



Dakota **Catholic Action**

Vol. 84 No. 10 **NOVEMBER 2025**



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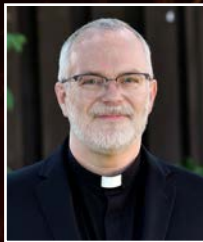
40 HOURS Devotion

A TIME OF SOLEMN PRAYER & ADORATION OF JESUS
IN THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

NOVEMBER
14-15-16

Begins with an Opening Mass on
Friday, November 14 at 6:00 PM
and continues until 7:00 PM
on Sunday, November 16.

40 HOURS PREACHER



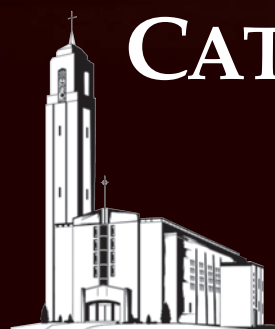
Father
Wayne Sattler

Father Wayne Sattler has been a priest of the Diocese of Bismarck since 1997. He served as an instructor in two diocesan high schools for three years, a pastor for sixteen years, and lived a life of prayerful solitude as a diocesan hermit for six years. During his time as a diocesan hermit, Father Sattler gave retreats to priests and religious, particularly the Missionaries of Charity. In 2023 he began a new role as Diocesan Spiritual Director. In this role, along with providing spiritual direction, he has given numerous retreats, talks, and parish missions. He is the author of two books: *And You Will Find Rest; What God Does in Prayer and Remain in Me and I in You: Relating to God as a Person, Not an Idea*, available from Sophia Institute Press and also found on Amazon.

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Bringing Jesus to the World Through the Family



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ON THE COVER: Bishop Kagan spoke to those in attendance for the Rally for Life on Oct. 10. See more photos on pages 10-11.



PAGE 6: American Heritage Girls is the nation's premier Christ-centered scout-type organization for girls ages five to 18.



Dakota Catholic Action



Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941

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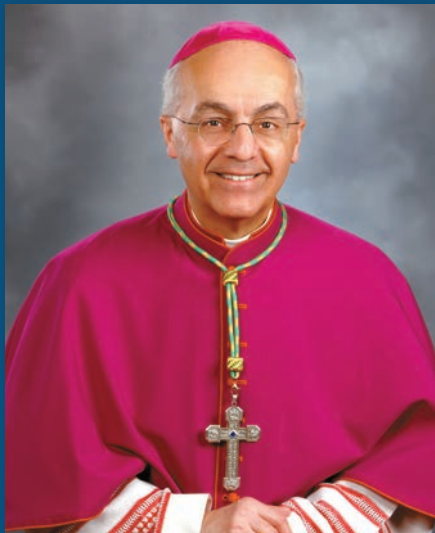
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FROM THE BISHOP

We are destined for heaven as
all of the saints before us

Bishop David D. Kagan

With the month of November our Holy Mother Church reminds us to pray for all of the faithful departed of our families, our parishes, our diocese, as well as friends and neighbors whom Almighty God has called from this life. While November highlights this necessary spiritual work of mercy, it is something we should be doing every day.

This year All Saints Day falls on Saturday, Nov. 1 and All Souls Day falls on Sunday, Nov. 2. Since it is still Ordinary Time in our liturgical year, the Mass of All Souls will be celebrated on Sunday.

In fact, whenever we celebrate the feast of one or another saint or a group of saints, we are doing what the Church urges us to do in November. In the end, the month of November reminds us that what we profess as an article of our Catholic faith, our faith in the communion of saints, we profess with our lips and confess with our actions faith in the goodness, mercy and intent of Almighty God for each of us. God created us to live and die in His life and grace in order to live with Him for all eternity in heaven.

This is what each of us should desire for ourselves and others for whom we pray. This is what All

Saints Day reminds us of, that we are destined for heaven as all of the saints before us and that they are praying and interceding for us before the Lord. This is what All Souls Day reminds us of, that those who have gone before us in faith and are in need of purification and must depend on our prayers, good works and sacrifices to assist them since they can no longer help themselves by these means as they did in their earthly lives.

These two wonderful feasts are as much for us who live our faith in the world as they are for the saints already in heaven and the holy souls in purgatory who await heaven with the same hope that sustained and motivated them in their earthly lives to be faithful to God and His Church. All Saints Day followed immediately by All Souls Day remind us that we are loved and have been created by God Who desires only that we return the gift of our lives to Him at that moment of death so that He can admit us to the eternal glory of heaven.

This is why November and, in fact, every day should be important to us. Our eternity is presented to us by Almighty God. †

BISHOP IN ACTION



Photo by Lyle Ripplinger, Photo Phun By Rip: Bishop Kagan processed into Mass for the March for Life Rally at the Bismarck Event Center on Oct. 10.



Holy Father’s Prayer
Intentions for November
FOR THE PREVENTION OF
SUICIDE

Let us pray that those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts might find the support, care, and love they need in their community, and be open to the beauty of life.

BISHOP’S SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER 2025

Nov. 2	Confirmation at the Church of St. Edwin, Washburn, 2 p.m.
Nov. 3	Mass for Deceased Clergy, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 11 a.m.
Nov. 3	Women’s Care Center Meeting, Chancery, Bismarck, 3 p.m.
Nov. 4	Real Presence Radio Fundraising Banquet, Bismarck Event Center, 5:30 p.m.
Nov. 5	Gold Mass, University of Mary, Bismarck, 10 a.m.
Nov. 6	Priest Benefit Association Board Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 11 a.m.
Nov. 9-14	USCCB Meetings, Baltimore
Nov. 18	Catholic Charities North Dakota Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 12 p.m.
Nov. 20	Parish Expansion Board Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 10:30 a.m.
Nov. 21	Mass of Profession of Simple Vows for Sr. Lucia of the Servants of the Children of Light, Church of St. Joseph, Mandan, 4 p.m.
Nov. 23	Confirmation at the Church of St. Joseph, Killdeer, 8:30 a.m. MT
Nov. 27	Thanksgiving Mass, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 8 a.m.
Nov. 30	Confirmation at the Church of St. Anthony, Linton, 10:30 a.m.

American Heritage Girls helps girls grow in their faith and cultivate a heart for service

Amanda Evinger
DCA Writer

From working with fashion design to exploring the wonders of astronomy, to performing heartfelt acts of service, the American Heritage Girls (AHG) embrace what it means to be truly Catholic – inside and out.

“One of my all-time favorite activities we did was a cookout,” Director of Catechesis and Youth for the Bismarck Diocese Diane Huck said, who serves as a troop leader for AHG Troop 0520 of the Bismarck area. “It was really fun. We had planned to do it in one of the earth lodges, but due to the fire ban, we couldn’t so we did it in the visitor’s lodge in their huge fire place. We made ‘stone soup’ and each girl brought a vegetable to add, focusing on friendship and sharing with others. We also made ‘campfire pies’ in pie irons, which many of the girls had not had before.”

American Heritage Girls was founded in 1995 by a group of parents who desired a faith-based, scout-type character development program for their daughters. The mission of the AHG Program is to nurture women of integrity through service to God, family, community and country. AHG members participate in badge-earning programs, service projects, leadership opportunities and outdoor adventures—all with an emphasis on nurturing Christian values and family values. Currently, there are AHG troops in every state as well as in 15 different countries. America is home to thousands of dedicated volunteer members who help girls grow



Submitted photos

closer to Christ, get to know their Catholic faith in a deeper way, cultivate a desire to serve Him and others, enjoy God’s creation and live life to the fullest.

The Bismarck AHG charter (Troop 0520) was approved in the spring of 2022, with the first official troop meeting held the following fall. “It was a long process, but three local moms (with



support from Father Josh Ehli, rector of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit) felt it was a worthwhile adventure to pursue as an alternative to Girls Scouts,” said Dionne Haynes, who currently co-leads Troop 0520 along with Diane, Holly Triska-Dally and Stephanie Kritzberger. “AHG provides a way for young girls to connect with each other and expand their skill sets while growing closer to God. Furthermore, AHG also leaves fundraising efforts up to each troop. This provides freedom to raise money in a way that fits our strengths and to use those funds according to our goals each year.”

The badges that AHG members earn emphasize the nurturing of Catholic virtues, such as modesty, charity, care of creation and generosity. Recently, the members earned badges by helping during the city-wide clean-up, sang Christmas carols at an assisted living center, put on a bake sale after Mass and made Valentine cards for others.

When asked why she enjoys helping with this ministry, Diane said, “This group gives a sense of belonging to something with a Catholic twist!



Having my daughter involved in activities that support our faith/beliefs and being surrounded by other families that do the same is very important to me.”

And when asked what she would tell a girl who is thinking of joining but isn’t sure, Diane said, “I would tell her to give it a try and join us! It is fun to meet new friends, try new activities and share in our love of Jesus!”

Looking towards the future, Diane said, “I would love to see our troop grow so big we have to have two or three groups!”

According to Stephanie Kritzberger, being a member of the AHG is a highlight of her life. Not only does it give her a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the upcoming generation of Christian women, but it also inspires her to live out her own call to sanctity.

“I love being involved in the AHG because it is an amazing organization,” she said. “It helps build



up women of integrity while keeping Christ at the center of all we do. We are able to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy together as a troop while also cultivating the individual gifts and talents of each member.”

Impressively, being part of the AHG can open new, unexpected doors in a girl’s life—especially doors of the heart. For example, in January of 2025, the troop was blessed to receive a visit from Mother Mary Joseph of the St. Mary Sisters of Bismarck.

“She spoke with the girls about modesty and their identities as daughters of God,” Stephanie said. “Every eye was fixed on her as she spoke and at the end the girls really opened up with their questions about prayer and their relationships with God. It was truly touching to see them comfortable enough to reveal a portion of their hearts they may not have otherwise.”

When asked what she would say to girls who are thinking about joining the AHG, Stephanie responded, “I would encourage other girls to join AHG because it offers a supportive community to grow in faith, friendship, develop valuable life skills



and grow in confidence of who God made them to be.”

Thanks to God’s grace, Stephanie envisions a bright future for the AHG.

“My hope for the future of AHG is that it would grow to eventually form multiple troops based on ages, because right now we only have one troop with girls ages 6-14,” she explained. “That way we could tailor our activities based on the ages of the girls. I would love to add in more outdoor activities or a camping trip. For example, last year, we were able to bring the girls to Fort Lincoln to earn an outdoor cooking badge. After discussing fire safety, we made stone soup there over an open fire. There’s also an AHG national convention every year which would be amazing to bring the older girls to eventually.”

For further information, email Stephanie Kritzberger at steph.kritzberger@gmail.com. AHG Troop 0520 meets on the second Thursday of the month from 6:15 to 7:30 p.m. in the Cathedral basement. All girls in kindergarten through high school are more than welcome to come.†

UNIVERSITY OF MARY PRAYER DAY

NOVEMBER 12, 2025



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: FLORIANI

Founded in 2021, Floriani is a men’s vocal ensemble dedicated to serving the Church, saving the culture, and drawing souls to Christ through the transcendent beauty of 2,000 years of sacred music. They tour nationally and internationally, offering concerts, liturgical music, workshops, and recordings.

Schedule of Events

- 9:00 AM** Mass Accompanied by Floriani
Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel
- 10:00 AM** Floriani Keynote and Concert
Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel
- 11:00 AM** Panel Discussion with Floriani
Butler Auditorium
- 11:30 AM** Lunch
The Crow’s Nest Campus Restaurant
(Meal tickets are available for pre-registered guests.)
- 4:30 PM** Sung Vespers
Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel
- 7:30 PM** Floriani Concert (with Concert Choir and Cappella)
Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel
(A free will offering will be accepted.)
- 9:00 PM** “Grog & Song” with Floriani
Chesterton’s Pub
(A free will offering will be accepted. Free beer and soft drinks; bring state-issued IDs for age verification.)



RALLY FOR LIFE

OCTOBER 10, 2025

Photos by Lyle Ripplinger, Photo Phun By Rip

#NDMarchforLife



UPCOMING EVENTS



Mass for Deceased Clergy Nov. 3
The public is invited to attend the annual Mass for Deceased Bishops, Priests and Deacons celebrated by Bishop Kagan on Monday, Nov. 3 at 11 a.m. at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck. This Mass honors members of the clergy who have passed away.



University of Mary Prayer Day Nov. 12
All are invited to the University of Mary Prayer Day on Wednesday, Nov. 12. Keynote feature is Floriani, a men's vocal ensemble dedicated to serving the Church through sacred music. The day begins with Mass at 9 a.m. followed by a concert and panel discussion. Lunch will be served (for pre-registered guests). Vespers will be sung at 4:30 p.m. followed by a concert at 7:30 p.m. The evening concludes with "Grog & Song" with Floriani in Chesterton's Pub beginning at 9 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. Register at umary.edu/PrayerDay.



Beginning Experience weekend Nov. 21-23
Beginning Experience, a non-denominational peer ministry, is offering "The Weekend," Nov. 21-23 in Richardton. This weekend is a comprehensive program for those struggling with the loss of a love relationship due to divorce, separation or death. Interested people are invited to contact Elaine at 701-400-1941. Registration is due before Nov. 7. For more information, go to www.beginningexperiencewesternnd.com.



Festival of Trees Nov. 21-22
All are invited to the Festival of Trees weekend fundraiser for the Dakota Hope Clinic in Minot on Nov. 21-22. Kick off the holiday season with festive fun for all ages at the North Dakota State Fairgrounds. Events include a dinner and live auction (ticketed), "Dashing Through the Snow" 5k and 1 mile family fun run (ticketed), "Fun Pianos!" dueling piano show, live nativity, silent auction, vendor show, live music, Santa photos, professional family photos, horse-drawn wagon rides, balloon animals, jumping castles, pony rides, petting zoo, bake sale, and more! General admission for each day is \$5 per adult. Admission for ages 18 and under is free. Tickets for the dinner and live auction and Dashing Through the Snow are required and can be purchased at festoftrees.com. Festival of Trees is a fundraiser for Dakota Hope Clinic, a nonprofit offering free, confidential services to pregnant women and families in north-central North Dakota. For more information, visit festoftrees.com or call 701-852-4675.



Upcoming Jubilee Masses at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit
During this Jubilee Year of Hope, several special Jubilee Masses have been celebrated at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. The next Jubilee Mass is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 16 at 5:30 p.m. A Mass in celebration of the closing of the Jubilee Year will take place on Sunday, Dec. 28 at 11:30 a.m. Consider making a pilgrimage and attending one or both special Masses. Groups wanting to make a pilgrimage should contact the Cathedral parish office 701-223-1033. For more information about the pilgrimage, go to cathedralparish.com/jubilee-2025.



March for Life Pilgrimage, Washington D.C.
Registration is now open for the diocesan pilgrimage to the 2026 national March for Life in Washington D.C. on Friday, Jan. 23. Join more than 150,000 other pro-life supporters as we stand tall for those who cannot speak for themselves—the unborn babies, their mothers and fathers. This year's pilgrimage will be from January 19-24, 2026, and includes transportation, lodging, some meals, sightseeing of the area along with the annual march. Cost is \$350 for high school youth and young adults and \$150 for chaperones (age 21+). For more information and to register, please visit bismarckdiocese.com/march or contact Diane Huck at 701-204-7206. Registration deadline is Saturday, Nov. 15.



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

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

The following appointments have been made with the permission of Bishop David D. Kagan.



The **Reverend Monsignor Thomas J. Richter**, Pastor of the Church of Queen of Peace, Dickinson, to be also a member of the diocesan finance council, and a member of the College of Consultors for the Bismarck Diocese, effective immediately.



The **Reverend Father Robert P. Shea**, Pastor of the Church of St. Wenceslaus, Dickinson, to be also the spiritual advisor for the Catholic Physicians Guild of the Bismarck Diocese, effective Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025.



Deacon Steve Quintus, assigned to the Church of Spirit of Life, Mandan, to be also the Chaplain for the Catholic Committee on Scouting for the Bismarck Diocese, effective Friday, Oct. 31, 2025.



Deacon Robert A. Nickola, to be assigned for diaconal ministry to the Churches of Queen of Peace, Dickinson, and Sts. Peter and Paul, New Hradec, effective Saturday, Oct. 25, 2025.



BULL SALE

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The brown scapular is an outward sign of our love for Mary

One of the most popular sacramentals in Catholic devotional life is the brown scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. For centuries the scapular has been a type of apron worn by monks and nuns while working at duties, and is still part of the Carmelite habit today.

The more familiar form used by most Catholic laymen consists of two small panels of cloth joined by string and worn over the shoulders. Since the Church considers the brown scapular to be a miniature religious habit, it is a highly indulgenced sacramental, which is a conduit of God’s grace for those properly disposed.

Although the Carmelites have always been devoted servants of the Virgin Mary, she did not give the brown scapular just to the Carmelites. She gave it to the whole world so that all her sons and daughters could wear an outward sign of her love for them. As a “cloak” of grace and love, the scapular represents the protection and security we find in our heavenly mother’s love. Our Lady has given us her scapular to wear, a garment of special concern, a sign of belonging and a mantle of grace and love.

Pope Saint John Paul II was very devoted to Our Lady and had a special place in his heart for the brown scapular. In a message to the Carmelites, he wrote, “The sign of the Scapular points to an effective synthesis of Marian spirituality, which nourishes the devotion of believers and makes them sensitive to the Virgin Mother’s loving presence in their lives.”

The message of the brown scapular is to always follow Christ in faith, hope and charity. This includes



Submitted photo: A popular sacramental in Catholic devotional life is the brown scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel like this one.

regular attendance at Mass and reception of the sacraments, frequent reflection on the Word of God, daily prayer and a determined effort to eliminate faults while growing in virtue. Learning more about Carmelite saints and their teachings can deepen our understanding of the mystery of Christ as the source of all truth and holiness, and about the graces we receive through Mary’s intercession which come from Jesus, in order to lead us back to Him.

What types of people can enroll in the brown scapular? As a result of centuries of evolution of devotion to Mary through the scapular, there are today several categories of devotees, according to the degree of identification, with an affiliation to the family of Carmel. These may be listed as follows: Carmelite priests, monks and nuns; laymen enrolled in the Secular Order (also called The Third Order); those who belong to public associations such as the Confraternity of the Scapular; all those who have been invested in the scapular, practice the Carmelite Order’s spirituality, and have been granted some degree of association with the Order; those who wear the scapular out of devotion, practice the Carmelite Order’s spirituality, but have no formal association with the order; those who are committed to practice the Marian characteristics of Carmelite spirituality but use outward forms other than the brown scapular to express this devotion.

All of the above are committed to put into practice the Marian characteristic of Carmelite spirituality

wholly and fervently, but in forms which correspond to the nature of the bond that ties them to the family of Mary. Catholics wear Our Lady’s scapular as a loving response, a fervent “YES”! to her desire that we keep Jesus as the center of our lives and bring Him to others.

The Catholic Church has a beautiful custom of enrolling children in the brown scapular at the time of their First Communion, which places them under the tender care of their heavenly mother. The blessing of the brown scapular and enrollment of children and adults can be done by a priest or deacon in a simple ceremony described in “The Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel: Catechesis and Ritual” dated Oct. 30, 2000.†

Information provided by the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order in our diocese. Those interested in more information about Discalced Carmelite Seculars can contact Bryon Herbel at bryon.herbel@icloud.com or Cheryl Hansen at cheryl@midconetwork.com or 701-527-4022.

Are you looking for an opportunity to serve couples of the Bismarck Diocese?

Are you passionate about how Natural Family Planning (NFP) strengthened **your** marriage?

Become an NFP instructor to share this great gift.



Bismarck Diocese

Contact Katie in the Office of Family Ministry and Respect Life at kkostelecky@bismarckdiocese.com or 701-712-0418.



Bismarck couples grow in love and faith through Teams of Our Lady

Peggy Polries Anderson
Special Contributor to the DCA

In a fast-paced and often chaotic world, the sacred bond of marriage can be tested in many ways. But for couples seeking to deepen their connection with each other and with Christ, *Teams of Our Lady* offers a pathway to peace, purpose and spiritual renewal. This international lay movement brings together small communities of married couples to share life, grow in faith and live out their vocation with joy.



Local mission rooted in love

The movement came to western North Dakota through the vision and faith of Dennis and Charlene Prindiville of Bismarck who first encountered this lay ministry while living in Colorado.

“We discovered teams through our church. It was the perfect ministry we were looking for us to grow together spiritually and to meet other faith-filled couples,” said Charlene.

When they returned to North Dakota, they saw a need and responded with conviction.

“We wanted to bring teams to western North Dakota because it didn’t exist in the Bismarck Diocese,” stated Dennis. “The Fargo Diocese had 12 teams already, and we felt called to spread the news and grow the ministry here.”

The Prindivilles started their Teams of Our Lady mission here in 2023 and now have two teams of Bismarck couples meeting regularly. Each team consists of five to seven married couples that meet

monthly September through June. Each month, team members take turns meeting in each other’s homes for a shared simple meal, prayer, spiritual reflection and meaningful discussion.

Pat and Sue Forster are members of the first Bismarck team.

Pat reported, “Our team has surrounded us with a group of couples who share the same faith and values that we have.”

Sue agreed, “Even though we did not know most of the couples well before joining the team, we have become very close and feel more like a family than just a group of friends that meets once a month.”

What is Teams of Our Lady?

Founded in France in 1938 by Father Henri Caffarel, Teams of Our Lady emerged from a desire to support couples in living out their Catholic marriage with greater intentionality. Since then, it has spread to over 90 countries, enriching the lives of thousands of couples.



Submitted photo: Teams of Our Lady photo: Bismarck Teams of Our Lady Members met with the Bishop Kagan after Mass: (front row, l-r) Scott Wild, Bill Marion, Becky Marion, Bishop Kagan, Joyce Gruby, Peggy Anderson, Mark Anderson, Meikel Engelhardt, Tom Engelhardt, Father Josh Ehli; (middle) Shonda Wild, Mary Porter, Bryon Herbel, Shirley Weightman, Bruce Weightman, Ray Gruby, Les Noehre; (back) Tim Porter, Nellie Herbel, Dennis Prindiville, Charlene Prindiville and Daniel Traynor.

At its heart, the movement centers on small groups of married couples.

“It is inspiring to see how Teams of Our Lady encourages couples whether they are married two years or 42 years to look deeper into their faith and grow in holiness together,” said Father Ehli, rector of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck.

Community that builds over time

What sets Teams of Our Lady apart from many marriage enrichment programs is that it isn’t a one-time retreat or workshop. It is a sustained journey.

Charlene explained, “It’s not a one-time event like a weekend retreat. Teams builds with time and keeps your marriage fresh. We walk away from each meeting with a renewed love for each other.”

Through the monthly gatherings and the shared spiritual practices, teams grow into a trusted and

close-knit community, “Teams become a tight-knit group with strong emotional, confidential and unconditional support. As time evolves and we continue to meet and share our lives and faith, the bond deepens,” said Dennis.

Spiritual growth as a couple

Bill and Becky Marion of Bismarck have enjoyed their teams experience.

“Being part of this movement has been a blessing in our marriage,” stated Bill. “Through teams, we’ve learned to pray more intentionally and listen more patiently. It has helped us center our relationship on Christ and grow in unity, not just as husband and wife, but as spiritual companions walking together in faith.”

Joyce and Ray Gruby of Bismarck agreed, “Our marriage has certainly been strengthened by the friendships within our team. Sharing our ups and

“It’s not a one-time event like a weekend retreat. Teams builds with time and keeps your marriage fresh. We walk away from each meeting with a renewed love for each other.”

— Charlene Prindiville

downs and spiritual endeavors has led to a new appreciation of the rhythm in our marriage.”

Ray stated, “We wholeheartedly encourage couples to join. Teams offers a welcome respite from the busyness of the world.”

More about teams

If you’re a married couple looking to deepen your spiritual life, strengthen your relationship and find meaningful Christian fellowship, Teams of Our Lady may be the answer.

As Dennis and Charlene put it, “It’s good to be part of a group of like-minded Catholics with strong beliefs. The friendships that develop are strong and forever.”

If you are interested in being on a team or just want to know more about the movement, email bismarckndsector@gmail.com. There’s a place at the table for you. †

Catholic Charities North Dakota

give hope.

December 2, 2025

GIVING TUESDAY

donate now

Giving Tuesday is a global generosity movement that encourages people to give back and make a difference in their communities. This special day kicks off the holiday season with a focus on kindness and philanthropy.

Catholic Charities North Dakota is proud to be part of this movement. Every contribution has a significant impact, enabling us to continue our mission of offering compassionate care and guidance through adoption, pregnancy, guardianship, and counseling.

We appreciate your support and are grateful for your commitment to making a difference with Catholic Charities North Dakota this Giving Tuesday.

PILGRIMAGE OF HOPE

Annual gathering of Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

Tim Montgomery
The Catholic Spirit

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (EOHSJ) harkens back nearly a thousand years to a time when knights in armor mounted horses to escort Christian pilgrims to sites in the Holy Land.

Today, their chivalry takes a different form. Amid political strife in the Middle East, with waning faith and loss of hope, the order supports communities in a land that is the cradle of Christianity. The order’s support of education, medical care and the maintenance of holy places in the Holy Land creates a stabilizing influence on life in the region. The 2025 Annual Meeting of the EOHSJ Northern Lieutenancy held in the Twin Cities Sept. 19-21 reviewed activities of the past year and celebrated and encouraged members and supporters of the order.

“The mission of the order is to make sure that Christian communities in the Holy Land stay viable,” explained Tim Milner, a member from Mendota Heights who helped organize the 2025 Twin Cities gathering as co-chair of the event. Moreover, the order propagates the faith by defending the weak and working with charity toward all. Milner said that over the past year, membership supported schools in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the only remaining Christian parish and hospital in Gaza. The order’s Legacy Society endowment fund made distributions to establish youth programs in Haifa and Ramallah. Milner said the roughly 30,000 members of the order worldwide donate \$15 million to \$16 million annually to financially support Christian parishes and schools in the Holy Land.



Photo credits: John Crudo, EOHSJ: Bishop Robert Barron of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester speaks Sept. 20 to members of the EOHSJ Northern Lieutenancy gathered at the Minneapolis Hyatt in Minneapolis.

Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis Sept. 20 celebrated promotees in the ranks of the Northern Lieutenancy of the Order—a total of 108 knights and dames. Mass at the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul Sept. 21 celebrated new investees—86 laity, seven priests, one abbot and one bishop. The theme selected this year was Pilgrims of Hope.



Knights bear the principal symbol of the Equestrian Order, the Jerusalem Cross, at the Basilica.

“It’s an opportunity to deepen our spirituality and increase it in new ways,” said investee Dwight Rabuse of St. Peter in Mendota, Minn., who was attending with his wife, Sandra. “And the emphasis on nurturing Christianity in the Holy Land appeals to us.”

“In a world often marked by division, anxiety and uncertainty, your generosity is a beacon of hope,” said Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, in a letter to the membership that was read at the general session on Sept. 20. “It reminds us that the Gospel is alive and that faith continues to call hearts to action. As pilgrims of hope, you are called not only to look forward, but to walk forward with courage trusting in God’s providence and participating in his ongoing work.”

In his Sept. 20 homily, Archbishop Bernard Hebda tied calls for prayer and action after the recent shooting at Annunciation in Minneapolis to the

prayer and action characteristic of Mary, patron saint of the order and of the Basilica, where promotions in the order were being celebrated.

Mary, the archbishop said, teaches us that both prayer and action are important aspects of our faith. The Gospel of Luke, he pointed out, expresses that in the aftermath of the Annunciation—when Mary was told by an angel that she would conceive and give birth to Jesus—Mary was compelled to service. Rather than focusing on her own condition, Mary traveled to the hill country to be of service to her elderly kinswoman, Elizabeth, who had conceived and was with child. The lesson, he said, is that people will recognize Jesus when we come into service bearing him in humility and prayer.

The world is at a critical moment in history, said the archbishop, and members of the Equestrian Order have to be ready to act in this moment with the “loving boldness” that characterizes Catholics and Christians.

In a dynamic afternoon address to a general session of the order at the Minneapolis Hyatt, Bishop Robert Barron, of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, followed the “trajectory of the temple” — from the building of old where animal sacrifice was offered up for sins to Jesus’ ultimate act of sacrificial love on the cross that cut through all the dysfunction of sin to sanctify humanity.

“Your job as laypeople is not to become clerical priests” concluded Bishop Barron. “Your job is to sanctify the world by turning your section of it to the right praise of God. And in that, we fulfill our vocation and become the living temple.”

Sal Di Leo next shared the story of his journey. When his father abandoned the family, young Di Leo and his 11 siblings were taken in at a Catholic orphanage outside Chicago by a nun of the Franciscan Sisters. Sister Paul was an important influence in his life, and he was later inspired to call her when contemplating



Submitted photo: Some of Bismarck Diocese members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem during the annual meeting in Minneapolis last month.

suicide after a series of bad decisions. She told him he had the power to do something better with what he had and helped him change his life. His self-published memoir “Did I Ever Thank You, Sister?” is the inspiration for a film project to promote religious vocations for women.

“I was mentored by Catholic women who did everything God asked them to do and didn’t ask for anything in return,” Di Leo said.

Bishop Andrew Cozzens, of the Diocese of Crookston, spoke to the interior transformation of hope, which, he said, is not merely optimism but requires faith. He talked about what hope is and why it’s needed—and why it’s important to be pilgrims of hope.

“It’s pretty easy to see that we live in a world that’s in a crisis with regard to hope,” Bishop Cozzens said. He pointed to an increase of 37% in suicide

rates and that some studies show 20% of teens have considered suicide. “Many people struggle to find purpose and meaning in our world today—signs of a lack of hope.”

Bishop Cozzens called for a revival in the sacrament of confession. The humility to acknowledge sin and receive forgiveness, he said, opens the door to love. Discovering you can still be loved despite your weakness is a moment when hope can be born. Confession, said Bishop Cozzens, facilitates this encounter, and going to confession is an act of hope. Divine mercy is the source of hope, concluded Bishop Cozzens. “This is what the risen Lord offers us, his mercy—because he wants to make us new so that we can become a source of hope for the world.”†

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Diocesan attorney given papal award for distinguished service to the Church

Bishop Kagan has announced diocesan attorney, Tom Bair, as the recipient of the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice—among the highest honors the Holy Father can confer on laypeople, deacons and religious. The award, from the Holy See, translates to “for Church and Pope.”

Bair, a Mandan resident, recently retired as the diocesan attorney after 34 years of faithful and competent service to this local Church. Tom attended the University of North Dakota Law School in Grand Forks and had been practicing law for 40 years before retiring. He and his wife, Jackie, and family are faithful, devout Catholics and are members of St. Joseph’s in Mandan.

Speaking of Tom’s service to the diocese, Bishop Kagan stated, “In his capacity as the diocesan attorney, he assisted on numerous boards and led several projects which have helped improve the structures of the diocese and have enabled the local Church to respond adequately to legal inquiries.”

Bair served under three bishops of the Bismarck Diocese. “His advice and counsel have been invaluable to me and the diocese as a whole,” expressed Bishop Kagan in the nomination letter to the Apostolic nunciature in Washington, D.C.

The Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice is given for distinguished service to the Church by lay people and clergy. It is the highest honor that can be awarded to laity by the pope. The award, established



Submitted photos: The certificate and medal are awarded for distinguished service to the Church.

by Pope Leo XIII in 1888, means “For Church and Pope” in Latin. The diocesan bishop petitions the Holy See with the name and biographical information of the person whom he wishes to receive the award.

Bishop Kagan presented Bair with the award at the diocesan finance council meeting on Sept. 25 at the Center for Pastoral Ministry. The certificate, inscribed in Latin, and translates to: “The Supreme Pontiff Leo XIV has deigned to decree and lavishly bestow upon the well-deserved Mr. Thomas Bruce Bair the golden Benemerenti medal which has been instituted for distinguished service to the Christian



Bishop Kagan presented Tom and his wife, Jackie, with the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice.

cause granting him the faculty of wearing this medal. The gold cross of the medal depicts the Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul with the inscription *Pro Ecclesia* (For Church) on the left and *Et Pontifice*

(And Pope) on the right. The medallion’s ribbon is yellow and white, the colors of the papacy.†

—Staff report

“Come and See”

the African Mission in action as a short-term missionary

The Bismarck Mission welcomes people who have a desire to “come and see” the mission and share in its life on a short-term basis (three weeks up to six months). It’s a rare opportunity to be the hands, feet and voice of Christ in Kenya by serving our brothers and sisters through the various programs administered by the mission. It is also an opportunity to allow oneself to be shaped and formed by people of deep faith who live in poverty. The heart of the mission is the education program that serves over 450 orphaned and vulnerable children.

If you are interested in learning more about the Bismarck Diocese African Mission, contact mission director Chuck Reichert, 701-220-0373 or go to bismarckdiocese.com/african-mission for more information.





RED MASS 2025

Staff Photos

Bishop Kagan celebrated the annual Red Mass on Oct. 20 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. This votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, known as the Red Mass, invokes the guidance and blessings of the Holy Spirit upon judges, government officials and all the members of the legal community of this great state in fulfilling their duties for the common good. The word “red” was originally used to describe the Mass in the early 1300s, because the justices of the English Supreme Court wore scarlet-colored robes. Over time, the Red Mass came to have a deeper theological meaning, with red symbolizing the “tongues of fire” that descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost bestowing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the United States, the first Red Mass was celebrated in New York City on Oct. 6, 1928, at Old St. Andrew’s Church with Cardinal Patrick Hayes. One of the better-known Red Masses is celebrated each fall at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington, D.C., before the Supreme Court begins its new term. This Mass is attended by the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, members of Congress, the president’s cabinet and other federal and local government officials. †



QUESTIONS I WAS AFRAID TO ASK

Q: I asked God for a miracle, and it didn't happen. Was God listening?

Fr. Gary Benz

As Catholic Christians, we have been formed in the spiritual life to believe in the necessity of prayer and the power of prayer. But we must admit that at times, we doubt the efficacy of prayer when our prayers are not heard. Someone we love was diagnosed with cancer and we prayed for a miracle for their healing, and months later, they died. Why was my prayer not answered? We may suffer from chronic pain, and we ask God for a miracle to relieve us from this heavy cross, but the pain continues. Why did my plea go unheard? When miracles are not granted, we may begin to doubt not only the power of prayer, but also God’s love and concern for us. To avoid this hapless state, we should consider the Catholic understanding of the purpose and nature of Christian prayer.

When we pray for a miracle, we pray that God’s will be done. From all eternity, God has a providential plan for all His creation, including for my life. In His wisdom, God has determined what is best for me, to guide me along the path to eternal life in heaven. Therefore, in His divine will, there are graces and blessings waiting to unfold in my life, even miracles. When I pray, I am not changing God’s holy will, but I am opening the door to the reception of these blessings which are the fruit of prayer. God has eternally desired to grant us certain blessings but respects our human will and our desire to ask for these blessings.

Some may object to this understanding of the purpose and benefits of prayer by pointing to Matthew 7: 7-8, which says, “Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and the door shall be open to you.” They did ask, seek and

knock at the door for a miracle, but their intention was ignored. Perhaps we should revisit this beautiful passage on prayer from Matthew’s Gospel and do so with an attitude of abandonment to God’s will. Yes, we should ask in prayer, convinced that we will receive what God believes is best for us. We should seek in prayer, knowing that we will obtain the grace God intends for us. We should knock at the door and be content with which door will be opened to us with the accompanying blessing. So, when we pray, it is not wrong to pray for miracles, but we should keep in mind the words of the *Our Father* that we pray time and time again, “Thy will be done.” The essence of prayer is not merely telling God our needs but reminding us of our need for Him and the unfolding of His divine will for my salvation.

On another level, we must address the hurt and pain that result when the prayer for a miracle seems to be denied by God. This is especially true when a miracle for the relief from suffering and the preservation of life is at hand. We seek answers to that perennial question, “Why would a loving God allow these tragedies to happen?” But with the gift of faith granted by God, we come to the belief that all things have meaning, even those sufferings we must endure. Assuredly in the life to come, we will understand completely why God’s will unfolded as it did in my life. But with God’s grace, we may begin to see already in this life why certain prayers, including prayers for miracles, were denied us, because God had greater blessings in mind.

Questions I Was Afraid to Ask continues on page 27

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 with “Question Afraid to Ask” in the subject line.



James Odermann

Saints are templates for love without keeping score

This is the time of the year when the canvas of nature changes daily. Plants are senescing and trees are losing their colorful arrangements of leaves thanks to cooling night time temperatures and wind.

It is fall and the gradual preparation for winter is underway. This is also a time of the year when I make plans to get away from the ranch doing a tour of communities in the Bismarck Diocese.

On my tour, I noticed terrifying jack-o'-lanterns, sinister music, spider webs, skeletons and monsters sprouting from the yards. Halloween was on the horizon and "scaring" is the trademark of the day.

I was flabbergasted by Halloween spending statistics. Americans spent over \$12 billion and \$11 billion in 2023 and 2024 respectively on Halloween according to Statista. In 2024 alone, nearly \$4 billion was spent on costumes and outfits and almost \$3.5 billion on candy. Wow, pleasure is expensive.

I thought about this data as I navigated my way through fall work (between weekend football games) and realized this is a real-life example of God's gift of free will. God does not say where, when, why and how the world spends the treasure with which it is blessed.

I pondered a striking contrast: Halloween precedes two important days in the Catholic liturgical calendar. All Saints Day, one of the Catholic holy days of obligation, is November 1. All Souls Day is November 2.

All Saints Day is a special day for Catholics because November 1 each year is the day to celebrate the model of love and sacrifice given to the world in the lives of saints. There are many recognized by the Church through the canonization process—and many more who lived pious lives whom God has welcomed into heaven.

All Souls Day is the day Catholics remember those who have transitioned from this life into the next. All Souls Day is a time of prayer and sacrifice for our sisters and brothers awaiting full sanctification.

God really does have things arranged to help me. He gives me a day to connect with the saints, the holiest of the holy. God then calls on me to connect with, remember and pray for family and friends—and those who have passed that I did not welcome in the spirit of Jesus' love. I am called to remember all who have crossed my path and interacted with me in some way, shape or form. God sets the table for me, loving me despite my deficiencies.

All Saints Day is one of my favorite celebrations. All Saints Day observes the virtues I need to possess. The list is a template for everyday living. So, how I could become more like the saints?

Jesus gave the greatest commandment: love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself. The world begins—and continues—with love. As per Jesus' words, I am compelled to love my neighbor as I love myself. I recalled the quote from St. Thérèse of Lisieux: "When one loves, one does not calculate."

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).

I immediately asked myself, "Am I keeping score in life, with my spouse, my children, my grandchildren, my friends, etc.?" This led to another, perhaps more important question, "What am I keeping score about?"

True love is unconditional and not judgmental. When I judge I short circuit the possibility to experience the goodness God has bestowed in my fellow sisters and brothers. Judging portrays a selfish, lazy desire to be caught up in my own greedy ego. Love means getting rid of my ego and, as Jesus and the saints showed me, put other's needs ahead of mine.

I asked, "What makes me so important?" I answered myself, "Nothing. I need to be a disciple of Christ, loving as the saints did." This is a reason for All Saints Day, to encourage me to learn about, to dive deeper into the lives of saints and to emulate them in my thoughts, words and actions.

QUESTIONS I WAS AFRAID TO ASK *(continued)*

For example, just after her retirement, my mother suffered a massive stroke that left her paralyzed on her left side for the rest of her life. The stroke lasted for a few seconds, but it did a lifetime of damage. She spent the last 12 years of her life in a nursing home, away from her husband and her home. She, along with her family, wondered why God did not grant her the gift of a miracle to heal her so that she could resume the life she once loved. But then prayer brought clarity, and she understood the reason why her request for a miracle was denied. Our diocesan vocations director at the time, Monsignor Thomas Richter, visited my mother, along with other residents of her nursing home, and asked that they offer their sufferings daily for the intention of vocations to the priesthood for the Bismarck Diocese. These suffering individuals were an important factor in the considerable number of vocations that our diocese has experienced.

Monsignor Richter's nephew, Father Steven Vetter, our current vocations director, has also encouraged

Today's secular world is so concerned about winning, about dominating that little is given to the appreciation of talents and gifts of my fellow sisters and brothers. So much time is spent on planning how to gain control. And, when the outcome is not total control, impatience overcomes character. The results can be a loss of common sense, a lack of personal responsibility, a sort of reckless, non-spiritual strategy for living.

I need to live life carefully, with gentleness and thoughtfulness, with commitment to the way of life the saints showed. I pray I will use God's ever-present grace to devote my life to make a better world.

Care to join me? †

suffering people to offer their sufferings for the same intention. A glance at how many seminarians are on our new vocations poster shows that these sufferings, offered to God, continue to bear fruit. So, when God denies us a miracle, He has an even greater blessing in mind, not only for us, but for other members of the Body of Christ. In faith, we will come to realize that when our prayer for a miracle was denied, our prayers *were* answered, but in a different and meaningful way.

As Christians, we are not afraid to bring all our intentions before God, including asking for miracles. God may have determined this blessing from all eternity and the miracle will be granted to us when we seek it in prayer. But we should always remember that God may have a different plan for us, because His wisdom far surpasses ours. When we prayerfully review our life, we humbly and joyfully admit that the life God has planned for me is far more beautiful than the life I had planned for myself. †



MAKING SENSE OUT OF BIOETHICS

Ethical issues involved with "pregnancy robots"

Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

Reports emerged in August that the world’s first “pregnancy robot” was under development in China.

The concept prototype involved a humanoid form, equipped with an artificial womb in its abdomen, prepared to carry a fetus for nine months and then give birth.

The device, as envisioned by Dr. Zhang Qifeng, founder of Kayiwa, a company based in China’s southern Guangdong province, was not simply an incubator but a human-mimicking robot that could replicate the entire process from conception to delivery, according to Asian media outlets.

Dr Zhang’s revelations were made during an interview shared on Duoyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, in which he noted, “Some people don’t want to get married but still want a ‘wife’; some don’t want to be pregnant but still want a child. So one function of our ‘robot wife’ is that it can carry a pregnancy.”

As the story spread on social media, the company sought to clarify that it was not actually developing a pregnancy robot and that its founder’s comments had been taken out of context. Zhang also backpedaled from his prior interview, noting the pregnancy robot was an overseas project, and that his company was only involved in manufacturing the humanoid part of the robot and not the artificial womb.

The story, nevertheless, resulted in an avalanche of comments on social media, ranging from criticisms like, “It is cruel for a fetus to be born without connection to a mother,” and, “It completely violates human ethics,” to praise like, “If the price is only half of my annual salary, I would buy it immediately,” “It’s good that women don’t have to suffer,” and, “Women have finally been liberated.”

Several significant ethical issues are, in fact, raised by the prospect of developing a “pregnancy robot.”

These devices tend to involve female humanoid forms, raising red flags and reminding us of the lamentable tendency to pursue “substitutes” for women in their unique nurturing dimensions. We seem to be growing accustomed to sidestepping what Pope John Paul II once referred to as the “feminine genius” with its essential maternal identity and its uniquely feminine procreative nature.

Even certain radical feminist activists, like Andrea Dworkin, have sensed the importance of opposing artificial wombs, noting how they could lead to the “end of women.” Dworkin once wrote: “The real question now is, will men, once the artificial womb is perfected, want to keep women around?”

Additional moral concerns arise if robot designers try to start a pregnancy through the manual mixing of sperm and egg as occurs in IVF, followed by embryo transfer into the artificial womb of the robot.

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 Senior Ethicist at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org and www.fathertad.com.

Children have the right to be brought into being exclusively within the loving marital embrace of their mother and father, and it remains profoundly unethical to generate new life in test tubes, pregnancy robots, or other devices. The body-to-body self-giving of spouses is the unique and privileged setting that safeguards the origins of the next generation and helps assure that their human dignity is respected. It also decreases the likelihood that children will be treated as objects for manipulation, or products to be marketed for the gratification of well-heeled customers. The best interests of children must always supersede the desires of adults.

Of additional concern is the fact that a pregnancy robot involves a form of surrogacy. Just as it is always unethical to pay women to become surrogates, so we should never incentivize companies to produce and sell devices to initiate and carry pregnancies as high-tech surrogates.

This should not be misconstrued as casting aspersions on every potential use of artificial wombs, if this technology were to come to maturity one day in the future. Currently we use incubators to support babies who are born prematurely. When an artificial womb or other mechanical device serves strictly as an advanced incubator and allows for the continued gestation of naturally-conceived, but prematurely-delivered babies, this will generally be ethically-acceptable. Such an approach constitutes a form of medical treatment and life-saving assistance for a child who, regrettably, ends up being born too early.

On the other hand, if we take matters into our own hands and become “life-makers,” manufacturing human beings in glassware and imposing a nine-month machine-based gestation upon them, we are clearly crossing a number of fundamental ethical lines, egregiously violating both the designs of our own sexuality, and the respect that is always due to human life in its origins. †

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



An invitation from the St. Serra Vocations Apostolate of Bismarck Mandan

Nov. 1	Deacon Ross Reiter	Nov. 16	Fr. Michael Taras Miles
Nov. 2	Fr. Jake Magnuson	Nov. 17	Deacon Gerald Rustand
Nov. 3	Lay Ministers	Nov. 18	Fr. David Morman
Nov. 4	FOCUS Missionaries	Nov. 19	Deacon Randy Schmidt
Nov. 5	Deacon Kris Ringwall	Nov. 20	Fr. Corey Nelson
Nov. 6	Fr. Ryan Martire	Nov. 21	Deacon Kenneth Schmit
Nov. 7	Sr. Rosemary DeGracia, OSB	Nov. 22	Fr. Jadyn Nelson
Nov. 8	Seminarians in Formation	Nov. 23	Sr. Nicole Kunze, OSB
Nov. 9	Fr. Adam Maus	Nov. 24	Fr. Raphael Obotama
Nov. 10	Deacon Dennis Rohr	Nov. 25	Deacon Ervin Schneider
Nov. 11	Religious in Formation	Nov. 26	Abbot Valerian Odermann, OSB
Nov. 12	Seminarian Griffin Schaeffer	Nov. 27	Pope Leo XIV
Nov. 13	Bishop David Kagan	Nov. 28	Deacon Doyle Schultz
Nov. 14	Seminarian Alex Wilson	Nov. 29	Seminarian Preston Barbie
Nov. 15	Liturgical Ministers	Nov. 30	Fr. Logan Obrigewitch



BALANCING CHURCH & STATE

Dilexi Te and the Church's preferential love for the poor

David Tamisiea

On Oct. 4, 2025, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo XIV issued his first major teaching document called *Dilexi te* (“I have loved you”) on love for the poor. The title is taken from the words of Jesus in heaven comforting a suffering Christian community on earth (Rev 3:9). Pope Leo intentionally connects this teaching to Pope Francis’s last encyclical, *Dilexit nos* (“He loved us”), where Francis reflects upon the human and divine love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and how our devotion to his Sacred Heart can renew in our own hearts a deeper love for God and for our neighbor.

Francis had already started *Dilexi te* before he died, and Leo completed it to stress his own commitment to the poor and marginalized in continuity with his predecessor: “I am happy to make this document my own—adding some reflections—and to issue it at the beginning of my own pontificate, since I share the desire of my beloved predecessor that all Christians come to appreciate the close connection between Christ’s love and his summons to care for the poor” (3). This kind of collaboration between two popes is not unprecedented. Francis’s first encyclical, *Lumen fidei* (“the light of faith”) was a completion of a work already begun by Benedict XVI before he retired from the papacy.

In *Dilexi te*, Leo offers pastoral guidance to the Christian faithful on the Church’s “preferential love for the poor.” According to this Catholic doctrine, Christians have a moral obligation to prioritize caring for the poor, marginalized and vulnerable in society, based upon the example of Christ and the entire Christian tradition. As Leo explains, this preference for the poor “never indicates exclusivity

or discrimination towards other groups” but rather “is meant to emphasize God’s actions, which are moved by compassion toward the poverty and weakness of all humanity. ... God has a special place in his heart for those who are discriminated against and oppressed, and he asks us, his Church, to make a decisive and radical choice in favor of the weakest” (16). Since they have so little, and their needs are greater, our loving service to the poor should be greater too.

Who are “the poor”? According to Leo, poverty takes many forms – the materially poor, the homeless and destitute, the lowly and powerless, those suffering from moral or spiritual poverty, the socially marginalized, the uneducated, the sick and dying, immigrants, those struggling with addiction, the imprisoned or enslaved, and so on (9, 12, 49, 59, 68, 73, 76). The common feature of “the poor” is that they are human persons who suffer a lack or deficiency of some kind that causes tremendous suffering.

Leo stresses that charitable works are not an obsession on the part of a few but rather “the burning heart of the Church’s mission” (15). Leo also emphasizes his conviction that “the preferential choice for the poor is a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society, if we can only set ourselves free of our self-centeredness and open our ears to their cry” (7). Leo teaches that “charity has the power to change reality; it is a genuine force for change in history” (91). Leo then recalls the 2,000-year history of the Church’s teaching and practice of caring for the poor to make clear that it has always been a central part of the

Church’s life and renewal. Leo draws upon teaching and examples from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, the Fathers of the Church, saints and religious orders and the social doctrine of the Church over the past 150 years, all to demonstrate the Catholic Church’s unwavering commitment to the poor and the power of Christian charity to change the world.

Why is care for the poor and suffering so essential to the Church’s identity and mission? As Leo explains, “love for the Lord ... is one with love for the poor” (5). Leo points out Jesus’s own teaching that “the primacy of love for God is clearly complemented by his insistence that one cannot love God without extending love to the poor” (26). Pointing to Jesus’s insistence that the twofold commandment to love God above all things and to love your neighbor as yourself surpasses all other commandments (Mark 12:29-31), Leo states “the two loves are distinct but inseparable” (26). You cannot claim to love God without also loving your neighbor in need.

Leo takes this a step further and teaches that works of mercy for the poor are a sign and requirement of authentic worship of God (27, 42), quoting St. John Chrysostom, “What advantage does Christ gain if the sacrificial table is laden with golden vessels, while he himself dies of hunger in the person of the poor? Feed the hungry first, and only afterward adorn the altar with what remains” (*Homily on Matthew* 50,4) (41). If we do not in some manner serve those in greatest need out of Christian charity, our worship of God becomes lifeless, self-focused and hypocritical.

Leo recalls no less than five times in *Dilexi te* (5, 26, 28, 52, 73) Jesus’s parable about the Final Judgment where he describes the separation of the sheep (the righteous) from the goats (the wicked) based upon their care for those in need (Matt 25:31-42), and teaches, “Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do to me” (Matt 25:40). The righteous invited into his heavenly kingdom are those who serve Christ in those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, homeless, and in prison, but the wicked are those who ignore those in greatest need and as a result are cast into the darkness. In the end, we will all be judged on how we treated the poor, the marginalized and the least among us.

How are we to help the poor and suffering? Leo urges a comprehensive approach that meets the needs of the whole person, including everything from eradicating structural causes of poverty and inequality found in our laws and institutions, to almsgiving to assist with basic material needs, to religious instruction and sacramental ministry that meets spiritual needs. No one can do everything for the poor, but every one of us can do something.

Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, encourages us to take up Leo’s challenging message in *Dilexi te*: “A radical love for Jesus Christ and a sincere desire to worship God is countercultural, and as we continue to unpack the message of *Dilexi te*, I invite all people to read, reflect and pray with the message offered by our Holy Father. May it call us to renewal of our Church and society so that we learn to approach each person with the same love Christ has for that person.”†

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



Servant of God
Michelle Christine
DUPPONG

Jan 25, 1984 – Dec 25, 2015

A laywoman who dedicated her life to evangelization and showed Jesus to others while suffering with cancer

Jesus, I praise and thank You
for the life of Your servant
Michelle Duppong. In her life and
suffering, she joined You in Your thirst
for souls and embraced
the cross offered to her.
Following her example, I ask for the
special grace of... and, if it
brings You greater glory, that
she be honored by Your Church.
Jesus, I ask this in Your Holy Name.
Amen.

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

Please report any special favors granted to
duppongcause@bismarckdiocese.com



Dakota Catholic Action

Bismarck Diocese

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PERIODICAL

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

The Bismarck Diocese 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: Deacon Brent Naslund, Chancellor, Bismarck Diocese, 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 Bismarck Diocese and it provides a foundation for implementing effective and enforceable standards for all personnel. View the Code of Conduct at www.bismarckdiocese.com.



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