From Bishop Folda:
From coronavirus to Resurrection

Catholic Culture in the Home:
Pray the rosary as a family, a decade a day

Coronavirus restrictions could renew appreciation for community, faith

PLUS

Christ be our light!
Our hope in hard times
PLEASE JOIN BISHOP JOHN FOLDA AS WE CELEBRATE OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES AND INVOKE GOD’S BLESSING UPON OUR LAND

3rd annual RURAL LIFE celebration SUNDAY, JULY 12, 2020

SCHEDULE
1:30 PM Welcome
1:45 PM Blessing of Land, Machinery and Animals
2:00 PM Mass & Procession
3:30 PM Meal, Entertainment, horse and buggy rides & games for kids

LOCATION
Frank & Helen Braun Farm
5972 Hwy. 3, Napoleon ND 58561
(3 miles north of Napoleon)

FOR MORE INFORMATION
fargodiocese.org/rural-life

RSVP
*This event is free. RSVP recommended, but not required. RSVP at (701) 754-2860 or evangelize@bektel.com
Please come rain or shine; if it rains we’ll move indoors

ALSO...
*Please bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit on
*Bring a small container of soil or seed from your fields or garden to be blessed

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ON THE COVER:
The risen Christ stain glass window at St. Michael’s Church in Grand Forks. (Kristina Lahr | New Earth)

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Never in living memory have we celebrated Holy Week and Easter as we have this year. The outbreak of coronavirus around the world and in our own country has upended the daily lives of millions, and brought sickness, fear, and even death to a growing number of our brothers and sisters. For several weeks now, we have been taking extraordinary measures to stem the tide of this pandemic, even to the point of canceling public Masses and most public activities of the Church. With great regret and sadness, I suspended the public spiritual celebrations that are so important to all of us, especially in this most holy time of the year. This was deemed necessary to keep us from inadvertently spreading or contracting the virus among ourselves and in the wider community.

It is an understatement to say that this is “new territory” for all of us, but God is never outdone in the outpouring of his grace and blessings. After the darkness comes dawn, and after this intense Lent, there will still be Easter.

- Bishop John Folda

But even though our observance of Holy Week and Easter may be muted, even though the outward solemnity of the liturgies and devotions is missed by us all, we are still called to participate in the saving mysteries of Christ’s redemption. In fact, I have no doubt that God will be at work among us, inviting us to a quiet but prayerful awareness of the death and resurrection of his Son. Our experience of these last weeks of Lent has perhaps been more intense because of the prayers and sacrifices of the recent crisis. And in the midst of this crisis, I believe God has summoned us to a greater faith in his providence, greater charity towards our neighbor, and greater hope in his mercy.

One of the precautions we are urged to take is social distancing, hence our canceled public Masses. But it is important to remember that social distancing doesn’t have to distance us from God or from each other. We have in this unusual period a perfect opportunity to show our love and concern for our immediate family, for neighbors, and for those in need through calls, emails, and even material assistance. There are some who may feel alone and afraid, or just confused, so a simple effort to touch base could be a great comfort. I also want to applaud the many pastors and faithful who continue to reach out to those in need. The Catholic Church has a long record of service to others during past plagues and pandemics, and we will continue now to attend to our brothers and sisters in need, whether spiritually or materially.

Our prayer life as we finish Lent can also be strengthened by this experience. Charity suggests that we need to keep our distance from each other for a while, but God is as near to us as ever. We may not have the immediate access to Mass that we are used to, but nothing can separate us from the love of God if we stay close to our Savior. Mass is still being celebrated, and although we cannot be present physically, we can still unite ourselves to the Lord’s sacrifice with our hearts. There are many opportunities to participate in the Mass through livestream on the internet, including on our own Diocese of Fargo webpage, and through broadcast Masses on television. Some families have even set up a sacred space in their homes where they can reverently participate as they watch the Mass together. Visits to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation when possible, praying the Rosary or Divine Mercy Chaplet at home, and a daily spiritual communion can sustain us through this difficult time. Nothing can substitute for being personally present for the Sacrifice of the Mass, but the Church has an abundance of spiritual riches that she still makes available to us.

As we deal with our inability to attend Mass, it might be worthwhile to remember our many brothers and sisters around the world who hardly ever get to attend Mass because of persecution, danger, geographical distance, or a shortage of priests. There are a greater number than we realize who rarely see a priest for Mass, and we now have the opportunity to join ourselves in solidarity with them. Many of our homebound neighbors are also prevented from attending Mass because of physical infirmity. Now we can understand their plight a little better as well. As members of the Body of Christ, we have a spiritual bond in Jesus that transcends the limitations of physical distance.

It’s also important to remember that Easter always follows Good Friday. Although the celebration of our Lord’s Passion will be different this year, we know in faith that Christ is Risen, and that he is always with his Church. The reality of the Resurrection will be even more glorious when we come through the present health crisis and gather once again for the Church’s sacred liturgies. After all, every Sunday is a day permeated with the Lord’s sacrifice with our hearts. There are many opportunities to participate in the Mass through livestream on the internet, including on our own Diocese of Fargo webpage, and through broadcast Masses on television. Some families have even set up a sacred space in their homes where they can reverently participate as they watch the Mass together. Visits to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation when possible, praying the Rosary or Divine Mercy Chaplet at home, and a daily spiritual communion can sustain us through this difficult time. Nothing can substitute for being personally present for the Sacrifice of the Mass, but the Church has an abundance of spiritual riches that she still makes available to us.
ask Christ our Redeemer, the Divine Physician, to grant us his healing grace. And may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick and Help of Christians, be with us and intercede for us in our time of need. I assure you all of my constant prayers for your good health and safety. And, above all, I pray for the grace of this holy time of year, the grace of redemption and joy, as we celebrate the death and the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. To all of you, I wish a most blessed Holy Week and a Happy Easter!

All public events in the Diocese of Fargo have been suspended. Once all the restrictions are lifted, check with the local pastor whether an event will take place as scheduled.

**BISHOP FOLDA’S CALENDAR**

**Apr. 23** • 1 p.m.
Diocesan Pastoral Council,
Pastoral Center, Fargo

**Apr. 24** • 6:30 p.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
Sacred Heart, Carrington

**Apr. 25** • 10 a.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
St. Alphonsus, Langdon

**Apr. 25** • 7 p.m.
Shanley Deacon Dinner Auction,
Holiday Inn, Fargo

**Apr. 26** • 2 p.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
Holy Cross, West Fargo

**Apr. 28** • 6 p.m.
Theology on Tap, Holy Spirit, Fargo

**May 1** • 7 p.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
St. Stanislaus, Warsaw

**May 2** • 10 a.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
St. Joseph, Devils Lake

**May 2** • 5 p.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
St. Michael, Grand Forks

**May 3** • 1 p.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
St. Stephen, Larimore

**May 7** • 9 a.m.
Diocesan Principals and Pastors Meeting,
Pastoral Center, Fargo

**May 8** • 7 p.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo

**May 9** • 10 a.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
St. Timothy, Manvel

**May 9** • 5 p.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
Holy Family, Grand Forks

**May 15** • 6 p.m.
Confirmation and First Eucharist,
St. Catherine, Valley City
Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

“Salvation of souls is the principle desire of God... give me souls and take the rest for yourself.”

– St. Vincent Ferrer
How do I explain to my non-Catholic but baptized friends why they are not allowed to receive the Eucharist?

This is a dilemma that I have also encountered. After a recent funeral I was downstairs in our social hall, eating our excellent scalloped potatoes and visiting with the guests. One of the ladies from the local Lutheran church mentioned that it was her first time at a Catholic funeral. She wondered about the instructions I had given concerning Communion. In her church everyone is invited to come forward and participate; here only those who are practicing Catholics.

It is a very good question. Many Protestants have a deep faith in God, so why wouldn’t Catholics allow other baptized followers of Christ to receive the Eucharist? The best direct explanation I can give, and the one I tried to give to the lady who asked me, goes something like this:

“When you say Amen and receive Communion at Mass, you are publicly declaring that you believe all that the Catholic Church teaches and believes. Further, you are acknowledging that you are trying to live as the Catholic Church expects. So if you don’t believe all that the Catholic Church believes or aren’t living according to her standards, when you receive Communion, it would be like you are publicly saying a lie, which of course you wouldn’t want to do.”

Now it is my experience that this very brief explanation is often found satisfactory, both in the case mentioned above, and concerning questions about those married outside of the Church. If someone responds by saying, “But I want to receive!” that would open another discussion about changing the circumstances of their lives. The Church takes very seriously the connection between a person’s desires and concrete actions. If you want to be Christian and aren’t baptized, you need to be instructed and be baptized. If you wish to receive the Eucharist and don’t profess the Catholic faith, be instructed and make a profession of Faith. “The Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1395). If you don’t profess the Catholic faith, then it isn’t appropriate to act as if you do.

(Technical point: in very rare circumstances and only with the Bishop’s permission, a protestant who believes the teachings and requests Communion can receive the Eucharist [CCC 1401].

Normally the interested protestant would become Catholic first.)

Further, it is important to know that the Catholic Church has carefully examined and taken very literally the scriptural references to the Holy Eucharist both in the Gospels and in 1 Corinthians. When Christ says, “This is my Body... this is my Blood,” the Church has consistently taught that this is exactly what the Eucharist is: truly the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. The bread and wine prayed over by the priest become Jesus’ Body and Blood through the power of the Holy Spirit acting through the grace of Holy Orders. The outward form or appearance remains, but the underlying reality has changed to become supernatural food. Jesus told us “Take and eat,” and what we are eating is the incarnate Son of God himself.

This differs from the protestant view. Most protestants believe communion bread is merely symbolic, or perhaps bread and Jesus’ body (which I understand is the position of the Lutherans), but not actually only Jesus’ body (which is our belief). Because protestant churches deliberately broke the apostolic succession of their ministers, they lost the sacrament of Holy Orders, and their ministers cannot in fact change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Only those Churches whose bishops were ordained in an unbroken historical line back to the apostles can claim to have the valid sacrament of Orders, with its three levels of bishop, priest, and deacon. Therefore, only those Churches (i.e. Catholic and Orthodox) have the valid Eucharist as Christ intended. And that is why, for our part, we don’t receive communion at protestant churches. We do not believe what they believe concerning this crucial doctrine.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27-30, St. Paul reminds his readers: “Whoever, therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and the blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” He goes on to say that he who doesn’t discern the Body of the Lord brings judgment on himself: “That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.” That should cause us to sit up and notice. The Eucharist is a food of blessing and strength to the soul in a state of grace. St. Paul teaches that it may harm the soul who receives it in an unsuitable way.

The Eucharist is a great gift of Christ to his Church. Protestants believe differently than us, and so sadly we are not able to share Communion. We hope and pray that one day the damage done by the separation of our Christian brothers and sisters may be repaired. And then together we can say Amen and all receive the Lord’s Body and Blood.

Editor’s note: If you have a question to suggest for consideration in a future column, send to news@fargodiocese.org or mail to New Earth, 5201 Bishops Blvd. S, Suite. A, Fargo, ND 58104, Attn: Ask a Priest.
St. Bernadette was born in Lourdes, France on January 7, 1844. Her parents were very poor and she was the first of nine children. As a toddler, Bernadette contracted cholera and suffered extreme asthma. Unfortunately, she lived the rest of her life in poor health.

On February 11, 1858, 14-year-old Bernadette was sent with her younger sister and a friend to gather firewood, when a very beautiful lady appeared to her above a rose bush in a grotto called Massabielle. The woman wore blue and white and smiled at Bernadette before making the sign of the cross with a rosary of ivory and gold. Bernadette fell to her knees, took out her own rosary and began to pray. Bernadette later described the woman as “a small young lady.” Though her sister and friend claimed they were unable to see her, Bernadette knew what she saw was real.

On February 18, Bernadette said “the vision” asked her to return to the grotto each day for a fortnight. With each visit, Bernadette saw the Virgin Mary and the period of daily visions became known as “holy fortnight.” On February 25, the vision had told her “to drink of the water of the spring, to wash in it and to eat the herb that grew there” as an act of penance. The next day, the grotto’s muddy waters had been cleared and fresh clear water flowed.

During her sixteenth vision on March 25, Bernadette claimed she had asked the woman her name, but her question was only met with a smile. Bernadette asked again, three more times, and finally the woman said, “I am the Immaculate Conception.”

Bernadette asked the local priest to build a chapel at the site of her visions, and the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is now a major Catholic pilgrimage site in the world. Many other chapels and churches has been built around it, including the Basilica of St. Pius X, which can accommodate 25,000 people and was dedicated by the future Pope John XXIII when he was the Papal Nuncio to France.

Bernadette later took the religious habit of a postulant and joined the Sisters of Charity at their motherhouse at Nevers. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the bone in her right knee and was unable to take part in convent life. She died in the Sainte Croix (Holy Cross) Infirmary of the Convent of Saint-Gildard at the age of 35 on April 16, 1879, while praying the holy rosary. Bernadette’s last words were, “Blessed Mary, Mother of God, pray for me. A poor sinner, a poor sinner.”

She is buried in a gold and crystal reliquary in the Chapel of Saint Bernadette at the mother house in Nevers.
Congratulations to Dr. Lucho Espejo for receiving the annual Catholic Charities ND Caritas Award! Dr. Espejo is the medical director at Family HealthCare, a community health center in Fargo and Moorhead that provides exceptional medical and dental care to anyone who needs it, regardless of the ability to pay. He has spent his career providing for the poorest and neediest in Fargo and Moorhead as well as in his native city, Chimbote, Peru. Dr. Espejo and his family are parishioners at Nativity Church in Fargo.

The purpose of the Caritas Award is to recognize an individual or organization who has by example and deed, served persons in need and advocated for justice and convened other persons of good will to do the same in a manner consistent with Catholic Social Teaching. Dr. Espejo received the award at Sts. Anne and Joachim Church in Fargo on March 10. (Kristina Lahr | New Earth)
What are deaneries, and why do they exist?

By Paul Braun

Imagine being a bishop, trying to administer the numerous parishes under your diocesan umbrella, while also being that pastoral shepherd your flock needs. It’s a daunting task, and every bishop needs assistance with it, no matter how big or small the diocese.

The Church has a mechanism to deal with top-down administrative issues when a bishop needs to communicate directives and other pieces of information to the priests across a diocese. It’s called a deanery.

The Diocese of Fargo is made up of eight deaneries, which are eight geographical territories with their own boundaries. Each deanery is led by a dean nominated by the priests within that deanery and approved by the bishop. In most cases the dean is an experienced pastor. The deans give advice to the bishop regarding the pastoral needs of the people, which can vary from parish to parish, and to the priests within the deanery who have the gifts to serve those needs.

Deans also review the sacramental and financial records and the temporal or material goods of the parishes in order to report the spiritual and material well-being of the parishes to the bishop. Priests assigned to a particular deanery meet monthly if possible to share at table, pray, and discuss important items from the bishop and items particular to the deanery. The deans coordinate and lead the deanery meetings of the priests in order that the priests can help each other with pastoral ministry to their people, prayer, and fraternity.

“One of the most important aspects of deanery meetings is the chance to socialize and bond with my brother priests,” said Father Tim Schroeder, pastor of St. Charles Church in Oakes, and a member of Deanery 1. “It gives our dean, Father Lagodinski, a chance to give us important updates, but the meetings are also very helpful in getting to know the other priests in the region and to learn from them.”

“The priests in our deanery schedule communal celebrations of the sacrament of Reconciliation during which we help hear the confessions of the people and give them absolution,” said Monsignor Dennis Skonseng, pastor of St. Catherine’s in Valley City and dean of Deanery 7. “The deans most importantly work with Bishop Folda to carry out the mission of Christ throughout the entire Diocese of Fargo.”

Deans may also be called upon by the bishop to represent him in the installation of a new pastor of a parish or parishes, to oversee the arrangements for the funeral rites of a priest, and to serve the clergy and people in a deanery in other ways.

“A dean is to be a support for the brother priests in the area, and to assist the Bishop to be a liaison for the people and clergy,” said Father Chad Wilhelm, pastor of St. Joseph’s Church in Devils Lake and dean of Deanery 5. “A dean is a representative for the deanery to help the bishop with smooth pastoral operation of all the parishes in that particular area. It has been a joy and sometimes a challenge to serve the Church as dean. The priests of our diocese really want to serve the Church, and it has been an honor to serve in this capacity for my brothers and the Church.”
Following a period of prayer and discernment, the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, have re-elected Sister Nicole Kunze, OSB, as prioress of Annunciation Monastery. Sister Nicole will serve as prioress for a six-year term.

Directly following election, Sister Nicole Kunze was formally re-installed as prioress on March 14 in the presence of the Benedictine community and Sister Kerry O’Reilly, president of the Federation of St. Benedict.

Prior to the election, the sisters spent sacred time together, and individually, to discern and hold conversations about the future directions set forth by the monastic community and who might be the sister to provide leadership into the future.

“I am honored to be re-elected as prioress of Annunciation Monastery,” remarked Sister Nicole. “The past four years have been an exciting and challenging learning process. I am grateful for the trust and faith my monastic community of sisters has placed in me for another term.”

As prioress, Sister Nicole serves as the spiritual and administrative leader of the religious community. Sister Nicole guides the sisters in their long-range planning and in the day-to-day life of the sisters. She also provides leadership in the Sisters’ sponsored institutions: CHI St. Alexius Health, the University of Mary and CHI St. Alexius Health-Garrison. Sister Nicole serves as president of the Board of Trustees at the University of Mary. She serves as a councilor on the Federation of St. Benedict council. She completed a three-year term on the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses coordinating committee and continues to serve as treasurer of the organization.

“Our sisters came to Dakota Territory to serve the needs of the people and we will continue to serve out of that courageous spirit into the future. We continue to invite women to be open to God’s call in their own lives to become sisters. As monastic women, we strive to deepen our spirituality and enrich the lives of others through prayer and service,” said Sister Nicole.
What does it mean to be a godparent or to be someone’s confirmation sponsor? The roles are the same, and traditionally the godparent who spoke for a child at baptism would be the same as the confirmation sponsor. In Baptism, we may identify the sponsor of a child as godmother or godfather, but the technical term is still “sponsor.”

In either case, the primary responsibility of the sponsor or godparents is to provide the candidate prayerful support and guidance in his or her Christian walk and to “take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament” (Canon 892).

Being a sponsor is a lifelong commitment. A sponsor takes on the role of a spiritual parent who “brings the candidate to receive the sacrament, presents him to the minister for the anointing, and will later help him to fulfill his baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit” (Rite of Confirmation 5). In other words, you are responsible that this person is raised with the freedom to choose Christ when they are older. So what can sponsors do to assist candidates in their lifelong journey?

1. Make the Catholic faith an essential part of your life: The more you are engaged in your faith, the more Jesus will inspire you to be the spiritual role model you desire to be. Go to Mass, read scripture, pray daily, go to Reconciliation often, and be attentive to God’s presence in your life.

2. Pray for your godchild: We can always pray for those we guide no matter where we are. Make a habit to pray for them daily.

3. Be in contact: Even if you live far away or haven’t spoken to your godchild in years, find a way to connect with them. Call, write a letter, or arrange to meet with them for breakfast or some activity they would enjoy. If they’re young, reconnect with their parents first.

4. Stay connected: Make a habit of connecting with your godchild. Note their baptism or confirmation date and give religious gifts such as Catholic art, a crucifix, or books about the saints, prayer, and growing in faith on those dates rather than their birthday to keep those days special. Ask them when they are going to Mass. Invite them to go to Mass with you.
Take the role seriously: Years ago, godparents also took care of their godchild should anything happen to the parents. That shows what an important role it was and still is. Tell them what Jesus means in your life. Tell them how Jesus affects their daily life. Bishop Folda spoke to the sponsors of the confirmation candidates at St. Philip Neri Church in Napoleon on March 13 during his homily, saying, “Don’t be afraid to give them a little encouragement now and then. We all need that. You can certainly help this young person you are standing with today grow in their faith. You are a very important part of this celebration.”

Being a godparent or confirmation sponsor is a two-way street. Guiding someone else in their faith allows us to share the grace we receive, and doing so is its own reward. We never know how much our efforts and a little encouragement will affect the lives of others. If your own godparents or sponsors have fallen away from the faith or passed away, pray for them. If you don’t feel qualified to be a godparent, have faith. Somehow God chose you, and he won’t abandon you in your efforts to lead another close to him.
Seeking to be a true man: *Ecclesia Domestica* comes to Fargo Diocese

By Grant M. Dahl

On March 7, around 50 Catholic men from Minnesota and North Dakota gathered at St. Boniface Church in Lidgerwood for the Fargo Diocese’s first-ever *Ecclesia Domestica* retreat.

Ten years ago, a group of Catholic laymen in the Diocese of St. Cloud founded *Ecclesia Domestica*. Their goal, and consequently the goal of *Ecclesia Domestica*, is to renew Catholic families by awakening and strengthening the faith in Catholic men. Since their founding, they have brought Catholic men together in retreats across Minnesota to help them rediscover their roles as the spiritual leaders of their families.

Guided by Master of Ceremonies Deacon Craig Korver, the men at the retreat heard from several speakers, including Father Peter Anderl, pastor of St. Boniface Church in Lidgerwood, Kevin Dockendorf, and Paul Rhoda. In these talks, they learned how to view themselves as beloved sons of God the Father, the importance of being reverent fathers in their families, and how sin does not define us. Between the talks were small group sessions headed by experienced retreat leaders such as founder Kevin Olson, Father Jerry Mischke, Deacon Korver, and others, where the retreat participants discussed the topics of the retreat in light of the challenges and realities of their own lives. The day climaxed with Eucharistic adoration, confession, and Mass to help give the participants a renewed supply of spiritual strength as they returned to their families and communities to confront the growing spiritual challenges of the world.

The retreat was a resounding success, with many commenting on the great peace that existed throughout the day and how relatable the topics were to their everyday lives. Many men spoke of forming men’s groups in their parishes to continue what had begun in their spiritual journey that day. Father Anderl was particularly effusive in his praise of the event.

“It exceeded my expectations,” said Father Anderl. “The content that was shared, the witness of the men, the experience that I saw of our men receiving it, was incredible. I was very moved. This was perhaps the most powerful men’s conference I have ever been to. I can’t wait to have it offered again. And I would love to offer it for even more men to come. The theme about being a beloved son of the Father—that’s a core identity. To see that with the individual men, and their relationship with the Father, but then also to see the men coming together as a band of brothers, united in Christ—awesome, beautiful. To see how quickly everybody bonded and the fruit of wanting to develop and build a men’s group from this... I am just thrilled.”

If you are interested in the *Ecclesia Domestica* ministry, visit their webpage at www.ecclesiadomestica.net.
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The Dolan Agency
It was a dark time. Friends gathered in a room, devastated by the happenings in the world around them, and frightened for the future. The nights seemed so long and uncertain as they prayed for an end to their nightmare. No, this isn’t a description of the social distancing we have been practicing across the country beginning in mid-March, but it could be. Actually, what I described could have been what was happening to the disciples that fateful Friday when their Lord and Savior was crucified and died.

Imagine what must have been going through their minds. The despair, panic, heartache, uncertainty. They’d just lost their friend and teacher. Was it really all over? Were the last three years a waste of time and effort? What about all of the miraculous signs they witnessed? What of the powerful words that were spoken, and the thousands who came to believe that the man they called Messiah was the true deliverer promised by God? Had it all just ended?

We know what happened three days later. In the words of the old gospel song, “Then Came the Morning!” The disciples saw their beloved Savior risen from the grave. They walked with him, talked with him, ate with him and prayed with him, and they came to believe. Christ was their light… the light at the end of a long tunnel of despair.

In these days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in our isolation, we must trust in Christ once again, that he will be our light, our hope in despair and uncertainty. Hundreds of thousands have been infected with the coronavirus, and many thousands have died. It’s reminiscent of the 2009 H1N1 world pandemic. And this time, like in the Spanish flu scare of 1918, local, state, and federal governments are taking severe action to try and stop the spread of the disease.

Over the past several weeks, businesses have been forced to close, sporting events canceled, and international travel banned. The closures have put people out of work and placed financial and emotional strain on families. Schools have shut down, with online learning taking the place of the classroom. Colleges and universities have closed their doors and canceled commencement ceremonies. High school seniors have had their last few months of school upended with no spring sports, no prom, and no tassel and gown.

The international scare has also closed the doors of churches all across the world, just when the faithful need them most. The Fargo Diocese is no exception, when Bishop John Folda on March 17 ordered all activities and Masses to cease until further notice.

“This was a very difficult decision, especially since we are in the season of Lent and approaching the beautiful days of Holy Week and Easter,” said Bishop Folda. “I consulted with priests and lay advisors of the diocese, and I also heard from medical experts. Certainly the guidance of the President and the CDC to avoid groups of more than 10 was also a major factor in this decision. My principal concern was for the safety of our people. Although difficult, this drastic and temporary step seemed to be the best way to protect the faithful of the diocese from possibly catching or spreading the coronavirus in a church sponsored event.”

However, unlike the Spanish flu pandemic, technology is available to help the faithful participate in Mass in the safety of their homes. Dioceses and parishes across the world are offering daily and weekly Masses through various forms of live-streaming and pre-recorded offerings, the Diocese of Fargo included. Several parishes across the diocese are offering Masses via live-stream and even on radio. Bishop Folda himself offers Sunday Mass live from the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo at 9 a.m. Priests from
around the diocese have been offering daily Masses Monday through Saturday at 7 a.m.

The cathedral was chosen as the host of diocesan Masses because cameras were installed to allow the Masses originating from there to be offered on a local cable channel. Although technology has far surpassed the capabilities of the existing system, the analog cameras serve their purpose in this time of need. The diocese utilizes its YouTube channel to broadcast these Masses live, but the Masses may also be viewed at any time during the day for the convenience of the faithful.

The first Sunday the live-stream Mass was offered, 875 devices were tuned in live, and the recording had nearly 3,000 hits later that day. It’s apparent that the faithful miss their Sunday Mass time, and are utilizing the technology available to join in Sunday Mass even if they are not allowed to attend in person. Several treat the production just like they would if attending Sunday Mass: they dress up, erect a small altar with a crucifix in their home, and fully participate as a family or individual. The only difference, they can’t receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. For many this is the hardest part of the social distancing and precautions that are in place. But the Church allows for missing physical participation in the Holy Eucharist in a special way.

The Church asks the faithful to make what’s called a “Spiritual Communion” when they can’t physically take part in the Eucharist. St. Thomas Aquinas defined Spiritual Communion as “an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him.” The basis of this practice was explained by Pope John Paul II in his 2003 encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

“In the Eucharist, unlike any other sacrament, the mystery is so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: Here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union.

Precisely for this reason it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of ‘spiritual communion,’ which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. St. Teresa of Jesus wrote: ‘When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.’”

The most well-known prayer for a Spiritual Communion was penned by St. Alphonsus Liguori:

“My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you Sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you.”

As of this writing, it’s not known how long these restrictions and precautions will be in place. It’s possible by the time this issue of *New Earth* reaches homes during Holy Week that daily routines and attendance at Mass may be reinstated. Until that time, we must have faith that God is with us, he hears our prayers, and he will deliver us.

“Even though we are temporarily separated from the public life of the Church, the grace of God continues to work among us through the sacraments and through our personal spiritual lives,” said Bishop Folda. “Jesus remains with us, and hopefully these difficult steps now will help to resolve the crisis more quickly.”

This Easter, let us remember that Christ is truly our light, and he will be the “Light” at the end of our dark tunnel during this health crisis. As we pray in the Divine Mercy Chaplet, “Jesus, I trust in you.”
Many have heard the saying by the Servant of God Patrick Peyton that “the family that prays together stays together.” The family rosary has been a staple of Catholic family devotions for centuries. However, many find it difficult to pray the rosary. Attention spans seem to be shorter, perhaps due to the multitude of screens that surround us. Commercials every few minutes, video games, cellphones, all contribute to problems concentrating. For many silence can seem unnerving when we are constantly being stimulated. Add to that the noise of younger children. So how can you, and your family, pray the rosary together?

The rosary continues to have immense value. It teaches us—especially children—the basic prayers of our faith. It covers the essential moments in the life of Christ, encapsulating the gospel story. It helps us to start to spend time with God in meditative prayer. The rosary is a wonderful way to ask for God’s help and Mary’s intercession.

One way to do this is to not try to start with the full five decades of the rosary. Instead, pray one rosary over the course of the week. You can pray at a family altar where the images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary are enthroned. Keep rosaries there for the children. Begin on Sunday with the opening prayers of the rosary: the Sign of the Cross, the Apostles Creed, the Our Father, and three Hail Marys. Monday through Friday, pray one decade a day. On Saturday, pray the concluding prayers: the Hail Holy Queen, final prayer, prayers for the pope’s intention, and the Sign of the Cross.

Over the course of the week the family prays one full rosary. It only takes a few minutes a day in the morning or evening. Over time, you can increase the number of decades prayed until you are praying the entire rosary on a daily basis.

This can easily be enhanced. Each family member can be asked for what intention they are offering the decade. You can add scripture readings or a scripture for each Hail Mary, use pictures, coloring books, spiritual meditations, and music. In addition, you can add other prayers for morning or night, or other devotions such as a litany or novena. These devotions are a treasure chest of ancient Christian prayer just waiting to be rediscovered. At a time when many are attracted by “mindfulness,” we seem to ignore the long history of Catholic meditative prayer. There is an added bonus that praying part of the rosary gains a partial indulgence, and a plenary indulgence is granted to those who pray the whole rosary in a family group. These can be offered for the deceased members of the family.

This method is a great way to learn how to pray the rosary and to make it a regular part of your spiritual life. It will teach your children how Catholics pray, and it will bring your family together making Christ the center of your home. Your family will become a “domestic church” where your hearts are united, with Mary, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Father Goodwin is the Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Fargo.
The phrase “social justice” tends to trigger all sorts of reactions, especially among devout Christians. Whereas some consider it to be an essential description of following Jesus’ teachings, there are those who find the title to be odious—perhaps a propaganda tool that at best obscures and at worst contravenes sound dogma. It is evident, though, that the social teachings of the Catholic Church demand our attention.

Societal changes resulting from the transition of many nations away from agrarian patterns during the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century necessitated a new way to apply the enduring precepts of the Gospel of Christ. Under the umbrella of the Church’s social teaching are subjects like the uniqueness of human personhood, political activity, economic life, care for the environment, and dignified human work. Regardless of a country’s government system, or whether its citizens are materially prospering or impoverished, the message of the Body of Christ pertains to everyone.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church primarily treats social teachings within its discussion of the Seventh Commandment (“Thou shall not steal.”) and exploring the virtue of justice. Several years ago, we saw the publishing of a youth catechism referred to as “YOCAT.” In 2016, the Church produced a handy compendium useful for both grownups and adolescents, playing off the question of what Catholics in today’s society are to do—hence, “DOCAT.”

The content of DOCAT comes to us from the Catholic Bishops of Austria, with input from the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, giving it a truly “Catholic” (universal) stamp. The book’s layout follows a tried-and-true pattern of questions and answers in treating each particular subject, reminiscent of the Baltimore Catechism of days past. I personally find this helpful in that the reader can take it up in brief sections without feeling like he or she has to invest lengthy amounts of time.

Each of the 12 chapters concludes with excerpts from important Church documents, such as papal encyclicals, from the past 150 years. Throughout the text there are many quotations in the margins from a wide and surprising variety of authors, saints, and other historical figures, including the following observation of cyberspace: “The Internet is a place for searching, copying, and browsing. At worst it is a place for executions, sexual abuse, a place for data mining and privacy groups. More trivially, it is a world of escapist nonsense.” This quote is by none other than actor Bruce Willis.

Whether it be such quotations, photos, or illustrations, the volume is chock full of visual stimuli. To say that DOCAT simplifies the Church’s social teaching, I believe, is not quite accurate. Rather, I propose that DOCAT delivers it in a concise and engaging way. Here we have a discussion for modern times, but not one that runs the risk of rapidly becoming obsolete. We have a resource designed to engage both young adults and the young at heart.

Father James Gross is the pastor of St. Mary’s Church in Grand Forks.
ANNNOUNCING AN
UPCOMING RETROUVAILLE
WEEKEND FOR COUPLES

OCTOBER 2-4, 2020
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or is it a little off track?

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Blaire Pascal said, “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” The great seventeenth-century philosopher thought that most of us, most of the time, distract ourselves from what truly matters through a series of divertissements (diversions). He was speaking from experience. Though one of the brightest men of his age and one of the pioneers of the modern physical sciences and of computer technology, Pascal frittered away a good deal of his time through gambling and other trivial pursuits. In a way, he knew, such diversions are understandable, since the great questions—Does God exist? Why am I here? Is there life after death?—are indeed overwhelming. But if we are to live in a serious and integrated way, they must be confronted—and this is why, if we want our most fundamental problems to be resolved, we must be willing to spend time in a room alone.

This Pascalian mot has come to my mind a good deal as our entire country shuts down due to the coronavirus. Shopping malls, movie theaters, restaurants, school campuses, sports stadiums, airports, etc.—the very places where we typically seek fellowship or divertissements—are all emptying out. This is obviously good from the standpoint of physical health, but I wonder whether we might see it as something very good for our psychological and spiritual health as well. Perhaps we could all think of this time of semi-quarantine as an invitation to some monastic introspection, some serious confrontation with the questions that matter—some purposeful sitting alone in a room.

Might I make a few suggestions in regard to our retreat? Get out your Bible and read one of the Gospels in its entirety—perhaps the Gospel of Matthew, which we are using for Sunday Mass this liturgical year. Read it slowly, prayerfully; use a good commentary if that helps. Or practice the ancient art that has been recommended warmly by the last several popes—namely, lectio divina. This “divine reading” of the Bible consists in four basic steps: lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio. First, read the scriptural text carefully; second, pick out one word or one passage that specially struck you and then meditate on it; third, speak to God, telling him how your heart was moved by what you read; fourth and finally, listen to the Lord, discerning what he speaks back to you. Trust me, the Bible will spring to life when you approach it through this method.

Or read one of the spiritual classics. Keep in mind that, prior to the rise of the physical sciences, the best and brightest people in our Western intellectual tradition entered the fields of philosophy, theology, and spirituality. One of the dark sides of our post-Enlightenment culture is a general forgetfulness of the astonishing richness produced by generations of brilliant spiritual teachers. So take up St. Augustine’s Confessions, preferably in Maria Boulding’s recent translation, which reads like a novel, or Frank Sheed’s classic translation. Though he lived and wrote seventeen centuries ago, the spiritual seeker of our time will discern in Augustine’s story the contours and trajectories of his own. Or read the Rule of St. Benedict, especially the section on the twelve degrees of humility. If you dare, follow St. Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises, preferably under the direction of a good guide (who doesn’t have the coronavirus!). If these texts and practices seem too dated, spend your quiet time with Thomas Merton’s splendid autobiography The Seven Storey Mountain, which, in compelling prose, tells the story of the twentieth-century author’s journey from self-absorbed worldling to Trappist monk.

And of course, pray. When Merton was once asked what is the most important thing a person could do to improve her prayer life, he replied, “Take the time.” Well, now we have more time. Do a Holy Hour every day or every other day. Dust off your rosary, which I think is one of the most sublime prayers in the Catholic tradition. When we pray it well, we meditate on the mysteries of Christ; we call to mind, fifty times, the inevitability our own passing (“now and at the hour of our death”); and we entrust ourselves to the most powerful intercessor on earth or in heaven. Not a bad way to spend twenty minutes. Take the time at the end of the day to examine your conscience—and not in a cursory manner. Do it carefully, prayerfully, honestly. Ask yourself how many times in the course of the day you missed an opportunity to show love, how many times you did not respond to a grace, how often you fell into a habitual sin.

Now that we’re being asked to keep a certain distance from our fellow human beings, embrace the solitude and silence in a spiritually alert way. Go for that long walk across the fields or wherever you like to go to be alone. And just talk to God. Ask him what he wants you to do. Pray for your kids or your parents or your friends who might be struggling. Tell him how much you love him and how you want greater intimacy with him. And please put away the iPhones! Open your eyes, lift up your heads, and take in the beauty of God’s creation and thank him for it.

If Pascal is right, many of our deepest problems can be solved by sitting, with spiritual attention, alone in a room. Perhaps through God’s strange providence, the quarantine we’re enduring might be our chance.
As I write this, we have had multiple cases of the new coronavirus confirmed in North Dakota. On an emotional level, that changes things for us. While we know that all of us are brothers and sisters in the Lord through the principle of solidarity, it is one thing when people across the globe or even our nation have a disease, another when people in our neighborhood are infected. There is a very real fear and anxiety knowing that the coronavirus is right here with us now, most likely in the midst of us already, and it is challenging to deal with the uncertainty of not knowing what will happen next.

The idea of social distancing—limiting our contact with others to groups of 10 people—recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention seems to go against the principle of solidarity, forcing a society that many experts have argued is already in many ways isolated through technology into even greater isolation. However, in this case, it may be that the federal government’s action is what lessens the spread of a horrible epidemic that we hope will all pass quickly. The suggested remedy to isolate ourselves temporarily is for the greater good of keeping our brothers and sisters near and far safe.

How do we respond personally to a time like this? This situation seems to be, to put it simply, “unprecedented.” Although it is a challenging time, I believe it is also a time of great opportunity. As the coronavirus threatens to further isolate and seclude us, we need to find even more creative ways to connect with each other than before.

—Chad Prososki

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How do we respond personally to a time like this? This situation seems to be, to put it simply, “unprecedented.” Although it is a challenging time, I believe it is also a time of great opportunity. As the coronavirus threatens to further isolate and seclude us, we need to find even more creative ways to connect with each other than before. Let’s use technology to reconnect to others. If our activities slow down, let’s embrace our time at home with our immediate families, and pick up the phone and call those who aren’t with us. When was the last time you wrote someone a real letter? Think of what a great chance we have to be a blessing to others, to let Christ works through us. Now more than ever we are needed to be the hands and feet of Jesus. When businesses close and even Mass is suspended, are we going to shut down our efforts to help those in need too? If we don’t offer our support, who will?

Don’t be discouraged at this moment in history. Remember that we share a faith in “God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, visible and invisible” (Nicene Creed). Recall that Christ told us that not even a single sparrow falls without the Father’s knowledge, and so how much more does he love each of us (Matt. 10:29-31)? The Lord has counted each hair on our head and has known us since before we were formed in our mother’s womb (Matt. 10:30; Jer. 1:5). Remember the story of the footsteps in the sand, which reminds us that it is during the toughest times in our lives when the Lord is carrying us. All we have to do is ask for his help and strength.

This is also our chance to truly help those in need! At Catholic Charities we are receiving calls from people new to us seeking counseling to help with their anxiety and depression. Some of our partner organizations are being almost overwhelmed with the number of new people seeking food and shelter, yet they also shared that the response from people right here in North Dakota as donors and volunteers has been equally overwhelming. Nonprofits across the state are taking inventories and making assessments, preparing to help however needed.

My question is how this situation will define us. What will our response be during this time of need? How will the coronavirus outbreak define you?
A budget for the common good and the least among us

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he North Dakota Legislative Assembly will not meet again until January 2021. The governor will not present a proposed budget until the month before. Even then, the legislature may ignore it and submit its own budget bill, as it has done in recent years. Moreover, let us not forget that there is a gubernatorial election this year and half of the legislative districts are up for contest.

Despite all these unknowns, politicians, activists, state agencies, and legislators are already working on the state budget for the 2021–22 biennium.

Unless you’re one of those special breeds that enjoys numbers, watching the budget-making process can be frustrating, boring, and mysterious at the same time. Conceptualizing how a dollar figure assigned to an acronym-designated government agency or program affects real people can be daunting.

State budgets, however, affect real people. As such, they should get special attention from Catholics concerned about putting faith into action.

How much money the state should collect through taxes, how to collect it, and how to spend it are matters of prudential judgment. There does not exist a single “Catholic” way to form a budget. Nevertheless, the mere fact that something can be a matter of prudential judgment does not mean that it escapes our moral and religious obligations. The exercise of prudential judgment must conform to reason and faith. What, then, are some of the principles that should guide the use of prudential judgment when it comes to a state budget?

First, we need to reject the libertarian fallacy that forcing people to pay taxes is inherently wrong and that more government is always bad. Neither of these ideas have a place in Catholic social doctrine. The church teaches that people have a duty to pay taxes and that the government is part of the established order of society. It is not a “necessary evil.”

Governments, however, are obligated to be good stewards of the revenue collected. Quoting St. John Paul II, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church states: “As an instrument of the State, public administration at any level—national, regional, community—is oriented towards the service of citizens: ‘Being at the service of its citizens, the State is the steward of the people’s resources, which it must administer with a view to the common good’” (No. 412). Good stewardship means not only avoiding unnecessary spending, but also eschewing building unnecessarily complex bureaucracies. Perhaps most importantly, the Compendium points out that good stewardship means not spending for “unjust private interests.”

As St. John Paul II noted, the state must administer its resources for the common good. Sometimes, common good is misunderstood as being only something that benefits everyone in common. This is where we get the false notion that taxes should only be spent on something that benefits every citizen in the state.

The Compendium’s explanation of the common good is worth setting out in full:

“The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people. According to its primary and broadly accepted sense, the common good indicates ‘the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.’”

“The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains ‘common,’ because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future” (No. 164).

It is “common” because it stems from the dignity we share in common. The direction should be toward those conditions which allow us to reach our fulfillment as human persons. The challenge for lawmakers—and us as citizens—is that these conditions are not always tangible, immediate, or quantifiable. They are not dollar amounts on a tax return. They can range from laws defining marriage to decisions to whether to build a new state hospital or prison.

The church teaches that everyone has a responsibility for the common good, but government has a primary duty toward the common good. At the same time, the state has an obligation to put the least among us first. This is not just a duty of Christians acting privately. It is also the task of the government that represents us.

This sometimes turns the whole political process on its head. At this very moment, government agencies, politicians, and lobbyists are jockeying for a piece of the state’s budget, including the Legacy Fund. The powerful are often not the least among us. We should, therefore, pray and act now for a budget directed toward the common good and the least among us.
Picture this: you are a junior in college, it is the last two weeks of school, and you have multiple projects due. The ones that are most frightening are the two philosophy papers for two of your most challenging courses. These papers, alongside the preparation for finals, leave you in a state of slight paralysis as you’re not quite sure where to even start.

Why do I bring this up? This is a snapshot of what I felt during my junior year of college seminary. I was so stressed that I was paralyzed for about half a week, during which I couldn’t even think about writing those two papers. While what I described may be slightly exaggerated, what happens to us when tasks before us seem insurmountable?

I was sitting in the library staring at my computer with an open Word document where I had written only the title and the prompt. Then the gentle thought crept into my stressed consciousness, “Have you invited Jesus to be with you in this?” My first reaction was, “Well no, I have not, why would Jesus want to be with me while writing a paper?” As I sat and pondered my answer to that question, I remembered one of the retreats that I had attended earlier that spring where the priest had invited us to ask Jesus to be with us in every moment of every day. The priest said that Jesus desires to encounter and be in relationship with us. As with any relationship, this can only take place in the present moment. As I continued to mull this over, I decided that stressing out about this paper was not getting me anywhere, so I decided to pray a simple prayer in which I invited Jesus into the stress and entrusted the paper to him. Then I began to write.

The stress and fear that had formerly paralyzed me were replaced with a sense of peace which continued with me throughout the two weeks of paper-writing and finals preparation. The course work did not get any easier in the sense that there was miraculously less to do, but with the knowledge that I had entrusted it all to Jesus, there was a great sense of peace in whatever the outcome would be. That sense of peace freed me to do what I needed without being overwhelmed.

With the coronavirus pandemic, which as I write this is the source of much fear and anxiety, I have been reminded many times of that simple lesson which the Lord taught me in my undergraduate years. More important than the grade that I got on those papers was what I learned from that entire situation: Jesus truly does want to be in relationship with us and we can entrust anything to him because he really does love us and want what is best for us. This does not mean that I do not struggle with giving into the fear. What it does mean is that I know I can trust him and invite him to be here with me in the midst of my fears and anxieties in this troubled time.

Editor’s Note: Seminarian Life is a column written by current Diocese of Fargo seminarians. Please continue to pray for them.
We are certainly living in some unprecedented and interesting times. As I write this, the COVID-19 epidemic has forced the hand of many bishops around the country, including ours, to suspend public Masses as well as a host of other parish activities. Because of this, and since parish members will not be attending Sunday Mass for a while, one of the most obvious and glaring concerns for the 130 parishes in our diocese is the potential loss of offertory income. Many of our parishes live just like many people—paycheck to paycheck—or in the case of a parish, Sunday-to-Sunday offertory.

Without a doubt, the “social distancing” practices and suspension of Masses that are in place have created unique challenges to the way many people will financially support their parish. A majority of folks in our diocese tithe to support their parish by contributing via the collection basket at weekend Mass. If our parishes are going to continue to thrive and deliver the necessary ministry we need during these difficult times, we then need to adjust the method of providing support to our parishes.

Just like in our personal lives, our parishes have bills to pay: lights, electricity, heat, church supplies, phone, internet, snow removal, etc. I’m sure some parishes will be making changes and looking for ways to lessen the financial burden during these trying times. But there will be expenses, and they will need to be paid.

For those who support their parish by dropping an envelope in the Sunday offertory basket, let me offer a few suggestions that will help keep your much needed offertory support going.

**U.S. Mail:** Simply drop your check in the mail and send it to your parish. For many, it’s as simple as putting the flag up on the mailbox and the mailperson will get it sent.

**Bill Pay:** Many banks provide a bill-pay service. It’s a very simple process and your bank can easily walk you through it if you have any questions. For many, it can easily be set up on their bank’s website.

**Online:** Many parishes have an online donation portal on their website. In most cases, offertory support can be made using a credit card, debit card, or directly from a checking or savings account. In some parishes, especially in the rural areas of the diocese, online giving is not available. If you desire to give online, and after checking with your parish to determine it’s not available, you can give online to your parish through the Diocese of Fargo online donation portal. Just follow these three simple steps:

1. Go to www.fargodiocese.org and click on “Ways to Give” and then click on “Donate Now”
2. Choose “Other Programs”
3. You are now on the Online Donation page. Use “other” and make sure you put in what parish your gift is designated for and then follow the prompted instructions. Once the donation has been made, an acknowledgment will be sent to you and your pastor.

With God’s grace and the time and talents he has given us all, we will navigate through these new challenges. Let us all remember in prayer all those afflicted by the virus and those who are caring for them every day.

On a side note, now is a great time to make sure both the Diocese of Fargo and your parish have your email address, so we can keep in touch. If you want to receive occasional updates from Bishop Folda or the diocese via email, send your email to Susan.LeMier@fargodiocese.org.
quote from a page of my great aunt Frances’s daily diary reads, “Wednesday, December 11, 1957... not so cold, not much wind, 3 below, Sophie came by for the doughnuts. At 5:00 I went to Super Valu for a tree, they have them at the Robertson Lbr. Co. 4 ft. tree for $1.75. Julia did the curtains for Christmas. I made the first Advent wreath we ever had. Don called up, new little girl born just before noon today. The 101st.”

That little girl who was born just before noon was me! I felt very special...loved so much that my dad just had to spread the good news of my birth! Loved enough to be recorded in someone’s diary! I now belonged to a huge community of love called “The Lange Family.”

Family is usually the first community we encounter in our lives. Here we learn how to get along with our siblings, obey our parents, and the basics of our faith. I grew up one of nine kids, living on a farm near Webster. My days were spent going to school, watching sporting events, doing chores, baking, playing in the yard, or playing games with my siblings. My family attended a rural Catholic church a few miles from our farm. The parish had picnics in the grove of trees nearby and ball games in the church yard. That little church was the center of our rural farm community, where every Sunday the men and women would stand outside after Mass, catching up on the week's events, while the kids played. In the winter, while the kids had religion class after Mass, the adults sat in their cars and caught up with each other.

When I began teaching, I became part of another community, a Catholic school and parish in Langdon. I remember thinking, “I know only a few people here.” It wasn’t long before I felt like I belonged there, but I wasn’t very involved in the parish. This same experience happened again when I began teaching in a different Catholic school, this time in Belfield. As I became settled, I realized I wanted to be more involved, so I joined the church choir. I loved belonging to this parish, teaching in its school, and being a part of this community. I thought I would marry a cowboy, settle down, and raise a bunch of kids. That’s when God called me to a different way of life.

I had taken part in several SEARCH weekends and other retreats over the years. I realized God was calling me to Religious Life. I entered the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation in 1985. That first year, I lived and worked with some of the Sisters in Grand Forks, where our parish was the Newman Center at UND. There the Sisters helped me to teach First Communion class, help with Newman Center socials, be a lector and Eucharistic Minister, and attend RCIA classes. As I learned more about my Catholic faith, I began to understand how my faith life had gotten its start as a young child in my family as we went to church weekly, prayed the rosary, and attended religion classes. But now it was up to me to continue learning.

This didn’t happen until I attended that first SEARCH retreat. It was there that I began to pray more and my faith started to grow. After I entered the convent, I realized I belonged to a new kind of family now. My journey of learning about my faith, my community, and the Catholic Church flourished as I progressed through the various stages of formation and professed the vows of poverty, obedience, and consecrated chastity. I knew I truly belonged to this new community of love: The Sisters of Mary of the Presentation.

My religious community taught me that all who have been baptized are specially chosen, just as Jesus chose his Apostles from all his disciples. As they followed Jesus, learning from him, so we are called to follow Jesus and see the world through his eyes and love the world with his heart. We are called to be life-givers through self-sacrifice. So I ask myself, how do I give my love away like Jesus did? What sacrifices do I make to bring life to someone else? We are called to be the Good News by our spoken and unspoken word, the witness of our life. How am I the Gospel for others? Do I lead the people I encounter closer to Jesus?

After more than 30 years of religious life as a Sister of Mary of the Presentation, there is no other life that would satisfy the deepest longing of my heart because the deepest desire of my heart is to dwell with the one who gave me life in the first place. It is here in this community of love that I truly belong.
Some tourists go to see the three highlights of Jerusalem: the Tomb of Jesus, the Dome of the Rock and the Wailing Wall, and then their tour is off quickly to other places: Sea of Galilee, Bethlehem, Hebron, the Dead Sea, Haifa, Tel Aviv, etc.

When one lives in Jerusalem for four months, as I did in the autumn of 2016, every church, synagogue, mosque, and museum is possible to visit. So I have been to many places, sometimes more than once. Today, we visit one of those churches. I want to say it is my favorite.

I call it the Church of All Nations. It is also known as the Church or Basilica of the Agony. It's located at the base of the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane. This garden is the place where Jesus and the disciples retreated to after the Last Supper; it is the garden where Jesus prays and the disciples sleep before Judas comes to betray Jesus (Mark 14:32-42).

The current church rests on the foundation of two earlier ones, that of a small 12th century Crusader chapel abandoned in 1345, and a 4th century Byzantine basilica, destroyed by an earthquake in 746.

In 1920, during work on the foundations, a column was found two meters beneath the floor of the medieval crusader chapel. Fragments of a magnificent mosaic were also found. Following this discovery, the architect, Italian Franciscan monk Antonio Barluzzi, immediately removed the new foundations and began excavations of the earlier church. After the remains of the Byzantine era church were fully excavated, plans for the new current church were altered and work continued on the current basilica from April 19, 1922 until June 1924 when it was consecrated.

Barluzzi was the architect or on the architectural team of many Jerusalem area projects, most notably the Church of the Resurrection of Lazarus in Bethany. These two churches boast interior darkness.

When inside the Church of All Nations, no matter the time of the day outside, the time of day inside is dusk, the time when Jesus was betrayed and arrested and led off to the High Priest.

At the center of the church, just in front of the chalice-shaped altar, is the remains of the garden rock on which Jesus prayed “let this cup (the coming agony on the cross) pass from me, yet, not as I will, but as you will” (Matt. 26:39).

A low wrought-iron fence keeps the faithful from getting on the stone. However, at all hours of the day the faithful can pray on three sides and often bend themselves over the barrier to kiss the stone.

On the heights of the three vaults of the church are artworks depicting the agony in the garden (Jesus praying at the rock), Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples to “stay awake,” and Jesus’ betrayal by the kiss of Judas.

In the courtyards of the church are olive trees said to be 2,000 years old. When I was here 30 years ago, one could touch the trees and picnic under them. They are now fenced off from the thousands of tourists who visit this sight every week.

I loved this place because of the darkness, the coolness, the comfort, the visual stimulus, and the quiet (despite the noise of the tourists) for solitude and prayer.

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

Editor’s note: Stories of Faith is a recurring feature in New Earth. If you have a faith story to tell, contact Father Bert Miller at bert.miller@fargodiocese.org.
Doris and Gib Bromenschenkel will celebrate their 65th anniversary on April 18. They are parishioners of Holy Spirit Church in Fargo. They have 3 children, 12 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.

Olaf and Verna Erickson, parishioners of St. Cecelia Church in Towner will celebrate their 70th anniversary on April 19. They were married at St. Edward’s Church in Nekoma. They have 9 children, 17 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren.

Quentin and Delores Georgeson, parishioners of St. John’s Church in New Rockford, will celebrate their 60th anniversary on April 23. They have 4 children (1 deceased), 8 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren.

Lawrence Henry Gapp will celebrate his 90th birthday on April 18. He has been a parishioner of St. Boniface Church in Walhalla his entire life. He has been married to Carol (Leonard) Gapp for 61 years. They reside on their farm north of Walhalla where they raised their 9 children.

Betty Koble Haman, parishioner of Sacred Heart Church in Rolette, celebrated her 92nd birthday on Feb. 23. Betty and her late husband, Daniel, were married for 54 years. They lived in Drake and Rugby before Daniel passed away in 2003. They have 5 children, 10 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren.

Marie Heil, parishioner of St. Cecilia’s Church in Harvey, will celebrate her 90th birthday on April 12. She was married to Ray Heil for 65 wonderful years until his passing in 2017.

Diocesan policy: Reporting child abuse
Diocese of Fargo is committed to the protection of youth. Please report any incidents or suspected incidents of child abuse, including sexual abuse, to civil authorities. If the situation involves a member of the clergy or a religious order, a seminarian, or an employee of a Catholic school, parish, the diocesan offices or other Catholic entity within the diocese, we ask that you also report the incident or suspected incident to Msgr. Joseph Goering, vicar general, at (701) 356-7945 or the victim assistance coordinator, at (701) 356-7965 or by email at victimassistance@fargodiocese.org.
A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

75 years ago — 1945
The Diocese of Fargo will again join this year’s United National Clothing Collection to secure an additional 150 million pounds of usable clothing, shoes and bedding for people in the liberated countries of Europe. More than 30 million have been described as “statistically naked” while more than four times that number are in desperate need. Reverend Anthony Peschel reported parishes from the Fargo Diocese collected 30,455 pounds of the 18 million pounds of clothing needed during the first drive last fall. Approximately 15,000 Catholic parishes in more than 100 archdioceses and dioceses throughout the United States participated in the first clothing drive.

50 years ago — 1970
Father Colman J. Barry, OSB, author of “American Nuncio, Cardinal Aloisius Muench,” will receive the Red River Valley Historical Society’s Lake Agassiz Publication Award for 1970. The presentation will take place April 10 at the Society’s spring awards banquet in the North Dakota State University Memorial Union. Father Coleman, president of St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minn. will be the main speaker at the banquet and will discuss Cardinal Muench’s career.

20 years ago — 2000
More than 10,000 members of the Knights of Columbus gathered at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. for what is believed to be one of the largest gatherings in the shrine’s history. The Knights came for a jubilee year pilgrimage, to pray the rosary with Pope John Paul II, to celebrate Mass and to reconsecrate the 1.6 million member fraternal organization to the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The April 1 event also marked the 75th anniversary of the first pilgrimage of a group of Knights to the shrine.

These news items, compiled by Danielle Thomas, were found in New Earth and its predecessor, Catholic Action News.

Most people think of “the pope,” not “God,” when they hear “Catholic”

By Catholic News Agency

When asked about Catholicism, most people think of the pope, according to a newly released survey from the Pew Research Center.

The survey, published on Tuesday, March 17, found that over half of respondents — 54% — replied with either “the pope,” “Pope Francis,” or “Pope John Paul II” when asked who is the first person to come to mind when they heard the word “Catholic.” Of that number, 47% replied with simply “the pope,” and only 5% said “Pope Francis.”

A further 18% of respondents named a figure from the Bible when asked who came to mind when they heard the term “Catholic.” Of that percentage, 12% replied “Jesus,” and 5% said the Virgin Mary. An additional 2% said “God.”

Six percent of respondents cited themselves or a Catholic family member as the first person to come to mind, while 13% either refused to answer or said they could not think of anyone.

Pew also asked people to name the first person who came to mind for other religions, including Buddhism, evangelical Protestantism, Islam, and Judaism.

For evangelical Protestantism, the person who was named the most was televangelist Billy Graham, who was named by 21% of respondents. Jesus and Martin Luther were each named by 5% of respondents.

A total of 46% of respondents declined to answer or said they did not know when asked who came to mind when they heard the term “evangelical Protestant.”

Fittingly, 55% of respondents said that “Buddha” was the first person who came to mind when they heard the term Buddhism. The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, came in second with 7% of responses. Mahatma Gandhi, who was not a Buddhist, was named by 3% of respondents.

Just over a quarter — 26% — of respondents said that “Mohammad” was the first person who came to mind for Islam. The second-highest response was “God” at 8%, followed by “Osama Bin Laden” with 5%. Mahatma Gandhi, who was not a Muslim, was cited by 1% of respondents.

About half of the respondents cited a figure from the Bible as the first person they thought of when they thought about Judaism. Twenty-one percent said “Jesus,” followed by 13% saying “Moses.” An additional 8% said “Abraham.”

Asked about the term “atheism,” the top four people respondents cited were Richard Dawkins, Madalyn Murray O’Hair, physicist Stephen Hawking, and television host Bill Maher.

Madalyn Murray O’Hair was one of the founders of American Atheists, and brought several cases to the Supreme Court against prayer in public schools.
Coronavirus restrictions could renew appreciation for community, faith

By Carol Zimmermann | Catholic News Service

Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori celebrates a private Mass in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Baltimore that was livestreamed for viewers on March 15. The archbishop canceled all public Masses in the archdiocese amid coronavirus concerns effective March 14. (Catholic News Service | Archdiocese of Baltimore)

During the coronavirus pandemic, life as most people have known it, including parish life, has come to a halt.

But despite closed churches, canceled parish gatherings and limited outreach, many church leaders are emphasizing that Catholics can take this time of isolation and pause of normal and often-very-busy routines to strengthen their personal faith and reinforce bonds with families, neighbors, and the church at large.

Many Catholics are relying on technology to tap into spiritual resources such as livestreamed Masses, Bible readings, and prayers; they’re also reaching out to others and staying connected through social media, emails, or video conference calls.

The internet is the blessing of all blessings” right now, said Sister Susan Francois, an assistant congregation leader for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, who has been having Zoom video conference meetings with team members across the country and in other parts of the world.

And even social media, which does not always have a spiritual side, is reflecting one now as people turn to parish Facebook pages for information, to YouTube for online Masses and are searching the internet for advice on how to make a spiritual communion. Twitter also has been a platform where church leaders and everyday Catholics have voiced concern but also hope during the uncertainty of this pandemic.

For example, a March 18 tweet by Bishop Mario Grech of Gozo, Malta, pro-secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, said: “We are going through the ‘dark night of the soul’—the meaning we had given to lot of things is vanishing. Yet the bright side of this experience is that it can offer us a deeper sense of purpose and connectedness.”

Father Paul Keller, a Claretian Missionary priest currently serving at St. Paul Catholic Newman Center Parish in Fresno, California, similarly spoke of a spiritual side to this difficult time. He said the current forced period of isolation provides a time for solitary prayer “that we don’t have time to do in the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives.”

He pointed out that people can take going to Mass for granted, but now this “fast from the Eucharist and the sacraments can increase our longing” for them, he told Catholic News Service March 17.

The priest also hoped many would embrace this time to connect as a community even by phone, which is one thing the young adults in his parish are doing: calling every parishioner to see how they are doing and if they need anything.

This reaching out to others, more than people might usually do, “can also help those who might need more care or resources but hadn’t asked for it,” said Dominican Brother Ignatius Perkins, director of provincial administration for the Dominican Friars -Province of St. Joseph in New York.

He called this time a “defining moment for the church and for each of us to reach out to the last, the least, and the least among us, but most especially the abandoned, the unloved, and those who have no place to lay their head at night.”

Mercy Sister Kathleen Ann Kolb, coordinator of health and wellness for the Sisters of Mercy in the New York and Pennsylvania area, similarly said she hoped the current health crisis would “build community in small areas but also in the global community,” noting how in difficult times, people tend to band together.

Of course, community is something experienced on the parish level at church gatherings that are now canceled, and ultimately at Mass, but most dioceses in the U.S. are no longer having public Masses as of March 18, which is a loss for many Catholics across the country.

Paulist Father Larry Rice, director of the University Catholic Center at the University of Texas at Austin, said he understands this disappointment not only because of the importance of Mass but also because participating in it has been “emphasized for centuries.”

He said the current separation might help Catholics “come to a deeper appreciation that we are the Body of Christ together, and for each other, even when we are not able to gather for worship.” For now, he added, promoting the common good for all our community paradoxically means staying home.

Washington Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, in a column for the March 19 issue of the Catholic Standard, the archdiocesan newspaper, echoed the belief this could be a time of grace.

“I honestly never dreamed I would live in a moment where the same disquieting circumstances that compel us as Catholics to want to gather more frequently in worship, prayer, and solidarity would also prevent us from being able to do so securely.”

But the archbishop added: “If we are open, God will use this moment to bring our hearts closer to him and more firmly in union with one another.”

He said that during this time of separation, Catholics should “value the gift of assembled common prayer even more” and come to a deeper understanding that what Catholics share is “something more profound and enduring than mere physical proximity.”
The tiny girl slipped away momentarily from her father, who stood in an area of the sidewalk we call “the trap.” It’s an indented section that many people who come seeking abortion in downtown Fargo believe to be the entryway, only to discover after turning into it that it’s not. They are then directed to the actual door a few feet away.

While the father conversed in that sheltered area with those who usher women into the building to have their children violently ripped from their wombs (this act cannot be couched in niceties), his living baby, perhaps two years old, toddled over to the actual door of the facility and peered inside. She then placed her hands upon the transparent door, which her mother had entered only a few hours earlier to destroy her sibling.

It was afternoon now, and much of the sidewalk traffic of the day had quelled. Most escorts had pulled the rainbow vests proclaiming their role as abortion-rights protectors from their bodies and returned them to the large, plastic bin where they’re stored and moved on. The majority of sidewalk advocates also had put away their signs and brochures, parting ways with this dismal place for another week.

A few of the pro-life advocates had either remained from before, or returned after Mass and a sip of soup, and of those, only a couple observed the darling girl in her purple coat, her dark, tender hands pressing upon the plexiglass of the one operation in our state that will perform this deadly deed. We alone took note of the inescapable incongruity: the welcome of one child and death of another.

What made her worthy of life, and her sibling, worthy of death? She, of course, was an innocent bystander, unaware. Her hands upon the glass door were simply a pining for the mother who had disappeared, now inside. She could not know that as her tiny hands reached up, she was saying goodbye to perhaps the only sister or brother she’d ever know.

My friend and I looked on silently, unable to put into words in that moment the visual’s significance. Our hearts knew, though, and we also knew we would carry this image with us for a long time, our only recourse being to bring it to our Lord, who knows all, sees all, and redeems all who approach him in humility with a contrite heart.

The rest of the afternoon brought other such snapshots of sadness our way. The later hours at this facility are particularly bleak, for by then, reality has set in. Women who arrive in the morning—surrounded by those who wear “choice” on their garments and believing life would be so much better after doing this one thing—now are exiting. No longer does a look of persistence show on their faces, a determination to go forward with what they’d been promised would make their problems disappear.

Plainly put, the women leaving were, in gait and glance, the truth of abortion. I shared my own observations on Facebook that evening: “The afternoons don’t show faces of expectation and mission. There are no snapshots of women relieved of a ‘problem’ nor shows of ‘women’s empowerment.’ Instead, we see expressions of dejection, abandonment, consternation, and shock. This is what this ‘choice’ brought. This is what those lies wrought.”

When we hear the pro-abortion messages ringing out through our land, these pieces of evidence are absent, not entered into the public trial. Few have a chance to glimpse the truth—until it’s too late. What we see on Wednesdays here, however, reveals reality, the aftermath of what abortion actually confers on our society, and it’s not a pretty picture by any means.

These images, these faces, remind us that our work is far from over, and only God can bring justice and mercy, and right the wrongs. These snapshots of sadness, seen by few and almost never recorded, have been seared into our hearts. We stand as witnesses to these moments, such as the precious hands of a small sister reaching out for her mama, and, unknowingly, for the love God had meant for her, already floating away into his merciful arms.

These pictures of pain, held for a time by us and witnessed for you in written form here, may be mostly hidden, but they are seen forever by God, and the unnamed, unseen victims are never forgotten.

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

Where in the diocese are we?

Last month’s photo is from St. Vincent’s Church in Gwinner.