



Dakota **Catholic Action**

Vol. 85 No. 6 **JUNE 2026**



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2026 Seminarian Golf Tournament • June 15, 2026
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\$10/ticket \$50/6 tickets Winner need not be present to win.
City of Mandan Permit #2026-27

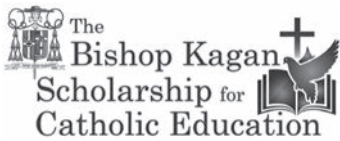
Catholic Foundation of Western North Dakota
2026 Seminarian Golf Tournament • June 15, 2026
Prairie West Golf Course, 2709 Longspur Trail, Mandan, ND

- (1) \$1,000 cash prize donated by Vance Vetter Homes
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- (1) \$500 cash prize, donated by Flash Printing
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- (1) Green Mountain Smoker/Grill (\$900 value), donated by Retired Priests
- (1) #2 Meat Bundle (\$249 value) 3Be Meats, Bismarck, donated by Presort Plus
- (1) #1 Meat Bundle (\$299 value) Butcher Block Meats, donated by Northwest Tire
- (1) #8 Meat Bundle (\$189 value) Butcher Block Meats, donated by Northwest Tire
- (1) \$500 Golf Etc. gift card & (1) Free Driver Fitting (\$590 value), donated by Golf Etc.

Drawing to be held after the golf tournament.
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City of Mandan Permit #2026-27



Catholic Foundation of Western North Dakota
2026 Seminarian Golf Tournament
June 15, 2026
Prairie West Golf Course, 2709 Longspur Trail, Mandan, ND



**\$3,000 scholarship toward K-12 tuition at any Bismarck Diocese
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Drawing to be held after the golf tournament.
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ON THE COVER: This mosaic was recently installed at Emmaus Place, the retirement home for priests, after being pulled from storage following its removal years ago from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. The 40" x 28" piece was originally donated by Albert and Ruth Hartl Family in 1995.



Dakota Catholic Action



Reporting on Catholic action in western ND since 1941

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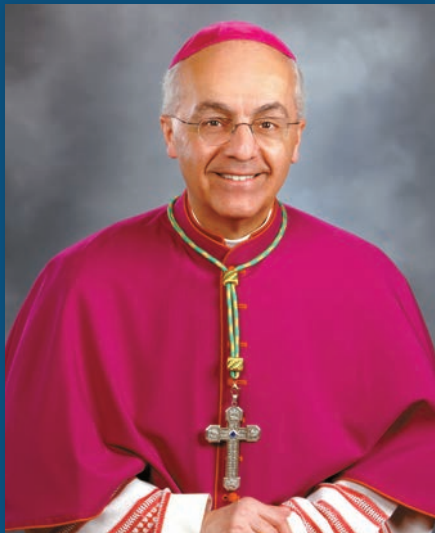
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FROM THE BISHOP

June is truly a month of great graces for the Church

Bishop David D. Kagan

The month of June always has a special place in the Catholic Church’s life since we celebrate two beautiful solemnities, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul. There is a direct connection between these two solemnities, and I shall return to that connection.

This year the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus falls on a Friday which also is the day of great rejoicing for our diocese. Deacon Colton Steiner will be ordained to the sacred priesthood for our diocese. Our prayers for him and for vocations continued to be answered by Almighty God Who mercifully answers our prayers and provides for noble laborers for His harvest of souls, yours and mine. If you have an opportunity to attend this ordination, I encourage you to do so; it will also be livestreamed from our Cathedral.

The day following the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated as the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This year the feast falls on a Saturday and please do come to Mass and pray in thanksgiving for the gift of Our Blessed Mother to the world and to each of us as our mother.

Let me now turn to the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and its direct connection to the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29. From Apostolic times, the Church has always believed that from the pierced Heart of Jesus it was born and the sacraments He instituted were poured into her for the salvation and sanctification of each person. It was to St. Peter that Jesus entrusted His Church as His Vicar, and it was to St. Paul that Jesus entrusted the world to be converted to His Church.

Saint Peter’s faith is the Apostolic Faith from which the Church has never strayed nor erred. Saint Paul’s faith is the Apostolic Faith which is ever and always a missionary Faith to be proclaimed to the world in every age, past, present and future. These two Apostles planted the Catholic Faith firmly in the known world then, and they and their successors for more than two thousand years have faithfully nourished this Faith in word and deed through our glorious martyrs and beloved and faithful confessors.

The month of June is truly a month of great graces for the Church, for us. Let us recommit ourselves to the Lord Jesus as His true disciples.†

BISHOP IN ACTION



Photo by Deacon Joe Krupinsky: Bishop Kagan blessed the law enforcement, fire and emergency responder personnel as he exited the Blue Mass on May 14 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.



Holy Father’s Prayer Intentions for June

FOR THE VALUES OF SPORTS

Let us pray that sports be an instrument of peace, encounter and dialogue among cultures and nations, and that they promote values such as respect, solidarity and personal growth.

BISHOP’S SCHEDULE

JUNE 2026

June 1-6	Clergy Retreat, Assumption Abbey, Richardton
June 7	Corpus Christi Mass, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 8 a.m.
June 8	Women’s Care Center Meeting, Chancery, Bismarck, 3 p.m.
June 11	Priestly Ordination Social, University of Mary, Bismarck, 5 p.m.
June 12	Priestly Ordination, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 2 p.m.
June 12	Ordination Banquet, University of Mary, Bismarck, 5 p.m.
June 15	Seminarian Golf Tournament, Prairie West Golf Course, Mandan, 12:45 p.m.
June 17	Building Commission Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 9:30 a.m.
June 18	North Dakota Catholic Conference Meeting, St. James Basilica, Jamestown, 10 a.m.
June 20	Mass for SMCHS Class of 1976 Reunion, Our Lady of Victory Chapel, Bismarck, 10 a.m.
June 21	Confirmation at the Church of St. Peter, Fort Yates, 10:30 a.m.
June 25	Finance Council Meeting, Center for Pastoral Ministry, Bismarck, 10 a.m.
June 28	Installation Mass for Fr. Dustin Johns, Church of St. Anthony, New Town, 8:30 a.m.
July 10	Cabinet Meeting, Chancery, Bismarck, 10 a.m.
July 10	Mass for Cor Christi, University of Mary, Bismarck, 4:30 p.m.
July 17	Mass for Cor Christi, University of Mary, Bismarck, 4:30 p.m.
July 19	Town and Country Celebration, Church of St. Vincent de Paul, Crown Butte, 11 a.m.
July 23	Mass for Steubenville Attendees, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck, 9 a.m.

Allowing God to configure my life to His

Sonia Mullally
DCA Editor

Priests are set apart to serve Our Lord, to shepherd His people. One man will join this remarkable brotherhood on June 12.

Deacon Colton Steiner will be ordained to the holy priesthood by Bishop Kagan at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck beginning at 2 p.m. The Mass will be livestreamed for those who would like to view online.

Colton has been studying for several years at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis. He reflected on his upcoming ordination with great anticipation, capping off years of prayer and preparation. When contemplating what has sustained him through the years of formation, he said it boils down to interconnection.

“If I sum up how I have been sustained throughout my years of formation in one word, it would be ‘relationship.’ I began my time as a seminarian all the way back in the fall of 2017, and during this time, I was blessed to have had the opportunity to form and cultivate a wide variety of meaningful relationships,” Colton explained. “It is only in and through these relationships that I am the man—and the deacon—that I am today. I am so grateful for all the friends and spiritual companions that the Lord has placed in my life who have guided me along my ongoing journey of conversion and inspired me to grow deeper in my faith. There is no way I would be writing to you today, discussing the reality of my upcoming ordination to the

priesthood, without all the influential people I have built relationships with over the past number of years.”

He’s quick to point out that the very top of the list has been and always will be his link with God.

“Primary amongst those relationships, of course, is my relationship with the Holy Trinity,” Colton said. “The book of Deuteronomy tells us, and Jesus echoes this sentiment, that ‘man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’ (Deuteronomy 8:3). These years of formation have been steeped in God’s Word... His Word that I have encountered not only in Sacred Scripture, but also His words of comfort and consolation, which I have received through silent prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament. The Lord has poured out so many graces upon me as I have grown in my relationship with Him. It is really in and through my relationship with God that He revealed to me His plan for my life, to be His priest for eternity.”

Colton was ordained to the transitional diaconate by Bishop Kagan in May 2025. This takes place in the later stages of preparation for the priesthood.



Deacon Colton Steiner



Photo by Deacon Joe Krupinsky: Diocesan Vocations Director Fr. Steven Vetter (left) with Deacon Colton Steiner at a Serra Club gathering.

As deacons, the men serve the Church by baptizing children, presiding at weddings and preaching God’s Word at Mass.

He points toward preaching and baptizing as two of the aspects for the ministry as a deacon that he particularly enjoyed.

“It is certainly hard to narrow down what aspects of my diaconal ministry I have enjoyed the most because I love everything about being a deacon so much! Out of all the things that my ministry involves, however, preaching and baptizing are the two that have been particularly fruitful and spiritually enriching,” Colton said. “It is a tremendous joy to share the Gospel with the world. I love being able to share the fruits of my prayer and encounter with Jesus from the ambo to assist others in their path towards a lived relationship with Jesus Christ. Part of the Good News is the reality that Jesus has saved us from our sins, and that salvation is poured out to us in the waters of baptism.”

He’s also in tune with the realization that he is a conduit of God’s love during this time of service to the Church as a deacon.

“There is honestly nothing like being an instrument for God to cooperate in His plan of salvation for the world,” Colton shared. “I remember, after my first baptism, just how awestruck I was that this little baby had been cleansed of original sin, and the Trinity began to dwell in his soul, all through the simple words and actions I had just finished. This experience actually became a wellspring from which sprung a multitude of graces that would go on to inform my future preaching. In my mind, baptizing and preaching go hand in hand—mutually enriching and both integral in building up God’s Kingdom on earth. I have an abundance of gratitude for all the pastors that I have served under since being ordained a deacon, who have given me so many opportunities to preach the Gospel both in the Bismarck Diocese and the Archdiocese of St. Louis and baptize 13+ children.”

“This calling for which I have been preparing for years now is almost here. It is this reality that brings me joy. That, despite all my own weaknesses and failures, Jesus is calling me to be His priest, and it is in this vocation, celebrating Mass, hearing confessions and anointing the sick, that He wants to form me as a saint.” — Deacon Colton Steiner

His utter amazement at and appreciation for the gift of the priesthood comes to the top of his mind when Colton thinks about his upcoming ordination.

“As I get closer to priestly ordination, I feel like my sentiments can be summed up by a line from the Gospel that we heard in the Easter Vigil liturgy,” Colton explained. “As Mary Magdalene and the other Mary left the empty tomb to announce to Jesus’ disciples that He had risen from the dead, St. Matthew explains that they were ‘fearful yet overjoyed.’ I can certainly relate to what they must have felt. It is not so much a fear of whether I am doing the right thing or if I will be happy. Rather, it is reverential fear that I have as I approach the priesthood.

“The priesthood is such a tremendous gift, and I have asked Jesus, ‘Who am I to receive this gift?’ However, time and time again, He has confirmed His desire to configure my life to His and make me into His priest. This truth often makes me sit back in my chair and simply say, ‘Wow.’ I find it almost hard to believe that I will soon be celebrating Mass, hearing confessions and anointing the sick. This calling for which I have been preparing for years now is almost here. It is this reality that brings me joy. That, despite all my own weaknesses and failures, Jesus is calling me to be His priest, and it is in this vocation, celebrating Mass, hearing confessions and anointing the sick, that He wants to form me as a saint.”

The Reverend Mr. Colton Steiner, upon ordination to the sacred priesthood, will serve as chaplain for St. Mary’s Academy and part-time parochial vicar for the Church of Saint Anne in Bismarck, effective July 1.

“While I am excited about the entirety of the priestly life, I am certainly looking forward to celebrating the sacraments,” he shared. “I am especially excited to forgive the sins of the penitent in the sacrament of confession. It is something my heart has always longed for. I have received such a beautiful amount of grace and mercy in the sacrament of confession that I can hardly wait to be an instrument of that same grace and mercy, to give back in a way that I have received so much.

“I am also looking forward to being a chaplain at St. Mary’s Academy. Attending Catholic Schools was integral to my early formation, and I cannot thank my parents enough for making the sacrifice to give me a Catholic education. My priest-chaplain, Fr. Thomas Grafsgaard, also played a key role in my eventual decision to enter seminary formation. Seeing a priest every day at school, walking the halls and cheering in the stands, made the priesthood so real, so personal. Now, having the opportunity to labor in the vineyard of our Catholic Schools and to be that Christ-like presence for our students, it simply leaves me awestruck.”

Colton concluded with a message to the people of our diocese.

“As I near priestly ordination, I would like to thank everyone who has been praying for me, especially those whom I have never met. I cannot tell you how much your prayers aid not only me, but all our seminarians as we strive to follow God’s call for our lives. I would like to humbly ask that you continue to keep me in your prayers and please know that I am praying for all of you!” †

Join us for our

1ST ANNUAL VOCATION CELEBRATION

THURSDAY

08 | 06 | 26

5:30 PM MASS - OUR LADY OF VICTORY CHAPEL
FOOD, FUN & ADORATION TO FOLLOW

*Saint Mary's Central High School
5802 Ridgeland Drive
Bismarck ND*

**COME CELEBRATE, SUPPORT, AND
VISIT WITH OUR SEMINARIANS,
AND MEN AND WOMEN IN FORMATION!**

Raising Funds for Vocations for the Diocese of Bismarck

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Father Johnson earns degree focusing on the New Evangelization

Father Jared Johnson, pastor of the Pro-Cathedral of St. Mary in Bismarck, recently received a Licentiate of Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) degree from Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan.

On May 2, Fr. Johnson took part in the graduation ceremony at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, along with his parents, Brian and Cheryl Johnson of Williston. The S.T.L degree offered by the seminary is a post-graduate ecclesiastical degree in pastoral theology with a focus on the New Evangelization. The Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome confers the degree through the faculty of Sacred Heart Major Seminary. The S.T.L. degree is midway between an American master’s degree and doctorate degree.

The S.T.L. in the New Evangelization combines online coursework throughout the academic year (September to May), with a five-week on campus summer residency at the seminary. Father Johnson completed the five-week on campus summer residencies during the summers from 2022-2024.

At the conclusion of the program, each student is required to write a 100-page thesis. Fr. Johnson’s thesis is entitled: “Fr. Solanus Casey: A Priest’s Model for Evangelization,” in which he focused on the life and ministry of Blessed Solanus Casey, an American priest who served the poor in Detroit for many decades. Father Solanus was beatified in 2017. Catholic author and scripture scholar, Dr. Mary Healy, served as Fr. Johnson’s thesis director.

The S.T.L. in the New Evangelization program aims to form Catholic priests with a deep theological, spiritual and cultural understanding of evangelization, enabling them to thoughtfully evaluate and apply its principles across diverse contexts and programs.



Submitted photo: Fr. Jared Johnson, with his parents Brian and Cheryl Johnson, after the May 2 graduation ceremony in front of Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit.

At the same time, the program emphasizes practical leadership and pastoral experience, equipping priests to effectively guide others in proclaiming the Gospel and fostering the transformation of culture through Christ.

In addition to his parish responsibilities, Fr. Johnson serves as the Director of Continuing Education for Clergy for the Bismarck Diocese and as the Coordinator for Hispanic Ministry in Bismarck-Mandan.†

—Staff report

On May 11, Bishop Kagan celebrated Mass for the anniversary of the ordination of the holy priesthood. Priests celebrating anniversaries this year are: 5 years – Fr. Jacob Degele, Fr. Ben Franchuk, Fr. Greg Hilzendeger, Fr. Nicholas Vetter; 10 years – Fr. Doug Krebs; 15 years – Fr. Jason Signalness; 25 years – Fr. Shannon Lucht; 30 years – Msgr. Tom Richter; 35 years – Fr. Ken Phillips; 60 years – Fr. Marv Klemmer and 65 years – Fr. Paul Cervinski. May God bless the faithful ministry of our priests. †



Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky



Adventures in God's Country inspired by the beauty of North Dakota

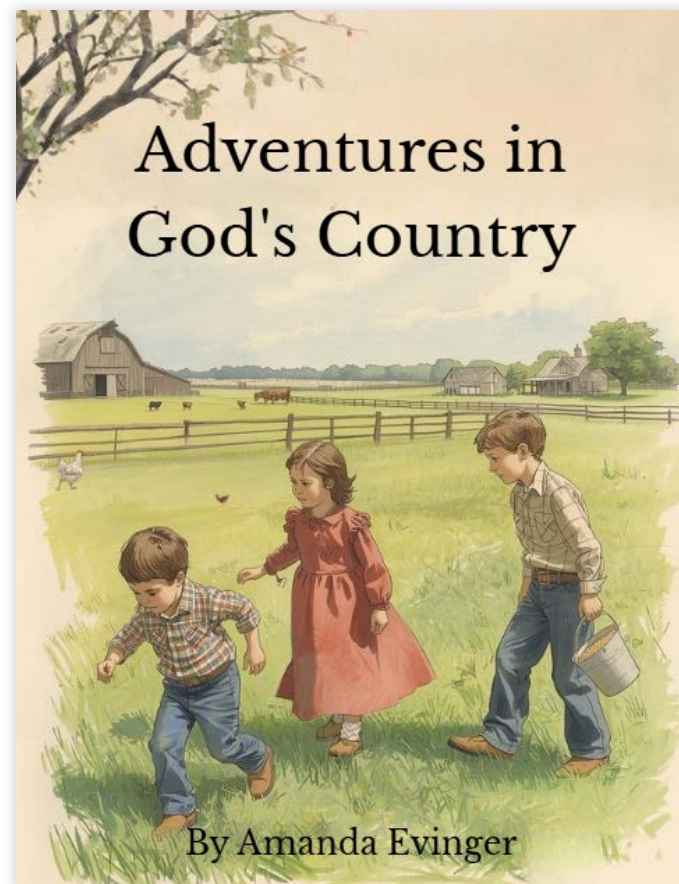
When Amanda Evinger first moved to North Dakota, she was taken aback by all the goodness and beauty she saw around her.

“I grew up outside of Detroit in Michigan; went to college in Grand Rapids and Santiago, the Dominican Republic; lived with Mother Teresa’s sisters as a missionary in D.C., Harlem, the South Bronx, and Memphis; and worked as a professional writer in Augusta, Georgia,” she said. “I was definitely a big city girl when I came here! When I first came to visit, I was totally floored at how gorgeous the countryside in North Dakota is, and how friendly small-town people are. I couldn’t believe how many stars I could see in the night sky!”

Amanda was a religious novice for a year alongside her current sister-in-law, Sr. Michelle Marie Evinger, which is how she came to know her husband, Michael.

“When I first met their family, I thought of the *Little House on the Prairie* series right away, which I loved to watch as a child,” she remembered. “Instantly, I knew there was something they had that I wanted, too—a more wholesome country-style life, away from the craziness of gigantic cities, endless traffic jams, the constant threat of crime and an impersonal way of life.”

About 10 years after moving to North Dakota, she decided to begin writing about the beauty of North Dakota and its people through *Adventures in God’s Country*, a fiction book based on real-life stories from recent Dakotan history.



“We started writing *Adventures in God’s Country* as a family after I had an extremely difficult pregnancy with my sixth child,” she said. “I needed to do something fun with my children to remind me of what was most important in life, and why I chose to homeschool and live in rural North Dakota to begin with.”

Adventures in God’s Country was written to educate young readers about the Catholic faith, the homeschooling movement and the beauty of rural family life.

“We desired to give families something meaningful to read together—something that celebrates the very heart of North Dakota and honors the goodness of Catholic family life.” — Amanda Evinger

“I pray it serves as a much-needed blast from the past, meant to remind us of where we came from and where we should be headed,” Amanda shared. “We embarked on this small-scale literary journey about nine years ago, and thanks to the encouragement of family and friends, we decided to keep traveling.”

Meeting a need in the literary world

It is meant to be the first book in a series which will help meet a need in the Catholic literary world.

“After serving as a publisher of thousands of articles, authoring several books and homeschooling my seven children, I have come to appreciate the value of cultivating a reading culture in one’s home,” Amanda remarked. “In spending countless hours searching libraries and online bookstores for inspiring literature picks, I consistently noticed a troubling lack of engaging Catholic literature for younger readers, and I wanted to do something about it.”

Wanting to fill this gap, the Evinger family began drumming up ideas and drawing inspiration from the homeschooling pioneers and farm families they had grown to respect.

“We desired to give families something meaningful to read together—something that celebrates the very heart of North Dakota and honors the goodness of Catholic family life,” Amanda shared. “We wanted to make a way for them to go on a literary adventure together—an action-packed adventure that will edify their souls and lift up their minds to higher

things. We hope to put our little drop in the ocean of literature and make a difference in our own little way.”

However, there were hurdles to overcome along the way.

“I tell people I might as well have a ‘CG’ for City Girl branded on my forehead—pun intended,” Amanda shared. “Michael and I went to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico for our honeymoon, and he spent much of the plane ride there teaching me the names of farm animals and their babies. I grew up in an extended family full of engineers and was totally ignorant about country living when I married him. Even after living the rural life for years, I still sort of am—so this book was an eye-opener for me. I had to ask Michael and the children so many questions just to get a basic paragraph written!”

Value of cultivating the art of reading

After performing a decade of research on literacy education, Amanda wholeheartedly believes that the “lost art” of reading “good ol’ books” is a worthwhile endeavor.

“Nearly all of the research on literacy education supports the same conclusion—that nurturing an appreciation for good reading helps children in more ways than we can even comprehend,” she said. “For example, fascinating studies have been done on the effect of mothers reading to their babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

They all reveal how amazingly therapeutic such reading can be, and how drastically it aids the infants physically, emotionally, psychologically and perhaps even spiritually.”

Amanda feels there is no better time than now to foster a genuine love of wholesome reading in our children, especially in this excessively digital age.

“Young minds and hearts are so impressionable,” Amanda observed. “This is a very good thing, but it needs to be navigated well, in order to preserve the purity of their souls.”

Truly, the beauty of the written word has the power to communicate love, wisdom and virtue to people of all ages, cultures and interests.

“Renowned Catholic author Michael D. O’Brien once expressed that through stories we encounter the depth of human experience and the complexity of moral choices,” Amanda said. “He also wrote, ‘Literature opens the door to the human soul, revealing truths that lie beneath the surface. [It] has the power to transform hearts and minds, fostering empathy and understanding.’ His words were right on!”

A branch of Tan Books offered to publish the book, but the cost for them to illustrate it was too steep. Noticing her discouragement, her daughter Marella offered to illustrate it instead.

“I thought it would be way too difficult of a job for her, but she proved me wrong,” Amanda said. “As a homeschooled student, she has plenty of time to

develop her God-given, artistic talents. She has taken over 100 challenging courses in vintage drawing, typography, graphic design fundamentals, digital design and computer programming, earning over 20 professional certifications. She is currently learning Java, which is helping her a lot with her design work.”

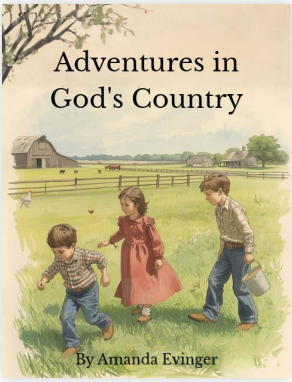
Last fall, after En Route Books and Media agreed to publish *Adventures in God’s Country*, Marella took a leap of faith and submitted two prayer journals she designed for publication to En Route as well. These beautiful, vibrantly illustrated journals are titled: *My Prayer Journal: It’s for Girls!* and *The Joyful Catholic Mother’s Prayer Journal*. The journals have simple but inspiring writing prompts, a saint quotation for each day, topics for reflection and more. Marella is also currently creating two more prayer journals in the series—one for teenage girls and one for women.

“I had never published a book before, so I didn’t think they would actually give my work a chance,” Marella said. “I suppose God wanted it done, because they said they would! We were all really surprised and excited! I am so thankful I can share these journals with others and help people pray better.”

Due to the enthusiasm people have expressed about Marella’s work, as well as the pressing need for authentically Catholic, affordable designers, she decided to start her own digital design and illustration business, which she named Grace-Gra-Fix Design. Further information about Marella’s design business and her creations can be found on her website at gracegra-fixdesign.my.canva.site/.

To purchase *Adventures in God’s Country*, scan the QR code or visit enroutebooksandmedia.com/adventuresingodscountry/.†

—Staff report



UPCOMING EVENTS



Big Smoke BBQ Competition June 21

The 2026 Big Smoke event at the Flickertail Garden on the ND State Fair Grounds in Minot is Sunday, June 21. Doors open at 3 p.m. Come and spend the day with priests and diocesan seminarians at this event held by the Serra Club of North Central North Dakota. Tickets can be purchased at the door. Take part in taste testing at competitor stations and stay for a BBQ dinner with all the fixings served by the seminarians. Proceeds of this event work to ensure the future of our Catholic Faith by supporting new priests, the priesthood and the consecrated life.



Home On The Range golf scramble June 27

Home On The Range is hosting the 9th Annual Dakota Scramble Golf Tournament at Pheasant Country Golf Course in South Heart, N.D. There are options to join as a partner in this special event—whether as a corporate sponsor, hole sponsor or by bringing your own team. The tournament takes place on Saturday, June 27. Registration will be held from 7 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. MST, with a shotgun start at 8 a.m. MST. You can look forward to great door prizes, contests for longest drive and longest putt and plenty of additional fun. Every dollar raised will directly support Home On The Range and the boys and girls in their care. For more information, go to www.hotrnd.com/golf-tournament.



KC pancake breakfast July 3-4

All are welcome to the Knights of Columbus Art in the Park 4th of July pancake breakfast on Friday, July 3 and Saturday, July 4. Each day the breakfast is served from 7-11 a.m. on the Morton Mandan Library patio behind the band shell on Main Street in Mandan. Cost is \$7 for adults and \$4 for children aged 10 and under. Proceeds to benefit various charities.



Town and Country Celebration July 19

You are invited to the annual Town and Country Celebration on Sunday, July 19. The event will be held at the Church of St. Vincent de Paul near Crown Butte. The day will begin with Mass celebrated by Bishop Kagan inside the church at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow Mass. There will be a blessing upon rural communities, equipment, land and animals. Attendees are invited to bring a container of soil or seed from their field or garden to be blessed. Bring your lawn chairs, blankets and umbrellas to enjoy the day outdoors. The event is hosted by Fr. Nick Schneider and the parishioners of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul. Register at bismarckdiocese.com/townandcountry or call Amanda at 701-204-7205. Registration is required for an accurate meal count. Note that although there is a simple ramp, the church is not handicapped accessible, especially for seating.



Champion’s Ride is Aug. 1

Everyone’s invited to the Champions Ride Rodeo on Saturday, Aug. 1 at 1 p.m. (MT)—a premiere event with top ranked professional cowboys invited to ride the toughest saddle broncs in the region. The Champions Ride not only has a rich history of cowboys, but also as a major fundraiser for the organization, Home On The Range (HOTR). Gates open at 11 a.m. with the grand entry at 12:30 p.m. All times are mountain time zone. Cost is \$20 for adults in advance or \$25 at the gate and \$13 for student tickets in advance or \$15 at the gate. HOTR is a diocesan-supported, nonprofit organization which helps abused, neglected and traumatized teenage boys and girls. For more information, go to hotrnd.com.



Vocation Celebration Aug. 6

All are invited to the first-ever Vocation Celebration on Thursday, Aug. 6. The event, sponsored by the St. Serra Vocations Apostolate of Bismarck-Mandan, will be held at Our Lady of Victory Chapel at St. Mary’s Central High School beginning with 5:30 p.m. Mass. There will also be food, fun and adoration to follow. Come celebrate, support and visit with our seminarians and men and women in formation for religious life. Funds raised from the event go towards vocations for the diocese.



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.

Taking part in disaster preparedness training

Sara Pachl
Catholic Charities North Dakota

Editor’s note: The following was written by the Community Resource Coordinator at Catholic Charities North Dakota.

On March 16–20, I attended AIDE for Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA). AIDE (Applied Institute for Disaster Excellence) is CCUSA’s annual training event that equips Catholic Charities staff, diocesan leaders and partner organizations with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate disasters. This year, the conference was held in Orlando, and this was my first time attending.

The week included special guest speakers and a variety of training sessions. I participated in disaster case management training with the goal of expanding CCND’s disaster response capabilities in the future, and I also joined CCUSA’s disaster cadre network. The cadre functions as a pool of subject matter experts and trained CCUSA certified disaster case managers who can be called upon to assist disaster affected agencies, either on the ground or virtually, during disaster events.

AIDE also provided excellent opportunities for networking with other Catholic Charities agencies and partner networks. I made valuable connections with Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Catholic Social Services of Rapid City, which may support future collaboration and mutual aid efforts.



In addition, I attended trainings on rural disaster response and navigating insurance before and after disasters. The week concluded with site visits, including a behind-the-scenes tour of SeaWorld Orlando, where we learned how the organization prepares for disasters and activates its emergency protocols.



The final guest speaker on Friday was Jim Cantore, meteorologist from *The Weather Channel*. He shared that North Dakota is the only state where he has not yet been “deployed” to report on a weather event. Given the saying that Jim Cantore’s presence is often a bad omen, I joked that he should stay away—North Dakota is fine without him!

The guest speakers provided valuable insights and diverse perspectives on planning for, activating during and recovering from disasters. Using the information gained at the conference, along with lessons learned from the June 2025 tornado event, I am making plans to strengthen CCND’s ability to respond to future disasters in North Dakota with support from CCUSA.

Catholic Charities North Dakota, in partnership with Catholic Charities USA, provides financial assistance and disaster case management for recovery after times of disaster. Catholic Charities North Dakota is also a member of the ND VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) and the State of North Dakota’s Disaster Response and Recovery Partners. These memberships ensure we are informed of local, state and federal response capabilities so we can provide the most accurate case management services in times of recovery.†



Submitted photo: Catholic Charities North Dakota employee, Sara Pachl, with Jim Cantore, meteorologist from *The Weather Channel*, who was a guest speaker at a recent seminar on disaster preparedness.

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Court St. Claire celebrating 65 years of faith, fidelity and family

In September 2025, Court St. Claire #1846 in Linton joyfully celebrated its 65th anniversary, a milestone made even more meaningful by honoring one of their own charter members, Mercedes Goetz, who has walked with the Catholic Daughters from the very beginning. Her quiet strength, steadfast faith and unwavering commitment have shaped the character of our court for more than six decades.

When Court St. Claire was founded in 1960, Mercedes was among the women who agreed to build something new—something rooted in prayer, service and sisterhood. Sixty five years later, she remains a living witness to the beauty of perseverance in faith. Fellow court members note that her presence at meetings, her gentle humor and her deep devotion to the Blessed Mother continue to inspire every generation that follows.

Adding to the joy of this anniversary celebration was the presence of Mercedes’ daughter, Toni

Goetz, herself a dedicated Catholic Daughter from another North Dakota court, Court St. Catherine #323 in Dickinson. Witnessing a mother and daughter share the same charism—each serving in her own community—was a powerful reminder that the mission of the Catholic Daughters is not only organizational, but generational. Their shared commitment reflects the way faith is handed down: heart to heart, home to home.

As Court St. Claire marks its 65th year, the members give thanks for the women who built their foundation and for those who continue to strengthen it today. Their charter member’s fidelity is a testament to what St. Claire teaches us: *we become what we love, and who we love shapes what we become*. Her love for Christ and for this sisterhood has shaped the court in ways that will echo far beyond this anniversary year. †

—Submitted information



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



Chaplain Fr. Mark Aune, Charter member Mercedes Goetz and Regent Kristen Vetter at the court anniversary celebration.



Mercedes Goetz, charter member of Court St. Claire #1846 and, her daughter, Toni Goetz, member Court St. Catherine #323 in Dickinson, enjoyed the celebration.



Submitted photos: Members of Catholic Daughters of America Court St. Claire #1846 in Linton celebrated their 65th anniversary.

Fladeland retires from the University of Mary after 40 years of service

This winter, longtime University of Mary Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Diane Fladeland celebrated her retirement after four decades of service to the institution she regards as her home. In keynote remarks shared at the annual faculty and staff Christmas celebration, Fladeland shared her perspective on the university’s remarkable history—and rightly so: For 40 years, she has been in the thick of it.

Student, nurse, educator

Raised on a farm outside of Jamestown, Fladeland made the most of every opportunity that came her way. In a one-room schoolhouse encompassing grades 1-8, she learned to be independent in her own studies and helped the younger students with theirs—two skills that have served her well throughout her life. She continued to excel at Jamestown High School, then enrolled at the University of North Dakota. Initially a psychology major, she worked at the state hospital in Jamestown after freshman year, and a colleague encouraged her to consider psychiatric nursing. Fladeland took to nursing naturally and never lost the warmth and compassion of her first profession

She met her husband Mike on a blind date while at UND, and they were married by the end of her sophomore year. Mike served with the U.S. Air Force and was stationed at Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda, Mich. With no four-year schools nearby, Diane transferred to Mercy College in Detroit, three hours south. Her weeklong trips from Wurtsmith to Mercy began a major thread in her life: *Do whatever it takes to earn the education you need.*



Submitted photos: At her 2026 farewell party, Dr. Diane Fladeland with her husband, Mike, family members and Monsignor James Shea as the University of Mary community celebrated her life and career.

After Mike left the Air Force, they moved to Chicago, then back to Jamestown to start their family. Diane allowed a student to join the attending nurse at the birth of their first son and was recruited while still in the hospital bed to teach nursing at Jamestown College.

She thrived in her new role supervising student nurses during their clinical experiences. When the chair of nursing asked her to earn a master’s degree, she enrolled at the University of Portland in Oregon, where, for three summers, she studied with two preschoolers in tow.

In 1985, she moved to Mary College, and shortly thereafter, Sister Mary Margaret urged her to pursue a doctorate to assist in the launch of a nurse practitioner program. Now with four children at home, Diane enrolled at the University of Minnesota.



Dr. Diane Fladeland (far right) joined Dr. Mary Dockter, dean, College of Health Professions; Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla; University of Mary President Monsignor James Shea; and Annunciation Monastery Prioress Sister Nicole Kunze, OSB, for the ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the newly named and renovated Saint Gianna School of Health Sciences.

The three youngest lived with her in the Twin Cities during the summer, while their oldest son stayed with Mike. During the academic year, she continued to take coursework while teaching at Mary—spending Mondays and Tuesdays in Minneapolis before returning to Bismarck to complete her clinical hours and teach her students.

Transformational Leadership

The launch of the nurse practitioner program would not be the last programmatic change Fladeland would help to facilitate. In 1997, Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Tom Johnson hired her as an assistant vice president, and when he retired three years later, she took his place. Over the next quarter century, the transformation has been staggering.

“Every week, one small, independent college closes—and this fall, we reached 4,000 students,” Fladeland

reminded her colleagues at the Christmas party. “Last April, I called more than 1,000 graduates forward in over 60 majors, 17 master’s programs, and five doctoral programs. Now, on Sunday at 8 p.m. or Wednesday at 10 a.m., Mass is full to the brim, with hundreds of students, faculty and staff coming together to worship.

“Mary College started at St. Alexius Hospital in Boniface Hall; we are now in the midst of the largest facility expansion in our history!” she said, referring to Mary’s Vision 2030 Capital Campaign.

Launched in 2015, the campaign has not only added signature campus features like the Lumen Vitae University Center and the Marian grotto but also enhanced academic facilities for the Saint Gianna School of Health Sciences and the Hamm School of Engineering, a wellness center and fieldhouse and the new Marauders athletics complex currently underway.

Also during her tenure as vice president for academic affairs, Fladeland helped Mary’s president, Monsignor James Shea, achieve “Newman Guide Recommended” status as a faithfully Catholic university—and today, 21 graduate degree and certificate programs at the university also boast Newman Guide recognition. Mainstay offerings like the flourishing Catholic studies program and the university’s Rome campus were developed and implemented on Fladeland’s watch, transforming the undergraduate experience for Catholic and non-Catholic students alike.

“We’ve embraced who we are as a Christian, Catholic and Benedictine institution,” she said. “We’ve always lived the mission, but we’ve become much more intentional about it. When what you’re doing is true, good and beautiful, word spreads.”

Fladeland also oversaw the launch of Mary’s five doctoral programs, in physical therapy (2006), nursing practice (2014), education (2015), occupational therapy (2017) and business administration (2021), as well as numerous, flexible undergraduate and graduate degree programs delivered online, in-person or in a blended format, on the Bismarck campus or at one of several satellite locations across the northern plains. In 2015, Fladeland helped lead the rollout of Year-Round Campus, which restructured the university’s academic calendar and catalog so students could earn a bachelor’s degree in just over two and a half years and a master’s in four—enabling them to save time and money.

None of these achievements came easily, but Fladeland pursued each new initiative with the same grit and energy that she had applied to her own studies. Long hours, long miles, long odds — *whatever it takes*.

“Work has always included a suitcase and travel,” Fladeland said. “The first month of his service, Monsignor Shea committed to bringing Catholic Studies to UMary. He and I headed to Saint Paul to

meet with Dr. Michael Naughton and Dr. Don Briel, and now we have the second largest Catholic Studies program in the U.S.! And on a plane to Peru to set up a medical mission, Monsignor and I sat up writing the curriculum for a master’s in bioethics—all night.”

Fladeland’s leadership and determination were integral to the development of the Hamm School of Engineering—which was built from scratch with no home, no curriculum, and no engineering faculty—and Mary College at ASU, an unprecedented partnership between a small, private, Catholic university and the largest public research university in the country. Today, both are thriving: The engineering school boasts state-of-the-art facilities, eight different degree programs and students from across the country, while the domestic exchange with ASU sparked a growing Catholic community on campus and the recent creation of the Photina Center for Catholic Counseling and Nazareth Seminary to serve the Diocese of Phoenix and surrounding communities.

As Fladeland’s retirement approached, the University of Mary conducted an extensive national search for her replacement. In the end, the committee discerned to hire an internal candidate, Dr. David Echelbarger, a professor of philosophy who assumes the role of vice president for academic affairs from the same assistant vice president post his predecessor held before she was promoted. Fladeland is convinced the university is in good hands and will lose none of its momentum in the transition.

“We have answered the call to bring Catholic higher education to our region and beyond,” she said. “Only with the breath of God, and under the unfailing watch of the Blessed Virgin, could the miracle that is UMary exist, thrive and prosper. And so, we follow the Rule of Saint Benedict and run while we have the light of life!” †

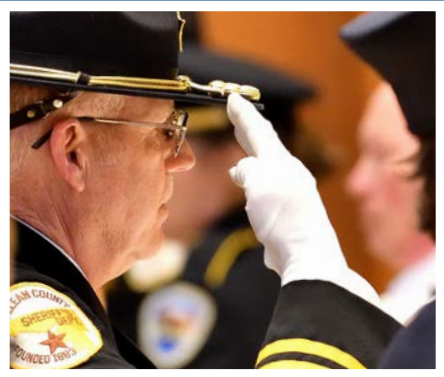
—Submitted information



BLUE MASS 2026

Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky

On May 14, Bishop Kagan celebrated the annual Blue Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck. By way of a brief history, Father Thomas Dade of the Archdiocese of Baltimore formed the Catholic Police and Firemen’s Society while serving at St. Patrick’s Church in Washington, D.C. over 90 years ago. More than 1,000 police and firemen, dressed in uniform, marched into St. Patrick’s for the celebration of the first Blue Mass on September 29, 1934. Since then, the Blue Mass has become a tradition in which the local community gathers to celebrate and thank those who serve their community as police officers, firefighters, emergency responders and 911 dispatchers as well as to offer prayers to God for their continued protection. The name comes from the traditional uniform color associated with law enforcement. †



*May we continue to ask the Lord to grant those who have laid down their lives
that promised share in the new and eternal life of the Risen Christ. Amen.*

New members enter the Church in Western North Dakota

At this year’s Easter Vigil, parishes in our diocese joyfully welcomed a remarkable number of new members into the Catholic Church. A total of 62 adults received the sacrament of baptism, 89 individuals were received into full communion and 33 adults completed their initiation through confirmation.

In a diocese of more than 61,000 Catholics, this year’s numbers reflect approximately one new member entering the Church for every 335 Catholics—an encouraging sign of growth and evangelization across western North Dakota. Each of these individuals represents a unique faith journey, often shaped by prayer, personal invitation and the witness of family and parish communities.

Parishes welcome these new Catholics through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). One of those welcomed this Easter, Jesse Roth, shared how meaningful the journey has been for him and his family, who are parishioners at the Church of Corpus Christi in Bismarck.

“OCIA was a transformative experience that introduced me to the Catholic Church and brought my wife and me closer together. She is a cradle Catholic who faithfully prayed that I would take the step to enter OCIA. Through this journey—and especially through my confirmation—we have grown stronger as a couple, and our marriage has been deepened. Our family is now more united through our shared faith. I have come to deeply appreciate the richness, history and apostolic succession of the Church. While I know there is still much more to learn, OCIA has been a meaningful springboard into my life as a Catholic.”

Stories like Jesse’s highlight the profound impact of OCIA and the continued vitality of the Church’s mission. As these new Catholics continue their journey of faith, they bring renewed energy and witness to parishes throughout the diocese. †

—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 nearly 400 orphaned and vulnerable children.

If you are interested in learning more about the Bismarck Diocese African Mission, contact mission director Tracy Kraft at 657-268-9000 or tkraft@bismarckdiocese.com or go to bismarckdiocese.com/african-mission for more information.



Town and Country Celebration

Sunday, July 19 • 11 a.m. CT

Mass, celebrated by
Bishop David D. Kagan,
begins at 11 a.m. CT inside
the Church of St. Vincent de Paul

Church of St. Vincent de Paul
3182 36th St
Mandan, ND

(Please Note: that although there is a simple ramp, the church is not handicapped accessible - especially for seating).

There will be a blessing upon
our rural communities, equipment,
land and animals. Feel free to
bring a container of soil or seed
from your field or garden
to be blessed.



Hosted by Father Nick Schneider and the parishioners
of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul.

Lunch will follow Mass (*registration required* for accurate meal count).
Bring your lawn chairs, blankets and umbrellas
to enjoy the day outdoors.

All are welcome!



To register, scan the QR code or go to
bismarckdiocese.com/townandcountry
or call Amanda at 701-204-7205.



Catholic just war doctrine

David Tamisiea

Peace on earth is one of the greatest gifts God can bestow on mankind. Peace is not merely the absence of war, but rather, as St. Augustine defines it, the “tranquility of order” (*City of God*, Book XIX), that is, the harmony within man, among men, and between God and man, that is the fruit of justice and charity. While peace is ultimately a divine gift, every person is called by God to be a peacemaker: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). The Church therefore urges everyone to work and pray for peace in the world, while striving to avoid war, violence, and conflict (CCC 2307-2308).

Because men are sinners, however, the threat of war and conflict is always present. Despite the grave dangers of modern warfare, the Church recognizes that nations may have to take up arms as a last resort to defend themselves against an unjust aggressor. While most commentators today justify American involvement in war for strategic reasons, the Church’s just war doctrine offers a moral framework for Christians to assess war in a way that prioritizes peace and the dignity of all persons, while at the same time recognizing a nation’s duty and right to defend its people and protect its homeland. Given our country’s ongoing war with Iran and involvement in other conflicts around the world, it is an opportune time to review Catholic just war doctrine.

The just war doctrine is divided into two distinct assessments: The first assessment, *ius ad bellum* (“right to go to war”), determines whether a nation can be morally justified in going to war. The second assessment, *ius in bello* (“right conduct in

war”), regulates and limits the kind of fighting that is morally permissible during war. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, this assessment belongs to the prudential judgment of the governmental authority responsible for the common good (CCC 2309), even though these judgments can be challenged and criticized.

There are six criteria that must be met to justify a nation going to war (*ius ad bellum*):

Legitimate Authority: The first criterion to justify entering war is that the decision must be made by the legitimate governing authority, not by an individual or group that has unlawfully seized or retained control of the state. This is because it is the government’s duty to promote the common good of its citizens. As St. Thomas Aquinas explains, just as it is lawful for the governing authority to have recourse to the sword in defending the common good against internal disturbances by criminals (Rom 13:4), “it is their business to have recourse to the sword of war in defending the common good against external enemies” (*Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 40, a. 1).

Just Cause: A second criterion for entering war is it can only be for a just cause. The clearest case of a just cause is when a nation acts in self-defense against an unjust aggressor that has attacked it first. Another reason that might justify going to war is to put a stop to severe human rights violations in another country. While there is no clear consensus, some moral theologians and ethicists also contend that a preemptive war might be morally justified if it is necessary to prevent an imminent and certain attack on the homeland.

Right Intention: A third criterion for entering war justly is that those responsible for the decision must have a morally good intention. Right intention consists of correcting the injustice and restoring the peace. War should not be entered into for unjust aims such as territorial expansion, pursuit of strategic advantage, demonstrating military power, or exacting vengeance for past wrongs.

Last Resort: A fourth criterion that must be satisfied is that war must be the last resort. As the *Catechism* puts it, governments have the right to lawful self-defense “once all peace efforts have failed” (CCC 2308). Engaging in diplomatic negotiations, exacting economic sanctions, issuing ultimatums prior to using force, and other peaceful alternatives must first have been tried and failed before entering war with another country.

Serious Prospects of Success: A fifth criterion justifying entry into war is there must be serious prospects of succeeding (CCC 2309). The political leaders responsible for military action must assess whether the aims of the war are achievable. Even for a just cause with all the right intentions, government leaders may nevertheless determine that a war is not winnable. Assessing the probability of success prevents an irrational resort to force that risks wreaking havoc and bloodshed on both sides for no good reason.

Proportionality: A sixth criterion that must be met is proportionality: The expected damage to be inflicted and costs to be born must be proportionate to the good to be achieved. If entering war is expected to cause tremendous harm for relatively little gain, it cannot be justified. The *Catechism* warns that this consideration is especially important due to the destructive capacities of modern warfare: “The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition” (CCC 2309).

As the *Catechism* makes clear, the moral law remains intact even during war: “The mere fact that war has regrettably broken out does not mean that everything becomes licit between the parties” (CCC 2312, quoting Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 79). Once war has begun, there are two chief criteria that must be met to justify how the war is being conducted (*ius in bello*):

Noncombatant Immunity: The first criterion that must be met for conduct during war is noncombatant immunity. In the Catholic tradition, a state of war permits the use of force only against those who are actively engaged in fighting. The moral law prohibits attacking civilians, prisoners of war, enemy soldiers who have surrendered, medical personnel, the wounded, and all others who are unarmed and do not pose an immediate threat. Due to the increased lethality of modern weaponry and threat of mass devastation, the Church is especially insistent in condemning indiscriminate destruction of civilian populations and non-military targets (CCC 2313-2314). For this reason, Pope Leo rightly condemned as “truly unacceptable” President Trump’s threat to destroy Iran’s “whole civilization”

Proportionality: Proportionality is not just a static principle for determining whether entering war is justified but must constantly be evaluated throughout the war. If the harms and burdens of a war become disproportionately high compared to the good to be achieved, the war can no longer be morally justified. A classic example where the harms became disproportionately greater than the good to be achieved is the Vietnam War, where over time American involvement no longer made sense because the immense destruction, high casualties, and political divisions at home far outweighed its strategic objectives.

Catholic just war doctrine recognizes that war may at times be necessary in a fallen world yet can only be morally justified under strict conditions ordered toward peace. Far from justifying violence, it places a heavy burden of proof on those who would wage war and insists that, even in conflict, the dignity of every human person must be upheld. Especially in an age marked by unprecedented destructive power, just war doctrine serves as a guide for conscientious Christians to judge whether war is justified and how it must be fought. Ultimately, it reminds us that war is never an end in itself, but a tragic and imperfect means of last resort to achieve a just and lasting peace. At this time of so much war and violence around the world, let us heed Pope Leo’s constant plea to work and pray tirelessly for peace. †

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.



AG ATTITUDES

God loves with unconditional humility

James Odermann

“That farmer can really drive straight,” my city 7-year-old granddaughter pointed out as I toured the countryside with her, her siblings and country cousins. “Not a single overlap of the seeding, not a curve in the rows,” another quipped.

“I wonder how that can be done,” another marveled. “When I drive, I cannot go that straight,” my 12-year old grandson, said.

I was enjoying the comradery, the joy of the moment, the awe of the field artistry which was part of the discussion. “Grandpa, why aren’t your rows straight like that?” another quipped. “You have been doing this a long time so you should be able to drive straight.”

I laughed and wanted to reach across the seat and give that youngster a hug. What a sweet, unassuming way to humble Grandpa.

The youngsters were observing, noticing the disparities and freely talking about the differences. Most satisfying for me was the fact we were together enjoying the gift of freedom in the wide-open spaces of clean air, surrounded by pure water and fertile soil.

“These fields are like art,” another interjected, which really brought me out of the delirium I was enjoying as I listened to the verbal exchange. Our drive-

about was a reason to get young minds away from video games and experience nature. Additionally, this drive was an opportunity for Grandma and her daughters and daughters-in-law to “straighten” up the house, which gets out of order with nearly a dozen youngsters playing.

The trip was a blessing for me, seeing the exuberance and unbridled enthusiasm. All wanted to talk—on multiple occasions at the same time. I was delighted by the pearls of knowledge each shared so unabashedly.

I was reminded of my juvenile years when English class introduced famous literary authors like Henry David Thoreau, Ernest Hemmingway and Leo Tolstoy to name a few. My favorite then—and still today—incorporates art and agriculture. It comes from Ralph Waldo Emerson: Agriculture is the mother of the arts and the foundation of all civilized society. The farmer stands close to nature; he obtains from the earth the bread and meat. The food, which was not, he causes to be.

I recalled that quote as we continued our drive-about. History has recorded the “settlement” of humanity centered around the development of agrarian roots, when God helped my sisters and brothers merge the elements of air, water and soil to produce food for sustenance.

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).

The simplicity of this combination of these earthly resources opened my being to the simplicity of God’s gift to the world: humility. Here, as I was reaping God’s gift of love and life with my grandchildren, I was reminded of the quote from the Gospel of St. John (3:16): For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life.

I believe Jesus is the Son of God. I believe the Holy Trinity is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This mystery is the core of the Catholic faith, which I am called to live in my thoughts, words and deeds.

The rousing trip with these grandchildren reminded me of the commitment by God to bring joy into the world. My call is to make sure I have my senses

attuned to the blessings of God—and answer the call daily in my life and vocation.

Furthermore, God is calling to make sure I have a humble commitment to my sisters and brothers. God is asking me to make sure my heart is free of prejudice and willing to share God’s compassion, patience, love and understanding with humanity—and do it humbly.

These youngsters make it easy to do. The real challenge is to completely surrender my ego and bias. I need to take time for prayer and reflection with God. God, just as young minds innocently did for me, will lovingly help me avoid discriminatory behavior and help me build God-like relationships with my sisters and brothers.

Jesus, help me to be your disciple. Care to join me?†

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

June 1	Fr. Basil Atwell, OSB	June 16	Br. Gregory Senger, OSB
June 2	Deacon Charles Kramer	June 17	Sr. Jobitha, CTC
June 3	Fr. Shane Campbell	June 18	Sr. Idania, Daughters of Mary Immaculate, Williston
June 4	Sr. Karen Warren, SSND		
June 5	Fr. Paul Cervinski	June 19	Fr. Gregory Crane
June 6	Deacon Leonard Krebs	June 20	Deacon Brian Lardy
June 7	Sr. Agatha Muggli, OSB	June 21	Deacon Kevin Leingang
June 8	Music Ministers	June 22	Lay Ministers
June 9	Bishop David Kagan	June 23	Fr. Patrick Cunningham
June 10	Deacon Lloyd Krueger	June 24	Br. Michael Taffe, OSB
June 11	Seminarian Alex Wilson	June 25	Deacon Tom Magnuson
June 12	Fr. William Cosgrove	June 26	Fr. William DeCrans
June 13	Deacon Joe Krupinsky	June 27	Sr. Beata, ACJ
June 14	Sr. Phoebe Schwartz, OSB	June 28	Deacon Michael Marback
June 15	Seminarians and Religious in Formation	June 29	Fr. Jacob Degele
		June 30	Deacon Gerald Martin



QUESTIONS I WAS AFRAID TO ASK

Q: Are your questions about the faith finally answered here?

Rev. Jason R. Signalness

Is it okay to talk to a deceased loved one when visiting their grave?

That depends on what is meant by “talk to.” It is acceptable to pray for them by asking God to have mercy upon them. It is also acceptable to ask them for their prayers for us because, if they are in heaven and “alive in Christ,” their prayers are powerful (James 5:16). Casual, one-sided conversation where we might, for example, tell them about our day, is also not problematic. What must be avoided is any attempt to obtain information from them which we could not know using ordinary human powers. The flow of information is from us to them, not the other way around. Any attempt to summon them or use mediums or sorcerers to have two-way conversations is forbidden and dangerous. If we used a medium to contact a deceased loved one, for example, we would most likely be victims of a scam. But if the “medium” were genuine, they may channel not our loved ones as expected, but demons instead, and thus cannot be trusted. As the *Catechism* explains, “all forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to ‘unveil’ the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone” (CCC 2116).

Do I offend God by looking for evidence of His existence?

Not at all. God has given us minds that can think, and a desire to know. Theology was described by St. Anselm as “faith seeking understanding,” and St. Thomas Aquinas provided us with five famous proofs for the existence of God. These men show us there is nothing wrong in looking for ways to prove God’s existence using reason, or by looking for evidence in His creation. When seeking such evidence, however, some great humility and patience is required. Remember, there are thousands of years of arguments and explanations from saints and theologians that have come before us, many of which are very convincing if carefully followed with an open mind. So, go ahead and look for evidence. If done rightly, such evidence can be seen everywhere and can lead a person to a deeper belief in God. That said, we can always doubt our own reasoning and wonder if we have made a mistake. Our faith must not be based only on our academic proofs and assessment of evidence. A regular prayer routine, with an openness to God’s existence, will give you and God the opportunity to build a relationship. And if a person has a relationship with someone, it is harder to doubt their existence. So, go ahead and look for evidence, but also seek out the Lord in patient and persistent prayer. Many have found their experience of God in prayer convincing.

Father Signalness is pastor of Queen of the Most Holy Rosary in Stanley and St. Ann in Berthhold. 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.

If sin requires a choice, should I still confess random evil or immoral thoughts that come to mind?

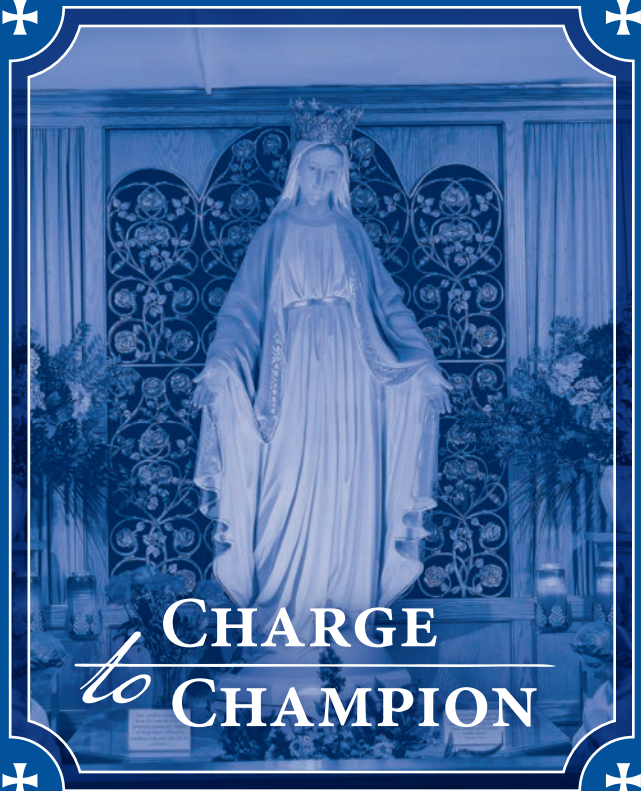
There is no need to confess temptations or thoughts that spontaneously come to mind and are rapidly dismissed. If a person chooses to dwell on them, however, they should be confessed. When in doubt as to whether a choice was made to entertain the thoughts, it does not hurt to mention them to a priest in confession.

Is every soul in purgatory guaranteed heaven eventually, or could they still go to hell?

Souls in purgatory are guaranteed heaven. The *Catechism* explains that “all who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned” (CCC 1030-1031). We should pray for them, and have Masses offered for them, to aid them in this purification, so their arrival at heaven will be hastened.

I suffer from depression. Is it okay to take medication rather than rely on prayer and God to heal me?

There is a parable told of a man who was stuck on his rooftop in a flood, praying for God to save him. A man came by in a rowboat and offered the stranded man a ride to safety. He declined the ride because he was waiting for God to save him. The water rose higher, and the man drowned. When the man got to heaven, he asked God why, if he had prayed in faith, God let him drown. God replied, “I sent you a rowboat. What more did you expect?” Sometimes, God heals without medical intervention, even miraculously, and we should pray for that. But he also works through the God-given talents of doctors and scientists to heal us. My suggestion is to both pray and take the advice of a good and trusted doctor. That medicine might be a God-sent “rowboat.” And if God does heal the condition in a more dramatic fashion, we can trust that the Lord will also make it known, in cooperation with the doctor, that the medicine would no longer be needed. †



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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.

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