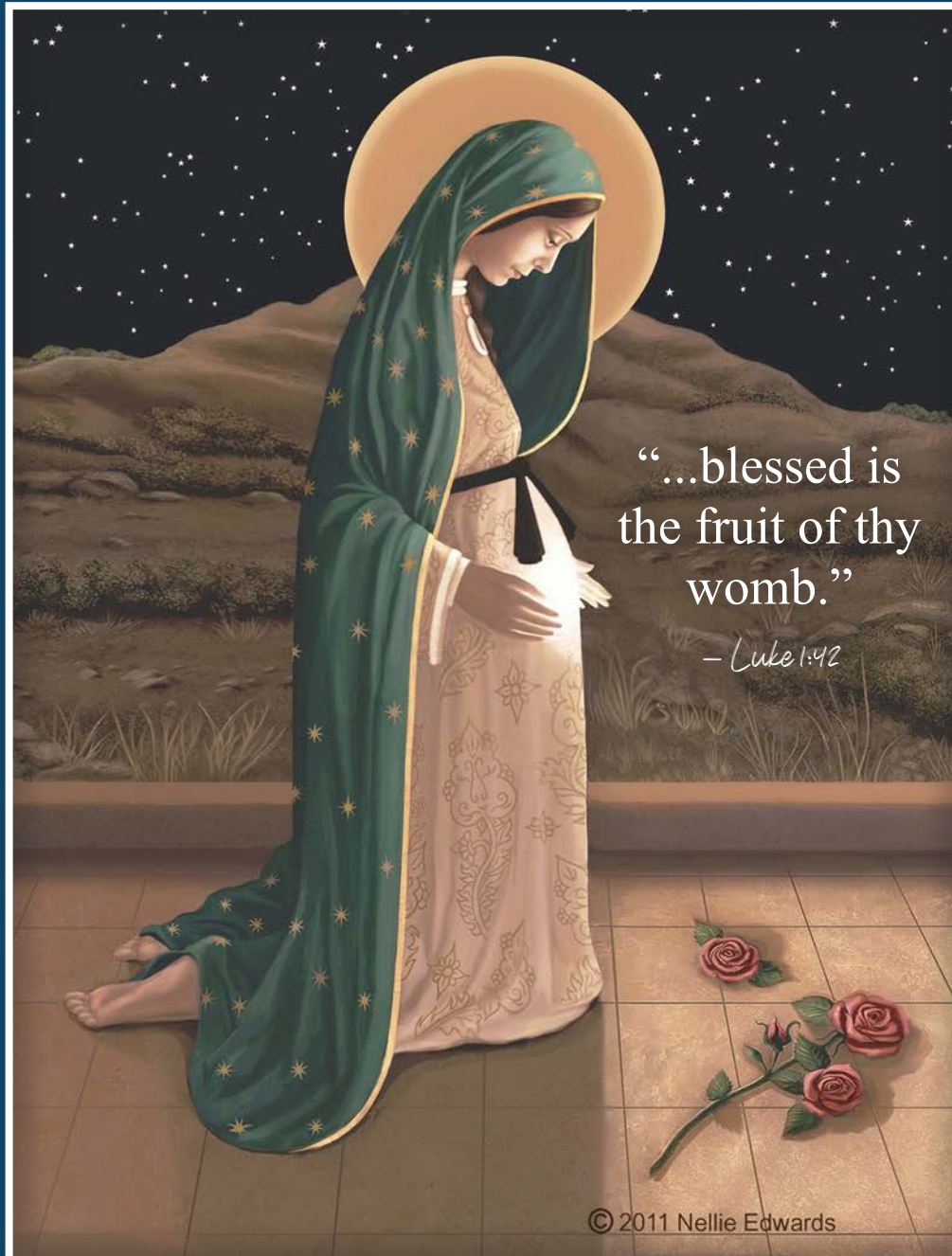





# Dakota **Catholic Action**

Vol. 82 No. 5 **MAY 2023**



**MAY:** THE MONTH TO  
**HONOR THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

[www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com)



# Source and Summit: *A Eucharistic Congress* June 2, 2023 Bismarck Event Center

Mass with Bishop Kagan - Eucharistic Adoration - Confession

## Featured Speakers:



Msgr. James Shea



Fr. Brian Gross



Shelly Preszler

Registration is open. Use your camera app  
to scan this QR code to register now!



Lunch will be provided for all attendees who are **pre-registered**.

Additional information and registration also available at  
**[bismarckdiocese.com/eucharisticcongress](http://bismarckdiocese.com/eucharisticcongress)**

If unable to register online,  
mail this registration form to:  
Source and Summit  
Eucharistic Congress  
Diocese of Bismarck  
PO Box 1137  
Bismarck, ND 58502-1137

Household last name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Total # attending Eucharistic Congress: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Primary email address: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6 MOTHER OF LOVE

Story Of This Well-Known Depiction Of Our Lady of Guadalupe

## 8 A BEAUTIFUL VOCATION

Fr. Leonard Eckroth To Mark 65 Years As A Priest

By Sonia Mullally

## 12 GOD'S SHARE APPEAL

May 6-7, 2023

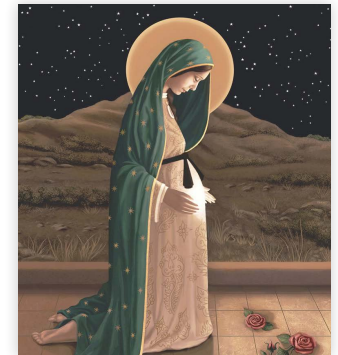
## 21 FORMING A TRUE SERVANT HEART

Two Seminarians To Be Ordained Transitional Deacons on May 24

By Sonia Mullally

## 24 CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

## 26 CHRISM MASS 2023



**ON THE COVER:** "Mother of Life" cover art by Bismarck Diocese artist, Nellie Edwards.



**PAGE 21:** Two diocesan seminarians will be ordained transitional deacons on May 24.



# Dakota Catholic Action



*Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941*

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

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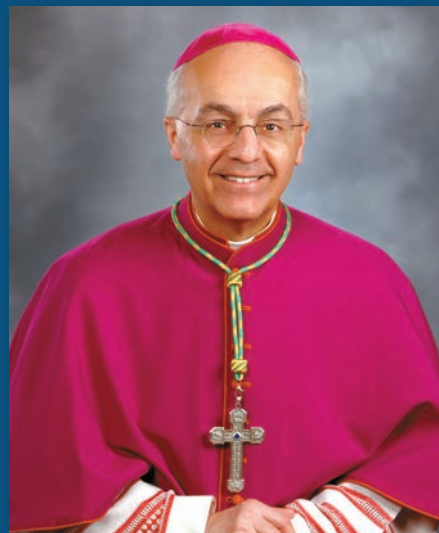
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## FROM THE BISHOP

*May is the month dedicated  
to Our Blessed Mother!*

### Bishop David D. Kagan

With the coming of the month of May and our weather finally beginning to be more like spring than winter, we celebrate this month which, by long custom, has been dedicated to the Blessed Mother. In many ways, the month of May represents springtime because of the weather changing, plants and crops being planted and beginning to grow, and the mix of rain and sunshine washing away the snow, cold, grit and grime of winter.

However, for us and while all that I just said is true, the dedicating of May to Our Blessed Mother should remind us of what happened on that first Easter Sunday when Jesus, crucified, arose from the dead and brought a truly spiritual springtime to the world. Everything He said in this life came to pass and His death and resurrection washed away the cold, grit and grime of sin which had held us in a frozen prison since Adam and Eve rebelled and disobeyed the Lord God.

This May, due to the date of Easter, we celebrate not just much of the Easter Season, but we celebrate the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord and the Solemnity of Pentecost. We should know well what these two solemnities represent for us personally and as members of the Catholic Church. However, what is not always noticed but is important for us are the two feasts which begin and end the month, May 1 is the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker and

May 31 is the Feast of the Visitation.

The Church intentionally honors St. Joseph who is the patron saint of workers and thus reminds us of the dignity of work in all its forms but also reminds us to work in imitation of St. Joseph. If we do so then we give that good example of honesty and dedication which inspires others. The Church intentionally honors the Blessed Mother by commemorating her visit to her elderly cousin St. Elizabeth just after the Annunciation to assist her with the birth of St. John the Baptist. The Church holds her up to us as the model of the New Evangelization. She brings Jesus to the everyday life of St. Elizabeth, and it is an act of charity. We are to do the same in our daily lives.

The month of May has several memorials and feasts of the saints from every age of the Church, and I encourage you to go to Mass on these days and read of the lives of these saints. We are all in communion with them and they assist us with their prayers and have given us an example to follow. This month, I have the great privilege to ordain to the transitional diaconate two of our seminarians who will then begin their final year of seminary and formation prior to being ordained priests in June 2024.

Enjoy this beautiful month and continue to live in the light of the Risen Lord. †

## BISHOP IN ACTION



*Photo by Monte Obrigewitch: Bishop Kagan celebrated the Mass on Holy Saturday at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on April 8.*



### Holy Father's Prayer Intentions for May

#### FOR CHURCH MOVEMENTS AND GROUPS

We pray that Church movements and groups may rediscover their mission of evangelization each day, placing their own charisms at the service of needs in the world.

## BISHOP'S SCHEDULE

MAY 2023

May 1	Confirmation at the Church of St. Joseph, Mandan, 7 p.m.
May 2	Presbyteral Council Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck 10 a.m.
May 3	Mass, St. Mary's Academy, Bismarck, 8:30 a.m.
May 4	Parish Expansion Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 11 a.m.
May 4	Confirmation, Church of Spirit of Life, Mandan, 7 p.m.
May 5	Confirmation, Church of Saint Anne, Bismarck, 7 p.m.
May 7	Confirmation, Our Lady of Grace, Minot, 10:30 a.m.
May 8	Anniversary Mass, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 11 a.m.
May 11	Blue Mass, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, 5:30 p.m.
May 12	Home on the Range Board of Directors Meeting, Sentinel Butte, 1 p.m. MT
May 13	Confirmation, Church of St. Leo the Great, Minot, 11 a.m.
May 14	Confirmation, Church of St. Mary, Richardton, 10 a.m. MT
May 14	Trinity High School Graduation, Dickinson, 2:30 p.m. MT
May 19	Cabinet Meeting, Chancery, Bismarck 10 a.m.
May 19	Bishop Ryan Catholic School Graduation, Minot, 7 p.m.
May 21	St. Mary's Central High School Graduation, Bismarck, 1:30 p.m.
May 23	Finance Council Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, 10 a.m.
May 24	Diaconate Ordination, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 2 p.m.
May 27	Confirmation, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 10 a.m.
May 28	Mass, Church of St. Peter, Fort Yates, 10:30 a.m.



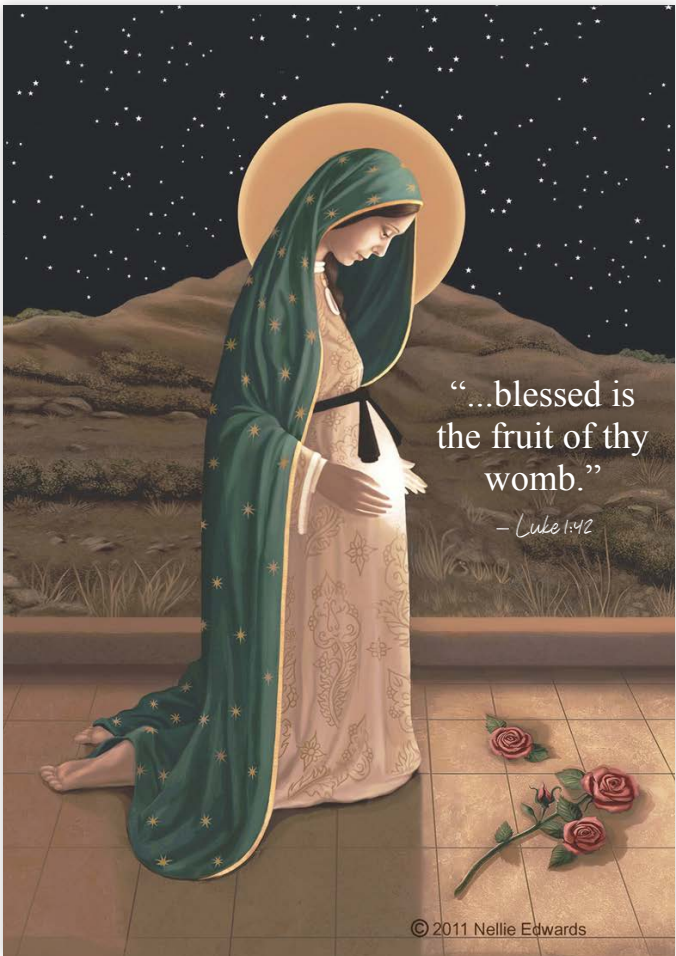
# Story Of This Well-Known Depiction Of Our Lady Of Guadalupe

Staff Report

“Heaven left her image on the tilma of Juan Diego and it’s...quite good!” This was the reply of Nellie Edwards, a nationally known artist from the Bismarck Diocese, when asked if she might do a new version of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Nellie said, “I thought it would be quite irreverent to attempt such and so, ruled out the idea completely.

One day in early 2011 Nellie, a long-time prolife activist, began a new work of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom she imagined would be in white, grieving the loss of an aborted child. About 45 minutes into it, a very strong awareness came over her, that this “had to be Our Lady of Guadalupe!” She was truly stunned, since this had not been on her mind whatsoever! In her words, “I looked up and asked, ‘Lord, is this You?’” She then earnestly prayed about it.

After realizing a sense of peace, Nellie thought about the fact that the sash around Mary’s belly had signified to the Aztec people that she was with child. Plus, that she appeared to Juan Diego in mid-December, which meant that she was likely full term with baby Jesus. And, because the artist already had the face of Our Lady in the side-view at the onset, she realized the opportunity to have her in the profile view, kneeling, in adoration of her unborn Savior-Son, the Light of the World. In her words, “I wasn’t sure what to do with it when finished—what God wanted for it—but I couldn’t help but hope it was meant to be a visual aid in the cause of life. I



“Mother of Life” artwork by Bismarck Diocese artist, Nellie Edwards.

somehow knew that I should patiently pray, obey and stay out of His way!

Soon, the Knights of Columbus requested this creation she titled “Mother of Life” for the cover of *Columbia Magazine*, (after the editor saw it at

“Always obey that nudge from God! You never know what graces will come out of your obedience.”

a prolife event). Then, the well-known theologian, Scott Hahn, posted it on social media, which literally sent it around the world. Nellie was amazed to see tens of thousands sharing and commenting on the image from many countries, including Germany, Japan, Brazil, Australia and Jerusalem. She counted it a great blessing too, that it was posted on Facebook by a priest from Mexico and was shared and commented on by nearly a million people.

The artist’s hope that “Mother of Life” would serve to help build the culture of life is being realized more and more. Many dioceses and Church organizations have requested it for various events and publications and large canvas prints and/or banners are displayed in crisis pregnancy centers, adoration chapels and parishes, etc. around the U.S., as well as being used on the front lines of the battle for life by those offering alternatives to young women arriving for abortions.

Two years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ prolife secretariat asked to license “Mother of Life” to produce prayer cards (to give to pregnant women) for their “Walking With Moms in Need” program. Now on their third printing of half a million cards, they told Nellie that “Mother of Life is making a real impact!” (walkingwithmoms.com)

Over the years, numerous people have shared with Nellie how “Mother of Life” has blessed them. Best of all to her, are the stories of expectant mothers, deciding against abortion, saying that it was due to this evocative image of the Blessed Mother; looking tenderly at her womb, which housed, she knew, the Creator of all life.


The full story of how Nellie began doing sacred art can be found on her website [www.paintedfaith.net](http://www.paintedfaith.net). It truly illustrates divine providence, the importance of

A PRAYER FOR  
PREGNANT MOTHERS

O Blessed Mother, you received the good news of the incarnation of Christ, your Son, with faith and trust. Grant your protection to all pregnant mothers facing difficulties.

Guide us as we strive to make our parish communities places of welcome and assistance for mothers in need. Help us become instruments of God’s love and compassion.

Mary, Mother of the Church, graciously help us build a culture of life and a civilization of love, together with all people of good will, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life.\* Amen.



\*Cf. *Evangelium vitae* 105 © Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City. Adapted with permission. All rights reserved. Image: “Mother of Life” © 2011, Artist Nellie Edwards ([www.paintedfaith.net](http://www.paintedfaith.net)). Used with permission. All rights reserved. Copyright © 2019, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

Prayer card and image not for resale. All rights reserved.  
To order card #1932 (Spanish, #1933), call toll-free 866-582-0943.  
[www.usccb.org/prolife](http://www.usccb.org/prolife)

USCCB prayer card featuring the “Mother of Life” artwork on the reverse.

obedience to God, prayer and divine intervention... plus, the fact that “God doesn’t always call the equipped, but He equips the called.”

Nellie believes that devotion to the Real Presence; Eucharistic adoration and daily Mass, is essential to develop a kind of spiritual antennae...so as to discern God’s holy will. And, as she likes to say, “Always obey that nudge from God! You never know what graces will come out of your obedience.”†



# Fr. Leonard Eckroth To Mark 65 Years As A Priest

Sonia Mullally  
DCA Editor

A chance meeting with Bishop Vincent Ryan changed the course of Fr. Leonard Eckroth’s life leading him to 65 years as a Bismarck Diocese priest.

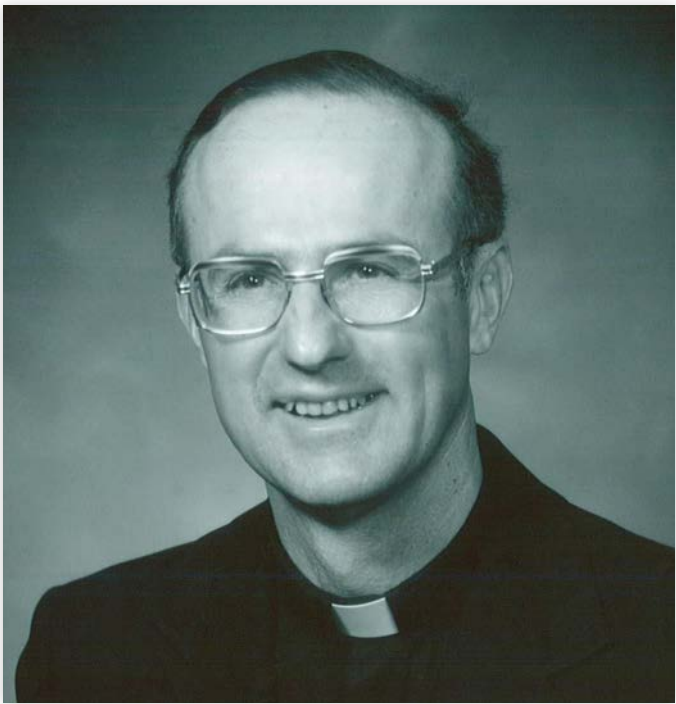
Growing up attending St. Joseph’s parish and school in Mandan, Father Leonard often thought of a life devoted to religious life. He comes from a large family with 10 siblings and parents who were open to their children following their vocation; two of his sisters and one brother entered religious life.

“When he was young, my dad served Mass for Bishop Wehrle and he wanted my dad to be a priest. He talked it over with his dad, my grandfather, and ended up not choosing that life, of course,” Fr. Leonard said.

His parish was staffed by the Benedictines from St. John’s Abbey based in Collegeville, Minn. leading to many vocations. The Benedictine brothers’ guidance led young Leonard to attend high school and two years of college at St. John’s University near St. Cloud, Minn. from 1947-1952.

On one of the train trips back to high school in Minnesota, he was approached by Bismarck Diocese priest, Fr. Elwood Cassidy, who said that Bishop Ryan was also on the train, and he’d like them to visit.

“That conversation with Bishop Ryan must have got me thinking,” Fr. Leonard recalled, with a smile.



Fr. Leonard Eckroth early in his priesthood.

## Ordained in 1958

His thoughts shifted from becoming a Benedictine priest to a diocesan priest for his home diocese. He also knew that most Benedictine priests ended up being teachers and he wasn’t crazy about that idea. So, in 1952, he entered St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. He was ordained a priest for the diocese on June 2, 1958, by Bishop Hilary Hacker.

Father Leonard’s first few assignments were as assistant pastor closer to home. In 1960, he became

the administrator at St. Michael parish in rural Linton. In 1961, he became pastor at St. John in New Leipzig with missions in the small parishes at Sacred Heart in Bentley and St. Mary in Miner (both mission parishes have since closed). He remained there until 1964, when he moved to be pastor in Bowbells and Portal until 1970. Then from 1970 to 1978, he was pastor at Tioga and Powers Lake.

Wherever assigned, Fr. Leonard established himself as a member of each community getting to know the parishioners and their families. He’s an avid outdoorsman so if anyone was looking for a hunting or fishing trip companion, Fr. Leonard was an eager volunteer.

While serving in Tioga and Powers Lake, he got to know a young man named Shannon Lucht who attended daily Mass with his parents. One day, Father Leonard was in search of altar servers since most of the boys who typically serve were in school. So, he called upon a young Shannon who was not even old enough to receive communion at the time.

“Father Leonard is the first priest I remember in my life. I just remember being at Mass with my mom and he came over and asked if I’d like to learn how to serve,” Fr. Shannon, priest for our diocese since 2001, said. “I think it was around my kindergarten year. He had to help me with everything because I was so young.”

Father Leonard became part of the Lucht family. “I’m grateful to my parents for many things obviously, but one thing is that they were always so welcoming to the priests who served our parish and Fr. Leonard visited our home many times. I even have memories of fishing with him and my dad. Our parents made the church our ‘home away from home’ so we were always connected to the parish priest. I remember Father Leonard as an important part of our family.”

Even though Fr. Leonard left Tioga a couple years later, he remains a friend to Fr. Shannon.



Assisting Fr. Leonard Eckroth as an altar server in the mid-1970s at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Tioga was young Shannon Lucht who was ordained a priest for the diocese in 2001.

“When I was ordained in 2001, I was assigned as an associate in Linton and Fr. Leonard was at Strasburg nearby. So even after all those years, he was there when I first started serving Mass and there again for me ‘right next door’ for my first assignment as a priest,” Fr. Shannon explained.

After leaving Tioga in 1978, Fr. Leonard was named pastor in Huff and Fort Rice until 1987. Also, during this time, he volunteered to serve as priest chaplain at the N.D. State Industrial School and the N.D. State Penitentiary. He enjoyed serving those who were enduring tough times.

“It was a challenging eight years as chaplain,” Fr. Leonard said. “But I felt I was reaching out to those who really needed encouragement and support.”

## Longest assignment

Father Leonard’s next pastoral assignment would be his longest at Sts. Peter and Paul in Strasburg that





Several vocations came from the Church of St. Joseph in Mandan around the same time as Fr. Leonard (circa 1950s).

began in 1987 and lasted for 23 years. Here, he also ministered to the people of St. Aloysius in Hague (a mission that closed in 1993) and St. Michael in rural Linton. The Church of St. Mary in Hague was added to his duties in 1989.

He recalled going to the church in Strasburg when he was serving in rural Linton back in the early 1960s and thinking how that beautiful church reminded him of his home church. Much to his surprise, Fr. Leonard was assigned there nearly 27 years later.

“I visited that church in Strasburg for the first time and, right away, thought that it looks like my home church in Mandan, St. Joseph’s. I remember thinking that I’d love to have that parish and then I got it. I already loved that school there and that town.”

Retiring in 2009 at the age of 76, didn’t slow him down. He continued to fill in wherever needed around the diocese. Then, in 2014, Bishop Kagan asked him if he’d like to serve as the chaplain for the Cloistered Carmelite nuns that opened a convent near Hague. Father Leonard jumped at the chance to return to the beloved Emmons County communities where he had served for so many years.

Father Leonard’s return to the area allowed him to reconnect again with Fr. Shannon who was assigned as pastor of the parishes in Strasburg, Hague and rural Linton in 2018. “It was great to be back with Fr. Leonard, to concelebrate once in a while,” Fr. Shannon remarked.

When the nuns closed the Hague convent and departed to return to their motherhouse in 2019, Fr. Leonard “officially” retired. Now, at age 90, he resides at the home for retired priests in northeast Bismarck and celebrates Mass several times a week at a nearby assisted living facility.

“He’s just a tremendous model of what a holy priest should be: kind, joyful, always smiling, loves the Lord. I treasure that,” Fr. Shannon said. “He’s prayerful and holy, above everything.”

## Anniversary Mass May 8

Father Eckroth will be among those honored at a Mass on Monday, May 8 with Bishop Kagan for the priests celebrating their ordination anniversary. Priests recognized this year are: 5 years - Fr. Dominic Bouck and Fr. Jarad Wolf; 10 years - Fr. Patrick Cunningham, Fr. Joseph Evinger, Fr. Thomas Grafsgaard, Fr. Jared Johnson, Fr. Corey Nelson and Fr. Bob Shea; 15 years - Fr. Shane Campbell and Fr. Justin Waltz; 20 years - Fr. Biju Antony; 25 years - Fr. Roger Synek and Fr. James Kilzer, OSB; 30 years - Msgr. Patrick Schumacher; 35 years - Fr. David Zimmer and Fr. Hugo Blotsky, OSB; 40 years - Msgr. Gene Lindemann; 45 years - Fr. Bruce Krebs; 50 years - Fr. Paul Becker and Fr. Valerian Odermann, OSB; 55 years - Abbot Daniel Maloney, OSB and 65 years - Fr. Leonard Eckroth.

The Mass will be held at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck beginning at 11 a.m. The public is invited to attend. †

# A CATHOLIC VISION FOR THE WHOLE OF LIFE

Awaken the Catholic imaginative vision with the University of Mary's **Master of Arts in Catholic Studies**. Our program reveals the wisdom and beauty of the Church's intellectual, cultural, and spiritual heritage, integrating rich, interdisciplinary coursework with deep, personal formation. As you come alive to the tradition you love, you will gain life-changing insight into the world and your calling within it.

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## 90% of children will never tell anyone about the abuse they suffer

### Why kids don't tell...

- I don't want to get them in trouble.
- I'm too ashamed.
- I promised to keep this a secret.
- I'm Scared.
- I'm going to get taken away from my home or family.
- I should have fought harder or screamed louder.
- No one will believe me.
- He said he'd kill me if I told.
- It's my fault.


#### If a child discloses abuse or neglect to you....

##### Do:

- Remain calm
- Believe the child
- Allow the child to talk
- Show interest & concern
- Reassure and support the child
- Take action. It could save the child's life

##### Don't:

- Panic or overreact
- Press the child to talk
- Promise anything you can't control
- Blame or minimize the child's feelings
- Overwhelm the child with questions

 **Dakota Children's ADVOCACY CENTER** | [www.dakotacac.org](https://www.dakotacac.org) 701-323-5626

The Dakota Children's Advocacy Center provides and coordinates services for children who have been abused.



My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for your faithful commitment to our diocese and the Church’s mission in western North Dakota. Our mission as a diocese is to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with compassion and enthusiasm, so that people’s lives may be transformed as they come to know and love the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Annual God’s Share Appeal is a combined effort of our 93 parishes and 60,469 Catholics to support our vibrant Catholic community with the spiritual, pastoral, educational, and temporal works critical in forming families, children, and all individuals yearning for the love and mercy of God.

Our 66th Annual Appeal is upon us. This year’s goal is \$3,295,000. With your donation, we will be able to form our 12 seminarians and 11 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, [www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com) has additional information on our offices and programs, as well as materials that will inform, educate, and inspire you.

As disciples, we have the awesome privilege of walking with Jesus every day and inviting others to join us in this journey of faith. The Lord is always eager to meet us wherever we may be and to draw us closer to Himself and others. That is what the God’s Share Appeal is all about, doing God’s work together in western North Dakota as the Body of Christ. We must ensure that these quality ministry opportunities continue to exist for many generations.

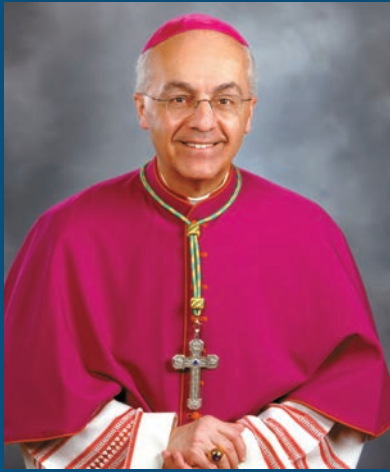
I invite you to prayerfully consider how you can respond to the Lord’s call to “do this in memory of me” by supporting the God’s Share Appeal. A donation to the appeal funds the work that enables service to the Lord beyond what an individual parish can provide, supporting all the faithful in western North Dakota.

Thank you for your generosity and faithful commitment to the Church’s mission.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*David D. Kagan*

Most Reverend David D. Kagan, D.D., P.A., J.C.L.  
Bishop of Bismarck  
On behalf of the Bismarck Diocese



“Living the Gospel,  
Being Eucharistic  
Disciples.”

The Bismarck Diocese 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.



GOD’S SHARE APPEAL **MAY 6-7, 2023**

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.

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 (833) 544-1375
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.
9. 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 Mission Advancement at (701) 222-3035 for assistance.



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**Bismarck, ND 58501**  
**(701) 222-3035 or**  
**Toll Free 1-877-405-7435**  
**[bismarckdiocese.com](http://bismarckdiocese.com)**

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 2023 God’s Share Appeal. Make your pledge today. Thank you for being good stewards of God’s varied graces.*



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

“Living the Gospel, Being Eucharistic Disciples.”

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.

Your donation to the 2023 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
- Episcopal Vicar for Clergy
- Family Ministry/Respect Life
- Finance
- Internal Auditor
- Mission Advancement
- Missionary Activity
- Moderator of the Curia/Vicar General
- Permanent Diaconate
- Vocations
- Worship

“Living the Gospel, Being Eucharistic Disciples.”

God’s Share Appeal

May 6-7, 2023

We Are...

- 60,469 Catholic people
- 93 Parishes
- 1 Bishop
- 64 Priests
- 10 Retired Priests
- 12 Seminarians
- 85 Permanent Deacons
- 11 Men in Diaconate Formation
- 1 Diocese

Living and Sharing our Faith In 2022, we celebrated:

- 990 Baptisms
- 805 First Communions
- 826 Confirmations
- 201 Marriages
- 818 Deaths

The Bismarck Diocese 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 five new priests after their ordination.



Our seminarians attending their summer gathering.

Office of Vocations

Your donation supports the **Office of Vocations**. Last year, five priests were ordained to the priesthood: Fr. Jake Magnuson, Fr. Logan Obrigewitch, Fr. Ben Wanner, Fr. Grant Dvorak, and Fr. Paul Gardner. On June 12, 2023, three more of our seminarians, Deacon Josh Hill, Deacon Dustin Johns and Deacon Steven Vetter will be ordained to the priesthood. For a small diocese of our size, we are extremely blessed with the number of seminarians we have.





*Bishop Kagan confirms over 780 people each year.*



*Bishop Kagan gathers with the RCIA candidates*

### 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 rallies; Search weekends; Steubenville Youth Conferences; young adult ministry; Duc in Altum; and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) wanting to enter the Catholic Church.



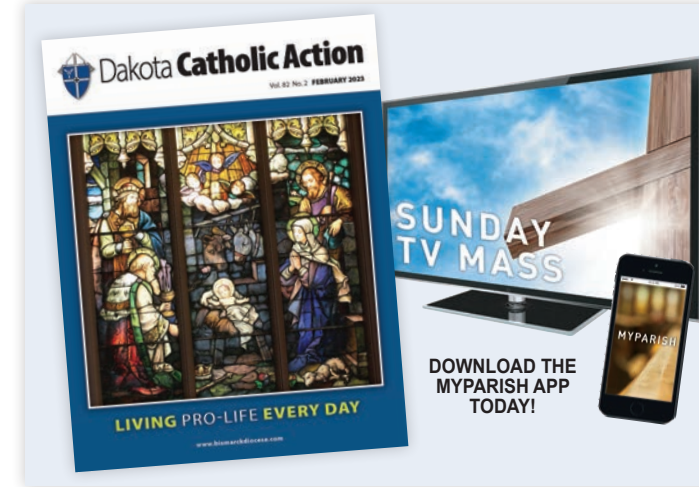
*Bishop Kagan blesses the land, animals and machinery at the Annual Town & Country Celebration.*



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

### 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; N.D. March for Life; and others.



### 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* news magazine, weekly video messages on the diocesan website and through social media including Bishop's Twitter account.



*Bishop Kagan with our two new Deacons, Kevin Leingang and Jeff Baranick.*

### 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 11 men in formation and 85 deacons.



### 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.



*Bishop with retired priest.*

### Retired Priests and Bishop

Your contribution supports all of our 10 retired priests who are a tremendous gift to our diocese. Through the ministry of the Office of the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy, we desire to reaffirm them and offer encouragement to them as they experience their sunset years. Bishop Kagan visits with Fr. Leonard Eckroth, one of our retired priests.





### Continuing Education for Clergy

The **Office of Continuing Education for Clergy** provides for the continued spiritual, intellectual and pastoral growth of our clergy by planning the annual fall and spring clergy conferences, annual retreats for priests and the new priest workshops.



*Bishop Kagan holding the Host.*



*Bishop Kagan at Mass.*

### The Chancery Office

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

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

## PRAY FOR OUR 2022-2023 SEMINARIANS



**Josh Hill**  
Theology IV  
Cathedral  
Bismarck



**Dustin Johns**  
Theology IV  
St. Leo the Great  
Minot



**Steven Vetter**  
Theology IV  
St. Bernard  
Belfield



**Ryan Martire**  
Theology III  
Cathedral  
Bismarck



**Eric Artz**  
Theology III  
Little Flower  
Minot



**Colton Steiner**  
Pastoral Year  
St. Joseph  
Dickinson



**Isaiah Jilek**  
College IV  
St. Wenceslaus  
Dickinson



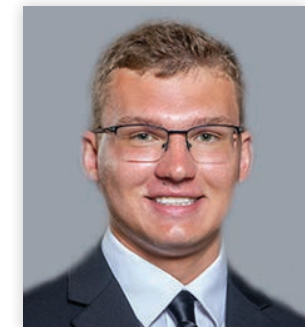
**Joseph Richter**  
College IV  
St. Anne  
Bismarck



**Joseph Schon**  
College III  
Ascension  
Bismarck



**Benjamin Weigum**  
College II  
St. Anne  
Bismarck



**Dominic Schaeftbauer**  
College I  
St. Joseph  
Mandan

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 11 seminarians. The average cost for one seminarian in the major seminary is \$37,500 each year. Please continue to pray for our 11 seminarians and for everyone else that is considering a call to the religious life.





Camp ReCreation needs volunteers

Camp ReCreation, a summer camp dedicated to serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, needs volunteers. Make a difference by sharing your time, talent or treasure with this life-changing experience held in Richardton, N.D. Counselors, teachers, task force, cooks, nurses, photographers, entertainers, etc. are needed for camp dates June 4-8 and June 11-16. Volunteers walk away with a renewed sense of understanding, compassion and knowing they made a difference. For more information, visit [www.camprecreationnd.com](http://www.camprecreationnd.com) or call 701-974-3774.



Priesthood anniversary Mass May 8

The public is invited to gather with the diocese and Bishop Kagan on Monday, May 8 for the anniversary Mass of the ordination of the holy priesthood. Priests celebrating anniversaries this year are: 5 years - Fr. Dominic Bouck and Fr. Jarad Wolf; 10 years - Fr. Patrick Cunningham, Fr. Joseph Evinger, Fr. Thomas Grafsgaard, Fr. Jared Johnson, Fr. Corey Nelson and Fr. Bob Shea; 15 years - Fr. Shane Campbell and Fr. Justin Waltz; 20 years - Fr. Biju Antony; 25 years - Fr. Roger Synek and Fr. James Kilzer, OSB; 30 years - Msgr. Patrick Schumacher; 35 years - Fr. David Zimmer and Fr. Hugo Blotsky, OSB; 40 years – Msgr. Gene Lindemann; 45 years - Fr. Bruce Krebs; 50 years - Fr. Paul Becker and Fr. Valerian Odermann, OSB; 55 years - Abbot Daniel Maloney, OSB and 65 years - Fr. Leonard Eckroth. The Mass will be held at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck beginning at 11 a.m.



Blue Mass May 11

The annual Blue Mass will be held on Thursday, May 11 at 5:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck. Held during National Peace Officers Memorial Week, this special Mass with Bishop Kagan is an opportunity to pray for all active, retired and deceased law enforcement officers, firefighters and emergency medical personnel.



Eucharistic Congress June 2

The diocese is hosting “Source and Summit: A Eucharistic Congress” on Friday, June 2 at the Bismarck Event Center. All are invited to delve deeper into their relationship with Jesus and His Real Presence in the Eucharist. The Bismarck Diocese event will feature speakers—Monsignor James Shea, Father Brian Gross and Shelly Preszler—plus adoration, confession and Mass with Bishop Kagan. There is no charge for the event and a free lunch will be provided for those who pre-register. Go to [bismarckdiocese.com/eucharisticcongress](http://bismarckdiocese.com/eucharisticcongress) for more information.



Foundation golf tournament June 19

The 9th Annual Seminarian Scholarship Golf Tournament hosted by the Catholic Foundation of Western North Dakota is Monday, June 19 at the Prairie West Golf Course in Mandan. Check in and lunch begins at noon with a shotgun start at 1 p.m. Lunch and dinner are provided. Cost is \$520 per team or \$130 per person. Register online at [cfwnd.org/golf](http://cfwnd.org/golf) by June 15. The tournament fills up fast, so you are encouraged to register early. For more information contact Ron Schatz at 701-204-7202 or Mike Bichler at 701-471-0985.



Queen of Peace 50th

Save the date for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at Queen of Peace Parish in Dickinson June 23-24. On the evening of June 23, there will be an outdoor movie, inflatables and games for the kids. Events on the evening of June 24 begin with Mass with Bishop Kagan at 4 p.m. followed by a catered meal, live music, beer garden, inflatables and games for the kids.



Steubenville Conference 2023

Registration for the Steubenville Conference 2023 is open through May 10. This summer, students in grades 8-12 are invited to attend the St. Paul conference for an exciting opportunity to become better equipped and empowered to live life to the full with Jesus Christ. The dates for the trip are July 27-30. Find the registration links on the diocesan website at [bismarckdiocese.com/Steubenville](http://bismarckdiocese.com/Steubenville). For questions, contact Ben Ottemoeller at [bottemoeller@bismarckdiocese.com](mailto:bottemoeller@bismarckdiocese.com) or 701-204-7208.

Two Seminarians To Be Ordained  
Transitional Deacons on May 24

Sonia Mullally  
DCA Editor

Two 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 Eric Artz and Ryan Martire are currently studying at the Theology III level and will be ordained to the priesthood, God willing, in the summer of 2024 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

*Eric Artz*

Seminarian Eric Artz grew up in Minot as a member of St. Therese the Little Flower Church. With a strong desire to serve others for God, he comes from a close-knit family and parents who stressed the importance of faith through service. Eric credits the example set by his parents as paving the way to his vocation to the priesthood.

When Eric was in high school, his twin brother died from cancer. This difficult time taught him about suffering and taking up your cross leading him to turn to Eucharistic adoration to fill a void after losing his best friend. It was here, sitting before Jesus in the Eucharist, that he listened closer to God’s will for him and waited patiently for direction.

While in college at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, Eric began to seriously look at the seminary as an option to fulfill his calling and find the true happiness he was seeking. He is currently studying at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis.

“I had the opportunity to begin this year with a weeklong silent retreat in January,” Eric explained. “It was a very blessed time to pause, be with the Lord, and see what he was desiring for me as I come closer to being ordained a deacon in Bismarck this May.”



Eric Artz

The retreat had a profound effect on Eric and further cemented his faith.

“The Lord reaffirmed my vocation towards priesthood and deepened my confidence that I am called to live a life of celibacy. More specifically, in praying with the nativity scene, Mary allowed me to hold her newborn son in my arms. As I was holding Jesus, I was filled with a comforting and consoling sense that I would be taken care of, that I would be provided for, and that I was still on the right path. In a sense, I realized that it was really the infant Jesus Who was holding me.”

During this year of study, the seminarians further develop their prayer life as they journey toward sacred ordination.

“As the months have gone on since this prayer experience, I have come to more deeply realize that I live a very joyful, peaceful and happy life as



a seminarian. In fact, I could not imagine a better life for myself. The Lord has surpassed my wildest expectations and done more for me than I could have ever imagined in these past six years of seminary formation. I have also come to find that the ‘yes’ that I will give in just a few weeks to the diaconate is really a ‘yes’ and a deeper confirmation to this life that God has provided for me,” Eric said.

He’s enthusiastic, yet humbled, about being ordained to the transitional diaconate after years of formation.

“I am very excited to be ordained a deacon—to live more deeply as a celibate in the service of charity and at the altar at Mass. I am also filled with much excitement at the future possibility of being able to assist the priest, preach homilies and possibly even baptize children this summer as I return to North Dakota for my summer break. Although I still have another year of being able to grow closer to the Lord in prayer and study until I am ordained a priest, I can now pause and see that the Lord is about to give me a great and wonderful gift—one that I am not worthy to receive, but one that God has earnestly desired to bestow upon me.”

Eric added a message to the people of our diocese, “Until that day, please keep me in your prayers and know of mine.

### Ryan Martire

Growing up in Bismarck, Seminarian Ryan Martire gained a strong foundation for his faith through years of Catholic education and as a member of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. After his parent’s divorce during grade school, to cope with the major life change, he thought his focus should be sports. But he eventually learned that only faith could fill the void.

It was in fulfilling his dream to play Division 1 soccer at DePaul University in Chicago where his true vocation came into focus. While there, he connected with the Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa Sisters) regularly serving at their soup

kitchen. He said the sisters were a constant encouragement to his vocation to the priesthood.

Ryan was resistant to the call to the seminary at first thinking he was destined to be married and have a family. But as his heart opened to the idea, he began to hear God’s voice directing him. After years of formation at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis, Ryan’s path became clear after spending last summer immersed in parish life.

“I entered into this year of seminary formation coming from a pastoral internship at Queen of Peace in Dickinson,” Ryan explained. “The internship was a very rich and rewarding year that gave me peace, security and confidence in God’s call for me to serve as a deacon and priest in the Bismarck Diocese. That year taught me how to serve, how to break out of my selfishness and to give myself as a gift to others. Also, many beautiful people entered my life that year who were a great gift to me in various ways.”

That desire for service to others became even stronger back at the seminary.

“This current year in seminary is a continuation of the internship year, learning to live according to the needs of others at the seminary, at my apostolate at a high school and parish in St. Louis. I am also grateful for deepened friendships with my brother seminarians this year,” Ryan said.

He’s looking forward to being ordained to the transitional diaconate after years of formation.

“I am very grateful to God,” Ryan expressed. “Every year of formation has been unique and full of grace. Each year has drawn me closer to Jesus Christ and helped me to grow in my humanity in many ways. God has provided many necessary graces of healing



Ryan Martire



Submitted photo: Diocesan seminarians, Eric Artz (left) and Ryan Martire, will be ordained transitional deacons on May 24.

to prepare me to serve the people of God during my time in seminary. I have come to a deeper acceptance of myself as a beloved son in the Father which gives me greater confidence to serve the diocese authentically. The journey has not been too slow, nor too fast, and the diaconate ordination comes at the perfect time.”

Ryan and Eric will soon put their knowledge into practice as deacons, true servants of the Church. The transitional diaconate is the entry into the clerical state, meaning the men become members of the clergy.

“The diaconate is a tremendous gift from God, conforming the man to be ordained to Christ the servant. Among the many services of the deacon, he is the servant of the word and the servant of the faithful. I am really looking forward to preaching the word of God to help lead others into a real encounter with Jesus Christ. Further, I am looking forward to being surprised with the people who God sends into my ministry as a deacon and to respond to the daily call to serve their needs.”

Next fall, Ryan and Eric will return to Kenrick-Glennon Seminary for one final year of formation before coming back to their home diocese for priestly ordination.

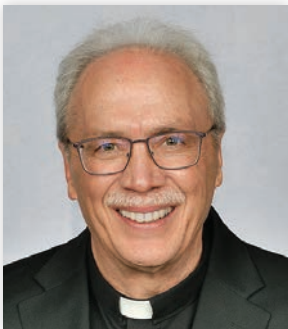
“The easy temptation for the final year of formation is to ‘check out’ so to speak,” Ryan noted. “I look forward to resisting this and trusting that God has great plans for me to serve as a deacon in the Archdiocese of St. Louis and Kenrick-Glennon Seminary for my last year before I return home to Bismarck. Further, the last year of formation can be filled with much necessary interior preparation to receive the eternal gift of the priesthood. I know I will need the time and formation to let the Lord stretch out my heart to receive this eternal gift.”

Both men are eagerly anticipating their new diaconal faculties to assist at the Church’s liturgies and being able to share more actively the joy and freedom of the Gospel. While summer assignments have yet to be determined, they are looking forward to putting that into practice back at “home” in the parishes within our diocese.†



# CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

The following appointments, with the permission of Bishop David D. Kagan, are effective July 1, 2023 (unless otherwise noted).



**The Reverend Monsignor James B. Braaten**, Pastor of the Church of the Ascension, Bismarck, to retire with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop.



**The Reverend Gregory M. Hilzendeger** to be Pastor of the Churches of Holy Trinity, Hettinger, Sacred Heart, Reeder, and Sacred Heart, Scranton.



**The Reverend Benjamin J. Wanner** to be Parochial Vicar for the Churches of St. Joseph, Williston, St. John the Baptist, Trenton, and St. Boniface, Grenora.



**The Reverend Jacob M. Magnuson** to be Chaplain for St. Mary's Central High School, Bismarck, and Parochial Vicar for the Pro-Cathedral of St. Mary, Bismarck.



**The Reverend Paul C. Eberle** to be Pastor of the Churches of St. Joseph, Williston, St. John the Baptist, Trenton and St. Boniface, Grenora.



**The Reverend Jacob E. Degele** to be Chaplain for Bishop Ryan Catholic School, Minot, and Parochial Vicar for the Church of St. Leo the Great, Minot.



**The Reverend Nicholas J. Vetter** to be Pastor of the Churches of St. John the Baptist, Beach, St. Mary, Golva, and Chaplain for Home On The Range, Sentinel Butte.



**The Reverend Christy D. Pathiala** to be Parochial Administrator for the Churches of St. Nicholas, Garrison, Immaculate Conception, Max, and Sacred Heart, White Shield.



**The Reverend Gregory Crane** to be the Parochial Administrator for the Churches of St. Patrick, Crosby, St. Luke, Noonan, St. John the Baptist, Portal, and to complete a degree in Sacred Liturgy at the Liturgical Institute, Mundelein, effective July 24, 2023.



**The Reverend Wayne V. Sattler** to be Diocesan Spiritual Director.



**The Very Reverend Douglas S. Krebs, J.C.L.** to be the Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Bismarck.



**The Reverend Patrick Ojedeji** to be Parochial Vicar for the Churches of Spirit of Life, Mandan, St. Martin, Huff, and St. Anthony, St. Anthony.



**The Reverend Mr. Joshua Hill**, upon Ordination to the Priesthood, to be Parochial Vicar for the Church of Our Lady of Grace, Minot, and Religion Instructor at Bishop Ryan Catholic School.



**The Reverend Russell P. Kovash** to be Pastor of the Church of the Ascension, Bismarck.



**The Reverend Kregg W. Hochhalter** to be Pastor of the Church of Saint Anne, Bismarck.



**The Reverend Paul A. Gardner**, Chaplain for St. Mary's Academy, Bismarck, to be also Parochial Vicar for the Church of Saint Anne, Bismarck.



**The Reverend Mr. Dustin Johns**, upon Ordination to the Priesthood, to be Parochial Vicar for the Church of the Ascension, Bismarck, and to provide clergy assistance to St. Mary's Academy, Bismarck.



**The Reverend Raphael M. Obotama** to be Chaplain for the Benedictine Living Center, Bismarck.



**The Reverend Daniel J. Berg** to be Pastor of the Churches of St. Agnes, Kenmare, and St. Joseph, Bowbells.



**The Reverend Basil J. Atwell, OSB**, with the consent of his Religious Superior, to return to Assumption Abbey, Richardton.



**The Reverend Mr. Steven Vetter**, upon Ordination to the Priesthood, to be Parochial Vicar for the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, and Religion Instructor at St. Mary's Central High School, Bismarck.



# CHRISM MASS 2023

Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky



Diocesan Seminarian Deacon Dustin Johns incensed the altar with Bishop Kagan.



Bishop Kagan at the altar with the priests of the diocese.

The Church makes use of three sacred oils for sacraments: oil of the sick, oil of catechumens and chrism oil. The first two are blessed by the bishop and he consecrates the third during the annual Chrism Mass held during Holy Week, traditionally on the Monday of Holy Week in the Diocese of Bismarck. Each year, the bishop blesses new oils for the 93 parishes in the diocese during the Chrism Mass. After Mass, the oils are bottled into smaller vessels and distributed to parishes to be used in administering the sacraments that call for oil during that year. This Mass is also known for the renewal of priestly promises made on the day of ordination. †



The ritual for consecrating the sacred chrism is slightly different from the other oils. At the end of Mass, the bishop says a prayer to consecrate the sacred chrism oil during which he breathes on the oil at the opening of the urn signifying the presence of the Holy Spirit.



Diocesan Seminarian Deacon Steven Vetter placed the chrism oil before the consecration.



Deacon Kevin Leingang handed the oil of catechumens to Bishop Kagan.



***“...bless and sanctify this oil, so that all who are outwardly anointed with it may be inwardly transformed and come to share in eternal salvation.”***

# AG ATTITUDES



## God Is Our Companion Throughout Suffering

James Odermann

I really was out of my element as I sat in the clinic waiting room. The chairs were filled with my sisters and brothers of all ages, gender, race, ethnicity and shapes.

The setting was not ideal and happy faces did not prevail. In fact, there was a lot of trepidation from those waiting to be seen by a health care professional—and perhaps more anxiety exhibited among the loved ones accompanying those needing care.

After all, the people in the room had put a pause on their routines of life to find out what they could do to experience the goodness of a healthy mind and/or body. There is nothing like good health—and all were seeking answers to discover an antidote.

I contrasted the situation with my daily duties caring for livestock or getting equipment ready to grow and harvest a crop. Usually, I am, if you will, the caregiver, checking to make sure newborn stock has nursed, ambulatory and protected from the elements. My tasks also involve making sure fluid levels on equipment are up to snuff, as well as paying attention to torque bolts to specifications, seed calibration is accurate, etc.

As I reflected on those tasks—and translated that to the camaraderie present in the waiting room—I thought about the wonders of God, providing me the opportunity to share time and swap stories. As always, one of the biggest topics of discussion was the weather.

“When will it quit snowing?” was perhaps the biggest lament. “I wish it would warm up,” was another comment. Yet, the focus eventually shifted to, “Why are you here?”

The answers varied as multiple ailments were discussed and past experiences relative to “cures” were shared freely. One common denominator was the willingness of strangers to listen to stories about existing maladies and how the disorder could be overcome. There was an empathy present as each described the affliction and how lives were affected.

I reveled in the communication, reflecting on the compassion that emanated from the interactions. Simply, it was a beautiful

example of God’s love in action and on display, everywhere in the room.

Sometimes God’s love comes in the form of difficulty, God allows suffering. In fact, I thought how God sometimes challenges me with struggles. Is God perhaps checking in on my commitment?

Why would God, who created me and instilled His own spirit in me, want me to suffer? If I suffer, does God suffer also? I considered the fact further and, while it seemed odd that God allows suffering, I thought about His redeeming humanity through Jesus’s suffering and death on the cross.

I pondered further. God suffers right along with me, yet His suffering is at a whole different level. God suffers because I, with my humanity, make choices that offend my sisters and brothers—thusly causing God pain.

While everything in my being is created by God, my soul is a piece of God that He wants me to nourish, so I can flourish as a person of faith, hope and love. God wants me to respond ultimately in the way He cares for me, to strive to be God-like, to be patient like Him.

In my humanity, I fail many times—but I need to keep rising from failures, seeking forgiveness and moving forward. The Easter Triduum was a perfect reminder of God’s love: the Last Supper when the Eucharist was instituted, the suffering of Jesus for me on the cross, the power of God through the Resurrection.

God is my companion if I am open to that relationship. Pentecost, the celebration of the Holy Spirit inspiring the disciples, is another time for renewal of my commitment to the Holy Trinity.

Am I ready to pledge in my heart to be a disciple like God wants, to display empathy, like God shares with me, toward those in need? Will I accept suffering with the same devotion to God as Jesus did? I pray I can and will commit.

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).





## BALANCING CHURCH & STATE

### Set Back To Making North Dakota A Sanctuary For Life

#### Christopher Dodson

On March 16, 2023, the North Dakota Supreme Court issued an opinion on the state’s “trigger ban” that could greatly set back the work to make North Dakota a sanctuary for life.

Rather than recite the complicated legal and procedural issues in the case, I want to focus on the court’s main holding. The court unanimously held that the North Dakota Constitution includes “a fundamental right for a woman to obtain an abortion in instances where it is necessary to preserve her life or health.”

Where in the state constitution did the court find this new right? Article I, Section 1 of the state constitutions states, in part, that all “individuals . . . have certain inalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life . . . and obtaining safety . . .” The court wrote that the rights to defend life and pursue and obtain safety “implicitly include the right to obtain an abortion to preserve the woman’s life or health.”

That section of the state constitution was adopted in 1889. The court did not cite any historical documents or legal authority to support its conclusion that the section was meant to include a right to abortion to save the life of the woman or to preserve her health. Instead, it baldly stated that the right was “implicit.”

The court did cite abortion laws from before and after statehood that exempted from prosecution abortions when they were necessary to save the life of the woman. From those statutes, it concluded that the right to abortion in these circumstances is “deeply rooted in North Dakota’s history and culture.”

A few problems with this reasoning stand out. First, if the right to abortion to save the life of the mother was considered so fundamental by the framers of our state constitution, why was it not explicitly written into the constitution? Second, the mere fact that the legislature repeatedly chose not to criminalize abortions necessary to save the life of the mother does not mean that there is a “fundamental right” to them in the state constitution. The legislature passes thousands of laws intended to protect life and health. Does the court’s decision mean that all those laws are also fundamental constitutional rights? And if that is the case, why do we need a process for amending the state constitution at all?

The problems with the opinion, however, do not stop there. As mentioned, the court cited in support of its holding state statutes enacted before and after statehood that included an exception for when the abortion was necessary to save the life of the woman. None of the statutes cited, however, included a health exception. Where, then, did the court get the right to abortion to preserve health?

The court apparently found the “health” right in the “obtaining safety” provision of the state constitution. Only once does the court try to explain its reasoning for the health finding. It stated: “Medical journals published shortly after statehood indicate it was common knowledge that an abortion could be performed to preserve the life or health of the woman.” The fact that abortions “could” be performed to preserve the health of the woman, however, is a far cry from saying that they were considered a constitutional right. Abortions “could” have been performed a hundred years ago for a myriad of reasons. That does not mean that the framers meant to include all of them as rights in the state constitution.

By the way, the medical journals cited by the court were two British medical journals published in 1914–25 years after the adoption of the state constitution.

The court leaves us guessing about what it means by “health.” Does it mean, what the U.S. Supreme Court said in *Roe*’s companion case, *Doe v. Bolton*? That case, now overruled, said that “health” included “all the factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial and the woman’s age—relevant to the well-being of the patient.” If so, the court essentially ruled that there is a right to abortion on demand in North Dakota.

Or did it mean that there is a right to abortion only when it is medically necessary to prevent a serious health risk? In other words, is the right limited to those circumstances when the abortion is necessary and when the abortion itself directly treats a serious health risk? There are hints in the opinion that this is what the court meant, but only future decisions tell us for sure.

By the time this column is published the “trigger ban” will likely be repealed. In some form, however, the litigation will continue. Let us pray that our state Supreme Court does not destroy all that we have done for life in North Dakota and all that we can do in the future. †

*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

### Q: Can A Catholic Believe In Reincarnation?

#### Fr. Gary Benz

As a Catholic pastor, I would prefer not to expend time and energy arguing over the notion of reincarnation (from the Latin, re: again; incarnare: to take on flesh), the idea that upon death, one’s human soul can become embodied once again, taking on a new existence in another material life form.

Why? Because reincarnation makes no sense. If, as adherents of reincarnation postulate, there are a set number of souls (they are never created or destroyed) and each one merely takes on a new mode of existence, then how do you account for the historical increase in world population, but not a net increase in the number of souls to animate these bodies? More troubling are those adherents of reincarnation who believe that the soul upon death, due to bad karma, could become embodied in a lesser life form, such as vermin. The idea that a rational being could be reduced to an irrational being casts aside the order and dignity of creation as set forth by God, with man created in God’s image and likeness and God taking on human form in Jesus Christ. Yet, despite the inherent contradictions in reincarnation, I believe it must be addressed because those Catholics who posit belief in it may be in danger of losing their salvation.

The most troubling element of reincarnation is the notion that essentially there is no need for a Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who redeems us and saves us by the grace of His cross and Resurrection. With reincarnation, we become our own “redeemers” of sorts, because each person purifies themselves with their series of embodiments in various life forms until they reach the desired state of perfection. Even this last state of “perfection” is contrary to the Christian faith, because rather than entering into the presence of God in heaven, those who adhere to reincarnation believe that they become God; they are consumed into an energy which they loosely call “The Divine.” The original sin of Adam and Eve, once again, enters into play: the creature wants to become God. Any Catholic who entertains the concept of reincarnation has essentially rejected the Christian faith, because as St. Paul reminds us, “We have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men” (1 Timothy 4:10).

Reincarnation could also lead people away from salvation by justifying sinful behaviors which can be accommodated to reincarnation but not to the Christian faith. For one, reincarnation might justify the taking of one’s life, with the belief that if you are not happy in this life, then just try to seek that elusive happiness in your next embodiment. It may also lead to a hedonistic way of living, seeking all the pleasures in this world for one’s selfish interests. If you cheated from others and trampled upon their needs in this life, so be it; you can always atone for it in the next reincarnation.

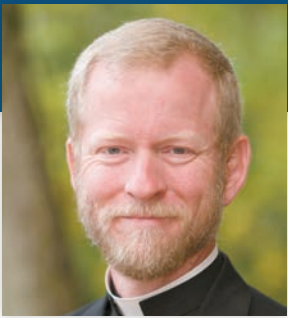
A callousness towards the plight of others might also result from belief in reincarnation because those suffering in this life are “paying their debts” for bad karma. Why should I worry about a destiny they created for themselves; it’s their own fault. But this contradicts the Christian duty to love one’s neighbor and do good to them. If you read carefully the Judgment of the Nations account of St. Matthew’s Gospel, you will note that those judged worthy of heaven or hell were judged not by faith alone, but by a charity which animated their faith: “What you did for one of the least of my brothers, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). To deny our neighbor help in their needs may lead to the soul being denied the glory of God’s Kingdom.

Thus, for all the reasons above, reincarnation is a great danger to the Christian soul, because it offers an open door to the lies and works of the Evil One, who uses this false teaching to lead souls away from the portals of heaven.

At its core, reincarnation is diametrically opposed to the Christian faith, especially regarding one’s salvation. Revelation is clear: life on earth is linear, leading to our final judgement and life, with or without God, for all eternity. In the Letter to the Hebrews, we read, “And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgement” (9:27). Give your life completely to Jesus Christ in this life because there is no second chance. Indeed, we are all granted one life on this earth, so live it well. †

*Fr. Benz is pastor at Sacred Heart, Glen Ullin, St. Ann, Hebron, and St. Joseph, Grant County. 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 “Question Afraid to Ask” in the subject line.*





# MAKING SENSE OUT OF BIOETHICS

## Holding The Line On Brain Death

Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

How do we determine that someone has died? The Uniform Determination of Death Act (UDDA), which has been an important part of the medical and legal landscape in the U.S. for more than 40 years, states:

“An individual who has sustained either irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions or irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brainstem, is dead. A determination of death must be made in accordance with accepted medical standards.”

The UDDA, originally drafted in 1981 by a special Presidential Commission, was designed to serve as a legal standard and a uniform framework for determining that someone has died, as well as to provide a clear legal foundation for declaring someone dead by means of “neurological criteria,” also known as “brain death.”

Since that time, the UDDA has served as an important benchmark for the medical profession, and a point of reference for legislative standards adopted throughout the United States, with all 50 states relying on language borrowed from the UDDA in their legal definitions of death.

Clearly defining and ascertaining when someone has died is important for a number of reasons: grieving can begin; burial arrangements can be made; and organ procurement can take place if the person had indicated a desire to become a donor. Most importantly, establishing that someone has not yet passed on helps us provide appropriate care and medical treatments until the time of death.

Recently, a group of physicians, ethicists, and lawyers recommended revising the wording of the UDDA. Their proposal adjusts the definition of brain death from whole-brain death to less-than-whole-brain death. Whenever brain death assessments are done today, physicians carry out a series of bedside clinical tests. They check whether the patient can gasp or initiate a breath when taken off the ventilator (known as an “apnea test”).

Any attempt at taking a breath would indicate that the person’s brainstem is still functioning, and that he or she is still alive. Physicians also check for other reflexes and responses mediated by the brain: Do pupils of the eye respond to light? Is there any reaction to, or withdrawal from painful stimuli? Is there any gag reflex when an object is placed in the back of the throat? If such reflexes are present, the individual is still alive.

For somebody to be deceased, then, there needs to be evidence of a catastrophic neurological event that has caused their brain to become irreversibly non-functional. One type of brain function that is not routinely assessed by doctors when carrying out brain death testing involves the hypothalamus. This important region of the brain coordinates with the pituitary gland to enable the secretion of hormones and small molecules that regulate the function of the kidneys and other organs, and helps control salt and water balance in the body. Sometimes a person can pass all the tests for being brain dead, but still have hypothalamic function.

If a patient has continuing hypothalamic function in this way, it seems clear that he or she does not manifest “irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain” as delineated in the UDDA. Regrettably, some are now proposing that a person in this situation should still be considered brain dead, and they are seeking to revise the wording of the UDDA to reflect this, substantially lowering the standard for a declaration of brain death. They declare, without compelling support, that the persistence of neurosecretory function by the hypothalamus is consistent with brain death.

In cases of genuine brain death, when all functions of the entire brain have ceased, the bodies of these individuals can typically continue to function on a ventilator only for a matter of hours or perhaps a few days before their various subsystems, like blood pressure, electrolytes, and fluid balance become erratic and dysregulated, leading to cardiac arrest.

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)

Meanwhile, some brain-injured individuals who have retained hypothalamic functioning have survived for months or years on a ventilator after losing both their brain-mediated reflexes and their ability to breathe. Even though these patients suffer an extremely severe central nervous system injury, they are clearly still alive.

Even to be “slightly alive” is still to be alive. If the language of the UDDA ends up being changed to allow for a declaration of brain death even with continued hypothalamic functioning, individuals who are not-quite-dead will be treated as if they were already dead.

Rather than revising the language of the UDDA and seeking to lower the standards for declaring brain death, the battery of routine reflex and apnea tests used for ascertaining brain death needs be expanded to include tests that can verify the loss of hypothalamic function.

Such improvements in testing will help ensure that people are not declared deceased prematurely. It will also help strengthen public confidence in the life-saving work of organ transplantation.†



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With ecclesiastical approval of Bishop David D. Kagan  
Diocese of Bismarck, North Dakota

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



*An invitation from the Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club*

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May 2	Fr. Anthony Baker, OSB	May 17	Seminarian Dominic Schaeffbauer
May 3	Deacon Dan Brooke	May 18	Sr. Gerard Wald, OSB
May 4	All Music Ministers	May 19	Sr. Marie Hunkler, OSB
May 5	Br. Symeon Rubbelke, OSB	May 20	Fr. Dan Berg
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May 7	Sr. Lucille Heidt, OSB	May 22	Deacon David Crane
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May 10	Br. John Seiler, OSB	May 25	Fr. Dominic Bouck
May 11	Sr. Hildegard Urlacher, OSB	May 26	Sr. Gladys Reisenauer, SSND
May 12	Seminarians & Religious in Formation	May 27	Deacon Robert Dangel
		May 28	Msgr. Jim Braaten
May 13	Fr. Gary Benz	May 29	Bishop David Kagan
May 14	Deacon Lynn Clancy	May 30	Deacon Dennis Dean
May 15	Lay Ministers	May 31	Fr. Philip Brown





# Dakota Catholic Action

Diocese of Bismarck  
PO Box 1575  
Bismarck, ND 58502-1575

PERIODICAL

## 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 [www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com).

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