

THE PRAIRIE CATHOLIC

Pastoral news from across the Diocese of New Ulm

Minnesota's Most Rural Diocese Diocese of New Ulm Vol. 38 No. 3 December 2023



(Photo by Christine Clancy)

Celebrating Our Lady of Guadalupe

MONTEVIDEO - The Latino faith community of Holy Family Area Faith Community (Granite Falls, Montevideo, and Dawson) gathered on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, at the Church of St. Joseph in Montevideo to celebrate the annual Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12). Bishop Chad W. Zielinski celebrated the Mass in Spanish and the parish's pastor Fr. Paul Timmerman concelebrated. In keeping with Latino tradition, before the liturgy, participants proceed to the front of the church and honor Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, with roses. After Mass, the faithful gathered for a brief performance highlighting the origin of Our Lady of Guadalupe, followed by a potluck supper. Pictured, Leonardo González, carried by his father Alex, hands a rose to Bishop Zielinski to place on the honorary memorial.

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Come join the Pro-Life March!

The 2024 March for Life from the Cathedral in St. Paul to the Minnesota State Capitol will take place Monday, Jan. 22.

Turn to page 9 in this issue to learn more.

(2019 March for Life photo by Dave Hrbacek - The Catholic Spirit)

Bishops' fall assembly sees abortion 'pre-eminent' in faithful citizenship

BALTIMORE (CNA and USCCB) – The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) gathered November 13-16 for their Fall Plenary Assembly in Baltimore.

The bishops began their plenary with a Mass for Peace at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with an afternoon of regional meetings. On Tuesday, the public sessions of the assembly began with the bishops sending prayers and a message to the Holy Father, as well as an address by Cardinal Christophe Pierre, papal nuncio to the United States. Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, addressed the body as USCCB president.

During the plenary, the bishops received updates on the following items: the 2021-2024 Synod of Bishops, the U.S. bishops' Eucharistic revival initiative and national congress, the Institute on the Catechism, and the recently launched mental health campaign.

The bishops also held a canonical consultation and affirmed their support for the cause of beatification and canonization of Servant of God Isaac Thomas Hecker, priest and founder of the Missionary Society of Saint Paul the Apostle (the Paulist Fathers); and also affirmed their support for a request from the bishops' conference of England and Wales asking the Holy Father to name Saint John Henry Newman a Doctor of the Church.

Approved was a request to ask Rome to include "St. Teresa of Calcutta" as an optional memorial on the Roman Calendar for Sept. 5, and also heard that a request to include Salvadoran martyr St. Oscar Romero would have to be sent to the Vatican "accompanied by a robust letter of support from the president of the conference."

During the assembly, New Ulm's bishop Chad Zielinski, chair of the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs, requested the postponement of a vote on a comprehensive pastoral framework for Indigenous ministry which was on the agenda. Bishop Zielinski said the subcommittee had met the night before to review amendments and decided it needed more time to address them and would re-present the text to the bishops at their 2024 June assembly.



Bishop Chad W. Zielinski addressed the U.S. bishops assembly on behalf of the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs in which he serves as chairman.
(Photo courtesy of USCCB)

Deacon Don Blackbird, a member of the Omaha Tribe and principal of St. Augustine Indian Mission in Winnebago, Neb., was quoted as saying that he was not surprised by the decision and hoped that the bishops would take their time to reflect on the pastoral framework and come to a decision that honors the Indigenous peoples of the United States.

Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn. and chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, reported that the bishops are "halfway through this National Eucharistic Revival" and shared that attendees of the National Eucharistic Congress July 17-21 in Indianapolis now have the option of purchasing single-day and weekend passes, among other provisions to make participation more affordable and flexible, including scholarships from the bishops' Solidarity Fund. He also mentioned the Apostolic Penitentiary is going to grant a

plenary indulgence to anyone who participates in one of the four legs of the pilgrimage to the National Eucharistic Congress.

Threat of abortion

The U.S. bishops will continue to highlight the threat of abortion as a "preeminent priority" in the introduction to a guide they'll disseminate to Catholic voters ahead of the 2024 election.

That designation, the source of debate among some bishops in recent years, was retained when the bishops voted overwhelmingly (225-11, with seven abstentions) to approve a revised introduction to the guide, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship."

The bishops also voted to approve several brief excerpts from the guide to be inserted in parish bulletins during the upcoming election cycle. "The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks our most vulnerable and voiceless

brothers and sisters and destroys more than a million lives per year in our country alone," the new introduction to the guide says. The new introduction also lists euthanasia, gun violence, terrorism, the death penalty, and human trafficking as "other grave threats to life and dignity of the human person."

The revised introduction also now states that the "redefinition of marriage and gender ... threaten[s] the dignity of the human person."

While the previous version of the guide included language condemning gender ideology, there was no mention of that issue in the document's introduction. In a press conference after the vote, Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, vice president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, said that while many issues are important, "not all issues are equal."

"We are called to stand in radical solidarity with women in difficult pregnancies and their unborn children and to provide them with the kind of support and services and public policies that they need," he explained.

"So, it's not simply a public policy issue. It is a deeply, deeply pastoral issue of loving the moms in need, walking with them, helping them bring their babies to term, and then providing them with what they need to move forward," he said.

"In a culture where there is so much death and so much disregard for life, we bishops and together

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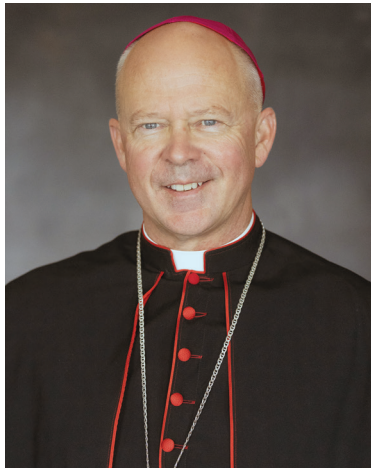
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That they may have life



by Bishop Chad W. Zielinski

Blessed are the Peacemakers!

I have been celebrating All Saints Day for 27 years as a priest. In the Gospel reading, *Matthew 5:1-12*, Jesus begins his sermon on the Mount as he teaches his disciples the Beatitudes. He was giving them and us today a road map to true happiness in our earthly journey to one day be with him in eternal happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

As I listened to the eight beatitudes proclaimed in the Gospel, I was deeply taken by *Mt 5:9*, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be children of God.” This grabbed me to the core of my being in a way it never did before. Why do

I sense God is calling me, all of us, to be peacemakers in a most passionate way?

We have already listened to the Gospel reading for the First Sunday of Advent, “Be watchful! Be alert!” The season of Advent has us postured in a state of vigilance and waiting for the coming of the birth of Christ. What do we hear and see in our world as we prayerfully enter into this ancient longing for the birth of our Savior to bring a newfound peace?

In recent conversations with friends and co-workers, I have heard: “What is happening to our world? Did you see all the mass killings in our nation committed by young people? I had to quit watching the news because it was overwhelming with war, violence, and hatred. It disturbed me deeply, and I was not at peace.”

At the recent annual U.S. bishop’s gathering in Baltimore, one bishop passionately said, ‘Are we going to talk about the escalation of war and violence in our world and how this impacts the faithful?’”

I have to admit that I shared the same sentiments. There is an imbalance in our world; the holy and peaceful order of God’s divine

design has been disrupted. I see worry, concern, and fear on the faces of those coming to Church. I have to ask myself that as I look at my brother or sister, no matter how wounded or broken, can I see the sacred, divine blueprint of the image of God that lives within them? This is not being honored in many communities today. And I must admit that I, too, am not at peace! How did this happen?

In 1941, C.S. Lewis authored the “Screwtape Letters,” which appeared as a series in the *Guardian Newspaper* in England. Gaining great interest among his readers, the letters were compiled and published in a book in 1942. A friend sent an excerpt of one of the letters that I found most prophetic as it relates to confusion and division in our society. The letter is addressed to “Wormwood,” a human student being taught by “Uncle Screwtape,” who is the devil. C.S. Lewis’s words seem to be prophetically fulfilled today:

“My Dear Wormwood. Be sure that the patient remains completely fixated on politics. Arguments, political gossip, and obsessing on the faults of people they have never met serve as an excellent distraction from advancing in personal virtue, character, and the things the patient can control.

Make sure to keep the patient in a constant state of angst, frustration, and general disdain towards the rest of the human race in order to avoid any kind of charity or inner peace from further developing. Ensure that the patient continues to believe that the problem is “out there” in the “broken system” rather than recognizing there is a problem with himself.”

Keep up the good work, Uncle Screwtape

As C.S. Lewis masterfully captures the crafty work of the Great Deceiver or Liar (as Pope Francis refers to Satan), I have to admit that I have allowed this disorder to creep into my heart and soul which is crafted by our Creator to be a sanctuary of peace. C.S. Lewis’s words remind me that if I want to change the world, I must start with myself.

As I remain alert and watchful during these weeks of Advent, how do I allow the Holy Spirit with a refining fire to usher in a renewed peace that crowds out the disorder and deception of unrest and brokenness in our world?

In his Letter to Families, Nov. 22, 1981, Pope St. John Paul II explained, “The Fathers of the Church, in the Christian tradition,

have spoken of the family as a ‘domestic church,’ a ‘little church.’” St. John Paul II invited each of us to begin with our home/ domestic church by bringing a peaceful order, a holy order and from this haven of God’s loving presence that would ripple out into the world creating a new order.

The *Prophet Isaiah, 9:5*, delivers a hopeful message, “For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.” This is hopeful, healing news that orders our hearts and minds, family homes, parishes, and society into a peaceful and holy order by preparing for and welcoming the Prince of Peace.

As peacemakers and children of God, please join me in prayer, word, and deed in the remaining weeks of Advent to prepare a place in our domestic church, parish church, and diocese to celebrate the birth of the God-hero, Prince of Peace born anew.

A most blessed Advent and Merry Christmas to all!

Bishop’s calendar

Dec. 17: 1 p.m. Advent Prayer Service, Church of St. Peter, St. Peter

Dec. 19: Diocesan Staff Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Dec. 21: 2:30 p.m. meeting with Friends of San Lucas, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Dec. 23: 4 p.m. 4th Sunday of Advent Mass, Church of St. John Cantius, Wilno

Dec. 24: 8:15 a.m. 4th Sunday of Advent Mass, Church of St. Dionysius, Tyler

4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass, Church of Ss. Peter & Paul, Ivanhoe

6 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass, Church of St. Dionysius, Tyler

Dec. 25: 8:15 a.m. Christmas Morning Mass, Church of Genevieve, Lake Benton

Dec. 27: Gathering and dinner with diocesan seminarians and priests of the diocese in New Ulm

Jan. 5, 2024: 9:15 a.m. Diocesan Staff Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

10:30 a.m. Diocesan Senior Leadership Team Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Jan. 6-12: Region 8 Bishops Retreat, Venice, Fl

Jan. 16: Diocesan Staff Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Priests Personnel Board Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Jan. 17: Committee on Parishes Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Jan. 21: 3 p.m. Ecumenical Prayer Service, Cathedral of the Holy

Trinity, New Ulm

Jan. 26-Feb. 2: Native American Subcommittee Gathering, Hawaii

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 bishop’s calendar is also posted on the Diocese of New Ulm’s website, www.dnu.org/bishop.

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The Prairie Catholic, the official newspaper for the Diocese of New Ulm since May 1972, is published every six weeks, Sept.–June.

Publisher: Bishop Chad W. Zielinski
Editor: Christine E. Clancy

Submission deadline is the 1st of each month prior to publication.

Publication office: Diocesan Pastoral Center, 1421 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; phone: 507-359-2966, Email: dnu@dnu.org Website: www.dnu.org

Postmaster: Send notice on Form 3579, “The Prairie Catholic,” 1421 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073-2071. Periodical postage paid at New Ulm and additional mailing offices. USPS 926-760.

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Overview of U.S. bishops' plenary meeting in Baltimore

(Continued from page 1.)

as a Catholic family, a united Catholic family, we need to stand together.”

Forming Catholic consciences

The U.S. bishops first issued “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” in 2007 and have updated the guide every four years, in 2011, 2015, and 2019 ahead of the next presidential election.

At last year’s fall assembly, however, the bishops voted to postpone a full revision until after the 2024 election, opting instead to limit revisions in 2023 to the guide’s introduction and “supplemental inserts” disseminated in parish bulletins nationwide.

“I think the underlying document has served us very, very well,” Archbishop Lori said. “It’s based on Catholic social teaching. It’s not based on one’s favorite political ideology. It’s rooted very much in the tradition of the Church.”

“I think it is important to recall the purpose of this, which is to help first and foremost individual members of the Church to form their consciences. Not simply to ask themselves, ‘Who’s my favorite candidate? Who do I like?

What kind of ideology attracts me?’ But rather to step back and say, ‘What does my Church say? What does our tradition say about the public order and what is good and true and right and just?’”

“In these materials,” he emphasized, “the bishops do not tell Catholics for whom to vote or against whom to vote. Rather, we seek first and foremost to help Catholics to form their consciences through prayer, study, reflection, and dialogue so that they can discern with prudence their decisions about public life.”

Lori said the bishops made a “very deliberate decision” to “rewrite” the guide after the 2024 elections through what he described as a “very thought-through, detailed, consultative process,” adding that “one might even say it will be synodal,” a reference to Pope Francis’ call for a synodal Church characterized by greater dialogue, inclusion, and openness.

One of the newly approved bulletin inserts addresses the Church’s opposition to gender ideology. “We support the dignity of the human person, created male or female,” it reads, “therefore, we oppose a gender ideology that fails to recognize the difference and reciprocity between man and woman.”



Bishop Andrew Cozzens of Crookston, Minn. and chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, reported on the Eucharistic Revival and the upcoming Congress in Indianapolis during the recent U.S. bishops’ meeting in Baltimore.

(Photo courtesy of USCCB)

Another bulletin insert, adopting language used in the bishops’ existing guide, stresses that “family – based on marriage between a man and a woman – is the first and most fundamental unit of society: a sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children.” The insert goes on to say that traditional marriage “should be defended and strengthened, not redefined, undermined, or further distorted.”

The bishops’ nearly unanimous approval of the revised

introduction (93% voted to approve it) underscored both the gravity of abortion in the eyes of the Catholic Church and the powerful influence the issue continues to exert on American political life. Some Church observers expected more debate and a closer vote.

A planet for people

In his remarks to the media, Lori pushed back on the suggestion that the bishops’ revisions fail to place enough emphasis on climate change, an issue Pope Francis

has highlighted in his encyclical *Laudato Si’* and this year’s apostolic exhortation *Laudato Deum*.

“First, I would remind you that the vote was 225 to 11,” Lori said, referring to the vote on the new introduction.

“No. 2, if you look at *Laudato Si’* and when [the pope] talks about integral human ecology, the earth is our common home, but it is the home of people. And certainly in our midst, there are people who are vulnerable for many, many different reasons. The reason we focus on the unborn as we do is because they are utterly voiceless and defenseless. And abortion is a direct taking of human life,” he said.

“I would also say that if you go to read what Pope Francis has said about abortion, it is said in far more stark terms that we have said it, and he would identify abortion as a primary instance of the throwaway culture. And so I think we have done our level best to reflect fully, fairly, and lovingly the magisterium of Pope Francis, to whom we are most, most grateful.”

October Mental Health Campaign part of U.S. bishops’ plenary discussion

by Catholic News Agency

BALTIMORE – During November’s United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Fall Assembly in Baltimore, a lively discussion took place concerning the recent USCCB launch of a National Catholic Mental Health Campaign that began Oct. 10 – World Mental Health Day.

The goal of the campaign was to raise awareness of mental health issues, help remove the stigma surrounding mental illness, and encourage those suffering to seek help.

At its launch, Archbishop Borys Gudziak, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop Robert Barron, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth, wrote in a statement on behalf of the USCCB: “Despite its

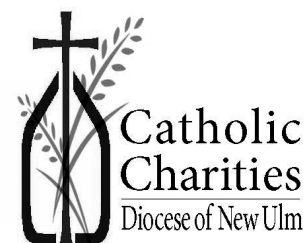


ubiquity, mental illness and mental health challenges often remain associated with embarrassment, shame, or guilt, which can prevent people from seeking and receiving help.”

“Such a stigma contradicts the compassion of Jesus and is contrary to the foundation of Catholic social teaching,” the bishops added. “As pastors, we want to emphasize this point to

anyone who is suffering from mental illness or facing mental health challenges: Nobody and nothing can alter or diminish your God-given dignity.”

The bishops urge all Catholics to advocate for bipartisan legislation that “addresses the severe lack of health care resources for prevention and treatment of mental health conditions.”



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

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por Bishop Chad Zielinski

¡Bienaventurados los pacificadores!

Como sacerdote he celebrado el Día de Todos los Santos durante 27 años. En la lectura del Evangelio, *Mateo 5:1-12*, Jesús comienza su sermón en la montaña y desde ahí enseña a sus discípulos las Bienaventuranzas. Les estaba dando a ellos y a nosotros hoy un mapa para encontrar la verdadera felicidad en nuestro viaje terrenal para algún día estar con él en la felicidad eterna del Reino de los Cielos.

Al escuchar las ocho bienaventuranzas proclamadas en el Evangelio, me impactó profundamente *Mt 5:9*: “Bienaventurados los pacificadores, porque serán llamados hijos de Dios”. Esto me llegó al núcleo de mi ser de una manera que nunca lo había hecho antes. ¿Por qué siento que Dios me está llamando a mí, a todos nosotros, a ser pacificadores de una manera apasionada?

Ya hemos escuchado la lectura del Evangelio del primer domingo de Adviento, “¡Estén atentos! ¡Vigilen!”. El tiempo de Adviento nos coloca en una postura de vigilancia y espera por el nacimiento de Cristo. ¿Qué escuchamos y vemos en nuestro mundo al ir llenándonos de este antiguo anhelo por el nacimiento de nuestro Salvador para traer una nueva paz?

En conversaciones recientes con amigos y colegas, he escuchado: “¿Qué está pasando en nuestro mundo? ¿Has visto todas las matanzas que en nuestra nación están cometiendo los jóvenes? Tuve que dejar de ver las noticias porque era abrumador ver tanta guerra, violencia y odio. Tanta noticia mala me perturbaba profundamente y no estaba en paz”.

En la reciente reunión anual de obispos de Estados Unidos en Baltimore, un obispo dijo apasionadamente: “¿Vamos a

Para que tengan vida

hablar sobre la escalada de guerra y violencia en nuestro mundo y cómo afecta a los fieles?”.

Tengo que admitir que compartí los mismos sentimientos. Hay un desequilibrio en nuestro mundo; el orden divino y pacífico del diseño divino de Dios ha sido perturbado. Veo preocupación, inquietud y miedo en los rostros de los que vienen a la Iglesia. Me pregunto si, al mirar a mi hermano o hermana, por más heridos o rotos que estén, ¿puedo ver el sagrado y divino diseño de la imagen de Dios que vive en ellos? Esto no se está pasando en muchas comunidades hoy en día. Y debo admitir que yo, también, no estoy en paz. ¿Cómo sucedió esto?

En 1941, C.S. Lewis escribió las “Cartas del diablo a su sobrino,” que aparecieron como una serie en el periódico *The Guardian* en Inglaterra. Generando gran interés entre sus lectores, las cartas fueron compiladas y publicadas en un libro en 1942. Un amigo envió un fragmento de una de las cartas que encontré profética en relación con la confusión y la división en nuestra sociedad. La carta está dirigida a “Gusano”, un estudiante humano enseñado por “Tío Carta”, que es el diablo. Las palabras de C.S. Lewis parecen ser proféticamente cumplidas hoy:

“Querido Gusano. Asegúrate de que el paciente permanezca completamente concentrado en la política. Los argumentos, los chismes políticos y obsesionarse con los errores de personas que nunca han conocido sirven como una excelente distracción que impide avanzar en la virtud personal, el carácter y las cosas que el paciente puede controlar. Asegúrate de mantener al paciente en un estado constante de angustia, frustración y desdén general hacia el resto de la raza humana para evitar cualquier tipo de caridad o paz interior que pueda desarrollarse más. Asegúrate de que el paciente siga creyendo que el problema está “allá afuera” en el “sistema roto” en lugar de reconocer que hay un problema consigo mismo”.

Sigue con el buen trabajo, Tío Carta

Al capturar magistralmente C.S. Lewis el trabajo astuto del Gran Engañador o Mentiroso (como se refiere el Papa Francisco a

Satanás), debo admitir que he permitido que este desorden se infiltre en mi corazón y alma, que fueron creados por nuestro Creador para ser un santuario de paz. Las palabras de C.S. Lewis me recuerdan que si quiero cambiar el mundo, debo empezar por mí mismo.

Mientras permanezco alerta y vigilante durante estas semanas de Adviento, ¿cómo permito que el Espíritu Santo, con un fuego purificador, traiga una paz renovada que acabe con el desorden y la decepción de la inquietud y la fragmentación en nuestro mundo?

En su Carta a las Familias, el 22 de noviembre de 1981, el Papa San Juan Pablo II explicó: “Los Padres de la Iglesia, en la tradición cristiana, han hablado de la familia como una ‘iglesia doméstica’, una ‘pequeña iglesia’”. San Juan Pablo II nos invitó a cada uno de nosotros a empezar con nuestro hogar/iglesia doméstica al llevar un orden pacífico, un orden santo y desde este refugio de la presencia amorosa de Dios que se extendería al mundo creando un nuevo orden.

El Profeta Isaías, 9:5, entrega un mensaje esperanzador, “Porque nos ha nacido un niño, se nos ha concedido un hijo; la soberanía reposará sobre sus hombros, y se le darán estos nombres: Consejero admirable, Dios fuerte, Padre eterno, Príncipe de paz”. Esta es una noticia esperanzadora y sanadora que ordena nuestros corazones y mentes, hogares familiares, parroquias y sociedad en un orden pacífico y santo al prepararnos y dar la bienvenida al Príncipe de Paz.

Como pacificadores e hijos de Dios, únense a mí en oración, palabra y acción en las semanas restantes de Adviento para preparar un lugar en nuestra iglesia doméstica, iglesia parroquial y diócesis para celebrar el nacimiento del Dios-héroe, Príncipe de Paz nacido de nuevo.

¡Tengan todos un Adviento muy bendito y Feliz Navidad!

The Christmas Posadas celebration begins soon!

by Anisabel Palma

What a gentle, beautiful, intelligent, and prudent guide our Mother Church is in shaping our faith! Advent truly showcases this.

As we eagerly count down, we are marking the days leading to the celebration of Christ’s initial arrival among us at Christmas. It is an undeniable truth: God became man; the Second Person of the Trinity incarnated and entered our world as one of us. He whom the heavens cannot contain willingly embraced one hundred percent humanity. To explore this profound mystery, our Mother Church provides us with daily readings in the Holy Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, inviting us into this sublime mystery and ensuring this special season doesn’t pass by unnoticed by our souls.

Practices like the Posadas help us keep the season’s purpose alive in our minds and hearts. Rooted in Catholic origins and deeply tied to a cultural tradition, Posadas may not be universally known. Therefore, I’d love to take this chance to share the tradition that holds some of my fondest childhood memories, as I grew up in my cherished *ejido* in Baja, Mexico, where we prepared for Christmas in a most heartwarming way.

The Posadas were invented by Spanish missionaries who, in their attempt to evangelize the natives of the Americas, performed Christmas plays and songs to explain the mystery of the Incarnation. The term “posada” means “inn” or “lodging” in Spanish, referring

to the biblical story of Mary and Joseph’s search for a place to stay (posada) in Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus. The tradition reenacts this journey and typically takes place over nine nights leading up to Christmas Eve, representing the nine months of Mary’s pregnancy.

During the posadas, people gather to recreate Mary and Joseph’s search for shelter. Participants split into two groups: one representing Joseph and Mary, and the other group acting as the innkeepers. In the warm winters of my *ejido*, I recall traveling with my family from house to house, singing traditional songs known as *villancicos* or posadas songs, asking for shelter through song. The hosts, representing the innkeepers, initially refuse to let us inside. Once we reached the “designated” house, we were welcomed in, symbolizing the moment when Mary and Joseph found a place to stay. Here there would be a celebration with food, drinks, piñatas, and often prayers and a Gospel reading.

If your parish’s Hispanic community hosts Posadas this Advent, I encourage you to join. You will relish delightful moments, savor delicious food, forge new friendships, and delve deeper into the significance of the Incarnation of the Son of God.



Anisabel Palma is the director of the Office of Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese of New Ulm, apalma@dnu.org, (507) 233-5360.

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PLEDGE TO HEAL

Anyone who has suffered sexual abuse or exploitation by a cleric of the Diocese of New Ulm should immediately report such misconduct to local law enforcement. They are encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator or the Bishop’s Delegate in Matters Pertaining to Sexual Misconduct, 1421 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073, phone: 507-233-5313, for counseling or assistance, if that is desired.

Toda persona que fue víctima de abuso o explotación sexual por parte de un clérigo de la Diócesis de New Ulm debe reportar dicha mala conducta a las autoridades policiales inmediatamente. Se les exhorta ponerse en contacto con el Coordinador de Asistencia para víctimas o el Delegado del Obispo en cuestiones sobre el mal comportamiento sexual, 1421 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073, teléfono: 507-233-5313, hay consejería o asistencia disponible si así lo desea.



Visit www.dnu.org for a listing of area events.

Eucharistic Congress offers scholarships, weekend passes

by Catholic News Agency

INDIANAPOLIS – With the National Eucharistic Congress just months away, scholarships and single-day and weekend passes will be available to make it possible for more Catholics to attend the event to be held July 17–21, 2024, at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

The congress is the climax of the U.S. bishops’ three-year National Eucharistic Revival initiative, launched in part because of a Pew Research poll that suggested only one-third of adult Catholics in the U.S. believe in the Church’s teaching on the Blessed Sacrament.

Addressing the U.S. bishops at their fall plenary meeting on Nov. 15, Bishop Andrew Cozzens of the Diocese of Crookston, Minn., said that “incredible things are happening” as a result of the revival. Cozzens, the chairman of the National Eucharistic Congress, Inc., pointed to several statistics and updates indicating the revival has already borne fruit.

Cozzens shared that the Eucharistic revival has garnered almost 8,000 volunteer “parish point persons” while more than 12,000 parish leaders have downloaded the revival’s leader’s playbook, a resource that gives concrete steps on how to cultivate the revival in one’s community. Another resource, “Jesus and the Eucharist,” a seven-session small-group video series, is being used in “thousands of parishes” with over 32,000 hours viewed, he said.

Tens of thousands have engaged with the revival’s “Spark” series, which is a set of prayers, reflections, and spiritual initiatives emailed to one’s inbox over nine days. Additionally, early next year a new “preaching series” will be

released, “which is linked to the Sunday readings in Lent as well as a tool kit for parish teams to begin reaching out to parishioners who have not yet returned since the pandemic.”

Single-day and weekend passes
Those wishing to attend the congress will be able to purchase single-day or weekend passes in early January. Single-day passes will cost between \$49 and \$95, depending on which day is chosen, and weekend passes will be offered at \$125. A “limited” number of single-day passes will include a discount for participants who purchase them “early.”

Scholarships
More than \$750,000 has been raised in a “solidarity fund” to offer scholarships to those wishing to attend the conference and who are in need of financial support. Some of that funding also came from private donors and foundations.



The Diocese of New Ulm has discounted tickets available to the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. Further information can be found on the diocesan website, www.dnu.org/2024necregistration.

Stay tuned for information regarding bus transportation for adults, families, and youth to the Congress in Indianapolis. Lodging information will be posted soon.

One woman’s reversion

Staying fluid with God’s plan while striving to suffer well even through a diagnosis of cancer

by Kathryn Ballalatak
Prairie Catholic correspondent

ARLINGTON – On a brisk evening in October – almost one year after being diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer – Annie Ballalatak, the mother of nine, was warmly welcomed to Holy Trinity Church in Winsted as a speaker for *Revive*, the community’s gathering for faith-filled women. Her topics? Staying fluid with God’s plan and striving to suffer well, which she told through the lens of her cancer diagnosis as well as her reversion to the Catholic faith.

According to Annie, the past year of fighting cancer (which included chemo, radiation, surgery, a staph infection scare, and more) has been a blessed exercise in uniting her will with God’s will – something she believes he has been quietly preparing her for years.

Annie shared many small “God moments” that eventually led her back to her Catholic faith. Little did she know that all these moments would also give her the strength and perseverance she’d need in this latest opportunity.

Growing up Catholic
Annie describes herself as a cradle Catholic: “When I was young, I received all my sacraments and attended Mass and catechism every weekend. Thanks to Mrs. Burns, I even memorized some Baltimore Catechism and *Psalms* 23!” “The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I lack. . .”

Unfortunately, family life also had its ups and downs. Her parents divorced when she was in third grade, and her father’s presence in her life was minimal for a while. “During this time, our Catholic practices waned,” says Annie.

But one faith-filled person remained a constant: her Grandma, Lucy Speikers, who prayed daily that her granddaughters would find good Catholic husbands.

“True to Grandma’s prayers, I married my wonderful Catholic husband, Tom, in 1995. We weren’t practicing our faith then, but Grandma would have her way.”

Coming back to the faith
For Annie, her father’s death in 2000 was a pivotal moment in her reversion. “My dad died very unexpectedly at the age of 59.



Annie Ballalatak and her husband Tom. (Photo submitted)

I was devastated, and I started talking to God: “Where is my dad?” My concern was for his soul. For the first time, I was faced with these realities,” says Annie.

Despite this heartbreaking event and a string of other challenging situations, including being laid off, Annie’s prayer life grew, and Providence eventually moved the family near Arlington, where she became a stay-at-home mom, and they joined St. Mary’s Catholic Church.

What followed was experience after experience with wonderful communities that allowed her faith to grow, including the Church of St. Pius X’s mom’s group in Glencoe, which she joined in 2005. Shortly before this, she was asked to teach choreography to an all-girls Christian dance ministry. “It was only after I agreed to teach that I was told I would also be leading prayer and a Bible study. I didn’t even own a Bible before this! God is so funny.”

Through these two groups, Annie met many beautiful homeschooled families, eventually inspiring her and her husband, Tom, to start homeschooling in 2006.

But the most important part of her reversion, Annie shared, was her return to confession and the Eucharist. “My faith grew gradually, and any difficult times provided the greatest opportunities for my faith to be stretched, but Jesus in the Eucharist was always my biggest consolation.”

Annie also unpacked an exercise in trusting God’s will and what it means to suffer well and the phases of this process, which she creatively explained using punctuation. “The first is a question mark,” she says. “‘God wants me to do this now?!’ is a question I’ve asked myself over and over again. This phase can be rife with shock and discomfort.”

Then, after God has proven himself faithful, the next phase can be described as acceptance or, in this analogy, a period. “‘I guess God wants me to do this now,’” says Annie with a different inflection. “This phase is all about embracing the situation God has willed for you – even if it’s begrudgingly at the start.”

Then, after God has proven his plan is always better, the final phase trades the period for an exclamation point, an enthusiastic “yes” to God’s will. “Here, you hug the cross and come to realize that a deep love for souls can make suffering almost desirable,” says Annie. “I’m no St. Therese of Lisieux, but I won’t waste the suffering that God has willed for me.”

When asked if there was one thing she hoped her audience took away from her talk, Annie responded: “Trust God’s will and plan, especially suffering, as it is a gold mine for souls and provides for the best opportunities for your faith to grow.”

God's story lives on through his people: Over a century of memories comes to a close as two parishes in diocese celebrate a final Mass

In light of a much-declined enrollment and financial deficits, members of the Church of St. John-Assumption in Faxon Township and the Church of St. Joseph in Henderson gathered on Sunday, Nov. 5 for what would be their final Mass at both parishes. The Masses were celebrated by Bishop Chad W. Zielinski and concelebrated by Monsignor Eugene Lozinski, parochial administrator.

by Deacon Ryan Pope
Prairie Catholic correspondent

Recently traveling the rural roadways in the Diocese of New Ulm, a familiar sight of a steeple broke through the dawn horizon, guiding me to St. John-Assumption parish in Faxon Township (Belle Plaine), where the first of two closing Masses of the day would take place. The other closing Mass would follow later in the day at St. Joseph parish, a short drive away in Henderson.

"I've seen this steeple and cross my whole life," said T.C. Fogarty, a lifelong member of St. John-Assumption parish, "and I've lost sleep leading up to this day."

Fr. Bob Mraz, a retired priest of the diocese who often assisted in the celebration of Mass in the two parishes, commented, "When you are growing up in your parish, you see it as stable in your life; you never think about one day this may no longer be here. [Closing or merging a parish] is difficult — like a mourning process," he said. Even amid difficult circumstances, reminiscing abounded, hugs embraced, fellowship was shared, and even a few laughs arose as stories helped to offer solace, and as they were, stories would be the blessings that permeated the day.

Regal Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus and fragrant incense ushered in by choral and community voices opened the final liturgies. Merlin Bartels, a lifelong member of St. John-Assumption who had proclaimed the Word of God as lector for decades until health impeded, battled back to be able to attend the closing Mass with the help of his wife, Wilma. At both closing Masses, *Psalms 131* echoed, "In you, Lord, I have

found my peace," as families held hands and silent tears signaled the reality of generations gone before and the memories of sacraments and liturgies of time past.

"I first found that fire for Jesus here (at St. John's). We are like family; we share as a community, staying in touch and helping each other," said Nellie Hennen, who, with her husband Paul, commented that their kids and grandkids have continued with their faith that grew out of their participation in parish life at St. John-Assumption.

"Parting is hard, but go and tell that story the world needs to hear - that there is a community of hope and healing still at hand, and through God's grace and determination, our stories will continue. . . — Msgr. Lozinski

Steve Heinz, a lifelong member of St. Joseph, noted that his family had been members of the parish since the late 1860s, "and my grandchildren are the seventh generation here," as he shared his story. Heinz lamented, "Few people come to church anymore. I pray every day for the conversion of souls."

The realities of low Mass attendance and an aging population were almost universally cited as a catalyst for closure.

However, even amid these challenges, "regular Mass attenders and adorers are and continue to be a storehouse of prayer and support for our communities," said Monsignor



Faithful gathered in Henderson on Sunday, Nov. 5 at the Church of St. Joseph to celebrate what would be the final Mass.

Eugene Lozinski, parochial administrator of the Church of St. John-Assumption and the Church of St. Joseph.

At both closing Masses, Bishop Chad Zielinski illumined scriptures, especially Paul's Epistle honoring "the Word of God in you," and he related how "Paul was trying to tell a different story. . . a story of Truth." He went on to say that this story of Truth that we, and the world around, need to hear is God's story: "You are a big deal because you are created in the image



St. Joseph, Henderson

priesthood," Bishop Zielinski said.

Using this example among many others from his family to saints of the Church family, the bishop showed that just like the parishes of St. John-Assumption and St. Joseph, "We all have and know

"The stories of this parish do not die, but through you, they live on and bear fruit for generations, and together with God's story, they give life." — Bishop Zielinski

a story of someone. Honor the story; the stories of this parish do not die, but through you, they live on and bear fruit for generations, and together with God's story, they give life."

Monsignor Lozinski shared some of his stories in these parishes, also declaring that God's story

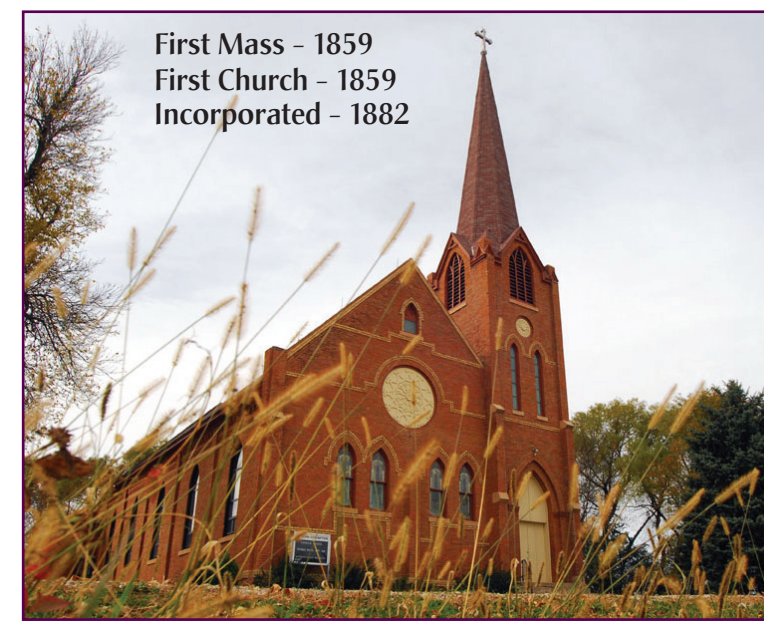
lives on in the people. He offered many thanks for the "beacons of light" the parishioners and administrative councils have been through this challenging time.

Monsignor echoed the bishop by saying, "Parting is hard, but go and tell that story the world needs to hear — that there is a community of hope and healing still at hand, and through God's grace and determination, our stories will continue. . . go and be a blessing to the faith communities you now join."

Editor's note: Deacon Ryan Pope serves the Church of St. Catherine in Redwood Falls and the Church of St. Anne in Wabasso.



A collection of St. Joseph, Henderson parish history lined a table, sparking many memories and discussions.



St. John - Assumption, Faxon Township



Monsignor Eugene Lozinski, St. John-Assumption parochial administrator, gives long-time parishioner Doris Fahey a friendly greeting following the parish's closing Mass.

(photos by Deacon Ryan and Erica Pope)



Merlin and Wilma Bartels, members of St. John-Assumption, enjoy the reception that followed the Mass. Merlin served as lector at the parish for decades.

Continuing to plan for the future

Prayer and honest dialogue will help discern God's will for the diocese

by Deacon Ken Noyes

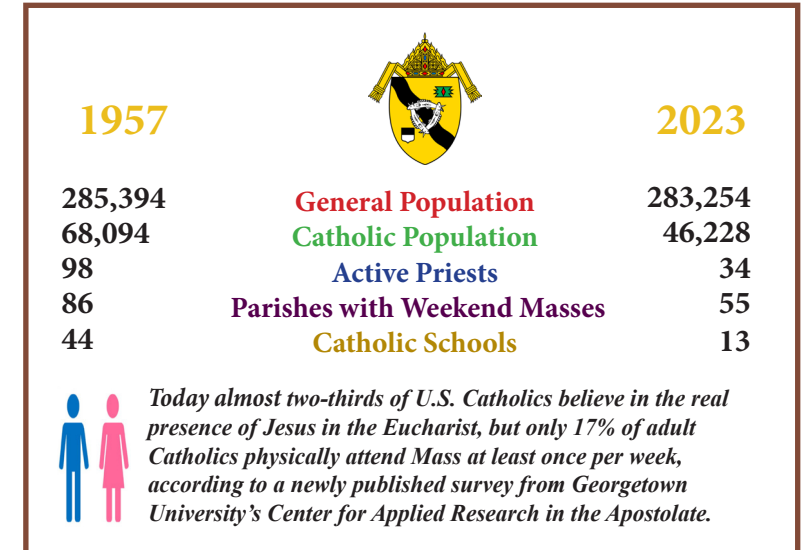
We are living in different times. When the diocese was founded back in 1957, there were 68,094 Catholics, 98 priests, 86 parishes, seven Catholic high schools, and 37 Catholic grade schools. Sixty-five percent of U.S. Catholics were attending weekend Masses. Today, the statistics look much different.

For the past 35 years, the Diocese of New Ulm has been proactive in pastoral planning. Projections show that by 2027 the number of active priests serving in the diocese, aged 70 and under, will decline to a total as low as 25.

In addition, the number of parishioners and the percentage of parishioners attending Mass has continued to decrease.

Reports show that about 30 percent of registered Catholics in our parishes attend Mass on a weekend. A decrease in active parishioners usually means a decrease in financial support for parish facilities and fewer people to plan and work at parish activities.

As painful as it can be, parish mergers and closings have been part of the diocesan planning process. It is important more



than ever for members of the Diocese of New Ulm to consider inviting back those who have left the Church and welcome those who are new to our communities.

Pray for priests
Currently, the diocese has four men in the seminary. Please pray for their continued priestly formation and encourage young men to consider answering God's call to enter the priesthood.

Our shepherd Bishop Chad Zielinski values the input from his flock. Consider sharing your ideas concerning parish planning with your parish pastor and parish leadership. Be supportive of their efforts to address these critical issues.

As one in Christ, we are all called to work together. Prayer and honest dialogue will help Bishop Zielinski discern God's will for the Diocese of New Ulm.

Through ongoing pastoral planning, we are not losing our history; instead, we are changing our structures and how we celebrate our faith based on an honest and prayerful look at what is happening in our parishes and our diocese.

Editor's note: Deacon Ken Noyes serves as the Diocese of New Ulm Committee on Parishes chairperson. He serves the Bread of Life Area Faith Community (Marshall, and Cottonwood.)



The Knights of Columbus added a distinguished honor guard during Mass at St. John-Assumption on Sunday, Nov. 5. Pictured are 4th Degree Knights Keith Heitkamp, Larry Entinger, Jason Paulo, and Mark Wolf.

When there is a need – there’s a Knight!

Knights of Columbus celebrates one million coats donated through its Coats for Kids program

by Christine Clancy
The Prairie Catholic

NEW ULM – The Knights of Columbus reached a significant milestone in November when they donated their one-millionth coat through their Coats for Kids program. Since Coats for Kids launched in 2009, the Knights have distributed coats in 49 U.S. states and all ten Canadian provinces – including on U.S. military bases and Native American and First Nation reservations in the U.S. and Canada. Knights of Columbus councils have distributed over 100,000 coats to children in need each year since 2017 and are on pace to distribute 200,000 coats in 2023.

The Coats for Kids program has become synonymous with the Knights’ charity mission, established by their founder, Blessed Michael McGivney, more than 140 years ago.

In a recent interview with “EWTN News Nightly,” Supreme Knight

Patrick Kelly was noted as saying that the Coats for Kids program “provides the gift of warmth to children in the coldest months. It really is in keeping with who the Knights are,” he said.

“Since our very beginning with Fr. Michael McGivney, we were in service to the family, and so it’s very much in keeping with our founding vision of serving the family and our founding mission of charity,” he added.

Knights of Columbus at work in the Diocese of New Ulm

There are over 400 members of the Knights of Columbus in the New Ulm area alone, and “Coats for Kids” has long been their organization’s project. Area Diocese of New Ulm KC Councils reporting 2023 coat distributions are:

- ◆ New Ulm – Council #1076 distributed 96 newly purchased children’s and adults’ winter coats, hats, and mittens to those in need, plus additional donated coats. According to Knight Mario



The New Ulm Knights of Columbus Council #1076 recently distributed nearly 100 winters coats to those in need. Pictured are Knights (l-r), Tim Rahe, Zach Kaiser, Joe Leonard, and Mario DeSouza.

(Photo by New Ulm Journal)

DeSouza of New Ulm, “Minnesota is the 3rd highest state in coats given out, and 11,000 coats are expected to be distributed this year throughout the state.”

- ◆ Marshall – Council #1621 distributed 168 new coats plus additional donated coats.
- ◆ Darwin, Litchfield, Manannah, and Watkins areas - includes

Councils #13122 and #2029, combined distributed 196 coats and various hats and mittens.

Supreme Knight Kelly pointed out that the Knights are seeing an increased need for coats this year. In 2023, more than 1,500 Knights councils will distribute over 200,000 coats. Please consider a donation today to the Coats for Kids program at kofc.org. One

hundred percent of donations will support the purchase of coats for those in need.

Become a Knight

Membership is open to males 18 years of age or older who are practicing Catholics. To join visit www.KofC/Joinus and complete the online form. A Knight in your area will contact you.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024 : 3 OPPORTUNITIES

FRIDAY 6:30-8:30PM ST. PETER, ST. PETER	SATURDAY 10-NOON ST. ANASTASIA, HUTCHINSON	SUNDAY 2-4PM ST. EDWARD, MINNEOTA
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Diocese of New Ulm
National Eucharistic Preacher

THE EUCHARIST: LEADING US TO THE SACRED HEART

with **FR. JOE LARAMIE**

TALK **ADORATION WITH PRAYER TEAMS & CONFESSION** **RECEPTION**

St. Paul Seminary enrollment exceeds goals, largest in decades

by Barb Umberger
The Catholic Spirit

Despite a nationwide decline in the number of men pursuing the priesthood, the St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul started the current academic year with its largest enrollment in a decade: 100. The number “exceeded all of our goals,” said Father Joseph Taphorn, the seminary’s rector and vice president.

When Father Taphorn joined the seminary about five years ago, enrollment was at 70. The seminary has seen steady growth and, at 100 men, is “almost at capacity,” Father Taphorn said. “We could fit in a few more, but we’re feeling really good,” he said. Father Taphorn recently joined “Practicing Catholic” radio show producer Kayla Mayer to discuss the seminary’s enrollment growth and formation.

The seminary serves 15 dioceses, (including the Diocese of New Ulm), and one religious order, with the largest group – about

one-third – from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Having a large number of seminarians from this diocese is one reason behind the increasing number, Father Taphorn said.

“The local Church is very strong, and it’s just super edifying to see so many young men desire to enter the seminary and explore vocation and take that question seriously,” he said. A second reason is that other bishops in the region “are sensing good things are happening and are happy to have their men be a part of a good seminary,” he said.

Another factor contributing to the St. Paul Seminary’s reputation is its “strong emphasis on human formation,” a dimension articulated by St. John Paul II 35 years ago, Father Taphorn said.

And beyond “a strong culture of fraternity, a solid academic program and “good spiritual formation,” Father Taphorn said “I just think we have ... the makings of all the ingredients, and you put

that together and I think just with people being generous and open, especially to the Holy Spirit, it’s really turned into a beautiful place.”

To learn more about the seminary, visit SaintPaulSeminary.org. The “Practicing Catholic” radio show can be found at PracticingCatholicShow.com or choose a streaming platform at anchor.fm/practicing-catholic-show.

Editor’s note: The Diocese of New Ulm currently has four men in formation to be priests. One currently attends the the St. Paul Seminary and the other three attend Saint John Vianney College Seminary in St. Paul.

If you or someone you know is interested in the priesthood or religious life, contact Fr. Brendan Rolling, director of Vocations of the Diocese of New Ulm, broilling@dnu.org.

Nominations sought for 2024 New Ulm Diocesan Woman of the Year award



by Jackie Finstad
NUDCCW president

There are many ways women in the Diocese of New Ulm carry out the mission of Christ through their family, church, and involvement in the Council of Catholic Women.

Each year, the Council's "Woman of the Year" award serves as an opportunity to recognize one of these remarkable women and show how much her service to God and others is appreciated. Nominations for 2024 Woman of the Year are now being accepted.

The award will be presented at the 2024 NUDCCW Convention on Saturday, April 27, at the Church of St. Pius X in Glencoe. Judging will be based on family commitment, participation in church activities, committees and community activities, and activity in the CCW on all levels. A group of three individuals may submit a nominee for this award, and more

than one name can be submitted. Names may be resubmitted if they have yet to receive the award.

Nominations must include a summary of the merits of the candidate. All information submitted will be kept confidential until the honor is awarded, so data should be gathered without talking to the nominee. Current diocesan Council of Catholic Women voting board members are not eligible.

For nomination rules or forms, contact your parish Council of Catholic Women president or Barb Mathiowetz, NUDCCW Immediate Past President, at bjmathiowetz@hotmail.com.

Make your VOICE HEARD!

Plan to attend the March for Life at State Capitol in January

by Sr. Candace Fier, ISSM
Diocesan Director of Family Life

The Supreme Court's decision last year, overturning Roe v. Wade, declared that the constitutional right to abortion, upheld for nearly a half-century, no longer exists. So, what does our pro-life landscape currently look like here in Minnesota after the reversal?

I think we have to admit that we have seen a number of challenges and setbacks this year: the loss of funding for pro-life pregnancy centers, the passage of a law permitting for abortion up to birth, and the repealing of the right of newborns to receive lifesaving treatment. Now more than ever, it is crucial that we, as members of the Diocese of New Ulm, do not miss any opportunity to present ourselves as a "pro-life community" that has a message and a mission for every Minnesotan in our state, standing for every human life, from conception to natural death.

On Jan. 22, 2024, we have one such opportunity when the annual March for Life at the state Capitol in St. Paul takes place under the theme, "Save the 12,000." The day will begin with a Prayer Service for Life at 10:30 a.m. at the Cathedral of St. Paul. Following the prayer service, pro-lifers will walk to the Capitol steps (approx. .5 miles) where the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL) has planned a

powerful and moving program to remember the 12,000 babies lost to abortion this past year alone.

Participants in the March for Life will have the opportunity to place in a display on the Capitol steps a replica of a fetus, symbolizing one precious child lost to abortion this year. To sign up to carry one of these replicas, visit mccl.org/march.

Each year, the Diocese of New Ulm is well represented by students from our Catholic high schools as well as parishioners from throughout the diocese. Let us increase our presence at the March in 2024. There will be several opportunities within the diocese for bus transportation to the March for Life.

Or, consider sponsoring a bus from your local Catholic school or parish. MCCL is offering assistance to Christian schools and churches to fund the cost of buses. Contact mccl.org for further information.

When we join together as a pro-life community, each one of us doing our part, we can build a culture that cherishes life. So come join the March and do your part.

Editor's note: For questions or assistance concerning the March for Life in January, contact the Diocese of New Ulm Family Life Office, pkral@dnu.org.

Bussing available in several locations in diocese

▷ Marshall

Bus will depart from Holy Redeemer in Marshall at 6:30 a.m. and stop for additional riders at St. Catherine's in Redwood Falls. Bussing is sponsored by area Council of Catholic Women and Knights of Columbus and free. Contact Lori Timmerman at (507) 476-0070. Bring a sack lunch and dress warm.

▷ New Ulm (Includes 7 a.m. Mass for Life prior to departure)

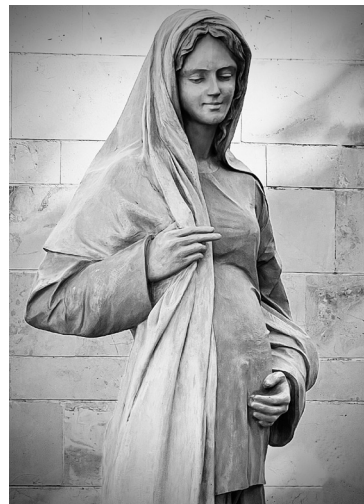
Bus will depart from Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm at 7:45 a.m. following the Mass for Life. The bus will return at 3 p.m. Bring lunch and warm clothes. To reserve a seat contact the Cathedral office at (507) 354-4158. For questions contact Kate Sloom at (507) 276-8023.

▷ Spicer area (Our Living Water & Shepherd of Souls Area Faith Community)

Bus will depart Our Lady of the Lakes in Spicer at 6:30 a.m. Transportation sponsored by KC Councils and 4th Degree Assemblies. For rest of the scheduled stops visit dnu.org/familylife. To reserve a seat contact Tony Lorber at (320) 248-6863.

Be sure to check www.dnu.org for bus schedule updates.

Encountering Jesus through the Gospel



by Leonard Gutierrez
Office of Evangelization

We are approaching Christmas, which means we are anticipating the gift of Jesus Christ. This month's reflection invites us to consider the gift of God becoming man this Christmas through the words we find in the Hail Mary.

In *Luke 1:39-43*, we read, "In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" And "why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

As I've traveled throughout the Diocese of New Ulm to visit with pastors and parishioners, I have made an effort

to make it to Mass at the parish I am visiting. One of the things I've noticed is an evident love and devotion to Mary. As I enter the church just before the start of Mass, I often walk into a group of parishioners praying the rosary and offering their lives, work, families, and our diocese to Jesus through Mary. A line we could reflect on the next time we pray the rosary, and as we approach Christmas, is, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

We recite these words fifty-three times when praying the rosary. It is through Mary that the gift of salvation comes down to us. Because of her yes, we too can ask her to help us give our "yes" to the gift of Jesus Christ this Christmas. Because she is the mother of God and carrier of the Christ Child, we too can entrust our lives, intentions, joys, and worries to her.

As St. Bernard says, "If you wish to present something to God, no matter how small it may be, place it in Mary's hands if you do not wish to be refused." This is the prayer and faith I have seen throughout the Diocese of New Ulm. May we continue to entrust ourselves to the care of our Blessed Mother, knowing that she desires to give us her son, Jesus.



Leonard Gutierrez is the director of the Office of Evangelization for the Diocese of New Ulm. He can be reached at lgutierrez@dnu.org; (507) 233-5361.

Accepting applications NOW for 2024-25 NUDCCW Scholarship Fund

Scholarships help with expenses to attend workshops - leadership training, bookkeeping programs, education, and more.

Learn more at www.nudccw.org or contact Sandra Jerzak, scholarship coordinator, (507) 828-9082 email: ks.jerzak@gmail.com

Applications must be received by March 1, 2024.

Ask a Canon Lawyer

This month's question:
What are marriage "banns"?

Why are they published in some parish bulletins and not in others?



by Fr. Mark Steffl, STL, JCL

This month's question is connected to establishing the freedom to marry two people before they exchange their marriage vows in a public ceremony and is part of the official paperwork that is completed prior to a wedding.

There are two canons from the Code of Canon Law that specifically address this:

Can. 1066 Before a marriage is celebrated, it must be evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.

Can. 1067 The conference of bishops is to establish norms about the examination of spouses and about the marriage banns or other opportune means to accomplish the investigations necessary before marriage. After these norms have

been diligently observed, the pastor can proceed to assist with the marriage.

Canon 1066 requires the parish priest (or his delegate) who is preparing a couple to marry to verify that both individuals are free to marry before they exchange their vows. The Church acknowledges that a person has a right to marry. This individual right is considered to be based on natural law — it is inherent to the human nature bestowed on us by our Creator.

This right to marry (or "freedom to marry") is only for those who have not freely given up this right either by already being married (to a spouse who is still living), or renouncing the right to marry with a public promise or vow to chastity. (A man makes such a promise at the time of ordination to the diaconate or priesthood; men and women religious make a vow of chastity as part of their entrance into an institute of

consecrated life as a religious "brother" or "sister.") There are a few other circumstances (officially called "impediments") that would prevent a person from marrying, such as a certain degree of being related to another.

Canon 1067 gives the responsibility to a conference of bishops (the bishops of a country) of establishing how the freedom of marriage is to be investigated within that country. In the United States, each diocese has its own set of official paperwork that is required to be completed with a couple prior to marriage, with the priest or deacon asking each of the persons questions under an oath to tell the truth. It also includes verifying that no notations of a previous marriage or vow of chastity was made in the baptismal record of either of the parties wanting to marry.

"Banns" of marriage are public announcements of the intention of two people to marry, usually

for the three weeks prior to the date of a wedding. Under the previous Code of Canon Law (in force until 1983), the parishes of each of the parties wishing to be married were required to publish or publicly announce the upcoming wedding. This was done with the understanding that if there was anyone who knew of a reason one or both of the individuals seeking to marry were not free, that person had a moral obligation to make such a reason known to the parish priest. This was required as a safeguard for each of the parties seeking to marry, as well as to protect the dignity of marriage in general. In past centuries, it was much easier than it is today for someone to appear in a new town, city, state, or country without being known, and these "banns" were an additional mode of protection against someone abandoning a spouse, family, or religious vow.

In the United States, parishes are not required to publish "banns" in parish bulletins or in public announcements but

are free to do so according to the pastoral needs of the particular parish.

As a side note, and as a parish priest, I find that publishing the "banns" in a parish bulletin is a helpful way to communicate to the parish as a whole about the upcoming weddings in a parish because marriage is a public vocation and state of life within a community.

Next issue: Funerals – in church? In a funeral home? Can a parish priest refuse to do a funeral for any reason?



Editor's note: Fr. Mark Steffl is a canon lawyer and serves as judicial vicar of the diocesan Office of the Tribunal. If you have a question for the Tribunal Office, email The Prairie Catholic at cclancy@dnu.org.

ERA: a trojan horse to weaken women's rights and religious freedom



INSIDE THE STATE CAPITOL
by the Minnesota Catholic Conference

The proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Minnesota Constitution, more appropriately called the Erosion of Rights Amendment, would diminish the hard-earned rights and protections of women and could eliminate the conscience rights and religious liberty of all Minnesotans.

If passed by legislators, the ERA would be sent to Minnesota voters as a ballot question during a general election year. The proposed language for the constitutional amendment protects people against a broad range of discrimination, including creed and age, which is not in itself bad. But it goes beyond attempting to protect against basic forms of discrimination to also protect people against discrimination

based on their "gender identity or expression." This elevation of subjective identity over biological determinants of sex would allow men, posing as women, to invade women's spaces and activities and undo years of progress in the name of women's equality.

The ERA is unnecessary. The Minnesota Supreme Court has interpreted the Minnesota Constitution to require equal protection of the laws. In addition to longstanding federal and state constitutional protections barring discrimination, the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) bans, among other things, sex discrimination as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, but in a limited manner with protections for common-sense

distinctions and exemptions for religious entities. The balance of interests in the MHRA ensures that the law is treated as a shield against unjust discrimination rather than a sword against those who hold views consistent with biological reality.

So why is there a strong push to pass the ERA?

Historically, ERA proponents wanted to end discrimination against women. There were also problems with prior versions of the ERA, including the proposed federal ERA, because it could protect abortion. But in an ironic twist, the new ERA proposed in Minnesota essentially furthers discrimination against women, endangers their safety, and threatens those who object because its purpose is to impose gender ideology, where each person gets to define "their" identity.

Special interest groups hope the ERA gives them greater power in the courts. Right now, these groups are relying on judges who are willing to impose their own

novel interpretations, such as the recent case where Attorney General Ellison settled with a male prisoner by transferring him to a female prison, paying for his "sex change" operation after one was denied to him, and awarding him \$500,000 in damages. By passing the ERA, the case outcomes desired by radical activists will become the norm rather than just a novel interpretation of the law by judges, thus erasing years of work and undermining women's involvement in society.

Other potential outcomes of the ERA include the further entrenchment of abortion rights, increased litigation against faith communities and schools that reject gender ideology, the erosion of conscience rights for medical professionals, more taxpayer-funded "gender-affirming care"; the decline of women's sports; attacks on free speech related to mandated pronoun usage; the shutdown of faith-based shelters for women; and major curricula changes in schools. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, all forms of unjust

discrimination against persons should be avoided. But biology is not bigotry, and imposing a false vision of the human person through the ERA will harm persons, the common good, and those who object on principle and believe that respecting our bodies as God in his providence created them promotes human flourishing.

Visit www.mncatholic.org/action_21473 to reach out to your state legislators and urge them to oppose the erosion of women's rights and religious protections.

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The final step – Stewart native enters monastic life

by Katie Roiger
Prairie Catholic correspondent

STEWART, Minn. – “Faithful till the end” is one of the goals of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará, a religious community dedicated to serving Jesus. And “faithful till the end” is the way of life for Terry and Karen Maiers, members of St. Boniface in Stewart. From encouraging their daughter Grace Marie’s consideration of religious life early on to walking her down the aisle during her final vows, the Maiers strive to be faithful to God’s call for themselves and their children.

“It’s quite the journey,” Terry said, referring to his and his wife’s support for their youngest child’s entrance into religious life. “She felt she was being called to the life of prayer and chose that, and that helps us try to understand.”

Neither Terry nor his wife felt particularly surprised when their daughter announced she wanted to join the Servants of the Lord. An active member of her high school youth group, Grace served on NET Ministries, a Catholic youth missionary organization, and also went on convent visits, otherwise known as “nun runs,” with college friends at the University of Mary

in Bismarck, ND, where she attended.

It was when Grace spent a year studying abroad at the college’s Rome campus that she discovered which order she felt most drawn to join. “That’s where she met the Servants of the Lord, and because she liked their charism, she wanted to look at that more,” said Terry.

In January 2016, Grace entered the Servants of the Lord as a postulant, followed by her investiture as a novice in December of the same year. Her profession of first vows took place in 2017. Her parents proudly followed her progress and attended every one of their daughter’s milestones. Although they missed seeing Grace regularly, they chose to focus on being supportive of her vocation. “Terry’s dad had 17 kids in his family, and of them, one became a priest, and four became nuns,” Karen said. “They didn’t have the tech we have. We’re so blessed because we can video chat, and she leaves us messages, sometimes once a week.”

The Maiers have found other meaningful ways to ensure that Grace is included in their family celebrations. When



Sr. Mary, Mother of Divine Grace stands with Bishop Chad Zielinski of New Ulm and her parents Karen and Terry Maiers, members of St. Boniface in Stewart, following her Final Profession of Vows as a member of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará.

(Photo submitted)

Grace’s goddaughter made her First Communion, she wore the flowered headpiece that Grace had worn to her investiture. “It was pretty cool!” Karen said.

Grace made her final profession of solemn vows, along with five other women, on Sept. 14, 2023, at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The main celebrant was Bishop Chad W. Zielinski of the Diocese of New Ulm who has ties to the Servants of the Lord from his time serving as bishop of Alaska. “There was a lot of emotion,” said Terry. “Having Bishop Chad there was just super special.”

When Grace was to make her final vows, Bishop Zielinski was in Washington attending a United

States Conference of Catholic Bishops committee meeting. During this time, the order’s provincial superior, Mother Immaculate Conception, invited the bishop to be the main celebrant at the Mass.

“What an incredible joy and honor to celebrate this Mass and officiate the ceremony of the reception of Solemn Vows of these six missionary sisters and be blessed to have Sr. Mary, Mother of Divine Grace from the Diocese of New Ulm,” said Bishop Zielinski.

“I have witnessed several marriages during my 27 years as a priest, but there was something extraordinarily special that I witnessed. [I] felt an overflowing of God’s blessing rush upon these

young women, who were filled with a grace that will move them closer together as a community, move them daily toward the Real Presence of Christ at the Mass, and send them forth as fearless witnesses of the hope and healing presence of the Risen Christ to a world that cries out loudly for his love,” the bishop said.

Karen and Terry expressed appreciation that the families present were able to be involved in meaningful ways. Terry read one of the Scripture readings, and both parents walked alongside their daughter during the presentation of the gifts.

As a sister of the Servants of the Lord, Grace received the name Sr. Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, and has been assigned to serve at a convent in Luxembourg in Western Europe, focusing primarily on the hidden life of prayer.

Terry and Karen expressed gratitude for their daughter’s wholehearted acceptance of God’s call while acknowledging their own struggles and growth during the process.

“The way I see it, she’s not my child – she’s the Lord’s,” Terry said. “We raised these children, but they’re not ours. They are the Lord’s, and we have to give them back. And what more do we want for our children but to be happy and to know the Lord?”

Join Bishop Zielinski for an ADVENT PRAYER SERVICE

Sunday, Dec. 17 at 1 p.m.
Church of St. Peter

1801 W. Broadway Ave., Saint Peter, Minn.



Stained glass window in the Church of St. Michael, Gaylord, Minnesota

Bring your Baby Jesus figure from your Nativity scene for Bishop Zielinski to bless AND “swaddling clothes” to donate for babies in need.

There will be a blessing of families and expectant mothers.

(A reception will follow the prayer service.)

For information contact the Diocese of New Ulm Office of Worship, (507) 233-5320; worship@dnu.org

Twenty-five years since the first Emmaus Retreat at Holy Redeemer in Marshall

by Christine Clancy, editor
The Prairie Catholic

As the disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus returned joyfully to Jerusalem to share the Good News, an Emmaus Retreat provides a setting for today’s disciples of Jesus to walk the transforming road to Emmaus.

In October, Holy Redeemer parish in Marshall held its 25th annual women’s Emmaus Retreat; 31 women participated. The retreat format of the Emmaus movement dates back to 1978 and is based on the *Gospel of Luke 24:13-35*, “And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village

named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.” . . .

The three-day retreat offers small group sharing, reflecting, journaling, prayer, Mass, and the sacrament of Reconciliation. Invited speakers were present to share their experiences of coming to know God in their lives. An opportunity to renew and deepen their relationship with the Lord, a number of the women attending the Emmaus retreat have been doing so since the parish began hosting the event. As one participant said, “It is a time for personal growth as well as for those searching for ‘something more.’”

During the retreat, it is not unusual to experience spiritual healing or relief from emotional burdens. The retreat also serves as an ideal time to make new or renew friendships while recognizing Jesus intimately in Breaking of the Bread during the celebration of Mass.

The next women’s Emmaus Retreat is scheduled for Oct. 11-13, 2024. The parish also offers a men’s retreat which is scheduled for Feb. 9-11, 2024.

Contact Lisa Meyer, tl.meyer.fam@outlook.com.

catholic trends

NEW ULM – On Sunday, Jan. 31, 2024, there will be an Ecumenical Prayer Service for Christian Unity, this year held at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm at 3 p.m. Individuals and congregations, representing several different Christian denominations in southwest and west-central Minnesota, will gather for an ecumenical celebration of the Word of God. The service is held as part of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity observed Jan. 18-25, 2024. A reception will follow the prayer service. Everyone is invited to attend. For questions contact the Diocese of New Ulm Office of Worship, (507) 233-5320.

VATICAN CITY – The Vatican has published the schedule of Pope Francis’ liturgies for Christmas 2023 through the Jan. 7 feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Most of the liturgies will take place in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Following his custom in recent years, Pope Francis will preside over a Christmas Eve “Mass at Night” at 7:30 p.m. in the basilica. On Christmas Day, he will deliver the traditional “*urbi et orbi*” (“to the city and the world”) blessing from the central balcony on the front of St. Peter’s Basilica. For the vigil of the Jan. 1 solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the pope will preside over first vespers,

also known as evening prayer. On Jan. 1, 2024, he will preside over a Mass at 10 a.m. for the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. The first day of the year is also commemorated as the World Day of Peace. For the solemnity of Epiphany, which is observed in Italy and the Vatican on Jan. 6, Francis will again preside at a Mass at 10 a.m. And on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 7, Pope Francis will preside at a Mass in the Sistine Chapel, where he will also baptize the babies of several Vatican employees.

VATICAN CITY – The Vatican unveiled its annual Nativity scene on Dec. 9, 2023, paying special tribute to the origins of the beloved tradition on its 800th anniversary. The scene in St. Peter’s Square depicts not only Mary and Joseph standing beside the manger but also St. Francis of Assisi, who organized the first Nativity scene in a cave in the Italian village of Greccio on Christmas Eve in 1223. At the center of the scene is the now-empty manger, where a figure of the newborn savior will be placed on Christmas Eve. On one side of manger, Mary kneels, flanked by Joseph, while on the other side, St. Francis of Assisi stands in a pose of wonder.

In addition to Mary, Joseph, St. Francis, and the traditional ox and donkey, the 13th-century mayor of Greccio who helped organize the first Nativity scene, Giovanni Velita, is featured in statue form, along with his wife, Alticama. Three Franciscan friars, whom St. Francis had tasked with setting up the first Nativity scene as a place where local faithful could come and contemplate the poverty of the incarnate Lord, are also depicted.

The backdrop of the scene is a replica of the fresco that decorates the Chapel of the Nativity in Greccio, which is built into the

grotto where St. Francis set up the first Nativity scene. On one half of the fresco, he kneels in adoration of the Christ child; on the other side, Mary feeds the newborn savior while Joseph, the ox, and the donkey look on. Underneath the fresco, a Franciscan friar is depicted celebrating Mass in the grotto. The friar elevates the body of Christ directly behind the manger.

In another fitting tribute to the Nativity scene’s origins, this year’s Vatican display was provided by the Diocese of Rieti, which is where Greccio is located.

After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. – (Matthew 2:9)

