



Faithful Footsteps

Walking Together in Faith on a Lifelong Journey

‘CONSUMED’ with Jesus: Teens Inspired at Steubenville Conference

“For the Lord, Your God, is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” Deut. 4:24

Steubenville – St. Paul – is a yearly trip that has become an anticipated tradition of many youths of the Bismarck Diocese. Parents who attended in their teen years now are encouraging and support their own children to attend this life-changing event. A group of 121 youth, 18 chaperones, three priests, and two seminarians recently traveled to St. Paul, Minnesota, to attend the Steubenville Youth Conference 2025 at the University of St. Thomas. The trip, which took place from July 24–27, was filled with opportunities for service, prayer, fellowship, and spiritual growth.

The journey began on Thursday, July 24, with a send-off Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, celebrated by Bishop David Kagan. After receiving the bishop’s blessing, the group hit the road, stopping for lunch in Moorhead, Minnesota, before arriving at the university. That evening was spent settling into dorms, enjoying dinner, and playing outdoor games before resting up for the weekend ahead.

On Friday morning, the group served at Feed My Starving Children, a Christian nonprofit organization called to feed God’s starving children hungry in body and spirit. The group helped package over 44,000 meals, enough to feed 123 children in Zambia for an entire year. Later that afternoon, the youth gathered outside Planned Parenthood in St. Paul—one of the largest abortion clinics in the nation—for a peaceful time of prayer and witness. While there, a volunteer began dancing around, mocking the group as they prayed the Rosary. However, during the Divine Mercy Chaplet, his demeanor shifted—he calmed down and even began responding to the prayers alongside the group. As it was the feast day of St. James, he was affectionately given the name “James,” though his real name remains unknown. The conference officially kicked off Friday evening with a Traveler’s Mass, followed by high-energy praise and worship led by Sonar, the conference band. Catholic speaker and evangelist Chika Anyanwu, in her keynote, “Consuming the World”, gave a powerful message reminding teens that “you are loved, made to be loved, and made to share love in this world.” The evening closed with pizza and outdoor games on the campus quad, enjoying the cool evening air, renewing old friendships and building new ones.

Saturday began with opening words from M.C. Oscar Rivera and a moving personal testimony by Lily Turman, a senior at St. Mary’s Central High School in Bismarck. Lily was selected out of more than 1,500 applicants to share her faith journey and spoke courageously about how God has remained present to her through the hard times. She gave all glory to God for the opportunity.

Saturday’s schedule also included men’s and women’s sessions, small group gatherings, reconciliation, time to explore religious vocation booths, and a marketplace filled with Catholic books, t-shirts, and gifts. In the afternoon, youth attended a panel on vocations featuring Fr. Roger Synek, Fr. Eric Artz, Deacon Dan Brooke, and Sr. Marina Hoogland. Each shared their own journey to religious life and answered challenging faith questions.

In addition to the talks and sessions, Saturday also included a fun and faith-filled “Passport” treasure hunt across campus. Youth were given a passport-style booklet and challenged to find six different stations, each representing a different country. At every stop, they learned about a canonized saint from that country, and could pray with a relic of that saint, discovering how holiness is lived across cultures and continents. As they collected stamps in their passports, participants not only enjoyed the adventure, but also gained a deeper appreciation for the universal call to sainthood and the diverse faces of the Catholic Church around the world.

One particularly powerful presentation by guest speaker, David Calavitta, as he spoke about “Consumed by Stress”, explored the anxiety of daily life and how we often try to juggle everything—school, sports, friendships, faith, and family—like balls in the air, desperately trying not to drop any. The speaker challenged the teens to stop juggling and instead place all those concerns into a single “hamster ball” that represents God. Rather than trying to control everything on their own, they were invited to let God carry it all, surrendering their stress and finding peace in trusting His plan.

The evening session, “All-Consuming Love,” brought more keynotes and worship, with youth rushing to the stage to celebrate and praise God. The emotional highlight of the weekend came during Eucharistic Adoration, as the weekend priest/host, Fr. Chad VanHoose, carried the monstrance through the crowd, bringing Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament close to each attendee—a moment many will never forget.

Sunday included a final keynote from speakers Tanner Kalina and Oscar Rivera, followed by Closing Mass celebrated by Archbishop Hebda and nearly 30 priests from the surrounding area. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the group returned home physically exhausted but spiritually renewed and full of hope for today’s youth of the Church.

Check out the Bismarck Diocese Office of Catechesis and Youth Facebook page for photos, videos, testimonies and more!

Walking Together in Faith to these **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Emmaus Youth Retreat

Williston: Sunday, October 26, 2025, St. Joseph Parish
Minot: Sunday, November 16, 2025, Bishop Ryan High School
Dickinson: Sunday, February 22, 2026, Trinity High School
Bismarck/Mandan: Sunday, March 22, 2026, St. Mary's Central

All retreats run from 12:30 - 6:00 pm local time
with 5:00 pm Mass included

2025-26 SEARCH WEEKENDS

Don't wait until the last minute, the deadline to register is 2 weeks before.

- ☐ OCT 10-12, 2025
- ☐ NOV 14-16, 2025
- ☐ JAN 16-18, 2026
- ☐ MAR 6-8, 2026
- ☐ APR 17-19, 2026

WEEKEND COST: \$75⁰⁰

PARTIAL SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE. NO ONE WILL BE TURNED AWAY BASED ON FINANCIAL NEED.

REGISTER ONLINE
SearchinMedora.com



A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN MUST BE PRESENT WHEN REGISTERING ONLINE IF UNDER 18.

SEARCH
Discipleship/Leadership Weekend
August 22-24, 2025
Richardton, ND
Register on Diocese website

Prairie Sheepfold is a for all those who are involved in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at the school or parish level –parents of students are also welcome to attend.

Prairie Sheepfold Catechist Day Retreat

Saturday, September 6

10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Christ the King Parish

505 10th Ave NW, Mandan, ND 58554

Register \$20 at

bismarckdiocese.com/goodshepherd

- Optional 8am Mass, Bfast, Morning Prayer
- Lunch provided
- See website for full schedule

Retreat Leader: Fr. Schneider

Upper Elementary Guide, Christ the King Catholic Montessori School, Pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Director of Worship, Bismarck Diocese



We welcome CGS catechists/aides of all levels.

Nursing infants welcome.

Limited overnight accommodations may be available at additional cost.



THE BISMARCK OFFICE OF
CATECHESIS AND YOUTH
INVITES YOU TO

How Grace Works
through the Ordinary:
Why Practical Life Activities Matter

(Romans 12; Ephesians 2:10)
Grace, God's help, comes to each of us constantly, and in the Sacraments, God himself comes to live within us. Thus, every moment, place and relationship is an opportunity for God's love to be known to us and to be made known to others. All is an opportunity for each of us to make a sincere gift of ourselves.



Saturday, September 13

10 AM - 4 PM CT

Church of St. Joseph

Beulah, ND

\$20 registration fee



FMI or to register:

Scan QR code or go to

<https://bismarckdiocese.com/catechesis-youth>

Dr. Stella Marie Jeffrey

Hello everyone! My husband Greg and I currently live in Fargo, ND (yes, it's a real place). In Fargo, I spend the majority of my time working in missionary discipleship and evangelization. I also take on "teaching gigs" and do "retreats" and "parish missions" whenever possible. Currently, I work full-time for Franciscan University of Steubenville both supporting our partners with the Catechetical Institute, CI, and as an adjunct professor for Theology and Catechetics. My hobbies include playing guitar, choir, dancing, reading, and community improvement. I have served 'on the front lines' of the apostolic work of the Catholic Church for most of my adult life. I pray that whatever I do will be a means for all to grow in our love, understanding, and passion for the Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Lord, and His Family, the Church. May we increase our ability to "speak the Faith in a conversational way" with everyone we meet.

How Grace Works

is open to all people of the Bismarck Diocese but especially DREs, youth ministers, catechists, young adult ministers, parents or college students who may be "working in the vineyard" in the future.

Dr. Stella will introduce us to the **Catechetical Institute through Franciscan University** and how it can benefit all life-long learners.

Do you have a past event you would like to highlight or an upcoming event you would like to share? Email Diane at dhuck@bismarckdiocese.com with all the information, photos, quotations and more to be including in the upcoming issues of Faithful Footsteps.

Responses to Why People Hesitate to Become a Catechist

[Joe Paprocki Teaching Skills](#)

Amy G., a religious education coordinator in N.J., wrote the following bulletin article, offering responses to my list of reasons why people hesitate to become a catechist. Nice job, Amy! Thanks for letting me share it here!

Maybe being a catechist is something you feel God is calling you to, but you've got some reservations. Joe Paprocki, a former Director of Religious Education and current 8th grade catechist came up with some reasons why he thinks that people hesitate to volunteer to be a catechist which he published on his website, "Catechist's Journey" (www.catechistsjourney.org). These are reprinted here with Joe's permission. I've given my own reassurances after each hesitation.

"I'm hesitant to become a catechist because..."

"...I don't know if I can handle a group of kids. I don't know if kids will like me."

Everyone is nervous going into a classroom on their first day of teaching (Some of us were nervous for our first several weeks of teaching). The good news is that the children already know how to behave in a classroom from being at school. They know what acceptable behavior is and what it is not. The bad news is that they will sometimes act up. Children thrive when there are clear expectations for their behavior and clear consequences for when they step out of line. If you are friendly, fair, and firm with your students, classroom discipline comes easier. And people of all ages like others who are friendly, fair, and firm.

"...I don't know if I'll be able to answer kids' questions."

Our textbooks are very easy to use and the answers to most questions you will be asked will come from the text. However, sometimes, kids come up with really excellent questions that are not all that easy to answer. There is absolutely nothing wrong with saying, "I don't know, but I'll find out and tell you next time we meet." Then, after class, you can just walk down to the Religious Ed Office and ask us for the answer.

"...I'm not sure that I have anything to share. I'm not that holy; I'm just a regular person."

Teaching religion is not just about passing on facts for memorization. In addition to helping the children learn about God, the catechist must help the young people in his or her class to get to know Jesus Christ through His Church; to foster in them a relationship with Jesus. If you're thinking about serving God as a catechist, you probably have a relationship with Our Lord already. And your good relationship with God probably happened as part of a process, not all of a sudden. You can share some of how you got to where you are with God now. And the struggle it sometimes is to stay that way.

And as far as not being holy enough goes, let's look at the example of the canonized saints. They considered themselves regular people, too. They love God with all their mind, with all their heart, and with all their strength. Does that sound like someone else you know?

"...I'm not sure that I know just what the Church teaches. I'm afraid I'll say something wrong."

Our textbooks are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. That means that everything in our textbooks is in line with what the Church teaches. The key here is never to guess at what the Church teaches. If you don't know, just say, "I'm not sure, let me get back to you" and ask the Religious Ed Office or consult the Catechism we'll give you.

"...I don't have any formal training to teach and I've never taught before."

Have you ever shown someone else how to make one of your favorite recipes or use a computer program? Have you ever given someone else directions to a destination? If you can answer yes to questions like those, then guess what: you taught someone! Sure, not formally, but you taught them all the same.

Our texts come with a variety of activities you can use in each lesson and they give you a hand with how to plan lessons. I heard a priest once say, "God doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called." At our parish, we qualify those who are called to the ministry of catechesis by sending you to local workshops on how to teach religion and on the catechism. We often run these classes right here at our parish. You're not out there on your own; Michelle and I are here to help you in any way we can.

"...I don't know if I have the time."

Being a catechist is definitely a time commitment. And it's not just the hour and 15 minutes you're here in the classroom. For your time with your students to go well, you need to prepare before you walk into the classroom for at least an hour. Many of my best catechists take much longer than that. And when you factor in the workshops that I strongly encourage everyone to attend, it probably averages out to about 3 hours a week outside of the classroom time.

Maybe a weekly class just can't fit into your schedule right now, but you could do the monthly Confirmation Preparation Program. Or maybe right now you'd like to serve as a teacher's aide or a substitute teacher to get a feel for what this is like.

LOOK WHO'S WALKIN'

Celebrating fun and educational events in our Diocese that are spreading the Love of Jesus!



"Thank you for inviting your students to the Bismarck Mandan Youth Group Event last week! It was an INCREDIBLE evening! There were over 100 students who came. They were very receptive the Holy Spirit and absorbed everything they could. It was beautiful seeing all of them come together and share laughter, s'mores, and pray together. Our young people are such an inspiration to the faith, as I'm sure you have seen at your parish. Our leaders were impressed by the knowledge and insights the students had during small groups. What a blessing that we, as youth ministers, get to be Jesus' instrument in sharing the truth with young people. Please enjoy these wonderful photos of the event!" - Eve Merz, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit Youth Minister



SOUP KITCHEN

"Took this great group of students to the Heavens Helpers Soup Cafe in Bismarck. We spent the day prepping meals, serving patrons, and doing our best to be "the hands and feet of Jesus". Thanks, Mark Meier and wonderful volunteers for the important work you do every day!" - Kris Ehlis, St. Mary's New England DRE

