

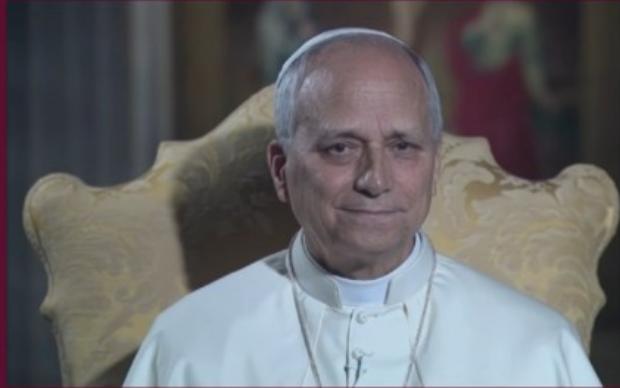


# Faithful Footsteps

Walking Together in Faith on a Lifelong Journey

LIVE  EWTN

Pope Leo XIV came to America—Virtually!



POPE  
LEO  
LIVE  
2025

2025 NATIONAL CATHOLIC YOUTH CONFERENCE

Pope Leo recently appeared via live video call with 16,000 Catholic teenagers at the NCYC (National Catholic Youth Conference) in Indianapolis. Five students from across the country were able to ask him a question. Here's a few takeaways:

1. “Sin never has the final word. Whenever we ask for God's mercy, he forgives us.”
2. “Do not focus only on your sins. Look to Jesus. Trust his mercy and go to him with confidence.”
3. “He often speaks to us gently in stillness. That is why daily moments of silence are so important, whether through adoration, reading scripture, talking to him, looking for those little spaces of time where we can be with Him.”
4. “When [the thought 'no one understands me'] comes, try saying, 'Lord, you understand me better than I understand myself.'”
5. “A real friend is not only someone who's fun to be with—though that is good too. But it's someone who helps you grow closer to Jesus, someone who encourages you to become a better person.”
6. “Remember, making a difference usually happens through simple daily faithfulness.”
7. “Be intentional with your screen time. Make sure technology serves your life and not the other way around.”
8. “AI will not judge between what is truly right and wrong. And it won't stand in wonder, in authentic wonder before the beauty of God's creation.”
9. “You are not only the future of the Church, you are the present. Your voice, Your voices, your ideas, your faith matter right now. And the Church needs you.”

If you want to see the full transcript, check it out here: <https://proym.com/popeleo>

Do you have a past event you would like to highlight or an upcoming event you would like to share? Email all the information, photos, quotations and more to [dhuck@bismarckdiocese.com](mailto:dhuck@bismarckdiocese.com) to be included in the upcoming issues of Faithful Footsteps.

# Walking Together in Faith to these UPCOMING EVENTS



## Emmaus Youth Retreat

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.

- JAN 16-18, 2026
- MAR 6-8, 2026
- APR 17-19, 2026

**WEEKEND COST: \$75<sup>00</sup>**

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.

### STEP UP TO THE PLATE: SAY YES TO GOD'S CALL!

\* A Catholic Vocations Day for  
4th & 5th Grade Alt-Stars \*



**SPONSORED by** THE BISMARCK DIOCESE  
OFFICE OF CATECHESIS AND YOUTH

**ST. MARYS ACADEMY**

1025 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Bismarck, ND

GATE OPEN AT 9:30 A.M.

EVENT STARTS AT 10 A.M. - ENDS AT 3:00 P.M.

FREE DRINKS • FREE FOOD • DOORPRIZES

WWW.BISMARCKDIOCESE.COM/VOCATIONSDAY

### Prairie Sheepfold

Catechist Gathering 2025-2026  
Freedom, Responsibility and Art

Thursday, February 12 7-9:00 PM

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, 519 Raymond St., Bismarck

We welcome CGS catechists/aides of all levels to gather for  
continuing education followed by time for sharing the insights  
of children in our atria and uplifting fellowship.

Register at [bismarckdiocese.com/goodshepherd](http://bismarckdiocese.com/goodshepherd)  
Carolyn Kohlhaas is a nationally recognized Formation Leader for  
CGS at all three levels of formation. She received her Bachelor of Arts  
Degree in Theology and in Religious Education from Franciscan  
University of Steubenville and her AMI Primary (3-6) and  
Elementary (6-12) Level Certifications from the Montessori Training  
Center of Minnesota. Carolyn has a Master of Education degree  
(Loyola College, Maryland) as well as a Master of Theology (St.  
Paul Seminary School of Divinity). She has worked with children in  
atriums in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis since 2006  
and with adults in formation courses across the U.S. since 2009.



The United States Association of  
The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd



### New CGS Trainings Already in Motion for 2026

Registration is open on the  
diocesan website for a Level 1  
training to start July 13-18, 2026  
at Cathedral of the Holy Spirit!  
Also working on the details for a  
Level 2 and Level 3 training for  
July 2027-2028! CGS is growing  
and I am so excited to support it  
from the diocesan level!

You are invited to celebrate with all those  
who will be entering the Catholic Church  
this Easter season through Baptism,  
Confirmation and Holy Eucharist

### RITE OF ELECTION AND CALL TO CONTINUED CONVERSION

**FEBRUARY 22, 2026**

CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
BISMARCK, ND

"Sought and Summoned" Retreat 12:00 - 2:45 PM  
for calechumens, candidates and their sponsors

Rites with the Bishop 3:00 PM  
Open to the Public Reception to follow



# Why Are So Many Young Adults Becoming Catholic

DR. CHRISTOPHER KACZOR

MAY 7, 2025

WWW.WORDONFIRE.ORG

THIS EASTER, the University of Notre Dame saw a record number of students enter the Catholic Church. This trend is happening not just at Notre Dame but around the country. Los Angeles welcomed more than 5,500 new Catholics. The *New York Post* ran an essay entitled “Young people are converting to Catholicism en masse [...]” As reporter Matthew McDonald wrote in another article, “Dioceses are reporting increases of 30%, 40%, 50% and even more than 70.”

Not just in the United States but around the world, a growing number of adults—mostly young adults—joined the Church. In Austria, there was an 85 percent increase in the number of adult baptisms. In his essay “Adult Baptisms: What’s Driving the Rise?,” Luke Coppen reports large increases in Belgium, Canada, and Mongolia. Catholic conversions are also rising in Kosovo. In Sweden, the Catholic Church is growing, again with young adult converts. *The Washington Times* reported, “France sees a record surge in conversions to Catholicism.” In England, another article noted that it is “the young converts leading Catholicism’s UK comeback.”

Some people think that the COVID pandemic explains this massive surge in young people joining (or rejoining) the Catholic Church. As Yale Professor Nicholas A. Christakis explains, “Usually what happens in times of plague is people get more religious. I mean, this has been observed for thousands of years. They get more abstemious; they stop spending money; they get risk-averse; they adopt a whole set of behaviors like that. And then when the plague is behind them, they do the reverse. Religion now declines.” In May 2023, the World Health Organization declared an end to the pandemic. So, what one would expect in 2025 is a decrease in conversions, rather than what is actually found: a great increase in people joining the Church.

What has drawn so great a number of young people to conversion? Each person’s story is unique, but recent converts often share common paths. Many of them have been influenced by winsome and intelligent online presentations of the Catholic faith from people like Trent Horn of Catholic Answers, Dr. Scott Hahn of the St. Paul Center, and of course Bishop Robert Barron at Word on Fire. They don’t present a dumbed-down Catholicism incapable of answering the questions of today’s young adults.

*Although many people begin their journey to the Church online, the destination is personal, concrete, and incarnational.* Another recurring pattern is the power of beauty in prompting conversions and reversions. What could be more beautiful and moving than Holy Week celebrations in the Vatican with the pope? I had the chance to do this in 1991 with Pope St. John Paul II.

It was absolutely spectacular, stunningly beautiful, and deeply moving. I assumed there would never be anything to surpass it. I was wrong.

This year, I got to celebrate Holy Week at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame from Palm Sunday through Easter Vespers. If you want to go to the Easter Vigil, you need to wait in a long line. The Vigil begins at 9:00 p.m., but the doors open at 7:00 p.m. So, eager students began lining up for a prime seat in the Basilica at 5:45. That is, 5:45 a.m., more than fifteen hours before the service began. That is enthusiasm in the root sense of the term.

What made Holy Week at Notre Dame so beautiful? The choir singing Pergolesi’s *Stabat Mater* would melt the heart of the abominable snowman. The gradual extinguishing of all lights in the Tenebrae service with the thunderous *strepitus* in total darkness made me feel the power of infernal forces.

But the most beautiful part of Holy Week for me came during the Easter Vigil. We witnessed the baptism of twenty-three students. After they were baptized, the congregation gave them an ovation of thunderous applause lasting, it seemed, three or four minutes.

As recent convert Sydney Johnston put it, “There’s just something so beautiful and transcendent about the rituals and the ancient history in the Catholic Mass that’s been preserved. . . . The church really communicates a degree of reverence that I didn’t find in the more liberal, laissez-faire approach of nondenominational churches.” Although many people begin their journey to the Church online, the destination is personal, concrete, and incarnational.

The Church is in a prime position to supply what is lacking in today’s culture. As Professor Jeffrey Pojanowski pointed out:

*In a disembodied time, [the Church] is resolutely concrete: the splash of holy water, the smear of oil, the pinch of exorcising salt, the smell of incense, the quiet voice of absolution in your ear, the gentle slap of confirmation, Blaise’s candles on your throat, the laying on—or grasp—of hands, the gentle ache of the knees at consecration, the weird, withered relic of a saint, and, of course, the taste of bread and wine that are, mysteriously, His flesh and blood—suffering embraced and given loving meaning. This revolution will not be digitized.*

As so many young people around the world have recently discovered, the Church offers what cannot be found anywhere else.

# LOOK WHO'S WALKIN'

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



November 5th, St. Joseph Williston's Varsity Veritas enjoyed our **3rd Annual All Saints Murder Mystery** with Diane Huck from the Diocesan Office of Catechesis and Youth! The winning group was able to solve the mystery of the murder of St. John the Apostle's servant. *During St. John's time in exile on Patmos Island with Prochorus, his servant, they began having visions in the Cave of Revelation of angels and demons, heaven and hell, as well as souls of saints and those of the damned, when suddenly a by-stander found a deceased servant.* Those who succussed in the task of solving the crime that Prochorus was unalive by the **Damned Souls from Laodicea** in Purgatory with the toilet plunger! Such a fun event.



On Wednesday, December 3rd, the CCD students at Queen of the Most Holy Rosary in Stanley, had a joyful visit from St. Nicholas. The Feast of St. Nicholas is December 6th. He had an

engaging conversation and asked the students if they were saying their prayers daily. He reminded them to do kind deeds, write them down and put them in their Jesus stocking for a Christmas gift for Jesus. St. Nicholas gave each student a bag of chocolate gold coins before he left! Be Ho-Ho-Holy!



The Cathedral American Heritage Girls troop spread some holiday cheer to the residents of the Baptist Home during the Advent season. This group of girls, ages 6 -12, enjoyed the special time of singing traditional songs and hearing the elderly folks join in the tunes. AHG is open to all girls grades kindergarten through 12th grade (current group has students through 6th grade). The adult leaders are looking to grow this group of Catholic girls who want to live lives of virtue.

**STEP IN TO an adventure with**

**AMERICAN HERITAGE GIRLS**  
FAITH | SERVICE | FUN

AGH is a Christ-centered leadership and character development organization whose mission is building women of integrity through service to God, family, community and country.

A collage of images showing girls in various activities: a group photo, girls in a classroom, a girl in a kitchen, and a girl in a library. A QR code is in the bottom right corner.