

# THE PRAIRIE CATHOLIC

*Pastoral news from across the Diocese of New Ulm*

Minnesota's Most Rural Diocese Diocese of New Ulm Vol. 38 No. 4 January/February 2024

## Save the Date

# Ignite

*Join Bishop Chad Zielinski at*  
**St. Anthony, Watkins**  
**May 19, 2024 at 4:00 PM**

Want to be a part of a Eucharistic Congress but unable to go to Bemidji or Indianapolis? Join us at the Church of St. Anthony in Watkins on May 19 to spiritually participate in the national pilgrimage. The Marian Pilgrimage Route to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress begins at Lake Itasca, MN on Pentecost Sunday May 19. Bishop Zielinski and others from our diocese will travel from Lake Itasca to Watkins. All are invited to join us there! Bring your statue of Mary to be blessed by Bishop Zielinski who will also share a message of Eucharistic Revival. Watch for more details on our website

*[www.dnu.org](http://www.dnu.org)*



NATIONAL  
**Eucharistic Revival**  
**Avivamiento Eucarístico**  
DIOCESE OF NEW ULM



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(Photo by Christine Clancy)

ST. PAUL - Hundreds from the Diocese of New Ulm joined the over 3,000 who gathered January 22 at the Cathedral of St. Paul for a morning prayer service to end abortion held prior to the annual March for Life at the Minnesota State Capitol. (Read more on page 7.)

## National Eucharistic Revival preacher to speak in Diocese of New Ulm

by Christine Clancy  
*The Prairie Catholic*

Jesuit Father Joe Laramie will speak at three parishes in the Diocese of New Ulm this month to share talks focusing on the National Eucharistic Revival initiative at three locations across the diocese. Fr. Laramie is one of a group of 50 preachers who are being sent to dioceses across the country to enkindle belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

The preachers share witness testimony about God and invite their audience into an encounter with Christ in hopes they will experience a profound conversion to a deeper relationship with God.

Fr. Laramie's presentations will be held on Feb. 23, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Church of St. Peter in St. Peter; Feb. 24, 10 a.m.-noon

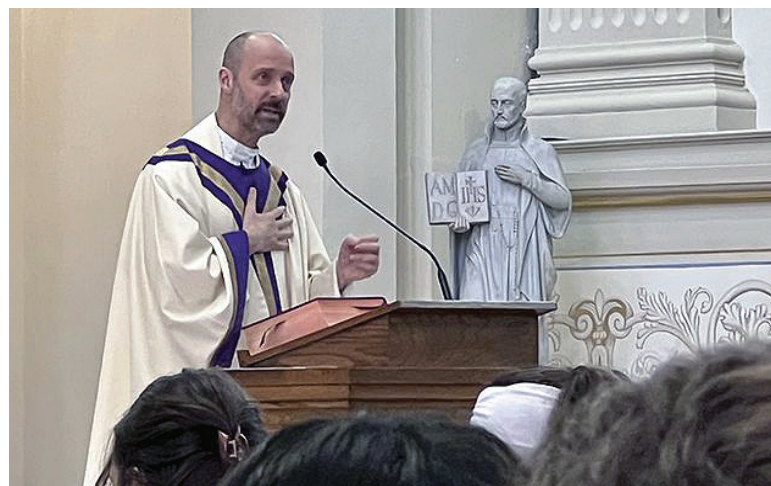
at the Church of St. Anastasia in Hutchinson, and from 2-4:00 p.m. at the Church of St. Edward in Minneota. Each of Fr. Laramie's presentations will address "The Eucharist: Leading Us to the Sacred Heart." \*For details for any of these opportunities, visit [www.dnu.org](http://www.dnu.org).

Fr. Laramie is the national director of the Pope's Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer), a 175-year-old spiritual mission uniting "hearts" to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A native of St. Louis, Mo., he resides in Milwaukee and travels widely for his ministry. He attended Saint Louis University, a Catholic Jesuit school, and was ordained in 2011 after studies at Loyola University in Chicago, earning a theology degree (M.Div. and STL) at Boston College. Fr. Laramie has been featured on the Hallow app, EWTN, Busted Halo, and America.

Prior to his arrival in the diocese, Fr. Laramie agreed to a Question & Answer with Christine Clancy, editor of *The Prairie Catholic*.

**Q.** As a priest, what does the Eucharist mean to you?

Jesus, present in the Eucharist, is the source and summit of my life. As a priest, I am called and blessed to celebrate Mass daily. Meeting Jesus in the Eucharist, taking quiet time for prayer before him in the Tabernacle, receiving Communion - this is the 'heartbeat' of my vocation. Jesus draws me to himself, renews me, and then sends me out to preach and teach. Then, the next day, he draws me back to himself in the Mass. He is the true lifeblood of my life!



National Eucharistic Preacher Fr. Joe Laramie, S.J. will be presenting in three locations in the Diocese of New Ulm in February.

(Photo courtesy of [www.jesuit.org](http://www.jesuit.org))

**Q.** What do you believe is the main point of misunderstanding or confusion for the faithful regarding the Eucharist?

Partly, people got out of the habit of attending Mass during the pandemic. It was a crazy time - watching Mass on Zoom or YouTube. We also did this for work and school. I think we are still seeing the effects - isolation, mental illness, the divisions in our culture.

We need the Eucharist! Especially for Catholics, we have an embodied faith. We are the Body of Christ [the Church]. We receive the Body of Christ [the Eucharist] and encounter our embodied God. The eternal Son took on a human body for us. We need to re-learn those Catholic habits with a deeper sense of their importance. The National Eucharistic Revival is an effort to 'rekindle' that fire of faith in us.

**Q.** What message would you share

with clergy about their role in helping the faithful to understand the True Presence?

As clergy, we must keep 'leaning in' to nourish and deepen our relationship with Jesus through the sacraments. If we don't do it first, how can we expect the Christian faithful to? Yes, priests are busy. Our people are busy, too. We've got to make time for quiet prayer before the Eucharist, prayer before Mass, and after Mass - thanking the Lord, praising him, asking him for help.

**Q.** Do you have any "glory stories" from your time as a Eucharistic Preacher?

I'm sitting in O'Hare airport outside Chicago, flight delayed, tired, trying to remember where I'm going next. A parish in Ohio? Diocesan leaders in Virginia? I have a little bit of anxiety and nervous energy - will they be friendly? Will they like me? Is my talk any good?

And then I get there. People are warm, welcoming, and excited. They've been preparing and advertising, and there's a good turnout. The Eucharistic Revival has really stirred some good Catholic mojo and energy.

I then take some time in prayer before the Eucharist, and Jesus reminds me, "I led you here. I'm speaking through you. This is my mission - you're serving me and my people. And I prepared their hearts to welcome me in the Eucharist."

Being a Eucharistic Preacher is a lot of fun! I had an evening holy hour for families in Carmel, Ind., outside Indianapolis. Kids were everywhere, and young parents were tired but excited and singing. Advent had just begun. We're adoring Jesus in the Eucharist. And I said, "Every Mass is like a little Christmas! Jesus comes to us; he is 'born' on the altar. So we dress nice, we sing to celebrate, we're so happy he is here!"

**Q.** Is there a saint with whom you particularly identify as a Eucharistic Revival Preacher?

I think about St. Claude Colombiere S.J. He was a Jesuit priest in France in the 1600s. He was the spiritual director of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque VHM; she was a great visionary of the Sacred Heart.

Fr. Claude was a faithful pastor at a small parish church. Then, he was sent to be the chaplain to the royal court in England! The Duchess of York was Catholic, and she was later the wife of the King. Just that mix: humble, rural

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# diocesan church

## *That they may have life*

### The beauty of consecrated life

by Bishop Chad W. Zielinski

Over the years we have been blessed with many consecrated women and men who served or are serving in the Diocese of New Ulm. In the gospel story, the Magi focused on a single star, “the light of Christ,” which led them to leave their homeland and venture to a foreign land. In a similar way the holy women and men called to consecrated life, sharing that same hunger and thirst for closeness to God, follow the light of Christ to a life of true closeness to him.

During their discernment, many made inquiries and visited various religious communities of consecrated life to witness and learn more about the order’s apostolic charism. Each community is founded by a consecrated religious who intently listened to Christ’s call, “Come follow me,” “follow my light.”

The beauty of consecrated life is the varied charisms of each religious community reaching out to serve the Mystical Body of Christ: school teachers, medical workers, nursing home care workers, retreat directors, and others, all providing spiritual guidance, parish catechesis, and a powerhouse of prayer for the local



On the 28th World Day of Consecrated Life on Feb. 2, 2024 (feast of the Presentation of the Lord), Bishop Zielinski celebrated Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm, recognizing the ministry and sacrifice of those living a consecrated life. Gathered with the bishop following Mass are consecrated women who serve or once served in the diocese. Religious communities represented are (flowing l-r): Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará, and the Sisters of Mary Morning Star. (Photo by Christine Clancy)

and universal Church.

So, how many religious orders are there in the Universal Church? The answer is “that only the Holy Spirit knows.” Like thousands of stars in the sky, there are thousands of religious orders, all reflecting a natural order created by the hand of God, resulting in radiant beauty.

Those seeking religious life

typically spend one year as a postulant and two to three years as a novice before making their solemn profession. During this time, the discerning man or woman grows in knowledge, wisdom, and holiness by the very structure of their formation. Each day, week, month, and year, the “light of Christ” becomes brighter, and the intensity of drawing closer to Christ by serving in this unique charism of a particular community

increases with fervor. Like the Magi, they will eventually leave their home and travel to a new place and, for some, to a foreign land.

I recently had the honor of being the main celebrant at two Masses where religious sisters made solemn vows. One was for the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus in New Ulm, the other for the Servants of Our Lord and the

Virgin of Matará (the Servidoras) in Washington, D.C.

One of the most beautiful scenes at these Masses was seeing the women lie on the church floor while the community chanted the Litany of Saints. This physical gesture of prayer is a profound sign and action of complete surrender to Christ. At this moment, the Pilgrim Church and the Church Triumphant join in a single voice, asking these women to surrender all to Christ and offer their entire selves, including vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These three living gifts are the greatest treasures held by the Church that bring forth beauty, goodness, and truth.

Similar to the three Magi who returned to their home country a different way after encountering Christ, who warned them about the evil desires of Herod, these women were also being sent by Christ to be a bright, shining star in the world - a fearless witness of the Gospel.

As the faithful of the Diocese of New Ulm, we have an incredible treasure chest in our consecrated women and men. There are many stars guiding us closer to Christ, and they share in this light through their unique charisms. We are abundantly blessed and profoundly thankful.

## THE PRAIRIE CATHOLIC

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## Question & Answer with Fr. Joe Laramie

(Continued from page 1.)

setting, Mass for nuns, and then the biggest possible stage! St. Claude kept a prayerful, joyful spirit. I want to do that, too.

**Q.** Understanding the rural nature of the Diocese of New Ulm, what can we do to enkindle a love for the Eucharist in the hearts of the faithful?

I did my Jesuit novitiate in St. Paul, Minn., and now I live in Milwaukee. I’m also a fan of Garrison Keillor, who’s sort of the Mark Twain of Minnesota. I like the cold. Northern weather creates hardy, devoted Catholics with big hearts - we need it to stay warm!

My grandparents had a country house outside St. Louis. I loved going out there when I was a kid - going for a ride with Grandpa on his tractor, petting the horse, and going fishing. I also remember

going to their little parish for early Sunday Mass. The older farmers wore faded overalls and had tan cheeks and hairy forearms. In planting season or during harvest - these guys were heading to the fields right after Mass!



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Visit [www.dnu.org](http://www.dnu.org) for a listing of area events.

As Americans, we have a big, beautiful country. I think rural folks know that better than others: sunset, the bright stars on a chilly night, frozen ponds, waiting for spring. It breeds gratitude to God, trust in God, and living in the liturgical seasons of the Church.

What can you do? Invite someone! You probably know your neighbors, even if they live a half mile away. Call them, write a note,

walk over: “We have a nice event at our church this weekend. You’re welcome to join my family. We’ll have dinner afterward, and you can come too.” A friendly invite - it’s simple. They may say “Yes” or “No,” but you’ve put it out there.

You planted a seed. The Holy Spirit can water it and shine upon it.

Invite a relative who has been away from the Church for a while, such as a parent at your kid’s school. You don’t need to be pushy; you’re just offering and opening a conversation. Let Christ do the rest.

**Q.** As we head into the Eucharistic

Revival Year of Mission, what advice can you offer parishioners?

Let’s keep praying! Keep leaning into the Eucharist; arrive a few minutes early for Mass to pray, and stay a few minutes after. Go to Eucharistic Adoration if you can. Take a look at some of the great resources the Eucharistic Revival offers - reflections, videos, and prayers. Jesus has good things in store for us.

If you are ‘already on board,’ already attending Mass and deepening your faith, then trust that Jesus wants to use you to draw someone else [back] to the Eucharist.

If you’ve been away from the Eucharist or aren’t practicing your faith now, this is your chance. Jesus is opening a door for you and inviting you. “Come! It’s warm and bright here. I want you here! I want to renew you, strengthen you, and nourish you!”



## Former rector of Cathedral to mark 60 years of ministry



Msgr. John Richter distributes the Eucharist to Betty Rausch during Mass on January 17 at the Divine Providence chapel in Sleepy Eye. (Photo by Christy Baker)

by Christine Clancy  
*The Prairie Catholic*

On Feb. 22, Monsignor John Richter will mark his 60th anniversary as a priest of the Diocese of New Ulm. In recognition, Bishop Chad Zielinski will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving on Sunday, Feb. 18, at 1 p.m. at the Church of St. Mary in Sleepy Eye, followed by a reception in the church social room. Everyone is invited to attend.

Following his ordination on Feb. 22, 1964, at the Church of St. Mary in Bird Island by Bishop Alphonse J. Schladweiler, Msgr. Richter went on to serve the parish communities of New Ulm (Cathedral of the Holy Trinity with teaching duties at Cathedral High School), Hutchinson, Montevideo, Madison, Canby, Sleepy Eye (while also serving as superintendent of St. Mary's Catholic School and chaplain of Divine Providence Home in Sleepy Eye), Wabasso, Seaforth, Lucan, Wanda, and Searles. He served as rector of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm

from 2002 to 2015, at which time he became senior associate pastor at the Cathedral and also assisted in the Holy Cross Area Faith Community (New Ulm, Searles, Lafayette, West Newton Township). He also served as diocesan director of Vocations and the Bishop's Liaison to the Charismatic Renewal and on various diocesan committees.

On Sept. 14, 2005, Msgr. Richter was named Chaplain to His Holiness with the title of "Monsignor" by Pope Benedict XVI.

In 1998, he received the Diocesan Distinguished Service Medal from the second bishop of New Ulm Bishop Raymond A. Lucker in recognition of his "faithful ministry and effective educational leadership," and on May 23, 2019, he was inducted into the Knights of Columbus Hall of Fame.

Following retirement from active ministry 2017, Msgr. Richter continues to serve as chaplain to the Divine Providence Community Home/Lake Villa Maria in Sleepy Eye.

## Theologian and best-selling author to speak at Bishop Lucker Lecture in March

### The Eucharist: Is the Real Presence Biblical?

by Dr. Edward Sri  
[edwardsri.com/blog](http://edwardsri.com/blog)

The "Real Presence" of Jesus in the Eucharist is rooted in Christ's own teachings. When Jesus taught about the Eucharist, he spoke with a profound realism. At the Last Supper, he didn't say, "This is a symbol of my body." He said, "This is my body. . ." And when he gave his most in-depth teaching on the Eucharist, he spoke in a very realistic way - in a way that makes clear that the Eucharist is not just a symbol of Jesus, but is his flesh and blood made sacramentally present.

Let's enter into that dramatic scene, known as "The Bread of Life Discourse" in John's Gospel chapter six. Jesus had just performed his greatest miracle so far, multiplying loaves and fish to feed 5,000 people. The crowds are in awe. They declare him to be the great "prophet who is to come" and want to carry him off to make him king (*John 6:14-15*).

But the very next day, Jesus says something that sends his public approval ratings plummeting, something that makes those same raving fans now oppose him. Even some of his own disciples will walk away from him. What does Jesus say that was so controversial? He taught about partaking of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

Jesus first says, "I am the bread of life. . . the true bread come down from heaven" (*John 6:35*). And he makes clear that he is not bread in some vague, figurative sense. He concludes, ". . . and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (*John 6:51*).

The people are shocked at this. They say, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (*John 6:52*). The Jews listening that day don't take Jesus as speaking metaphorically, as if we are to somehow only symbolically eat of his flesh. They understand Jesus very well. They know he is speaking realistically here, and that's why they are appalled. Now here's the key: Jesus has every opportunity to clarify his



Dr. Edward Sri, a well-known theologian and Catholic speaker will be the presenter at the Diocese of New Ulm Bishop Lucker Lecture on Friday, March 15, 2024, at the Church of St. Catherine in Redwood Falls. Dr. Sri's presentation will be based

on "Bringing the Liturgy into Our Daily Lives."

The evening presentation will be preceded by the celebration of Mass at 6 p.m. celebrated by Bishop Chad Zielinski. The lecture will begin at 7:15 p.m. followed by a reception. **No registration is required.**

**NEW this year** is a day program also based on the Liturgy. It will be held on March 15 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at St. Catherine's. The agenda of the day will be two hour-long presentations by Dr. Sri, lunch, and small group discussion. Cost of lunch is \$15. **Registration is required.** Visit [www.dnu.org](http://www.dnu.org) or call (507) 359-2966 for more information.

teaching. But notice how that's precisely what he doesn't do. He doesn't back up and say, "Oh wait. . . I'm sorry. . . You misunderstood. I was only speaking metaphorically here!" He doesn't soften his teaching, saying, "You just need to nourish yourself on my teaching, my wisdom, my love." Jesus does just the opposite. He uses even more graphic, more intense language to drive his point home: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (*John 6:53*). And he goes on to underscore how essential partaking of his Body and Blood is for our salvation. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (*6:54-55*).

This is not the language of someone speaking metaphorically. Jesus wants to give us his very body and blood in the Eucharist. In fact, Jesus now uses a word for "eat" that has even greater graphic intensity - trogein, which means to chew or gnaw - not a word that would be used figuratively here! So challenging is this teaching that even many of Christ's disciples are bewildered, saying, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" (*John 6:60*). Indeed, Christ's words on the Eucharist were too much for some of them to believe. Many of his disciples rejected Jesus over this teaching

and left him (*John 6:66*). And Jesus let them go. He didn't chase after them, saying, "Wait! You misunderstood me." They understood quite well that Jesus was speaking about eating his flesh and blood, and they rejected this teaching. That's why Jesus let them go.

So it's clear that Jesus wants to give us his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. But we still must ask, why? In the Jewish, Biblical worldview of Jesus' day, the body is an expression of the whole person and the life is in the blood. So by giving us his Body and Blood in the Eucharist, Jesus is giving his very life to us, and he wants to unite himself to us in the most intimate way possible. He wants to fill us with his life and heal us of our wounds, strengthen us in his love, and change us to become more and more like him. That's the life-transforming power of the Eucharist in our lives. In Holy Communion, we have the most profound union with Our Lord Jesus Christ that we can have here on earth.

*Editor's note: Dr. Edward Sri presents to tens of thousands of people from around the world each year and appears regularly on EWTN. He is a founding leader with Curtis Martin of FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic Univeristy Students), where he currently serves as Sr. Vice President of Apostolic Outreach.*

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por Bishop Chad W. Zielinski

### Vida Consagrada

A lo largo de los años, hemos sido bendecidos con muchas mujeres y hombres consagrados que sirvieron o están sirviendo en la Diócesis de New Ulm. En la historia del evangelio, los Magos se enfocaron en una sola estrella, “la luz de Cristo”, que los llevó a dejar su tierra natal y aventurarse a una tierra extranjera. De manera similar, las santas mujeres y hombres llamados a la vida consagrada, compartiendo ese mismo hambre y sed de cercanía a Dios, siguen la luz de Cristo hacia una vida de verdadera cercanía a él.

Durante su discernimiento, muchos hicieron investigaciones y visitaron diversas comunidades religiosas de vida consagrada para presenciar y aprender más sobre el carisma apostólico de la orden. Cada comunidad es fundada por un religioso consagrado que escuchó atentamente el llamado de Cristo: “Ven, sígueme”, “sigan mi luz”.

La belleza de la vida consagrada radica en los variados ministerios de cada comunidad religiosa que se extienden para servir al Cuerpo Místico de Cristo: maestros de escuela, trabajadores médicos, trabajadores de hogares de ancianos, directores de retiros

## Para que tengan vida

y otros, todos proporcionando orientación espiritual, catequesis parroquial y un poderoso núcleo de oración para la diócesis.

Entonces, ¿cuántas órdenes religiosas hay en la Iglesia Universal? La respuesta es “que solo el Espíritu Santo lo sabe”. Como miles de estrellas en el cielo, hay miles de órdenes religiosas, todas reflejando un orden natural creado por la mano de Dios, resultando en una belleza radiante.

Los que buscan la vida religiosa suelen pasar un año como postulantes y dos o tres años como novicios o novicias antes de hacer su profesión solemne. Durante este tiempo, el hombre o la mujer discerniente crece en conocimiento, sabiduría y santidad mediante la estructura misma de su formación. Cada día, semana, mes y año, la “luz de Cristo” se hace más brillante, y la intensidad de acercarse a Cristo al servir en este carisma único de una comunidad particular aumenta con fervor. Como los magos, eventualmente dejarán su hogar y viajarán a un lugar nuevo y, para algunos, a una tierra extranjera.

Recientemente tuve el honor de ser el celebrante principal en dos Misas donde las hermanas religiosas hicieron votos solemnes. Una fue para las Siervas del Corazón de Jesús en New Ulm, y la otra para las Siervas de Nuestro Señor y la Virgen de Matara (las

Servidoras) en Washington, D.C.

Una de las escenas más hermosas en estas Misas fue ver a las mujeres postrarse en el suelo del templo mientras la comunidad cantaba la Letanía de los Santos. Este gesto físico de oración es un signo y una acción profundamente significativos de entrega total a Cristo. En este momento, la Iglesia Peregrina y la Iglesia Triunfante se unen en una sola voz, pidiendo a estas mujeres que entreguen todo a Cristo y ofrezcan todo su ser, incluidos los votos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia. Estos tres dones vivientes son los mayores tesoros que la Iglesia posee y que traen consigo belleza, bondad y verdad.

Similar a los tres magos que regresaron a su país de origen de una manera diferente después de encontrarse con Cristo, quien les advirtió sobre los malos deseos de Herodes, estas mujeres también fueron enviadas por Cristo para ser una estrella brillante y radiante en el mundo, un testigo valiente del Evangelio.

Como fieles de la Diócesis de New Ulm, tenemos un tesoro increíble en nuestras mujeres y hombres consagrados. Hay muchas estrellas que nos guían más cerca de Cristo, y comparten esta luz a través de sus carismas únicos. Somos abundantemente bendecidos y profundamente agradecidos.

## Priestly milestones

The Prairie Catholic congratulates priests of the Diocese of New Ulm celebrating significant priestly anniversaries in 2024. Thank you all for your many years of ministry.

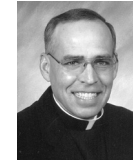


### 60 Years



**Msgr. John Richter** was ordained Feb. 22, 1964. He retired from active priestly ministry in 2017.

### 35 Years



**Rev. Michael Doyle** was ordained June 8, 1989. He serves as senior associate at the Shepherd of Souls Area Faith Community (Watkins, Darwin, Litchfield, and Mannanah).

### 50 Years



**Rev. Dennis Labat** was ordained May 25, 1974. He serves as parochial vicar of the Bread of Life Area Faith

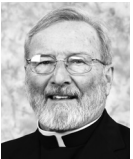
Community (Marshall and Cottonwood) and Our Lady of the Prairie Area Faith Community (Milroy and Tracy).

### 30 Years



**Rev. Brian Mandel** was ordained May 28, 1994. He serves the St. Isidore the Farmer Area Faith Community (Murdock, Clontarf, and Appleton).

### 50 Years



**Rev. Gerald “Jerry” Meidl** was ordained June 2, 1974. He serves as senior associate at Holy Cross

Area Faith Community (New Ulm, Searles, and West Newton Township).

### 25 Years



**Rev. Todd Petersen** was ordained June 5, 1999. He serves as pastor of the Good Teacher Area Faith Community

(Ghent and Minneota).

### 50 Years



**Rev. Robert Mraz** was ordained June 1, 1974. He retired from active priestly ministry in 2018.

### 20 Years



**Rev. Jeremy Kucera** was ordained June 12, 2004. He serves as pastor of the Vine and Branches Area

Faith Community (Lamberton, Springfield, and the oratory of Sanborn).

## Bishop's calendar

**Feb. 12** – Institution of Lector, seminarian Brett Sundve – St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul

**Feb. 13** – Eucharistic Revival Committee Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center

**Feb. 17** – All Saints AFC Confirmation – Church of St. Andrew, Fairfax

**Feb. 18** – Msgr. John Richter 60th Anniversary Mass, Church of St. Mary, Sleepy Eye

Rite of Election, Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, New Ulm

**Feb. 23** – School Mass and Visit – Church of St. Mary, Tracy

**Feb. 25** – Christ the King AFC Confirmation – Church of St. John Cantius, Wilno

**Feb. 27** – Diocesan Staff Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Priest Personnel Board Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Priests' Council Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

College of Consultors Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

**Feb. 29** – School Mass & Visit, Church of St. Peter, Canby

**March 3** – Good Teacher AFC Confirmation, Church of St. Eloi, Ghent

Bread of Life AFC Confirmation, Church of the Holy Redeemer, Marshall

**March 6** – Minnesota Catholic Conference Meeting, St. Paul

**March 7** – Minnesota Catholic Conference Legislative Visits – State Capitol, St. Paul

**March 10** – Divine Mercy AFC Confirmation – Church of St. Mary, Sleepy Eye

**March 11-13** – USCCB Meetings, USCCB Headquarters, Washington, DC

**March 15** – Bishop Lucker Lecture – Church of St. Catherine, Redwood Falls

*Editor's note: Calendar represents Bishop Zielinski's schedule at the time "The Prairie Catholic" went to press and dates and times are subject to change.*

"The **Chrism Mass** sees the Christian people in every diocese gathered around their Bishop...  
IT IS A **SOLEMN, INTENSELY MEANINGFUL CELEBRATION.**"  
- ST. JOHN PAUL II

March  
21  
2024

## CHRISM MASS

ANNUAL CONSECRATION OF HOLY OILS  
& RENEWAL OF PRIESTLY PROMISES

7 P.M. | THURSDAY  
CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY TRINITY, NEW ULM

# Celebrating 65 years and beyond

71 years



**Gordon and Renee (Shroeder) Osmonson** were married on Aug. 8, 1953. They are members of St. Mary, Sleepy Eye.

71 years



**Alcuin and Arlene (Pelzel) Tauer** were married Sept. 15, 1953. They are members of St. Mary, Sleepy Eye.

70 years



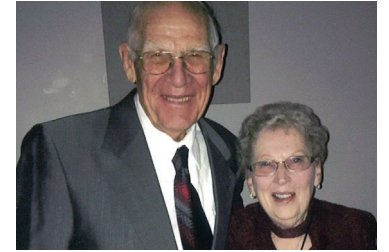
**Charles and Lucille (Mathiowetz) Moldaschel** were married June 22, 1954. They are members of St. Mary, Sleepy Eye.

70 years



**George and Doris (Wiedl) Schweiss** were married May 8, 1954. They are members of St. Willibrord, Gibbon.

69 years



**Charles and Sharon (DeZeeuw) Bakker** were married June 21, 1955. They are members of St. Dionysius, Tyler.

69 years



**Wesley and Doris (Prax) Boyum** were married Sept. 10, 1955. They are members of St. Andrew, Fairfax.

69 years



**Walter and Georgia (Christensen) Brewers** were married Nov. 12, 1955. They are members of Holy Redeemer, Marshall.

67 years



**Daniel and Lucille (Antony) Brewers** were married on Aug. 19, 1957. They are members of St. Mary, Tracy.

67 years



**Jerry and Janet (David) Gish** were married Aug. 21, 1957. They are members of Holy Rosary, North Mankato.

67 years



**Richard and Mary (Scholl) Hanson** were married on June 22, 1957. They are members of St. Mary, Willmar.

66 years



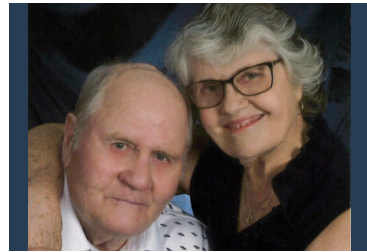
**Francis and Grace (Heaton) Rabaey** were married Sept. 13, 1958. They are members of St. Edward, Minneota.

66 years



**Dave and Sharon (Blondin) Carr** were married Sept. 20, 1958. They are members of St. Mary, Sleepy Eye.

65 years



**Vincent and Jeanette (Thooff) Lanoue** were married on Aug. 26, 1959. They are members of St. Mary, Tracy.

65 years



**Linus and Rose Marie (Walter) Nachreiner** were married on Sept. 1, 1959. They are members of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, New Ulm.

65 years



**Eugene and Rita (Kack) Streff** were married on June 23, 1959. They are members of St. Leo, St. Leo.

## God loves a cheerful giver!

by Bishop Chad W. Zielinski

Shortly after I received my driver's license in 1981, I recall waiting at a traffic light in Alpena, Mich. The car directly in front of me displayed a bumper sticker that read:

1. God First
2. You Second
3. Me Last

This simple message, imprinted in my mind since the 11th grade, flows from the Gospel message from Jesus regarding the love of God and neighbor as the greatest of commandments. If I keep God and others first in my life, then the Lord will always provide for me. This is the foundation of the stewardship of our time and resources shared with others. Thank you for your strong faith response of keeping God first and your outreach to others and the Diocese of New Ulm.



## Learn more about

### "What Happens at Mass"

a 36-week reflection in both English and Spanish by Bishop Zielinski. Visit [www.dnu.org/eucharistic-revival](http://www.dnu.org/eucharistic-revival).

May 17 & 18 • 2024

## Star of the North

### Eucharistic Congress

This local Congress will lead into the kick-off of the Marian Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

Bemidji, Minnesota • Sanford Center

[CrookstonEucharist.org](http://CrookstonEucharist.org)

CO-HOSTED BY

Register Today!

Bishop Andrew Cozzens  
Diocese of Crookston

Bishop Daniel J. Felton  
Diocese of Duluth


Father Mike Schmitz  
Diocese of Duluth

Bishop Robert Barron  
Diocese of Winona-Rochester

Sister Jude  
Andrew Link, OP

**Attention faithful of the Diocese of New Ulm!** There will be a "Gift Pilgrimage" to Bemidji and Lake Itasca and then on to the diocesan *Ignite* event on May 19 at the Church of St. Anthony in Watkins, Minn. Come and be a part of this unique opportunity. Contact Roxanne Felder, (612) 396-0727 or [giftpilgrimage@gmail.com](mailto:giftpilgrimage@gmail.com).

# Catholic Schools Week “Super Stars” play a major role in student success



**There are 100's of individuals throughout the Diocese of New Ulm who are committed to supporting Catholic education in a variety of ways. Most work “behind the scenes” to ensure quality in our Catholic schools. They invest their talents and blessings because they believe in the importance of Catholic education. In recognition of Catholic Schools Week 2024 (celebrated in schools Jan. 28-Feb. 2), *The Prairie Catholic* highlights two individuals who have been nominated as a Catholic Schools Week Super Star.**

**Catholic Schools**  
United in Faith and Community

CSW coverage by Elli Burmis  
*Prairie Catholic* correspondent

New Ulm Area Catholic Schools (NUACS) Food Service Director and Head Cook Christine Stodola is known for planning for the future while taking care of the present. She has been writing manuals for the positions in the kitchen so each employee knows their duties. “This will help our hot lunch program as we move into the future,” she says.

Since her initial hiring in December 2016, Stodola has continued to exceed expectations and excel above and beyond. NUACS President Sr. Julie Brandt, St. Anthony Elementary School Principal Karen Schulte, and Cathedral High School Principal Erica DeVries all agree that Stodola stretches every dollar as far as it can go. For instance, she applies for numerous grants that help fund NUACS’s lunch program; she takes in produce (e.g., tomatoes) and processes them to add to menu items; she uses fresh local produce to enhance student lunches; and she arranges for volunteers to help with time-consuming projects such as deboning chickens. Given her dedication and incredible work ethic, Stodola’s fellow staff members were excited to nominate her as a Catholic Schools Week Super Star!

Reflecting on the many reasons for nominating Stodola, the NUACS staff share specific memories that make her a Catholic Schools Week Super Star. For example, last year, she knew that tomato products would be in short supply due to a freeze in California. Very connected to the community, she asked for donations of tomatoes and then processed them, adding them to soups and sauces to stretch the tomato products she could procure. Similarly, when Stodola could not order pizzas due to shortages, she put in extra time to make homemade pizzas. They were a big hit and showed how much Stodola cares for the students.

In addition to Stodola’s tremendous work ethic and ‘above and beyond’ mentality,



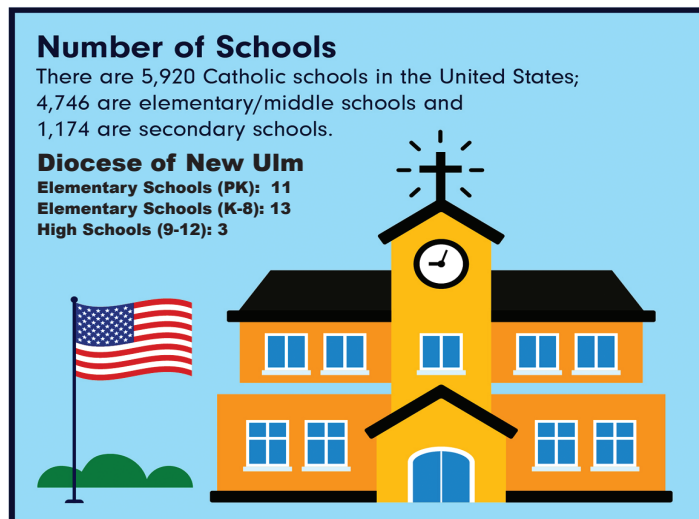
**Christine Stodola serves as the Food Service Director and Head Cook at New Ulm Area Catholic Schools.**

she strives to connect with fellow staff members and students, consistently strengthening the NUACS community. When asked about some her favorite memories and moments of serving in the NUACS system Stodola replied it is when the students are excited to tell her something about their day, vacations, or an accomplishment. “I have to laugh when they [students] are reading the menu in the dining room and get excited about the meal. One student claimed his best subject was lunch!” Stodola said.

As a Catholic Schools Week Super Star, Stodola exemplifies the diocesan mission to be the loving face of Christ and continues to positively influence the NUACS school and community. Brandt, Schulte, and DeVries concur that

Stodola works very hard and is dedicated to the students’ well-being. They say that she is a model of service to the students, generously offering to cook for various parish and school events.

Likewise, Stodola is very proud and honored to serve her Catholic school. “Our mission is to do our best for the students through every aspect of the day,” she explains. “We set values through our actions as students can see not so much by our words but [by] how we go through our everyday life as people with empathy and kindness for others. [We] believe our faith will guide us through life’s joys and sorrows. The small school environment gives us the chance to appreciate what each of us does every day to make the school a success.”



Sources: U.S. Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2022-2023: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing (NCEA).



**One of Brittany Dahl’s responsibilities at St. Peter’s School in Canby is working with students in the classroom. Above, Dahl works with Harlan Dressen, Preschool and Cylus Schmiesing, 3rd Grade.**

Brittany Dahl’s calm demeanor and patient personality are great assets when working with preschoolers at St. Peter Catholic School in Canby. Since hired as a paraprofessional at the school in 2019, Dahl has been considered a “blessing” by principal Lori Rangaard. “She consistently goes above and beyond all expectations,” shares Rangaard. “She is always willing to help out in other areas and work with teachers, students, and administration to be flexible and adjust to any changes.”

At the school, Dahl also works individually with students in K-6 classrooms, assists in the K-2 Science and Music classes once a week, handles lunchroom and recess duties, serves as the school librarian, and “helps teachers and the principal with extra tasks or events that come up throughout the year.”

When asked what she loved best about her job, Dahl shared, “Being able to attend Mass on Wednesdays with the students and watching their faith grow is one of the best things. . .”

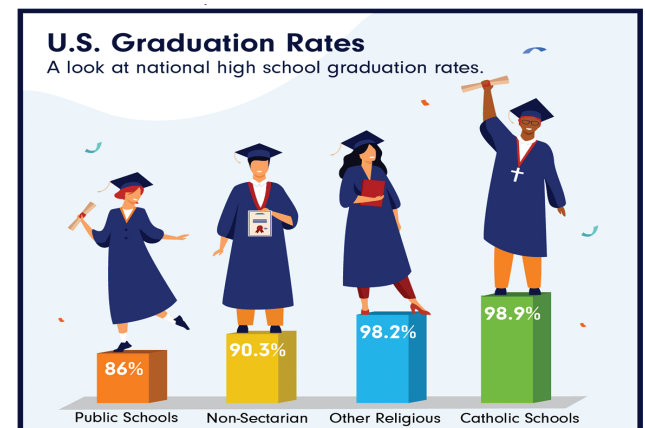
Dahl also enjoys helping the

students with what they are learning in class. The small school environment “makes it easy to pop in and help out,” she said. Dahl’s remarkable dedication to helping students and staff, always ensuring the well-being and happiness of the students and making them feel safe and valued, makes her the perfect nomination for Catholic School’s Week Super Star.

“Teachers and administrators rely on Brittany’s support for various projects, as she offers to help without hesitation,” said Rangaard.

In addition, Dahl is always ready to fill in as a substitute teacher wherever needed. “Her contributions to the school and its students are commendable and make her an exceptional individual,” said Rangaard.

Dahl feels blessed to serve at St. Peter Catholic School in Canby. “Seeing and helping the students get a religious and academic foundation is truly rewarding,” she said. “St. Peter’s is one big family. We work together to make sure the children are getting all they need.”



Sources: Broughman et al. (2021); Irwin et al. (2022)

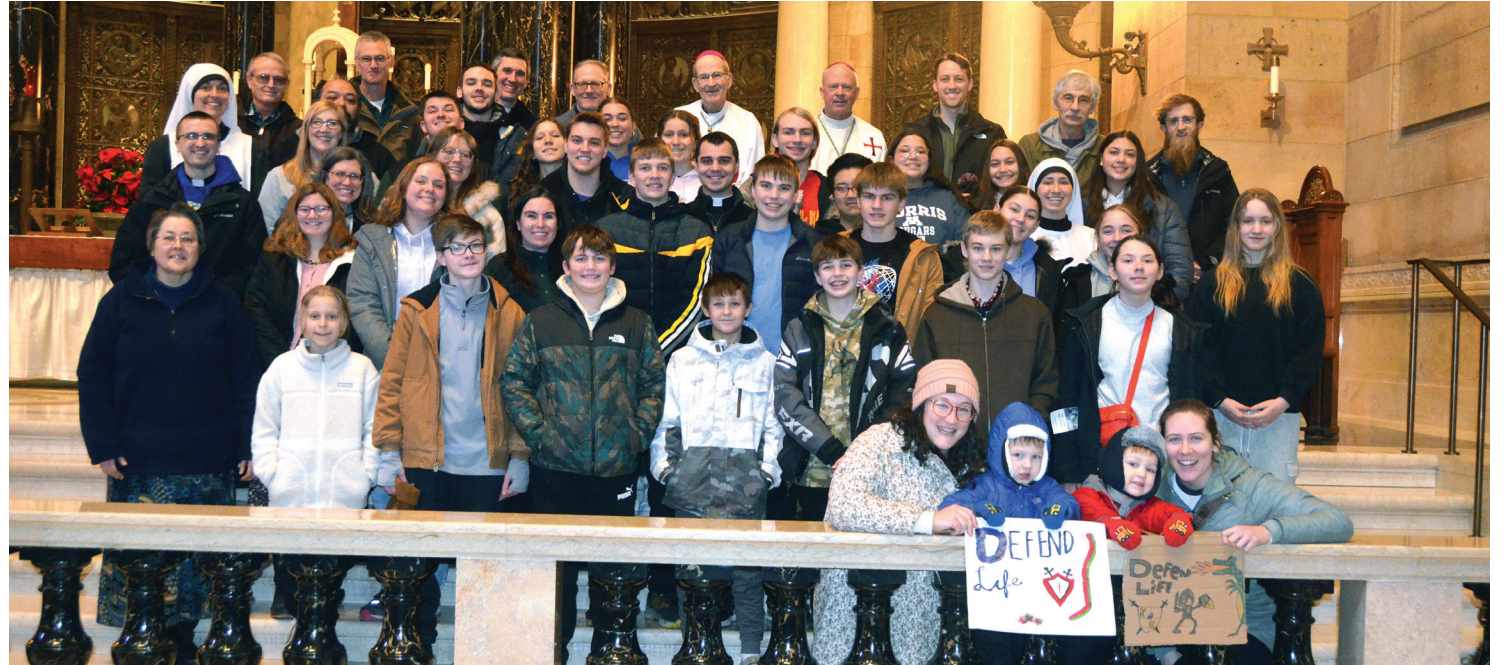
# Bishop Zielinski among the thousands defending life at State Capitol



by Christine Clancy  
*The Prairie Catholic*

**ST. PAUL** – Thousands of Minnesotans, including dozens of state lawmakers, filled the state Capitol grounds Monday, Jan. 22, 2024, to mark the 51st anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalized abortion nationwide. In 2022, the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision overturned the 1973 decision, returning abortion issues to the states, which have created a range of laws governing it.

Organized by the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL), this year’s March for Life featured a display on the Capitol steps of 12,000 life-size models of unborn children, each baby representing one life lost to abortion in 2022 alone. Speakers at the event called for stricter abortion laws



There was standing room only during the January 22 prayer service at the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul, held before the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life annual March for Life at that State Capitol. Several pro-life advocates from the Diocese of New Ulm, including youth from three Catholic schools and homeschoolers, gathered for a photo opportunity with their bishop Chad Zielinski, back (r), and their former bishop John LeVoire before walking to the steps of the Capitol. *(Photos by Christine Clancy)*

and for the next generation to get involved in anti-abortion advocacy.

Once again, the diocese had a dedicated contingent of pro-lifers from all generations at both the prayer service for life and the March for Life, according to Sr. Candace Fier, director of the Office of Family Life for the Diocese of New Ulm, “Community buses came from three different areas of the diocese,” Sr. Candace said. “Likewise, our Catholic schools in New Ulm, Sleepy Eye, and Winsted sent students and gave witness to the new pro-life generation. It was a great event filled with energy and

enthusiasm and supported by a foundation of faith and prayer. I give a shout-out to all who supported the event through attendance and prayer.”

The 2024 March for Life comes after the Minnesota legislature in 2023 established abortion-up-to-birth in state law and repealed numerous longstanding abortion-related policies, including the Woman’s Right to Know informed consent law, the Positive Alternatives program supporting pregnant women, and a measure that ensured lifesaving care for born-alive infants. According to MCCL, the number

of abortions in Minnesota increased by 20 percent in 2022 - reaching more than 12,000 abortions total. Early estimates indicate an even more significant increase in 2023. Some lawmakers now aim to enshrine abortion without limits in the state Constitution.

Contact the Diocese of New Ulm Office of Family Life at (507) 233-5328 or [cfier@dnu.org](mailto:cfier@dnu.org) for information on taking action and becoming a proponent of life.

## “Ya’ll Need Jesus” – COR Night’s message to diocesan youth

by Christy Baker  
*The Prairie Catholic*

**OLIVIA** – “Did you know that ya’ll need Jesus? Yes, we do! And you can talk to God like he is a real person, just like, ‘Hey God, thank you for the pizza,’” said Bob Lesnefsky, formerly known as “Righteous B,” an award-winning Christian hip-hop artist. Lesnefsky spoke and sang to the COR Night youth about the greatest longing of the human heart and how Jesus is the only one who can fill it.

Lesnefsky spoke and sang to over 250 youth and chaperones from around the Diocese of New Ulm on Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023, at the Church of St. Aloysius in Olivia for COR Night, a popular youth event sponsored by the diocese. “The evening features opportunities for discipleship – such as a meal and small group discussion,” said Kevin Losleben, diocesan director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. “It creates a space for a personal encounter with Jesus by ending with Eucharistic Adoration and Confession.”



Award-winning Christian hip-hop artist Bob Lesnefsky was the keynote for the Diocese of New Ulm sponsored COR Night event for youth held in Olivia on Dec. 10, 2023.

*(Photo by Christy Baker)*

Lesnefsky’s overall message to the youth was how forming relationships with others can illuminate how we relate to Jesus. He recalled how, at the young age of five, life and love were simple – “If you liked a girl, you threw a rock at her.” But, by third grade, love became more complicated; sharing a story about his third-grade sweetheart, Terri. For Valentine’s Day, he left one of his shiny rocks superglued onto one of his mother’s necklaces on her desk.

“Before cell phones, we had this crazy thing called real life,” said Lesnefsky. “The closest thing we could get to side-stepping a face-to-face interaction was a note.” Lesnefsky sent a note to Terri via a friend that said, “Do you like me? Circle one. Yes, No, Maybe.” Unfortunately, when the note was returned, she had circled “NO,” not once but several times!

This innocent love story is a good metaphor

for us and God. We often think we are slipping notes to God and anxiously waiting to see what he says, explained Lesnefsky. “If we are honest with ourselves, we are not too good at following Jesus.” Because we are sinful, we think that God will answer “No” or “Maybe.”

Lesnefsky said that the shocking part is that God is not playing the role of Terri; we are. God is passing notes to us, asking, “Do you like me?” The God of the universe, who is so far beyond us, longs for each of us. We are the ones who pass his note back saying “No” or “Maybe.” The tragedy is that we often don’t even see the notes God sends to us.

### A deeper relationship

As an adult, Lesnefsky’s first encounter with his wife Kate was holding her hand to help her across the street. “What if I never asked her to date or to marry me but only kept holding her hand?” Lesnefsky asked his audience. “That would be weird!” He

*(Continued on page 11.)*



# Dying with dignity is becoming an uphill battle

*One couple's story of helping their child's journey to heaven*

**The vast majority of our nation does not allow assisted suicide. But in recent years several states have legalized it as a form of “medical treatment,” and now Minnesota is considering what has been called one of the most aggressive assisted suicide bills in the country.**

*Minnesota Alliance for Ethical Healthcare, ethicalcaremn.org*

by Deacon Ryan Pope  
Prairie Catholic correspondent

Matthew's Gospel (Ch.16) presents Jesus foretelling his death, the great suffering he must undergo, and his Resurrection. Jesus knew that redemptive suffering was part of life and necessary for our salvation; Peter had a different plan, but he failed to see how Jesus and his own end-of-life were already being penned by life's author, God himself.

Rewriting our script, as it were, is a grave concern falsely veiled as compassion and mercy. The act of “medical aid in dying,” more commonly known as physician-assisted suicide, is one such instance. For Canadians, physician-assisted suicide is already a reality. Minnesota is modeling its proposed End-of-Life Options Act law using similar criteria as our neighbors to the north (Minnesota Senate File SF1813/Minnesota House of Representative File HF1930).

In the subtle change of language to “medical aid in dying,” there is a renewed effort to enact laws in favor of physician-assisted suicide. According to Sr. Candace Fier, director of the Office of Family Life for the Diocese of New Ulm, “Since 2016, I have consistently seen legislation to put physician-assisted suicide into Minnesota law. However, there have also been strong efforts against physician-assisted suicide, even among organizations that differ with us on other cultural issues but join us in upholding Catholic Social teaching on the issue of assisted suicide.

“If physician-assisted suicide passes, a physician could make a judgment for someone based



Brian and Ronda Mathiowetz pictured with their daughter, Stacy.

on a single interaction that their life is not worth living and advise that person to take their life,” said Dr. Francille Knowles, a physician in the Diocese of New Ulm and Minnesota Catholic Conference presenter on end-of-life issues. “The bill implies that those with less than six months to live, mostly those with a disability or the elderly, now have the definition of a life not worth living,” and “those who require high levels of care will be pressured, due to costs, into believing that it is their duty to end their life,” Dr. Knowles lamented.

“Recommending death as an option is not compatible. . . and is in complete opposition to our healthcare provider mission of healing. [Healthcare providers] have worked so hard to improve quality of life. We have made great progress in palliative care and hospice to ease suffering at the end-of-life and allow patients precious time with family and loved ones while maintaining their independence and dignity,” said Dr. Knowles.

Sr. Candace noted “When we as Catholics choose palliative or hospice care, we want that care to guide us on our journey toward eternal life with God. Relief of pain and suffering, to the degree that it can be achieved, should allow the person to enter into the journey of dying and make it spiritually fruitful for themselves, and their loved ones, family, and friends,” she said.

“There are so many beautiful examples of saints who have given their lives – living the process of dying in the same way they lived

their life, with total trust in God,” Sr. Candace added. “Maximillian Kolbe was among many, who made a living choice to honor God by valuing life and offering it to him on the journey to death. In this way Kolbe made fruitful the eternal treasure of his soul even amidst suffering and death.”

**Dying surrounded by love**  
Demonstrating how faith informs end-of-life decisions, Stacy Mathiowetz shines as one example of living life as only God can author. Born prematurely thirty-seven years ago to parents Brian and Ronda, members of the Church of St. Mary in Sleepy Eye, Stacy was born with a rare genetic disorder of Chromosome #3. Stacy's mentation was that of a four-to-five-year-old, and she was both mute and blind.

With Stacy, “Milestones were in her own time,” noted Brian. “We experienced growing differently; what may happen – like walking – by age one or two for you and me, we just did the same thing with Stacy by age five.”

“She had such a beautiful smile, and she communicated in her own way, often using her hands, and though it was difficult to know at times – we could still communicate because she was our child,” added Ronda.

One pivotal moment in the Mathiowetz's life was when Stacy was enrolled at an academy for people who were blind. At that time, Brian and Ronda received the gift of the poem *Heaven's Very Special Child* from Pat, who served as a dorm mom. “From that moment on,” said Brian, “Stacy was not a problem to figure out,

not work – but heaven's gift. We always asked, ‘What's best for Stacy?’”

Stacy was a catalyst for the first group home within Sleepy Eye. She demonstrated that life did not have to be complicated and that simple things like hugs need to be appreciated more. “Her hugs were just so genuine,” said Ronda. Having received the sacraments of initiation into the Catholic Church, Brian noted, “Stacy was like a prefigured Jesus in our midst – she was calm, the glue that held the family together. She modeled a simple child-like faith – she was like a saint.”

Last December, group home staff informed Brian and Ronda that Stacy was not eating well, and medical visits showed a rare Stage IV bile duct cancer that was terminal. After consulting medical providers and a priest and discussing what would be best for Stacy, palliative care was chosen. Ronda said that she and Brian's faith made it possible to choose palliative care. “We had a faith community, and we had support through hospice care and our family, she said.

“Who were we to prolong Stacy's going to heaven?” Brian said. “How beautiful is it that God chose December 25? How can we say we would re-script that?” With loving care and a gentle touch, lying with Brian and Ronda present, Jesus took the hand of Stacy, and on Christmas morning, she died at home. “I will treasure the moment God came for Stacy at Christmas,” said Brian.

During Stacy's journey to heaven, hospice was there supporting the Mathiowetzes, answering those 2 a.m. urgent questions and helping Brian and Ronda understand what was happening, assuring them that they did not give up but instead chose different care that honored God's plan.

“So often the world only sees the physical, the bodily, the appearances and abilities, while the soul goes on for eternity,” Brian said. “Stacy's death has helped us prepare for our own death,” he said.

**did?**  
**YOU.**  
**know**

An estimated 74 million people in the United States live in a jurisdiction that allows Physician Assisted Suicide, or as it is called today, Medical Aid in Dying (MAID). These are the states of California, Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia.

87 million people reside in states like Minnesota where Physician Assisted Suicide is on the legislative agenda: Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

## What's next?

H.F. 1930, the Physician Assisted Suicide Bill was passed by the House Health Finance and Policy Committee on Jan. 25, 2024. It now advances to the House Public Safety Committee when the legislative session begins on Feb. 12. Your continued advocacy is vital to ensure this harmful legislation does not become law.

► Go to the Minnesota Alliance for Ethical Healthcare, <https://ethicalcaremn.org/> or Minnesota Catholic Conference, <https://www.mncatholic.org/> for more information on contacting your legislators.



**End of Life Planning**  
*Resources and Guidance*  
[dnu.org/endoflife](http://dnu.org/endoflife)



## NUDCCW Spring Gathering opportunities in all three deaneries of the diocese



by Jackie Finstad  
NUDCCW President

The upcoming New Ulm Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Spring Gatherings are just around the corner, and you are invited and encouraged to attend. These mornings or evenings are hosted in each deanery of the diocese and begin with Mass, followed by a light meal and a presentation by a speaker selected by the hosting deanery.

### Deanery 1's Spring Gathering

will be on March 21 at St Mary's in New Ulm. Registration will begin at 4:30 p.m., followed by Mass, a light supper, and a presentation by Gabrielle Cohrs Rohlik, who will speak on "Staying Positive in a Negative World."

**Deanery 2's Spring Gathering** will be on March 18 at St. Andrew's in Granite Falls. Registration begins at 5 p.m., followed by Mass at 5:30 pm. The speaker will be Carrie Meyers from Choices Pregnancy Center of Redwood Falls, who will discuss the new Marshall location, what they offer, and how they differ from Birthright.

**Deanery 3's Spring Gathering** will be on March 9 at St. Boniface in Stewart. There will be an opportunity for Reconciliation from 8-9:00 a.m., Rosary at 8:30 a.m., followed by Mass at 9 a.m. Brunch will

be provided by the St. Boniface Council of Catholic Women, followed by a presentation on "Unbound Ministries" by Deacon Mike McKeown, director of Healing Ministry for the Diocese of New Ulm. \$10 donation to Fr. Bruno's Water Project.

**NUDCCW Convention**  
The annual New Ulm Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Convention will be held on Saturday, April 27, 2024, at the Church of St. Pius X in Glencoe. Evangelization will be the central message for the day, and the convention theme will be "Be an Instrument of Salvation."

The NUDCCW Board is working hard to make this an event you will want to attend! Additional information and details will be provided to parish councils through their deaneries and available on the NUDCCW website, [www.nudccw.org](http://www.nudccw.org).

## Pregnancy Centers: an alternative to abortion

by Lori Timmerman  
NUDCCW Reverence Life Coordinator

The Minnesota Legislation repealed the \$3.35 million Positive Alternatives Grant given to Pregnancy Centers in 2023, which provided essential care for thousands of Minnesota families. Included in the care were pregnancy and parenting education, lactation education, care seat distribution, and material support, including formula, diapers, and baby clothes provided at no cost.

The elimination of the grant leaves Crisis Pregnancy Centers needing donors to fill the gaps in their budget. The New Ulm Diocesan Council of Catholic Women is working to increase awareness of this need and encourage the Christian faithful of the diocese to come together to support these centers financially.

This past November, Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Va., and chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, issued the statement, "Pregnant and parenting moms in need are among the most vulnerable people in our communities. When women in

### Nearby Pregnancy Crisis Center Services

**Birthright - Hutchinson**  
(320) 587-5433  
[birthrighthutchinson.com](http://birthrighthutchinson.com)

**Birthright - Mankato**  
(507) 387-7818  
[birthrightmankato.org](http://birthrightmankato.org)

**Birthright - Marshall**  
(507) 532-3660

**Choices Pregnancy Center – Redwood Falls and Marshall Locations**  
(507) 637-2534  
[choicespregnancycenter.com](http://choicespregnancycenter.com)

**First Choice Pregnancy Center – New Ulm**  
(507) 359-9800  
[consideryouroptions.org](http://consideryouroptions.org)

**Hope Pregnancy Center - Willmar**  
(320) 235-7619  
[findhopepc.com](http://findhopepc.com)

**Options for Women - Mankato**  
[optionsmankato.org](http://optionsmankato.org)  
(507) 625-2229

**Birthright – Moorhead**  
(218) 477-1977  
[birthrightfm.org](http://birthrightfm.org)

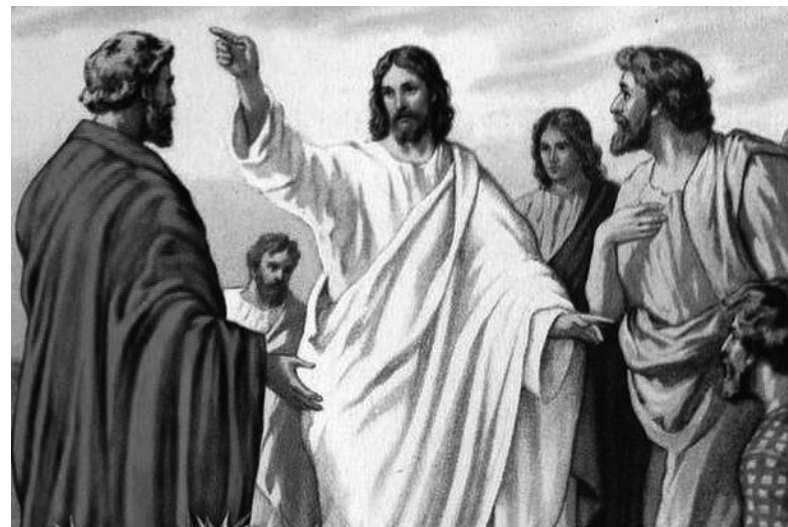
challenging circumstances do not know where else to turn, the loving staff and volunteers at pregnancy help centers embrace them with empathy and service."

Bishop Burbidge noted that pregnancy help centers across the United States provide a spectrum of care, resources, and material goods to support new mothers – from diapers and layettes to babysitting and career services to referrals for housing and food assistance and personal mentorship and support. He added that many also provide certain medical services, including ultrasounds and prenatal and postnatal

care. "Often, there is nowhere else a mother in need can go for this kind of comprehensive assistance. The practical, loving service that pregnancy help centers offer extends far beyond the birth of the child, with relationships between mothers and help centers continuing for years," Bishop Burbidge stated.

Now more than ever, NUDCCW encourages you to consider spiritually and financially supporting the area pregnancy centers so that those seeking assistance are given the information and support needed to choose life for their unborn child.

## Encountering Jesus through the Gospel



by Leonard Gutierrez

As we enter into the season of Lent, which begins Feb. 14 this year, we will hear in the Sunday Gospel readings various moments in Jesus' ministry concerning the physical and spiritual healing of those who came to him and of those to whom Jesus was brought.

We will hear healing stories like the man with an unclean spirit, the healing of the fever of Simon's mother-in-law, and the healing of a man with leprosy in *Mark 1*. On the third and fourth Sundays of Lent, Jesus begins to make reference to his Resurrection and the light that he brings to the world so that the works of those who live in the truth "may be clearly seen as done in God," as in John's Gospel chapter three told.

Somewhat hidden throughout these passages is the message for all to "repent and believe in the Gospel," which we read in *Mark 1:15*. We know this message permeates and influences the Gospel account of Mark because these words also happen to be the very first words that Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Mark.

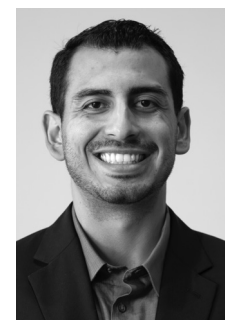
These words are a call from Christ for everyone to turn away from the life of darkness and sin and face the light and freedom he brings. Immediately following the call to "repent and believe in the Gospel," we begin seeing a string of events that we will hear on Sundays that involve Jesus healing and inviting individuals to leave behind their way of life and to follow the light that is Christ.

Throughout this season of

Lent, many Christian faithful in the Diocese of New Ulm will begin new study groups or continue with a Lenten topic in hopes of seeking out the light that is Christ by journeying with him through the desert, through his passion, and eventually into the glory found in the Resurrection. Various accountability, study groups, and retreats will take place to help everyone enter into the season of Lent, such as *Exodus 90* program, book studies on "Made for Heaven" by Fr. Agustino Torres, CFR, and a new video series on the story of salvation history by Dr. Edward Sri and Curtis Martin.

St. Mother Theresa reminds us of Jesus' thirst, particularly in the season of Lent, as it relates to his words, "repent and believe in the Gospel." She said, "As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus' thirst. . . 'repent and believe' Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor – he knows your weakness. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you."

For more Lenten resources visit [www.dnu.org/evangelization](http://www.dnu.org/evangelization).



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by Fr. Mark Steffl, STL, JCL

# Ask a Canon Lawyer

**This month's question:**  
*Funerals – In church? In a funeral home? Can a parish priest refuse to do a funeral for any reason?*

In the Code of Canon Law, canon 1176 gives a general understanding of the Church's liturgical prayers for those who have died:

§1. Deceased members of the Christian faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals according to the norm of law.

§2. Ecclesiastical funerals, by which the Church seeks spiritual support for the deceased, honors their bodies, and at the same time brings the solace of hope to the living, must be celebrated according to the norm of the liturgical laws.

§3. The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the deceased be observed; nevertheless, the Church does not prohibit cremation unless it was

chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine.

The first part of the canon states that it is the right of someone who has died, as being a member of the Church, to a funeral. This "right" is founded in both a "corporal work of mercy" (burying the dead) and in a "spiritual work of mercy" (praying for the dead). Both of these actions are obligations, rooted in Sacred Scripture, for members of the Church and followers of Jesus Christ.

The Church's prescribed prayers for those who have died finds its roots in the rituals prayers of Judaism. For example, Psalm 23, proclaiming the Lord to be the Good Shepherd, is often used as the responsorial psalm at Catholic Funerals, and would be read or chanted as part of the ritual for someone who has died in the Jewish faith.

The Mass, as the summit of all the prayers that the Church offers,

is the heart of what the Church offers as prayer. As such, then, the Funeral Mass is seen as the norm of what is offered for someone who has died. (This is also at the heart of the idea of offering Masses for the intentions of those who have died, and why we pray for those who have died at every Mass, making specific mention of this in whichever Eucharistic prayer is used).

The practice in the United States, along with the cultural use of what we call "funeral homes" has allowed for some adaptations in the way that these prayers are sometimes offered. Occasionally, a Catholic funeral may take place at a funeral home, and these funerals are not a Funeral Mass but a "Funeral Service" with many of the same prayers that would be part of the Funeral Mass. Pastorally speaking, these are offered for those who perhaps have not been "practicing" their Catholic faith, or offered for those who were baptized with no further

affiliation with the Catholic Church or any other Christian community.

In canon 1184, there are examples of times when the Church should deny a Catholic funeral, which would in practice be very rare:

§1. Unless they gave some signs of repentance before death, the following must be deprived of ecclesiastical funerals:

1. notorious apostates, heretics, and schismatics;
2. those who chose the cremation of their bodies for reasons contrary to Christian faith;
3. other manifest sinners who cannot be granted ecclesiastical funerals without public scandal of the faithful.

§2. If any doubt occurs, the local ordinary is to be consulted, and his judgment must be followed.

The main rationale of denying anyone a funeral from the list above would be to avoid public scandal

to the members of the Church, who themselves are striving to live a Christian life based on the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. The preceding guidelines suggest that should such a situation present itself, the parish priest would consult the "local ordinary" (i.e. the diocesan bishop or his vicar general) for assistance in making such a decision. Again, such a circumstance would be rare, because the Church would pastorally err on the side of being very generous in offering every possible prayer for someone who has died, and for the consolation of those who mourn his/her death.

**Next Issue:** "If I leave a bequest to my parish in my will to be used only for a specific purpose, will my wishes be respected?"



Fr. Mark Steffl serves as judicial vicar of the Office of the Tribunal for the Diocese of New Ulm and is a canon lawyer, [msteffl@dnu.org](mailto:msteffl@dnu.org), (507) 233-5316.

## Families First Project proposal seeks to create a lifetime tax exemption



### INSIDE THE STATE CAPITOL

by the Minnesota Catholic Conference

Cycles of abuse, addiction, poor health outcomes, academic underachievement, and crime seem impossible to end. All too often, at the heart of these issues is the breakdown of the family. While there is no single cause or solution, we know that these outcomes exacerbate the breakdown of the family, and when families are economically stable, many of these issues can begin to heal.

The Families First Project, an initiative of the Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC), advocates for removing barriers to family stability and economic security so that Minnesotans can get married, stay married, and raise a family.

Many Minnesota families will

see the first fruits of the Families First Project when they file their taxes this year. Through legislation spearheaded by our Families First Project and supported by the testimony of families like yours, Minnesota's legislature passed a nation-leading, permanent state-level child tax credit.

#### So, what does this mean for eligible families?

The Child Tax Credit reduces the amount owed on state taxes for a given year. The credit is refunded through tax returns for those who do not owe taxes. However, to receive the credit, it is imperative to file an individual income tax return, regardless of earned income. This credit and other tax benefits like the Working Family Credit, education tax credit, and education subtraction

for children's schooling expenses help put more money back into the pockets of our most important producers-parents.

Navigating tax laws can be challenging, so the Minnesota Catholic Conference has curated a list of resources on the Families First Project website at [www.FamiliesFirstProject.com/CTC](http://www.FamiliesFirstProject.com/CTC). The Minnesota Child Tax Credit is just the first of the policies we hope to enact through our Families First Project with your help. Because we all come from families, we are all subject-matter experts on family needs. No matter your family dynamic or your current state, you have unique expertise that legislators need to hear to propose legislation that supports the health, stability, and growth of families across Minnesota.

One such proposal is the Baby Items Sales Tax Exemption Expansion. First-time parents encounter substantial upfront expenses on essential items such as car seats, cribs, strollers, bassinets, mattresses, and more that can easily tally up to nearly

\$2,000. To alleviate this burden, MCC is advocating for eliminating state sales tax on these big-ticket items, providing parents with almost \$130 in savings. While that may not seem like much compared to the full amount spent, we can all appreciate the need to stretch a dollar further these days.

Another Families First Project

proposal seeks to create a lifetime exemption on state income tax for women who give birth to four or more children. This initiative aims to provide tangible support for larger families, acknowledging the unique financial challenges they face.

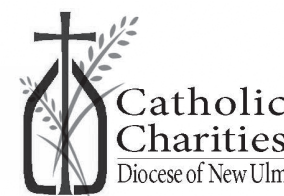
#### Take Action

Visit [www.mncatholic.org/action](http://www.mncatholic.org/action).

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"Let us do good to all people."  
- Galatians 6:10

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If you or someone you know is in need of Catholic Charities Services, call 1-866-670-5163 email, [pkral@dnu.org](mailto:pkral@dnu.org).

## A sacramental encounter with Christ



Pilgrims who recently made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wis., are pictured, front row, left: Mary Buckley, Monica Mueller (behind Catherine), Catherine Buckley, Sophia Buckley, Lisa Pikula, and Lori Unterberger. Middle row: Tammy Houle, Merry Seymour, Andrew Hardison, Leonard Gutierrez, Kate Slood, Jessie Teicher, and Madeline Hurley. Back row: Matthew Buckley, Danielle Kruse, Gabby Houle, Jessica Kruse, Scott Osborne, Doug Houle, Dennis Schwartz, Vince Slood, Gwen Christiansen, Deacon Rick Christiansen, and Aaron Gnerer. (Photo submitted)

by Leonard Gutierrez  
Director of Evangelization

On Dec. 16, 2023, thirty-two pilgrims of all ages from six Area Faith Communities in the Diocese of New Ulm (Holy Cross, Shepherd of Souls, St. John Paul II, Light of the World, Divine Mercy, and Christ the King) boarded a bus headed to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wis.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of the Americas and the Unborn and is also known as the Star of the New Evangelization. Her message is one of hope and salvation as she appeared to Juan

Diego in December of 1531 as a pregnant mother, carrying Jesus in her womb.

Coordinated by the diocesan Office of Evangelization, the pilgrimage experience which included Mass with the shrine's founder Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, helped the pilgrims draw close to Our Lady and return to the diocese having experienced not only a profound peace and rest, but a sacramental encounter with Christ.

*Editor's Note:* For those interested in learning more about the shrine, visit [guadalupeshrine.org/pilgrimage](http://guadalupeshrine.org/pilgrimage).

## COR Night

(Continued from page 7.)

noted that some of us treat Jesus that way; we hold hands with him on Sunday and ignore him the rest of the week.

“But Jesus wants more than that. He wants more than an hour with you,” said Lesnefsky. “He wants a deeper relationship with you!” And that’s meeting him face-to-face in the Eucharist.

Lesnefsky’s message is not only for the youth of the diocese but for everyone. Jesus awaits you and is physically present at the nearest tabernacle and in a beautifully intimate way during Eucharistic

Adoration. Speak to Jesus regularly. He wants to hear your deepest desires and fears.

Lesnefsky’s final words to his youthful audience: “God is calling us deeper, but we have to first realize that we need Jesus. But from there, it is up to you.”

Next COR Night  
February 18 in Olivia

Lisa Cotter, presenter  
“Relationship Goals”

[www.dnu.org/cor-night](http://www.dnu.org/cor-night)  
to register.

## Lost and found: How one former Protestant found the Catholic faith

by Elli Burmis  
Prairie Catholic correspondent

**SLEEPY EYE** – International speaker and missionary disciple Barbara Heil recently spoke in the Diocese of New Ulm, about her journey from serving as a Protestant minister to now a faithful Catholic with a strong devotion to the Eucharist. Heil shared her story “Lost and Found,” on Dec. 10, 2023, to an audience gathered at the Church of St. Mary in Sleepy Eye.

Heil was not raised in a Christian home but personally encountered Christ on her own. “I had a deep conversion as a student,” she explained. “My life was totally transformed by the love of Jesus as I surrendered my life to him.” Heil’s great adventure of faith began by attending church, studying scriptures, and learning about the Lord. Her initial search and desire to learn more soon led to a lifelong passion and mission to spread the Gospel. She attended Bible school and soon grew her ministry as a Protestant missionary and evangelist with her husband.

As Heil continued to research and delve deeper into her Protestant faith, she could not help but acknowledge the richness of Catholicism that she was uncovering. “As I learned about the early Church and the great faith of the early Church, I was surprised at how Catholic it was from the very beginning,” she describes. “I began reading the Doctors of the Roman Catholic Church and was intrigued! I continued to read and began to visit churches,” she said.

With so many Catholic teachings consistently being revealed throughout her studies and personal experiences, Heil started to reflect on their meaning in her life and felt led to explore more. “After many years of praying, reading, and learning, I attended the Harry J. Flynn Catechetical Institute in the Twin Cities, a two-year program, as the only non-Catholic minister to ever attend,” she said.

During this time, Heil continued to be invited to attend Mass by her small group members and was encouraged to consider attending RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). “Initially, I was



Barbara Heil speaks to an audience gathered at the Church of St. Mary in Sleepy Eye about her journey to the Catholic faith.

(Photo by Chris Heiderscheidt)

reluctant, as I was very busy and still ministering as a Protestant. But, I finally went to RCIA, and between my RCIA classes and the Catechetical Institute, I was drawn with love into the Catholic Church.” Excitingly, she made her First Communion in Rome, and she was Confirmed on April 27, 2013, at the Church of the Nativity in St. Paul, Minn.

That being said, one particular experience at a Catholic Church would change her life forever. While attending a conference in the Philadelphia area, she visited a nearby Catholic church. “I was standing way in the very back, really almost in the entryway, [and] worshipping the Lord with my eyes closed,” said Heil. “Suddenly, I sensed Jesus standing right in front of me. Waves of his loving Presence washed over me, and I found myself bowing,” she explained.

When Heil opened her eyes, a priest leading a Eucharistic procession was holding the Monstrance containing the Eucharist right over her. “I did not know what that was. I only knew that Jesus was in front of me!” she exclaimed.

It was at that moment that Heil believes she encountered the True Presence of Christ for the first time in the Holy Eucharist.

From that day, Heil has become a daily Mass attendee: receiving the Eucharist is her top priority. She explains, “The Eucharist feeds and sustains me through my day. The wonder and amazement that I feel at the knowledge that God

has come in the flesh and that he allows me to partake of him causes love to overflow in my heart,” she said.

With this newfound faith and remarkable revelations, Heil’s passion for ministry has grown. “I am still a missionary disciple, but I am now in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church, and I share the love of God wherever I go!” she said.

Today, a significant part of Heil’s mission is sharing about the Eucharist with the faithful to help deepen their relationship with Christ. “Too many Catholics do not understand the reality that is taking place during Mass,” she said. “Many are familiar with the form and ritual but do not comprehend what everything means. Not everyone has been evangelized! Knowing the ‘what’ but not the ‘why’ causes us to lose that Eucharistic amazement! We become casual, absent-minded, and distracted.” Heil said.

Heil encourages the faithful to spend time in Eucharistic Adoration and “allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you.”

“God is not afraid of your fear or struggle,” she said. “Find a mentor that can help you learn about the Eucharist, and the other great teachings of the Church. Begin to read the scriptures and seek to grow in faith. Jesus is the Word of God, and as you read his Word, he tenderizes our hard hearts, and heals our brokenness.”



# catholic trends

**WASHINGTON – The Committee for Religious Liberty of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)** issued its first annual report in January on the state of religious freedom in the United States. “Catholics have a vital role to play in defending religious freedom and promoting the common good,” said Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, chairman of the Committee for Religious Liberty.

“Religious freedom is enshrined in our Constitution in the First Amendment – and it is something

so vital to the fabric of our country that it is often referred to as our ‘first freedom.’ While most of the founders of our country were not Catholic, there’s much in their vision that resonates with a Catholic understanding of religious freedom. At the same time, we have a distinctive voice and tradition, particularly with our understanding of human dignity, faith and reason, natural law, the common good, and the rich heritage of Catholic social teaching. And so we Catholics have a vital role to play in defending religious freedom and promoting the common good.”

“Alongside the great work that many other Catholic and religious liberty organizations are doing, I pray that this report helps raise awareness of the threats to our first freedom here in America, and that it helps Catholics and all people of good will contribute to the common good of these United States.”

The report identifies a wide range of concerns, such as federal agencies misusing laws meant to aid pregnant women in order to promote abortion, threats to the safety of our Jewish and Muslim neighbors, and hostility toward ministries serving migrants and refugees, and suggests how individuals and communities can respond. Bishop Rhoades also offered further remarks about the report, which may be found at: <https://youtu.be/JTb5kGqAnbE>.

**VATICAN – Pope Francis’ prayer intention for the month of February is for the terminally ill.** “When some people talk about terminal illnesses, there are two words they often confuse: incurable and un-curable. But they are not the same,” the Holy Father said in a video released Jan. 30. “Even when little chance for a cure exists, every sick person has the

right to medical, psychological, spiritual, and human assistance,” he said, adding: “Sometimes they can’t talk; sometimes we think they don’t recognize us. But if we take them by the hand, we know they are relating with us.”

Pope Francis pointed out that “healing is not always possible” but that “we can always care for the sick person, caress them.”

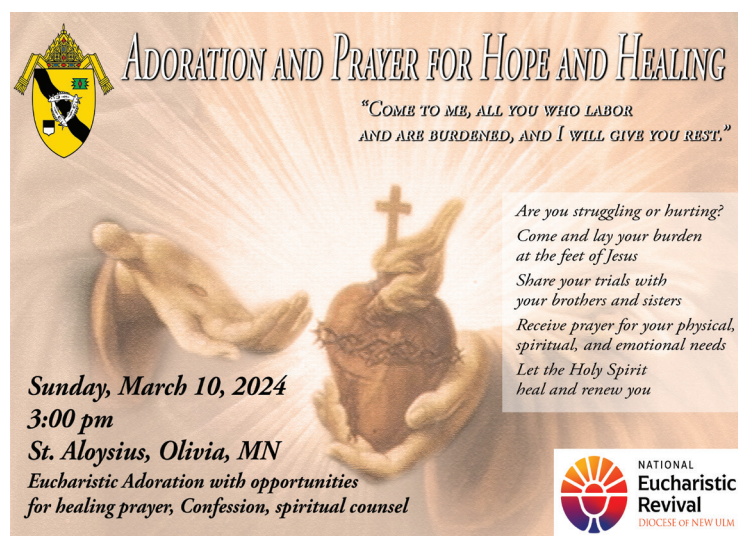
The pope quoted St. John Paul II, who used to say: “Cure if it is possible; always take care.”

“And this is where palliative care comes in. It guarantees the

patient not only medical attention but also human assistance and closeness,” Francis said.

The Holy Father emphasized that “families should not be left alone in these difficult moments. Their role is decisive,” he said. “They need access to adequate means so as to provide appropriate physical, spiritual, and social support.”

He concluded with a prayer: “Let us pray that the terminally ill and their families always receive the necessary medical and human care and assistance.”




**ADORATION AND PRAYER FOR HOPE AND HEALING**

*“COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE BURDENED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.”*

*Are you struggling or hurting?  
Come and lay your burden at the feet of Jesus  
Share your trials with your brothers and sisters  
Receive prayer for your physical, spiritual, and emotional needs  
Let the Holy Spirit heal and renew you*

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