clearly understand that the Church invites them to order their feelings and attractions through a life of chaste continence, but they also wrestle with a strong desire for same-sex friendship and bonding.

In the midst of an escalating gay culture that actively promotes and celebrates homosexual sex, even in its most promiscuous forms, how can young men hope to encounter friends with whom they might cultivate healthy and chaste relationships? What role does the Church play in supporting and encouraging this?

A group called Courage offers outstanding spiritual support for those who are struggling with same-sex attraction and desiring to live chastely according to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. Founded by Father John Harvey, Courage held its first meeting in 1980 in New York City. Since then, it has expanded into an international ministry. This important apostolate deserves broad recognition and support for its vital work, yet regrettably, resistance still arises at times in some quarters of the Church when Courage seeks to promote clear Catholic teaching on chastity and homosexuality.

Cultivating a chaste heart demands a deep prayer life, strong spiritual support, and good fellowship, not to mention frequent reception of the sacraments, especially Holy Communion and confession. Courage vigorously promotes these practices.

I once visited a large Midwest Catholic parish where there was a group of men with same-sex attraction who attended Mass together. I later learned that each of them had his own room in a common living arrangement where they divided responsibilities, prayed together, discussed their burdens and struggles, and sought to strengthen each other in their shared journey of following the Lord

generously and chastely. They were a source of inspiration and an example of hope within the parish, which supported and encouraged them.

Among same-sex-attracted individuals, cultivating chaste relationships with each other can sometimes be complex. Doing so requires a supportive environment, patience, an understanding of human weakness, a strong sense of hope, and a mutually-shared determination to avoid near occasions of sin.

A few years ago, I read a memorable, no-holds-barred commentary on the gay lifestyle by Ronald G. Lee, a librarian in Houston, Texas, in which, based on his own struggles with homosexuality, he offered several helpful observations. He disputed the claim that gay men are supposed to, or are even able to, live in monogamous homosexual relationships. Instead, echoing the wisdom of the Church’s teaching, he stressed the fundamental need for a chaste lifestyle.

At the same time, he acknowledged the urgent need for same-sex-attracted individuals to have healthy human friendships with others. He mentioned his best friend Mark, who, like himself, was a refugee from the gay lifestyle and a man of faith. Summing up their relationship, he said, “From Mark I have learned that two men can love each other profoundly while remaining clothed the entire time. We are told that the Church opposes same-sex love. Not true. The Church opposes homogenital sex, which in my experience is not about love, but about obsession, addiction, and compensation for a compromised masculinity.”

The Catholic Church stresses that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered but homosexual persons are not. This distinction is crucial. Moreover, a person’s natural inner desire for human bonding should not be considered disordered or problematic in itself. In other words, the desire for friendship, relationship and communion, even among same-sex-attracted individuals, is not

intrinsically disordered, although desiring and pursuing same-sex sexual relations, which always contravene the root purposes of human sexuality, will be unchaste and immoral. The desire for closeness among same-sex-attracted individuals can and should be directed toward non-lustful friendships.

A second distinction is also worth mentioning. If homoerotic desires are allowed to take root, linger and be acted upon, they will be inherently problematic and sinful. If such desires, however, arise spontaneously in a person’s mind, and are not actively cultivated, entertained, or acted upon, this would not be sinful, insofar as sin always involves a wrongful choice.

The late Father Benedict Groeschel alluded to these nuances surrounding our inclinations and choices when he noted, “Homosexuality is a condition; gay and lesbian is a decision.”

The Catholic Church extends a beautiful call to each of us, one of authentic freedom and love. Human sexuality involves powerful drives that must be ordered within God’s sacred and providential plan. The Catechism reminds us that same-sex-attracted individuals are called ultimately to holiness, which is the fulfillment of a life of love:

“Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection” (n.2359).

That summons is a source of great hope. ■ 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

Ag Attitudes

JAMES ODERMANN



God in my heart is a special treasure

I tugged on the last blade of grass and got the cutting machine unplugged. I felt blessed to have a piece of machinery that could cut and windrow hay at least 10 times faster than when I was growing up—and all at one time.

The improvement of mechanization on agriculture is exponential. More and more efficient upgrades are expected as engineers and ag producers collaborate.

This ingenuity is needed today as agriculture feeds the world. The need for food worldwide is growing and is exacerbated by growing tensions across cultural, ethnic, race and ideologic differences.

I was happy as I wiped off the dirt and brushed away the hay

clippings. I crawled into the tractor seat and fired up the machine to finish the field.

I really appreciate being part of production agriculture, one of many blessings in my life. And that caused me to reflect on the Gospel reading from the 19th Sunday in ordinary time (Luke 12:34): “For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”

I continued to cut the hay field. I pondered on the divisions, the priorities permeating society today. Life’s tempo seems to be moving at a jet-like velocity, drowning out opportunities to “stop and smell the roses,” (which I did not do and have regretted on many occasions).

I began a self-examination of my priorities. Where is my heart?

What are my treasures? What is the focus of my life? There were lots more questions as I continued throughout the afternoon and into the evening hours.

I reflected on how there is an inordinate amount of time spent on being “self-accomplished.” This hypothesis is driven by the desire to amass huge amounts of material possessions—none of which accompany one during transition from this life to the next.

I contemplated further: Where is my heart? What are my treasures? Do my desires reflect the desires of God? Am I a disciple of Jesus?

There are so many options, so many situations that are camouflaged along the road map of life. The alternatives are a test:

some good, some so-so, some just plain bad. I need to use my free will to make good choices.

Do I treasure God? Is God in my heart? Are my thoughts, words and actions a reflection of the treasure in my heart?

God asks for loyalty, for love, to be the treasure in my heart. God wants to be in me. I need to love God unconditionally, trusting God will steer me down life’s best path. 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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