

## Diocese, parishes preparing for return of public Mass

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Although publicly celebrated Masses remain suspended to prevent the spread of COVID-19, preparations are underway for when they can resume.

Bishop William Joensen sent a letter to the faithful May 9 sharing that select Diocese of Des Moines officials and clergy compose a special committee charged for weeks with the planning process. As of press time May 11, however, a regathering date had not been determined. Diocesan officials are watching for a reasonable decline in the incidence of COVID-19 in the southwest quadrant of Iowa.

When regathering does begin, the process will happen in phases. The first phase involves the resumption of periodic weekday Masses (Monday through Saturday), provided that certain conditions at parishes are met.

Even when publicly celebrated Mass resumes, the Sunday Mass obligation will remain suspended to protect vulnerable parishioners and guard against flare-ups of the virus. For those who do not attend Mass during the pandemic, God's infinite grace and mercy remain abundantly available.

"I pray that all of us – myself included – will charitably embrace the gradual manner in which we resume a Eucharistic rhythm of life, for reasons of necessary social distancing and due diligence in cleaning and restoring our churches to a safe environment each time we gather for Mass," wrote Bishop Joensen in his May 9 letter.

Last month, the state lifted restrictions on gatherings for worship,

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## Beacons of Hope

Nurses receive letters of appreciation from local pre-schoolers



MercyOne nurses hold up a sign they received from local pre-schoolers.

Nurses Week, a week celebrating the nursing profession nationally and annually during the second week of May, is looking different this year due to the effects of COVID-19.

But that didn't stop more than a dozen local daycares from Ankeny, Des Moines, Johnston, Urbandale and West Des Moines from sending hundreds of appreciation cards, coloring pages and posters to celebrate Mercy-

One Des Moines nurses.

"It is really special to know that daycare providers and the children they are caring for took the time to write these beautiful messages of thanks," said MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Chief Nursing Officer Cindy Penney. "Thank you for making Nurses Week even more special!"

"Caring for people in times of sickness and health is what we do

on a daily basis and we feel so honored to be recognized by the community in this way," said MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Manager of Nursing Education, Mackenzie Rittler-Cheney. "We would also like to give our thanks to our daycare workers who have found ways to care for children while health care workers do their work. We would not be able to do it without you!"

## Bishop announces new priest assignments

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Bishop William Joensen has made the following clergy appointments effective July 9.

The assignment for Monsignor Frank Chiodo, pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, is extended until July 2024.

Msgr. Chiodo, whose home parish is St. Anthony, was educated at Dowling Catholic High School, Immaculate Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, and the St. Thomas Theological Seminary in



Monsignor Chiodo

Denver.

He was ordained a priest on June 4, 1976 by Bishop Maurice Dingman and given the honor of monsignor in 1990.

He served primarily in parish ministry, having served Christ the King, the Basilica of St. John, Holy Trinity and St. Anthony in Des Moines, and in team ministry at St. Brendan in Leon and Sacred Heart in Chariton.

He also taught at St. Albert High School and served at St. Thomas More Parish in Omaha. He has served as pastor of St. Anthony Parish since 2007.

Father James Downey, is moving from studies in Rome, to parochial vicar at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish, Ankeny and St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, Ankeny.

Father Downey studied at Dowling Catholic High School, St. John Vianney Seminary in St. Paul Minnesota, and the Pontifical North American College in Rome. He was ordained last summer by Bishop Rich-



Father Downey

ard Pates. After ordination, Father Downey returned to Rome for another year of studies focusing on moral theology.

Father John Frost is moving from pastor at St. Michael Church, Harlan, to become pastor at St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines.

Father Frost attended

Dowling Catholic, William Penn College St. Ambrose College in Davenport and St. John's Seminary in Collegeville, Minnesota.



Father Frost

He was ordained a priest in 1987 by Bishop William Bullock. Since ordination, he has served primarily in parish ministry. Father Frost has ministered at:

St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines, Queen of Apostles in Council Bluffs, Ss. John and Paul in Altoona, Immaculate Conception in St. Marys, Assumption in Churchville, St. Patrick in Irish Settlement, St. Bernard in Osceola, St. Patrick in Grand River, St. Mary in Avoca, St. Patrick

in Walnut, and most recently St. Michael in Harlan. He has also served as Canonical administrator of Shelby County Catholic School for the past 10 years.

Father Enrique Garcia-Elizalde is moving from serving as an instructor at Conception Seminary College in Conception, Missouri, to become parochial vicar at Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs.

Ordained in 2001 in Ecatepec, Mexico, Father Garcia-Elizalde was incardinated



Father Garcia-Elizalde

Continued on page 7

# Homeward Bound

When Moses gathered seventy elders of the Israelite people near the tent where he would usually meet the Lord God dwelling in his holy tabernacle, the spirit was readily distributed on all present. Yet a couple of guys, Eldad and Medad, who had remained back in the camp, also displayed the same prophetic spirit even though they were absent from the larger gathering. Moses had no problem with the fact that the prophetic spirit had sought out these men otherwise “left behind” at home. They were still a vital part of the community where God’s presence was manifest (Numbers 11:24-26).

For these weeks of pandemic self-discipline practices, we may have at times felt left out or left behind from the larger community where sacraments are celebrated and God’s presence and abundant life are shared. Yet my hope is that we all have come to deeper belief that God’s Spirit—the Spirit of the Risen Jesus—seeks out where we are, as we are. We have had the chance to invite God’s word into our daily lives and introduce God’s will and Spirit presence in the porous places where love is far from perfect and acute need is known. Mother Maureen McCabe observes, “To live through darker times faithfully is to grow in our capacity to receive God in all situations, for as our receptivity becomes less dependent on circumstances and feelings, an interior door opens up to another, deeper level.” That’s one definition of what it means to be a prophet: someone who places God’s word where it is absent, and helps others to believe God has come to them when they would otherwise feel God has left them behind in life.

The coronavirus contagion has afforded us plenty



By  
Bishop  
William  
Joensen

of chances to give witness that we are a prophetic people in Christ. But let’s be honest: The live-streaming Masses, even more than the Zoom and FaceTime encounters with loved ones and colleagues, are far from fully satisfying. If God’s Spirit has touched our hearts where we are, then that same Spirit urges us to make our way from our own homes—our “domestic churches”—to unite ourselves with God and each other as completely as possible. We long for the whole Christ: the Eucharistic Body who suffered and died for us, and is raised in the Spirit to become the nucleus of an organic communion that is glorious, grateful, and soul-filling.

By baptism, we are made prophets of the Word who is Christ, AND we are made priests who lend our holy desires to the larger Body, who mediate and shore up the tent of trust that allows our respective vulnerabilities and needs to be seen as valuable and not a drain on the larger whole, for they evoke the mysterious, sacrificial love of Jesus embedded in the Eucharist. When we are attuned to the Spirit pulsing among us, nothing less than actual reception of Holy Communion in the context of the Mass that is both source and

summit of Christ’s abundant life, can allow us to sigh and say, “Ah, home at last!”

Before he became pope, Joseph Ratzinger recalled what happened in concentration camps and Russian prison camps, where people had to do without the Eucharist for extended periods yet did not take matters into their own hands. He observes how they made a Eucharistic celebration of their longing, waiting with yearning upon the Lord. “In such a Eucharist of longing and yearning they were made ready for his gift in a new way, and they received it as something new,” when the day at last arrived that they could participate in Mass again.

At this writing, and with the Feast of God’s Spirit at Pentecost approaching on the last day of May, it remains uncertain when that glorious day when we are able to regather and participate in public Mass—and celebrate baptisms, weddings, funerals, confirmation and other sacraments as a full community—will occur. God willing, it will arrive very soon. Our regathering task force, which includes both priests and lay people, has been hard at work to help outline the preparations and conditions in our churches that we must prudently observe in order to protect as much as reasonably possible the physical and spiritual well-being of our Des Moines Diocese family.

As with the Israelites who confronted Moses about Eldad and Medad, there’s been some grumbling about whether

we’re going too slowly or too hastily in reassembling for worship. I get it. As I noted in my vespers homily the night before I was ordained your bishop, there are times when authority is enlisted to make decisions not based on absolute truth coming directly from God, but to guide the community as prudently, reasonably, and faithfully as possible—to limit and then liberate sacred action for the sake of the salvation of souls. As Fr. Thomas Joseph White, OP, notes, Catholics are not obliged to believe that every decision of bishops comes from God, but they are obliged to obey and believe that their legitimate exercise of authority is rooted in the Spirit of the Risen Christ to bind and loose.

And so I challenge us all—myself included—to seek the grace to let charity prevail as we continue our pilgrimage back home. This charity makes patience and forbearance possible when decisions are beyond our control, and prevents us from succumbing to the bitterness and rancor that are the fingerprints of the unholy spirit who seeks to divide us and set us against each other.

And this charity will also be manifest in embracing

the gradual manner in which we resume a Eucharistic rhythm of life, for reasons of necessary social distancing and due diligence in cleaning and restoring our churches to a safe environment each time we gather for Mass. When it is practically wise to do so, we cannot all rush the altar at the same time, heedless of our neighbor whose holy longing is equal to our own. We recall St. Paul’s challenge to the church at Corinth after hearing that there were divisions among them, factions that were breaking rather than building communion. “When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord’s supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk” (1 Cor. 11:18-21).

Paul is referring to the preliminary meal that precedes the actual Eucharist, but I think his counsel obtains for us as well as we all long to come home to Mass in our parish churches. May God’s Spirit, the Spirit of charity and abundant life, the Spirit of a prophetic, priestly people, be with us where we now are, and where God will have us be: united as one Body, more than ever before.

## Enfocados en Regresar a Casa

Quando Moisés reunió a setenta ancianos del pueblo de Israel cerca de la tienda donde el se reuniría usualmente y en donde habitaba el Señor Dios en su santo tabernáculo, el espíritu se había dispersado rápidamente entre todos los presentes. Pero un par de tipos, Eldad y Medad, quienes se habían quedado en el campamento, también mostraron el mismo espíritu profético a pesar de no haber estado presentes en la reunión general. Moisés no tenía problema con el hecho de que el espíritu profético hubiera también buscado a estos otros que de cierto modo “se habían quedado atrás” en casa. Ellos eran aún una parte vital de la comunidad en donde se manifestaba la presencia de Dios (Números 11:24-26)

En estas semanas de prácticas de autodisciplina por la pandemia, podemos en veces habernos sentido fuera o alejados de la comunidad general en donde se celebran los sacramentos y en donde se comparten la presencia de Dios y la vida abundante. Aún así espero que todos hayamos logrado una creencia más profunda de que el Espíritu de Dios – el Espíritu de Jesús Resucitado – nos busca en donde estamos y como somos. Hemos tenido la oportunidad de invitar la palabra de Dios a nuestras vidas diarias y a introducir la voluntad de Dios y la presencia del Espíritu en esos lugares porosos en donde el amor dista mucho de la perfección y se sabe que necesita atención urgente. La Madre Maureen McCage observa, “el vivir fielmente los

tiempos más oscuros es el crecer en nuestra capacidad de recibir a Dios en toda situación, ya que nuestra receptividad se vuelve menos dependiente de las circunstancias y de los sentimientos, abriendo una puerta interior hacia otro nivel más profundo.” Esa es una definición de lo que significa ser un profeta: alguien que lleva la palabra de Dios a donde estaba ausente y ayuda a los demás a creer que Dios ha venido a ellos cuando ellos hubieran sentido de alguna otra forma que Dios los había dejado fuera de su vida.

La enfermedad del coronavirus nos ha presentado numerosas oportunidades de dar testimonio de que somos un pueblo profético en Cristo. Pero seamos honestos, las Misas transmitidas en línea, más aún que los encuentros por Zoom y FaceTime con nuestros seres queridos y colegas – están lejos de ser satisfactorias. Si el Espíritu de Dios ha tocado nuestros corazones en donde nos encontramos, entonces el mismo Espíritu nos llama a seguir el camino desde nuestros propios hogares – nuestras “iglesias domésticas” – a unimos nosotros mismos con Dios y con los demás tan completamente como sea posible. Extrañamos la plenitud de Cristo: el Cuerpo Eucarístico que sufrió y murió por nosotros, y que resucitó en el Espíritu para convertirse en el núcleo de una comunión orgánica que es gloriosa, agradecida y que llena el alma.

Por el bautismo somos hechos profetas de la Palabra



### Bishop Joensen made the following appointments, effective July 9, 2020:

Monsignor Frank Chiodo, Pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, assignment extended until July 2024.

Father James Downey, from studies in Rome, to Parochial Vicar, Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish, Ankeny and St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, Ankeny.

Father John Frost, from Pastor, St. Michael Church, Harlan, to Pastor, St. Mary of Nazareth Parish, Des Moines.

Father Enrique Garcia-Elizalde, from Instructor, Conception Seminary College, Conception, MO., to Parochial Vicar, Corpus Christi Parish, Council Bluffs.

Father Daniel Gehler while remaining Pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Earling and St. Peter Parish, Defiance, to Pastor, St. Michael Parish, Harlan, and Canonical Administrator of Shelby County Catholic School.

Father Robert Harris, Pastor of All Saints Parish in Des Moines, assignment extended until July 2024.

Father Charles Kottas, Pastor of St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs and Canonical Administrator of St. Albert Catholic School, assignment extended through July 2021.

Father Gregory Leach, from Pastor, St. Mary of Nazareth, to retirement.

Deacon Dennis Lovell, while remaining Deacon at St. Anne Parish, Logan, assigned Director of Parish Life, Holy Family Parish, Mondamin.

Father Sylvester Omon Okoh, from Chaplain CHI/Mercy Hospital, Council Bluffs, to Canonical Administrator of St. Patrick Parish, Neola, and St. Columbanus Parish, Weston.

Father Augustine Clement Owusu, from Chaplain, St. Albert Catholic School, to Parochial Vicar of St. Michael Parish, Harlan, St. Joseph Parish, Earling and St. Peter Parish, Defiance.

Father Michael Peters, from Pastor, St. Patrick Church, Corning, and St. Patrick Church, Lenox, to retirement.

Father Litto Thomas from Parochial Vicar, Corpus Christi Parish, Council Bluffs, to Canonical Administrator of St. Patrick Parish, Corning, and St. Patrick Parish, Lenox

+

Faithfully in Christ,  
Most. Rev. William Joensen, Ph.D.  
Bishop

Jason Kurth  
Chancellor

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que es Cristo, Y somos nombrados sacerdotes que prestamos nuestros santos deseos al Cuerpo general, quienes sirven de mediadores y que levantan la tienda de la confianza que permite que nuestras respectivas vulnerabilidades y necesidades sean consideradas como algo valioso y no como algo que desgasta al grupo en su totalidad. Aunque los sacerdotes que se han ordenado son los ministros adecuados de los sacramentos, cada uno de nosotros recibimos el misterioso y sacrificial amor de Jesús implantado en la Eucaristía. Cuando estamos a tono con el Espíritu que se mueve entre nosotros, nada más que en la actual recepción de la Sagrada Comunión en el contexto de la Misa es tanto fuente y encuentro con la vida abundante de Cristo, que puede permitirnos suspirar y decir, “¡Al fin en casa!”

Antes de convertirse en papa, Joseph Ratzinger recordaba lo que sucedió en los campos de concentración y en los campos rusos de prisioneros, en donde la personas tenían que sobrevivir sin la Eucaristía por largos períodos de tiempo pero que aún así no tomaban el asunto en sus propias manos. Él observa cómo ellos hacían una celebración Eucarística de cómo extrañaban y esperaban con gran deseo al Señor. “En tal Eucaristía de extrañar y desear, ellos se alistaban para este don de una nueva forma, y lo recibían como algo nuevo,” cuando el día llegaba finalmente y podían nuevamente participar en la Misa.

Al escribirles esto, y con la proximidad de la Fiesta del Espíritu de Dios en Pentecostés el último día del mes de mayo, seguimos con la incertidumbre de cuándo llegará ese día glorioso en que podremos reunirnos nuevamente y participar en Misas públicas – y celebrar bautismos, bodas, funerales, confirmaciones y demás sacramentos con toda la comunidad. Con el favor de Dios, ese día llegará muy pronto. Nuestro grupo de trabajo para la reanudación, conformado tanto por sacerdotes como por laicos, ha estado trabajando arduamente para poder delinear las preparaciones y las condiciones que nuestras iglesias deberán observar prudentemente para poder proteger tan razonablemente como sea posible el bienestar físico y espiritual de nuestra familia de la Diócesis de Des Moines.

Al igual que los israelitas que confrontaron a Moisés respecto a Eldad y Medad, hay algunos gruñidos sobre si estamos siendo demasiado lentos, o demasiado apresurados en volvernos a reunir para nuestro culto. Entiendo. Como lo dije en la homilía de las vísperas la

noche antes de que fuera ordenado como su obispo, hay ocasiones en que la autoridad está llamada a tomar decisiones que no están basadas en la verdad absoluta que proviene de Dios, pero en guiar a la comunidad tan prudente, razonable y fielmente como sea posible. En veces el pastor toma la decisión de limitar y luego liberar acciones sagradas por el bien de la salvación de las almas. El Padre Thomas Joseph White, OP hace notar que los católicos no están obligados a creer que toda decisión de los obispos proviene de Dios, pero están obligados a obedecer y a creer que su legítimo ejercicio de autoridad está fundado en el Espíritu del Cristo Resucitado a atar y a desatar.

Y por tanto, nos hago un reto todos – incluyéndome a mí – a buscar la gracia para permitir que la caridad prevalezca al continuar nuestro peregrinaje de vuelta a casa. Esta caridad hace que la paciencia y la tolerancia sean posibles cuando las decisiones están más allá de nuestro control, y previene que caigamos en la amargura y el rencor que está en las yemas de los dedos de espíritu maligno que busca dividirnos y ponernos los unos contra los otros.

Y esta caridad quedará también manifiesta en acoger la forma gradual en que reanudamos el ritmo de vida Eucarístico, por razones de la necesidad del distanciamiento social y la diligencia necesaria para limpiar y hacer de nuestras iglesias un ambiente seguro cada vez que nos reunimos para la Misa. Cuando es prácticamente lo correcto, no podemos todos apresurarnos hacia el altar al mismo tiempo, sin considerar a nuestro prójimo cuyo sagrado apetito es igual al nuestro. Recordemos el reto de San Pablo a la iglesia en Corinto luego de escuchar que existían divisiones entre ellos, fracciones que más que construir la comunión la estaban rompiendo. “Ustedes, pues, se reúnen, pero ya no es a comer la Cena del Señor, pues cada uno empieza sin más a comer su propia comida, y mientras uno pasa hambre, el otro se embriaga.” (1 Cor. 11:18-21).

Pablo se refiere a la comida preliminar que precede a la Eucaristía misma, pero creo que este consejo se refiere a nosotros quienes estamos deseando el volver a casa a la Misa en nuestras iglesias parroquiales. Que el Espíritu de Dios, el Espíritu de la caridad y de la vida abundante, el Espíritu de un pueblo profético y sacerdotal, esté con nosotros en donde estamos ahora, y en donde Dios quiere que estemos: unidos como un Cuerpo, más que nunca.

## Appreciation effort takes a different path



**Members of the Serra Club delivered gift baskets and flowers to religious sisters in lieu of the Sisters Appreciation Dinner.**

The Serra Club of Des Moines got creative in how it honored women in religious life this year since its annual event was shelved due to the coronavirus.

The organization that prays and supports seminarians for the diocese honors religious women with an annual dinner and stipend.

“The pandemic made it impossible for us to have our Sisters Appreciation Dinner, which was scheduled for Sunday, April 26,” said Jerry Murphy.

Members donated what they would have spent for their dinner, which was added to the stipend and used to honor the women.

Members delivered

gift bags, flowers and stipends to the 42 sisters in the Des Moines diocese.

“It turned out to be a splendid way to thank our sisters for their vocation of doing God’s work in our diocese,” Murphy said.

For more information about the club, go to [serraus.org](http://serraus.org).

## FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

### EUCCHARISTIC BLESSING OVER DES MOINES

#### SUNDAY, JUNE 14TH AFTER THE 11AM MASS

## Saint Anthony Catholic Church

15 Indianola Rd, Des Moines, IA

Please honor us with your presence, online or in person, for this yearly celebration of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. The online Mass will begin at 11AM and following the Mass the Most Holy Eucharist will be processed out of the church to the Grotto and then on a motorcade route to bless Des Moines (Starting approximately 12pm). You are welcome to join us in the motorcade for this long held tradition. View online: [St Anthony Facebook page](#).

### Motorcade Route

(Route subject to change)  
To register your car to be in the motorcade, go to [StAnthonyDSM.org](http://StAnthonyDSM.org)

1. Start at the St. Anthony Grotto: SW 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Dunham Ave. Line up behind START truck.
2. East on Dunham Ave to South Union Street North to Jackson Ave.
3. East on Jackson Ave to SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and then South to Edison Ave.
4. West on Edison Ave to SE 1<sup>st</sup> Street turn South follow the curve west on Indianola Road.
5. Indianola Road becomes Thomas Beck. Turn South on SW 9<sup>th</sup> and head into Mac Rae Park up to the EMC Overlook.
6. At the EMC Overlook, stop to bless Des Moines.
7. Leave park going south on SW 11<sup>th</sup> Street.
8. Turn West onto Davis Ave to SW 12<sup>th</sup> Street.
9. Go south on 12<sup>th</sup> Street to Park Ave turn west and go one block to SW 12<sup>th</sup> PL and turn South.
10. Go to Thornton Ave and turn East. Turn North on South Union to Hartford Ave and go East.
11. Turn South onto Indianola Ave back to St. Anthony.

Contact Kim Lehman for more information: 515.202.2517

### Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas

El Consejero sobre Asistencia de Víctimas es un empleado de Polk County Victim Services. Ella ayuda a víctimas de abuso sexual por parte del clero durante el proceso de la queja y buscando servicios de apoyo y consejería. Pueden comunicarse al 515-286-2028 o en [advocate@dmdiocese.org](mailto:advocate@dmdiocese.org).

## Relief fund comes to aid of those in financial peril

By Anne Marie Cox  
Staff Writer

Three months ago, a Des Moines single mother supported her three children and grandchild by cleaning hotel rooms.

Since mid-March, she has been without a job. The hotel closed after government restrictions were put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The mother is not eligible for unemployment and is worried about paying rent.

She is just one of many that the Diocese of Des Moines

and Catholic Charities want to help through the COVID-19 Relief Fund.

Last month, the diocese and Catholic Charities partnered to create the relief fund, a Catholic response in southwest Iowa to the coronavirus crisis. Contributions to the fund support individuals and families through Catholic Charities and the most pressing needs in parishes and schools through the diocese.

Catholic Charities can help people like the hotel cleaner with essential services such as utilities, rent, transportation and other immediate needs.

Since the launch of the

relief fund on Holy Thursday, more than \$104,000 has been raised thanks to the generosity of individuals and organizations. The fund was part of the national Giving Tuesday Now effort on May 5, a national response to the unprecedented crisis.

Giving Tuesday Now helped grow the fund by \$6,500 in online contributions, said Maureen Kenney, diocesan director of Stewardship.

To make a donation, go to [dmdiocese.org/giving](http://dmdiocese.org/giving). Questions can go to Deb Powers at [dpowers@catholiccharitiesdm.org](mailto:dpowers@catholiccharitiesdm.org).

## Preparing for return of public Mass

Continued from page 1

as long as social distancing and sanitary measures were observed. But in an April 28 letter to the faithful, the four bishops of Iowa said the virus remained a “clear and present danger.”

“In particular, the health and survival of the elderly and other vulnerable populations is still a grave concern,” they said. “Many parishioners and priests fall within these groups.”

When people can gather safely while practicing social distancing, safe hygienic practices and other precautions without placing one another at risk, public Masses will resume, they said.

Vice President Mike Pence met with interfaith religious leaders including Bishop Joensen in Des Moines on May 8 to discuss making worship services more publicly available. Bishop Joensen briefly shared the process and preparations already underway in the diocese.

The diocese’s committee of clergy and laity, which suggested guidelines for when parishes can publicly worship, indicated that all parishes are not likely to resume public weekday Masses at the same time. COVID-19 infection rates in each county vary, and some parishes may not be able to meet all of the required safety guidelines simultaneously.

In general, the committee’s procedures require that parishes:

- Maintain social distancing throughout the Mass
- Disinfect the worship space between every Mass
- Make the Mass as hygienic as possible while respecting the integrity of the liturgy

Even when publicly celebrated Masses resume, the elderly, people in high-risk groups, people who live with vulnerable individuals and those who are ill or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19-

like symptoms should not attend Mass.

Those who wish to attend the weekday Masses are encouraged to go occasionally instead of daily. This is an act of charity toward others, as it can allow more people to participate in daily Mass and better serves the common good.

In addition, the faithful will be encouraged to attend Mass only at their own parish instead of traveling to neighboring parishes. Such traveling creates a health risk for all and hinders diocesan efforts to make the sacraments publicly available in the safest way possible.

In his May 9 letter to the faithful, Bishop Joensen said: “For these weeks of pandemic self-discipline practices, we may have at times felt left out of the community where sacraments are celebrated. Yet my hope is that we all have come to deeper belief that God’s Spirit – the Spirit of the Risen Jesus – seeks out where we are, as we are.”

## Beacons of Hope

Parishioners find ways to be light to others in the dark days of the pandemic.



Kathy Campbell, of St. Michael Parish in Harlan, brings light to others by grocery shopping for those who call in their orders.



Robert, Paul and Donna Schmidt use their trucks to deliver to-go bags of food for Harlan Community High School.



Jodi Dozler helps unload trucks of food at the high school in Harlan.

Shelby County parishioners joined together to coordinate food donations for each family receiving school meals during the coronavirus quarantine.

“It’s been very fulfilling to be like the hands of God and able to help out during this time of hardship and uncertainty and fear,” said Donna Schmidt.

Christine Petersen and Ellen Rosmann, a parish-

honer at St. Boniface Parish in Westphalia, put the word out for food and volunteers making “to-go” bags for families.

“It is nice to alleviate fear with acts of kindness and give hope and even joy and trust in God’s calling and presence,” Schmidt said.

The effort produced 60 bags for families initially but is now up to packing about 200 bags weekly.

**CARING ABOUT YOUR LOSS  
AND SHARING IN YOUR FAITH**

**Prayer to St. Joseph for a Happy Death**

*O blessed Joseph who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary,  
obtain for me, I beseech you, the grace of a happy death.  
In that hour of dread and anguish, assist me by your presence,  
and protect me by your power against  
the enemies of your salvation.  
Into your sacred hands, living and dying,  
Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.  
Amen*

John & Mark Parrish,  
parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi

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# Schools find ways to celebrate graduates

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Though social distancing is the new normal, schools across our diocese have found creative ways to celebrate its graduates.

Families were appreciative of the way St. Malachy Catholic School in Creston celebrated its eighth graders moving on to high school, which includes front-yard signage for all the graduates.

"They were so excited," said principal Jennifer Simmons. "And we personalize them and have their name on them."

They also surprised students the week of May 10 with a slideshow on their YouTube channel, featuring photos of the graduates growing up with their senior pictures.

Normally the eighth grade graduates receive a clap-out from all of the grades in the school. But since that's not physically possible this year, the graduates will be shown a video montage of all the grades clapping them on with Google Class Meets. Teachers will also be clapping.

"We're hoping to have their graduation ceremony this summer – that's our goal," Simmons said.

Despite these challenges, she hopes students hold their faith in God close and stay optimistic.

"I think there's a big future ahead of them and they will get to fulfill their dreams," the principal said. "I know some of them are worried about that."

Perry has been a hotbed for COVID-19. But that hasn't stopped St. Patrick Catholic



St. Malachy Catholic School in Creston celebrated their eighth grade graduates with yard signs. Pictured is Tucker Rohrig.

School from celebrating its 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduates, said principal Kandice Roethler.

"We're doing full-page bulletin inserts, senior style, that shows where they are headed to high school and their favorite memory," Roethler said.

This will be posted to the church and school website and Facebook page.

St. Patrick plans on celebrating a Mass for the eighth grade graduates in the fall when social distancing requirements have hopefully decreased.

St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs has found a number of ways to make graduates feel special. The fifth and eighth graders will each have a recognition event with a virtual meeting, prayer service and awards.

St. Albert will celebrate its seniors with a virtual awards ceremony and virtual baccalaureate Mass. The school celebrated its seniors on social media as well.

On May 7 they surprised seniors with a yard sign, delivered by faculty, staff and coaches.

"Once the cap and gowns arrive, we will send out a sign-up sheet for the graduates and their families to come to school to take a photo," said Katie Grudle, director of campus mission. "We'll have one individual photo and one with their family."

On May 16 St. Albert will celebrate its seniors with a drive through parade.

The school has tentatively planned a commencement



S. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs surprised graduates with yard signs, delivered by staff and coaches. Pictured is high school senior Veronica Svajgl.

ceremony for July 23, depending on social distancing guidelines at that time.

"Our teachers have gone above and beyond the call of duty to make the best of a bad situation," said Deacon Vernon Dobelmann, executive director. "Their dedication has been an inspiration to me. Faith in God is what makes that type of commitment possible. The teachers have demonstrated that being an educator at Saint Albert is a calling for them, not just a job."

Deacon Dobelmann has been impressed by the work of St. Albert's academic leadership team.

"In the midst of the struggles, we have remained a community of prayer," Deacon Dobelmann continued. "Whether it has been virtual prayer ser-

VICES, or social distancing ourselves during a student's funeral procession, we have found ways to be a community of faith at St. Albert."

Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines is celebrating seniors with a Last Day Celebration on May 15. Seniors will drive through campus while parents, faculty and staff line the drive.

This celebration will also include a food drive to benefit Catholic Charities. Upon departing campus, students will receive a grab-and-go catered lunch, which was generously donated by DCHS families.

Senior recipients of year-end awards will be celebrated via social media daily during their last week of classes beginning on May 11. A recognition video will also be shared on May 22, the original date of the graduation ceremony.

Dowling has tentatively reserved June 26 and July 17 to hold a graduation ceremony. Tentative plans also include celebrating the baccalaureate Mass the night before graduation.

Dr. Dan Ryan, president of Dowling Catholic, said these past few months have been a journey for students, teachers and staff.

"The circumstances surrounding the coronavirus have both challenged and strengthened our students' faith," Dr. Ryan said. "Like all of us, our students had grown accustomed to certain routines such as praying in the chapel at lunch, attending Mass, and visiting with a chaplain. Without these options, students have been forced to create new routines, and our staff has done an outstanding job of showing the students how to create a prayer routine in this new environment. This is a good test run for our seniors as they prepare to leave the halls of Dowling Catholic and independently continue on their faith journey."



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## Sister Beeson celebrates 70th anniversary of religious life

Humility Sister Rachel Beeson is celebrating her 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of religious life this year.



She devoted most of her years of ministry to education in both teaching and administration.

She holds a bachelor's degree in education from Marycrest College in Davenport and a master's degree in elementary administration from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. She also completed a corporate min-

istry program at St. Louis University in Missouri.

In the Diocese of Des Moines, she served at St. Joseph School in Dunlap, St. Anthony School in Des Moines, was a teacher, assistant principal and principal of St. Pius X School in Urbandale, principal at St. Albert School in Council Bluffs and principal at St. Anthony in Des Moines.

She also served schools in the Iowa towns of Oskaloosa, Centerville, Davenport, Albia, Clinton and Muscatine. Outside of Iowa, she served at schools in Minneapolis and Missouri.

In addition to education, she served as plant coordinator at Ottumwa Heights in Ottumwa, coordinator of retired at

Marycrest in Davenport, women's counselor at New Life Style in St. Louis, religious education coordinator at St. Anthony Parish in Knoxville, Iowa.

She was part of the Seeds of Hope team in Davenport, matching volunteers with opportunities serving the homeless, migrants and refugees, inner-city children and the elderly. Sister Rachel, born in 1932, entered the Congregation of the Humility of Mary in 1950, making her first vows in 1953. Her brother, Monsignor Lawrence Beeson, is celebrating his 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of priesthood this year. The siblings are originally from Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines.

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### Around the Diocese - A Note From the Editor:

We will not be printing calendar events this month. We hope to bring this feature back to *The Catholic Mirror* soon.

## Nationwide service to report sexual misconduct involving U.S. bishops launched

In May 2019, Pope Francis released his apostolic letter *You are the light of the world (Vos estis lux mundi)* to address the issue of sexual abuse and bishop accountability in the global Catholic Church.

Vos estis calls upon the provincial (formerly called metropolitan) archbishops to undertake the responsibilities for receiving and assessing reports involving bishops that pertain to sexual abuse and related misconduct. In June 2019, the bishops of the United States approved the implementation plan for carrying out the directives of the Holy Father.

The U.S. bishops created the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBAR). The service is operated by Convercent, Inc., an independent, third-party entity that provides intake services to private institutions for reports of sensitive topics such as sexual harassment through a secure, confidential and professional platform. Individuals may go to ReportBishopAbuse.org in order to make a report or call 800-276-1562.

The provincial archdiocese in our province is the Archdiocese of Dubuque. If an allegation is received against a bishop in our region, it will be forwarded to the local metropolitan archbishop (Dubuque Archbishop Michael Jackels), who will undertake the responsibility of initially assessing the report.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service allows for individuals to relay to Church authorities any reports of a U.S. Catholic bishop who has:

- Forced someone to perform or to submit to sexual acts through violence, threat, or abuse of authority;
- Performed sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable

person;

- Produced, exhibited, possessed, or distributed child pornography, or recruited or induced a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions;

- Or, a diocesan or eparchial bishop, or a cleric overseeing a diocese/eparchy in the absence of a diocesan or eparchial bishop, who has intentionally interfered with a civil or church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committee by another cleric or religious.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service does not replace existing reporting systems for complaints against priests, deacons, religious or laity. CBAR was designed to respond only to complaints against bishops for issues related to sexual misconduct.

The reporting of sexual misconduct by anyone in diocesan ministry who is not a bishop, such as priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, or lay persons working or volunteering for the Church should continue to be handled in accordance with the Des Moines diocese's child protection policy ([dmdiocese.org](https://dmdiocese.org)) and with proper civil authorities. For more information on the reporting service for bishops and how it works, please visit ReportBishopAbuse.org.

While the mandate by Pope Francis in Vos estis echoes many of the practices that the Catholic Church in the United States has already implemented since 2002 with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, this new order applies to the bishops and to the worldwide Catholic Church, making clear the pope's concern of the issue of sexual abuse in the Church at a global level.

## Bishop Pates named apostolic administrator for Diocese of Joliet

WASHINGTON— Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop R. Daniel Conlon from the Diocese of Joliet in Illinois and has appointed Bishop Richard Pates as the Apostolic Administrator sede vacante.

The appointment was publicized in Washington, D.C. on May 4 by Archbishop Chris-

tophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Bishop Conlon has been on medical leave since December 2019. Bishop Pates, who retired as bishop of Des Moines in 2019, has been serving as Apostolic Administrator for the Diocese of Joliet since December 2019.

# Bishop announces new priest assignments

Continued from page 1

into the Des Moines diocese in 2014.

Since then, he has served as a senior priest in Hispanic Ministry. For the past year, he has served as weekend sacramental minister at Corpus Christi Parish.

Father Daniel Gehler, while remaining pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Earling and St. Peter Parish in Defiance, he will become pastor of St. Michael Parish in Harlan, and Canonical administrator of Shelby County Catholic School.



**Father Gehler**

Father Gehler attended Iowa State University, St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota, Creighton University in Omaha and Conception Seminary in Missouri before being ordained a priest in 2016 by Bishop Richard Pates.

Since ordination, Father Gehler has served at St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines, and the Shelby County parishes of St. Peter in Defiance and St. Joseph in Earling.

The assignment for Father Robert Harris, pastor of All Saints Parish in Des Moines, is extended until July 2024.

Father Harris, whose home parish is St. Augustin, attended Roosevelt High School

in Des Moines, Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee and Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corner, Wisconsin.



**Father Harris**

He was ordained in 1996 by Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S. Since ordination, his ministry has been in parishes. He has served St. Anthony in Des Moines, St. Patrick in Missouri Valley, St. Mary/Holy Cross in Elkhart and has been at All Saints Parish in Des Moines since 2008.

Father Gregory Leach is retiring after 40 years of priestly ministry. He is the pastor of St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines.

He attended Dowling Catholic, Creighton University in Omaha, Loras College in Dubuque, St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corner, Wisconsin before his ordination in 1980 by Bishop Maurice Dingman.



**Father Leach**

After ordination, Father Leach served primarily in parish ministry in both urban and rural

settings. He served Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines, St. Joseph Parish in Earling, St. Bernard Parish in Osceola, St. Patrick Parish in Grand River, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, All Saints Parish in Stuart, St. John Parish in Adair and St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines, where he has been for the last 12 years.

Father Sylvester Omon Okoh is moving from chaplain CHI/Mercy Hospital in Council Bluffs to become the Canonical administrator of St. Patrick Parish in Neola and St. Columbanus Parish in Weston.



**Father Okoh**

Father Okoh was educated at Hope Waddell Training Institution in Nigeria and the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. He did post-graduate work at Cross River University of Technology in Nigeria.

He was ordained in 2008 by Bishop Joseph Edra Ukpo in Nigeria.

Father Okoh came to the Des Moines diocese in February and has been serving as a chaplain at CHI Health-Mercy in Council Bluffs.

Father Augustine Clement Owusu is moving from chaplain at St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs to parochial vicar of St. Michael Parish in

Harlan, St. Joseph Parish in Earling and St. Peter Parish in Defiance.

Ordained in 2011 for the Diocese of Konongo-Mampong, he served as an associate pastor for one year and a pastor for three years before being assigned to a Marian grotto, where people go for retreats and spiritual direction.

He served there for three years before being assigned to the Diocese of Des Moines.

Father Michael Peters is retiring after 32 years of priestly ministry.

He attended Dowling Catholic and Iowa State University and St. John's University in



**Father Peters**

Collegeville, Minnesota before being ordained in 1988 by Bishop William Bullock. After ordination, he served in urban and rural parishes: St. Theresa and St. Anthony in Des Moines, Ss. Peter and Paul in Atlantic, St. Patrick in Massena, Holy Spirit in Creston, St. Edward in Afton, St. Mary in Panama, St. Boniface in Westphalia, St. Mary in Guthrie Center, St. Cecilia in Panora, St. Patrick in Bayard, St. Patrick in Corning and St. Patrick in Lenox.

Father Litto Thomas is moving from parochial vicar at Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs to Canonical administrator of St. Patrick Parish in Corning, and St. Patrick Parish in Lenox.



**Father Thomas**

Educated at St. Sebastian High School and Union Christian College in India, and the Pontifical Urban University in Rome, Father Thomas was ordained in 2014 by Bishop Mar Mathew Vattuckuzhy in India.

He came to the Diocese of Des Moines last year to serve as parochial vicar of Corpus Christi Parish in Council Bluffs.

Deacon Dennis Lovell, from Canonical administrator, at Holy Family Parish, Mondamin, to Director of Parish Life, Holy Family Parish, Mondamin.



**Deacon Lovell**

20 year anniversaries will be highlighted in the June *Catholic Mirror*



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# Priests celebrate 60-year anniversaries

## Monsignor Lawrence Beeson

This is a special year for Monsignor Beeson for not only is he celebrating 60 years of priesthood, his sister, Humility Sister Rachel Beeson, is celebrating 70 years of religious life. The siblings had planned a joint celebration but have postponed it due to the coronavirus.

## Monsignor Beeson

Several events stand out as highlights of his priestly ministry: His service from 1962-1965 at the Second Vatican Council delivering ballots, materials and messages; the merging of five schools to one at St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs; and his outreach as a pastor.

"Being a pastor, that was my greatest love," he said. "I never expected to work in the Second Vatican Council. It was a lot of work merging the schools. But being a pastor, that's where you do funerals, baptisms and all of that parish work. That's what I loved to do most."

Originally from Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, Msgr. Beeson, was ordained June 5, 1960 by Bishop Edward Daly, O.P. He attended Dowling Catholic High School, Loras College, Mount St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque and Angelicum in Rome.

He served in administra-

tion for many years: as the secretary to the bishop, vice chancellor, vocation director, vicar general, vicar for Canonical affairs, coordinator of St. Albert Schools, consultant and vicar for retired priests. He has also assisted the Tribunal with annulments and other Canonical issues.

His parish ministry took him to St. Patrick Parish in Irish Settlement, St. Patrick Parish in Neola, St. Peter Parish in Defiance, St. Mary and St. Mary, St. Peter, St. Anthony and St. Ambrose Cathedral Parishes in Des Moines, Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic and St. Patrick Parish in Massena.

Monsignor retired in 2004 but continued serving as vicar for retired priests until last year.

He was honored with the title of monsignor in 1989.

Congratulatory messages can be sent to him at 1390 Buffalo Road, West Des Moines, 50265.

## Father Paul Monahan

Much of Father Paul Monahan's 60 years of priesthood was dedicated to education and parish life.

"The best times were the times that I spent with students," he said. I've talked

with a lot of students regularly and I still stay in touch with many of them."

He moved from St. Albert School to serving in parishes and enjoyed it.

"I enjoyed that new experience of being with the people and everything that's involved in parish life," he said.

In his spare time, the photographer goes through pictures that bring back fond memories.

He recalls receiving honors from the Knights of Columbus, the Freddie Falcon Award for his support of St. Albert Catholic School, and his travels to Europe, South America, Hawaii, Alaska and Medjugorje.

Asked if he'd be a priest again if he could go back in time, and he said, "Yes, I would. You can underline that one!"

Father Monahan was ordained June 5, 1960 by Bishop Daly. Originally from St. Mary Parish in Portsmouth, he attended Loras College, Mount St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque and did post-graduate work at Creighton University in Omaha.

He spent nearly 20 years in education, having taught at Dowling Catholic High School and St. Albert High School, where he also served as principal. In 1979, he moved to parish ministry, serving at St. Mary in Avoca, St. Patrick in Walnut, Holy Family in Council Bluffs, St. Mary in Ports-

mouth and Holy Rosary in Glenwood. He retired in 2004.

These days, he can be found reading, writing short summaries of articles and sending them to friends who may have an interest in that topic.

Congratulatory notes can be sent to him at Primrose Retirement Community, 1801 E. Kanesville Blvd., Council Bluffs, IA 51503.

## Father James Kleffman

Longtime military chaplain Father James Kleffman also comes from St. Mary Parish in Portsmouth and was ordained June 5, 1960.

Like Father Monahan, he attended Loras College, Mount St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque. After ordination, he served in a few parishes: Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic, St. Joseph Parish in Earling, Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines.

In 1968, he became a U.S. Army chaplain. He served St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines for a year before going to Council Bluffs, where he did post graduate work at Creighton University in Omaha and served St. Patrick, St. Francis and St. Peter Parishes in Council Bluffs.

In 1979, he began a 16-year stretch of service to the U.S. Army, ending in 1995 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. During this time, he received clinical pastoral education at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

In 1995, Father Kleffman returned to parish ministry, serving St. Patrick in Missouri Valley, St. Mary in Red Oak and St. Patrick in Imogene. He retired in 2003.

Congratulatory notes can be sent to him through The Catholic Mirror, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

## Father Leonard Kenkel

Father Kenkel was ordained a priest in 1960.

He served the following Des Moines parishes: Christ the King, Holy Trinity and St. Peter. He also served St. Boniface Parish in Westphalia, Holy Spirit Parish in Creston and St. Edward Parish in Afton. Father Kenkel taught at Dowling Catholic High School for 27 years, from 1962 to 1989. He retired in 2008.

He retired in 2008, and is no longer permitted to offer public priestly ministry.



Father Monahan



Father Kleffman



Father Kenkel

## Celebrating 50 years of priesthood

### Father Charles Kottas

Almost half of Father Kottas' 50 years of priesthood have been in service to the people of St. Peter Parish in Council Bluffs. A planned June celebration for his golden anniversary of priestly ministry was derailed by COVID-19.



Father Kottas

When parishioners can gather again, there will be a celebration in the parish hall named for him 10 years ago. He recalled talking with a staff member about how people appreciate honors like having their names on buildings.

"You may want your name on a building but it's more important that your name is in the hearts of your people," he recalled her saying, and he agreed.

"Hopefully, that's the highlight of your priesthood, that the people who you minister to are far better people of faith than before they met you," he said. "It's probably the most important thing as I think of the priesthood. From a brick and mortar standpoint, Father Kottas shepherded the parish through the building of a social hall, an office building, a conversion of St. Francis School into a retirement home and more. From a spiritual perspective, he's proud of the faith formation of young people in the parish.

"I'm very proud of the fact here that we've done a phenomenal job in preparing youth for confirmation," he said. "Our kids are really involved in our church and they're very well knowledgeable about the church."

Father Kottas, originally from Lincoln, Nebraska, was ordained June 6, 1970. He began serving in the Des Moines diocese in 1986 at St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines and Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines.

In 1989, he began serving parishes in Shelby County. He served St. Joseph in Earling, St. Peter in Defiance, St. Mary in Panama, and St. Mary in Portsmouth.

He was incardinated in the Des Moines diocese in 1991. He served St. Patrick in Dunlap and Sacred Heart in Woodbine, then St. Patrick in Massena and Ss. Peter and Paul in Atlantic before settling in at St. Peter in Council Bluffs.

Looking back, he thinks of all the lives he's touched.

"I like living here. I enjoy these people. I think they're just phenomenal," said Father Kottas. "Priesthood is a wonderful vocation if that's what the good Lord calls you to. I love our diocese."

Congratulatory notes can be sent to him at his parish, 1 Bluff St., Council Bluffs, IA 51503.

### Father John Dorton

Father John Dorton's anniversary plans were shelved as a result of the coronavirus, but he says maybe he can have a 51st anniversary celebration instead. It was the desire of being of service to others that drew him to the priesthood.

"One of the things that

I've enjoyed about my career is that it's been fairly balanced between different polarities," he said. "I spent 20 years in teaching and I spent 30 years in pastoral work. I spent some time in urban areas and I've also spent time in rural areas. I've had a nice variety of ministerial experience and I think that served me well.

"I've enjoyed very much the full spectrum, and every one of those particular types of ministries was fulfilling to me and had its own individual strengths and challenges," he said.

He served at Dowling Catholic High School as a teacher and chaplain, supporting the sports teams, the arts and encouraging students on Teens Encounter Christ retreats, also known as TEC, which were popular.

In parish life, Father Dorton relished accompanying parishioners.

"I think being able to travel the journey with folks and be there at important crossroads in their life" was important, he said. "I always used to say the church was never more church than when a parishioner died because the community would pull together and offer support to the family at a time when they were going through a lot of grief and suffering," he said.

"We are so fortunate in the Catholic Church that we have this beautiful sacramental system," he added. "It allows the Lord to walk with a person of faith from the beginning to the end of life and all of the important junctures in between. You, as a priest celebrating the sacraments, get to be a part of that action. It's very rewarding."

Ordained May 30, 1970 by Bishop Maurice Dingman, Father Dorton attended Dowling Catholic, Immaculate Conception Seminary in Conception, Missouri, Aquinas Institute in Dubuque, St. Meinrad Seminary in St. Meinrad, Indiana and Loras College in Dubuque.

After ordination, he served at the Basilica of St. John and St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines before beginning 20 years of ministry at Dowling Catholic. Subsequently, he served at several parishes including St. Peter and St. Anthony in Des Moines, St. Mary in Panama, St. Mary in Portsmouth, and St. Boniface in Westphalia.

In retirement, he serves as co-vicar for retired priests. He looks after his dog, Arnie, his cat, Oscar, and enjoys filling in for priests in parishes through the Des Moines metro area.

Congratulatory notes can be sent to Father Dorton at Dowling Catholic High School, Attn: Father Dorton, 1400 Buffalo Road, West Des Moines, IA 50265

### Monsignor Edward Hurley

Father Hurley is surprised at how fast 50 years flew by.

"It's gone awfully fast. It's just amazing, it's absolutely amazing."



Monsignor Hurley

He anticipated teaching at Dowling Catholic High School after ordination. His path took him in a different direction, to parish life and serving at St. Albert School in Council Bluffs.

His acumen in accounting, learnt on the job, served him well as he has overseen the priest pension fund for 33 years and served as the diocese's vicar of finance for many years.

"For me, the best thing was I had really good assignments over the years, none of which I really anticipated. I was always kind of surprised where I went next," he said. "I always found the people good and enjoyed where I was."

Father Hurley attended Dowling Catholic, Loras College and Aquinas Institute in Dubuque and Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He was ordained May 30, 1970 by Bishop Dingman.

His first assignment was at All Saints Parish in Des Moines, followed by 14 years at St. Albert as a teacher and president/executive coordinator. In 1987, he returned to parish ministry, serving St. Patrick in Massena, St. Timothy in Reno/Cumberland, St. Pius X in Urbandale, St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines, and St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines.

He was given the honorary title of monsignor in 1989 and retired in 2015.

In retirement, he helps at St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines, celebrates about 15 weddings and some funerals each year and helps a few families he knows.

Father Hurley had thought of celebrating his anniversary in June but says it's too risky with the coronavirus now. Maybe in August or September he will have a public celebration. Congratulatory notes can be sent to him at 280 S. 79th St., Unit 1308, West Des Moines, IA

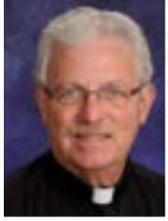
# Celebrating 40 years of priesthood

## Father Greg Leach

Father Greg Leach accompanied people on their life journey in and out of church.

He spent 40 years on a ballfield.

"I enjoyed baseball and I didn't have the skill to be a good player so I worked at being a good umpire," he said. Kids would point to him and say: "That's our priest!"



**Father Leach**

"They're seeing you in a whole different light other than just in church and that brings out the humanity of the pastor," he said.

He also spent about 20 years as a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician, or EMT. He was persuaded to join the local department when he was in Earling.

"A different face of the church to a small rural community was the priest who was going to show up on the firetruck or ambulance when you have needs other than just spiritual," he said.

Whether on the ballfield, on a firetruck or in church, he's been able to connect with people at important times of their lives.

"You're able to bring the face of the Lord to all sorts of different situations," he said. Sometimes, he figures out how he's been an instrument of God, and sometimes it's much later when someone tells him how he's touched their life.

Father Leach was educated at Dowling Catholic, Creighton University in Omaha, Loras College in Dubuque, St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corner, Wisconsin.

sin.

Ordained on Sept. 12, 1980 by Bishop Maurice Dingman, he served at Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines, St. Joseph Church in Earling, St. Bernard Church in Osceola and assisted with team ministry, St. Patrick Parish in Grand River, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart in Ankeny, All Saints Parish in Stuart, St. John Parish in Adair and St. Mary of Nazareth Church in Des Moines, where he has been since 2008.

Father Leach had planned a combined retirement and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary party for the end of June but is pushing that back September.

Congratulatory notes on his retirement and anniversary can be sent to him at 6811 Oakwood Drive, Urbandale, IA 50322.

## Father Aquinas Nichols

Father Aquinas Nichols' ministry has taken him around the world, gave him the chance to work with a saint, and settled him in Des Moines, where he has served for the past 20 years.

Born in 1952 in Duluth, Minnesota, he was educated there and in Las Vegas, where his family moved.



**Father Nichols**

He attended a minor seminary run by the Verona priests, then went to Conception, Missouri as a postulant for the Benedictine abbey. After two years of college, he entered the novitiate in 1972 and professed simple vows a year later.

He earned a bachelor's degree in theology and served in various roles at the abbey.

In 1975, he began to serve a parish in Missouri and

after a year, he wanted to try monastic life at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, California, where he made solemn profession in 1978.

He studied at St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana and was ordained a priest on June 29, 1980 by San Diego Bishop Leo T. Maher, D.D.

Father Nichols served the abbey for three years and then went to Rome for monastic studies at Sant' Anselmo. In 1985, he was appointed novice and junior master for the Oceanside abbey, where he served for six years in a number of roles. He was assigned pastoral work in Reno-Las Vegas, returned to the abbey briefly and then went to Rome.

In Rome, he worked for the Pontifical Institute of Liturgy Foundation and then as secretary to the Abbot Primate of the Bene-

dictine Order beginning in 1996. In that role, he was head of the order's curia at Sant' Anselmo. He accompanied the primate on travels to see Benedictines all over the world. He also had frequent encounters with St. John Paul II.

In 2000, Father Nichols was asked by the Abbot Primate to form a new community in Des Moines, St. Gabriel Benedictine Priory. He served the Basilica of St. John while trying to build the priory until 2008 when the priory closed. Father Nichols continued his assignment at the basilica.

He was appointed pastor of the parish in 2010.

In 2012, he was incardinated into the Diocese of Des Moines and legally changed his first name to Aquinas after St. Thomas Aquinas, a cherished patron. He is the Censor Librorum for the diocese.

Highlights of his 40 years of priesthood include being able to offer Mass on a daily basis, serving as the Abbot Primate's secretary in Rome and being the pastor of the Basilica of St. John.

"I don't know where the years went," he said. He enjoys the parish, which has good liturgy and many young families with children. "The future looks very promising," he said.

He had planned on a celebration of his 40 years as a priest on June 29, but due to the pandemic, he moved it to Sept. 13 at the 10:30 a.m. Mass at the Basilica of St. John with reception following in the parish hall.

Congratulatory notes can be sent to him at the Basilica of St. John, 1915 University Ave., Des Moines, 50314.

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## Seminarians experience God's graces amid quarantine

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

When news of the coronavirus pandemic began in January, seminarians didn't think it would directly impact them.

"I remember sitting in one of the floor lounges sipping on some coffee with Father James Downey and we could see just the very earliest news of corona," said seminarian Reed Flood, who was studying in Rome. "At this point, classes had just been canceled...and that's when I thought, 'I wonder how bad this will get?'"

As Flood was preparing to leave for class in late February, he received a notification from the Italian government that all schools in the country would be cancelling classes for a designated period of time. Not too long after, all public worship was suspended.

Soon Flood and the rest of the seminarians were confined to the walls of the college. Shortly thereafter, about half of the men packed up and left, returning to their home diocese.

"That was my first taste of loss – the loss of my friends and you'd never see some of them again," Flood said.

Despite the loss, there was a two week grace period, Flood added, as the men still remaining at the college became a tight-knit fraternity where friendships blossomed.

"For me, it was a huge blessing with tons of time to study and time to interact and hang with our brothers," Flood said. "It was a good healing moment."

Normally, men are so busy coming and going with classes and study that they don't have much time for interaction.

"The whole monastic lifestyle of being cloistered within the walls of a community, like what we experienced in Rome [was a blessing]," Flood said.

Seminarian Alex Kramer, also on lockdown in Rome, said they looked out for each other, making sure no one was feeling alone. They spent time

praying for those in the Diocese of Des Moines no longer able to receive the sacraments.

After two weeks of lockdown all remaining seminarians were sent home when the college was forced to close.

"It was great to be back in the great state of Iowa," Kramer said. "We love our state and our diocese and look forward to serving the people."

Thanks to the Diocese of Sioux City, the group spent two weeks in quarantine at a house near Lake Okoboji with a few priests before returning home.

"It made me think twice about the great gift I've had in the last six almost seven years of daily Mass and confession available," Kramer added. "I've kind of taken that for granted until it was taken away."

Seminarians studying in St. Paul, Minnesota were also placed on lockdown.

Seminarian Jake Epstein said living a cloistered lifestyle has involved many graces, including daily Mass.

"What a tremendous privilege when so many people are fasting – and that's not lost on us by any means," Epstein said. "One of the beautiful things about being cloistered here together is being really intentional about that life of prayer – specifically for the world and people with the coronavirus," Epstein said.

They've also been praying for the intentions of others, which are on slips of paper and kept in a basket at seminary.

"And so getting to remember so many people in prayer has been a huge blessing, and really an experience of the body of Christ...," Epstein said.

The new living situation has given the men a chance to grow deeper in relationship with each other.

"Since we're locked in together, that requires some fraternal charity, as you can imagine," Epstein said. "Which is of course a growth opportunity as well, to bear with your brothers – there's no escaping them now."

They all pulled together, using their unique gifts and talents for the Easter vigil, which was a beautiful sight, Epstein



added. That included one's gift for decorating the chapel, and two others' talents in catering and brewing beer, which were used for their reception.

Flood and Epstein will be ordained with Brad Robey to the transitional diaconate on June 12.

"Even in the midst of a plague, God can still bring out tremendous graces," said Flood, whose ordination was originally scheduled for October in Rome. "And I point to the ability to be ordained early as one of them."

**Above: Seminarians Alex Kramer, Reed Flood, Mike Mahoney and Father James Downey were evacuated from Rome when the Pontifical College of North America was shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Right: Seminarian Brad Robey receives a haircut from a fellow seminarian at St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, where they are in lockdown.**



## Priest returns from Rome with new degree, begins serving in Ankeny



**Seminarians Alex Kramer, Father James Downey, Reed Flood and Mike Mahoney have been studying in Rome and were staying at the Pontifical College of North America before it was shutdown due to the coronavirus.**

By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer

Father James Downey, a priest from our diocese who was ordained last June, completed his studies in Rome, returning with his licentiate in moral theology with a focus on bioethics.

"I will be acting mostly as a resource to the bishop and other priests when questions come up," he said. "I will also act as a resource to the people of the diocese."

He sees the possibility of

working with Dowling Catholic High School, Mercy College of Health Sciences and the Faith Journey Catechetical Institute.

Additionally, Father Downey has been assigned parochial vicar at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart and St. Luke Parishes in Ankeny.

He is excited to be back home and serving the people of the Diocese of Des Moines.

"This is the first time in about nine years that I can say Iowa is now my main residence," he said.

# Three men eager for June 12 ordination



**Brad Robey**



**Jake Epstein**



**Reed Flood**

**By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer**

Three seminarians are eagerly awaiting their June 12 ordination at St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines, when they will become transitional deacons.

Brad Robey, Jake Epstein and Reed Flood are excited about the next step of their long journey toward priesthood.

"This is when I make my promises of obedience and celibacy and chastity, and so that's important in that way," said Epstein, comparing it to the sacrament of marriage. "I'll be entering a vocational state in life – the way that I'm convinced

God has called me to serve him in this life, and so that's awfully exciting."

The three men are excited about many things, including baptisms.

"Deacons baptize, and that just makes me so excited, because baptism conforms us to Christ," said Epstein, who is currently studying at St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. "[Baptism] makes us adopted sons and daughters of God. To... administer such a great sacrament is something I'm very excited about."

Epstein will be spending the summer serving at St. Boniface Parish in Waukee.

Brad Robey, also studying at St. Paul Seminary, said he

looks forward to preaching, ministering and learning how to be a deacon in preparation for his ordination to the priesthood in June 2021. He'll be serving at Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic and St. Mary's Parish in Anita this summer.

Seminary has positively impacted his faith and he looks forward to the next part of his journey.

"Through seminary I've learned how to trust the Lord and trust the wisdom of the church and trust the seminary formation," Robey said.

Reed Flood, who has been studying at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, originally planned on being ordained at St. Peter's Ba-

silica in the fall. He has since requested to join his brother seminarians in Des Moines for their ordination to the transitional diaconate.

"I'm just excited," Flood said. "I think we are living in an extraordinary time of the Church and we are called to live extraordinary lives during this time."

He already has his first baptism planned with his nephew, Coy Flood.

"It has been such a long journey in seminary," said Flood, who will be serving at St. John Parish in Norwalk this summer. "I'm coming up on eight years. I just keep thinking of the song by Semisonic and the lines, 'Every new beginning comes from a be-

ginning's end.'"

Flood will return to Rome in the fall for his final year of studies before his ordination to the priesthood next June 2021.

"I look forward to the awesome conclusion of my seminarian adventure," Flood said. "But I am so excited for the beginning of this way of being – to be a man of the sacraments, a man of the church and for the church."

The ordination will be livestreamed on the Diocese of Des Moines Facebook page at [Facebook.com/DMDiocese](https://www.facebook.com/DMDiocese). Time of ordination will be announced in near future.

## God calls young Indianola native to seminary

**By Kelly Mescher Collins  
Staff Writer**

The first time Connor Lynch considered becoming a priest was when he was just a sophomore in high school on a parish mission trip.

"Throughout that week of mission I got closer to God, and at the end of the week Father Chris Fontanini mentioned to me something along the lines that I should consider priesthood," said Lynch, a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola. "This struck me in an odd way, and that thought stuck to me for a while."

He confided in his friends, who shared Lynch's uncertainty about someone his age being called to the priesthood.

"So I dismissed it," Lynch said. "But for the next two years of high school as I was touring colleges and pursuing different options of careers, priesthood would always pop up. My goal was to become an engineer or a nurse and to raise kids of my own, but that is what I wanted – not God."

Two years later – after graduating high school with plans full steam ahead to study engineering – Lynch was on another parish mission trip in El Paso, Texas in late August.

"The theme of the trip was 'God's Plan for You,'" Lynch said. "This really got

me thinking about the priesthood because I was about to enter college and pursue the path that I wanted.

"One day on the trip I prayed to God and asked, 'If you want me to be a married man, then please send me a sign; if you want me to be a priest then please send me a sign,'" he said

The next night at Mass he had an "unearthly feeling of joy and peace."

"I was shaking and sweating; I then knew that this experience was my sign and that he wants me to be a priest," Lynch said.

The experience lasted about 15 minutes. Mass was followed by a video they watched on receiving signs from God.

Afterwards, they convened in small groups for discussion.

"[Seminarian] Reed Flood was in my small group and he helped me figure everything out and he answered all of my questions," Lynch said. "God put me in good hands!"

After attending Des Moines Area Community College for one semester, Lynch started studying at St. John Vi-



**Connor Lynch (left) with some fellow diocesan seminarians Rodrigo Mayorga, Brad Robey, Nick Smith, Stan Asjes, Jonathon Arriola and Jason Lee.**

annev Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota in January. Because of the pandemic, his semester was cut short and he finished remotely. But Lynch loved everything he has experienced so far.

"It's everything in one," Lynch said. "You get a bunch of guys together who are so smart, so faithful, so masculine, but also like kids at heart. The same guys who would be going out playing

basketball or doing hard core workouts are the same guys who would watch Frozen 2."

There's a great deal of fraternity and brotherly trust amongst the seminarians.

"The vulnerability allows for connection and shows where you're weak," Lynch said. "But your brothers are there to support you 100 percent. It's truly just amazing."

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# Father Ed Pfeffer passes away

Father Edward Pfeffer, who served the diocese in education, administration and parish life, died March 18 at the age of 89.

Originally from Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, he attended Dowling Catholic High School, Loras College in Dubuque, and Mount St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque.

He was ordained by Bishop Edward C. Daly in 1956.

Following ordination, he spent two years studying Canon law in Rome. He served as assistant pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Des Moines and was on the faculty of Dowling Catholic, assistant pastor of St. Ambrose

Cathedral and vice chancellor of the Diocese of Des Moines. In 1964, he was appointed chancellor of the diocese, a position in which he served four bishops.

Beginning in 1979, he served as pastor over the next 20 years in three parishes: Sacred Heart in West Des Moines, St. Patrick in Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Church in Winterset.

He retired in 2000 and began serving as a volunteer at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women at Mitchellville. He served there for 13 years before retiring again.

Father Pfeffer prided himself on never having had an unhappy year in his active min-

istry. His fellow priests countered that the happiest of his years were during and after Vatican Council II.

He leaves behind his brother, Jim (Lynn); sister, Janet Fiala; nine nieces and nephews and 22 great nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his brother, Father Tom Pfeffer, a baby brother and his parents. A funeral will be celebrated at a later time.

Memorials may be made to the Priests Pension Fund c/o the Diocese of Des Moines 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines 50309.

## Schools superintendent made her mark

Before completing high school and at the age of 16, a young girl was received into the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and grew to become a leader, an inspiration and a trusted friend to many.

The girl, known as Sara "Sally" Agnes McHugh, became Sister Dolores Marie McHugh, BVM. She died on her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday on April 24 at Caritas Center in Dubuque.

In her early years of ministry, she served as a teacher in Chicago, in Glendale, California and in Kansas City, where she both taught and was principal.

She became the superintendent of schools and educational coordinator and consultant for the Diocese of Des Moines from 1975 to 1984. At the time, she was the only Catholic schools superintendent in Iowa who was a woman.

For 11 years, she lived with Humility Sisters Jeanie and Elaine Hagedorn, which was unusual for sisters of different religious communities at the time.

"That was rich for us because she shared so much of what their congregation was going through and what their thinking was and we shared with her" about the Humility sisters, said Sister Jeanie. "It was really enriching for all of us."

Sister Dolores truly lived the Scripture passage to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with God, said Sister Elaine.

While they'll always remember the vacations, the close family relationships and the grace with which Sister Dolores handled challenges, they saw their friend had "a deep, deep faith, a deep commitment to her BVM congregation."

"She was just a fair minded, a just minded person who wanted to make everybody feel at home and feel a part of life to the fullest," said Sister Elaine. "She had the courage to do a lot of difficult things and survived some very difficult challenges."

"Her passion for Catholic education, her work ethic – 110% all the time – her honesty, and ability to build relationships made a mark," said BVM President Sister Teri Hadro in a eulogy penned by Sister Mira Mosle, former Des Moines diocesan communications director.

Sister Dolores began serving in leadership for her religious community as vice president for eight years, then as president for eight years.

"Dolores brought her love of God, passion for religious life, intense love for each sister, compassion and caring," said Sister Teri. She affirmed people and empowered them to become their best selves.

A virtual visitation and funeral rite of committal for Sister Dolores was April 30 with burial in the Mount Carmel Cemetery in Dubuque.



Sara McHugh



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## Deacon with gentle soul dies

Deacon William Schroeder, a husband of 60 years, father to six and longtime hospital chaplain, died April 27 at age 85.

"He was such a gentle soul," said Deacon Dave O'Brien, head of the chaplaincy program at MercyOne Des Moines. He and Deacon Schroeder were ordained together in the Diocese of Davenport in 1988. "He was my mentor. I just loved him."

Deacon Schroeder was born in Arcadia, Iowa in 1935. A former seminarian, he met his wife, Janis, at The Starline Ballroom in Carroll, Iowa, and married in 1959.

He worked for Contel for 30 years, was a 4<sup>th</sup> Degree Knight with the Knights of Columbus, served in the National Guard, was a volunteer firefighter, a city council member and taught first aid.

He was ordained to the permanent diaconate by Bishop Gerald O'Keefe. In the Diocese of Davenport, he served at St. Anthony Parish in Knoxville and Sacred Heart Parish in Newton. He served Holy Spirit Parish in Carroll in the Diocese of Sioux City and at MercyOne in the Diocese of Des Moines.

He modeled his faith for his family on a daily basis and ministered to others. "He was always behind the scene

as a deacon" by visiting nursing homes, helping with RCIA, Cursillo retreats and more, Deacon O'Brien said.

It was "a God thing" that Deacon O'Brien was looking for a chaplain for MercyOne about the time he met up with his friend and former classmate Deacon Schroeder after Mass one day at St. Francis of Assisi Church in West Des Moines.

Deacon Schroeder went on to be a chaplain at MercyOne in Des Moines and MercyOne West Lakes in West Des Moines.

"When he'd go in a room he'd be there to listen to them and pray with them," said Deacon O'Brien. Deacon Schroeder won praise from both patients and nurses and other staff for his gentle way.

"He had a great way with people who were going through a difficult time," said Deacon O'Brien.

Due to the current coronavirus conditions, a celebration of life service will be held at a later date. Memorials can be made to the family and sent to Caldwell Parrish Funeral Home in Urbandale.



Deacon Schroeder

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## Fever

## Ask a Priest

*Q. What is the process for decommissioning a church?*

**A. We live in a world** of recycling. Many material things we make use of can be recycled for new purposes. So too with older church buildings. It's important to remember that a physical building is simply the "home" of the church, the worshiping faithful. I have not found a specific rite for decommissioning a church building.

In the past a church would lose its consecration or solemn blessing in two principal cases. One case was through the destruction of the building. Another case is if the local bishop reduces the building to profane use, as is still foreseen in Canon 1222 of the Code of Canon Law. Many dioceses have reduced the number of parish churches because the population no longer sustains the use of a building which once served a lively parish community. We have to remember that the church is not in the business of maintaining museums. Sad as it may seem to some, even a once well-loved church building can outlive its usefulness.

*Q. Have any popes visited nations during time of war?*

**A. In medieval times**, when there were still the "Papal States" popes actually led troops into battle. Thank God that's no longer the case. In more recent times, Pope Pius XII was in Rome during World War II. Italy was aligned with Germany and Japan against the Allies. So Pius didn't have to make a visit anywhere

else. He was in the midst of the war. Happily, popes today try to prevent war in whatever ways they can. St. John Paul II commented, "When we go to war, everyone loses."

*Q. Can you explain what the Liturgy of the Hours is?*

**A. For many years**, priests have been obligated to pray the Divine Office, now often called the Liturgy of the Hours. Before the Second Vatican Council, priests needed to complete those prayers every day. Since they were in Latin, very few ordinary Catholics took part in that prayer. Now, however, the Liturgy of the Hours is prayed in vernacular languages, and ordinary Catholics are encouraged to take part. There are a number of popularizations of this prayer available, which are available each month. One of them is called "Magnificat". Another is called "Give Us This Day". There are free apps available for tablets and smart phones. "iBreviary" is one; another is "Laudate". The church says that we observe the rising of the sun with morning prayer and the setting of the sun with evening prayer. Included in these popularizations and in the official texts are psalms, gospel and epistle readings, Old Testament sections, and suggested prayers of the faithful. You might be glad if you check out some of the offerings.

*Got a question for "Ask a Priest" and its author, Father John Ludwig? Send it to: communications@dmdiocese.org.*

## Guest Column

By Father  
Ron Rolheiser



John Updike, after recovering from a serious illness, wrote a poem he called, *Fever*. It ends this way: But it is a truth long known that some secrets are hidden from health.

Deep down we already know this, but as a personal truth this is not something we appropriate in a classroom, from parents or mentors, or even from religious teaching. These just tell us that this is true, but knowing it does not itself impart wisdom. Wisdom is acquired, as Updike says, through a personal experience of serious illness, serious loss, or serious humiliation.

The late James Hillman, writing as an agnostic, came to the same conclusion. I remember hearing him at a large conference where, at one point in his talk, he challenged his audience with words to this effect: Think back, honestly and with courage, and ask yourself: What are the experiences in your life that have made you deep, that have given you character? In almost every case, you will have to admit that it was some humiliation or abuse you had to endure, some experience of powerlessness, helplessness, frustration, illness, or exclusion. It is not the things that brought glory or adulation into your life that gave you depth and character, the time you were the valedictorian for your class or the time you were the star athlete. These did not bring you depth. Rather the experience of powerlessness, inferiority, is what made you wise.

I recall too as a grad-

uate student sitting in on a series of lectures by the renowned Polish psychiatrist Kasmir Dabrowski, who had written a number of books around a concept he termed "positive disintegration." His essential thesis was that it is only by falling apart that we ever grow to higher levels of maturity and wisdom. Once, during a lecture, he was asked: "Why do we grow through the disintegrating experiences such as falling ill, falling apart, or being humiliated? Would it not be more logical to grow through the positive experiences of being loved, being affirmed, being successful, being healthy, and being admired? Shouldn't that fire gratitude inside us and, acting out of that gratitude, we should become more generous and wise?"

He gave this response: Ideally, maturity and wisdom should grow out of experiences of strength and success; and maybe in some instances they do. However, as a psychiatrist, all I can say is that in 40 years of clinical practice I have never seen it. I have only seen people transformed to higher levels of maturity through the experience of breaking down.

Jesus, it would seem, agrees. Take, for example, the incident in the Gospels where James and John come and ask whether they might be given the seats at his right hand and left hand when he comes into his glory. It is significant that he takes their question seriously. He does not (in this instance) chide them for seeking their own glory; what he does instead is redefine glory and the route to it. He asks them: "Can you drink the cup?" They, naïve as to what is being asked of them, responded: "Yes, we can!" Jesus then tells them something to which they are even more naïve. He assures them that they will drink the cup, since eventually everyone will, but tells them that they still might not receive the glory

because being seated in glory is still contingent upon something else.

What? What is "the cup?" How is drinking it the route to glory? And why might we not receive the glory even if we do drink the cup?

The cup, as is revealed later, is the cup of suffering and humiliation, the one Jesus has to drink during his passion and dying, the cup he asks his Father to spare him from when in Gethsemane he prays in agony: "Let this cup pass from me!"

In essence, what Jesus is telling James and John is this: There is no route to Easter Sunday except through Good Friday. There is no route to depth and wisdom except through suffering and humiliation. The connection is intrinsic, like the pain and groans of a woman are necessary to her when giving birth to a child. Further still, Jesus is also saying that deep suffering will not automatically bring wisdom. Why not? Because, while there is an intrinsic connection between deep suffering and greater depth in our lives, the catch is that bitter suffering can make us deep in bitterness, anger, envy, and hatred just as easily as it can make us deep in compassion, forgiveness, empathy, and wisdom. We can have the pain, and not get the wisdom.

*Fever!* The primary symptom of being infected with the coronavirus, Covid-19, is a high fever. Fever has now beset our world. The hope is that, after it so dangerously raises both our bodily and psychic temperatures, it will also reveal to us some of the secrets that are hidden from health. What are they? We don't know yet. They will only be revealed inside the fever.

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.*

## Smiles - we need them!

From my earliest childhood, I can remember that it was only a slight turn to the right from my bedroom and a short walk down the hallway to my parents' room.

There, hanging on the wall, as though it was a coat of arms, we were greeted by a picture that hung on their entry wall. Inside a fragile old frame was a simple, yet profound poem.

Over the years, I read it so many times that it seemed it must be the family motto. The poem was called, *Take Time to Smile*. It had such a natural cadence and rhythm that, to me, it read as a melodious prayer.

The message was clearly received by all; it is important to smile.

We need smiles. Whether we are aware of it or not, our brains are continually mapping the facial expressions of others so as to interpret safety, familiarity, friend or foe, and all the emotional and motivational ranges of others.

While it is heartwarming to see the effects of our own smiles on the faces of others, we will also long to see a smile return to a loved one after a season of sadness, a conflict, or a bout of depression.

## Let's Get Psyched

By  
Deacon Randy Kiel



But the quickest expressions of all to be internally interpreted are those of anger and disapproval.

As children, we learned these emotions so quickly because, to our little minds, security felt threatened when anger and disapproval were exhibited.

These begin all children's sense of insecurity. The sense of security for all of us began with the simplicity of a smile. This is why we long to see an authentic smile as it communicates more than words. Without smiles, relationships are impaired.

As the father of four children, I have sat for hours, long ago and even still, and stared at the babies in my arms and even now the adult children in front of me. Sometimes I just smile at them, not needing anything in return but just to be pres-

ent. In these moments, it is impossible not to smile. From their infancy, my wife and I would sit, hold, rock, sing...and smile. We smile into the souls of our children. The need for this does not dissipate with age. We might not ever know all the miraculous things that a smile can do in another's life, but we do know scientifically as well as spiritually that a smile builds the foundation of a child's security in life.

Smiles are a sign of God himself because God is love. Realize that when you give a smile to someone you show them God. The smile says "I see you," "I hear you," and "I receive you."

Many times we hear that we disappoint God in ways such as the lack of worship, sin, omission of charity, or by selfishness.

I'm not so sure if God gets disappointed as we know disappointment.

We mostly see disappointment as personal failure through a frowned reaction. God smiles, all the time, even in all his righteousness and judgment, even in his wrath, he smiles.

This is not because he takes some sort of pleasure in our earthly struggles, it is because he loves us in the midst of all

our struggles. It is because we are still his children in his arms, crying and screaming at times, and he is holding us and rocking us and singing to us and...smiling at us. No matter what, he takes time to smile. No matter what, he is loving us.

*Take time to smile*

*The world is drenched with tears*

*And smiles will keep you young*

*But frowns will haste your years*

*And what, though the day goes wrong*

*Tomorrow is still worthwhile*

*And all of life is yours*

*Take time to smile.*

"Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile."  
— St. Theresa of Calcutta

Please know, that as I write this article, I am smiling for all of you.

*Deacon Randy Kiel is the founder of Kardia Counseling and serves Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines. To connect with him email randy@kardiacounseling.com.*

## Divided court reexamines insurance coverage of contraceptives

By Carol Zimmerman  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The justices of the U.S. Supreme Court seemed divided May 6 over Trump administration rules that give employers more ability to opt out of providing contraceptive coverage in their health plans.

The argument, part of a handful that will take place by teleconference during the coronavirus restrictions, took another look at an issue that has come before the court already and again, as in previous terms, it highlighted the Little Sisters of the Poor, the order of women religious who care for the elderly poor.

"There are very strong interests on both sides here, which is what makes the case difficult, obviously," Justice Brett Kavanaugh said in the May 6 arguments, which lasted 40 minutes longer than usual-allotted hour.

He said the interests include religious liberty for the

Little Sisters of the Poor and others and ensuring women's access to health care and preventive services.

"So the question becomes: Who decides how to balance those interests?" he asked. The Little Sisters of the Poor, who have been down this road before, were represented by Becket, a religious liberty law firm.

To recap their journey: In 2013, religious groups and houses of worship were granted a religious exemption by the Supreme Court from the government's mandate in the Affordable Care Act to include coverage of contraceptives in their employee health plan. Three years later, religious nonprofit groups challenged the requirement that they comply with the mandate and the court sent the cases back to the lower courts with instructions for the federal government and the challengers to try to work out a solution agreeable to both sides. Then in 2017, religious groups were given further protection

from the contraceptive mandate through an executive order issued by President Donald Trump requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to write a comprehensive exemption to benefit religious ministries, including the Little Sisters of the Poor, from the contraceptive mandate.

HHS provided this exemption in 2018, but several states challenged it, including California, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, saying HHS didn't have the power to give this exemption.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey obtained a nationwide injunction against the rules protecting religious objectors from the contraceptive mandate; that injunction was then upheld by the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Philadelphia.

This is where the Little Sisters come back because they appealed the circuit court's ruling and asked the Supreme Court to step in.

## Three U.S. bishops condemn racism in context of COVID-19 pandemic

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The chairmen of three boards of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have issued a joint statement expressing their deep concern about incidents of racism and xenophobia against Americans of Asian and Pacific Island heritage amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The May 5 statement was released by Archbishop Nelson J. Perez of Philadelphia, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Cultural Diversity in the Church; Bishop Oscar A. Solis of Salt Lake City, chairman of the USCCB's Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs; and Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.

"The pandemic resulting from the new coronavirus continues to sweep across the world, impacting our everyday behavior, practices, perceptions, and the way we interact with one another," the statement said.

"While we have been heartened by the countless acts of charity and bravery that have been modeled by many, we are also alarmed to note the increase in reported incidents of bullying and verbal and physical assaults, particularly against Americans of Asian and Pacific Island heritage," the bishops said.

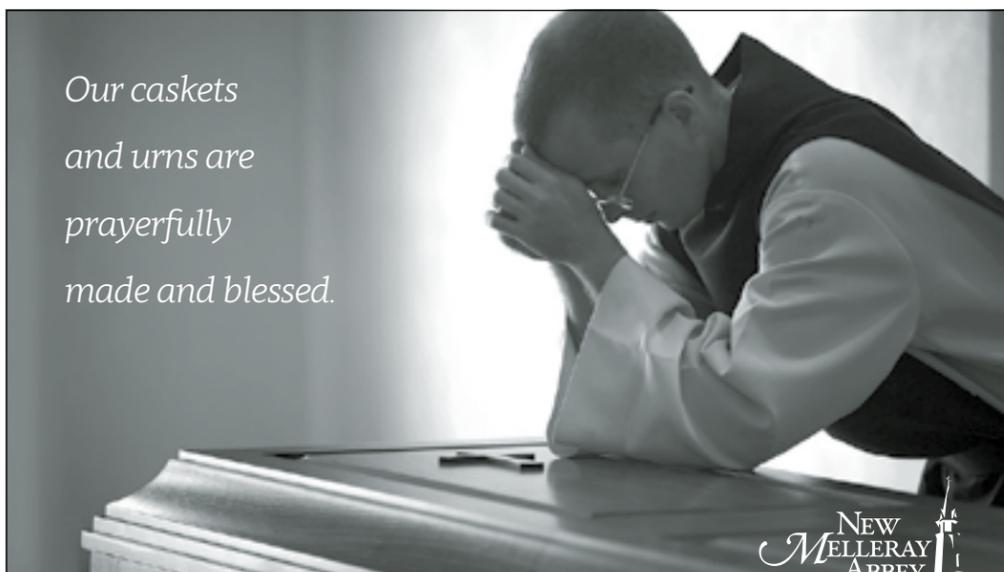
They pointed out that

"a high percentage of Asian Americans work in the health care sector -- risking their own health to save lives" and that "some have experienced rejection and requests to be treated 'by someone else.'"

The bishops also emphasized that "way before state and local ordinances brought to a halt almost every economic sector in the country, communities across the country -- from Oakland, California, to New York City -- reported a sharp decline in the patronage for businesses owned and operated by Asian Americans," adding that these are only "a few painful examples of the continuing harassment and racial discrimination suffered by Asians, Pacific Islanders and others in our country."

The bishops said they find these actions unacceptable and called on Catholics, fellow Christians and all people of goodwill to help them combat such acts of racism and xenophobia.

"They are attacks against human life and dignity and are contrary to Gospel values," the statement said. "As we wrote in our (2018) pastoral letter 'Open Wide Our Hearts,' racism is 'a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God.'"



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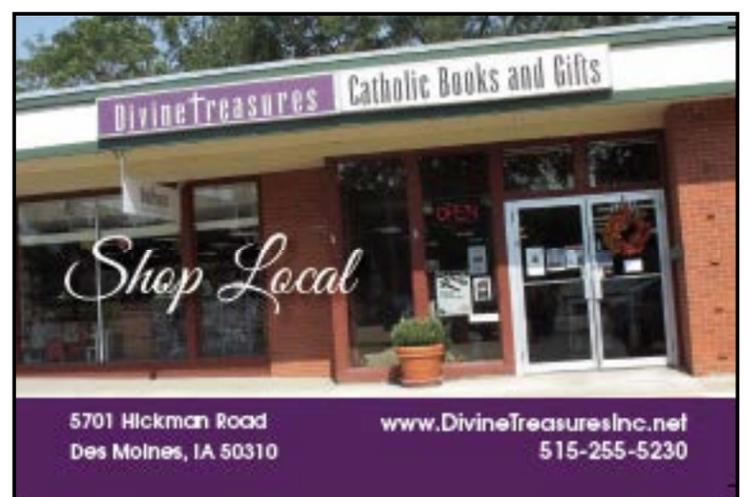
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## From behind the camera lens, bishops adapt to 'virtual' dioceses

By Rhina Guldos  
Catholic News Service

Bishops John E. Stowe, Oscar Cantu, and Mark J. Seitz are known for putting on the miles visiting their respective dioceses, whether on the rural roads of Kentucky, the bottleneck traffic of San Jose, California, or the border community of El Paso, Texas.

But in mid-March, like the rest of the world, the three prelates, along with bishops worldwide, were forced to change the way they operated their dioceses practically overnight as civil authorities put in place restrictions to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Since then, they've had to run their dioceses 'virtually,' meeting with staff via teleconferencing services, filming public service announcements and connecting to their communities through the lens of the camera in nearly empty cathedrals or chapels as they livestream Mass.

When Kentucky put in place a stay-at-home order in mid-March, one of the first

in the country to do so, Bishop Stowe said the Diocese of Lexington, which he leads, didn't have much time to prepare. But he quickly "lifted" the obligation to attend Mass, sending out "strong encouragement for vulnerable populations not to attend," as all pulled together to move as fast as possible to institute social-distancing measures for those who were still attending physically, while trying to move the celebration of the Eucharist and local church operations online.

With social media in wide use in his diocese, "we got the word out rather quickly and were able to get the Mass available 'virtually' to a lot of people with a lot of expressions of gratitude for having that in place," he said in a May 1 phone interview with Catholic News Service.

Within days, priests and lay ministers began to connect with parishioners via a variety of platforms, which besides keeping the Mass alive online, also organized activities to serve the local community with the needs the crisis produced.

## Pope encourages people to rediscover the need for prayer

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The coronavirus pandemic is a "favorable time to rediscover the need for prayer in our lives; let us open the doors of our hearts to the love of God our father, who will listen to us," Pope Francis said.

At his weekly general audience May 6, the pope began a new series of audience talks about prayer, which is "the breath of faith, its most appropriate expression, like a cry arising from the heart."

The pope's audience began with reading the story from the Gospel of Mark about Bartimaeus, the blind man, who repeatedly cries out to Jesus for healing. The pope said that of all the Gospel characters who ask

Jesus for help, he finds Bartimaeus "the most likable of all."

"At the top of his voice," Bartimaeus cries out, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And he does so over and over again, annoying the people around him, the pope noted.

"Jesus speaks to him and asks him to express what he wants -- this is important -- and so his cry becomes a request, 'I want to see,'" the pope said.

Faith, he said, "is having two hands raised (and) a voice that cries out to implore the gift of salvation."

Humility, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, is essential for authentic prayer, the pope added, because prayer arises from knowing "our state of precariousness, our continual thirst for God."

"Faith is a cry," he said, while "nonfaith is suffocating that cry, a kind of 'omerta,'" he

said, using the word for the mafia code of silence.

"Faith is protesting against a painful situation we do not understand," he said, while "nonfaith is limiting ourselves to enduring a situation we have become accustomed to. Faith is the hope of being saved; nonfaith is getting used to the evil that oppresses us."

Obviously, the pope said, Christians are not the only ones who pray because every man and woman has within themselves the desire for mercy and aid.

"As we continue on our pilgrimage of faith, may we, like Bartimaeus, always persevere in prayer, especially in our darkest moments, and ask the Lord with confidence: 'Jesus have mercy on me. Jesus, have mercy on us!'"

## Atlanta's new archbishop installed in quiet ceremony

By Andrew Nelson & Samantha Smith  
Catholic News Service

ATLANTA (CNS) -- In the silence of the Cathedral of Christ the King, Archbishop Gregory J. Hartmayer was installed May 6 as leader of the 1.2 million Catholics in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, telling believers they must care for each other without limit.

Speaking for the first time as the seventh archbishop of Atlanta, he said: "This cathedral is empty. And yet it is filled with the presence of the guiding force of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised his disciples he would send them to give them

the gifts they needed to continue to guide his flock. And so, the tradition continues."

The installation Mass looked unlike any other in the 64-year history of the church in Atlanta. It overturned what's typically a ceremony of ancient prayers, attended by throngs of people spilling out of pews, with civic and interfaith leaders greeting the new spiritual leader. Amid the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 1,300 people and infected some 30,500 in Georgia, the group in the cathedral was limited to a dozen people, keeping apart from each other, replacing handshakes and hugs with bows, with one participant wearing a mask.

## Fischer celebrated 100th birthday

Dolores Marie Berens Fischer, born April 25, 1920, was born in Dunlap, Iowa and moved to a farm in Neola at the age of seven. She started school at St. Joseph in Neola where she met her husband, Con, who will turn 99 in July. Dolores lived a half mile west of Neola and walked every day to school. Con lived four miles south of Neola and rode his horse to school. They graduated in 1938, 82 years ago.

After graduating, Dolores worked in Omaha as a nanny for two years, then attended Van Sant School of Business in Omaha for one year. Con also attended Van Sant and became an accountant for International Harvester, giving him the opportunity to work in many states. While in Chicago he would take

the train on Friday night and get off in Bentley, Iowa, to see Dolores, then back to Chicago on Sunday night.

In September, 1943, Con returned to the family farm near Bentley and became engaged to Dolores in 1946. Dolores continued to work in Omaha at Paxton and Gallagher Coffee Company. They wed at St. Patrick Church in Neola on Aug. 9, 1947.

They lived on the family farm until 2013 when they moved to Underwood. They are living at Bethany Heights, Council Bluffs, Iowa. They have three children, Mary Jo (Frank) Dobrydney, Dorothy (Michael) Mauro and John (Mary Martin), 8 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren.



Dolores Berens Fischer

Cards or greetings can be sent to Dolores Fischer, 11 Elliott St., Council Bluffs, Iowa, 51503.



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### Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese's Victim Assistance Advocate is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps victims of sexual abuse of minors by clergy through a complaint process and in seeking support and counseling services. He can be reached at 515-286-2024 or Sam.Porter@polkcountyia.gov.

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