

THE PRAIRIE CATHOLIC

Pastoral news from across the Diocese of New Ulm

Minnesota's Most Rural Diocese Diocese of New Ulm Vol. 38 No. 1 September 2023



(Photo by Mary Franta)

Celebrating 100 years of education!

WABASSO, Minn. – St. Anne's Catholic Elementary School (Pk-6 grade) in Wabasso began its 2023-24 academic year by celebrating its 100th year of providing young students a solid religious and academic foundation. The school will be having its official celebration on Saturday, Sept. 30, beginning at noon. Activities will include a parade, school tour, Homecoming football game and activities, and Mass followed by a catered dinner at the Wabasso Community Center (RSVP required). The public is invited to attend all events. For details, contact St. Anne's School (507) 342-5389.

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Happy anniversary Bishop Zielinski!

September 27 will mark one year since Bishop Chad W. Zielinski was installed as the fifth bishop of the Diocese of New Ulm.

(Turn to pages 2 and 5 for special coverage.)

Gender ideology and how it affects us all to be addressed in November

by Christine Clancy
The Prairie Catholic

Mary Hasson, the Kate O'Beirne Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., is scheduled to speak in November at several gatherings across the Diocese of New Ulm. Each of Hasson's presentations will address the issue of the "Transgender Movement: What Catholics Need to Know."

Hasson is co-founder and director of the Center's Person and Identity Project, an initiative that equips parents and faith-based institutions to promote the truth about the human person and counter gender ideology. An attorney and policy expert, Hasson has been a keynote speaker for the Holy See during the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, addressing education, women and work,

caregiving, and gender ideology, and serves as a consultant to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family, Life, and Youth.

The Diocese of New Ulm Office of Continuing Education of Clergy and the Office of Marriage and Family Life first invited Hasson to the diocese in February 2022 for presentations addressing issues of sexual identity. She offered several workshop opportunities for clergy and an evening presentation for medical professionals, directors of religious education, and Catholic school principals. Her return to the diocese this November will be an opportunity for the diocesan faithful to understand the current landscape and be formed in Catholic teaching regarding sexual identity.

Hasson to present at three locations in the diocese:

Sleepy Eye - November 4, Diocesan Ethics Conference,

Montevideo AND Olivia - Nov. 5, Montevideo (afternoon), Olivia (evening),

Olivia - Nov. 6, Diocesan Faith Formation Day. Break-out session: "Talking to Parents and Kids about Transgender Issues."

*For details or to register for any of these opportunities visit www.dnu.org.

To provide a peek into Hasson's presentations, Christine Clancy of *The Prairie Catholic* posed several questions to her concerning transgender and sexual identity issues versus our Catholic faith.



Attorney and policy expert Mary Hasson will address "gender ideology" in three locations in the Diocese of New Ulm in November.
(Photo submitted)

The Prairie Catholic: Can you provide a brief overview of what your presentations will be about?

In our culture today, the narratives about human identity ("who we are") have become very confusing – and it's important to know the truth. My talks will aim first to present the truth about the human person, according to Catholic teaching, and then to contrast this with the beliefs of gender ideology.

I'll unpack how gender ideology is affecting all of us, particularly young people, who are absorbing the false beliefs of gender ideology through social media channels, peers, schools, and even healthcare. My closing talk will present some ideas on effective ways to deliver the truth and provide pastoral care on these issues.

always know the backstory of what led the person to reject his or her given sexual identity as male or female. Statistically, persons who identify as "transgender" tend to have pre-existing mental health issues and may have experienced trauma or loss that left wounds in need of healing. None of those deeper issues can be addressed in a casual or single conversation. In the context of a relationship, however, it may be possible to help the person find assistance or a path towards healing.

Even as we seek to be kind and compassionate, it is critically important that we are clear, in our own hearts and minds, about the truth: Every person is created either male or female, and sex cannot change. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that everyone must acknowledge and accept his or her sexual identity as male or female. Changes in name, clothing, appearance, or even to a person's body parts or function do not change the fundamental truth that the person is – and always will be – male or female as created by God.

Every person is called to live in the truth about who they are – attempts to medically or surgically alter the body to deny that truth lead to serious harm.

We need to have our hearts in the right place, which means truly loving and respecting every person – even those who might reject our faith or who lead lives that fail to align in some respect with the truth. We also need to realize that these situations are complicated – there's no single explanation for why an individual might be experiencing identity or body-related distress. Nor do we

The Prairie Catholic: In general, our Catholic faith calls us to treat everyone with respect and kindness, acknowledging the dignity of the person. What is a practical and compassionate approach that Catholics can take toward a person who identifies as transgender but, at the same time, does not endorse gender ideology and transitioning?

Practically speaking, in our encounters with someone who identifies as transgender, we ought to treat the person with kindness and respect but also be willing to draw boundaries to protect our conscience rights and freedom. No one else has the right to demand

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September 2023



One year later, bishop finds being here 'an honor and a great blessing'

by Christine Clancy
The Prairie Catholic

NEW ULM – On Sept. 27, 2022, Bishop Chad W. Zielinski was installed as the fifth bishop for the Diocese of New Ulm. He had previously served as the bishop of the Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska. In place of his regular pastoral column, *That they may have life*, the bishop sat down for a question and answer with Christine Clancy, editor of *The Prairie Catholic*, to reflect back on his first year of ministry, discussing what has surprised him about this diocese, what he is grateful for in his first twelve months, and what challenges he has faced.

Q. Bishop, you have served this small rural diocese for over a year. How would you assess your leadership thus far?

Bishop Zielinski: I remember having a conversation with a priest friend the first year I was ordained a bishop in Alaska. I was somewhat frustrated trying to figure out what it means to be a bishop, but really only operating from an officer leadership model. I had been trained as a military officer. You focus on the mission, you keep pushing people, you push yourself to the point of where you'll die for the mission. And as this priest patiently listened to me, he turned to me and said, 'Who do you think you are? This diocese doesn't belong

to you; it belongs to Jesus Christ. And he's the shepherd and leader.' And then that scene of Jesus telling Peter, *Get behind me and follow me*, came to mind. Once I embraced that call to leadership as a follower of Jesus Christ, I felt a heavy burden was lifted. As a bishop, I have taken this to heart. I don't live it perfectly, but I have tried to embrace following Christ and allowing him to lead, yet, bringing others to follow Jesus, the leader of our diocese, and truly, passionately believing in that.

I was once told by a priest friend that if I surrounded myself with people way smarter than me, I would be successful. There are a lot of wise people in this diocese, and I have been very blessed.

Q: What has been the most surprising thing about life in the Diocese of New Ulm?

Bishop Zielinski: As I have driven around the diocese these past 12 months, I have seen these very small farming communities that pop up in the middle of cornfields and bean fields. I find it very peaceful and prayerful. I have gotten to know many of the farm families who work long hours with equipment that produces this massive production of corn and beans that feed their animals and help provide for the world. I have been surprised and impressed that the people in these small communities are very tight-knit; everybody knows each other, and that is expressed in their faith communities.

I have been deeply touched by how the Christian faithful live a simple life here, and I don't mean that in any pejorative sense at all. They are hardworking, and they step up when there is a need for something. I am amazed at the generosity and outpouring; whether it is a financial need, if it's a family that needs something, people respond.

Q. What have been the most significant adjustments for you?

Bishop Zielinski: The shift in transportation has probably been the most significant adjustment. It has been a complete change in the pace of life, and I am trying to get used to that. In Alaska, spending days on snow machines and boats on the Yukon River to go and celebrate Mass at a parish was not unusual. Here in the diocese,



Bishop Zielinski poses for a photograph inside the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm on Aug. 16, 2023. Since the bishop's arrival in the diocese he has visited 33 parishes, celebrated 17 Confirmations, (Photo by Christine Clancy)

get out into the peripheries, not remain locked up in the rectory; get out there and meet people.

So, with that kind of call coming from Pope Francis along with the United States' Catholic bishops' Eucharistic Revival and the faithful's thirst for the Eucharist, I saw a genuine need for Evangelization. The Diocese of New Ulm's Eucharistic Revival Committee that has been formed, I think, is really the catalyst for a successful Eucharistic Revival here in the diocese. As a result, we have hired a diocesan director of Hispanic Ministry who will be "on fire" with the Hispanic community

(Continued on page 5.)

Bishop's calendar

Sept. 16: Friends of San Lucas Gala, New Ulm

Sept. 18-22: USCCB Native American Affairs National Gathering, Washington DC

Sept. 24: Diocesan Ministries Appeal Bishop's Guild Dinner, Max's Grill, Olivia

Sept. 26: Diocesan Staff Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, New Ulm

Priests Personnel Board Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center

Senior Leadership Team Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center

Sept. 27: Minnesota Catholic Conference Board Meeting, St. Paul

Sept. 30: 100th Anniversary Mass and Celebration of St. Anne School, Wabasso

Oct. 1: St. Anastasia, Hutchinson and St. Boniface, Stewart Confirmation, St. Anastasia, Hutchinson

Oct. 3-5: Catholic Home Missions Allocation Meetings, Diocesan Pastoral Center

Oct. 6-8: Enders Island Board Meeting, Connecticut

Oct. 9-14: Ordination and Installation of Bishop-elect Steven Maekawa, Fairbanks, Alaska

Oct. 15: Corpus Christi AFC Confirmation, St. Mary, Arlington

Oct. 17-18: Diocesan Fall Clergy Days, St. Mary, Willmar

Oct. 20: Senior Leadership Team Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center

Oct. 22: Hope and Healing Service, Holy Redeemer, Marshall

Oct. 24: Staff Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center

Oct. 26: Mass and School Visit, St. Anastasia, Hutchinson

Oct. 30: Diocesan Staff Meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center

Editor's note: Calendar represents Bishop Zielinski's schedule at the time "The Prairie Catholic" went to press.



New faces in ministry at the Catholic Pastoral Center in New Ulm

Office of Evangelization established to assist bishop in implementing evangelization initiatives

NEW ULM – Bishop Chad W. Zielinski announces the appointment of four new key leaders who will serve on his diocesan curia at the Pastoral Center in New Ulm.

The new appointments, effective immediately, include Fr. Brendan Rolling as director of the Office of Vocations and Fr. Tanner Thooft as associate director; Anisabel Palma, director of the Office of Hispanic Ministry, and Leonard Gutierrez, director of the Office of Evangelization, a new office that was established this year.

Vocations

Fr. Rolling is a native Minnesotan who grew up in rural Arco and attended Ivanhoe public schools. After high school, he enlisted in the United States Army National Guard, serving in Minnesota and Kansas from 1989-1995. In 1998 he took his Solemn Profession of Monastic Vows at St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kan., and was ordained to the priesthood on July 1, 2000. He received faculties to serve in the Diocese of New Ulm in 2021 and was appointed by Bishop Emeritus John M. LeVoir to serve as parochial vicar at Christ the King Area Faith Community (Canby, Ivanhoe, Lake Benton, St. Leo, Tyler, and Wilno). Fr. Rolling now serves as parochial vicar of the All Saints Area Faith Community (Fairfax, Gibbon, and Winthrop in addition

to his responsibilities as Vocations director.

Fr. Rolling brings to his new diocesan role grit and character, along with excitement to serve Christ in the young people of the Diocese of New Ulm. His associate director, Fr. Tanner Thooft, is eager to be working alongside Fr. Rolling to foster an openness and discerning spirit in the hearts of the many generous men and women of the diocese.

Recently ordained to the priesthood in 2022, Fr. Thooft can still recall the many questions and unknowns that arise as one seeks to give themselves to the Lord through a vocation in the Church. If he had one word of advice to young people considering this gift of themselves in their own life, it would be to simply respond to the current step the Lord is asking you to take in faithfulness and fidelity to his activity in your life. “We might not know where the road will lead, but if we follow the Lord, we know it will be a great adventure beyond anything we could imagine,” Fr. Thooft said.

Apart from his work in vocations, Fr. Thooft serves as parochial vicar in the Divine Mercy Area Faith Community (Comfrey, Morgan, Leavenworth, and Sleepy Eye). He also is assisting in the diocesan Office of Worship. If you or someone you know is interested



Four new leaders have joined Bishop Zielinski's diocesan staff at the Pastoral Center in New Ulm. Pictured l-r, Fr. Tanner Thooft is serving as associate director of the Office of Vocations, Leonard Gutierrez is serving as director of Evangelization, Fr. Brendan Rolling is serving as the director of the Office of Vocations, and Anisabel Palma is serving as director of Hispanic Ministry and Outreach.

(Photo by Christy Baker)

in a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, contact the diocesan Office of Vocations (507) 233-5302, jmichaels@dnu.org.

Hispanic Ministry and Outreach

Anisabel Palma is the new director of the Office of Hispanic Ministry and Outreach for the Diocese of New Ulm. Palma brings a decade of experience in Hispanic ministry, previously serving as the Hispanic director at the Jesus Our Living Water Area Faith Community (Clara City, Willmar, and Spicer). She is looking forward to her new role and getting to know the people throughout

the diocese. Her expertise lies in leadership, support, training, and Spanish language pastoral formation and catechesis for area faith community (AFC) and parish Hispanic Ministry. An estimated 14,000 Hispanics reside throughout the 15 counties that make up the Diocese of New Ulm. Spanish Masses are celebrated in Glencoe, Litchfield, Marshall, Montevideo, and Willmar.

Palma is available to speak at your parish or group, regardless of whether there are Spanish-speaking members. She offers captivating insights into the stories

of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Juan Diego and the special gifts and blessings Hispanic brothers and sisters bring to the Diocese of New Ulm. To arrange a speaking engagement or any other inquiries, email apalma@dnu.org or contact the Office of Hispanic Ministry and Outreach, (507) 233-5360.

Evangelization

Leonard Gutierrez will serve as the new director of the Office of Evangelization for the Diocese of New Ulm. He will be assisting the bishop in the implementation of all diocesan initiatives focused on evangelization, missionary discipleship, and Eucharistic Revival, helping to establish a shared understanding of authentic Catholic evangelization, equipping individuals and area faith communities to live as disciples and be sent out as missionary disciples.

Gutierrez comes to the Diocese of New Ulm with more than six years of experience with FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students), a Catholic outreach program for American college students founded in 1997.

If you want to learn more about the Office of Evangelization or share how the office can accompany you in your discipleship journey, contact Leonard Gutierrez at lgutierrez@dnu.org, (507) 233-5361.

Diocesan retired priests honored; combined ministry of 1,347 years

NEW ULM – On July 13, 2023, Bishop Chad Zielinski hosted at his home in New Ulm a supper to honor the retired and semi-retired priests of the Diocese of New Ulm.

The following retired priests of the diocese were honored: Fr. Jim Barry (62 years of ministry), Fr. David Breu (50 years), Fr. Gene Brown (64 years), Fr. Pat Casey (58 years), Fr. Jim Devorak (51 years), Fr. Fred Fink (62 years), Bishop Emeritus John LeVoir (42), Fr. Bob Mraz (49 years), Fr. Jack Nordick (33 years), Fr. Peter Nosbush (53 years), Fr. Jerry Paulson (47 years), Fr. John Pearson (57 years), Fr. Tony Plathe (60 years), Fr. Germain Rademacher (65 years), Msgr. John Richter (59 years), Fr. Keith Salisbury (17 years), Fr. Phil Schotzko (46 years), Fr. Paul Schumacher (61 years), and Fr. Bernie Steiner (62). The priests who could be fully retired but have chosen to continue to serve are: Fr. John Goggin (59 years), Fr. Dennis Labat (49 years), Msgr. Gene Lozinski (51 years), Fr. Andy Michels (38 years), Fr. Jerry Meidl (49 years), and Fr. George Schmit (55 years).

Together they have served a total of 1,347 years of priestly ministry. The diocese is grateful for their service.



In July, Bishop Chad Zielinski hosted a supper at his home in New Ulm for brother priests. Front row, l-r: Bishop Zielinski, Fr. George Schmit, Fr. Nathan Hansen, Msgr. John Richter, Fr. Paul Schumacher, Fr. Gerry Paulson, Fr. Josh Bot, and Fr. Paul Timmerman. Middle row: Fr. Jerry Meidl, Fr. Sam Perez, Fr. Cornelius Ezeiloaku, Fr. Tanner Thooft, Msgr. Douglas Grams, Fr. David Breu, Fr. Bob Mraz, Fr. Germain Rademacher, Fr. Tony Hesse, and Fr. Keith Salisbury. Back row: Fr. John Hayes, Fr. Zach Peterson, Fr. Shawn Polman, Fr. Pat Casey, Fr. Phil Schotzko, Fr. Steve Verhelst, Fr. Jim Barry, Fr. Jeremy Kucera, and Fr. Joe Steinbeisser. (Photo submitted)



El Obispo Zielinski reflexiona sobre su primer año en New Ulm

por Bishop Chad Zielinski

En una reciente sesión de preguntas y respuestas con Christine Clancy, editora de *The Prairie Catholic*, el Obispo Zielinski reflexiona sobre su primer año como obispo de la Diócesis de New Ulm, nos cuenta lo que le ha sorprendido sobre esta diócesis, por lo que está agradecido de sus primeros doce meses y los desafíos que ha enfrentado.

Pregunta: Obispo, usted ha servido a esta pequeña diócesis rural durante más de un año. ¿Cómo evaluaría su liderazgo hasta ahora?

Obispo Zielinski: Recuerdo haber tenido una conversación con un amigo sacerdote el primer año que fui ordenado obispo en Alaska. Estaba algo frustrado tratando de entender lo que significa ser obispo, pero realmente solo operaba desde un modelo de oficial de liderazgo. Había sido entrenado como oficial militar, como tal te enfocas en la misión, presionas a las personas, te empujas hasta el punto de estar dispuesto a morir por la misión. Y mientras este sacerdote me escuchaba pacientemente, se volvió hacia mí y me dijo: "¿Quién crees que eres? Esta diócesis no te pertenece a ti; pertenece a Jesucristo. Y él es el pastor y líder." Y luego me vino a la mente todo ese asunto de Jesús diciéndole a Pedro: "Toma tu cruz y sígueme." Una vez que abracé ese llamado al liderazgo como seguidor de Jesucristo, sentí que se me quitaba una pesada carga. Como obispo, he tomado esto muy a pecho. No lo vivo de manera perfecta, pero he tratado de seguir a Cristo y permitir que él me guíe, al mismo tiempo que llevo a otros a seguir a Jesús, el líder de nuestra diócesis, y creer en eso de manera verdadera y apasionada.

Un amigo sacerdote una vez me dijo que si me rodeaba de personas mucho más inteligentes que yo, tendría éxito. Hay muchas personas sabias en esta diócesis, y he sido muy bendecido.

Pregunta: ¿Cuál ha sido la cosa más sorprendente de la vida en la Diócesis de New Ulm?

Obispo Zielinski: Al estar manejando por la diócesis durante estos últimos 12 meses, he visto estas pequeñas comunidades agrícolas que aparecen en medio de campos de maíz y campos de frijoles. Lo encuentro muy pacífico y lleno de oración. He llegado a conocer a muchas de las familias de granjeros que trabajan largas horas con equipos que producen una gran producción de maíz y frijoles que alimentan a sus animales y ayudan a proveer alimentos para el mundo. Me ha sorprendido e impresionado que la gente en estas pequeñas

comunidades son muy unidas; todos se conocen entre sí, y eso se expresa en sus comunidades de fe.

Me ha conmovido profundamente cómo los fieles cristianos viven una vida sencilla aquí, y no lo digo en absoluto en un sentido peyorativo. Son trabajadores incansables, y se presentan cuando hay una necesidad de algo. Me asombra la generosidad y el desbordamiento; ya sea una necesidad financiera, si es una familia que necesita algo, la gente responde.

Pregunta: ¿Cuáles han sido los cambios más significativos para usted?

Obispo Zielinski: El cambio en el transporte ha sido probablemente el cambio más significativo. Ha sido un cambio completo en el ritmo de vida, y estoy tratando de acostumbrarme a eso. En Alaska, pasar días en motos de nieve y botes en el río Yukón para ir a celebrar la Misa en una parroquia no era inusual. Aquí en la diócesis, no es nada raro subirme a mi carro y manejar dos horas para algún lugar para celebrar una Misa de confirmación, ser parte de una visita pastoral o una actividad juvenil, y luego volver a casa. De hecho, en este momento, creo que estoy metiendo 2,500 millas al mes a mi carro, mientras que en Alaska, recorría alrededor de 3,000 millas al año, pero volaba mucho en aviones, y a veces podía llevarme varios días para llegar a un pueblo remoto. Otro cambio significativo es que en los meses más oscuros del invierno en Alaska, había muchas horas de oscuridad. Aquí en la diócesis, el sol sale en invierno alrededor de las 8 a. m. y se pone alrededor de las 4:30 p. m. ¡Es una bienvenida cálida!

Pregunta: Cuando lo entrevistamos en el *The Prairie Catholic* el año pasado, antes de su instalación, usted dijo que la Evangelización sería una de sus prioridades, ayudando a los fieles a abrazar el núcleo de su fe. ¿Cuánto progreso siente que se ha logrado en este sentido?

Obispo Zielinski: Realmente creo que el Espíritu Santo está ahí afuera, reavivando un fuego de fe en nosotros. La primera exhortación apostólica del Papa Francisco fue "La Alegría del Evangelio." Hubo un mensaje simple de tres partes que saqué de ese documento: encontrarse con Cristo, ser transformado y ser enviado. Y recientemente, el Santo Padre ha enfatizado fuertemente a los líderes pastorales que deberíamos salir a las periferias, no quedarnos encerrados en la rectoría; salir y conocer a la gente. Entonces, con ese tipo de llamado proveniente del Papa Francisco junto con el Renacimiento Eucarístico de los

obispos católicos de los Estados Unidos y la sed de los fieles por la Eucaristía, vi una necesidad genuina de Evangelización.

El Comité de Reavivamiento Eucarístico de la Diócesis de New Ulm que se ha formado, creo que realmente es el catalizador de un exitoso Reavivamiento Eucarístico aquí en la diócesis. Como resultado, hemos contratado a una directora diocesana de Ministerio Hispano que estará "ardiendo" con la comunidad hispana porque son la comunidad de más rápido crecimiento en nuestra diócesis en este momento. Además, hemos desarrollado una nueva Oficina Diocesana de Evangelización cuyo joven director tiene un celo y un corazón misionero. Su papel apoyará mi oficina y acompañará a nuestras parroquias y escuelas proporcionando recursos, consulta, capacitación y desarrollo de liderazgo que ayuden a participar en este llamado a ser enviados como discípulos misioneros.

La evangelización se resume en salir y decirles a aquellos que se sienten aislados y solos, o aquellos que han abandonado la Iglesia o se han alejado de su fe católica, que son parte de una familia. Dios te creó para ser comunitario, para ser parte de una familia. Y esa es nuestra misión como parroquia, como diócesis. Eres parte de esta familia parroquial, eres parte de esta familia diocesana, y es la familia de Jesucristo.

Pregunta: ¿Cuáles sientes que han sido tus desafíos más significativos en el último año?

Obispo Zielinski: Reconozco que hay preocupación por la reducción en el número de sacerdotes que tendremos en los próximos años. Y entrar en una diócesis donde enfrentamos una población y asistencia a la iglesia en declive no ha sido fácil. Creo que desde la fundación de la diócesis en 1957, ha habido 40 parroquias que se han fusionado o cerrado. Esa es una historia difícil. Es difícil ir a una parroquia y escuchar las historias de por qué la gente no quiere que su iglesia se fusione o cierre. Son buenas personas de Dios. Aman su fe, y es simplemente un proceso horrible y doloroso de presenciar, y no es agradable formar parte de ello. Así que rezo para que en medio de esas dificultades y desafíos de fusiones y cierres de parroquias, seamos un pueblo esperanzado con una visión pastoral; escuchando a Dios, entregándole tu corazón, que es rendirse a él, confiar en él y luego tener esperanza. Y, mientras avanzamos y las cosas cambian, los tiempos cambian y la demografía cambia, siempre recordamos que Dios todavía está aquí. Dios es un Dios amoroso que nos llena

de esperanza y derrama grandes bendiciones sobre nosotros.

Pregunta: ¿Qué ha considerado como su mayor bendición en el último año?

Obispo Zielinski: Mi respuesta tiene dos partes. Puede que haya oído el refrán, "A toro pasado, claridad." O este otro dicho: "Con el tiempo, se enderezan los entuertos." Cuando dejé Alaska y vine aquí, no me di cuenta de la bendición que recibí hasta que estuve lejos y me di cuenta de que las hermosas personas a las que serví en el norte de Alaska dejaron huellas sagradas y perlas de sabiduría en mi vida. Así que esa es una bendición que he traído a esta diócesis. Al servir en esta diócesis, me he dado cuenta de

que en el Centro Pastoral trabajo con personal excepcional y que nuestros sacerdotes son hombres maravillosos que simplemente se esfuerzan y se esfuerzan, algunos de ellos hasta el punto del agotamiento, pero aún así me reciben con amabilidad como a un hermano. Hay una tranquilidad estadounidense de la gente que te da la bienvenida, se acerca a ti y te pide que visites su granja, 'Ven a conducir mi tractor!' me dicen con frecuencia.

La gente es la mayor bendición. Realmente estoy lleno de gran esperanza y alegría, y considero que estar aquí para servir a la gente de esta diócesis es un hermoso honor y una gran bendición en mi vida.

Palma es nombrada Directora del Ministerio Hispano



Anisabel Palma es la nueva Directora del Ministerio Hispano en la Diócesis de New Ulm.

Anteriormente, trabajó en la comunidad del Área de Fe Jesús Nuestra Agua Viva (St. Clara, Clara City, St. Mary, Willmar, y Our Lady of the Lakes, Spicer) como Directora del Ministerio Hispano por nueve años, hasta que Dios puso en su corazón el deseo de servir a más feligreses.

Palma espera con ansias su nueva labor y conocer a la gente de toda la diócesis. Ella está muy emocionada de continuar con su

trabajo preparando materiales para apoyar a los catequistas y líderes pastorales que acompañan a los miembros de la Iglesia de habla hispana.

Palma está disponible para hablar en su parroquia o grupo, independientemente de si tienen miembros que hablan español o no. Ella ofrece cautivadoras historias de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y San Juan Diego, así como los dones especiales y bendiciones que nuestros hermanos y hermanas hispanos aportan a nuestra Diócesis. Para programar una charla o cualquier otra consulta, no dude en contactar a Anisabel apalma@dnu.org o comunicarse con su oficina en el Centro Pastoral: 507-233-5360.

God loves a cheerful giver!

by Bishop Chad Zielinski

On August 10 we celebrated the Feast of St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr who lived from 225-258. In 253, Valerian became the Roman Emperor. He tolerated the Christians at first but soon accelerated a persecution and ordered Lawrence to surrender the treasures of the Church. In the words of St. Ambrose of Milan recalling the martyrdom of Lawrence he notes, "For when the treasures of the Church were demanded from him, he promised that he would show them. On the following day he brought the poor together. When asked where the treasures were which he had promised, he pointed to the poor, saying: 'These are the treasures of the Church.' And truly they were treasures, in whom Christ lives, in whom there is faith in Him. . . These treasures Lawrence pointed out, and prevailed, for the persecutors could not take them away..."

Through the intercession of St. Lawrence, may our hearts, minds and eyes be anointed to always see the poor and those less fortunate than us as treasures of the Church.

To learn about the ministries supported by the annual Diocesan Ministries Appeal visit www.dnu.org/dma.



'Hear God, hand Him your heart, have hope': A brief look back at the bishop's one year of ministry

(Continued from page 2.)

because they are the number one growing community in our diocese right now.

Also, we have developed a new diocesan Office of Evangelization whose young director has a zeal and a missionary heart. His role will support my office and accompany our parishes and schools by providing resources, consultation, training, and leadership development that help engage in this call to be sent as missionary disciples.

Evangelization boils down to going out there and telling those who feel isolated and alone or those who have left the Church or fallen away from their Catholic faith that they are part of a family. God created you to be communal. And that's our mission as a parish, as a diocese. You're part of this parish family, you're part of this diocesan family, and it is the family of Jesus Christ.

Q. What do you feel have been your most significant challenges over this past year?

Bishop Zielinski: I recognize there is a concern about the reduced number of priests we will have in the upcoming years. And stepping into a diocese where we face a declining population and church attendance has not been easy. I think since the inception of the diocese in 1957, there have been 40 parishes that have been merged or closed. That is a difficult story. It is tough to go to a parish and hear the stories of why people don't want their church to merge or close. They are good people of God. They love their faith, and it is just a horrible, painful process to watch.

So I pray that amidst those difficulties and challenges of parish mergers and closures that we are a hopeful people with a pastoral vision; hearing God, handing him your heart, which is surrendering to him, trusting him, and then having hope. And, as we move forward and things change, times change, and demographics change, we always remember that



During the Chrism Mass on March 30, 2023, at Holy Redeemer, Marshall, the bishop blessed the Holy Oils to be used in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick.



Bishop Zielinski celebrated a May Crowning Mass on May 10, 2023, at St. Edward's Catholic School in Minneota. Following the Mass he stopped by each classroom to visit with students.

God is still here. God is a loving God who fills us with hope and pours great blessings upon us.

Q. What have you considered your greatest blessing this past year?

Bishop Zielinski: My answer is two-fold. You may have heard the phrase, "Hindsight has twenty-twenty vision?" When I left Alaska and came here, I didn't realize the blessing I received until I was away and realized that the beautiful people I served in northern Alaska left sacred footprints and pearls of wisdom in my life.

So that is one blessing I have brought to this diocese. Serving in this diocese I have realized that I work with an outstanding staff at the Pastoral Center and that our priests are wonderful guys that are just pushing and pushing

themselves, some of them to the point of exhaustion but yet receiving me with kindness as a brother. There is a peacefulness in this rural American mindset of people welcoming you, approaching you, and asking you to visit their farm, "Come drive my tractor!"

The people are the greatest blessing. I am really filled with great hope and joy and consider just being here to serve the people of this diocese as a beautiful honor and a great blessing in my life.



Bishop Zielinski's video reflection on his one year in the Diocese of New Ulm is available at www.dnu.org/bishop.



Bishop Zielinski has found a "peacefulness in this rural American mindset of people welcoming you, approaching you, and asking you to visit their farm."



The bishop administered the sacrament of Confirmation to youth of St. Isidore the Farmer Area Faith Community held at Sacred Heart, Murdock on April 23, 2023. Also pictured, Fr. Jeremy Kucera.



The bishop blesses a baby Jesus figurine during the diocesan Advent Prayer Service held at St. Philip's, Litchfield on Dec. 18, 2022.



The bishop celebrated Mass at St. Mary's, Willmar on Dec. 10, 2022, in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12).



Tips for overcoming back-to-school anxiety



by Sam Rickertsen, MS LMFT
Catholic Charities
Diocese of New Ulm

Back-to-school or college can be both a time of excitement and worry for students. For some, the fear and worry associated with going back to school can be overwhelming.

For students struggling with back-to-school anxiety, there are things you can do to help them manage their worries.

First, start by identifying what their concerns are. Let them know that it is normal to feel some anxiety about going back to school. There are also things you can do to help.

- Encourage your student to express their feelings. It is important to allow your student to express their feelings about going back to school, both positive and negative. Avoid dismissing their fears or telling them they shouldn't feel nervous.

- Assist your student with developing coping skills. There are several coping skills that can help students manage their anxiety, such as positive self-talk, relaxation skills, and deep breathing. Help your student learn these skills and practice using them when they start to feel anxious.

- Be patient and understanding. It may take some time for your student to adjust to their new routine and environment. If your student's anxiety is severe or interfering with their ability to function at school or college it is important to seek professional help. A therapist can help them develop coping skills

and strategies for managing their anxiety.

Practical tips for helping reduce anxiety in younger children include:

- **Start preparing** your child for the new school year a few weeks ahead of time. This will give them time to adjust to their new schedule and make a smoother transition.

- **Visit the school** with your child before the first day of school. This will help them become more familiar with the new environment and reduce their anxiety.

- **Encourage your child** to reach out to friends before the first day of school. This will help them feel more comfortable and supported on their first day.

- **Help your child organize** their supplies before school starts so they can feel more prepared and in control.

- **Review your child's daily school schedule** with them for the first several weeks until it becomes routine.

It is important that you manage your own worries so that it doesn't exacerbate the situation.



Counseling services are available at four locations throughout the diocese, New Ulm, Marshall, Hutchinson, and Willmar. Call 1-866-670-5163, pkral@dnu.org.

Totus Tuus summer program shares the Gospel with youth, promotes the faith

NEW ULM – Another successful summer of the Catholic youth program *Totus Tuus* (Latin for “Totally Yours”) wrapped up in August. Throughout the summer, 12 young adult missionaries visited 18 parishes in the Diocese of New Ulm, serving around 650 elementary, middle, and high school-aged youth.

Totus Tuus missionaries host a daytime agenda consisting of games, skits, catechesis, and daily Mass for elementary students, and an evening program of small group discussion and a talk on how to live the Catholic faith for middle and high school-aged youth.

Missionaries serving this summer were Hazel Chvatal (St. Philip, Litchfield), Luke Hasson (Mater Ecclesiae, Berlin, NJ), Ellie Kirby (St. Columbkille, Dubuque,



Totus Tuus missionaries Julia Nilles, Zach Koralewski, and Anissa Kulzer of Team Immaculate Heart get doused during a water fight at St. Peter's in Canby.

(Photo by Kari Nilles)

Iowa), Zach Koralewski (St. Mary, Arlington), Anissa Kulzer (St. Philip, Litchfield), Maryanne Larsen (St. Michael, Morgan), Brendan MacLeod (St. Patrick/St. Anthony, Grand Haven, Mich.),

John Mendiola (St. John, Dassel), Sarah Mendiola (St. John, Dassel), Julia Nilles (St. Dionysius, Tyler), David Rabaey (St. Eloi, Ghent), and Noah U'Ren (St. Catherine, Redwood Falls).

Relics of three remarkable saints coming to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

The relics of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and her parents, Saints Zélie and Louis Martin, will be touring Minneapolis and Saint Paul between October 4 and October 15.

Following are the locations and dates open to the public. Visit the following websites for details

Oct. 4–5: St. Mary parish in Stillwater – www.stmichaelandstmarystillwater.org

Oct. 6–7: Cathedral of St. Paul – www.cathedralsaintpaul.org

Oct. 7–10: Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis – www.mary.org

Oct. 12–15: St. Therese parish in Deephaven – www.st-therese.org

What is a relic?

Relics are classified as first, second, or third class. A first class relic is part of a saint's body (e.g., bone, blood, flesh). Second class relics are possessions that a saint owned such as clothing or something used by a saint. Third class relics are objects that have been touched to a first, second, or another third class relic of a saint. They will be displaying first class relics of the visiting saints for veneration.

Why venerate relics?

There are many healing examples after exposure to relics from Sacred Scripture to online references. The healing is from God; relics are the means through which he acts. Any good that comes about through a relic

is God's doing. By venerating or honoring the saints whom God has worked through in an extraordinary way, we adore and glorify God who worked so beautifully in their lives. Our veneration of relics also reminds us that we are part of the Communion of Saints, the great cloud of witnesses who have run the race before us (*Heb. 12:1*).

Visit www.st-therese.org/st-therese-relics for information about this inspiring and rare opportunity to venerate this family of saints outside of France. For questions about the Twin Cities opportunities contact Laura Hunziker, relics@st-therese.org.

New leadership at School of St. Philip



LITCHFIELD – Andrea Dietrich is excited to begin as principal

at the School of St. Philip in Litchfield. With a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn., Dietrich brings experiences which include 15-plus years of teaching in both the Diocese of New Ulm and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Dietrich feels she knows and understands how God is working

in our Catholic schools to call each of his children to be of service to one another. “There is a great beauty in that, and I am honored to be a part of preparing young minds to receive this call,” she said. “With God’s help and the support of this wonderful community, I hope to continue with the great tradition of Catholic education at the School of St. Philip.”

Mathiowetz's conversion to the Catholic faith meant 'finding a new beginning'

by Ronda Mathiowetz

Growing up Evangelical United Brethren, which eventually merged with the Methodist Church, I had experiences in Sunday School, Sunday Service, Bible School, Easter Sunrise Service, summer camps on Lake Koronis, and Lay Witness Missions in Minnesota and Iowa. This was the beginning of my relationship with Jesus.

My husband Brian was raised Catholic. When we began our marriage preparation in 1980, we discussed what faith tradition we would choose. My parents had always taught me that a family is stronger and can get through anything if they follow Jesus and practice the same faith tradition. Brian and I were married in the Catholic Church on June 27, 1981, at the Church of the Japanese Martyrs in Leavenworth. What a gift it was to have my parents support my choice of religion.

In 1980, there was not yet a Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) program in the Catholic Church. I began learning about the Catholic faith through resources I received from the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. I would answer the questions and return them for evaluation and a possible response.

Since I was already baptized, these resources, in addition to the marriage preparation meetings Brian and I attended as a couple, prepared me for receiving the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. A year into my marriage, I began my journey of receiving the sacrament of Confirmation and in 1983 I was confirmed. After that I became highly involved in teaching confirmation, leading music for Mass, and youth ministry in my parish. In 1993, I attended World Youth Day in Denver.

However, it was when attending a TEC (Together Encounter



"Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist gave me the courage to continue searching to improve my ways of following Christ." - Ronda Mathiowetz

Christ) weekend that during Mass, I felt that I had experienced the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Our preparation for Mass the night before was

experiencing the Stations of the Cross and receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation. It was a wonderful time to focus on Christ and what I wanted my life to be

with him. Reconciliation washed all my shortcomings and sins away to give me a new beginning.

Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist gave me the courage to continue searching to improve my ways of following Christ.

Editor's note: Ronda and her husband, Brian, reside in rural Sleepy Eye. Since becoming Catholic, Ronda has been active in the New Ulm Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (NUDCCW) on both the parish and diocesan levels. She served as Region President in 2012 and eventually as the NUDCCW treasurer, 1st vice president, and president (2016 – 2018).

If you or someone you know has a story to share with *The Prairie Catholic* about "why you became Catholic," email cclancy@dnu.org; (507) 233-5332.

Lessons from St. Monica for those whose children have left the Church

by Isabel Barry
Catholic News Agency

Hundreds of thousands of young adults filled the streets of Lisbon, Portugal, for the 2023 World Youth Day in early August – gathering together for Mass, eucharistic adoration, prayer, and fellowship. The event was powerful and moving, but for some Catholics reading or watching the news coverage of World Youth Day, their interest may be tinged with sadness that their own children or grandchildren don't share the exuberant faith of the young WYD attendees.

This scenario is a very common one, as religious disaffiliation is rapidly on the rise: Nearly one-third of U.S. adults identify as nonreligious, and in particular, more than half of those who were raised Catholic end up leaving the Church at some point in their lives. Four in ten never return.

Parents and grandparents whose loved ones have left the Church often seek out the prayers of, and find inspiration in, the example of St. Monica. Although she lived more than 1,600 years ago, her story is remarkably familiar to many Catholic parents today.

St. Monica was the mother of St. Augustine, who is today one of the best-known theologians and saints of the Church. But for a long time, it didn't seem like he was headed for holiness.

Monica's non-Catholic husband wouldn't let her baptize Augustine as a child, and while she yearned for her son's conversion, he resisted joining the Church as a young man for 17 years. Monica never stopped praying in hopes of his conversion and he was eventually received into the Church just a few months before her death.

If this story sounds familiar, a new book from *Ascension Press* might speak to your heart and offer hope and consolation. It's called "What Would Monica Do?", and its authors, Patti Maguire Armstrong and Roxane Beauclair Salonen, are themselves mothers who offer guidance, practical advice, and prayers for navigating the difficulty of losing a loved one to the world through their reflections on St. Monica.



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

The Mission of the National Eucharistic Revival is to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.
Visit www.dnu.org for more information.

"What Would Monica Do?" recently earned first place in the Family Life and Pastoral Ministry/Parish Life categories at the 2023 Catholic Media Association's Book Awards.

St. Monica's inspiration

Armstrong and Salonen seek to bring hope and solidarity to parents grieving their child or grandchild leaving the Church. "We saw the book as a way to extend the support of friendship to others in the same situation and to offer understanding, support, and hope," Armstrong said.

"So many of Patti's and my prayer swaps had to do with this shared heartache," Salonen added. "We knew we weren't the only ones. We were very prayerful about whether we would venture out with this heartache, but in the end,

felt that God was calling us to bring it into the light to bring hope to others."

"The more we learned about her (St. Monica) the more we realized that her life is not so different from what many parents today are dealing with," Armstrong said.

"Her husband was not Catholic, although he converted before he died. Augustine went away to school and came back at age 17 with a girlfriend and out-of-wedlock son and following a New Age religion. Her perseverance and faithfulness can be an inspiration to others praying for someone who seems far from the Church."

Monica's fourth-century world is remarkably similar to our own; she lived in a time when Christianity was just beginning and paganism still had a hold. She felt alone at times and was unsure about how to handle her wayward son, but her example in these difficulties offers a way forward to parents in similar situations.

"The love of Christ carried her through," Salonen told CNA. "She

took that love and poured it into others."

St. Ambrose, who served as bishop of Milan from 374–397, told Monica to "speak less to your son about God, and more to God about your son" – advice Armstrong and Salonen took to heart.

"She had to learn the art of letting go – of her desire to control her son's soul, and place her worries for him into God's heart," Salonen said. "We all seek the peace with which she ended her life, knowing her son had reclaimed Christ. But in the meantime, we can do what Monica did, deepening our faith, bringing others who are ready to Christ, and living in hope."

Many parents think they are alone in this suffering, but it's actually remarkably common.

Armstrong and Salonen host a private Facebook group called "Catholic Parents: What Would Monica Do?" where loved ones of fallen away Catholics share resources, triumphs, and sorrows.

"We'd love to have [anyone] join us and pray with us as we walk through this journey together, with St. Monica and Our Lord ever near," Salonen said.



Church must accompany people, tell truth about gender ideology

(Continued from page 1.)

that you endorse their beliefs or self-perception (especially when those beliefs do not align with reality) or to insist that you use particular language not grounded in the truth or refer to the person in ways that contradict the truth. Pronouns, for example, have a specific meaning. They take the place of a noun and indicate sex (male or female). It is not compassionate or kind to refer to a person by chosen pronouns that conflict with the truth. This validates the person's false belief that feelings determine reality or that a person can "be" someone other than the male or female they are simply by calling themselves something different. True accompaniment leads others along the path of truth to draw closer to Christ. True compassion requires us to see clearly the good for that person, according to God's plan, and to help them see and embrace that truth as well.

The Prairie Catholic: In one of his first acts in office, President Joe Biden signed an executive order to expand sexual discrimination in federal law to include sexual orientation and gender identity. The executive order "Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation" impacts all sectors of society, including school sports, the privacy of single-sex bathrooms, and faith-based organizations. What impact does gender ideology have on our society, and why do you believe that redefining sex to mean sexual orientation and gender identity is problematic?

"Sex" has an objective biological meaning that, until recently, was accepted by everyone. Biologists define sex as a classification based on the design of the person's body to fulfill one of two reproductive roles: a female body designed to make large gametes (ova) or a male body designed to make small gametes (sperm). Sex is binary because reproduction is binary. There are only two sexes. The attempt by the government and activists to redefine sex is part of a larger belief system that denies objective truth and instead gives primacy to the feelings of privileged groups.

In this case, the federal government and some state laws are redefining "sex" to include "gender identity," even though

"gender identity" describes a person's feelings or self-perception regardless of the person's sex - and typically in opposition to sex. This leads to serious problems both in law and social norms. In fact, gender ideology is permeating all of our institutions, with problematic effects on law, language, education, healthcare, and social relationships. A person's self-perceived "identity" can change at any time, in contradiction to reality, and no one has any way of knowing another's self-perceived identity unless it is declared because it is a subjective feeling, not an objective fact. Further, this "gender identity" framework imposes obligations on others, too, violating conscience and common sense. It requires females to go along with the claims of males who assert a "felt" identity as a girl or woman and demand to compete in female sports or enter female-only spaces such as bathrooms and locker rooms - all to the detriment of female privacy, safety, and opportunity. In addition, sex discrimination laws are being interpreted to require individuals to validate "gender identity" claims, even if doing so would violate their consciences. Most troubling, the spread of gender ideology is distorting children and adolescents' self-understanding and awareness of objective truth. Over time, this will make their hearts less receptive to Catholic teaching as well.

The Prairie Catholic: Young people are being taught, in schools, peer groups, and media, that their identities are self-defined and that the body can be manipulated to match their self-perception (gender identity). How can those in Catholic leadership roles help these young individuals gain a more accurate self-perception and expand their understanding of what it means to be a woman or man beyond stereotypes that pigeonhole people based on interests, personality traits, or appearance?

We need to teach our children the truth about who they are – created male or female, with unique gifts and personality traits. Our fundamental identity is as a son or daughter of the Lord. Stereotypes do not define "identity," and in fact, stereotypes differ from culture to culture and over time. Gender ideology has created an obsession among young people

with measuring themselves against stereotypes and then pursuing changes to the body because the person's interests or feelings don't "fit" certain stereotypes. Tell kids to forget the stereotypes, embrace the reality of sex, and then embark on the exciting journey of discovering and cultivating their talents and gifts. The Catholic perspective celebrates each person as "unique and unrepeatable," as Pope St. John Paul II once said while accepting our sexual identity as unchangeably male or female as a gift from God's own hand.

Parents need to be protective. Children – especially adolescents – are immersed in a peer culture that promotes gender ideology at every turn. Smartphones are especially problematic. We know that increased smartphone use is linked to rising rates of depression (including over half of teen girls). And social media algorithms send poisonous content to kids, celebrating double mastectomies in teen girls and encouraging every adolescent to "try out" alternative "identities." It is critical for parents to consider how peers, school, social media,

and even trusted adults (teachers, coaches, counselors) are affecting their child's self-perception and beliefs.

Ask your child questions about what they are hearing and experiencing. Listen to their replies and address concerns about the body, identity, or sexuality directly. Be willing to take action and change a child's environment. There are no do-overs in childhood, and parents have the irreplaceable responsibility of protecting their children from harmful influences. At the same time, work on strengthening your relationships with your children. They need you – your presence, guidance, and prayers.

The Prairie Catholic: How should Catholics engage with others in their families or the workplace when these topics arise?

Charitably and truthfully. Always be kind and remember that those who experience identity or body-related distress often suffer greatly. At the same time, be willing to stand up for the

truth. We are created male or female, and sex cannot change. No matter how uncomfortable a person is with their body or identity, using medical or surgical interventions to alter the body is not the pathway to happiness. ("Transition" does not prevent suicide or bring happiness in the long run.) Engaging in conversations on these issues requires some prudence.

It is helpful to highlight the evidence about the reality of sex and the importance of protecting sex-specific spaces. Even in progressive Scandinavian countries and the U.K., the tide is turning on "transgender" issues.

Those countries now prioritize psychotherapy as treatment for minors experiencing identity or body-related distress. And in the U.K., as in the U.S., there is growing recognition that women's rights are threatened by "gender identity" laws and policies. So share facts, ask questions, and be kind – but be willing to speak the truth in fidelity to God and conscience.

Growing in union with God Two from Willmar enjoy charisms of Secular Carmelites

by Christine Clancy
The Prairie Catholic

SPICER, Minn. – The Divine Mercy Chapter of Secular Carmelites has been meeting at the Church of Our Lady of the Lakes in Spicer since 2011 and has 15 members in different stages of its formation.

"Secular" in the Secular Carmelites is what formerly was referred to in the Church as a "third order," a group that is associated with a religious order in the Church such as the Carmelites, Franciscans, Dominicans, and Benedictines, but as lay people who live "in the world" while observing as much of the charism and life of the religious order as they are able, in their vocations and work.

In May, Kathy Schwantes of Willmar received her brown scapular as her formal entrance into the Divine Mercy Secular Carmelites, and Ed Green, also of Willmar, made his first promises in the Order during a Mass celebrated by the group's spiritual assistant (chaplain), Fr. Mark Steffl on Sunday, May 21 at the Church of Our Lady of the Lakes in Spicer.



Kathy Schwantes (left) of Willmar has received her brown scapular as her formal entrance into the Divine Mercy Secular Carmelites, and Ed Green, also of Willmar, has made first promises in the Order during a Mass on May 21 celebrated by spiritual assistant Fr. Mark Steffl at Our Lady of the Lakes in Spicer.

(Photo submitted)

The Secular Carmelites are associated with the Order of Discalced Carmelites, whose spirituality is based on the writings of St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of Lisieux, and other notable Carmelite saints. To be a Secular Carmelite involves a commitment to meet monthly with other group members, a half-hour

of meditative prayer each day, morning and evening prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, and daily Mass when possible, along with continued study of the faith and spiritual reading.

For more information about the Divine Mercy Secular Carmelites contact Jane Gahlon at jgahlon@gahlon.com.



Life-giving water in India

NUDCCW water project to continue through April 2024

by Sheryl Kaiser
NUDCCW Service
Commission coordinator

Spirituality, leadership, and service make up the mission of the New Ulm Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (NUDCCW). Through their annual service project initiative, the NUDCCW addresses communities' needs both within the diocese and internationally by supporting programs and organizations that strive to improve the lives of those in need.

Since April 2022, through their International Service Project effort, the NUDCCW has helped provide life-giving water to many near St. Benedict's Monastery in Sivagangai, India. Through the generous contributions from parish CCWs, to date over \$12,300 has been raised.

The NUDCCW has a special connection to this monastery as Fr. Bruno Santiago, a native of India, served the diocese from 2017-2023. Fr. Bruno has reported that the financial assistance that has been received has allowed for safe drinking water to be delivered to the poorest of families. The immediate goal is to reach a five-mile radius and approximately 4,000 people



and there are hopes that the area can be expanded over time.

The NUDCCW Board has voted to continue this water project effort through April 2024. To donate contact sheryl.kaiser@charter.net.

NUDCCW Fall Gatherings

Deanery 1

Tuesday, September 19 at St. Raphael in Springfield. Registration begins at 4:30 p.m. Presentation by Mary Warner speaking on the Dresses for Africa project.

Deanery 2

Monday, September 18 at

St. John Cantius in Wilno.

Registration begins at 4:45 p.m. Presentation by Cynthia Sheppard speaking on 'fall cleaning' - our hearts of envy, pride, and worry; replacing them with gratitude, prayer, and humility.

Deanery 3

Saturday, September 16 at St. Anastasia in Hutchinson. Registration begins at 9 a.m. Presentation by Katie Braulick speaking on ministering to families touched by miscarriage.

Faithful participate in diocesan Corpus Christi Sunday procession in New Ulm

NEW ULM – In celebration of the solemnity of Corpus Christi, a more than 700-year-old feast day that commemorates the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, this summer, Catholics from across the nation participated in local eucharistic processions in a public display of faith.

As Jesus in the Eucharist was brought to streets and neighborhoods, a few hundred gathered at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in New Ulm on Sunday, June 11 for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the diocesan chapel and then, led part way by Bishop Chad Zielinski, processed to the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity.

The procession took place as the Church in America enters its second phase of the U.S. bishops' National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year initiative to inspire renewed belief in the Eucharist



following a 2019 Pew Research study that suggested only about one-third of U.S. Catholics believe the Church's teaching that the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Currently the Church is in the second phase of the revival, the Year of Parish Revival, meant to foster Eucharistic devotion at the parish level.

Visit www.dnu.org often for notices of Eucharistic Revival related events in the Diocese of New Ulm.



Encountering Jesus through the Gospel

by Leonard Gutierrez
Office of Evangelization

Imagine looking into a telescope. It is a clear and beautiful Minnesota night sky. You lean in, wondering what your eyes are about to see, and then BOOM! Your world just got much bigger. You see stars light-years away, and it seems as if you can touch them. Galaxies. Planets and their cloud coverings. Things that are literally out of this world.

Can you think of something that has taken your breath away? Something you looked into that grabbed ahold of your mind and heart?

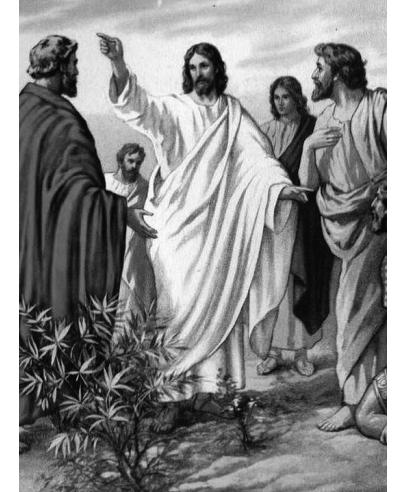
For me, it was seeing our first children, fraternal twins, move and jump in my wife's womb as when we went in for an ultrasound check-up. They were eight weeks old at the time and about the size of a kidney bean. I could hardly believe it. What was growing, moving, beating, and living in the shadows and darkness, my eyes were seeing. And in every moment were they seen and loved by the Father. They took my breath away.

It was a glimpse into the mystery and reality of life that I realized at that moment that I was being invited to see a new mystery. To see something out of this world, what my own eyes and my own doing could never do on its own.

These encounters can be what leads us to prayer and silence with God. They are invitations into deeper trust and relationship with him.

Mother Theresa once asked, "How do we learn?" She said, "Through prayer, we talk to God, listening than speaking. This is prayer. If we have not listened, we have nothing to talk about. So we must take the trouble to listen. For this, we need silence of the mind, silence of the heart, silence of the eyes, silence of the hands."

In their book "Personal Prayer: A Guide for



"Receiving the Father's Love," authors Fr. Thomas Acklin, OSB, and Fr. Boniface Hicks, OSB, ask, what makes prayer universal? "Silence! People who cannot speak, from infants in utero to elderly with dementia, from the severely disabled to the man drawing his dying breath, can all pray by being in relationship with God in silence," they answer.

How may God be inviting you to meet him where you may least expect it? How have you seen the face of Christ? Who is someone you can share that with today?

Over the next nine months, through this column, I invite all to join me as we explore the Gospel through the encounters and breathtaking moments of Jesus' disciples.

May you experience a love in the midst of their humanity so piercing that it will seem too good to be true.



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.





by Fr. Mark Steffl, STL, JCL

This question is a good one because it highlights one of the essential properties of marriage – indissolubility.

Canon 1056 of the Code of Canon Law says:

The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility; in Christian marriage they acquire a distinctive firmness by reason of the sacrament.

When speaking of indissolubility as a “property” of what marriage is, this means that it is a required part of what makes marriage what marriage is, and that without it, there is not marriage. These “properties” of marriage are considered to be part of natural law, or the very plan of God in creation. To exclude one or both

Ask a Canon Lawyer

This month's question:

Can Catholics have a prenuptial agreement and still get married?

of these properties of marriage at the time when a couple exchanges their vows would mean that their vows were not valid, thereby changing the nature of their contract.

In the Rite of Marriage, right before a couple exchanges their vows, they are asked 3 questions for them to answer. One of those questions specifically addresses indissolubility:

Are you prepared, as you follow the path of marriage, to love and honor each other for as long as you both shall live?

To which both the bride and the groom are instructed to answer “I am.” This question is asked to establish before all who are gathered at the wedding ceremony that the bride and groom are making a commitment that is life-long and cannot be dissolved (*indissolubile*) for any reason or by anyone (other than God, because of course the marriage ends when one of the spouses is called from this life).

This permanence of the marriage bond is mentioned a second time in the marriage vows themselves when each of the spouses says to the other in the presence of their witnesses and the Church’s minister (a priest or a deacon):

I, N., take you, N., to be my wife/husband. I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness, and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.

A pre-nuptial agreement is a legal document that addresses matters relating to property or financial wealth that would be considered property common to both a husband and a wife, in the case of a civil divorce. As such, it could, depending on the circumstances, be seen to be a sort of preparation for the possibility of a marriage ending before the death of either the husband or wife. If this were the motivation, then it could be seen as contradicting (and possibly invalidating) the promise that should be made “till death do us part” as is commonly said.

Would a pre-nuptial agreement always invalidate a marriage in the eyes of the Catholic Church if there were one? The quick answer is “no” but it would need to be investigated as to what the pre-nuptial agreement includes as well as the intention of the individuals who enter into the agreement. For example, there may be a situation where the bride or the groom holds property jointly in a business with siblings, and that the spouse has the pre-nuptial agreement to safeguard the good of the family business, while still declaring that he or she is making the marriage vows with the understanding that they are indissoluble.

Practically speaking, in the Diocese of New Ulm, this particular issue is addressed in the marriage preparation of every couple who gets married in the Catholic Church. The groom and bride, as part of their marriage preparation fill out a document called the Diocesan Pre-Nuptial Investigation with a priest or deacon who is coordinating

their preparation. And one of the questions on it that each the groom and bride are asked, under oath, is “Are there any conditions on your marriage consent, such as a pre-nuptial agreement?” And if that question has a “yes” to it by either the groom or bride, the priest or deacon has to investigate the circumstances to make sure that if there would be pre-nuptial agreement, that it would not be an indication that either the bride or groom is preparing for a divorce or holding out a possibility that the marriage might not be life-long, or that there would be any other hesitation on the part of either the groom or bride.

Next month's question: I was baptized, and received my First Communion, but never was confirmed in high school. How can I go about receiving this sacrament as an adult?

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 pertaining to the Tribunal Office, email The Prairie Catholic at cclancy@dnu.org.



The high cost of assisted reproductive technologies



INSIDE THE STATE CAPITOL

by the Minnesota Catholic Conference

The desire to be a parent is natural to our being and runs so deep that bearing the cross of infertility can leave couples with a devastating longing.

This devastation is a reality for about nine percent of men and 11 percent of women. Amid this painful longing, too often couples seeking answers and options are placed on the assisted reproduction track – a dangerous and expensive endeavor that generates many ethical dilemmas – with the promise that the couple can create (or even design) a child.

More than financial cost

During the 2023 legislative session, a bill, S.F. 1704, nearly passed that would mandate insurance coverage by large group health plans for infertility and

fertility preservation services, such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), for married couples who have tried to conceive naturally for six to twelve months depending on the woman’s age, for single individuals, or for same-sex couples. No exemptions exist for companies or organizations who do not agree with these controversial practices.

Fortunately, this bill did not make it to the finish line. It is bound to re-emerge in 2024.

Were this bill to pass, a single person or gay or lesbian couple would be granted insurance coverage to create a family by way of technology, contrary to how God intended the family unit to grow. Obvious ethical concerns are present in these instances, such as selling sperm and egg cells, the renting of women’s wombs

as surrogates, and intentionally creating circumstances in which a child is separated from the parents who share the child’s DNA.

Mandating insurance coverage will impact insurance premiums across the board. It often takes three to four IVF cycles on average before a viable pregnancy is achieved. One cycle can cost between \$15,000 and \$30,000 depending on the clinic and the individual health needs of the patient. Multiplying that by three cycles, insurance companies are looking at a \$45,000 to \$120,000 price tag. But the great financial cost is just one negative facet of this bill.

Begotten not made

The root issue is the human cost – the lives created and intentionally killed or abandoned and the disruption of the natural marital act. The Church raises ethical concerns about assisted reproduction such as IVF, which creates an excess of embryos, as written in *Dignitas Personae*: “The process of in vitro fertilization very frequently involves the deliberate destruction of embryos . . . [and] subsequent

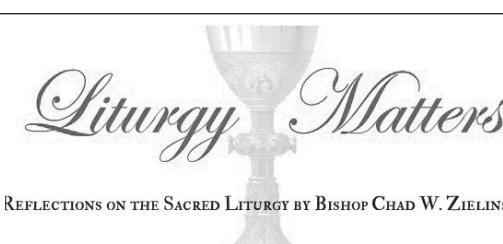
experience has shown, however, that all techniques of in vitro fertilization proceed as if the human embryo were simply a mass of cells to be used, selected, and discarded.” Concerns are also raised about genetic screening and testing so that the “best” embryo is implanted into the mother’s womb, tantamount to eugenics.

For married couples, it is good to try to overcome obstacles that may be preventing the conception of a child, and there are many incredible medical advances that are morally licit for married couples. In the document *Donum Vitae* (Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on

the Dignity of Procreation) the Church teaches that if a given medical intervention helps or assists the marital act in achieving pregnancy, then it is moral. If the intervention replaces the marital act, it is not moral.

To learn about the morally licit means available to couples trying to overcome infertility visit www.USCCB.org/topics/natural-family-planning.

Stay up to date on the Minnesota Legislature’s attempts to mandate insurance coverage for unethical fertility treatments and more, join the Catholic Advocacy Network at www.MNCatholic.org/join.



REFLECTIONS ON THE SACRED LITURGY BY BISHOP CHAD W. ZIELINSKI

www.dnu.org/liturgy-matters

As a part of the Eucharistic Revival in the diocese, Bishop Zielinski offers weekly reflections on the Sacred Liturgy available in both audio and text. Visit www.dnu.org/liturgy-matters.



From heartache to healing, Widows of Joy ministers to those grieving loss

by Katie Roiger
Prairie Catholic correspondent

WINSTED, Minn. — Anyone who knows their Beatitudes will remember that Our Lord promises comfort and peace in heaven to those who are mourning here on earth (*Mt 5:4*). In the spirit of his words, a ministry in Winsted aims to bring comfort to mourners on this side of heaven.

Widows of Joy foundress Roxanne Felder, a member of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Winsted, Minn., first became interested in forming a grief support group for the widows in her parish in September of 2021. A regular pilgrimage coordinator, she was journeying with a group to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion in New Franken, Wis., when she realized that her group of pilgrims had a unique composition.

"Many of them were widows,"

Felder recalled. "The nurse on our pilgrimage was a recent widow, too."

During the pilgrimage, Felder ensured that the group offered prayers for the members' deceased husbands. After the trip was over, however, she couldn't stop thinking about the widows and their individual grief journeys. Her continued prayers for them led her to reflect on Pope Francis's encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, which discusses fraternal bonds between all the members of the Church, regardless of their walks of life. Felder said she felt a call from God to extend that fraternal love to the widows of her parish.

"My prayers kept leading me to help through ministry," she said.

Fortunately, Felder's parish pastor, Fr. Matthew Wiering, also wanted to serve the bereaved better. When she spoke to him about her interest in starting a ministry, he gave her



On July 1, 2023, some members of the Widows of Joy along with Holy Trinity, Winsted pastors Fr. Matthew Wiering (l) and Fr. John Hayes (far right), enjoyed an outdoor gathering at the Holy Trinity Grotto in Winsted. Members pictured l-r, Joan Fiecke, Opal Schumacher, Shirley Fiecke, Marion Moy, Monica Mahon, Carol Kappel, Marge Rognli, Michelle Schesso, Mary Wessling, Diane Hirsch, and Chris Boerner. Back row, Mary Adelmann, Pat Marquardt, Gloria Radde, Kathy Baldwin, Barb Millerbernd, Joann Wegscheid, Evonne Kremer, Sandy Bayerl, Mavis Weber, Carol Cuhel, Joan Lynch, Kate Jones, and Ann Dalheimer.

(Photo submitted)

the needed help and resources.

The first Widows of Joy meeting was held in March of 2022 and continues to meet on the first Saturday of each month. Every meeting has a similar schedule. Group members begin by participating in morning Mass, followed by a video reflection and time to share.

"The videos talk about the grief experience," Felder said. "It answers questions like whether [the group members'] experience is normal, and the intensity and duration of their emotions. Afterward, the ladies can discuss and share their own experiences, or just know that they have someone there that can relate to them."

Margaret Rognli of Silver Lake, one of the first members of Widows of Joy, said the group feels like a real community. As a table leader who helps facilitate discussion, she has seen the real bonds that form from sharing and listening.

"Everyone is willing to share, and we always leave with lots of hugs," said Rognli.

In particular, Rognli remembered a special Widows of Joy retreat at Holy Trinity on June 3, 2023, led by Deacon Mike McKeown, director of Healing Ministry for the Diocese of New Ulm. The retreat offered talks, meditations, and opportunities for healing prayer.

"You could tell the Holy Spirit was present," Rognli said.

In his talks, Deacon McKeown discussed the process and pitfalls of grief, two topics that he felt were universal to mourners.

"Grief is a multifaceted trauma," Deacon McKeown said. "You can't just approach it from one angle." During the retreat, he spoke about the grieving process and common struggles many people experience along the way. He also focused on the guilty feelings that individuals may find themselves grappling with after the death of a loved one.

"Sometimes we blame ourselves for our loved one's death," said Deacon McKeown. "We say, 'I didn't pray hard enough or see the signs early enough.' Sometimes we say, 'God has abandoned me. He doesn't care about me, or he never would have let this happen.' We may have feelings that God is getting back at [us] for past sins."

Deacon McKeown said that when these guilt feelings strike, a ministry like Widows of Joy is very helpful. A supportive community is one way of preventing a mourner from closing themselves off or spiraling into negative or unhelpful thoughts.

"It's good to be willing to be vulnerable with our wounds," he said. "When we try to handle things on our own, it becomes the cause of many of these lies and things that hold us back. The

willingness to share what's going on in our hearts not only helps us but also helps other people. It's a double blessing, but it's a hard step to move from 'I can handle this on my own' to 'I need the help of other people who are in this process too.'"

McKeown expressed admiration for Felder's ongoing vision. Besides scheduling various events and fostering community, the Widows of Joy foundress is passionate about creating offshoot ministries in other parishes in the New Ulm diocese.

Felder said that she is happy to see the Widows of Joy members form close relationships with one another. Several current members get together for lunch and other social activities, and the group is conscientious about making sure that elderly or homebound widows have rides if they need them. She recalled one widow who, though unable to attend meetings, sent a poem titled "As I Sit in Heaven" to be shared at a retreat.

"The ladies were crying and so touched by it," Felder said. "It was really great that we could have a homebound widow give to the Widows of Joy and be included in that way. It's so great to see ladies move through the stages of grief and know their lives are being renewed through hope. It's all glory and praise to God."

Two Handmaids make profession of final vows



Bishop Zielinski receives the perpetual vows of Handmaids (l-r) Sr. Thérèse Marie and Sr. Mary Angela, both originally from North Dakota. (Photo by Jeanine McMahon Photography)

NEW ULM — About 400 family members and well-wishers joined Bishop Chad Zielinski and other bishops, priests, women religious and dozens of sisters from the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus as two sisters made their perpetual vows on Saturday, June 17, 2023, at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm.

Bishop Chad Zielinski served as the ceremony's principal celebrant. Bishop Emeritus John

M. LeVoir, former bishop of New Ulm, established the Handmaids in 2010, the first new group of its kind in the Diocese of New Ulm since its formation in 1957. There has never been a motherhouse within the diocesan boundaries. Over the past 13 years, the order has grown to 36 sisters, with convents in the dioceses of New Ulm, Duluth, St. Paul/Minneapolis, and Bismarck, ND.

catholic trends

VATICAN CITY – Pope Francis has announced he will release a follow-up environmental document to the 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* on Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

Speaking at the end of his general audience Aug. 30, the pope said he plans "to publish an exhortation, a second *Laudato Si'*," at the end of a Vatican-supported ecumenical initiative that will run Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. The "Season of Creation" will begin, Pope Francis said, on Sept. 1, which is the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. This year's theme is "Let Justice and Peace Flow."

"Let us join our Christian brothers and sisters in the commitment to care for creation as a sacred gift from the Creator," Francis urged at his public audience.

"It is necessary to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, striving to end the senseless war on our common home, which is a terrible world war," he added. "I urge all of you to work and pray for it to abound with life once again."

The pope said with this new writing he is updating *Laudato Si'* to cover current issues.

Laudato Si' is the second of three

encyclicals published in Pope Francis' pontificate thus far. It was released in June 2015.

The theme of the encyclical, which means "Praise be to you," is human ecology, a phrase first used by Pope Benedict XVI. The document addresses issues such as climate change, care for the environment, and the defense of human life and dignity.

Pope Francis said that the second part to *Laudato Si'* would be the kind of papal document known as an "exhortation."

WASHINGTON – For over 40 years, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated National Migration Week (NMW), which has traditionally been linked to the Vatican's World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR). This year WDMR occurs on Sept. 24, 2023, with NMW taking place the week preceding it (Sept. 18-24).

As in year's past, NMW will use the theme chosen by the Holy Father for his World Day of Migrants celebration: "Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay." This theme calls attention to the conviction that persons have a right not to migrate and if a person migrates it should be done

by choice and not by necessity. In their pastoral letter "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," the bishops of United States and Mexico highlight this theme and note that "all persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need."

Unfortunately, forced displacement is at an all-time high; according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the end of 2021, 89.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of

persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. This includes: 27.1 million refugees, 53.2 million internally displaced people, and 4.6 million asylum seekers.

In preparation for National Migration Week 2023, the faithful are asked to take a moment to reflect on what kinds of concrete efforts they can make on the local level to help those who have been forcibly displaced and what kinds of policies can be implemented to ensure that more people are in a position to choose whether to migrate or to stay.

Visit justiceforimmigrants.org/ to access resources and other information.

ADORATION AND PRAYER FOR HOPE AND HEALING
PRESIDED OVER BY BISHOP CHAD W. ZIELINSKI
"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

Sunday, October 22, 2023
3:00 pm
Holy Redeemer, Marshall, MN
Eucharistic Adoration with opportunities
for healing prayer, Confession, spiritual counsel

NATIONAL
Eucharistic
Revival
DIOCESE OF NEW ULM