



THE REGISTER

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALINA

AUGUST 22, 2025

TOGETHER, LET US BE DISCIPLES OF JESUS ON MISSION.

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MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

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Bottom line: 'You Matter'

God's love shines at Eucharistic Conference



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Participants at the second annual Eucharistic Conference in Hays listen to keynote speaker Fr. John Riccardo.

By LORI LEISZLER
THE REGISTER

My desire is for you to experience God's love in a new way this weekend," Bishop Gerald Vincke said as he welcomed 1,300 participants to the second annual Salina Diocese Eucharistic Conference, held August 9-10 at Fort Hays State University.

From the opening moments, a message of love and hope set the tone for the weekend.

MCs for the conference were Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt and Kate Weisner. Early on, Fr. Gale captured the excitement in the room for the weekend's keynote speaker, saying, "Fr. John Riccardo is changing the world."

Fr. John Riccardo, founder of ACTS XXIX, delivered a message of hope and mission. He acknowledged the struggles of our modern times, which he called "the new Great Depression." Showing Rembrandt's

painting of The Calming of the Storm, he compared our fear to the disciples' panic in the boat: We think we're going to drown, when Jesus isn't worried.

"You matter," Fr. Riccardo told participants. "He didn't make you to die. He didn't make you to be anxious. He didn't make you to be a slave. You're worth fighting for... One day, He'll destroy [your fears and struggles]. Because you matter."

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Small in numbers, strong in faith

St. Peter parish celebrates 150th anniversary

By DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

St. Peter Church in Aurora has just 31 families on its parish register.

But they are very proud of their church – the building itself and the people who have attended Mass there since 1875.

So, when a big occasion comes along, they celebrate. Especially for the party the Aurora-St. Peter folks threw in mid July in commemoration of the parish's 150th anniversary.

St. Peter's welcomed more than 200 guests to its church, highlighted by a Mass celebrated by Bishop Jerry

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COURTESY PHOTO, SHARON DYKES

Seven priests who have served St. Peter's joined Bishop Gerald Vincke for the 150th anniversary Mass in Aurora. From left are Frs. Kieffer, Letourneau, Scheetz, Ninemire, Msgr. Hake, Zimmerman and Metz. Kneeling is Fr. Rockers.

Making the shift to restored order of the sacraments

Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation is one of my favorite things to do as a bishop. I love meeting the students, their sponsors, and the parents and grandparents who accompany them.

As I travel throughout the diocese, I have noticed that parishes are celebrating Confirmation at different ages.

Several years ago, I asked Fr. Frank Coady what grade he thought was best for receiving Confirmation. He responded, "I think we should use the restored order."

The restored order refers to celebrating the sacraments of initiation in their original sequence: Baptism first, then Confirmation, and finally the Eucharist. This is the way the Church has traditionally understood these sacraments—each one building upon the other—with the

Eucharist as the summit of our full initiation into the life of the Church.

Shortly after that, I asked Corey Lyon, our chancellor, what age he recommended for Confirmation in our diocese. He also said, "I think we should follow the restored order." I later learned that

Corey had even written a paper years ago in support of it.

Then one day, Deacon Bill Meagher—who was in formation at the time—stopped by my office after attending a class on the liturgy. "Bishop," he said, "I think we should move to the restored order."

Hmmm. That got me thinking. So I asked these coworkers to form a committee to study the topic more deeply. They met with priests, deacons, DREs, and many others. After a couple of years of prayer, listening, and discern-

ment, I have made the decision that our diocese will adopt the restored order of the sacraments.

That means, going forward, the normal pattern will be for children to receive the Sacrament of Baptism as infants, and then receive both Confirmation and First Eucharist together in the same Mass, typically in the third grade.

I'm excited about this step forward. We are joining more and more dioceses around the country that are returning to this ancient and theologically rich practice.

One of the main reasons I chose to make this change is that sacraments are gifts of grace. At times, it has felt like Confirmation was something to be earned—by completing certain requirements or jumping through hoops. But sacraments are not rewards for performance. They are generous gifts from God, freely given to strengthen and sustain us in our journey of faith.

I also understand that some people are concerned that children will stop coming to Mass after receiving the sacraments in third grade. That's a valid concern—but not what God wants for them. Two things come to mind: first, parents are—and always will be—the primary educators of their children in the faith. Second, there are many beautiful opportunities in middle and high school to continue growing in faith: through service to the poor, youth groups, Bible studies, retreats, and vocational discernment. These moments give our young people chances to live out the grace they received in the sacraments and continue to grow as disciples.

Please join me in praying for our diocese as we begin this renewed approach to sacramental formation. May it help all of us—especially our young people—encounter the Lord more deeply and follow Him more closely.

GERALD Vincke
BISHOP, SALINA DIOCESE



Why I've come to love the restored order

For many years, I taught Confirmation to junior high and high school students. I loved being part of that journey—watching young people grow, ask big questions, serve others, and begin to make the faith their own. I honestly thought Confirmation belonged at that stage of life. Like many people, I saw it as a kind of graduation from faith formation or a personal declaration of belief—a moment to say, "This is my faith now."

That's the story I held onto for a long time. But over time—and through prayer, study, and some hard conversations—I've come to see that the Church has always told a different story about this sacrament. And honestly, I had missed it.

The restored order—Baptism, then Confirmation, and finally First Eucharist—reflects the Church's earliest tradition and deepest theology. It puts the emphasis where it belongs—not on age or accomplishment, but on God's grace and His desire to strengthen us for the journey of

faith.

This hasn't been an easy shift for me. I used to worry about all the same things I hear others voicing now. I was convinced that if we confirmed kids earlier, they wouldn't come back. I relied on Confirmation as a "carrot"—the last leverage point I had to keep them involved. In my mind, it was the one thing that kept families engaged past elementary school.

I get that mindset because I lived in it. I preached it. But eventually I had to ask: if the only thing keeping someone engaged is the threat of not receiving a sacrament, have we really formed them in faith?

That question challenged me deeply. Sacraments are not rewards. They are not tools to manage attendance. They are free gifts of grace. If I believed that, I had to admit that I was using the

sacraments in a way the Church never intended.

What helped me even more was learning the history. The truth is, the current practice of receiving First Eucharist before Confirmation only started about a hundred years ago. It wasn't planned. Pope St. Pius X lowered the age for First Eucharist to seven, understanding that children needed to receive the graces of the Eucharist earlier. Still, he didn't

intend for Confirmation to be delayed. It just got left behind. Over time, we added meanings like "maturity" and "ownership" to Confirmation—but that's not what the Church has ever taught.

The early Church—and still today Eastern Catholic Churches—celebrated the sacraments in this order. Adults entering the Church at the Easter Vigil still receive them that way. What we're doing isn't a new idea. It's a return to the roots of our faith.

What do those roots teach? That Confirmation completes Baptism. It strengthens us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and prepares us

for the Eucharist—the source and summit of our life. It's not about us choosing God. It's about God choosing and equipping us for mission.

I used to think we had to hold onto Confirmation to keep kids in the pews. That way of thinking puts more faith in my teaching than in God's grace, but the sacraments are real encounters with Christ. They plant seeds that grow—quietly but powerfully—over time.

And no, we can't stop forming kids after Confirmation. We must work even harder. The journey doesn't end there—it begins. We need to build strong formation, prayer, and service opportunities that help our young people grow as disciples and live out the gifts they've received.

This change challenged me. But I've come to believe that giving young people the grace of this sacrament earlier allows the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide them right when the world starts pressing in. They need that help now—to face the noise, the pressure, and the lies—and to grow as faithful disciples of Jesus.

BILL Meagher
DEACON, SALINA DIOCESE



BISHOP'S SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

1	Labor Day, Chancery Closed.
8-11	Priests Spiritual Renewal Days, Wichita.
13	Confirmation-Leoville/Oberlin at Leoville, 6 p.m.
14	Confirmation, Hoxie, 10 a.m.
14	Annual Holy Cross Charities Mass in Pfeifer, 3 p.m.
14	Divine Mercy Radio Banquet, Salina, 6 p.m.
17	Installation Mass, St. Edward Church, Belleville, 6:30 p.m.
19	Homecoming/ TMP/Marian, Hays, Parade and Game
22-24	2025 Mission Bishop's Conference, Chicago.

SEPTEMBER PRAYER INTENTIONS

Pope Leo's intentions:

Let us pray that, inspired by Saint Francis, we might experience our interdependence with all creatures who are loved by God and worthy of love and respect.

Diocesan intentions:

We pray for all who suffer persecution for their faith, that they may be strengthened by God's grace, filled with courage, and sustained by the hope of the Gospel.

Q&A

Frequently-asked questions about the restored order of the sacraments

By Deacon Bill Meagher



Q: What is the age for Confirmation in the Diocese of Salina?

A: Confirmation is received in the third grade, following two years of preparation beginning in second grade. First Reconciliation takes place in second grade. Then, in third grade, children receive Confirmation and First Holy Communion together—restoring the original order of the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

Q: Are third graders old enough for Confirmation?

A: Yes. Canon Law (Can. 891) states that Confirmation is to be conferred “at about the age of discretion” (around age 7), unless the bishops set a different age. The Church teaches that Confirmation is not about “choosing to be an adult in the Church,” but about completing the grace of Baptism. Even infants can receive this sacrament

in cases where there is a danger of death. This is because Confirmation, like Baptism, is a gift of grace from God, and the Church desires that no one, especially the youngest members, die without receiving the graces associated with this sacrament. Confirmation and First Eucharist complete one's initiation into the Church and are the beginning of full participation in the life of Christ and His mission through the Church.

Q: What is the Sacrament of Confirmation, and what does it do spiritually?

A: Confirmation strengthens the baptized with the Holy Spirit, obliging them more firmly to live as witnesses of Christ. It imprints a spiritual character on the soul, deepens one's baptismal grace, and binds the person more closely to the Church (CCC 1302–1305, Can. 879). It is not a symbol of graduation, but a sacrament of initiation that empowers the Christian for lifelong mission.

Q: What do children need to know to be confirmed?

A: Canon Law requires that candidates be “suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew their baptismal promises” (Can. 889 §2).

Children need to know the basics of the Catholic faith, appropriate to their age, and have a desire to receive the sacrament. They must be baptized and not prevented by law from being confirmed. Importantly, they do not need to have a complete or mature understanding of the faith. Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation that strengthens baptismal grace and prepares one more fully for the Eucharist.

Q: What does Canon Law say about the order of sacraments?

A: Canon 842 §2 teaches that Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are all required for full initiation. Canon 866 adds that adults should be baptized, confirmed, and receive the Eucharist in that order. The Eucharist, described in Can. 897 as “the most august sacrament,” is the culmination of initiation—the

summit and source of Christian life. Restoring this original order emphasizes that the Eucharist is the goal toward which the other sacraments are directed.

Q: What if a child missed Confirmation in third grade and is already baptized?

A: The child should be brought to the pastor or parish catechetical leader to arrange age-appropriate preparation and to receive the sacrament at a later date.

Q: How are adults and older children who are unbaptized prepared?

A: Adults and children age seven and older who have not been baptized are prepared for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist together through the Rites of Christian Initiation (OCIA or OCIC).

Q: What would you say to someone who thinks we need to keep Confirmation at the current ages to keep young people attending religious education?

A: It's a fair and heartfelt concern—many parents and parish leaders worry that moving Confirmation earlier might lead to less teen involvement in religious education. But this raises deeper questions:

Should Confirmation—a free, unearned gift of grace—be used as a reward for staying in a program? Should fear of missing out on a sacrament be what keeps young people connected to the Church?

Confirmation isn't a graduation or something to earn. It's a strengthening by the Holy Spirit, building on Baptism and preparing us to fully receive the Eucharist. Why delay this gift, especially when young people most need the Spirit's guidance and strength?

Restoring the original order of the sacraments reaffirms that grace is not a prize, but a generous gift from God. It doesn't mean formation ends after third grade. Instead, it challenges us to walk with young people in new ways—through deeper formation, service, community, and discipleship.

We must never forget that Confirmation is not the finish line. It's a beginning.



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of SALINA

TRANSITION PLAN

RESTORED ORDER OF THE SACRAMENTS

AUGUST 2025

Bishop releases a letter announcing the move to the Restored Order of the Sacraments.

2026-2027

Parishes confirm a significant portion of remaining students (at least half) and begin preparations for their first class receiving sacraments in the restored order.

2028-2029

The first group of 3rd graders will receive the sacraments following the restored order.

2025-2026

The year is focused on education and preparation as our parishes, parents, and teachers learning about the upcoming transition while regular operations continue.

2027-2028

This will be the most challenging year — the first restored order class begins prep, alongside the final confirmations for remaining grades.

2029-FUTURE

Transition Complete

SECOND ANNUAL EUCHARISTIC CONFERENCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Fr. Riccardo spoke of the spiritual battle for souls, calling the world “enemy territory” under the devil’s hold, but reminding the crowd: “We’re called to tell people that they can defect.”

His talks emphasized not only hearing the Gospel but living it out. Quoting the Mass’s dismissal, “Ite, missa est,” he challenged the faithful to go forth.

“His desire is that we would be His family,” Fr. Riccardo said. “God wants to use us after encountering Him to go out into an anxious, divided, frightened, bored world and renew it into His family. ... He wants to use us in this community to renew, heal, and transform all that we can.”

Tying into the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope, the conference theme — “Hope Does Not Disappoint” — was woven throughout the talks, liturgies, and times of prayer. “We shouldn’t just be pilgrims of hope,” Fr. Riccardo challenged. “We should be heralds of hope.”



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Featured speaker Fr. John Riccardo leads participants in prayer during the Eucharistic Conference in Hays.



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Several sisters made appearances over the weekend, listening to keynote sessions and leading breakouts, including the Marian Sisters from Lincoln, Nebraska. (L-R): Sr. Serena Deters, Sr. Faustina Lightfoot, Sr. Benedicta Hawkins and Sr. Megan Therese Tunink.

“God wants to give you so many good things, but most of all He wants to give you His heart.”

—Bishop Jerry Vincke

Breakout Sessions and Sacraments

Breakout sessions, led by religious experts from across the Midwest, offered participants a chance to dive deeper into their faith in smaller, focused settings. Tracks were available for men, women, and youth, each designed to meet the unique needs of those groups. Among the presenters were several Marian Sisters from the Diocese of Lincoln, including Sr. Megan Therese Tunink and Sr. Benedicta Hawkins, who had moved to Beloit just days earlier to begin their new ministry at St. John the Baptist School.

In the women’s track, Sr. John Marie of the IHMs reflected,

“Sacrifice and beauty often go together. Which is what we see modeled on the altar by Jesus Christ.” She encouraged women to create dedicated spaces for prayer in their homes and to personally invite others to join them for prayer and Mass: “A lot of people don’t come to Mass. But if you take the initiative to invite them, they might... What we have to offer matters.”

These moments of teaching and testimony wove together with the sacramental heart of the weekend. On Saturday night, participants gathered for Eucharistic Adoration; on Sunday, over 20 priests concelebrated the closing Mass.

Hearts Moved and Faith Deepened

For many, Fr. Riccardo’s message was transformative. Keely Klinge, a Sharon Springs high schooler, said listening to him was a great opportunity for people her age to grow in faith.

“I got to look at things I thought I knew in my faith but saw them in a completely different way and it really opened my eyes to who God is and how I need to grow closer to Him,” Klinge said. “The more I’ve had opportunities in my life, like coming to these things... the more I’ve been growing in faith and feel like I’m a lot happier.”

Youth participant Angelina Schroeder especially enjoyed Sr. Mary Jane Frances’ youth breakout: “I really liked learning about how to pray with her — it made me think.”

During the final moments, Deacon Bill Meagher was moved to tears: “It’s clear that the Holy Spirit is alive in this diocese. I see it at work. It’s a beautiful thing.”

Behind the Scenes

Nearly 100 volunteers kept the weekend running smoothly, from directing traffic to greeting guests. Mary Harmon, a returning volunteer from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Salina, said, “When you get like-minded people together, your faith just blooms. I’ve enjoyed volunteering. I’ve enjoyed the sessions. I volunteer because I’m a do-er and it’s so fun.”

Bishop Vincke’s words from the

opening session lingered in the minds of many as they departed: “God wants to give you so many good things, but most of all He wants to give you His heart.”

In the end, that was the conference’s lasting message — you matter, you are loved, and there is unshakable hope in Christ.



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Newly-ordained Fr. Kade Megaffin shares stories from his visit to Rome with participants before breakout sessions begin.



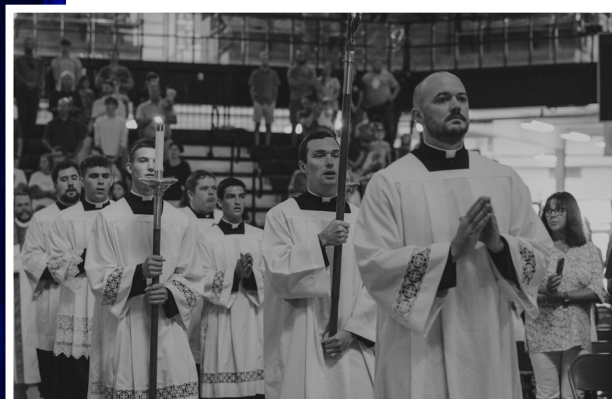
DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

Bishop Jerry Vincke took to the parking lot to greet folks attending the second annual Eucharistic Conference in Hays.



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Bishop Gerald Vincke exposes the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration on August 9th. During Adoration, Bishop Vincke processed with the monstrance around the coliseum, blessing attendants.



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Fr. Brian McCaffrey, followed by several diocesan seminarians, processes in to the final Mass of the Eucharistic Conference.



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Participants gathered at Gross Memorial Coliseum for a Holy Hour of Adoration.

Conference inspires all ages

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN

THE REGISTER

As the ninth of 11 siblings, Jeffrey O'Neill isn't used to being asked to speak for his family.

But on a pleasant Saturday morning in August, Bishop Jerry Vincke singled out 11-year-old Jeffrey, asking him to introduce his family members.

Bishop Vincke, the shepherd of the Diocese of Salina, was greeting swarms of people outside Fort Hays State University's Gross Memorial Coliseum before they entered the building.

They had come from all across Kansas and even from other states for the second annual Eucharistic Conference in Hays.

But first, they were treated to some good ol' western-Kansas hospitality with handshakes and hugs from Bishop Vincke.

Brian and Tiffany O'Neill from Rossville had decided to pack up their family and travel nearly three hours to listen to Fr. Riccardo, who they had heard years earlier.

The O'Neills live in the Archdiocese of Kansas City but follow Fr. Riccardo's schedule online and learned he was going to be in Kansas this summer.

They were unaware of the reception that awaited them in Hays when the nine O'Neill children ages 6 to 24 years and their parents rolled out of their 15-passenger van and made their way to the coliseum.

Jeffrey appeared a little shy when he first met the bishop. But Bishop Vincke got a big smile out of the youngster when he told him that he also was Sibling No. 9 in his family (of 10).



COURTESY PHOTO

(Above) Bishop Jerry Vincke takes a moment to pose for a photo with the the Brian and Tiffany O'Neill family at the conference.

(Right) Whitney and Maria Riley and their four daughters enjoyed eating Sunday's lunch on the grounds of Fort Hays State.



"Number one, the warm welcome from Bishop Vincke was enough to overwhelm us," Tiffany said. "It really set the tone for the weekend." "And Fr. Riccardo is amazing," she added. "We left with our hearts really full."

The O'Neills were pleasantly surprised earlier this summer when they learned the price of the conference – \$100 for an entire family.

Especially in the O'Neill family's case, that was a really good deal.

"We were so grateful that the price was affordable for a big family," Tiffany said. "We've had church events where the price was just astronomical for us as a family, so we couldn't attend. We were so

grateful for this opportunity."

"So we decided to bring the whole family, well almost – we just brought nine of our 11," she said, adding that two of their older children had other family commitments.

Several folks from the Salina Diocese also brought their families, including Whitney and Maria Riley, members of Seven Dolors Parish in Manhattan who were accompanied by their four daughters, ages 10-14.

It was the first time visiting the FHSU campus for the Rileys, and Whitney was impressed.

"A university campus is a great place to host a conference like this," he said. "They have a lot of open space and enough locations for

breakout sessions."

The Rileys had heard about the conference last year but weren't sure their younger daughters would benefit from the adult breakout sessions.

"We were so glad they added the youth track this year," Maria said, an author of children's books.

Some of the older O'Neill siblings dressed in shirts and ties for the Sunday afternoon Mass, a grand conclusion to the weekend.

"They were so impressed with the bishop and Fr. Riccardo and the entire conference," their mother said.

She said they talked about the conference on their way home.

"They said that having Bishop Vincke there at the door blew us away," Tiffany said. "They were telling us we want to go back next year."

The Riley family – surely along with hundreds of others – couldn't agree more.

"Oh," Whitney Riley said. "We'll definitely be back."

More than 1,300 people attended this year's conference. A date for next year's conference has not yet been set.

Kolbe Prison Ministries comes to diocese

BY DEACON MARK LEVALLEY
ST. MARY QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE,
SALINA

Kolbe Prison Ministries (KPM) is an organization whose sole purpose is to bring a sense of unity with Jesus Christ and His Church to those who are incarcerated throughout the United States. The ministry began in the Hill Country of Texas and held its first prison retreat in August 2009.

Since then, KPM has expanded and now offers retreats in Louisiana, Florida, Oklahoma, and Kansas. It is currently working with dioceses in several other states to bring the retreats to more facilities across the country.

The KPM retreat is modeled after well-known parish retreats such as ACTS and CRHP (Christ Renews His Parish). Its mission is: "To share the agape love of Jesus Christ with those in prison and to teach the fullness of the truth of the Catholic Church to the incarcerated."

From July 10–12, 2025, a group of men from Texas,

Louisiana, and all three dioceses in Kansas came together to hold the first KPM retreat in the Diocese of Salina. The retreat took place at the Ellsworth Correctional Facility (ECF) in Ellsworth, Kansas. The retreat team consisted of approximately 32 men—some who entered the facility to lead the retreat, and others who worked behind the scenes in prayer, fundraising, and outreach to parish communities.

Fr. Kyle Berens, pastor and chaplain at ECF, served as the spiritual director for the retreat. Fr. Joshua Werth, pastor and chaplain at the Norton Correctional Facility, also played a key role in helping bring KPM to the Salina Diocese. Much gratitude is owed to the ECF chaplains and staff who helped coordinate the retreat—from organizing schedules and logistics, to setting up and cleaning up each day, preparing and serving meals, providing snacks, drinks, audio/visual support, and much more. Their efforts were essential for the weekend's success.

The retreat itself was an experience of Christ's love. Through the personal witness of the team members and the grace of the Sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation—God's constant forgiveness and healing were shared with the men in a tangible and heartfelt way. It was evident, even from the first day, that the Holy Spirit was working in the hearts and minds of the retreatants. You could see it in their faces, hear it in their voices, and witness it in their testimonies by the final day.

One of the most moving aspects of the retreat was Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, offered each day. A room was set aside for Adoration, and the men were invited to sign up for 30-minute or one-hour slots—or simply stop in to sit with Christ. For many, this was the first time they had experienced Adoration, and many spoke of the deep peace they felt simply being with the Lord.

The retreat concluded Saturday afternoon with a



COURTESY PHOTO, LONG THIÊN

Kolbe Prison Ministries hosted a retreat for inmates in the Salina Diocese at the Ellsworth Correctional Facility.

reflection on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are called to serve Him by serving one another. Many of the men shared a renewed understanding of what it means to be Christian, and made new commitments to their faith. Already, the fruits of the retreat are visible: attendance at Monday evening Bible study has doubled, and participation in OCIA on Thursday evenings after Mass has also increased.

These retreats don't only change the lives of the men

who attend—they also transform the hearts of the volunteers who serve. If you feel called to be a part of this ministry, KPM is currently in the early planning stages for a retreat at the Norton Correctional Facility. Please consider joining us in the future as more information becomes available.

"For I was in prison and you visited me... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."
—Matthew 25:35–40

SMALL BUT MIGHTY, PARISH CELEBRATION FROM PAGE 1

Vincke and several priests, including seven who have served in one way or another at St. Peter's.

Parishioners scurried around for weeks before the big day, cleaning the church and installing new carpet down the aisles, making sure it was presentable for company.

"Yay, right?" Bishop Vincke proclaimed in his homily as he greeted the congregation. "... so thankful to be sharing in your joy and excitement. Thank you for taking care of this beautiful church."

Several in the congregation raised their hands when the bishop asked who had grown up in Aurora and had been baptized or married in St. Peter's.

When he asked "How many grew up here and became a priest?" a buzz went through the congregation as they looked toward Fr. Larry Letourneau, one of the priests around the altar, who is now retired.

The aroma of roast beef and all the fixings wafted through the air and could even be detected from a few blocks away as people

made their way from the church down the unpaved street to the Knights of Columbus Hall following Mass.

A video screen was set up in the hall, along with other mementos, giving people a taste of the parish history.

The first St. Peter church, built in 1875, survived a move seven years later from its original location to the spot of the current church. But it didn't survive a tornado in 1909 and was crumpled and swept away over the prairie.

Thus, a new church was built with bricks and mortar. It was dedicated in 1910 and still stands today.

Aurora (population 50) is only about 50 percent Catholic these days. But several area rural people attend church there, too, some on a regular basis, along with people from other towns. So a Mass is still said every weekend at St. Peter.

"We come to Mass here a lot," said Lisa Canfield, who lives in Concordia, about 15 miles to the northwest. "They are such a warm, welcoming

parish, and they take such pride in their parish here. We love coming here to church."

Lisa and her husband, David, decided to attend the anniversary celebration and brought with them Lisa's mom, Theresa (Istas) Peltier, who was baptized at St. Peter's and attended church there growing up.

The fact that many from the area still attend church at St. Peter's is not lost on the local folks.

"We've been so appreciative that we are able to have Mass every weekend," said Jolene Kindel, a member of Aurora's local parish council. "If it has to be on Saturday night, we say 'OK.' If it has to be early on Sunday morning, we say 'OK.'"

St. Peter's parishioners were happy with the outcome for their special day.

"We were so pleased with the turnout," Kindel said, adding that an estimated 250 people attended Mass, and 200 meals were served.

Several out-of-staters attended the celebration,

including Dick Demars, who came all the way from Houston, Texas.

He remembers while growing up that most of the residents of Aurora were Catholic.

"One of my classmates became a Catholic because all of the rest of us were Catholic," Demars said.

The Aurora school, staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Concordia, closed after Demars' sophomore year of high school in 1966, but he still remained in Catholic education, graduating

from Notre Dame High School in Concordia.

But Aurora – and St. Peter's – will always hold a special place in his heart.

Demars and several of his buddies were checking with each other for weeks leading up to the anniversary celebration to see who would be attending.

"We had such a good time reminiscing," he said. "The church was just gorgeous. The meal was fantastic. And having the bishop there was so special."

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WHAT'S HAPPENING



**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
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September 1, 2025

This 10th annual observance invites all Christians to reflect on their relationship with creation!

SEEDS OF PEACE AND HOPE

- September 1**

 - Labor Day.
- September 7**

 - Grandparents Day.
- September 13**

 - Divine Mercy Radio Banquet, Hays, 6 p.m.
- September 14**

 - Mass for the Feast of the Holy Cross, Holy Cross Church, Pfeifer, 3 p.m.
- September 19**

 - Homecoming for TMP-Marian, Hays.
- September 27**

 - OFM Capuchins Brown Robe event, 5 p.m.
- September 28**

 - World Day of Migrants and Refugees



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Rose Garden

Sep. 14th Salina
Hilton Garden

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**Go and Make Disciples:
The Call the Evangelization**




**15th Annual
Appreciation Banquet**



Holy Cross Church in Pfeifer, KS will be hosting a mass to commemorate the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on Sunday, Sept. 14 at 3:00 p.m. Bishop Jerry Vincke, Fr. Curtis Carlson and Fr. Reggie Urban will be the celebrants. Music provided by Trilogy. Seed wheat will be blessed. Free will donation BBQ social following mass. All are welcome.

Also, Holy Cross Charities will be holding a '31 Days of Cash Giveaway' this October. Tickets are \$50 and multiple winnings are possible. Prizes start at \$100 and the grand prize is \$1000. For more information or tickets contact Stan Dome 785-650-3145; Florian Dome 785-650-3847; Jerry Dreiling 785-650-3863; or Deb Hoffman 785-623-8928. Proceeds go towards church and cemetery maintenance.



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The Narrative


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DIOCESE HIRES NEW CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

The Diocese of Salina is pleased to announce the appointment of Ben Suing as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO), effective August 18, 2025. A committed Catholic and seasoned finance professional, Mr. Suing will oversee financial operations, strategic planning, and stewardship of diocesan resources.



Ben Suing

Originally from Omaha, NE, and a graduate of Mount Michael Benedictine High School, Mr. Suing earned his degree in Business and Finance from Kansas State University. He brings over 15 years of leadership experience in banking, finance, and manufacturing, most recently serving as North America Procurement Manager for Hillenbrand (Coperion), where he

managed multimillion-dollar budgets and promoted fiscal transparency.

"Ben's deep commitment to his faith, matched with his proven financial/managerial expertise,

makes him ideally suited to shepherd the diocese's fiscal health," said Bishop Gerald Vincke. "His vision and integrity will enhance our capacity to serve parishes

and ministries across 31 counties in Kansas."

Suing said, "I am honored to join the Diocese of Salina during this exciting period of growth and renewal. I look forward to working alongside Bishop Vincke, our pastors, and staff to ensure wise stewardship of resources in support of our shared mission."

Ben and his wife, Molly, have five children and live in Salina.

Seminarian dinners growing in popularity

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

The seminarian fundraising dinners in the Salina Diocese have become so popular that yet another location was added this year. Now, the dinners will be held at four locations, rotating between two sites each year.

This year a dinner was held in Manhattan for the first time, along with one in Hays. Next year's sites will be Salina and Colby, then back to Hays and Manhattan in 2027.

"These dinners are such a great way to give people a chance to come together to show their support for the seminarians and to meet the seminarians and learn more about them," said Corrina Hudsonpillar, donor relations and communications manager for the diocese's Catholic Foundation.

In addition to financial assistance, seminarians also need strong prayerful support.

"We are so happy this is in Manhattan this year," Manhattan resident Mary Todd said. "Our seminarians need our prayers more than anything in the world."

Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt served as master of ceremonies, leading a lively and faith-filled program, with vocation directors Fr. Andy Hammeke and Fr. Brian McCaffrey also speaking. All the seminarians were introduced—either in person or by video—and each shared a little about themselves.

Attendees enjoyed a special treat: hearing about the trip to Italy taken by three newly ordained priests. Fr. Kade Megaffin and Fr. Adam Urban told how they, along with Fr. Jesse Ochs, attended the General Audience in Rome and even blessed Pope Leo XIV.



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

At the Seminarian Dinner in Manhattan, participants played a game called, "Guess The Seminarian," where they had to match the seminarian to their fun fact. The dinners help fundraise for the cost of educating the diocesan seminarians.

Seminarians sat among the guests—often strangers at first, but friends by the end of the night. In Hays, Gabriel Friess shared how he graduated from Benedictine College and entered formation, and that his older brother, Deacon Luke Friess, will be ordained a priest in June 2026.

Gabriel also shared that he likes being called Gabriel in honor of Archangel Gabriel.

"My life as a seminarian is just beautiful," he said.

Fr. Gale spoke of the Year of Hope, telling attendees, "Something special is happening here in the United States, and the center of this fire is the Salina Diocese. Why the Salina Diocese? But then again, why Bethlehem? Why not Salina?"

Eight seminarians were present at both dinners, with a combined

attendance of over 350 people. The eight who couldn't attend shared video clips, including four new seminarians from Vietnam: Trung Nguyen, Dung Dau, Tien Nguyen and Phong Tran. After a year learning English at Cloud

County Community College, they will begin seminary formation this year and will remain in the diocese after ordination.

Also joining this year are Adam Bates (Beloit), Kale Kuhlman (Stockton), and Ed Schmeidler (WaKeeney).

Three current seminarians hail from St. Frances Cabrini in Hoxie: Deacon Luke Friess, Gabriel Friess and Ethan Weiner. Collin Thielen (Park) and Max Megaffin (Hays) left for Rome this summer to study at the Pontifical North American College.

Others in formation include Kyle Pfeifer, Joseph Schones, Holden Giefer, and Gus Hanson. The seminarians are studying at several seminaries, including those in Denver, St. Louis, Wichita, and Franklin, Wisc.

Some attendees also were honored at both locations for celebrating special personal occasions. Marcella Steinhauer from Abilene attended the Manhattan dinner on the eve of her 101st birthday, and Hays residents Gene and Theresa Flax celebrated their 49th wedding anniversary on July 31 at the Hays dinner.

MATCH WORK

An amount of \$120,000 has been donated as a challenge to the rest of the Diocese of Salina. Any donation to the seminarian education fund will be matched dollar for dollar while funds remain. Anyone wishing to donate to the education fund can scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/semsofsalina



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Bringing hope to life at Catholic Charities' Green Tie Celebration

By JEREE HUGHBANKS

CATHOLIC CHARITIES
OF NORTHERN KANSAS

On July 12, 2025, Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas hosted its annual Green Tie Celebration at the Salina Country Club. The event brought together community members for an evening filled with compassion and hope, highlighting how their support makes a difference for neighbors in need across the diocese.

The celebration honored the generosity of donors whose contributions support Catholic Charities' variety of programs, including financial and housing assistance, personal care and basic needs, pregnancy and adoption services, and counseling.

Executive Director Megan Robl shared highlights from the past year, celebrating both growth and impact. In February, Catholic Charities opened a new facility in Hays and launched a second thrift store, expanding its ability to serve clients with dignity and care. Outreach services also expanded, adding new stops in Colby and Solomon, bringing the total to 28 monthly outreach stops across the agency's 31-county service area.

Robl also reflected on the organization's disaster response efforts in Grinnell, where a tornado caused severe damage this spring. Thanks to donor



COURTESY PHOTO

Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt and his table celebrate with a selfie after winning the dessert dash at Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas' Green Tie Celebration. Their generous giving earned them first pick from a variety of delicious donated desserts. The event was a joyful and inspiring evening celebrating hope and community.

support, Catholic Charities' was able to respond immediately with supplies, direct assistance, and compassion.

"You don't just fund programs," Robl told attendees. "You bring the love and mercy of Jesus into some of the most difficult moments in people's lives. You are not just guests at this celebration. You are the reason for it."

Throughout the evening, guests heard powerful stories from clients and community members whose lives were touched by the organization. Their testimonies reminded everyone in attendance that hope often begins with a single act of generosity.

Poro Gahekave, who turned to Catholic Charities during an unplanned

pregnancy, shared how meaningful the support was. "It's not just about the diapers or supplies," she said. "It's about the peace of mind that comes from knowing someone cares."

Lesa Larson, Director at Heartland Early Education, described the importance of collaboration in supporting vulnerable families. She recalled helping a single mother recovering from a serious medical condition who was able to stay in her home thanks to Catholic Charities' assistance.

"What mattered most was how she was treated—with dignity, compassion, and genuine care," Larson said.

Daylene Tracy, Parish Life Coordinator at Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Solomon, emphasized the impact of food assistance in rural areas. "Every week, Catholic Charities distributes 120 food boxes to families in need," she said. "Your support doesn't just fill stomachs. It fills hearts with hope and reminds people that they haven't been forgotten."

Catholic Charities extends its heartfelt thanks to the many individuals who made the evening possible, including the planning committee, event volunteers, and all who give generously throughout the year.

Stay tuned for the date of next year's Green Tie Celebration, to be announced in the coming months. We hope to see you there!

CATHOLIC CHARITIES MEMBER SELECTED FOR NATIONAL STORYTELLING EXHIBIT



COURTESY PHOTO

Melissa Herrera stands beside the People of Hope: A Mobile Museum banner at Catholic Charities USA headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, where she recorded her personal impact story in July.

By JEREE HUGHBANKS

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF
NORTHERN KANSAS

Melissa Herrera, Emergency Assistance Coordinator at Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas, has been selected as one of just 40 individuals nationwide to be featured in People of Hope: Faith-Filled Stories of Neighbors Helping Neighbors, a new traveling museum exhibit developed by Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA).

Out of more than 240 submissions from across the country, Herrera's video — highlighting her experience walking alongside a client named Michael — was chosen for professional recording this summer at CCUSA's national headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia.

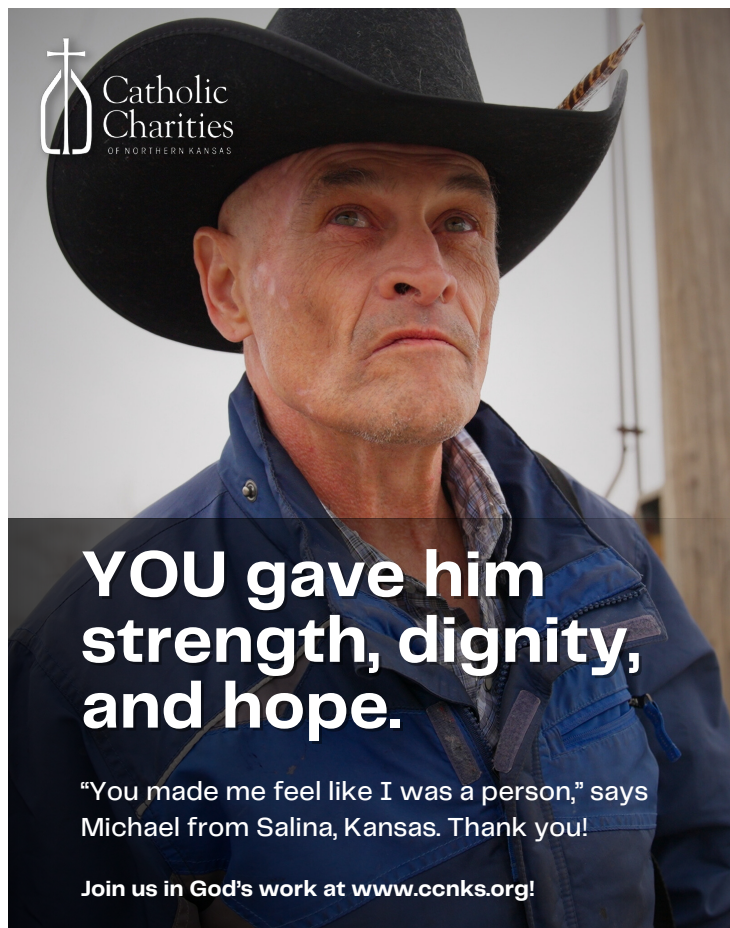
The People of Hope exhibit will launch in spring 2026 and travel across the United States for two and a half years. It will be housed in a retrofitted tractor trailer and feature immersive, first-person stories of service and transformation from Catholic

Charities staff and volunteers nationwide.

Herrera's story focuses on Michael, a man who came to Catholic Charities in Salina three years ago struggling with addiction and homelessness. With compassion and persistence, Herrera helped guide him toward stability, sobriety, and self-worth. Today, Michael is employed, housed, and has been sober for more than two and a half years.

"This recognition is such a joy, not just for Melissa, but for all of us," said Megan Robl, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas. "Her compassion, her consistency, and her faithfulness in showing up for people like Michael is at the heart of who we are as an agency. Her story is a powerful reminder of the hope that's possible when we serve others with dignity."

Stay tuned for more information about the People of Hope exhibit as it prepares to hit the road in 2026.



"You made me feel like I was a person," says Michael from Salina, Kansas. Thank you!

Join us in God's work at www.ccnks.org!

All in the family for Holy Family administrator

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

Alicia Knight loved her calling in education so much that she started working on her master's in education administration degree even while teaching full time and raising a family of four children.

So, when the assistant principal's position came open at Holy Family Elementary School in Hays this past spring, she was ready.

After 11 years teaching in elementary school classrooms, Knight will begin the 2025-26 school year as assistant to Principal Mandy Meagher.

Knight got her first taste of life as an administrator at the annual principals' meeting in Salina on July 30.

"It was so helpful for me to meet some of the other principals in our diocese," she said, "and getting the opportunity to interact with them."

Although this will be Knight's first job in administration, she is familiar with Holy Family, where her three older children attend class.

A graduate of Thomas More Prep-Marian High School across town from Holy Family, most of Knight's teaching stints had been in public education.

But she says she was always drawn to Catholic education.

"I student taught sixth grade at Holy Family and loved it," she said of her college career at Fort Hays State University. "Of course, I had been in Catholic education at TMP, but this gave me a glimpse of teaching there. I felt I really wanted to teach in Catholic schools."

However, like most college graduates, she applied for several positions and landed her first job at Trail Ridge Middle School in Gardner in eastern Kansas.

Knight said she wouldn't trade that opportunity for anything. She got a solid start in teaching, and it's where she met her future husband, Kegan Knight.

After three years at Gardner, the Knights moved back to Hays for Kegan to work on his master's degree, and Alicia took a position as a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher at O'Loughlin Elementary School.

"I enjoyed public schools, and I love Catholic schools," she said. "I just really like it all."

However, once their daughters Emery and Collins were old enough to start school, their parents



COURTESY PHOTO

Alicia Knight, new assistant principal at Holy Family Elementary in Hays, with her family. She is holding 2-year-old Turner, and to the right is her husband, Kegan. Front row: Kolter, 5; Emery, 9; and Collins, 7.

enrolled them at Holy Family.

Knight is a native of Great Bend, where she attended Catholic school in kindergarten and first grade.

But she moved around during her grade school days following her father's career in college coaching

and administration, and Catholic schools weren't always an option.

Her family moved to Hays in 2004 when her dad, Curtis Hammeke, took the athletic director's position at Fort Hays State.

Knight was entering eighth grade, and after

graduating from Kennedy Middle School, she finally got the chance to attend Catholic school again – at TMP-Marian. She then stayed close to home to attend FHSU.

"We always knew we were going to send our children to Catholic schools, if we had that opportunity," Knight said. "We feel so fortunate to have Holy Family here in Hays."

Now she gets to take her children to school with her. In addition to his older sisters at Holy Family, 5-year-old Kolter is in preschool there, and 2-year Turner will soon follow.

"Being in the same school that my children are attending is going to be wonderful, a major positive," Knight said. "And I think that with my wide variety of experience. I have a lot of different perspectives. I'm excited."

Following the principals' meeting, Knight was ready to hit the ground running.

"I know there are a lot of great things going on at Holy Family, so I'm excited for the school year, to get there and be a part of it," she said. "I've gotten the opportunity to witness it all as a mother. Now I'm looking forward to being a part of it on the faculty side."

Principals challenged to lead 'great teams'

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

Principals from Catholic schools across the Diocese of Salina gathered in Salina in late July for their annual meeting, leaving with full stomachs and renewed enthusiasm for the year ahead.

Included on the agenda was a delicious meat loaf meal prepared by Alice Fox and her team from Sacred Heart parish.

Diocesan Superintendent of Schools Geoff Andrews introduced this year's kickoff theme: "Seven Commitments of a Great Team"—emphasizing the belief that "strong teams build strong Catholic schools."

Andrews outlined the seven commitments:

- Call each other
- Stay mission-focused
- Stay positive
- Give your best
- Keep improving
- Stay connected

• Support one another

Each commitment was paired with a saint whose life reflected that principle, grounding the message in Catholic tradition.

"We're always going to have good schools," Andrews said. "But we should always strive to be better."

During Mass, Bishop Jerry Vincke thanked the principals for their service.

"I'm grateful to spend time with you today," he told the principals and staff in attendance, to whom he gave a special blessing. "Thank you for your vocation."

Andrews gave a presentation on the Italy pilgrimage he took this summer with students and parents. And he and Dr. Nick Compagnone, former superintendent of schools, took a look at technology in education and discussed whether artificial intelligence in schools is a friend or foe.

He ended with a talk on

school improvements and high quality instruction, showing a photo of Superman with a cross on his chest.

"Teaching is our super power," he said. "Remember not all heroes wear capes. Some wear Catholic school badges."

The principals gather each year before the start of school for professional development and networking.

"This is such a good energizer, getting to bounce off ideas with other principals," said Michelle Seltzer, who is entering her seventh year as principal at St. Joseph Grade School in Oakley. "We know we have a lot of support among our group and can email each other for help on things."

"It's always neat to attend Mass with our fellow principals," she added. "It puts you in the right frame of mind to have a great start to the school year."



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Diocese launches parent training initiative

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

Discussing the day's activities with family around the dinner table may not be a common practice in some households these days.

That doesn't matter, says Chris Rogers.

It's still the responsibility of parents to communicate with their children on their level, Rogers stressed, whether it be chatting around the dinner table or eating a fast-food sandwich on their way back from baseball practice.

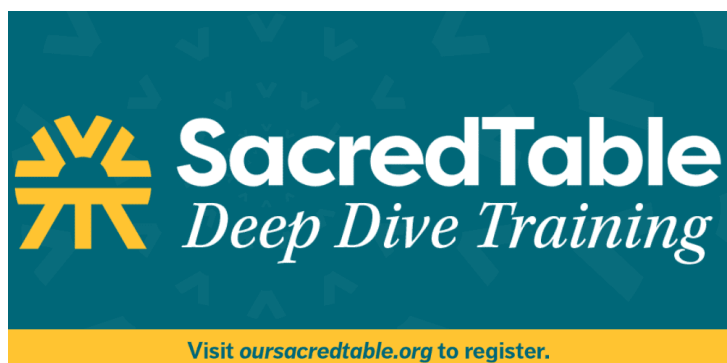
"Parents are the greatest influence on their kids' faith," said Rogers, Director of Family Life at the Diocese of LaCrosse, Wis. "We have to get on their level," wherever that might be at the time.

Rogers was speaking in Salina at a "SacredTable" training for the directors of religious education (DRE) for the Diocese of Salina.

Our diocese is one of only 20 across the country piloting SacredTable, a new initiative from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry.

Studies show that 85 percent of children raised Catholic won't practice the faith as adults.

"The Directory for Catechesis reminds us that



the Church is called to come alongside parents and help them embrace their role as the first catechists of their children," said Deacon Bill Meagher – director of the offices of youth ministry, religious education and family life for our diocese. "If we're serious about raising a new generation of disciples, we must partner with families now."

So he brought Rogers to Salina as part of the SacredTable initiative.

"SacredTable is about strengthening the connection between our parish communities and the domestic Church – the family," Dcn. Bill said. "We want to help train parishes to have conversations with families to help support passing on our faith."

About 85 people gathered in the parish hall of St. Mary Queen of the Universe Church to listen to Rogers, who centered on "training parish leadership

to better partner with parents."

He talked about the challenges of our culture to include "relationships that are fragile" and the importance of the domestic church.

More than once, there was a reference to late Pope Francis' mantra that "The family is the domestic church. The church is a family of families."

One of Rogers' sessions focused on the power of listening and sharing with our children.

Rogers emphasized to the DREs that while "we're helping parents, it's helping us, too. It's taking us to a spot we didn't know we would go."

The program was videotaped for those who couldn't make the training in person, and Dcn. Bill said that monthly training will continue for two years "to help us facilitate those conversations within our diocese and with families."

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Meyer receives FertilityCare™ award

SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

NFP Consultant Lindy Meyer of Concordia recently received the Outstanding FertilityCare Practitioner Award from the American Academy of FertilityCare Professionals. This is an annual award that is nominated, voted upon and given by those in the FertilityCare Profession.

Individuals recommended for the Outstanding FertilityCare Practitioner/Instructor Award must meet the following criteria: A. Is a Certified FertilityCare Practitioner or Instructor. B. Is a Voting member of the Academy. C. Has a current practice in FertilityCare, i.e., has taught Creighton Model FertilityCare to at least 10 couples in the past year. D. Has made an outstanding contribution to FertilityCare through service, education, and/or research. Examples of outstanding contributions are the following: i. developed and/or administers an accredited FertilityCare service program; ii. developed and/or adminis-

trates an accredited FertilityCare education program; iii. is the principal investigator of practice based FertilityCare research that has been published in a recognized professional journal; iv. maintains a large FertilityCare practice under adverse conditions.

Lindy provides FertilityCare instruction in Con-

cordia and the surrounding communities as well as virtually for long-distance clients. In addition to providing instruction, she is available to speak to parish and school groups on FertilityCare, Theology of the Body and related topics. Lindy and her husband Tony live in Concordia and have seven children.



COURTESY PHOTO

Lindy Meyer (right), an NFP Consultant for the Diocese of Salina, recently earned an award for her work from the American Academy of FertilityCare Professionals.

TWO NEW FERTILITYCARE™ PRACTITIONERS TRAINED IN DIOCESE OF SALINA

BY **LINDY MEYER**
NFP INSTRUCTOR

The Diocese of Salina joyfully announces that Laura Dlabal of Salina and Samantha Hicks of Beloit have successfully completed a rigorous 13-month education program to become FertilityCare™ Practitioners. Their completion marks a significant milestone in advancing women's health and strengthening the Church's mission of supporting natural family planning within the diocese.

The Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System (CrMS) is a research-based, medically-supported method of tracking a woman's natural fertility cycle. It provides couples with a natural, moral, and effective means of family planning, and it serves as a valuable tool for identifying and treating reproduc-

tive and gynecologic health issues.

Both Laura and Samantha have demonstrated exceptional commitment to this calling, completing the comprehensive training as part of the Diocese of Salina's first FertilityCare Practitioner Education Program which holds interim accreditation with the American Academy of FertilityCare Professionals. Over the past year, they have studied the scientific foundations of the CrMS, completed supervised teaching experiences, and passed multiple evaluations to ensure excellence in client care.

Their program completion expands the reach of FertilityCare services in north-central Kansas. While teaching in their local communities of Salina and Beloit, Laura and Samantha also offer client

instruction virtually, making this life-affirming care more accessible to women and couples across the diocese and beyond.

"We are blessed to welcome Laura and Samantha as fully trained FertilityCare Practitioners," said Lindy Meyer, Director of Salina FertilityCare Services Center. "Their dedication strengthens our ability to serve the diocese with compassionate, professional care that honors the dignity of the human person and the beauty of God's design for fertility and family life."

To learn more about the Creighton Model or to schedule an Introductory Session with Laura or Samantha, visit www.salinafertilitycare.org or contact our Center at fertilitycare@salinadiocese.org.


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Pilgrims visit Sacred Site

By DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

A pilgrimage to western Kansas dawned bright and beautiful in July for representatives from at least nine parishes across the Salina Diocese.

The destination was St. Paul Church, located in the unincorporated town of Angelus in Sheridan County. Bishop Jerry Vincke designated the church as one of the Sacred Sites for the Diocese's Jubilee Year of Hope.

Fr. Brian Lager—pastor of St. Paul's and the parishes in Colby and Oakley—grew up in Angelus and offered to celebrate a special Mass for the pilgrims.

The idea for the pilgrimage came from the evangelization committee at St. Nicholas of Myra Parish in Hays. Committee member Teresa Heimann led the planning and selected Angelus as the site.

Other Sacred Sites are Sacred Heart Cathedral and Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas, Salina; St. Isidore Catholic Student Center, Manhattan; Immaculate Heart of Mary, Hays; and St. John the Baptist, Beloit.

About 40 participants gathered at St. Nicholas Church the morning of July 20 for a short prayer service before heading west on I-70. More than 50 people attended the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. Paul's, which was followed by a history talk from Fr. Brian about his home parish. St. Paul's was founded in 1887; its current church was dedicated in 1917.

St. Nicholas parishioners assisted with various roles at the Mass, which was followed by a program, lunch, conversation, and a rosary led by Fr. Brian before the group's return trip.

"We are honored that Bishop Vincke chose our parish as a pilgrimage site for the jubilee year," Fr. Brian said. "This is where my Christian life began."

He shared that he received several sacraments at St. Paul's—Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation. He also preached his first homily there as a transitional deacon in 2011 and celebrated his first Mass as a priest the following year.



COURTESY PHOTO, CORRINA HUDSONPILLAR

The steeple on the St. Paul Church in Angelus stretches high into the clouds.

Pilgrims also had the opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence by fulfilling the usual conditions: receiving Holy Communion, praying for the pope's intentions, and going to confession within the designated timeframe (usually within 20 days before or after the act).

Fr. Brian noted that he is the seventh man from St. Paul's parish to be ordained a priest. Two others still living include Fr. John Lager, his uncle and national chaplain for FOCUS in Denver, and Fr. Tony Stephens of the Fathers of Mercy in Cincinnati.

Among the pilgrims were Peter and Bonnie Miller, newcomers to St. Nicholas Parish and recently retired from their businesses in Hanover. They moved to Hays to be closer to their children in Russell and Colorado.

"We've been wanting to get more involved in the community," Bonnie said. "This fit right into what we wanted to do. We enjoyed the pilgrimage tremendously—learning about the Angelus church and what this pilgrimage meant."

TALK ON FR. VALENTINE DRAWS CROWD

By DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

Despite the efforts of staff at the Hays Public Library to collect enough chairs from other areas in the building, it was standing-room only for a presentation on July 24.

Some people even sat on the floor as droves of folks gathered in the Kansas Room, eager to hear Father Reggie Urban give a much-anticipated historical presentation.

Fr. Reggie, a retired priest who lives in Hays, is passionate about the history of Father Valentine Sommereison, the founding pastor of eight Catholic parishes in Ellis and Rush counties in only 19 months time in the late 1800s. Father Valentine is buried in the St. Joseph Cemetery in Hays.

Next year marks the 150th anniversary of this monumental boost for Catholicism in Ellis County, and Fr. Reggie is on a mission to inform as many people as possible about Fr. Valentine and the upcoming milestone year.

For anyone interested in hearing more about this history, Fr. Reggie will give the same talk again at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 11, at the former Kennedy Middle School building in Hays.

More information will be available later this year for the 2026 150th celebration.



DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

Fr. Valentine Sommereison was the founding pastor for several parishes in Ellis and Rush counties in the late 1800s. His grave can be found just north of the large crucifix in the St. Joseph Cemetery in Hays. It is part of the Haffamier family burial plot.

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BAPTISMS

Flint Lee Baldwin, son of Jacob and Richelle Baldwin, was baptized May 31, 2025, by Fr. Vincent Thu Laing at St. Frances Cabrini Church in Hoxie.

Ryker Stephen Boling, son of Tyler and Carly Boling, was baptized June 21, 2025, by Fr. Keith Weber at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Salina. Godparents are Ross Boling and Casey Wendel.

Baylor Kay Chambers, daughter of Connor and Bridget Chambers, was baptized August 3, 2025, by Fr. Adam Urban at St. Mary Queen of the Universe Church in Salina. Godparents are Nicholas and Jessica Bentley.

Denim Wayne Maier, son of Brandon and Jadyn Maier, was baptized July 13, 2025, by Fr. Frank Coady at St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan.

Clayton Ronald Nelson, son of Tyler and Gina (Heimerman) Nelson, was baptized April 27, 2025, by Fr. Mark Wesely at St. Patrick's Church in Lincoln. Godparents are Jeremy Wiebke and Amy

Heimerman.

Maverick Kai O'Reagan, son of Dylan and Audra (Watson) O'Reagan, was baptized July 26, 2025, by Fr. Damian Richards at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays.

Hallie Joy Reece, daughter of Michael and Jessica (Stoecklein) Reece, was baptized July 27, 2025, by Fr. Nick Parker at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

Jagger Risher, son of CJ Risher and Amber McGann, was baptized Friday, July 11, 2025, by Fr. Michael Elanjimattathil, CMI, at St. Mary Queen of Angels Church in Russell.

Grady Chadwin Walter, son of Dayton and Shaylyn (Krone) Walter, was baptized June 1, 2025, by Fr. Mark Wesely at St. Patrick's Church in Lincoln. Godparents are Kyle Cavalli and Bri Walter.

Kateri Engra Willis, daughter of Bryan and Anna (Hixon) Willis, was baptized July 13, 2025, by Fr. Leo Blasi at Seven Dolors Church in Manhattan.

Mason Staley Adkins and Jamie Michelle Johnson were married July 26, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Trevor Buster witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Andy and Kristy Adkins. Parents of the bride are Mike and Kristi Johnson. Witnesses were Aiden Bourman and Jenna Wren.

Nolan Timothy Churchman and Kalea Rayann Nippert were married July 12, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Trevor Buster witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Timothy and Shauna Churchman. Parents of the bride are Jesse and Anna Nippert. Witnesses were Jacob Clark and Kyra Nippert.

Garrett Esslinger and Alexa Long were married June 14, 2025, at St. Joseph Church in New Almelo. Fr. Vincent Thu Laing witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are the late Scott Esslinger and Shannon Esslinger. Parents of the bride are Jan Long and Leanne Apolinus. Witnesses were Myles Mendell and Makayla Alexander.

Cole Feldt and Emily Eck were married July 12, 2025, at St. Mary's Church in Ellis. Fr. Andy Hammeke and Fr. Dana Clark witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Ryan and Becky Windholz and the late Douglas Feldt. Parents of the bride are Mark and Sarah Eck. Witnesses were Charlie Russell and Grace Eck.

WEDDINGS

Seth Flax and Ava Reis were married August 2, 2025, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays. Fr. Nick Parker witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Peter and Janetta Flax. Parents of the bride are Eric and Veronica Reis. Witnesses were Branden Vogel and Zoey Sneed.

Dawson William Girard and Riley Dianne Dusin were married July 25, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Frank Coady witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are David and Lisa Girard and the late Amanda Girard. Parents of the bride are Corey and Christa Dusin. Witnesses were Aiden Rudolf and Emily Jones.

Austin Richard Henderson and Kathryn Maristella Satsky were married July 19, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Trevor Buster witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Vance and Rebecca Henderson. Parents of the bride are Robert and Elaina Satsky. Witnesses were Brendan Mackey and Caroline Satsky.

Brady Kreutzer and Halli Friend were married July 5, 2025, at St. Mary's Church in Ellis. Fr. Andy Hammeke witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Kyle and Jamie Kreutzer. Parents of the bride are Jay and Dana Friend. Witnesses were Jenner Kehe and Hannah Gehring.

Manuel Antonio Marroquin and Katarzyna Czerw were married July 19, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Trevor Buster witnessed their vows along with concelebrant Fr. Adam Muda. Parents of the groom are Vance and Rebecca Henderson. Parents of the bride are Robert and Elaina Satsky. Witnesses were David Valle and Slawomir Czerw.

Parker O'Neal and Olivia Marie Gassman were married July 12, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Peter O'Donnell witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Robert and Amy O'Neal. Parents of the bride are Randy and Susan Gassman. Witnesses were Taylor O'Neal and Georgi Wilson.

Luke Ruder and Ciara Seib were married July 26, 2025, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays. Fr. Brian McCaffrey witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Russ and Janel Ruder. Parents of the bride are Brent and Jessica Seib. Witnesses were Ryan Ruder and Aliya Seib.

Robert Schiffner and Doris Donovan were married June 6, 2025, at St. Mary's Church in Ellis. Fr. Dana Clark witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are the late Albert and Pearl Schiffner. Parents of the bride are Patricia Tieben and the late James Tieben. Witnesses were Jeff Leubbers and JoAnn Tieben.

Jacob Sohm and Tiffany Dortmund were married July 5, 2025, at St. Mary Queen of Angels Church in Russell. Fr. Vincent Manuel witnessed their vows.

Cole Austin Stahlman and Leah Catherine Renyer were married July 5, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Justin and Lori Stahlman. Parents of the bride are Jim and Mary Renyer. Witnesses were Braden Bramhall and Kayla Lock.



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FUNERALS

Diana M. Dinkel, 70, died June 26, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 28 at The Basilica of St. Fidelis in Victoria. Fr. Curtis Carlson, OFM Cap., presided. Burial in St. Fidelis Cemetery, Victoria.

Renee Lyn Hewitt-Soden, 50, died July 5, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated July 12 at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Jarett Konrade presided. Burial in Elmwood Cemetery, Beloit.

Deanna Mary (Ochs) Kennedy, 76, died July 10, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated July 14 at St. Frances Cabrini in Hoxie. Fr. Vincent Thu Laing presided. Burial in St. Frances Cabrini Cemetery, Hoxie.

Rosalie (Rose) Catherine Gasper Maginness, 87, died July 22, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated July 28 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Concordia. Fr. Joseph Kieffer presided. Burial in the Nelson Center Cemetery, rural Concordia.

Joanna M. Normandin, 91, Hays, died July 14, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated July 18 at St. Joseph Church in Damar. Fr. Curtis Carlson, OFM Cap., and Fr. Harvey Dinkel, OFM Cap., presided. Burial in St. Joseph Cemetery, Damar.

Ernest V. Pfeifer, Sr., 87, died July 4, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated July 9, 2025 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Ellis. Father Dana Clark presided. Inurnment at St. Mary's Cemetery in Ellis.

Mary Ann Weigel, 89, Gorham, died July 18, 2025. Funeral Service was held July 23 at Cline-Keithley Funeral Home in Victoria. Brenda Rogers officiated. Burial in St. Mary's Cemetery, Gorham.

Andrea Marie (Woods) Wildeman, 82, died April 29, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 6 at St. Frances Cabrini Church in Hoxie. Fr. Vincent Thu Laing presided. Burial in St. Frances Cabrini Cemetery, Hoxie.

SISTER JEAN BEFORT

Sister Jean Befort, 85, died July 23, 2025, at Nazareth Motherhouse in Concordia. Born in Hays on July 23, 1940, she was the eldest of five children of William and Leona Befort and was baptized Mary Rose. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia in 1958 and professed final vows in 1963.

Sister Jean earned degrees from Marymount College, the University of St. Thomas (TX), and Creighton University. She ministered in religious education for 21 years in the Salina Diocese

and later served on the Community Leadership Team, at Manna House of Prayer, and helped found Neighbor to Neighbor in 2009, retiring in 2020.



She was preceded in death by her parents and sister Theresa Gottschalk. Survivors include her sister Margaret Ann Hines and brothers Donald and William.

Funeral Mass was held August 5 at the Motherhouse Chapel with Father Barry Brinkman presiding. The burial was in the Nazareth Motherhouse Cemetery, Concordia.

DCN. RONALD LEHMAN

Ronald Eugene Lehman, 76, of Olathe, passed away on July 21, 2025, following a battle with dementia. He was born November 16, 1948, in Belleville, to MaryAnn Banninger.

A 1967 graduate of Linn High School, Ron worked as a printer for the Fairbury Journal News, Linn Palmer Record, and later The McCall Pattern Co., where he spent 43 years until retiring in 2013. There he met his wife, Reyne (Stehr), and together they raised two children, Brent and Maree. He was an active member of Seven Dolors/St. Patrick

Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus.

In 2013 Ronald was ordained to the Permanent Diaconate where he enjoyed his service for the church.



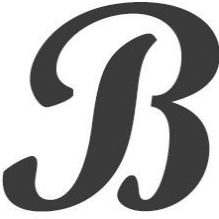
He loved fishing, spending time with his grandchildren, and traveling—especially a 2013 Italy trip with fellow Deacons.

He was preceded in death by his mother and brother Larry. Survivors include his wife Reyne, children, grandchildren, and siblings.

Funeral Mass was held August 1, 2025, at St. Patrick's, Ogden, with burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Ogden.

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what it means to suffer, to worry,
and to trust God through pain.

We bring to you our hearts—our joys,
our fears, and our struggles. Please
help us, as a family, to grow in
compassion and faith.

Teach us to love like Jesus, and to
stay close to Him in every part of life.
When we face sadness or hardship,
remind us that you are with us and
that God can bring good from every
sorrow.

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us.
Help us carry our crosses with love
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