

New Earth

March 2024 | Vol. 45 | No. 3

The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo



Calling on the Holy Spirit for guidance

Third Diocesan Synod
coming April 11–13

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From Bishop Folda:
“We adore you, O Christ,
and we praise you”

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Annual March for Life
remains youthful

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Raising Catholic kids: New
study suggests what successful
parents have in common

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DIOCESE OF
FARGO



NATIONAL
Eucharistic
Revival

ON THE COVER:

From Holy Spirit Church in Fargo. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

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NEW EARTH

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Mission

Our mission is to inform, teach, and inspire readers about the Catholic faith and the life of parishioners in Eastern North Dakota.

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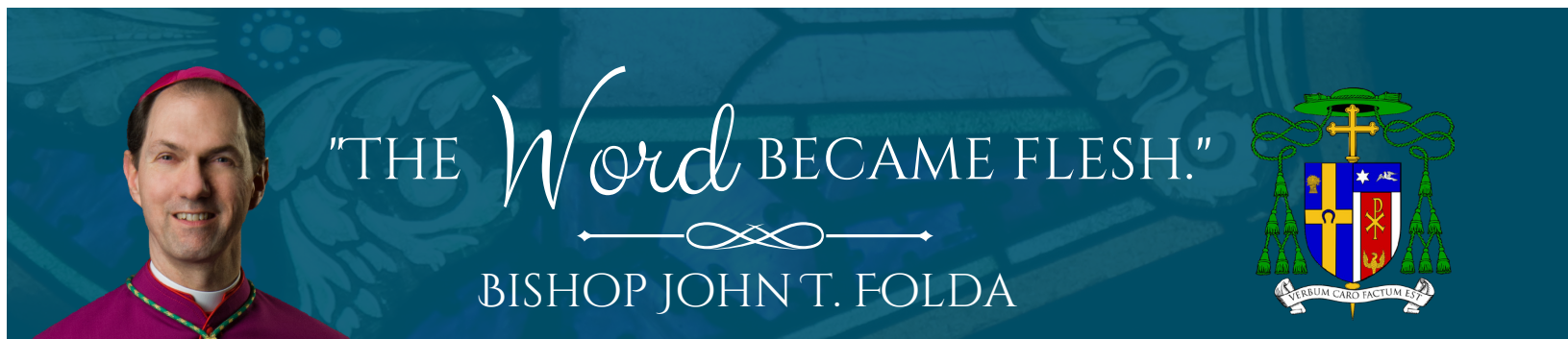
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“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you”

“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.” During the season of Lent, we often hear those words when we participate in the Stations of the Cross. We come to *adore* him as he lays down his life for us. But closely connected with this devotion of Lent is the adoration of our Lord that takes place in our churches year round. I am constantly edified by the practice of Eucharistic adoration that is so widespread in our diocese, and I believe it is a source of enormous grace for all of us.

Eucharistic adoration is a centuries-long spiritual custom in the Church, and it flows from our celebration of the Mass. The faithful have always realized that Christ, who gives himself to us in the sacrifice of the Mass, remains with us in the reserved Blessed Sacrament in our churches. Remember the promise he made to his apostles: “I will be with you always, even until the end of the age.” As I tell the young people who are receiving their First Holy Communion, Jesus makes good on this promise in a beautiful way through the Eucharist. He is with us, and we come to him simply to be in his presence. St. John Vianney noticed a certain parishioner praying often before the tabernacle, and asked him what he was praying for. And the man replied, “I look at him, and he looks at me.”

Eucharistic adoration is a simple but powerful act of prayer. To adore Christ is to recognize him as the Son of God, to give him the worship that we owe him. In faith, we acknowledge that the Lord is with us, and he waits for us to come to him. Ideally, our adoration can happen in silence when we can better hear God speaking to our hearts. It is a time to listen, to hear his saving Word, his quiet promptings in our souls. In his presence, we remember his Incarnation: “The Word became flesh and dwelled among us.” We recall his teachings and the miraculous signs of his divine power: the healing of lepers, the multiplication of loaves and fishes, the calming of the storm at sea, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. We ponder his sacrificial love, shown through his suffering and death on the cross. We also remember his glorious resurrection, and can say with the beloved disciple, “It is the Lord.” Reading the

Scriptures during Eucharistic adoration, especially the Gospel, is most fitting and fruitful as we kneel or sit before the Lord like Mary of Bethany.

Our time of adoration before the Lord in the Eucharist is also an opportunity to pour out our hearts to him. We can share our joys and sorrows, our hopes and our needs. He hears us and reassures us of his love. It is a wonderful time to intercede for those we love, our spouses and children, family and friends, and anyone in need. Certainly it is an occasion to pray for the Church, which is always in need of God’s healing grace. We can pray for a culture of life, and for peace. Or, perhaps, we can simply gaze on the Lord with love and trust.

The time we spend in adoration may be very quiet and personal, but even in that moment we are united with all the faithful around the world. Prayer before the Eucharist is always an ecclesial prayer, a prayer that unites us with the Church. As I pray quietly, I am joining with brothers and sisters in Ukraine, Israel, Cuba, China, and my own hometown too. We are all joined in a spirit of adoration and love for our Savior, who gathers us together and holds us close to his heart. Through this time of prayer, Jesus forms us and sends us forth, just as he sent his apostles into the world. Pope Francis recently spoke of this sending: “Do we, I ask myself, believe in the power of the Eucharist? Does our going to others, our service, find its beginning and its fulfillment there, in adoration?” Through adoration of our Lord, we are formed for the mission that Jesus prepares for all of his disciples.

Adoration of our Lord in the Eucharist does indeed flow from the Mass, but it directs us toward the Mass as well. From our prayerful encounter with Jesus, we are moved to return to the celebration of his sacrifice. The Mass is the greatest prayer of the Church, and our adoration fills us with desire for this celebration of the Paschal Mystery. We seek once again to receive our Lord in Holy Communion, which is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet he prepares for us. And we should also keep in mind that our celebration of Mass is itself an act of adoration. Pope Benedict says, “Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we receive.” St. Augustine says

“Jesus makes good on this promise in a beautiful way through the Eucharist.” —Bishop John T. Folda

even more strongly, “No one eats that flesh (of Christ) without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it.” The way we participate in Mass—our attentiveness and listening, our manner of receiving the Eucharist, our interaction with others—should always express adoration and worship of our Lord. After all, it is the mystery of salvation that unfolds before us, and we should rightly be filled with wonder and awe. Whether we come to him in the simplest chapel or the most magnificent basilica, we know that “It is the Lord.”

The Church in her wisdom calls us to adoration of our Lord, especially in the Holy Eucharist. So now, during this holy season of Lent and during our Eucharistic Revival, I invite everyone to come to Jesus and simply to adore him. It will be a blessing for you and for us all.

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

O Jesus, eternal Priest, keep your priests within the shelter of Your Sacred Heart, where none may touch them. Keep unstained their anointed hands, which daily touch Your Sacred Body. Keep unsullied their lips, daily purpled with your Precious Blood. Keep pure and un-earthly their hearts, sealed with the sublime mark of the priesthood. Let Your holy love surround them and shield them from the world's contagion.



Bless their labors with abundant fruit and may the souls to whom they minister be their joy and consolation here and in heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown. Amen. (By St. Therese of Lisieux)



Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

March - For the new martyrs

We pray that those who risk their lives for the Gospel in various parts of the world inflame the Church with their courage and missionary enthusiasm.

BISHOP FOLDA'S CALENDAR

Mar. 1–4

St. JPII Schools Alumni Events, Fort Myers, Fla.

Mar. 8

Diocesan Pastoral Center Lenten Retreat, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

Mar. 9 at 10 a.m.

Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Joseph, Devils Lake

Mar. 12–13

Catholic Charities Retreat and Board Meeting, Pastoral Center, Fargo

Mar. 16 at 10 a.m.

Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Anthony, Fargo

Mar. 17 at 2 p.m.

Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Catherine, Valley City

Mar. 23 at 10 a.m.

Confirmation/First Eucharist, Holy Spirit, Fargo

Mar. 24 at 10 a.m.

Palm Sunday, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Mar. 26 at 11 a.m.

Chrism Mass, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

Mar. 28 at 7 p.m.

Mass of the Lord's Supper, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Mar. 29 at 10 a.m.

Stations of the Cross, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Mar. 30 at 8:30 p.m.

Easter Vigil in the Holy Night, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Mar. 31 at 10 a.m.

Easter Sunday Mass, Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

Apr. 6 at 10 a.m.

Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. John, Grafton

Apr. 6 at 5 p.m.

Confirmation/First Eucharist, Holy Family, Grand Forks

Apr. 7 at 2 p.m.

Confirmation/First Eucharist, St. Stephen, Larimore

Apr. 8 at 7 p.m.

Mass and Blessing of St. Benedict Parish Center, Horace

Apr. 11–13

Synod Assembly, Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo



MONTHLY EUCHARIST MIRACLE

Two Eucharistic Miracles of Santarem, Portugal

From TheRealPresence.com (edited for content)

On Feb. 16, 1266 in Santarem, Portugal, a young woman who was overcome with jealousy for her husband, consulted a sorceress who told her to go to the church and steal a consecrated Host to use for a love potion. The woman stole the Host and hid the Holy Eucharist in a linen cloth that immediately became stained with Blood. Frightened by this, she ran home and opened the kerchief to see what had happened.

To her amazement, she saw that the Blood was gushing from the Host. The confused woman stored the Particle in a drawer in her bedroom. That night the drawer began to emit brilliant rays of light, which illuminated the room as if it were daytime. The husband was also aware of the strange phenomenon. The next day, the couple informed their pastor, who went to the home to remove the Host and return the Blessed Sacrament to the church in a solemn procession, accompanied by many religious and lay people. The Host bled for three consecutive

days, and was then placed in a beautiful reliquary made of beeswax.

In 1340 another miracle occurred. When the priest opened the tabernacle, he found the beeswax vase broken into many pieces, and in its place was a crystal vase containing the Blood mixed with the wax. The Sacred Host is currently preserved in an 18th century Eucharistic throne above the main altar of the Church of St. Stephen, now known as the Shrine of the Holy Miracle. Throughout the centuries, on various occasions, the Host gave new emissions of blood, and in some cases various images of Our Lord were seen in the Holy Eucharist. Among the witnesses of this prodigy is St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies, who visited the shrine before going on the missions. Every year since the miracle occurred, on the second Sunday of April, the precious relic is processed from the home of the couple, now a chapel, to the Church of St. Stephen.

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Dec. 6-8, 2024

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Love our global family through CRS Rice Bowl

By Catholic Relief Services

Catholic Relief Services is calling on Catholics across the United States to show their love for our sisters and brothers around the world by participating in the annual Lenten program, CRS Rice Bowl.

“Ash Wednesday always marks the beginning of CRS Rice Bowl,” said Beth Martin, CRS’ director of Formation and Mobilization. “And this year, Ash Wednesday fell on Feb. 14, or St. Valentine’s Day, and we think CRS Rice Bowl is the perfect way to celebrate the love we have for our global family.”

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.” When we receive Jesus through the Eucharist, our hearts are filled with his love and the call to share that love.

“During Lent, we are meant to express the love that we feel when we receive the Eucharist through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving,” said Martin. “CRS Rice Bowl gives us the means to do that—to put our love into action.”

Alms gathered through CRS Rice Bowl primarily go toward hunger and poverty alleviation programs in countries where CRS operates, however 25% of those funds stay in the diocese where they are collected. CRS Rice Bowl grants are given to local organizations that prioritize ending hunger and poverty in their communities.

“Love can be expressed in so many ways,” said Martin. “Even through a small act such as giving up your daily cup of coffee and instead, donating that money to CRS Rice Bowl. That small sacrifice—that small act of love—can change the lives of so many people.”

Previous years, schools, and parishes participating in CRS Rice Bowl held in-person events to collect donations saved during Lent. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many parishes developed online giving pages to accept alms. CRS Rice Bowl participants are encouraged to reach out to their local parishes to determine whether in-person collections will occur or if they should donate via an online community giving page.

Donations to CRS are accepted at crsricebowl.org/give, (877) 435-7277, or by mail and write “CRS Rice Bowl” on the memo of your check.

Catholic Relief Services
Attn: CRS Rice Bowl
P.O. Box 5200
Harlan, IA 51593-0700



A story of hope from El Salvador

By Catholic Relief Services

In Sandra Amaya’s home in Morazán, El Salvador, everyone helps with the chores. Early in the morning Sandra lights the firewood to cook, prepares coffee, and sweeps the chicken coop. Oscar, her eldest son, makes breakfast before walking nearly two hours to his high school. Nine-year-old Gamaliel grinds corn and, after having breakfast, goes to school accompanied by his father Santos and his little brother, Caleb.

Santos, Sandra’s husband, is a farmer, but longer droughts and unpredictable rains have reduced his harvests and income. Seeking to earn extra money, Sandra sold bread, tamales, and empanadas. When she heard about a Catholic Relief Services project on raising chickens, Sandra didn’t hesitate to join. She learned about preparing food for chickens and that they eat better if they are in a pen. She learned how to vaccinate and take care of them if they get sick.

As soon as Sandra received some chickens from the project, she began to apply her knowledge. Now her family has access to their own eggs, which saves them money on food, especially now that prices are so high. Her family eats healthier

because they can eat a variety of foods, instead of just beans or tortillas with salt.

Sandra wants to keep learning and Santos supports her. “I made the decision to be a promoter because I wanted to have new knowledge; no one can take knowledge away from you,” she says. “I discussed it with my husband and he agreed.”

When she travels far to attend a training, Santos takes care of the children. Sandra enjoys supporting other families by teaching them everything she learned.

Our Catholic faith teaches us how important it is to live in community for our growth and fulfillment. We believe that all people should participate in society, seeking the well-being of all, especially that of our sisters and brothers in need, just as Sandra does.



Sandra Amaya and her family in El Salvador. (Catholic Relief Services)

Generous donor provides dollar for dollar match for new Women's Care Center

By Kristina Bloomsburg | Assistant Editor of New Earth

After the *Dobbs* decision, the area's abortion facility, Red River Women's Clinic, moved into Moorhead, Minn., where abortions remain legal. In response, Women's Care Center purchased property directly across the street. The Women's Care Center has plans to build on the property and has raised nearly \$2 million—over two thirds of their total goal.

A generous donor recently provided the means necessary to ensure the building project could begin this summer. "We have a very generous donor that desires to help us reach our goal and break ground this summer," said Angela Wambach, Executive Director of Women's Care Center. "Every dollar we raise for the Moorhead capital campaign, now through April 15, will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$250,000 and two dollars for every dollar after that up to a total gift of \$500,000. This would total \$875,000 and bring us to our goal."

There are three abortion facilities in Minnesota: Duluth, St. Paul, and Moorhead. The Duluth and St. Paul facilities have life-saving pregnancy centers next door, and Moorhead needs one too.

"There is no more life-saving location for a pregnancy center. Being 'next door' or on the path to the abortion clinic, truly saves lives. If we are there, women come for second opinions, they come because they didn't know there was an alternative, and they come for the free services. If we are not there, they may not come," said Angela.

In addition to being next door, there are other factors that help Women's Care Center appeal to the women seeking services. The new center will have an aesthetically pleasing exterior with large signage and a private parking lot. It will be highly visible and accessible and have full-time hours with the same 24-hour hotline as the Fargo location. Once inside, women will find a home-like environment where they feel truly welcomed and safe—the first steps in choosing life for their children.

Every woman receives a free early ultrasound to see her baby and to hear the heartbeat. Ultrasounds not

only help a woman choose life but also play a key role in helping her bond with her son or daughter and in taking steps to having a healthy baby.

When a woman is considering a choice for her pregnancy, it is important to offer her a path to becoming a successful mother. The promise to be with her every step of the way, from confirmation of pregnancy until years after birth, has saved many babies from abortion.

A client, Kahri, said, "I keep thinking of what my life would be like without Women's Care Center. It makes me cry because I just love this baby so much."

"Women's Care Center is where nine out of ten women choose life for their babies," said Angela. "Without the involvement of passionate supporters, it would be impossible to save so many moms and babies. This mission would not exist."

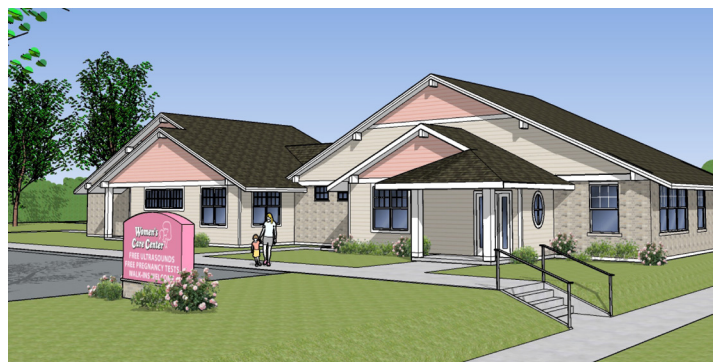
To make a dollar for dollar matching donation, mail to 103 University Dr. North, Fargo, ND 58102, visit www.supportwomenscarecenter.org/donate/ and choose the Moorhead location, or call Lisa Eggert, Development Director, at (701) 799-5545 or Angela Wambach, Executive Director, at (218) 591-8403.



Madi, Women's Care Center client. (submitted photo)



Baby Mayhree, daughter of a Women's Care Center client. (Ten Little Chickens Photography)



A drawing of the Women's Care Center in Moorhead, Minn., scheduled to break ground this summer. (submitted photo)

Give Back Award goes to St. Catherine's teacher

By St. Catherine's School, Valley City

St. Catherine's School in Valley City is proud to announce that Mrs. Dawn Ihry was selected as the recipient of the Give Back Award. This award, given out by Catholic Financial Life, honors teachers with an exceptional commitment to Catholic education. Catholic Financial Life is a company based in Milwaukee, Wis. This award, given annually, is open to all Catholic elementary, middle, and high school teachers in the United States. All nominated teachers were narrowed down through a public voting process. The top 10 vote recipients were reviewed by a panel at Catholic Financial Life to select three winners, based on the number of votes, the impact the teacher made, and additional stories and comments that were shared during the voting process.

In her nomination letter, St. Catherine's principal Nick Lee stated, "Mrs. Ihry is an exceptional teacher, mentor, leader, and practicing Catholic at St. Catherine School. She has been employed at St. Catherine School since 2005. Every colleague she has would have been able to write a list of positive attributes for Mrs. Ihry. More importantly, every student she has had would be able to do the same. Every issue that has arisen in the school this year has been met with one constant, Mrs. Ihry offering to help in whatever way she can. She goes above and beyond every single day."

Twice during her tenure, Mrs. Ihry served as a Dean of Students when there was not a principal at the school. Each time, she maintained her teaching position, while adding additional responsibility. Numerous stories were shared by many throughout the community, and it was clear through the voting process that her impact on the Valley City community and St. Catherine Community will be felt for years to come.

The award was presented during National Catholic Schools Week 2024.



Father Paul Duchscher (left) and St. Catherine's School principal Nick Lee (right) with Give Back Award winner Dawn Ihry. (submitted photo)

St Gianna's home mixes fun and fundraising

By Paul Braun | Editor of New Earth

How do you celebrate 20 years of service to mothers and their unborn and born children? If you're the St. Gianna and Pietro Molla Maternity Home in Warsaw, you host amazing events year-round. On Feb. 2, St. Gianna's invited the Minto and surrounding communities for a pre-Giving Hearts Day event featuring a taco bar and the Johnny Holm Band. Mary Pat Jahner, the home's director, wanted to bring in a big draw for the community to have some fun, and to raise awareness to give to St. Gianna's during Giving Hearts Day.

"I think people are so excited," said Jahner. "(Johnny) brings a lot of nostalgia and so much joy and energy. We just wanted to do something kind of as a pre-Giving Hearts event, to spread awareness for our work, but really to just do something exciting on a Friday night. We're always wanting funds as well, but that's not really the whole goal of the night. Just to enjoy and celebrate what's been done. We've been celebrating this whole year and we're going to keep on doing that."

The hundreds who attended the event were treated to a taco bar before Johnny Holm and the band took to the stage. The



Guests danced to the rock and country music provided by the Johnny Holm Band. (Paul Braun | New Earth)

next big event for the St. Gianna and Pietro Molla Maternity Home is the Canticle of Praise banquet at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks on Apr. 16. Raymond Cardinal Burke will celebrate Mass at St. Michael's in Grand Forks at 4 p.m. Cardinal Burke and Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla, daughter of St. Gianna Molla, will be keynote speakers at the event. More details are available at www.sgpmollahome.com/20th-anniversary.

D.C. March for Life remains youthful

By Susan Noah | Parishioner of Sts. Anne & Joachim Church, Fargo

I recently had the pleasure of accompanying my youngest son and two nieces on Shanley High School's annual pilgrimage to Washington D.C. for the March for Life. This was my sixth March for Life experience, once as a college student myself and the other times with my older sons. After a 24-hour bus ride, the 55 Shanley students and chaperones arrived in time to hit the Rally for Life held the night before the march. The rally set the tone for the march with music, pro-life speakers, adoration, and opportunities for confession.

On the day of the March, despite the blowing snow and icy roads, there was a huge contingent of pro-life people from all over the eastern half of the United States. Shanley and the other North Dakota schools celebrated Mass together with Bishop Folda before heading to the National Mall.

The theme of this year's March was, "With every woman, for every child." The rally on the mall before the march focused on the life-saving work of pregnancy resource centers. There were lots of great speakers but my designated group of high school boys were particularly enthusiastic when Jim Harbaugh, head coach of the national champion Michigan Wolverines, took the stage. Harbaugh encouraged everyone to speak the truth with clarity and courage and to be warriors for the sanctity of life.

Though most students would say that having cold, wet feet was the worst part of the day, the best part was walking down Constitution Ave with the students holding the Deacons for Life sign, Bishop Folda walking and talking amongst the students from our diocese, and the University of Mary flags waving high ahead of us. As far as you could see in front and behind us, the streets were curb-to-curb with tens of thousands of pro-life pilgrims. It is such a transformative event to see so many joyful young adults in solidarity for life.

We squeezed in a couple monuments and tours on this whirlwind pilgrimage. The last stop before heading back to Fargo was the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the largest church in North America. Father Metzger, principal of Shanley, gave the students a tour prior to Mass.

The funny thing about the March for Life experience is that the only person who seems to get older year to year is me. I look around and it's the high school and college-aged kids who dominate the pro-life scene. The enthusiasm and excitement is invigorating and I remain optimistic.

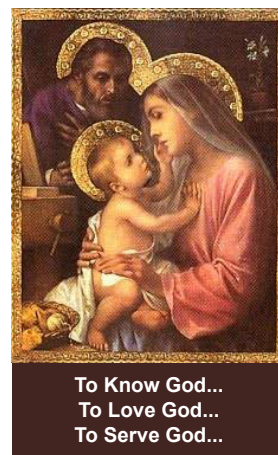
Now I'd better stay in shape so I can keep up on the March when my daughter hits high school in five years.



Shanley Students outside the capitol following the 51st annual March for Life on Jan. 19. (Susan Noah | New Earth)



Bishop Folda with students from Shanley High School, Fargo. (Susan Noah | New Earth)



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Mar. 14 - 17	Women's Cursillo retreat
Apr. 4 - 7	Ignatian Silent women's retreat (full)
Apr. 19 - 21	Life-Giving Wounds retreat
Apr. 22 - 24	Prayer retreat for priests
Apr. 25 - 28	SEARCH youth/young adult retreat
May 2 - 4	Women's retreat by Father Lefor
May 9 - 11	Theology of the Body & the Culture of Life
Aug. 8 - 10	Women's retreat by Father Lefor
Oct. 3 - 5	Women's retreat by Father Lefor



What is a Life-Giving Wounds retreat?

April 19 - 21, 2024

The Life-Giving Wounds retreat is a unique opportunity for young adults (18+) and adults with divorced or separated parents to reflect intentionally on the wounds caused by their family's breakdown, together with others who know this pain and knowledgeable, compassionate retreat leaders. With the help of God, retreat attendees learn to see how their life-draining wounds can become a life-giving mission of love for themselves, their relationships, and others.

Visit www.fargodiocese.org/lgw



3150 116a Ave. SE, Suite A,
Valley City, ND 58072



DIOCESE OF
FARGO

Contact:

Carrie.Nice@MaryvaleND.org
(701) 845 2864



Calling on the Holy Spirit for guidance

Third Diocesan Synod coming April 11–13

By Paul Braun | Editor of New Earth



The call is out to the faithful of the Diocese of Fargo to join Bishop John Folda as he opens the Third Synod of the Diocese of Fargo April 11–13, 2024, at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo. Bishop Aloisius Muench called the first diocesan synod in 1941, followed ten years later in 1951 by the second diocesan synod called by Auxiliary Bishop Leo Dworschak. A synod has not been held in the Diocese of Fargo in over 70 years, so this will be an historic event for the faithful of the diocese.

But what is a diocesan synod? According to the official announcement made by Bishop Folda calling for the synod, “The word ‘synod’ comes from the Greek and signifies ‘walking together,’ or taking a common road together. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that a diocesan synod is ‘an assembly of priests and other members of Christ’s faithful who assist the bishop by offering advice about the needs of the diocese and by proposing legislation for him to enact. A synod is not a legislature or a parliament where the Church’s teachings will be altered. It is a gathering of the faithful for prayerful discernment and consultation.’”

Synod delegates include parish priests, deacons, consecrated religious, and laypersons. Parish delegates were nominated by their local pastors and pastoral councils. There have been several events leading up to the actual synod gathering. Beginning June 7, 2022, Pentecost Sunday, Bishop Folda announced that a synod would take place. In his homily, Bishop Folda called on the Holy Spirit to be a guide and encouraged the faithful to offer prayers for a successful event.

The first phase of preparing for the synod was called “The Church Listens.” Regional listening sessions were held in 17 different locations across the diocese beginning in January 2023, along with additional sessions with priests and deacons of the diocese. In these sessions, after a time of scripture reflection and prayer before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, those gathered discussed a few key questions: What are the top three things that are working well at your parish/diocese? What are the top three challenges to address in your parish/diocese? What is one step I may be called to take to respond? The discussions were lively and the responses were many and varied.



The faithful of the Diocese of Fargo are invited to attend the opening and closing Masses of the synod, and to offer prayers for a successful synod. (Kristina Bloomsburg | New Earth)

The second phase of preparation for the synod, The Church Prepares, is complete. Following the listening sessions, the many responses were gathered together and organized into three key areas: Encounter, Formation, and Mission. Based on this consultation process, Bishop Folda formulated the significant issues and questions that should guide the ongoing preparation for our synod.

Focus Area I: Encounter: How can we encounter Christ, especially in the Eucharist, and foster communion with him and with each other in the Church?

Focus Area II: Formation: How are we formed in our identity as missionary disciples so that we may be prepared to live, witness, and hand on the gift of faith?

Focus Area III: Mission: As individual believers and Catholic communities, how can we fulfill our mission to proclaim Christ to others in all circumstances and to all people throughout the Diocese of Fargo?

Phase three of the synod preparation, The Church Engages, is the Synodal Assembly itself. This is where the faithful of the diocese can contribute mostly through prayer, but also by taking part in the public liturgies on April 11 at 5 p.m. and April 13 at noon, both at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo. The opening Mass is the “Mass for a Council or Synod” from the Roman Missal and those attending gain a plenary indulgence. There will be music pieces especially written for the synod by the Director of Music at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church, Patrick McGuire.

“Music profoundly impacts people,” said McGuire. “When we cry out to God in song, it is one of the most impactful and pure acts of humanity. My hope is that as we sing, the music will reflect the themes present in the liturgy. In this way, the music will amplify the liturgy and highlight the messages therein. The liturgy is always teaching us by the scripture and prayers that accompany it. I think this is why the Church crafted this Mass that begins a Council or Synod with ‘love’ as a theme of the celebration, to help open people’s hearts to the powerful love of Christ that extends to become our Christian mission.”

McGuire invites any musician age 13 and older from around the diocese to join the synod choir by calling him at (701) 235-5757.

For the delegates themselves, the three days will be filled with prayer, breakout sessions, special liturgies and open discussions on the three identified focus areas. Lori Bichler is an assigned delegate from St. David’s parish in Ashley. Bichler tells *New Earth* she is impressed by the length of planning, the efforts placed by Bishop Folda, and of those responding to voice their concerns and voice what is going well in the diocese.

“The open dialogue that took place prior to the Synod allowed me to feel comfortable to provide input, that the voices of not only the religious are being heard but of the laity,” said Bichler. “It is important to place respect to all individuals and their roles in the Catholic Church while maintaining the integrity of our beautiful Catholic faith.”

Bichler added that she hopes the synod will provide ways to inspire the faithful to grow into a deeper relationship with God.

“Our faith is not only found inside the church but carried out into our everyday lives,” said Bichler. “We are beautifully created. Each has different gifts and charisms to offer to grow the Catholic faith and the Church and to bring others to the faith that do not know Christ. We are just so blessed to be able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, and we should desire to have everyone to come to the banquet.”

After the Synodal Assembly, Bishop Folda will reflect on the results in prayer and prepare a pastoral letter to announce the implementations and next steps. All are encouraged to continue to ask the Holy Spirit’s guidance in this synod process.

Steve Splonskowski, Synod coordinator and moderator, said, “These are exciting times for the Church. Through this synod process, we are taking the time to pray together and discuss how the Holy Spirit is inspiring both us as individuals and as a Church to engage the world as missionaries of the Gospel. It’s amazing what can happen when we take the time to listen to one another and to what the Holy Spirit is inviting us to do. We are already seeing the fruits of solidarity in our preparations for the Synodal Assembly.”

“We can be absolutely certain that the Holy Spirit is moving among us, touching our hearts, and the hearts of many, many others as well,” said Bishop Folda during his Pentecost Sunday homily in 2022. “The Spirit sometimes comes very quietly like



The third synod for the Diocese of Fargo will be held at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo April 11–13.
(Paul Braun | New Earth)

a gentle breeze. And at other times, he comes upon us like a powerful driving wind. The Spirit is the bond of life and love between the Father and the Son. And he comes upon us so that we might be one with him. I look forward to praying and journeying with all of you through this upcoming diocesan synod. And I beg the Holy Spirit to pour down upon us his abundant blessing and grace to bless this endeavor and all the faithful of the Diocese of Fargo.”



The first two of the Diocese of Fargo synods were called by Bishop Muench in 1941 and Bishop Dworschak in 1951. (Diocese of Fargo archives)



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TATTERED PAGES

A review of Catholic books, movies, music

Delightful stories of faith for all ages

By Maura Wilburn | Wife, mother and parishioner of Sts. Anne & Joachim

Raising readers is one of the goals of my motherhood. We read a diversity of books. The library is a treasured destination when running errands, and everyone loves to snuggle on the couch for a story... and another... and just one more, Mom, please! It warms my heart to share a love of reading with my children.

In service to this maternal mission, I fill our family's bookshelves with beautiful children's books. I want my children to easily find books that will delight and inspire them. Some of our family's favorites include three visually stunning picture books by Josephine Nobisso, *The Weight of a Mass*, *Take it to the Queen*, and *Portrait of the Son*.

The Weight of a Mass: A Tale of Faith transports us to a post-Christendom kingdom whose citizens have largely abandoned their traditional faith. The royal baker is preparing for the king's wedding, baking an extravagant wedding cake and selling pastries for the festivities. A poor widow comes into the shop amidst the excitement and asks the baker for some stale bread in exchange for offering her offering a Mass for him. Insulted, the baker refuses. His son, however, has heard this exchange and tries to advocate for the widow. The baker takes a corner of tissue paper, writes the words "A Mass" on it, and places it on his scales. What ensues astonishes the baker and all witnessing until, ultimately, all realize the true value of a Mass.

Take it to the Queen is a touching allegory of, you guessed it, our Blessed Mother. Taking place in another village that is losing its faith, the finest girl is chosen to marry the king and she bears a son, the prince. Even though the king has always taken care of this village and promised to provide for their every need, the villagers are complacent and rely increasingly on themselves. This leads to dilapidation and sin. As the awaited prince is born and raised, the village has forgotten the king's promise. When the prince is grown and visits the village, he is beaten and thrown over a donkey to be sent back to the king and queen in disgrace. What the villagers did not realize is that they cannot do it all themselves. With humility, they learn that wrongs can be righted if they take them to the Queen.

Nobisso's latest work, *Portrait of the Son*, introduces us to a wealthy art collector who has acquired rare, beautiful works of art from around the world, simply to share them with his only son. When this son is killed in a war, the old man retreats in

grief until a fellow soldier visits him and shares a portrait he had painted of the son. This small, amateur painting brings life back to the father; he is inspired to keep building his art collection in honor of his son and the love they shared. Soon this collection is the most valuable in the world. When the father decides to auction it all off, art dealers and museum directors gather in eager anticipation, expecting fierce proceedings. The auction begins, to everyone's surprise, with the portrait of the son. No one can believe what happens next.

Each of these picture books explores poignant truths of our faith in a way that is accessible to children while also inviting them to ponder. As a parent, I appreciate that each book provides additional catechesis and insights, "Some Thoughts" from the author, under its cover flaps. I love learning the intentionality behind each aspect of a book, from the words and phrases chosen to the illustrator's artistic additions. This guidance helps parents go deeper with their children to connect the beauty of each book with the beauty of our faith. For example, in her notes for *The Weight of a Mass*, Nobisso explains that "the story is set in a bakery because Jesus is the very Bread of Life." At first glance, children are delighted by the sweets they see but they can learn that Jesus satisfies so much more.

Children are not the only ones who benefit from these picture books. I find with each reading that new details strike me and fuel prayer. What burden do I need to take to the Queen? Do I take the Mass as seriously as I should every time I attend? Where can I find beauty in the world around me? I appreciate that I can explore these questions with my children through an age-appropriate conduit.

My prayer is that in reading these picture books, we might experience a more profound relationship with our Lord and His Mother!





The Pilgrims Page

A look at Catholic pilgrimage sites

The “Grasshopper” Shrine and the Cathedral Shrine of St. Paul

By Mary Hanbury | Director of Catechesis for the Diocese of Fargo

As our pilgrimage continues, we head west to St. Paul, Minn. but first a stop off at the “Grasshopper” chapel, officially called Assumption Chapel. Just outside of Cold Spring, Minn. sits a tiny chapel upon a hill. The chapel was built in 1877 as a plea to the Blessed Virgin Mary for relief from the swarms of the Rocky Mountain locusts, a giant grasshopper that was destroying crops. They could decimate a farmer’s whole field in three days.

The grasshoppers ate almost anything; crops, fruit trees, wooden handles on tools, and even cloth. One priest related the story of the altar servers having to sweep them off the altar before Mass and then had to swat the bugs away from the priest’s vestment throughout Mass. Laura Ingalls Wilder gave an eyewitness of how she couldn’t even keep them out of the milk pail while milking a cow. The critters got so bad that the priests proposed the idea of vowing to make a biannual procession and pilgrimages on two specific days attributed to German saints who helped the people during the Middle Ages with a similar problem. Other parishes agreed.

Once the solemn proposal was made and plans to start the processions began, a strong northwest wind blew the locusts out of the region. However, they came back in 1870 with a vengeance. This time, the people prayed to Our Lady and vowed to build her a chapel to get rid the grasshoppers completely. Construction on the chapel began July 16, 1877. Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote that the grasshoppers left suddenly that same month.

The next stop is the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul Minn. Father Galtier first built a chapel on the bluffs of the Mississippi in 1841, naming it after the apostle. Later, it was determined a better spot was needed. The cornerstone for the current church was laid in 1907. The interior of the Cathedral is a

beautiful catechesis of the faith in stone, paint, and glass. Take a walk behind the sanctuary to see the “Shrine of all Nations.”

A patron saint is represented for each of the immigrant groups who helped build this church. The marble behind each saint came from the respective countries as well. The French shrine contains a sculpture of St.

Therese of Lisieux. As you stand in front of it, look left at the wall and you’ll see a plaque mounted to a stone. This large stone was taken from the prison that held St. Joan of Arc in Rouen, France. The chapel with the sculpture of Our Lady of Victory is an exact replica of the original in Paris. It was that sculpture that an early missionary priest prayed in front of before being sent to the United States. He commissioned a copy of it when he became the Bishop of St. Paul.

Finally, one of the most recognizable sculptures in the church is an exact replica of Michelangelo’s Pieta. This piece was made with the cast mold of the original. You can’t get very close to the original in Rome, but you can go right up to this one. Visiting this Cathedral places you among other notable visitors to this church; Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII) came in 1936, and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) came in 1982.

If you have time, visit the James Hill house across the street. He made his fortune on railroads and built a splendid mansion. His wife, Mary Hill, was a devout Irish Catholic who supported the building of the Cathedral and other Catholic institutions, so much so, that the archdiocese named a school after her in 1954. The Cathedral was designated a shrine in 2009, which denotes it as a place of pilgrimage. For you armchair pilgrims and for anyone who plans on visiting in person, there is a wonderful virtual tour series on the St. Paul Cathedral available at www.stpaulcathedraltour.com.



Pilgrims at St. Paul Cathedral in St. Paul, Minn. in 2016 during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. (Mary Hanbury)



Mary commanding the grasshoppers to depart at the Assumption Chapel near Cold Spring, Minn. (Mary Hanbury)

What is Exodus 90? Should you do it?

By Kristina Bloomsburg | Assistant Editor of New Earth

Jeff Benda, parishioner at Holy Spirit Church in Fargo, started a business, Wild Game & Fish Media, which helps hunting and fishing companies with marketing. He is a content creator, recipe developer, and food photographer, mostly for hunting and fishing companies. Ironically, in the midst of his work, Exodus 90 approached him to create 50 meatless recipes in the summer of 2022. Having experienced the benefits of Exodus 90, Jeff was eager for the opportunity.

"The intent was to create meatless meals that the whole family can eat together," he said. "I think I've come up with some pretty creative, interesting things."

According to exodus90.com, Exodus 90 is, "a spiritual exercise for men based on Christ's roadmap to freedom: prayer, asceticism, and fraternity. It is rooted in the traditions of the early Church. Following the Exodus lifestyle, a fraternity of 5-7 men commits to a set structure of prayer and ascetic disciplines. These men are led by daily readings from the books of Exodus and Joshua, paired with daily reflections to keep them on the road to freedom."

If you've heard about Exodus 90, you've probably heard how difficult it can be. The program asks men to avoid all unnecessary screen use (smartphone, computer, video games, TV), avoid snacking, sweets, and alcohol, as well as exercising three times a week, taking cold showers, and fasting from meat Wednesdays and Fridays. This is in addition to praying a holy hour every day, meeting with a group of men once a week, and more for a duration of 90 days.

"The draw for men to Exodus 90 is that it's hard," said Jeff. "When I'm hunting in the mountains or the Badlands, I want it to be a little hard. I want to wake up in a tent and not in a luxurious cabin. I don't want a deer or an elk handed to me. I want to have that story of how I pushed myself and found success. I want to grow as a person."

A big part of Exodus 90 is fraternity. Having a group of men that meets once a week to keep one another accountable and encourage one another is essential to each man's success.

"That's just scripture based," said Jeff. "Jesus didn't send out the apostles by themselves. He sent them in pairs. It's important that we have that that relationship with the Lord and also that human relationship with each other. I just can't see being successful in a program like this where you are trying to do it by yourself."

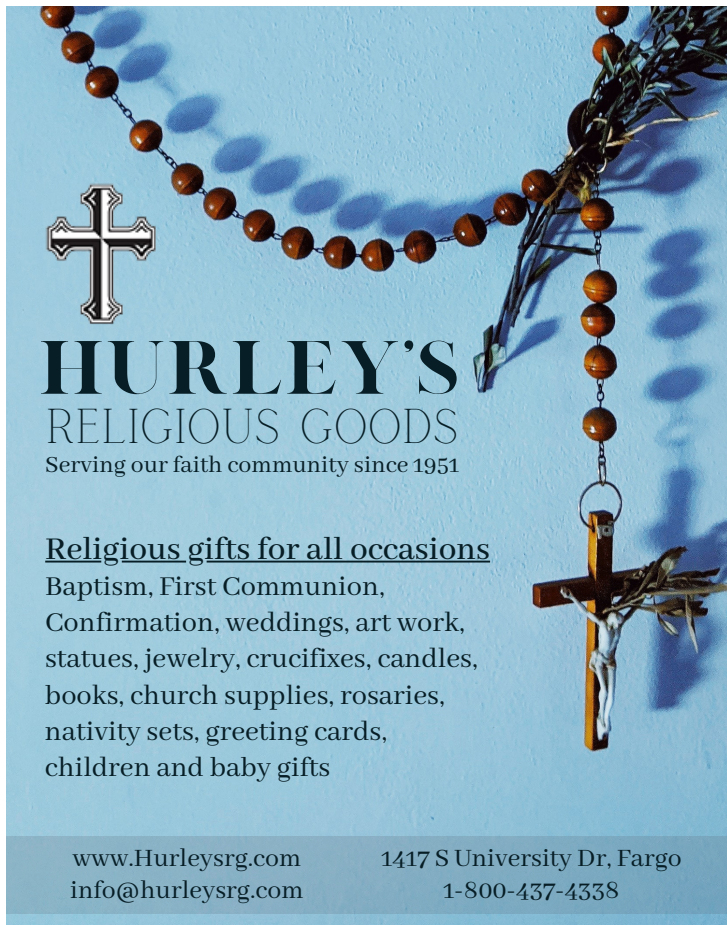
For Jeff, Exodus 90 was the catalyst for forming a group of men to encourage each other on their walk of faith.

"We are who we spend time with. If you want to be a good husband, you should hang out with other good husbands. If

you want to be a good father, you should hang out with good fathers. For me that was the greatest gift about Exodus 90, the relationships. It's the same thing with our relationship with Jesus. If we want a good relationship with him, we should spend time in adoration or at Mass."

Ultimately, that is the goal of the program, forming the discipline needed to live a life of freedom in Christ. According to exodus90.com, "Through contemplative prayer, we open up to a vulnerable relationship with God. Through asceticism, we grow in the power to say 'no' to the common things of the world that hold us back. Through fraternity, we have the essential support, encouragement, and mercy of other men striving after the same uncommon ideals."

"It's not just a Lenten thing," said Jeff. "You can start any time. Sometimes halfway through Lent we realize we wanted to do more, we said we were going to challenge ourselves this year and then it falls to the wayside. But there are always opportunities to be challenged and to grow as men. Exodus 90 reminds us of that."



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This Friday's meatless meal: potato crusted fish



WILD GAME & FISH

JEFF BENDA

Parishioner at Holy Spirit
Church in Fargo

Ingredients

- 1 pound fish fillets (catfish, walleye, whiting, or similar)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 cup flour
- 3/4 cup instant mashed potato flakes
- 2 teaspoons Old Bay seasoning
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Pat the fish fillets dry with paper towels, then sprinkle both sides of each fillet with the salt and black pepper.



3. Put flour in a shallow dish. Whisk together milk and egg and place in a second shallow dish. Combine instant potatoes and Old Bay seasoning in a third shallow dish.
4. Dredge fish fillets in the flour, then egg/milk, and then instant potatoes.
5. Melt butter and olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add fish and cook for 2 to 3 minutes on each side until golden brown and internal temp is the recommended 145 degrees F. If the outside of the fish is nice and golden brown, but the internal temp isn't quite to 145 degrees F, place the fish on a rimmed baking sheet and in the oven at 350 degrees F for about 3 minutes until done. Don't overcook the fish or it will dry out!
6. Like most Lent dinner ideas, it's important to keep the dish simple. The girls love eating this potato crusted fish with some roasted asparagus. But you can choose to pair it with your favorite vegetable side dish.



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The Christian Lay Vocation and Catholic Social Teaching



CATHOLIC ACTION

DAVID TAMISIEA, JD, PhD

Executive director of the North Dakota Catholic Conference, which acts on behalf of the Catholic bishops of N.D. to respond to public policy issues of concern to the Catholic Church.

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) marked the first time that an ecumenical council considered the Christian lay vocation as such. According to the Council in its dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the Christian lay faithful by virtue of baptism are united to Christ and thereby share in his redemptive mission, but what distinguishes them from the rest of the faithful in carrying out this mission is their “secular character” (LG 31).

But what does the Council mean by the laity’s secular character? The Council sums it up this way: “They live in the world, that is to say, they are engaged in each and all of the secular professions and occupations, and in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which, as it were, their very existence is woven” (LG 31). The laity’s secular character is to be distinguished from ideological secularism, which denies any transcendent reality beyond this world and excludes in principle all religious affirmations of God and the afterlife. Rather, the laity’s secular character designates their life as Christians living and active in temporal affairs, that is, in the realm of politics, business, healthcare, law, education, culture, marriage and family life, and all other things that pertain to life in this world.

The Council further teaches that the Christian lay faithful’s particular vocation is to order the temporal affairs of the world according to God’s will and to sanctify the world from within (LG 31). In other words, the laity are called by God to engage in secular affairs and direct them according to Christian principles and values. This vocation differs from that of the clergy, who are entrusted chiefly with the sacred ministry of the sacraments, preaching, and pastoral care, and from that of consecrated religious, who publicly profess the evangelical counsels of poverty, chaste continence, and obedience in a stable form of life totally dedicated to God.

St. John Paul II likewise emphasizes the indispensable role Christian lay faithful have in bringing Gospel values into the world in his apostolic exhortation on the lay vocation, *Christifideles Laici*. According to St. John Paul II, although Christ’s exhortation to his disciples to be salt, light, and leaven in the world (Matt. 5:13–16; 13:33) applies indiscriminately to all Christians, this entreaty is specifically applicable to the laity due to their extensive involvement in earthly affairs. Like salt, light, and leaven, the Christian lay faithful can and should profoundly influence the world from within in a manner that corresponds with the demands of the Gospel (CL 15).

How are lay people to do this? Much of the answer to this question lies in Catholic social teaching. Catholic social teaching refers to a body of doctrine rooted in divine revelation that offers guidance for building a just, peaceful, and charitable society. Beginning with Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Catholic social teaching has been developed over the past century and a half in papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. Catholic social teaching includes guiding principles for social life like the dignity of the human person, the sacredness of human life, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, the preferential option for the poor, the dignity of human work, and the like.

While Catholic social teaching is addressed to the entire Church and all people of good will, it is in a particular way addressed to the Christian lay faithful on account of their secular character and vocation. This is because the responsibility for building, organizing, and administering secular society belongs primarily to the laity, not to priests or religious (CCC 2442).

What does all this imply? For one, it means that lay Catholics have a duty to familiarize themselves with the Church’s social teaching and then put it into practice. As St. John Paul II observes, the lay faithful need sound doctrinal formation in Catholic social teaching: “This [need for doctrinal formation] is especially true for the lay faithful who have responsibilities in various fields of society and public life. Above all, it is indispensable that they have a more exact knowledge—and this demands a more widespread and precise presentation—of the Church’s social doctrine” (CL 60).

The more Catholic lay people learn about the rich heritage of wisdom found in Catholic social teaching, the better equipped they will be to build and organize a peaceful, just, and charitable society concordant with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, our faithful and loving mother



SEMINARIAN LIFE

DALTON BOOTH

Propaedeutic Year; St. Gregory the Great Seminary; Seward, Neb.

Seminary can be a challenging time, but also a time of growth. I started my first year of seminary at St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, Neb. this past August. As a part of this year's formation, I have very limited access to my phone and other technology during most days, making it difficult to stay in touch with my family and friends at home in Fargo. Learning how to love the people in my life who aren't physically a part of my life right now is a struggle.

However, I find much support and encouragement when I embrace the relationship I have with Mary as my mother. Relying on her intercession has been a major consolation for me this school year, especially after coming to know her better during a recent pilgrimage and mission trip to Mexico. Mary assists me in loving others when I feel like I cannot.

In December, my seminarian class traveled from Nebraska to Mexico City for poverty immersion, an important component of our first-year formation. During our visit, we had the opportunity to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day on Dec. 12! This was such a gift. I never thought I would be visiting our Lady's beautiful *tilma* amidst millions of other pilgrims who travel to Guadalupe during the multiple-day celebration. During our time visiting the shrine, we had the chance to read the dialogue that occurred between Mary and Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill, the location where she appeared to him in 1531. Her words revealed to me the very tender, motherly care that our Blessed Mother has for each of us. "Am I not here, I who am your mother?" These words demonstrated to me the unwavering faithfulness that Mary has to us as her children.

During our mission work in Mexico, we spent time with some of the poorest people in the world living on the streets and living/working in the city dump of Mexico City. Many of these people living in extreme poverty are trapped in a dangerous cycle of homelessness because they haven't come to know their dignity and the abundant love that Christ has for them. During our trip, we prayed about how we can come to know and experience Christ in the poor. "What you did to the least

of my brethren, you did to me" are the words that Jesus will speak to us when he comes at the end of time. Reflecting on this, I came to better understand the honor and privilege that we are given to serve our Lord in the poor. Jesus identifies himself with the poor and chose to humble himself amidst the "garbage and dirt" of our world. Our mission taught me to recognize and embrace the dignity of the poor instead of turning away from them. We are given a responsibility and a gift when Jesus asks us to love his children.

Love can be difficult, especially when it can't be reciprocated. Learning how to welcome this self-giving, sacrificial love is what really challenged me during our mission work. Visiting Mary during our pilgrimage helped me come to realize the blessing that we have in her and the necessity of having an intimate relationship with her as a seminarian. Like Juan Diego, I hope to rely on Mary's help to lead me and others to her son in the future.

When I turn to Mary's intercession, she shows me how to love others like Jesus, especially when I'm distanced from them or don't feel like I can express my love to them. Entrusting my time in seminary to Jesus through Mary's loving, faithful care continues to reveal to me my own dignity and the dignity of others as children of God. "Am I not here, I who am your mother?"



Quotable

St. Teresa
of Calcutta

"As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus' thirst... He knows your weakness. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you."

Claudine Gay, Jimmy Lai, and the truth of things



THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

GEORGE WEIGEL

Distinguished Senior Fellow
of the Ethics and Public Policy
Center in Washington D.C.

To my mind, the most cringe-inducing moment in the drama of Claudine Gay and her resignation as president of Harvard University was not when she whiffed at unambiguously condemning genocidal threats against Jews as violations of Harvard's norms for student behavior. That was horrible, to be sure. Even more telling, though, was Gay's subsequent apology, in which she expressed regret for having "failed to convey what is my truth."

Hard as it may be for normal people to grasp, the notion that there is only "my truth" and "your truth," but nothing properly describable as *the* truth, is virtually axiomatic in the humanities departments of American "elite" universities, and has been for some time. Now, following the Orwellian script in *Animal Farm*, the woke plague has created a situation in which some of those personal "truths" are deemed more equal than others' "truths"—the superior truths being the "truths" of political correctness. As dean of the Harvard faculty, Claudine Gay was a vigorous proponent of the new axiom that some truths are truer than others. But in her apology, she reverted to the basic, postmodernist absurdity that "truth" is a matter of personal conviction rather than conviction anchored in reality. Her downfall thus illustrates another axiom, one that antedates post-modernism by almost two centuries: "the Revolution devours its children" (Jacques Mallet du Pan, writing from Paris 1793 as the tumbrils rolled).

When post-modernism first reared its head decades ago, some Christian thinkers suggested that its mantra of your-truth/my-truth might provide an opening to serious intellectual exchange with non-believers, which was impossible with those academic nihilists and relativists who denied that there was any truth at all. This always struck me as a forlorn hope. For what happens when there is only "your truth" and "my truth" and our "truths" collide? Absent any agreed horizon of judgment (call it "*the* truth") against which we can settle our difference, either you will impose your power on me or I will impose my power on you.

Which means the death of serious conversation, of scholarship and, ultimately, of democracy.

7,494 miles away, I doubt the thought occurred to my friend Jimmy Lai; but the fact that the Claudine Gay affair coincided

with the beginning of Jimmy's trial on charges of having violated Chinese "national security" by defending the basic human rights of his fellow Hong Kongers nicely illustrated Oscar Wilde's point about life imitating art—including the arts of irony.

For there was President Gay, trying to save herself by an appeal to "my truth," while Jimmy was risking life imprisonment at a Stalinesque show trial because he had courageously borne witness to the truth: the truth that today's Hong Kong regime is a thugocracy terrified by free speech and a free press; the truth that the Beijing regime that controls Hong Kong is comprehensively violating the commitments to honor basic human rights it had made when Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty in 1997; and, perhaps above all, *the* truth that Catholic faith demands solidarity with those defending their God-given rights—rights that express built-in truths about the inalienable dignity and infinite value of every human life.

Jimmy Lai has become a Christian artist during his three years in solitary confinement; few, if any gifts that I have received in my life have touched me as deeply as the two sketches he has sent me from Stanley Prison. Both embody his commitment to truth—not just "his" truth, but *truth*, period—and his understanding that truth-telling is risky business in this world. The price of truth-telling is expressed in a crucifixion scene, rendered in colored pencil on the kind of lined paper we once used in elementary school. The commitment to live in the truth is captured in a beautiful Madonna with the simple inscription "Yes!" (cf. Luke 1:38).

Once asked what sentence he would wish saved if the rest of the Bible were somehow destroyed, John Paul II responded without hesitation, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32). Jimmy Lai's life and art luminously express that conviction about the liberating power of truth. We must hope and pray that Claudine Gay and the rest of the post-modern academic establishment—which has turned "elite" American higher education into a playpen for rabid antisemites, pampered snowflakes, and madcap ideologues—eventually come to understand what Jimmy understands.

Because that would set them free, spiritually as well as intellectually. Thus liberated, they could be true educators rather than enforcers of woke ideological conformity.



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Update: Living our Faith, Building our Future campaign



STEWARDSHIP

STEVE SCHONS

Director of stewardship and development
for the Diocese of Fargo



LIVING OUR FAITH,
BUILDING OUR FUTURE

Congratulations to all of our parishes who participated in the Living our Faith, Building our Future Capital Campaign last fall. As of the first week in February, 10 of the 32 have met or exceeded their campaign goal with more joining the 100% club each week!

Exceeding their campaign goal enables these parishes to now retain 70% of all monies brought in above their goal. This allows not only their designated parish projects to be funded, but also allows that parish to address deferred maintenance items or future development funds with the additional campaign gifts.

Block 2 of our campaign has begun and another 34 parishes have chosen to participate during this timeframe. The block runs from January to June 2024. The remainder of the parishes have chosen to conduct the campaign in Block 3, July to December 2024. A full listing of each parish's goals, progress, and chosen timeframe is available on our website at www.fargodiocese.org/lof and is updated weekly.

As we transitioned from Block 1 to the current Block 2 of parishes, Bishop Folda and a number of the Block 1 pastors

held an informative afternoon at Maryvale Retreat Center. It seemed an appropriate place to meet and learn from their experience as renovations to our beloved Maryvale as well as an endowment for expansion of the number of retreats offered are two of the projects the Living our Faith, Building our Future campaign support.

The afternoon was filled with fellowship and laughter as three of our pastors related their campaign experiences and what led them to exceeding their goals. The overriding message was a deep appreciation for the faithful of their parishes who recognized the sacrificial nature of this exceptional campaign and responded with an outpouring of love and generosity. Whether their hearts were touched by the future of Maryvale, the need for a residence for our retired priests, or by a recognition of the changing retirement landscape and the need to bolster the priests' pension plan, their prayers and generosity have abounded.

To find out when your parish is participating, check on the results, or to make your gift, visit fargodiocese.org/lof.

How do the offertory, God's Gift Appeal, and the Living our Faith, Building our Future campaign work together for the health of our diocese?

As Catholics, our first obligation is to support the life of our parish through our offertory. This keeps our parishes the thriving spiritual homes we love and need.

Our second obligation is to our diocese. Through the God's Gift Appeal, vital diocesan programs are funded annually.

Unique to our diocese this year is our Capital Campaign, Living our Faith, Building our Future. As the first Capital Campaign our diocese has undertaken in over 30 years, it brings to us a chance for a sacrificial gift. A sacrifice given freely, above and beyond our offertory and our God's Gift Appeal, but no less vital. The Living Our Faith campaign infuses our parishes with

vital funds for their physical and spiritual upkeep, enables us to renovate our beloved Maryvale, will allow construction of a residence for our retired clergy, and infuses funds into the existing priests pension plan.

We ask that you consider the gifts we have been given in our Catholic Faith and support each of the facets that will allow that faith to flourish; namely, our offertory, our God's Gift Appeal and our historic capital campaign.

With thanksgiving for all we have received, may the sacrifices we make together now bear fruit in lives of faith for generations to come.

My vocation story



SISTER'S PERSPECTIVE

SISTER MARY AGNES HUBER

Sister of Mary of the Presentation

As a child, I dreamed of getting married, having a big family, and living on a farm. There were six siblings when I was growing up. But when I joined the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation, I ended up having more Sisters than any one of my siblings. Now my family is the Religious Community as well as people that I served.

My first year of school took place a few miles from our farm, in a one-room school. The school closed the following year. My parents made arrangements for us to go to school at St. Catherine's Catholic School in Valley City.

My brother and I lived with my oldest brother during the weekdays so that we could attend Catholic School. We went to Mass in Fingal. In the wintertime when the roads were bad, we were unable to go to Sunday Mass. We would gather in the living room to pray at the time that Mass was offered in Fingal.

I remember very clearly on a Saturday morning, I mentioned to my mother that I was going to be a Religious Sister. She said that I needed to talk to my dad. So when the school year was to start, I went to visit with the priest in Fingal, and he too felt that I had a calling to be a Religious Sister. So I became an Aspirant of the Sisters and stayed on the top floor of St. Catherine School with other young women who were interested in becoming a Sister.

During my second year of high school, a Sister asked me if I was ready for the next step. I said, "yes." I needed my parents' permission to go to St. Margaret's Convent in Spring Valley, Ill. as I was not yet 18 years old. My parents gave permission, so at the end of November, I and another young woman went by train to Illinois. It was my first time on a train! At St. Margaret's Convent, I received the rest of my training to become a Sister.

After making my temporary vows to God, as a Sister of Mary of the Presentation, July 23, 1959, I was asked to serve in Illinois. I worked in the kitchen for one year. I continued that work for five years at St. Andrew's Health in Bottineau and then moved to St. Aloisius Medical Center in Harvey and was chief cook and head of the dietary department for eight years. I moved on and cooked for a year at Maryvale and then was Food Service Director at Presentation Medical Center, now St.

Kateri's in Rolla for 12 years. I then moved back to St. Aloisius Hospital in Harvey as food service director from 1986-1991.

It was during this time that I was thinking of making a change, and visited with the Provincial Superior. I then went to take clinical pastoral education for nine months at St. Francis Medical Center in LaCrosse, Wis. and became a certified Chaplain. During this time, I was chosen by my Religious Sisters to be one of the leaders of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation. When my four-year term was completed, I went back to Rolla and served there for 12 years as chaplain before moving back to Harvey in December 2008 where I presently continue to serve as a chaplain at St. Aloisius hospital and nursing home.

The seed for my vocation was planted many years ago by one of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation, who gave me a small booklet about the Sisters. I read the booklet and gave it back to the Sister, and never mentioned anything about being a Sister. I am thankful for my vocation and all the different experiences I have had over the years. I enjoy providing pastoral care as I can walk with the residents and patients as they are coming close to the end of their lives. I hear their joys and sorrows when they share their life stories with me.

Iconography workshop & retreat

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Learn the art of icons! Each participant will create the icon Mother of God using the techniques that have been passed down from generations of iconographers. Time for Mass and prayer also offered.



Cost \$675 (students \$625). Meals and housing not provided. Deadline to register Apr. 10. No art experience necessary. Register at www.fargodiocese.org/art-retreat.



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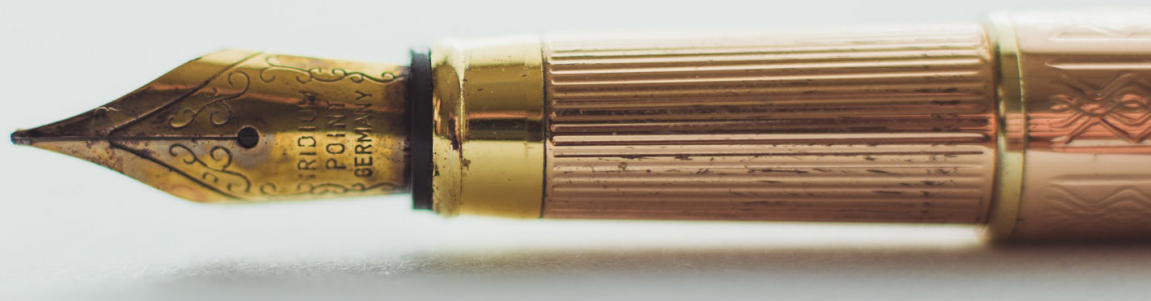
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Singing his praise through suffering

By Samantha Dols | Liturgy Coordinator at St. Anthony of Padua, Fargo

We seemed to be experiencing one blessing after another. Matt and I were married in August 2013. We both found great joy in our jobs and were enjoying our new community in Fargo. In 2014, we were blessed with our son, Jude. And in April of 2017, I found out I was pregnant again.

But on Apr. 30, 2017, I woke feeling miserable. I spent most of the night tossing and turning and making trips to the kitchen for water. As I got out of bed, I collapsed. Since I was too weak to walk, and Matt was on a business trip in Chicago, I crawled into Jude's room to check on him. Seeing I was unwell, he tried, as best as an almost 3-year-old can, to help me to his bed where he rubbed my head and placed his stuffed animals around me. I assumed I had the flu, so I called my parents asking them to come to Fargo to take care of Jude while I recovered. Afterwards I called Matt to tell him I wasn't well.

The hours between these phone calls and my parent's arrival is a blur. What I do know is that I had the movie WALL-E on repeat for Jude, and he kept bringing bananas for me to peel for him. The poor boy even witnessed me blackout. I woke up with blood on my legs and a bump on my head. Jude sat by me rubbing my face saying, "Mommy, you fell down."

When my parents arrived, my dad rushed me to the walk-in clinic. Hearing I was pregnant, the doctor checked my heart rate and said my dad needed to take me to the ER right away. My dad called Matt, and Matt began driving back from Chicago.

I assumed I'd caught a nasty bug and that being pregnant was heightening the symptoms. But I could hardly breathe, I was having extreme pain in my back, and my strength was diminishing. I was so dehydrated that the nurses struggled to find any veins to give me fluids. After I was able to take in fluids, the ER doctor sent me home saying I likely had strep throat or the flu. My dad didn't believe them. My grandma died a month prior from pneumonia, and he said I looked and sounded just like her. Even with my dad's and the nurse's persistence that they do more tests, the doctor sent me home.

At home, I tried to rest. But breathing was even more challenging, and I was in so much pain through my body. Matt made it home at 2 a.m., and shortly afterward, I vomited blood. Matt rushed me to the ER where a new doctor said we needed to do an X-Ray and more bloodwork. He discovered that I had strep-pneumonia, and that my body had become septic.



The Dols family. (submitted photo)

At the hospital, my condition continued to diminish. I was put on oxygen, and my blood pressure dropped dangerously low. A scan of my heart showed that I suffered a minor heart attack, and that my heart was continuing to be damaged by the sepsis. The doctors caring for me sent me to the ICU.

Now, the moment I was admitted to the hospital, I was filled with despair and fear, especially fear of losing my unborn baby. I hadn't even thought of praying, but I asked Matt to contact Father Courtright to give me the Anointing of the Sick. Right before going to the ICU, Father Courtright, pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Church in Fargo at the time, showed up. He was so relaxed, and joking around, and I kept thinking, "Father, I'm dying. How can you be so happy?"

But then he anointed me, and in that moment, I felt peace with what was happening and a will to fight. I began praying and asking God that he would heal me and protect my baby, and each time the machine checked my blood pressure, I prayed my numbers would rise. Prayer filled me with hope and strength, and after five days in the ICU, I was sent home where I continued to recover.

One of the first things I did when I got home was sit at our piano. Even though I couldn't sing because breathing was still difficult, I sat at the piano, playing and praying, and giving thanks to the Lord. I prayed for my own healing and for the protection of my unborn baby.

A week later, I returned to the hospital for an ultrasound to see if my baby was affected by the trauma. The report showed abnormalities and that I should prepare for pregnancy failure. While I normally would have been thrown into sorrow and despair, I remembered to pray. I prayed for my baby's healing, but I also prayed for the Lord's will to be done.

My appointments a few weeks later showed that the abnormalities were no longer present in my pregnancy, and that my baby's heart rate was healthy and strong. Another appointment

that week was to scan my heart and see how bad the damage was from the sepsis. That scan revealed that my heart looked normal, and they couldn't detect any damage. I truly believe these to be miracles, and thank God for his mercy!

Our Bennett was born, a big, healthy baby at 10lbs.

This story is an excerpt from a presentation that can be found on the St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church Fargo ND YouTube page.

A glimpse of the past

These news items, compiled by Susan Noah, were found in *New Earth* and its predecessor, *Catholic Action News*.

75 years ago — 1949

Father Meinrad Wesselmann, O.F.M., and his pilot Mr. McKay of Milton, ND took a plane from Father's home in Olga to his mission at Milton for Mass. It is only 11 miles but due to heavy snows, the priest had to take to the air to serve his mission.

50 years ago — 1974

During the diocesan Vocation Month the emphasis will be devoted to helping young people answer the question, "What is my purpose in life? Where can I best serve my fellowman?" On March 26, Bishop Loras Watters of Winona, MN will be speaking to the priests, sisters and lay people from the parishes of the Diocese at Cardinal Muench Seminary. The Bishop will have as his theme "The Theology and Meaning of a Religious Vocation." In 1972, Bishop Loras was elected to a two year term as Chairman of the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation.

20 years ago — 2004

The parish of St. Aloysius in Lisbon received a rare statue and altar from a special priest friend, and its restoration is now complete. The life-size Pieta statue had been in the basement of John Cantius Church in Chicago, which was closed. The altar and statue survived the Great Chicago Fire of Oct 9, 1871, and both pieces were in dire need of restoration. After being restored the Pieta has been placed in the south entrance to the parish. Visitors to Lisbon are encouraged to stop to see the way the love of Christ and the Blessed Mother has been communicated through this fine work of art.

Winter events

West Fargo: Blessed Sacrament Church is hosting a Fish Fry Mar. 8 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Father Luiten is the Executive Chef. Pan-fried fish, mac & cheese, coleslaw, fries, rolls, and dessert.

West Fargo: Knights of Columbus at Holy Cross Church will host fish-fry dinners each Friday in Lent. Fish tacos, fried fish, baked tilapia, shrimp, veggie lasagna, and mac & cheese and desserts. Dinner served beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Fingal: Holy Trinity Church will be serving a Spring Dinner Apr. 7 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Pork loin, mashed potatoes and gravy, and all the fixings. Homemade desserts and a bake sale.

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Diocesan policy: Reporting child abuse

The Diocese of Fargo is committed to the protection of youth. Please report any incidents or suspected incidents of child abuse, including sexual abuse, to civil authorities. If the situation involves a member of the clergy or a religious order, a seminarian, or an employee of a Catholic school, parish, the diocesan offices or other Catholic entity within the diocese, we ask that you also report the incident or suspected incident to Msgr. Joseph Goring, vicar general, at (701) 356-7945 or the victim assistance coordinator, at (701) 356-7965 or by email at victimassistance@fargodiocese.org. To make a report of sexual abuse of a minor and related misconduct by bishops, go to ReportBishopAbuse.org or call 1-800-276-1562.

LIFE'S MILESTONES



Roger and Sue Loegering, parishioners of Holy Rosary in LaMoure, will celebrate their 40th anniversary on Mar. 24. They were married in Big Lake, MN and have been blessed with 9 children and 27 grandchildren.



Ron Cartwright, parishioner of St. Cecilia's in Harvey, celebrated his 85th birthday on Feb. 13. Ron and his wife, Sandy, were blessed with 3 children, 10 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Life's Milestones includes anniversaries for marriages, ordinations, and religious vows for 25, 40, 50, 60, 65, and 70+ years and birthdays for 80, 85, 90, 95, and 100+ years for those in the Diocese of Fargo. Submissions will only be accepted for milestones occurring during the month of publication, one month prior, or one month following. Send a photo with text to news@fargodiocese.org or to Diocese of Fargo, New Earth, 5201 Bishops Blvd S, Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104 with a stamped return envelope and phone number. Deadline for the Apr. issue is Mar. 12, and the deadline for the May issue is Apr. 9.

Sister M. Beata Seil passes away Jan. 26



Sister M. Beata Seil, OSF, 98, died Jan. 26, just after 3 p.m., when God gently called her to the peace and joy she had so long awaited. The Mass of Christian Burial was held Feb. 1 at St. Francis Convent, Hankinson.

Sister Beata was well prepared by a long life of faithful religious life and service, and it seemed especially

consoling that Jesus would call her during the Hour of Mercy. Sister Beata died just after receiving care and comfort from the wonderful staff at St. Gerard's Community of Care, Hankinson. She had happily lived there since October 2017.

Sister Beata was born Katherine Marie to her parents George and Virginia (nee Strauch) Seil on May 17, 1925, at the home farm in Pleasant Lake (rural Rugby). In her 70 years of Religious Life, she served as a bookkeeper at several missions of her Franciscan Community including Gettysburg, S.D. and Oakes Community Hospital in Oakes. She spent some years in the Vestment Department at St. Francis Convent, Hankinson. Her real interests were art and writing, at which she was very talented. From 1975-2000 she was in charge of the St. James Religious Education Center in Grand Forks, a resource center for the Catholic parishes in the area.

Sister Beata loved nature and all things beautiful. She loved every dog she crossed paths with at St. Anne's. Her niece sent photos of her even holding and talking to their pet skunk. All creatures were welcome in her life. In retirement, she spent the afternoons browsing the gardens at the convent in

Hankinson. She picked flowers and leaves and pressed them between the pages of her Bible. She could not resist a good yard sale. She loved the arts, and several of her nature paintings are displayed at St. Francis Convent. As a girl, her father taught her to fly a small plane. In her retirement years she lived simply and quietly, always ready with a smile for those she met along the way. Even in the late stages of dementia, God saved that part of her that could be happy and appreciate a kind touch or word.

She was preceded in death by her parents George and A. Virginia Seil; her sister Suzanne (Dee) Falxa; her brothers John (Lila) Seil and Tony (Mary Jean) Seil. She is survived by her nieces and nephews: Virginia Seil; Deidre (Ed) Gardocki; Cheryl Rayer; Cynthia (Rick) Sahli; Georgia Seil; Joseph (Florine) Seil; John (Leeann) Seil; Robert (Julie) Seil; and Patricia (Frank) Fatino, and many grand-nephews and nieces.

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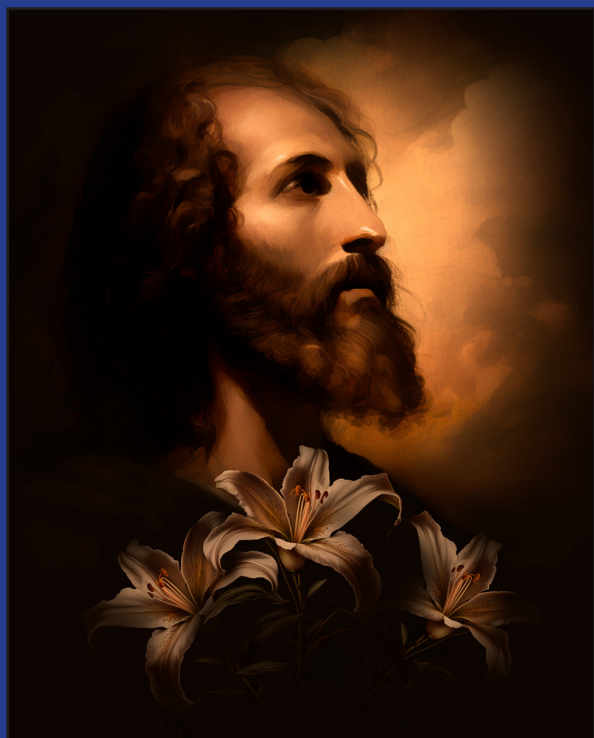
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ST. JOSEPH, MODEL OF MANHOOD, CALLING ALL MEN TO FOLLOW JESUS

What does it mean to be a man? What are the qualities that make one "manly?" Who should our role models be? If you are looking for a mentor and example to follow in these trying times, look no further than St. Joseph.

On the surface, St. Joseph could easily be described as a "man's man." But St. Joseph was much more than these superficial qualities. More than anything else, Joseph was "God's man."

Following his example of strength, devotion, courage, and chastity, we can become men of no return. By cultivating a deeply personal relationship with Jesus Christ, dying to self and offering our lives for our families, we can discover what true manhood looks like. Come grow in your faith and learn what it means to be a good father, a good husband, a good man of God.



SAINT JOSEPH: MAN OF NO RETURN AN ECCLESIA DOMESTICA RETREAT

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Ends about noon Sunday

Where: Sisters of St. Francis Retreat
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102 6th Street South East
Hankinson, ND

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Raising Catholic kids: New study suggests what successful parents have in common

By Paul Schratz | The B.C. Catholic. (Edited for content.)

At or near the top of almost any Catholic parent's list of things they want for their children is for them to continue practicing their Catholic faith into adulthood. But recent statistics paint a sobering picture: In the United States today, only about 15% of children raised in Catholic households grow up to be faithful Catholic adults.

But in the face of this diminutive percentage, one group of researchers sought to focus on the positive with a new study aiming to study the practices of parents who successfully raise children to be practicing Catholic adults.

The study titled "Raised Catholic: Who Stays and Who Goes?" was done by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University in conjunction with the Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life. The researchers used existing data from the General Social Survey (GSS)—a widely-used and respected resource—as well as more than two dozen original half-hour interviews with Catholics with adult children who remain active in the faith.

Dr. Gregory Popcak, a widely cited Catholic counselor and co-executive director of the Peyton Institute, told CNA that the overall conclusion of the study was that children who grow up in a warm and affectionate home—spending time with their family in fun, prayer, and service to others—are more likely to remain Catholic as adults.

"Families are effective in passing on the faith to the next generation to the degree that the children felt that the faith was a source of warmth in their homes," Popcak told CNA.

Among households that were successful in fostering lasting faith, children understood their parents to be open to hearing and talking about the children's doubts and struggles when it came to faith—an environment where kids "didn't feel like they would be lectured or scolded for having questions or struggles or doubts." If a question arose that the parents didn't have the answer to, they would pursue the answer together—"authoritative without being authoritarian," Popcak noted.

Popcak, who with his wife, Lisa, led the creation of an app called CatholicHOM, told CNA that the study shows that faith formation efforts such as Catholic schools, youth groups, and other ministries—while very important—are "secondary and supportive" to a strong faith life within families. The Church has long taught and emphasized that a parent's role in fostering the faith of their children is "original and irreplaceable" (*Familiaris Consortio*), he noted.

Popcak said he hears often from parents on his EWTN radio



(Aquarius Studio/Shutterstock)

show that their children have left the faith and they want to know what happened. He said he usually asks the parents what they did to live the faith inside the home, and many parents express confusion, saying they gave their children numerous faith-related opportunities outside the home.

"We've sent the message to parents that it's everybody ELSE's job to evangelize their kids," he commented.

"I think this study reveals something that's hidden in plain sight... it completely challenges our entire approach to evangelization as a Church, because we invest all our time and resources into adult evangelization and youth ministry. And they're all good—I'm not knocking any of that. But unless families are [living the faith at home], the other stuff doesn't stick," he explained.

"Everything else the Church does to evangelize outside of the family is really secondary and remedial."

Data cited by the researchers show that the number of people who remain practicing Catholics after being raised Catholic in the United States has been steadily declining for decades.

In the 1970s, an average of 36% of those who were raised Catholic remained Catholic as adults and attended Mass weekly, peaking at 40% in 1977. By the 2010s, that figure was just 15%. (The researchers pointed out that this figure does not include those who were not raised Catholic and converted to Catholicism. In addition, Catholic immigration helps to maintain the overall Catholic population despite declining retention rates among native-born Catholics.)

Among those raised Catholic who leave the faith, about half become religiously unaffiliated and the other half adopts a new religious affiliation. The median age at which these former Catholics said they made the decision to leave the faith was 13, the researchers said.

Dr. Mark Gray, a senior researcher with CARA who worked on the study, told CNA that the research does not aim to provide parents a “checklist,” and parents shouldn’t treat it as such. He said that while every family is different, their study did find “patterns of association” that seem to be common to families that successfully raise Catholic children.

Some of the common threads the researchers found are perhaps unsurprising. Most often those who remain Catholic and weekly Mass attenders attended Mass every Sunday with their parents as children. Many were raised in Catholic schools or parish religious education. Their prayer life with their family was active before dinner, at bedtime, and with additional prayer time such as family rosaries when possible.

Another key line in the data was the importance of families spending time together in charitable service to others. Some families, Popcak said, hosted immigrants in their homes, did community service projects together, and even had family discussions about their household budget to decide how they could sacrifice so that they could give to others in need.

Yet another common factor that came up again and again. Families that prioritized gathering daily for family dinners were more likely to raise Catholic children into adulthood.

“Family dinners are an opportunity to create communion through communication,” Popcak commented. “That is where families create a space to reflect on the day together, to make plans together, to communicate values... all the research really points to the importance of strong rituals for family resilience and also in passing on values.”

Demographically, practicing Catholic adults were more likely to have parents who were still married. The data also suggested that children who grew up with one stay-at-home parent were more likely to practice their faith into adulthood, and that they themselves are subsequently more likely to believe that one parent should stay at home, rather than both parents working. While highlighting this data point, Popcak nevertheless pointed out that any household, regardless of their situation, can be “intentional and conscientious” about passing on the faith to the next generation.

He reiterated that every family is different, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to passing on the Catholic faith.

But he said he believes that through this study, “we’ve identified those practices that enable families everywhere, regardless of their socioeconomic status or their makeup or their culture, their nationality and ethnicity... they can develop their own mission and charism using this framework.”

“Whatever the shape of your home is, whether you’re a traditional family with a stay-at-home parent, or you’re a two-career family, or you’re a blended family or a single-parent family, all families have their own struggles. But the more each household can live out these practices in their home, the more likely it is they’ll be able to raise their children to a faithful adulthood,” he said.



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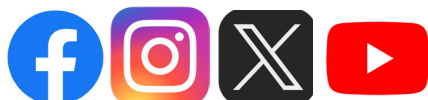
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The first Mexican-born martyr: a castaway friar who was crucified in Japan

By ACI Prensa / Catholic News Agency

In the 16th century, a young Franciscan friar from Mexico was blown off course en route back to his homeland from the Philippines, landing on the shores of Japan. San Felipe de Jesus—is now celebrated Feb. 5 in the Church for his martyr’s witness given on that island.

Felipe de las Casas Ruiz was born on May 1, 1572, in Mexico City to Alonso de las Casas and Doña Antonia Ruiz Martínez, who both emigrated from Spain in 1571 to the viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico) shortly after their marriage.

Legend says that Felipe was naughty as a child and that his parents hired a nanny to take care of him. But by all accounts, the young boy just had a restless and curious spirit with a drive to be active and seek adventure.

In the family’s orchard was a withered fig tree and one day, the story goes, Felipe did something that made his nanny very angry, causing her to exclaim sarcastically: “Holy Philip? Yes, when the fig tree comes back to life!” Curiously, several testimonies collected for Felipe’s cause pointed out that on the day of his death, the fig tree in his father’s house became green.

While still a teenager, perhaps inspired by the adventurous spirit of the missionary friars, Felipe applied to the Franciscan novitiate (Order of Friars Minor), but once there, he could not tolerate the austerity and severity of the rules of the monastery. So he left and returned to his parents’ house. After that, he worked for a few years as a silversmith, but the earnings were meager, so his father sent him to the Philippines to pursue his fortune.

Felipe arrived in the city of Manila and found its lively atmosphere, riches, and pleasures to be seductive. Soon, however, anguish, emptiness, and meaninglessness began to strike his heart constantly. What used to seem pleasant or entertaining became painful and embarrassing. The young man heard once again the call of Christ: “If you want to come after me, renounce yourself, take up your cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24).

Once again, Felipe knocked at the door of the Franciscans—this time in Manila, where he was received and where his conversion process really began. Surrendered to prayer, studies, and the exercise of charity, he came to know a completely different world, one that filled his heart with joy.

He took the name of Felipe de Jesus, with which he would be incorporated into the order. Now, at last, he was surrounded by real brothers: the needy, the sick, and, of course, the Franciscan friars.



Pope Francis at the Nagasaki Martyrs’ Monument on Nishizaka Hill Nov. 24, 2019. (Vatican Media)

One day, Felipe received a special announcement. His superiors informed him that he would be ordained a priest and that it would take place in his hometown in Mexico. Together with Friar Juan Pobre and other Franciscans, he set sail for New Spain, but a great storm diverted the ship to the coast of Japan, where Friar Pedro Bautista and other Franciscan friars were already doing arduous evangelizing work.

Felipe was not disheartened by the unforeseen event and thought that it could be a powerful opportunity to strengthen his “yes” to the Lord. So he set out to evangelize and his efforts quickly bore fruit, which filled him with encouragement. Unfortunately, however, the local authorities and nobility began to take a dim view of the growing number of conversions among the island’s natives, and many viewed the missionaries with suspicion.

Soon a persecution ordered by the Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the de facto leader of Japan at the time, would break out against the Franciscans, Jesuits, and other Christians. Hideyoshi feared that the foreign presence would jeopardize his political ambitions and commercial interests. Many laypeople and religious were imprisoned and condemned to death. Felipe, who was not yet a priest and enjoyed the status of a castaway, could have avoided imprisonment and torments, but he rejected the possibility of leaving and chose to stay and die with the other Franciscan missionaries who lived there.

On Feb. 5, 1597, the friar was forced, with other Franciscans, Jesuits, and laypeople, to make a walk through towns and villages as a form of public mockery. He, like the rest of

the future martyrs, had one of his ears cut off. The group consisted of 26 men.

Finally, they arrived in Nagasaki and were taken to Mount Nishizaka, where they were crucified. Felipe of Jesus was hung on a cross by his wrists and neck, using rings. The one they put around his neck exerted such pressure that Felipe began to suffocate. As he ran out of air and his strength was drained, he kept repeating "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." After a while, two executioners approached him and plunged their spears into his body. He was the first of the group to die. He was 25 years old.

Felipe of Jesus was beatified, along with his companions in martyrdom, on Sept. 14, 1627, and canonized June 8, 1862.

Between 1958 and 1962, the architectural complex of Nishizaka Park was built in Nagasaki in the place where the 26 martyrs perished. The complex is run by St. Philip of Jesus Church and there is a museum next door that commemorates the life and death of these courageous martyrs.

San Felipe de Jesús is the patron saint of Mexico City.

This article was first published by ACI Prensa, CNA's Spanish-language news partner. It has been translated and adapted by CNA.



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In Holy Land visit, Catholic Relief Services head sees “hope and resiliency” amid chaos

By Daniel Payne | Catholic News Agency

The head of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) said a recent visit to the Holy Land showed him a region wrought by violent chaos yet filled with people with hope and resilience.

Sean Callahan, the president and CEO of the Catholic aid group, told CNA this week that in a recent trip to the Middle East, he met with numerous partners in CRS’ global relief missions, including multiple Middle Eastern chapters of Caritas, the international confederation of Catholic aid groups.

Callahan said bluntly that the situation in the region is “catastrophic.” Yet he said the team witnessed considerable “resiliency” and “hope” from the local population.

Recalling an incident in which his team stayed with a family that included five small children, he said that at one point one of the children “came up and asked his dad: ‘We’re only children, why are they trying to kill us?’”

“Just seeing that everybody there is a victim of the violence that has gone on, almost everyone is displaced—but at the same time we see hope in the future, hope for the children, resiliency,” Callahan said.

His mission, he said, was to connect with CRS’ partners and assess where help is needed.

“We were discussing how the [Israel-Hamas] conflict was affecting everyone in the region and what we could do to support everyone, and what was necessary for the Church to respond,” he said.

Callahan said he also met with the Hashemite court, the royal family of Jordan. “We looked to set up supply chains from Jordan to Gaza,” he said. “We’re working with the charity groups there.”

On its website CRS says its work in the Holy Land includes “accompanying local partners to strengthen the economic, civic, and environmental foundations” including agriculture, food security, and emergency response. The group says it has served more than 1.3 million people in the region working with “an extensive network of local civil society organizations.”

Callahan said workers in Gaza are providing “food commodities” and “hygiene kits,” among other services, to those who live there. At the outset of the conflict, CRS said it was mobilizing “emergency food, water, and living supplies” and “safe and dignified shelter” for those caught in the conflict.

“I was actually very impressed, given the situation on the ground,” Callahan said of his recent visit. “You heard explosions frequently, and jets overhead, and drones. But our teams were still able to register people to get supplies out to them.”



Catholic Relief Services CEO Sean Callahan with aid partners in Gaza. (CRS)

Gaza has been wracked by violence for more than 100 days amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, which began in October of last year after Hamas launched a deadly invasion into Israel and Israel responded with a full military invasion of the Gaza Strip. Nearly 30,000 people—the vast majority of them in Gaza—have died in the conflict so far.

Callahan said that while in Egypt, “we made the determination that it would be good to go into Gaza.” The two territories share a short border in Egypt’s northeastern corner. “So I went in overnight and spent part of two different days there,” he said.

Callahan said he met with CRS workers while visiting Gaza. “I got to see the reality of what the situation is, and what type of distributions we do,” he said. “Our team was doing a phenomenal job of registering people for supplies, really a tremendous job.”

Callahan said he was able to witness the countless displaced individuals and families that have struggled in Gaza since the conflict began. “In Gaza City, there are no sidewalks, because they’re now filled with shelters and tents,” he said.

The CRS team also visited the West Bank and met with the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa. “We got a full picture of the Church in the region,” he said, “including their main concerns and how CRS’ help has been so far.”

Though thousands have died in a conflict that has no end in sight, Callahan said people in the region are driven simply by a desire for the war to be over.

“People were calling for peace so they could go home and rebuild their lives,” he said. “I didn’t see any violence or animosity. People were trying to protect their families.”

“I think it’s imperative to us to provide assistance so they can do just that, and get out of the cycle of violence,” he said.



“Choice” tactics: Scraping shovels without snow



SIDEWALK STORIES

ROXANE B. SALONEN

Mother of five, writer for The Forum and CatholicMom.com, speaker and radio host for Real Presence Radio

It has been a winter with the smallest amount of snow that I can recall in recent years, and yet a strange thing has been happening recently at the corner of the Red River Valley where abortions happen each Wednesday. The snow shovels have been out and working hard.

When I first saw it happening, it seemed surreal. But then it continued the next week, and the week after that as well. The facility's escorts have been pulling out snow shovels and scraping them, upside-down, against the dry pavement of their parking lot as clients arrive, preventing our words of hope from reaching abortion-minded clients before they make an irreversible decision. It makes a bit of a racket, as you might imagine.

You can't make this stuff up, and that's not the end of it. A few weeks ago, I saw what looked to be a black charcoal grill cover near one of the escorts' vehicles, which is usually parked strategically to be a barrier between the sidewalk and the facility entryway, preventing an easy view of clients entering. Though I missed the clashing moment, a friend sent me a photo the next week of an escort using the grill lid to block the voice of a sidewalk advocate trying to reach the women with pro-life resources over a nearby fence.

These “helpers” of the facility now wear rainbow vests with “CLINIC ESCORT” emblazoned across the front, though previous vests had “PRO-CHOICE ESCORT” written on them. I've always been confused by that designation, since the word “choice” strongly implies that they want the women, and men, to have choices. We are presenting options that don't involve taking a life to those who arrive there each week, scared or angry and broken. It might be the last chance they have to reverse course, preventing further wounds. But from appearances, the escorts seem intent on the opposite: making sure clients are prevented from learning about these alternatives.

Additionally, the escorts, rain or shine, typically don large, rainbow-colored umbrellas. Of course, there's no rain this time

of year, so why the rain-catching devices? The only association with rain I can come up with is that tears will soon be falling because of this decision, if not that day, then someday. The umbrellas also create another handy barrier between us and the clients.

And why rainbows? After I shared on Facebook some videos and photos showing these tactics and props, one friend called the escorts' actions “bizarre.” Another questioned the rainbows, wondering if they were making a political statement. It certainly seems so, but why would a facility claiming to provide a specific service—abortion—employ symbols that seem to have nothing to do with their stated cause? If they care about the clients as they claim, shouldn't they focus on the task at hand and leave other controversial topics at home?

I ask these questions because it's important to think about what those in the abortion industry state as their mission (helping women, providing healthcare, etc.) and what their actions show. Do the two coincide?

I just don't see it and would have to agree with my friend who deemed their actions “bizarre.” They don't seem to be gestures of individuals confident in what they are doing, or who have as their highest aim honoring those who seek them out for help. Rather, they are actions of women and men who are confused themselves and have lost their True North. It appears, by their actions, that they have lost sight of God.

It might seem like my words are unfair. After all, I'm talking about people who were, at one time, only “a thought in the mind of God,” just as you and I were. While that is very true, introducing incongruity into a suffering situation is wrong and needs to be called out.

I don't wish ill on these escorts. Rather, I want them to not miss the very point of their lives. They are just as worth saving as the babies who likely will perish with their “help.” These sorely misguided souls need our prayers just as much, and I urge you to join me and the other advocates in doing just that, with earnestness and hope.

“I, the Lord, have called you for justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness” (Isa. 42:6-7).

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Where in the diocese are we?

Last month's photo is from
Blessed Sacrament Church
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