A call to evangelize

Convocation of Parish Leaders invites all to be missionary disciples

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Eric Seitz ordained to the transitional diaconate

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ON THE COVER:
One of the round table dicussions at the Convocation of Parish Leaders.
(Kristina Lahr | New Earth)

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Towards the end of his time on earth, Jesus assured his apostles: “I will be with you always, even until the end of the age.” One of the ways that our Lord fulfills this promise is through his Church. Much has happened in the Church in recent months, most notably news surrounding the clergy abuse scandals. Additionally, the Pope and several hundred bishops met last fall for a synod in Rome to consider the vocation of young people. Here in Fargo, we held a Convocation of Parish Leaders to build up a culture of missionary discipleship in our diocese.

Sometimes when we read or hear the word “church,” we think of buildings and activities, or perhaps of popes, clergy, or sisters. We think of the Church as an institution. However, St. Paul teaches us that the Church is the Body of Christ; he is the head and we are the members. The Church as the Body of Christ, the celebration of the sacraments, and through the holiness of its members.

Through the Church, Christ continues to be active among his people as priest, prophet, and king, that is, by sanctifying, teaching, and shepherding. When we hear the Gospel proclaimed, whether by clergy or laity, Christ is at work in his Church, teaching the faith and imparting the truth. Through the governing actions of the Church, and through her missionary activity, Christ the Good Shepherd is at work, continuing what he began in Galilee and Jerusalem. When the liturgy and sacraments are celebrated, Christ is praying with and through his Church, drawing us into the mystery of his divine life. When we live saintly lives of charity and mercy, Christ walks among us, making his holiness take flesh in the lives of his disciples.

We all know the weakness and sinfulness of the members of the Church. Every member is a sinner who is redeemed and sanctified by Jesus, our Savior. However, we are still sinners in need of continual repentance and conversion. Some look at the sinfulness of the Church’s members, including its clergy, and conclude that the Church itself is sinful. Especially now, with clergy scandals (even though most are from decades ago), there is considerable backlash and resentment towards the Church, especially towards bishops. Some have lost trust and faith in the Church, and some question the holiness of the Church.

It’s important to remember that the holiness of the Church originates in Christ himself, apart from the sinfulness of its members and its leaders. The holiness of the Church has never therefore, is inseparable from the person of Jesus. However, many see the Church as somehow separate or standing apart from Christ, usually when there is dissatisfaction with the Church. But, Pope Francis has taught very clearly that one cannot even think of the Church apart from Christ, and one cannot think of Christ apart from the Church. Jesus and the Church are one, because he has made it so.

Through the Holy Spirit, Christ dwells within his Church and in each of its members, a communion of grace that unites us with him and with one another. The Second Vatican Council calls the Church the “universal sacrament” of Christ. In other words, the Church is a sign and instrument of his living presence in the world through the proclamation of the Word, through the celebration of the sacraments, and through the holiness of its members.

Through the Church, Christ continues to be active among his people as priest, prophet, and king, that is, by sanctifying, teaching, and shepherding. When we hear the Gospel proclaimed, whether by clergy or laity, Christ is at work in his Church, teaching the faith and imparting the truth. Through the governing actions of the Church, and through her missionary activity, Christ the Good Shepherd is at work, continuing what he began in Galilee and Jerusalem. When the liturgy and sacraments are celebrated, Christ is praying with and through his Church, drawing us into the mystery of his divine life. When we live saintly lives of charity and mercy, Christ walks among us, making his holiness take flesh in the lives of his disciples.

We are not isolated individuals but members of his Body, in a personal and intimate relationship with him, and in spiritual communion with each other. We are all part of his Church, which exists by his design, by his founding, and by his sustaining grace. – Bishop John Folda

We are not isolated individuals but members of his Body, in a personal and intimate relationship with him, and in spiritual communion with each other. We are all part of his Church, which exists by his design, by his founding, and by his sustaining grace. – Bishop John Folda
Gospel is still preached and the sacraments are still given to the faithful. It’s also true through the witness of the saints. Even at times in history when the clergy were afflicted with corruption, the faith was handed on through the faithful, and the Church endured and grew.

In times of crisis, God raises up saints to carry out his mission. Now is certainly such a time, though not the first, and Jesus is calling forth those who are willing to be saints, those who will live the faith with integrity and even with heroism. He calls every member of his Body, the Church, to be witnesses now more than ever, because the need is greater. Jesus calls us to be his disciples, his servants, and his friends, and through these callings, he invites us to holiness and forms us to be the saints his Church needs. Note well that our Lord does not call us in isolation. He calls us to be one with him along with many others, a community of faith. We are not isolated individuals but members of his Body, in a personal and intimate relationship with him, and in spiritual communion with each other. We are all part of his Church, which exists by his design, by his founding, and by his sustaining grace. Once again, we cannot think of the Church apart from Christ, and we cannot think of Christ apart from his Church. “I will be with you always, even until the end of the age.”

Bishop Folda’s Calendar

Jan. 2–8
USCCB Bishops Retreat, Mundelein, Ill.

Jan. 15  |  5:30 p.m.
Legislature Mass,
Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Bismarck

Jan. 17–18
March for Life, Washington D.C.

Jan. 21
Martin Luther King Day,
Pastoral Offices closed

Jan. 28  |  5:15 p.m.
Mass for Bison Week,
St. Paul Newman Center, Fargo

Jan. 29  |  10 a.m.
Mass for St. John’s Academy,
Jamestown

Jan. 30  |  11 a.m.
Know Your Faith Competition,
Shanley High School, Fargo

Jan. 31  |  9:30 a.m.
All Schools Mass,
Shanley High School, Fargo

Feb. 1  |  9:30 a.m.
All Catholic Schools Mass, Holy Family,
Grand Forks

Feb. 2  |  5 p.m.
Mass at St. Philip, Napoleon

Feb. 7  |  5:30 p.m.
Operation Andrew Dinner,
St. Joseph, Devils Lake

Feb. 10 |  5:30 p.m.
Operation Andrew Dinner,
Bishop’s Residence, Fargo

Feb. 7
Operation Andrew Dinner,
St. Philip Neri, Napoleon

6 p.m.
Moorhead Knights of Columbus
Clergy Appreciation Dinner,
Hjemkomst Center, Moorhead, Minn.

9:30 a.m.
All Catholic Schools Mass, Holy Family,
Grand Forks
Prayer
Intention of
Pope Francis

January
Evangelization – Young People
That young people, especially in Latin America, follow the example of Mary and respond to the call of the Lord to communicate the joy of the Gospel to the world.

Dear Lord, we pray that the Blessed Mother wrap her mantle around your priests and through her intercession strengthen them for their ministry. We pray that Mary will guide your priests to follow her own words, “Do whatever He tells you” (Jn 2:5). May your priests have the heart of St. Joseph, Mary’s most chaste spouse. May the Blessed Mother’s own pierced heart inspire them to embrace all who suffer at the foot of the cross. May your priests be holy, filled with the fire of your love seeking nothing but your greater glory and the salvation of souls. Amen.

St. John Vianney, pray for us.

New Earth is starting a new feature for 2019. Each issue we will recognize active priests who are celebrating birthdays. Please pray for these and all our priests.

January
5 – Father Mathew Pamplaniyil
7 – Father Damien Schill
9 – Father William Slattery
11 – Father Robert Smith
13 – Father Peter Anderl
16 – Father Steven Meyer
22 – Father Michael Schommer
24 – Father Anthony Hession
26 – Father Kurtis Gunwall
29 – Father John Cavanaugh

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One questioner writes: “Our son stole a lot of money from us. He has apologized, and we forgave him, but I don’t really feel I can trust him. What does forgiveness look like? Should I just move on and forget this happened?”

This situation reflects a reality that most of us have probably experienced in one form or another. It may not have been theft of money or property, but each of us have had a family member or friend sin against us, wounding the precious gift of trust in our relationship. Can we forgive the person who expresses sorrow, and can they regain our trust? How do we relate going forward?

In the Lord’s Prayer we petition our heavenly Father, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Our readiness to forgive others opens our heart to the forgiveness God readily offers us for our own sins against the very same family members and friends. Granted we are human and do not easily “forget” past offenses like theft of money by our own flesh and blood, but at least our questioner has made the conscious decision to forgive, insofar as the son did offer an apology with sincere expression of sorrow.

A key problem here is the broken trust, which is one of the natural effects of sin. How can we be sure the son will not turn around and steal again in the future? In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we find a parallel to this challenge. After we confess our sins to the priest, he invites us to pray an Act of Contrition, which includes these or similar words: “I firmly resolve, with the help of thy grace, to amend my life (or to sin no more) and to avoid the near occasions of sin.”

Depending on how much money the son stole, it would be important for him to make some gesture of restitution. Can he return it, or repay in small quantities over the course of time? Our Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) indicates it is a matter of justice to do so insofar as possible:

“In virtue of commutative justice (property rights, paying debts, etc.), reparation for injustice committed requires the restitution of stolen goods to their owner. . . Those who, directly or indirectly, have taken possession of the goods of another, are obliged to make restitution of them, or to return the equivalent in kind or in money” (CCC 2412).

The repentance of Zacchaeus, responding to Jesus’ invitation to dine with him, accompanies his declaration, “If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I shall restore it fourfold” (Luke 19:8).

A parent, however, who is not the police or law enforcement, has the option of “writing off the debt” the son owes in justice. That prerogative, if acted upon, would be a noble act of kindness and mercy. It would be the kind of loving response shown by the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Returning with repentant heart, the son expected to be treated no better than a hired hand. Instead, his father prepares a feast for the one who was “dead and came to life again” (Luke 15:31).

In response to our questioner: If you still don’t feel you can trust your son, it may be because his behavior suggests he has not fully repented nor changed his modus operandi. He has some obligation on his part to earn your trust, to regain that which he damaged by the theft. He owes you that in order to help you “move on and forget this happened,” or at last to treat him as if he had not done it, even though you won’t forget it. On your part, forgiveness would include an invitation to visits and holiday meals, and whatever other family activities and events you would share with any of your other children.

Here again we find a parallel in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The priest assigns some realistic “penance,” either a prayer or relevant action for the penitent to perform. You might consider what action on the son’s part you would consider reasonable penance, to affirm his sorrow and improve your relationship. It could be some appropriate charitable work for you or other family members, one that you agree on.

In sum, each interaction of sin and forgiveness within the family presents a challenge and opportunity to renew relationships with the help of grace from our merciful Father in heaven.

Father Kinzler serves as the pastor of St. George’s Church in Cooperstown as well as pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Aneta; St. Olaf’s Church, Finley; and St. Lawrence’s Church, Jessie.
With today’s society, it feels almost impossible to have a career and be a mother. So often, we hear about women giving up the idea of motherhood because they don’t dare risk losing the career they worked so hard to build. In addition, the outrageous costs of daily childcare could hinder any parent from the idea of having children. We hear and see the detrimental effects this idea has had with women embracing the use of contraceptives or even choosing abortion.

At St. Anthony of Padua Church in Fargo, we are told, “you can have your career, but also fulfill your vocation as a mother,” thanks to the Baby at Work program, which Father Raymond Courtright encourages his staff to utilize. This program was brought to life by former Director of Religious Education, Jenna Kennelly, in 2011.

“I started researching the program while I was pregnant at the end of the school/RE year because we had to decide if it would be possible to bring a baby to work or if Father would need to hire a new DRE,” said Kennelly. “Thankfully, we decided to try the program.”

Since then, the program has successfully promoted a work environment filled with the joy of new life. Five babies/children have come through the program so far.

When my husband and I found in 2013 that out we were pregnant with our oldest son, Jude, we began asking ourselves, “What are we going to do about childcare?” We worried about the bonding time lost, and cringed at the cost of professional care. I also wasn’t quite ready to leave my position as Director of Music and Liturgy at the parish. It was at this time Father Courtright brought the Baby at Work program to my attention.

The program has had such a positive impact in the upbringing of my children. While most mothers who are returning to work prepare their child for daycare after 6-12 weeks, I have been blessed beyond measure to bring each of my children to work with me until they become too active to keep cooped up in the office. I get to enjoy taking in the moments of everyday discoveries, the first big moments of rolling over, crawling, and walking. I also enjoy extra bonding time that would otherwise be limited to a few hours a day, all while maintaining my position at the parish. And, when our new Religious Education Coordinator, Maria Gietzen, decided to start working part-time again after 16 years of being a stay-at-home mom, she was grateful for the opportunity to bring her 4-year-old daughter, Anika, to work every so often.

“If it weren’t for this program, I wouldn’t be able to work here,” Gietzen said.

The joyful atmosphere that comes from the presence of children resonates well among the staff. Anika and my 11-month-old son, Bennett, fill the halls with their laughter and energy. Deacon Stu Longtin has even named them the “Ambassadors of Joy” for the parish. The effect these children have on our staff is immeasurable, not to mention the delight they give to those stopping by the parish.

I have especially enjoyed witnessing the peace and comfort my boys have given to those dealing with loss. During funeral planning, many people have been eager to hold my baby boys, or interact with games of “peek-a-boo,” and it is clear to see the ease and healing it brings to those in mourning. I look forward to sharing these stories with my children someday, so they may see the beautiful work God was enacting through them at such a young age.

My hope through sharing my story is that more parishes, companies, and businesses will embrace the idea of a Baby at Work program, or that more in-house daycares will become available at facilities. It’s incredible the bond that is built between parent and child when the proper amount of time is given to nurture the relationship. Admittedly, some days can be hard finding that perfect balance of “parent” and “employee,” but I wouldn’t trade them for the world. I am blessed to work in an environment that promotes a culture of life.
Eric Seitz ordained to the transitional diaconate

By Kristina Lahr

On Dec. 15, Bishop John Folda ordained Eric Seitz of Fargo to the transitional diaconate.

“The very word diakonia means service,” said Bishop Folda in his homily. “The Lord has given you an example that just as he himself has done, you also should do. As a deacon, you must open your heart to God so you might serve his people with love and with joy. Since no one can serve two masters, turn away from all defilement, all avarice, all self-serving, and give yourself generously to the One who has called you.”

Witnessed by family, friends, priests, deacons, and area faithful, Seitz declared his intention to carry out the office of deacon. He promised to hold fast to the mystery of faith, proclaim the faith in word and deed, embrace the celibate state and deepen a spirit of prayer by celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours.

Deacons are active in Christian ministry in parishes and hospitals, as well as service to the poor. A deacon is responsible for proclaiming the Gospel at Mass and may deliver homilies, preside at weddings and funerals and administer the sacrament of baptism.

The congregation prayed the Litany of Saints as Seitz lay prostrate as an expression of his total dependence on God. Bishop Folda then lay his hands on him, asking the Holy Spirit to descend upon him.

“When we recognize the face of Jesus in our brothers and sisters, we abide more fully in him,” said Bishop Folda. “Jesus is with us in them, especially those in need, and now you are called to serve him in a special way, drawing others into that same charity, a charity that evangelizes, that proclaims God’s love and truth.”

Deacon Seitz will return to St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. for his final semester and will be ordained a priest on a later date.

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Father James Goodwin assists Deacon Seitz as he is vested with the stole and dalmatic, signs of the office of Deacon.
(Kristina Lahr | New Earth)
A call to evangelize

Convocation of parish leaders invites all to be missionary disciples

By Paul Braun

Father Frank Donio talks to attendees about being missionary disciples during his keynote address. (Kristina Lahr | New Earth)

Amazing!

“Well worth the time.”

“I learned so much.”

“I can’t wait to get back to my parish and get to work!”

These were just a few of the comments overheard from attendees of the Convocation of Parish Leaders, held jointly by the Dioceses of Fargo and Crookston in Fargo Nov. 30 and Dec. 1. The convocation was the brainchild of Bishop John Folda of the Fargo Diocese and Bishop Michael Hoeppner of the Diocese of Crookston. After traveling back from the Convocation of Catholic Leaders, held in Orlando, Fla. in July of 2017, they decided that something similar needed to take place in their own dioceses.

“To my recollection, it was in the airport,” said Bishop Hoeppner. “Bishop Folda and I were both still very much enthralled with the whole process of what we had just been through with 3,000 plus delegates from across the country and scores of Bishops. We wondered how we might bring the joy and excitement and insight from the national meeting to our own dioceses. It didn’t take us long to figure out that we really wanted to do something as shepherds of our flocks here. And so, thoughts emerged of doing our own Convocation and modeling it on the national one.”

That task fell to Director of Catholic Education and Formation Father Andrew Jasinski and Ashley Grunhovd, Diocesan Director of the Office for Evangelization. They, along with Bob Noel and Deacon Mark Krejci from the Diocese of Crookston, went to work planning an event that would gather nearly 800 pastors and leaders from parishes in the two dioceses. The task of the attendees was to explore the Church’s teachings on evangelization and missionary discipleship, and to come up with ideas on how they could bring those teachings back to their fellow parishioners.

“The planning committee took the idea to discussion and prayer and from there, three main themes emerged,” said Grunhovd. “First, we hoped to foster a broader understanding of evangelization. Oftentimes, people automatically associate evangelization with overseas missionaries or going door-to-door. Evangelization isn’t for a few people or even for a select committee in the parish. It’s the call of all the baptized in the Church. The second aim was to answer the question, ‘If we are all called to evangelize and be missionary disciples, what does or could that look like?’ The third aim was to give the delegates the opportunity to take what they had received and begin to wrestle with the question, ‘what could missionary discipleship look like in my own life and in our parish?’”

Missionary discipleship is not a new concept in the Church. However, Pope Francis gave the concept new life when he wrote “Evangelii Gaudium,” or “The Joy of the Gospel.” Many parishes have outreach programs that aim to evangelize, but the convocation’s purpose was to help emphasize the great need for all parishes to reach out to those who may have fallen away from the Church or who have never had the scriptures introduced or explained to them.

“Sometimes our parishes feel like they are islands, in the mission by themselves,” said Grunhovd. “The Convocation allowed them to view the Church in mission on a broader scale, helping them to realize that we are all in this together. Offering people the chance to encounter Jesus Christ in prayer and the liturgy was central to the convocation.”

“If we aren’t evangelizing, we’re dead” said Bishop Folda. “The Church exists to evangelize, and we can’t be the Church Christ has created us to be if we aren’t going out to others with our faith. In our culture, we can’t assume that people will just accept the faith of their parents or families. We need to invite others to be part of the Church, and we need to be ready to give them a reason for our own faith. If we only pay attention to those already in the pews, then we’re ignoring the many people that Jesus wants to be part of his Church. If we don’t welcome others in, then our parishes will slowly diminish and die off. It’s that simple.”

The convocation opened with Mass, celebrated by Bishop Hoeppner, followed by opening comments from Bishop Folda. In his remarks, Bishop Folda addressed the challenges facing
the Church right now, especially after revelations of further sexual abuse in the United States that had taken place decades ago, but became known last August. He said that at a time when the credibility of the Church has been undermined by the sins of some of the Church’s leaders, the role of laypersons is more important than ever. The faithful need to embrace their own role in the Church’s mission and witness the faith to others.

“Some might wonder how we can possibly evangelize with all of this going on,” Bishop Folda told convocation attendees. “But we can never allow the sins of a few, even of our leaders, to keep us from living in Christ and sharing the joy of our faith.

Now more than ever, we need every member of the Church to be on board with the mission of the Gospel.”

In his keynote address, Father Frank Donio, S.A.C., Director of the Apostolate Center in Washington D.C. and a consultant to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee of Evangelization and Catechesis, put the challenge more bluntly. He said that the scandals the Church is facing “cuts missionary discipleship off at the knees,” and that it’s more important than ever for us to go forth into the world and live the Gospel and to be sent as apostles and missionary disciples.

“Evangelization is about one starving man who has found where the bread is, and wants to help others find it. It’s about one thirsty man surrounded by others dying in a desert, and he found where the water is.” – Monsignor Thomas Richter

Monsignor Thomas Richter of the Diocese of Bismarck spoke about the need to feel the need for evangelization. In his keynote address, he said evangelization was never meant to be complicated.

“Evangelization is about one starving man who has found where the bread is, and wants to help others find it,” said Monsignor Richter. “It’s about one thirsty man surrounded by...
others dying in a desert, and he found where the water is. He doesn’t have to know how to bake bread or dig wells, he just has to demonstrate to the others that his hunger is being fed and his thirst is being quenched.”

Monsignor Richter’s challenge for attendees is this: how do they pass on what they’ve learned about evangelization and missionary discipleship back to their fellow parishioners? How do they get them to understand the need to reach out to those who may just be looking for an invitation?

“We wanted to provide an opportunity for people who wanted to delve into what the New Evangelization really means,” said Bishop Hoeppner, “When Pope Francis says that it cannot be ‘business as usual’ in our parishes, that’s a challenge. And so, we want all attendees to study, reflect, learn and delve into what is the need for New Evangelization and what that really entails.

“I would like to see greater emphasis on the mission of the Church in our diocese,” said Bishop Folda. “I hope we can keep offering help to our parishes and support them as they explore their own mission to evangelize. Every parish is different, but there are some common ways that we can all reach out to share the Gospel, and we’ll be working on some follow-up steps after the Convocation. The most important element (of the Convocation) was the engagement of the parish leaders who were there. Everyone that I spoke to was grateful for the invitation and the opportunity to focus on the Church’s mission and some of the ways we can carry it out. I was very encouraged and very grateful for those who came, and I hope we can keep the momentum going in our parishes.”

Videos of Bishop Folda’s and Bishop Hoeppner’s homilies and remarks, as well as the presentations made by the two keynote speakers are available at www.fargodiocese.org/convocation-media. Questions concerning the convocation may be addressed to the Fargo Diocese Office for Evangelization at ashley.grunhovd@fargodiocese.org, or by calling (701) 356-7900.

Follow-up articles on what parishes are doing to promote evangelization and missionary discipleship will be printed in future issues of New Earth.
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For decades, churches in our diocese and Knights of Columbus councils have sponsored programs for youth. One of the most visible have been Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. While many of our parishes still sponsor these organizations, some are opting for alternatives.

Mike Richards, parishioner at Holy Cross Church in West Fargo, was looking for an alternative to Boy Scouts. He served as a den leader when his son was in Cub Scouts but was concerned about the secular direction the national Scouts USA organization was taking.

“The changes in scouting over the past few years got me searching elsewhere, and we found this amazing opportunity,” said Richards.

The alternative Richards found was Trail Life USA, founded in 2013 by former Boy Scouts and Boy Scout leaders. Trail Life USA has six Program Emphases: Wisdom, Heritage, Teamwork, Leadership, Character, and Faith. The program components support youth development, understanding, and practical experiences in these key areas. Although Trail Life USA is specifically Christian (it requires leaders to adhere to the belief of a Triune God), it is interdenominational, with Charter Organizations representing Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox faith traditions. Moreover, it has a strong focus on outdoor skills and camping.

“We’re teaching these boys to be future Christian fathers, husbands, and men, and we’re teaching them to practice chastity throughout their life,” said Steve Spickenreuther, District Chair Representative for Trail Life USA. “We don’t shy away from those discussions.”

As far as the scouting goes, that part is very much the same as Scouts USA. Spickenreuther says those activities provide skill and confidence building, team building, and a connection to the

American Heritage Girls wait to start their patriotic procession during Veterans Day ceremonies at Holy Cross Church in West Fargo. (Paul Braun | New Earth)
Shanley named to AP honor roll

By JPII Catholic Schools

Shanley High School has been named to the College Board’s 9th Annual AP® District Honor Roll. The Honor Roll recognizes 373 school districts in the U.S. and Canada that have increased access to AP coursework while maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP Exams. Congratulations Shanley students, staff, and parents on this honor.

In 2018, more than 4,000 colleges and universities around the world received AP scores for college credit, advanced placement, or both, and / or consideration in the admissions process. Inclusion in the 9th Annual AP District Honor Roll is based on a review of three years of AP data, from 2016 to 2018, looking across 38 AP Exams, including world language and culture.

For more information about the AP® District Honor Roll as well as a link to the complete listing of the 9th Annual AP® District Honor Roll, go to https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/awards/district-honor-roll

Shanley is listed by the district, “Diocese of Fargo Education Office,” and is one of only two schools in North Dakota to make the honor roll this year.
The lesson of the magi
By Father Michael Hickin

16

Ever since the invention of the telescope in the 16th century, Francis Collins, an internationally respected scientist who is listening to his patients. They professed the power of faith at work in the midst of terrible suffering. He was smart enough to share a fuzzy border. From the faith perspective, Catholicism embraces a long tradition of honoring the rational approach, the engagement of thought in the truth-seeking function of the mind. From the scientific perspective, knowledge is not restricted to proven data. When proofs are superseded by others, the scientist’s relationship with truth doesn’t crumble; he believes in a knowable Whole whose consistency is not yet accounted for by purely scientific methods.

Just like any human encounter, Catholicism must meet science with eager ears and a broad smile, a willingness to learn, and an ardent desire to share, when the moment is right, one’s own personal relationship with the “Word” made “flesh.”

More than a dozen years ago, an elderly woman greeted me after Mass with the words, “Father, they’ll care how much you know when they know how much you care.” Zinger! Folding that little saying into my Christian walk is the work of a lifetime.

How apropos. Our scientists might care to learn a little about this “Word” when they find believers open to learning a little more about this “flesh.”

Collins’ description of a worldview that harmonizes faith and science invites readers into questioning how balanced their own view of the world is. What follower of Christ does not wish to be part of that broad and inquisitive multitude that is “the safety of the world?” The lesson of the magi is as relevant today as ever.

Fr. Michael Hickin is the pastor of St. Mark’s Church in Bottineau and St. Andrew’s Church in Westhope.
How about that Garth Brooks concert televised on the First Sunday of Advent at the Notre Dame Stadium? In the rain, snow, and sleet, people packed together in their rain gear and parkas. Their phones were ablaze as they swayed to the music and sang the lyrics.

I spent the night sitting in my easy chair watching. I was most interested in hearing the lyrics and experiencing the graphics of “Standing outside the Fire.” Suddenly, there were electronic flames on the projection screens above the stage. It looked like a circle of fire engulfing the stage.

Garth Brooks and his singers were pounding it out for the audience... and the audience members were singing too!

I don’t know any words of the song other than the refrain, “standing outside the fire.” Right now, the other lyrics are not important.

I had just come home from the two-day Convocation of Parish Leaders in Fargo. This refrain tickled my thoughts. How often do we stand outside the fire rather than jump into the fire?

When I think about it, I spend a lot of time standing outside the fire. Or maybe with one foot in the fire in case it gets too hot. Does this sound true for you?

The reality is that we all could be standing inside the fire. In whatever we do for family, work, or school, in busy times and in boring times, we could be fanning the flames of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we stand inside the fire.

We probably feel that we do not have the training or the courage to live a life of evangelization. The Convocation speakers said if we have been paying just a little attention at faith formation classes and weekend liturgies, we have enough knowledge to be great evangelizers. We have courage — although we may not practice it often — from the Holy Spirit at Confirmation.

So, we just have to do it! Get out there, live a good life, talk about faith, and change the world. “Standing outside the Fire” is not the place to be. Rather, we need to stand inside it, the hot place, the family, the community, where the Holy Spirit is flaming!

My housekeeper told me that when Garth Brooks and his singers were pounding out “Standing outside the Fire,” her two-year-old granddaughter was running around the coffee table, jumping and screaming. She was into it! We adults need to get into it too!

So, join me in dumping our inhibitions, grabbing our courage, talking the faith, and living a good Christian life that others see and want to imitate.

Father Bert Miller serves as pastor at St. Mary’s Church in Park River and St. Luke’s Church in Veseleyville.

Editor’s note: Stories of Faith is a recurring feature in New Earth. If you have a faith story to tell, contact Father Bert Miller at bert.miller@fargodiocese.org.
Doing even little things with great love is one of the ways that Catholic Charities tries to fulfill its mission as a Catholic, Christian organization. While this applies to all who believe in the value of each person and is not only a Christian thing, it deeply reflects our Catholic Social Teachings based on the great, immeasurable dignity and worth of each person we meet. Loving our neighbor starts with doing the little things.

Do you remember the Chicken Soup for the Soul books? Each volume is a collection of short stories shared from real people about a few of the little moments and acts from the people and events that made a difference in their lives. These have been around for 20 years now, and it seems there are one of these books for every situation. Their popularity and staying power reflects the desire we have to be inspired, and to help others make a difference in their lives.

Many youth groups, bible studies, and other groups also share the “God moments” in their daily lives. They take turns sharing ways that they have seen the Lord working, often through others. While people share what you or I might consider little things, these little things have great meaning to them. Isn’t it true that the littlest things can make a big difference? One kind word or simple deed can have an enormous ripple effect, like skipping stones in a pond. We may not even know it until many years later. In fact, we may never see or understand much of the impact of our lives and actions in this lifetime.

Since we rarely see the results of these little acts of love, it requires trust from us that who we are and what we do really does matter. We have to believe that we can and are meant to care for one another, and to help lift each other’s burdens. St. Therese of Lisieux, also known as “the Little Flower,” shared with us her “Little Way” of doing simple things with great love. You can read how she embodied these beliefs in her autobiography, The Story of a Soul, where she describes living and growing in holiness by doing everything with great love for Jesus.

The “Little Way” isn’t just for the nineteenth century. Although St. Therese lived almost 150 years ago, St. Teresa of Calcutta, who many of us remember very well, also strongly believed in doing little things with great love. Through all that she did and saw in working with the poorest of the poor in India and across the world, Mother Teresa believed that the greatest suffering in the world is not from disease but from feeling unwanted or unloved. There is tremendous pain in being forgotten and cast out, and that happens right here in North Dakota. It can happen anywhere, in our smallest towns, in our schools, our businesses, even in our own churches.

The more I learn about the suffering and those in need, the more I believe in the importance of doing little acts of love. We see this at work all the time. In our programs, our staff goes above and beyond in so many ways. They might celebrate a birthday with a client who has no family to sing to them. They might encourage a client whose heart is breaking. They might drive the extra miles to be with someone in the hospital. They might accompany a pregnancy client giving birth, a guardianship client at death, or other clients at many times in between.

You can also be part of these little acts of love when you support us and other ministries. You can even do these things in your own families, churches, and communities. There are many people we don’t even know are hurting. We aren’t always perfect, but I’m sure all of us could do more little things with greater love. What if during 2019, all of us worked together on doing more little things out of love for each other? What a difference that could make in all of our lives!

Chad Prososki is the Director of Development and Community Relations for Catholic Charities North Dakota. For more than 90 years, Catholic Charities North Dakota and its supporters have been putting their faith in action helping people, changing lives. You can reach Chad at info@catholiccharitiesnd.org or (701) 235-4457.

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I grew up in Maryland. My parents said to me once while visiting in Wahpeton, “When we brought our first baby home from the hospital we never thought that 22 years later we would be dropping her off at a cloister in North Dakota.” Really, my mother should not have been so surprised because she knew my cherished childhood dream of moving out west to become a pioneer on the frontier like Laura Ingalls Wilder. By the time I was a teenager, finding no way to realize such a desire at the turn of the 21st century, I determined instead to go either to Africa or to China as a missionary. Then, when I was 19 going on 20, God himself solved my dilemma through my discovery of Carmel of Mary out on the prairie.

From the moment when my vocation became clear, I fell passionately in love with the land of North Dakota. I love the snow and the vast, open horizon. I love all the people who dwell here, those whom I have met and those whom I have yet to meet. Please do not mistake me for a naïve romantic. I know all too well that every land has its darkness and its heartrending contradictions, its tragedies and its tears; but it is these very shadows that are destined to be transformed into glory through Jesus Christ, on the Last Day, when all will be revealed.

Some of you may know that a few years ago our little Carmelite Community went through a transition as two of our Sisters, one of whom is the most beloved friend I have ever had, received a call to bring the riches of Carmelite spirituality to a different diocese further south. My experience being left behind has been a blessed occasion for me to penetrate in new and ever deeper ways the sacred meaning of my presence here in this place as part of the Father’s magnificent plan for salvation history. I like to think of myself as living in one of the far distant four corners of the earth to which the saving power of the Holy Spirit has been extended.

Every time that Bishop Folda has visited Carmel of Mary, I have wished that I could speak to him of what is in my heart, of my love for the Diocese of Fargo. One of my favorite things about being a cloistered nun is that one is not ordinarily transferred from place to place. My consecrated life belongs in a special way to the local Church, to the priests and people of our diocese.

There is much change, instability, and uncertainty in today’s world. All this has an impact even on the centuries old tradition of religious life. The signs of the times may require us to go, in charity and obedience, beyond our boundaries. This past October, for example, I was asked to travel to Pennsylvania to help with an event in honor of St. Therese of Lisieux. Together with 85-year-old Sister Gertrude and Sister Arlene from the Philippines, I helped to prepare over a thousand roses of many colors to be blessed and distributed to pilgrims. One day while I was there, my family from Maryland stopped by to visit just long enough to give me a chance to kiss my sister’s three month old baby and to give my niece a copy of Roxane Salonen’s charming book, The Twelve Days of Christmas in North Dakota. I was only away for a week, but it was one of the longest weeks of my life, so reluctant was I to be absent from the unique place on earth where I have promised to remain in prayer, day and night, year after year, until death.

Yes, it is good to have a place to call home, but the region where we live during our earthly life is only a sign, ephemeral and imperfect, of our heavenly home in the New Jerusalem.” – Sister Veronica of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, O. Carm.

Sister Veronica of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a Carmelite Nun of the Carmel of Mary Monastery, Wahpeton.
I was born and raised in Park River, the youngest of seven children to Paul and Colleen Samson. I graduated from Franciscan University of Steubenville in 2014 with a B.S. Degree in Business Management. After college, I spent time working in Steubenville and Park River. It was when I was recently living in Steubenville that I seriously started to discern my vocation. My whole story would not fit in this article, so I decided to share one meaningful experience.

When I decided to pursue a vocation, I did not really know how to go about proper discernment. I reached out to people who I thought would be of assistance. One of them was Archbishop Aquila from Denver, having known him well from his time as Fargo’s bishop. I started to correspond with the vocations director in Denver because I was still unsure about how to proceed, and he invited me to a retreat for vocations. I thought that it could not hurt to stay in a seminary for a weekend to see what life there is like. At this point I had a strong feeling that I wanted to be a priest someday.

As I packed my things to go on this retreat, I prayed to the Blessed Mother to help me find a confirmation of what I was feeling in my heart. Having arrived at the seminary, one thing that stuck out to me was how all of the young men there were striving to grow in holiness and to discern the will of God. They had already taken that next step to enter the seminary, and they seemed to be joyful about their decision.

The last night of the retreat, I spent time praying to the Blessed Mother expressing my concerns of not receiving the confirmation I was seeking. Perhaps I missed something that should have stuck out to me. My departing flight was not until Monday afternoon, which left me the following morning and lunch to spend time with the seminarians. On Monday morning, one of the seminarians suggested I meet with a spiritual director there. This director had a time slot open that morning that, providentially, worked perfectly for me. After our discussion, the spiritual director told me that he would be celebrating Mass that morning and asked if I was going to be around for it. After I told him that I would, he told me to pay close attention to his homily.

Though I was listening intently as ever to his homily, I can’t remember a word he said today because of what happened at the end of it. After his homily he scanned the crowd and called out, “Matt, where’s Matt?” I turned my head around hoping he was talking about another Matt. He saw me and told me to come up front. He came down from the pulpit and put his arm on me. As we faced the chapel full of seminarians he told them, “Matt is discerning a call to the priesthood.” He then asked me, “Matt, do you know how you’re going to find your answers?” I just shrugged, overwhelmed by being called forward in front of the whole seminary. He said, “I’ll show you how,” and led me over to stand in front of the statue of the Blessed Mother. He pointed to her, “Right here, she is the one who will help you.”

He then asked everyone in the church to recite a Hail Mary for me as we were standing at the foot of her statue. All I could do was bow my head in front of the statue and accept this great grace that was happening to me. This moment was one of the most moving moments of my life.

“Just when I began to doubt what I had been praying for would occur, something greater than I imagined was patiently waiting to take place.” – Matthew Samson

After this Mass, I randomly ended up sitting at the same table as a seminarian from the Diocese of Fargo. He asked me why I had not yet contacted Fargo about applying for seminary. I told him I wasn’t sure, so he gave me the number for the Vocation Director in Fargo.

Looking back, I can see now how much this event impacted my journey of discernment. It also increased my faith because just when I began to doubt what I had been praying for would occur, something greater than I imagined was patiently waiting to take place.

Samson is a Pre-Theology I seminarian studying at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.

Editor’s Note: Seminarian Life is a column written by current Diocese of Fargo seminarians. Please continue to pray for them.
Now that the midterm elections are over and both the North Dakota legislative session and the new session of the U.S. Congress have begun, we should reflect on how we, as Catholics, engage in the making of public policy.

We can begin by shedding all partisan, ideological, or identity politics. Our entire outlook and motivation should flow from our Catholic Christian faith. But wait, you might ask, isn’t that a form of ‘identity politics’? No. At the core our Christian faith are several principles that are antithetical to Christian identity politics. Every human person is created in God’s image and is bestowed with a dignity that is not dependent upon ethnicity, race, political beliefs, religion, or even behavior. Moreover, loving our neighbor means to love everyone and seek solidarity with all. This charity and solidarity, combined with the commitment to seek the common, not group or individual good, is the purpose of political life. There is no place for a politics of Christianism in Christianity.

The next step is to approach lawmaking with humility. God bestows us with wonderful gifts that can lead to the betterment of lives and communities, but neither legislators nor constituents will create the Kingdom of God here on earth. Thinking that we can is a form of hubris that will lead to unintended consequences.

Recognizing our limitations, we turn to seeking wisdom. We need wisdom of discernment. We need wisdom to pursue what is needed, rather than pursuing something solely because it furthers political advantage, fundraising, or membership satisfaction. We need wisdom to ask why something is done the way it is rather than seeking change for change’s sake.

Embracing humility, seeking wisdom, and rejecting factional identities prepare ourselves for engagement in the public square. The next step is examining every legislative proposal in light of a few fundamental principles.

As mentioned, every human person has an inherent dignity that society must respect, including the right to reach his or her fullest human good. Mirroring the Trinity, we are social creatures. As such, the dignity of the human person is best fostered and protected within the community and especially the family. For this reason, we are committed to the common good, not our individual good. The common good means all the conditions in society that allow individuals and groups to reach their fullest human good, both in this life and the next. The church’s social doctrine includes many other important principles, but most stem from these fundamental teachings.

One more principle deserves attention when it comes to legislation — the preferential option for the poor. It requires us to place the needs of the poor before our own and always ask how a particular policy proposal would affect the least among us.

Catholics have a moral duty to participate in the political process according to our abilities. For most of us, that means more than voting on election day. The real work begins with the legislatures. You can start by asking about every bill: Does it respect or disrespect human dignity? Does it strengthen or weaken families and communities? Does it contribute to the common good? How does it affect the poor and does it put their needs first?

Four questions for every bill. The temptation we all face is to ask these questions only when we hear about bills that directly impact the unborn, people in poverty, religious rights, parents, immigrants, or other concerns to the church. We should, however, ask those questions about every legislative proposal. Whether the bill is about road construction, jobs creation, taxes, higher education, schools, professional licensure, agriculture, mining, water, or anything else, we should ask those fundamental questions. Good people might reach different conclusions, but no bill or policy proposal should escape being subjected to those universal questions.

We also have an obligation to stay informed. If you have not done so, go to the North Dakota Catholic Conference website (ndcatholic.org) to join its legislative network. In addition, follow the conference’s Facebook page for the most up-to-date information.

Finally, pray for our lawmakers. Pray that they devote each day with dedication to working for human dignity, the common good, and the preferential option for the poor.

Christopher Dodson is executive director of the North Dakota Catholic Conference. The NDCC acts on behalf of the Catholic bishops of North Dakota to respond to public policy issues of concern to the Catholic Church and to educate Catholics and the public about Catholic social doctrine. The conference website is ndcatholic.org.
While we would never attend a Broadway musical without a ticket or take a trip without luggage, most Americans have not taken the time to plan for their future. We simply never get around to doing it.

The result is disappointing. When we fail to plan, our dreams, wishes and hopes may never be fully realized. Unfortunately, this also means our family and beneficiaries experience the expense and frustration of estate administration. A few months of probate can destroy what it took a lifetime to create. Don’t let this happen to you or your family.

The good news is that planning is easy and rewarding. In less time than it takes to choose and arrange a summer vacation, you can complete a plan that outlines your goals and lets your family and friends know the values you hold dearly.

Take the time to plan your life, your future, and your legacy. You will be glad you did, and every day thereafter, you can expect the peace and comfort of knowing the life you live today will matter tomorrow.

How can I begin planning online?

Creating your plan is easier than ever before when you use the online Wills Planner available on our website. Organize your family, estate information, and goals using the secure system. When finished, you may share your information with an online attorney to complete your will or trust plan. If you have questions, information can be shared through the system so we may better assist you.

To get started, visit our website (fargodiocese.giftlegacy.com) and click on “Plan Your Will.” Create a username and password; then log in. Enter information on your family, contacts and healthcare, finances and your estate. Once you have completed all sections of the Wills Planner, click on “Create a PDF” to compile the information your attorney will need to finalize your plan. Be sure to have your attorney review your will. It is not legal until they do so.

Where can I obtain more information on estate planning?

As you are completing the Wills Planner, you may find that you have questions. We would like to give you a free book— “Provide & Protect” — to answer important questions about the estate planning process. The book addresses ways to pass benefits to your children and other family members, how to prepare your advisors to make crucial decisions on your behalf, how to gather your property information, and how to make key estate planning decisions. You may also take the quiz at the end of each chapter. Then view the answers online. To request your free copy of “Provide & Protect”, please call me at (701) 356-7926 or go to fargodiocese.giftlegacy.com and click on Wills Guide.

Steve Schons is Director of Stewardship and Development for the Diocese of Fargo.
Tolkien, Chesterton, and the adventure of mission

T here is a common, and I’ll admit somewhat understandable, interpretation of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy that sees the great work as a celebration of the virtues of the Shire, that little town where the hobbits dwell in quiet domesticity. Neat, tidy hobbit holes, filled with comfortable furniture, delicate tea settings, and cozy fireplaces are meant, this reading has it, to evoke the charms of a “merrie old England” that existed before the rise of modernity and capitalism. As I say, there is undoubtedly something to this, for Tolkien, along with C.S. Lewis and the other members of the Inklings group, did indeed have a strong distaste for the excesses of the modern world.

However, I’m convinced that to see things this way is almost entirely to miss the point. For the ultimate purpose of *Lord of the Rings* is not to celebrate domesticity but rather to challenge it. Bilbo and Frodo are not meant to settle into their easy chairs but precisely to rouse themselves to adventure. Only when they leave the comforts of the Shire and face down orcs, dragons, goblins, and finally the power of evil itself do they truly find themselves. They do indeed bring to the struggle many of the virtues that they cultivated in the Shire, but those qualities, they discover, are not to be squirreled away and protected, but rather unleashed for the transformation of a hostile environment.

A very similar dynamic obtains in regard to interpreting G.K. Chesterton. His stories, novels, and essays can indeed be read as a nostalgic appreciation of a romantic England gone with the wind, but a close look at the man himself gives the lie to this simplistic hermeneutic. Though he enjoyed life with his wife and friends in his country home in Beaconsfield, Chesterton was at heart a Londoner, a denizen of the pubs of Fleet Street, where he rubbed shoulders with the leading journalists, politicians, and cultural mavens of the time. He loved to laugh and argue with even the bitterest enemies of the religion he held dear. Most famously, over the course of many years, he traveled the country debating with the best-known atheist of the time, his good friend G.B. Shaw, with whom he typically shared a pint after their joint appearances. The point is that Chesterton didn’t hide his Catholicism away; he launched it into the wider society like a great ship onto the bounding main.

“The point is that Chesterton didn’t hide his Catholicism away; he launched it into the wider society like a great ship onto the bounding main.” – Bishop Robert Barron

Paul Tillich was a quiet and serious student of Lutheran theology, preparing for a life as a preacher, when he was called to serve as a chaplain in the German army during World War I. In the course of five years, the young man saw the very worst of the fighting and dying. He said in one of his letters to his wife that it was like witnessing the collapse of an entire world. In the wake of that horrific experience, he sought a new way of articulating the classical Christian faith for the twentieth century, which is to say, for people whose world had fallen apart. He did indeed spend countless hours with his books, hunkering down to learn the great Christian intellectual tradition, but he insisted that the ultimate purpose of the theologian is to go out to meet the culture “mit klingendem Spiel,” which means, roughly, “with fife and drum.” Like his one-time colleague Karl Barth, who said that Christians ought never to crouch defensively “behind Chinese walls,” Tillich felt that believers in Christ ought to meet the culture head-on.

This general attitude is present from the beginning of Christianity. From the moment the Lord gave the great commission — “Go and preach the Gospel to all nations” — his disciples knew that the Christian faith is missionary by its very nature. Though it exhibits contemplative and mystical dimensions, it is, at heart, a faith on the move, one that goes out. How fascinating that the Holy Spirit first fell in the heart of a city, and that the greatest figure of the Apostolic age, Paul of Tarsus, was an urbane fellow, at home on the rough and tumble streets of Antioch, Corinth, Athens, and Rome.

This, by the way, is why I have a particular affection for YouTube, on whose forums I am regularly excoriated and attacked, and Reddit, where secularists, agnostics, and atheists are happy to tell me how stupid I am. Well, why not? Chesterton faced much worse in Fleet Street bars; Paul met violent opposition wherever he went; Frodo and Bilbo looked into the abyss. Good. We Christians don’t stay in hobbit holes; we go on adventure, mit klingendem Spiel!

Bishop Barron is a theologian and evangelist, known for his Word on Fire ministry. He serves as an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

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**JOB OPENING**

**Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry**

Diocese of Rapid City, S.D.

The position requires forming and inspiring youth and young adults in the Catholic faith, preparing leaders, and providing support and resources for youth and young adult ministry. The position requires a practicing Catholic with a personal relationship with Jesus and a passion for sharing the faith. Applicants should have a bachelor’s degree in theology, catechetics, or related field with a sound Catholic theology. Prior experience in parish youth ministry preferred. Must have excellent organizational, communication, and leadership skills, and ability to relate to pastors, youth ministers, young adults, and youth. Requires willingness to travel throughout the diocese, including some weekend and evening work. Full job description available at [www.rapidcitydiocese.org/chancellor/employment/](http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/chancellor/employment/).
Events across the diocese

St. James Basilica, Jamestown, to host Eucharistic miracles program

Documented and Vatican approved Eucharist miracles have occurred and are still occurring worldwide. On Jan. 14 at 7 p.m., 152 Eucharist miracles will be on display at St. James Basilica in Jamestown. With an extensive assortment of photographs and historical descriptions, the exhibition presents some of the principal Eucharistic miracles that took place throughout the ages, which have been recognized, approved, and documented by the Vatican. The exhibition has visited over 3,000 parishes worldwide. Free-will offering. All invited.

9 Days for Life Novena begins Jan. 14

Jan. 14-22 will mark the USCCB’s nationwide Novena 9 Days for Life. The prayer effort takes place during the U.S. bishops’ annual period of prayer and action focused on cherishing the gift of every person’s life. While the overarching intention of the centerpiece novena is the end to abortion, each day focuses on a different aspect of respecting each other’s God-given dignity. Download or sign up to receive the novena: free mobile app, text message, email, or online. Visit www.9daysforlife.com.

40 Days for Life ND invites you to an evening of thanksgiving

Ramona Trevino will be the guest speaker at an evening event honoring the participants of the 40 Days for Life fall campaign and all who stand for life. Join Ramona as she shares her story of conversion from an abortion provider to an advocate for life. Mark your calendars for Jan. 22 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Avalon Events Center in Fargo. Registration not required. Free will offering. Sponsored by 40 Days for Life ND. Contact the Pregnancy Help Center at (701) 284-6601.

Join Johnette Benkovic for lunch on Feb. 18

Johnette Benkovic will be the guest speaker at a pro-life luncheon on Feb. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo. Johnette is the founder and president of Women of Grace, a Catholic apostolate for women featuring conferences, media, and study groups. She has been a consistent presence on Catholic radio and television. She will be speaking on Missionary Discipleship for the Gospel of Life. Cost is $15. Sponsored by the Diocese of Fargo Respect Life Office. Register by Feb. 10 at www.fargodiocese.org/respectlife or call (701) 356-7900.

Mark your calendar for the Real Presence Radio fundraising banquet

Real Presence Radio is excited to welcome Johnette Benkovic-Williams as keynote speaker for their annual fundraising banquet in Fargo on Feb. 18. Johnette is host of EWTN’s “Women of Grace,” and founder and president of the organization by the same name. After years as a non-practicing Catholic, Johnette experienced a deep conversion back to her Catholic faith. Through this conversion, she found a vocation to share the Gospel message through media, including radio, television, and writing. To become a sponsor, host a table, or register to attend as a guest, visit yourcatholicradiostation.com, call (877) 795-0122, or email jessica@yourcatholicradiostation.com.

All welcome to breakfast with Father Sherman

All are welcome to a free will offering breakfast in honor of Father William C. Sherman on Jan. 27 at St. Michael’s Church in Grand Forks from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. He continues to inspire others with his knowledge of history and stories of his many life adventures, including his 63 years as a priest, 27 of which he served at St. Michael’s. He has authored and co-authored many books and articles and spent many years as a sociology professor at NDSU.

Ignatian retreat offered at Maryvale, Valley City

Head to Maryvale in Valley City to experience an Ignatian retreat. These silent retreats are steeped in the Gospels and are based on the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Upcoming retreats are Feb. 8–10 (register by Feb. 1), and May 3–5 (register by April 26). Suggested donation is $85. Contact Sister Dorothy Bunce, SMP, at (701) 845-2864 or dorothy.bunce@fargodiocese.org.

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 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 Monsignor Joseph P. Goering at (701) 356-7945 or Larry Bernhardt at (701) 356-7965 or VictimAssistance@fargodiocese.org.

For additional information about victim assistance, visit www.fargodiocese.org/victimassistance.
Ernest and Estelle Carrier celebrated their 60th anniversary on Nov. 28. They were married at Our Lady of Sacred Heart in Olga. They have eight children, 24 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

Lawrence and Carol Gapp, parishioners of St. Boniface Church in Walhalla, will celebrate their 60th anniversary Jan. 31. Lawrence and Carol were married at Holy Trinity Church in South St Paul, Minn. They are blessed with 9 children, 25 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

Randy and Carol Summers, parishioners of St. Mary’s Church in Park River, celebrated their 50th anniversary Oct. 31. They were married at St. Joseph’s Church in Devils Lake. They have two sons and two daughters.

Alan and Janet Vasicek, parishioners of Holy Spirit Church in Fargo, celebrated their 50th anniversary on Dec. 6. Alan and Janet were married at St. Mary of the Assumption in Lakota. They have two children and six grandchildren.

Marie Axtman celebrated her 100th birthday on Oct. 31. She is a parishioner of St. Therese the Little Flower Church in Rugby. She was married to Matt Axtman who passed away Dec. 16, 1984. Marie has two children, nine grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren.

Jim and Terry Wilmeth, parishioners of St. Boniface Church of Esmond, will celebrate their 60th anniversary on Jan. 23. Jim and Terry have 5 children, 17 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great grandchild. They spend their winters in Perdido Beach, Ala. and their summers in Esmond.

Gary and Marlene Boyer of Carrington will celebrate their 50th anniversary on Jan. 18. They were married at St. Paul’s Newman Center in Fargo. They have three children and six grandchildren.

As a way to celebrate life and love, we encourage parishioners throughout the Diocese of Fargo to send a photo and news brief about golden anniversaries and anniversaries of 60 or more years or birthdays of 80 or more years to: New Earth, Diocese of Fargo, 5201 Bishops Blvd. S., Suite A, Fargo, ND 58104 or news@fargodiocese.org.

The Peter’s Pence Collection provides the Holy Father with the financial means to respond to those who are suffering as a result of war, oppression, natural disaster, and disease. Please support this collection at Mass on Jan. 19–20.
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A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST
These news items, compiled by Danielle Thomas, were found in New Earth and its predecessor, Catholic Action News.

75 years ago — 1944
“To the list of boys from our Diocese who have died for us in this war, for whose souls you are offering your Holy Masses, Communions, and family prayers, please add one more name. Harold T. Brown, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Brown of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission, Granville, was killed in action in Italy on October 22, 1943.”

50 years ago — 1969
With increased attention being given by some persons towards legalizing abortion, Bishops Leo F. Dworschak of Fargo and Hilary B. Hacker of Bismarck have announced jointly that their position is as follows: “At this tense moment in our history when external wars and internal violence make us so conscious of death, an affirmation of the sanctity of human life by renewed attention to the family is imperative. Let society always be on the side of life.”

20 years ago — 1999
After a flood and fire destroyed the St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center in Grand Forks in 1996–97, a report was written on the progress of rebuilding the facility. “We are spread all over campus,” said Kathy Call, pastoral assistant and director of religious education at the Newman Center. “Offices and religious education classes are in Robertson Hall, Sunday Masses are in Christus Rex Lutheran Chapel and a chastity and sexuality workshop is in the Union. Our staff has become completely flexible and quite adept at working in temporary and limited spaces, but this is not to give the impression that moving back to the Newman Center is in any way removed from our thoughts.”

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Monday, January 28
6:30 pm at Trinity Elementary School
2811 7th Street E • West Fargo

Tuesday, January 29
6:30 pm at Nativity Elementary School
1825 11th Street S • Fargo

Thursday, January 31
6:30 pm at Holy Spirit Elementary School
1441 8th Street N • Fargo

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Lori Hager
Admissions Director
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lori.hager@jp2schools.org

“Cheerfulness prepares a glorious mind for all the noblest acts.”
— Elizabeth Ann Seton
A
fter more than two years of hard work and bipartisan cooperation in the US Congress, the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) applauds the enactment of the Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act (H.R. 390). This critical legislation will direct humanitarian relief to genocide victims in Iraq and Syria and hold ISIS perpetrators accountable.

“This law is a signal of hope for the critically vulnerable of this region. We thank Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ), the bill’s author, and Anna Eshoo (D-CA), its lead cosponsor, and President Donald Trump for signing it into law,” said Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D., Archbishop for the Military Services USA and Chairman of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace.

“Less than 200,000 Christians remain in Iraq, down from 1.4 million in 2002 and 500,000 in 2013, before ISIS swept through the region on its genocidal campaign. Many of the remaining Christians in Iraq are displaced, mostly in Erbil in the Kurdistan region, and need desperate assistance to return to their homes and stay in Iraq. After the ISIS invasion, 60,000 Yazidis fled to Europe, and of the 550,000 Yazidis still in Iraq, 280,000 remain displaced and only 20 percent have been able to return to their historic homeland of Sinjar, according to the Yazdi organization Yazda.

The Catholic Church has consistently raised its voice in support of the most vulnerable who are facing persecution and displacement in the Middle East and around the world. Pope Francis has denounced the persecution, torture, and killing of Christians in the Middle East, calling it a “form of genocide” that must end, and lamenting the wider conflicts that have put so many in danger. The USCCB has joined with Pope Francis in condemning the actions of those who would persecute others solely for reasons of their faith and ethnicity.

High court won’t hear states’ appeals over defunding Planned Parenthood

By Tyler Orsburn | Catholic News Service

P
ro-life leaders said they were disappointed the U.S. Supreme Court declined Dec. 10 to hear appeals from Kansas and Louisiana on lower court rulings that have stopped the states from blocking Medicaid funds going to Planned Parenthood.

“Complicated legal arguments don’t take away from the simple fact that a majority of Americans oppose taxpayer funding of abortion,” said Jeanne Mancini, who is president of March for Life.

“America’s largest abortion provider, Planned Parenthood, is responsible for more than 300,000 abortions each year and was recently found to be involved with the harvesting and trafficking of body parts from aborted babies,” she said in a statement issued shortly after the high court declined to hear the states’ appeals.

“Abortion is not health care, it is a human rights abuse,” Mancini added. “Until Planned Parenthood ceases to perform abortions, they should not receive any money from taxpayers.”

Federal funds cannot be used to pay for abortion, but pro-life advocates say Planned Parenthood should not get Medicaid funding because its facilities primarily perform abortions. Also, the organization has been accused of making a profit on providing fetal body parts to researchers.

Planned Parenthood officials and its supporters say the Medicaid funds are used only to help low-income women receive wellness services, cancer screenings, pregnancy tests, and birth control.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the national pro-life group Susan B. Anthony List, said that despite the Supreme Court declining to take the two states’ appeals, the pro-life grassroots movement “will not stop fighting until every single tax dollar
Just as she did hundreds of years ago from a small hill in Tepeyac, Mexico, Mary accompanies the downtrodden and the lowly like a mother caring for her children.

Mary “is a woman who walks with the gentleness and tenderness of a mother, she makes her home in family life, she unties one knot after another of the many wrongs we manage to generate, and she teaches us to remain standing in the midst of storms,” the pope said in his homily during a Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

From houses and hospital rooms to prison cells and rehabilitation clinics, he added, Mary continues to utter those words she said to St. Juan Diego, “Am I not here who am your mother?”

“In Mary’s school, we learn to be on the way to get to where we need to be: on our feet and standing before so many lives that have lost or have been robbed of hope,” the pope said.

Mary, he continued, also teaches her children that problems are not solved with immediate responses and magical solutions, nor through “fantastic promises of pseudo-progress that, little by little, only succeeds in usurping cultural and family identities.”

Instead, Christians learn from her the true joy that comes from loving God and neighbor unconditionally and to guard “the sense of God and his transcendence, the sacredness of life” and respect for creation, the pope said.

Mary, he added, taught humility by lifting up lowly people, like St. Juan Diego, by giving them a voice and “making them the protagonists of this, our history.”

Pope Francis said that “through Mary, the Lord refutes the temptation of giving way to the strength of intimidation and power” and instead gives dignity to those who have been cast aside.

“The Lord does not seek selfish applause or worldly admiration. His glory is in making his children the protagonists of creation,” the pope said. “With the heart of a mother, (Mary) seeks to raise up and dignify all those who, for different reasons and circumstances, were immersed in abandonment and obscurity.”

Processing into the basilica dressed in white, the symbol of purity, Pope Francis made his way to a replica of St. Juan Diego’s tilma, which bears the image of Mary, who appeared to the indigenous saint in 1531. The pope stood before the image, bowing reverently and incensing it three times.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the reading from St. Luke’s Gospel, in which Mary hastily visits her cousin Elizabeth, and subsequently proclaims “the greatness of the Lord.”

Through her Magnificat, the pope said, Mary teaches all Christian men and women not only the importance of praising God in the midst of joy but also how to accompany and walk with others.

With a mother’s heart, Mary raises up the abandoned, pope says at Mass

By Junno Arocho Esteves | Catholic News Service

Just as she did hundreds of years ago from a small hill in Tepeyac, Mexico, Mary accompanies the downtrodden and the lowly like a mother caring for her children.

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Join the University of Mary for its fourth annual Vocations Jamboree

Meet members of religious communities from around the country, ask questions, schedule personal meetings with vocation directors, and learn more about opportunities to serve God and the community.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
(Open to the Public)

Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput
Wednesday, March 20, 7:30 PM
Founders Hall, Lumen Vitae University Center
University of Mary

Appointed Archbishop of Philadelphia by Pope Benedict XVI in July 2011, Archbishop Chaput has also served as Bishop of Rapid City and Archbishop of Denver. He was instrumental in founding Centro San Juan Diego, Catholic Association of Latino Leaders, and ENDOW. Archbishop Chaput received the 2009 Canterbury Medal from the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty for his work in advancing religious freedom. He is the author of three books.
As the car pulled up, I had just a moment or two to talk to the father. He did not try to hide the fact that yes, they were there for an abortion.

“Why?” I dared ask.

“This is the first one for us. We’re just not ready,” he said.

“It’s not a baby yet anyway.”

The usual responses, and when one of my fellow prayer advocates at our state’s only abortion facility asked what the man had said, he replied, “That’s not a good enough excuse.”

“No,” I said. “I’ve yet to hear one that is.”

But it wasn’t all this father said to me. This man was young, but certainly not too young to bear the responsibility of a child. Before ducking into the facility that would dismantle and destroy that unique life, I implored him to think about it some more, reminding him that men are made to protect and defend life. He quickly shot back, “Well my dad didn’t protect me.”

There it was — the seething, hidden wound that had led him to the conclusion that this child was not real, not worthy of life — for all to see, if only for a moment before it enfolded again into its hidden prison within his heart.

Later, as I contemplated the lies this father had bought into, an image came to me. I thought of St. Joseph, and how it must have been for him when he learned his betrothed, with whom he’d had no sexual relations, had conceived a child.

Joseph, of all men, would have had reason to seek abortion for the life that had been quietly announced, presenting a crisis. Though there wouldn’t have been an abortion facility in either Nazareth or Bethlehem, surely they could have found a way to destroy the child Jesus.

Of course, God knew what he was doing when he chose Joseph and Mary to bring his Son into the world. But what if? What if Joseph had insisted that Jesus be killed, as Herod had desired?

Instead, with God’s grace in the hardest of circumstances, he rose up and became the father Jesus needed. His manhood springing into action, Joseph went into a mode of protectiveness for his beloved, Mary, and the fruit of her womb — the one who would save us all.

It’s chilling to consider the “what ifs,” but it presents a contrast we seem to need right now. The more time I spend on that sidewalk, the more apparent the crisis of fatherhood becomes.

Our men are wounded, and the hearts of too many have folded up. In this damaged state, they have become selfish, to the point of overlooking what abortion does to women and themselves, ultimately leading many to facilitate the destruction of their own children.

More than ever, we need the intercession of St. Joseph, who knows just what they’re going through, and how to help rectify it all.

Dear St. Joseph, we implore you. Please, come into the hearts of men everywhere, that they might see the jewel before them, and be the men God has called them to be. Only then will their hearts, now chained in captivity, be set free.

For those who stood vigil during this year’s 40 Days for Life ND prayer campaign in Fargo — and all who stand for life — please join the Evening of Thanksgiving celebration with Ramona Trevino, former Planned Parenthood manager, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on Jan. 22 at the Avalon Events Center in Fargo. Registration is not required. Hors D’oeuvres will be served. Free-will offering.

Roxane B. Salonen, a wife and mother of five, is a local writer, and a speaker and radio host for Real Presence Radio. Roxane writes for The Forum newspaper and for CatholicMom.com. Reach her at roxanebsalonen@gmail.com.
Do you know where we are? The answer will be revealed in the February New Earth.

Where in the diocese are we?

Last month’s photo is from outside St. Gianna’s Maternity Home in Warsaw.