

THE REGISTER

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALINA

JANUARY 23, 2026

TOGETHER, LET US BE DISCIPLES OF JESUS ON MISSION.

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Diane Gasper-O'Brien,
THE REGISTER

PREPARING YOUR HEART FOR LENT

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Pope Leo XIV proclaims Franciscan Jubilee Year

BY ALMUDENA MARTÍNEZ-BORDIÚ
ACI PRENSA

Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a "Special Year of St. Francis" to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint's death. During this time of grace, which will extend until January 2027, the faithful are granted the opportunity to obtain a plenary indulgence.

This Franciscan Jubilee Year, considered a gift for the entire Church and an occasion for authentic spiritual renewal, was inaugurated on Jan. 10 with a decree issued by the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See.

Until Jan. 10 of next year, the faithful can obtain this grace under the usual conditions — sacramental confession, Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the pope — by making a pilgrimage to any Franciscan conventual church or place of worship dedicated to St. Francis anywhere in the world.

Furthermore, the elderly, the sick, and those who, for serious reasons, cannot leave their homes can obtain the plenary indulgence

by spiritually joining in the jubilee celebrations and offering their prayers, pains, or sufferings to God.

In a world where "the virtual takes over the real, disagreements and social violence are part of everyday life, and peace becomes more insecure and distant every day, this Year of St. Francis spurs all of us, each according to our possibilities, to imitate the poor man of Assisi, to form ourselves as far as possible on the model of Christ," the decree states.

For the Order of Friars Minor, this time is also an opportunity for the faithful to become "models of holiness of life and constant witnesses of peace."

On the occasion of this anniversary, Pope Leo XIV addressed a letter to the ministers general of the Franciscan Family Conference in which he emphasized that "in this era, marked by so many seemingly endless wars, by internal and social divisions that create distrust and fear, he continues to speak. Not because he offers technical solutions, but

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COURTESY PHOTO

Pope Leo has proclaimed a Special Year of St. Francis, encouraging the faithful to imitate the poor man of Assisi and grow in holiness as "witnesses of peace."

Transformed and sent forth: SEEK takes Cloud County students to the heights

BY CHASE HAGEMANN
SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER



COURTESY PHOTO

Students from the recently revived Newman Club at Cloud County Community College, Concordia, joined thousands of college students at SEEK26 in Denver, CO. Front (L-R): Caylyn Pfizenmaier, Sarah Rieke, Hallie Everett and Georgia Rolph. Back: Jarell Yardin, Cody Sharp, Clare McKain, Bishop Gerald Vincke, Chase Hagemann and Sophia Rieke.

Monsignor James Shea capped the Denver SEEK conference with a striking statement.

After a fiery address, he stopped for a moment, gazed into a sea of 4,503 people at the Gaylord Rockies Resort and Convention Center, and he said, "Do you have problems? Good for you."

An awkward chuckle rippled throughout the audience. Msgr. Shea followed by saying evangelization is not merely a suggestion, but a calling to all baptized Christians. The more problems we have, the more opportunities there are to draw closer to Christ and reach others.

Throughout SEEK, a five-day conference centered around college students, speakers guided attendees on a journey through salvation history using five Rs: Relationship, Rebellion, Reconciliation, Recreation and Response.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Turning our hearts to the Father

Recently, I attended a retreat with fifteen other bishops from Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. Our retreat master was Fr. Simeon Leiva-Merikakis. He is known for his wonderful four volume commentary on the Gospel of Matthew and his book, "The Way of the Disciple."

Of all the things that he said that touched my heart-- and there were many-- was the story he shared of



when he was teaching religious education decades ago. He asked the students the question, "Why did Jesus rise from the dead?" Immediately a young boy raised his hand and said, "I know I know I know." The boy responded, "Because he wanted to be with his Father." Fr. Simeon remarked, "There it is, so simple and so true."

Jesus lives in us, and our hearts long to be with our Heavenly Father, who created us out of love and desires to be with us for eternity.

I also recently heard the vocation story of Fr. Boniface Hicks, a well-known Benedictine speaker. He grew up in an atheist home and went to college to study Computer Science. While he was reading underneath a tree (reminds me of the call of Nathaniel), a student invited him to join a Bible study. He agreed as he was

always searching for the meaning of life. The Bible study eventually led him to become Catholic and a Benedictine monk.

Catholics have a reputation that they do not read the Bible. I hope this can change in our lives. Last year, we invited Fr. John Riccardo of ACTS XXIX to our second annual Eucharistic Conference to discuss the Rescue Project, which is based on four themes: Created, Captured, Rescued, and Response.

I want to encourage you to partake or start a Bible study based on the Rescue Project beginning during Lent. Please invite someone who may not be responding to God's love for them. We all have a desire to grow closer to God. As you pray and think about what you want to do for Lent, consider forming or joining a small group to experience the Rescue Project together. Small groups are a simple but powerful way to encounter Jesus, build real community, and talk honestly about the deeper questions of life. Even two or three people meeting in a home or classroom can make a meaningful difference.

You can use groups you already have—Bible studies, men's or women's groups, youth groups—or create new small groups. Families may also choose to walk through the sessions together at



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Fr. John Riccardo prays during the 2025 Eucharistic Conference in Hays. He shared the vision of the Rescue Project with the diocese at that time. Bishop Vincke now invites the people of the Diocese of Salina to continue to discuss Fr. Riccardo's message through Lenten Bible studies.

home.

All videos, guides, and easy-to-use materials are available on our Diocesan website.

Week 6:

What difference does it make?

Week 7:

Words are not enough.

Easter:

Week 1:

What does God want from me?

Week 2:

Getting clarity on the mission.

My hope is that this Lent will help all of us rediscover the beauty of the Bible, the joy of walking with Jesus, and the love that the Father has for each of us.

Volviendo nuestro corazón al Padre

Recientemente asistí a un retiro con otros quince obispos de Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska y Kansas. Nuestro director espiritual fue el P. Simeon Leiva-Merikakis. Es conocido por su maravillosa obra en cuatro volúmenes sobre el Evangelio de Mateo y por su libro El camino del discípulo.

De todas las cosas que dijo y que tocaron mi corazón — fueron muchas—, una de ellas fue la historia que compartió de cuando enseñaba educación religiosa hace décadas. Les hizo a los estudiantes la pregunta: «¿Por qué Jesús resucitó de entre los muertos?».

Inmediatamente, un niño levantó la mano y dijo: «Yo sé, yo sé, yo sé». El niño respondió: «Porque quería estar con su Padre».

El P. Simeon comentó: «Ahí está, tan simple y tan verdadero».

Jesús vive dentro de nosotros, y nuestro corazón anhela estar con nuestro Padre celestial, quien nos creó por amor y desea estar con nosotros por la eternidad.

También escuché recientemente la historia vocacional del P. Boniface Hicks, un conocido conferencista benedictino. Creció en un hogar ateo y fue a la universidad para estudiar Ciencias de la Computación. Mientras leía debajo de un árbol (me recuerda al llamado de Natanael), un estudiante lo invitó a unirse a un estudio bíblico. Aceptó, ya que siempre estaba buscando el sentido de la vida. Ese estudio bíblico eventualmente lo llevó a convertirse al catolicismo y a ser monje benedictino.

Los católicos tienen la reputación de no leer la Biblia. Espero que esto pueda cambiar en nuestras vidas. El año pasado invitamos al P. John Riccardo de ACTS XXIX a nuestra segunda Conferencia Eucarística anual para hablar sobre el Proyecto Rescatados, que se basa en cuatro temas: Creados, Cautivos, Rescatados y Respuesta.

Quiero animarlos a participar en o iniciar un estudio bíblico basado en el Proyecto Rescatados a partir de la Cuaresma. Por favor, inviten a alguien que

quizá no esté respondiendo al amor de Dios por él o por ella. Todos tenemos el deseo de crecer más cerca de Dios. Mientras oran y piensan en lo que desean hacer durante la Cuaresma, consideren formar o unirse a un pequeño grupo para vivir juntos el Proyecto Rescatados. Los pequeños grupos son una forma sencilla pero poderosa de encontrarse con Jesús, construir una verdadera comunidad y hablar honestamente sobre las preguntas más profundas de la vida. Incluso dos o tres personas que se reúnan en un hogar o en un salón de clases pueden marcar una diferencia significativa.

Pueden utilizar los grupos que ya tienen —estudios bíblicos, grupos de hombres o mujeres, grupos juveniles— o crear nuevos pequeños grupos. Las familias también pueden optar por recorrer las sesiones juntas en casa.

Todos los videos, guías y materiales fáciles de usar están disponibles en nuestro sitio web diocesano.

Esquema de Cuaresma

Semana 1:

¿Por qué son importantes las historias?

Semana 2:

¿Por qué hay algo en lugar de nada?

Semana 3:

El Enemigo es el enemigo.

Semana 4:

Empeora.

Semana 5:

¿Qué ha hecho Dios al respecto?

Semana 6:

¿Qué diferencia hace?

Semana 7:

Las palabras no son suficientes.

Pascua

Semana 1:

¿Qué quiere Dios de mí?

Semana 2:

Obtener claridad sobre la misión.

Mi esperanza es que esta Cuaresma nos ayude a todos a redescubrir la belleza de la Biblia, la alegría de caminar con Jesús y el amor que el Padre tiene por cada uno de nosotros.

Celebrating one year of the Hays Thrift Store



Hays Thrift Store Manager Shannon Werth and volunteer Laurie Toepper stand ready to welcome shoppers and clients at the Hays Thrift Store, a place where compassion and community meet.

BY JEREE HUGHBANKS
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NORTHERN KANSAS

As Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas prepares to celebrate the first anniversary of its Hays Thrift Store, this milestone marks far more than a year of doors opening and closing or racks being restocked. It represents a year of neighbors being met with dignity, families finding relief, and a community discovering how generosity can change lives.

At the heart of this work is Shannon Werth, Hays Thrift Store Manager. While her title is new, serving people in crisis is not. Before stepping into the thrift store, Shannon served as Catholic Charities' Emergency Assistance Coordinator, often the first face clients saw when seeking help. Her role has simply shifted locations. Now, she continues serving those same neighbors in a welcoming space where people can receive help with dignity—because of you, care doesn't stop at the office door.

"Of course we provide clothing, shoes, and coats," Shannon shared. "But what I didn't fully realize until this year is the sense of community inside the store. It doesn't feel like just

a store. It's an escape and a way for people to take their minds off things."

Over the past year, the Hays Thrift Store has become something deeper than a place to shop. It has quietly become a refuge—a calm, welcoming space where people can pause in the middle of hardship and feel seen.

Shannon has witnessed that sense of peace firsthand. Some shoppers stop in not just to browse, but to find comfort during difficult seasons. "I've had people battling cancer who come in after chemotherapy because our store is on the way to the hospital," she said. "They'll tell me it's a quiet, calming place where they can gather their thoughts and take their mind off everything they're going through."

Open to the public, the store supports Catholic Charities' mission by helping neighbors access clothing and household essentials with dignity. Clients who meet income guidelines can receive clothing through vouchers—typically two pairs of pants and two shirts every other month for each family member—with additional support available when needs extend beyond the basics, such as winter coats, shoes, or clothing required for employment.

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BISHOP'S FEBRUARY CALENDAR

8	Church Rededication at St. John the Baptist, Hanover, 3 p.m.
9-12	Priests Continuing Formation Days, Wichita.
14	St. Andrew's School Auction, Abilene, 6 p.m.
15	Confirmation, St. Thomas More, Manhattan, 5 p.m.
21	Confirmation, Seven Dolors, Manhattan, 5:30 p.m.
22	Rite of Election, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina, 3 p.m.

FEBRUARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

Pope Leo's intentions:

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

Diocesan intentions:

Let us pray for a fresh openness to God's will in this new year, that each of us may respond with courage, peace, and trust in the Lord's plans for our lives.

FRANCISCAN YEAR OF JUBILEE, FROM PAGE 1

because his life points to the authentic source of peace."

In this regard, he highlighted that St. Francis reminds us that "peace with God, peace among people, and peace with creation are inseparable dimensions of a single call to universal reconciliation."

Editor's Note

St. Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of animals, the environment, and peace. His example continues to inspire Catholics around the world to pursue lives of humility,

charity, and reconciliation. During this Special Year proclaimed by Pope Leo XIV, the faithful are invited to celebrate his witness and reflect on ways they can also share Christ's love in their own lives.

Devotion to St. Francis remains strong in the Church close to home. Within the Diocese of Salina, three parishes are named after the saint: St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Norton, St. Francis Parish in Munjor, and St. Francis Parish in St. Francis.

"This Year of St. Francis spurs all of us, each according to our possibilities, to imitate the poor man of Assisi, to form ourselves as far as possible on the model of Christ."

-Pope Leo XIV

CORRECTIONS

The following corrections are offered to clarify errors that appeared in recent issues of The Register.

We apologize for these errors and appreciate our readers' understanding!

A sixth-grade student in the Holy Fire article on the cover of the November issue of The Register was misidentified. It was Anthony Church, not Aydan Church, who attended the middle school Holy Fire

event in Hays with his mother. Anthony is a sixth-grader at Thomas More Prep-Marian Jr./Sr. High School in Hays. Aydan, Anthony's older brother, is a sophomore at TMP-Marian. Additionally, in the December issue of The Register, on page 8 a priest's name was misspelled. It was Fr. Curtis Carlson who was present as St. Fidelis during the installation of the Padre Pio relic.

NEIGHBORS NEAR & NEIGHBORS FAR:

Black & Indian Mission

Your financial support of the Black and Indian Mission Office enables us to help form children in the faith, educate young people, and build hope – a hope often so hard to find in the areas our missionaries serve.

To Give:

Anytime during the month of February, place an envelope in your Parish Collection labeled "Black and Indian Mission", or simply add it to the memo line of a check!



TOGETHER, LET US BE DISCIPLES OF JESUS ON MISSION!

Will you join the Mission?

BY BISHOP GERALD VINCKE
BISHOP, SALINA DIOCESE

Dear Brothers and Sisters, The mission of the Church is clear. Christ calls us to follow Him and to help others come to know Him. That mission did not end with the first disciples. It continues in the Church today.

And it continues here, in the Diocese of Salina.

Wherever I go in our diocese, I see people responding to that call. I see priests serving faithfully. I see the laity begin new initiatives to serve others. I see families living their faith in ordinary and meaningful ways. I see young people searching for direction. I

see men discerning the priesthood and preparing to serve God's people.

Each of these responses matters. Together, they strengthen the life of the Church.

This year, through the Bishop's Annual Appeal, I am inviting you to Join the Mission. We carry this mission together as one diocesan Church. Through this shared support, the Church is strengthened across the Diocese of Salina, supporting priests who serve our people in 86 parishes, forming 16 seminarians for future priestly

**GERALD
Vincke**
BISHOP, SALINA DIOCESE

ministry, and creating moments of encounter and care throughout our diocese. In 2025, this shared mission brought more than 1,300 people together for the Eucharistic Conference, helped nearly 300 middle school students encounter Christ through Holy Fire, and provided pastoral support through various family life ministries.

In the coming weeks, you will receive a letter from me about supporting the Bishop's Annual Appeal. The Appeal allows us to join our efforts and our resources

so the mission of the Church can continue across our diocese. Every gift, offered in faith, helps make this work possible.

I ask you to prayerfully consider how God is calling you to join the mission. When we respond together, the Church is able to serve faithfully and bring people into relationship with Christ.

Thank you for your faith, your generosity, and your love for our diocese.

In Christ's service,

+ Gerald L. Vincke

Most Reverend Gerald L. Vincke
Bishop of Salina

Seeing the Mission up close

Before I began working at the Catholic Foundation for Diocese of Salina, I never gave much thought to what it took to provide many of the programs and ministries in our diocese. Events were held, sacraments were offered, and I didn't think much about the time, prayer, and resources required behind the scenes to make all of it possible.

The truth is, these ministries have always been present in my life. What has changed is my awareness of what it takes to sustain them.

Programs like Totus Tuus and Prayer and Action helped shape my faith as a student, and I was honored enough to work those programs for three summers during college. Catholic education played an important role in giving me a well-rounded foundation, both academically and spiritually. Priests took the time to guide me, challenge me, and help me grow in prayer and in my relationship with Christ.

Now, working closely with the ministries of our diocese, I see more clearly how intentional and

interconnected this work truly is.

I see couples celebrating milestone anniversaries at Masses hosted by our Family Life Office – a beautiful witness to the vocation of marriage. I see seminarians at the very beginning of their formation and later, years down the road, as they approach ordination – growing in wisdom, humility, and readiness to serve God's people. I see priests who continue to walk with parishioners through moments of joy, grief, and deep faith.

What I have come to understand is that the Bishop's Annual Appeal supports far more than individual programs. It sustains the mission of the Church as a whole. It helps ensure that ministry continues not just where it is visible, but where it is quietly needed most.

I want to encourage you to reflect on the ways the Church has shaped your own life. Perhaps through a parish, a program, a priest, or a moment of encounter with Christ and how your generosity helps make those moments possible for



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS
Torrie Gregg, bottom left, grew in her faith volunteering with Totus Tuus, one of many programs sustained through the Bishop's Annual Appeal.

others across our diocese.

Please prayerfully consider making a gift to the Bishop's Annual Appeal. Gifts can be made online at join.givecfd.org, or mailed to the Catholic Foundation for Diocese of Salina, PO Box 1696, Salina, KS 67402.

Other giving options, including stock, IRA distributions, gifts of grain, and donor-advised funds, are also available. Questions may be directed to 785-827-8746 or

torrie.gregg@salinadiocese.org.

Thank you for the many ways you support the Church through your prayers, your service, and your generosity. It is a privilege to see how our diocesan family continues to carry this mission forward together.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your gift to the Bishop's Annual Appeal helps support vital programs and ministries within our diocese. Give today via the QR code or at join.givecfd.org.



join THE MISSION





2026-2027 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

The Catholic Foundation for Diocese of Salina serves in many capacities, including managing endowment funds and investment savings accounts, some of which are dedicated to scholarships. We are excited to announce the availability of three scholarships for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year.



APPLY BY MARCH 1, 2026 AT [GIVECFDS.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS](http://givecfds.org/scholarships)

WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC FOUNDATION?

The Catholic Foundation exists to support the mission of our Church today and for generations to come.

We work alongside parishes, schools, ministries, and faithful families to help generosity be stewarded with care, clarity, and integrity. Each gift is guided by donor intent, governed responsibly, and invested in a manner consistent with Catholic values.

Through the Foundation, gifts are established for specific Catholic purposes such as supporting parish life, Catholic education, scholarships, ministry outreach, or the long-term needs of the Church. Some gifts are used to meet

immediate needs. Others are set aside to provide steady, lasting support over time. In every case, the purpose of the gift is honored and protected.

At its heart, the Foundation's role is simple: to care for generosity given in faith, so it can continue strengthening parishes, schools, and ministries now and in the years ahead.

You give with purpose. We steward with faith. The Church is strengthened.

If you have any questions, please contact us at development@salinadiocese.org or 785-827-8746.



HOW TO SUPPORT A FOUNDATION FUND:

- 1 Visit givecfds.org/funds
- 2 Find the fund you want to support
- 3 Give today!

MONSIGNOR CLEMENT A. KRUSE

The Monsignor Clement A. Kruse Scholarship honors his legacy of service to the Diocese of Salina, where he faithfully ministered in numerous parishes from his ordination in 1941 until his passing in 2006 at age 90.

Apply if you are an active registered member of a Catholic parish in the Diocese of Salina.

SUSIE DEGES

The Susie Deges Memorial Scholarship honors Susie Deges, a young leader in CYO whose life ended tragically before high school graduation. Established through an outpouring of support, the scholarship helps young Catholics pursue their educational dreams.

Apply if you are an active registered member of a Catholic parish in the Diocese of Salina and active within your parish CYO group.

MARYMOUNT MEMORIAL TRUST

Marymount College, operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, opened in 1922 as a women's liberal arts college in Salina and became coeducational in 1968. After its closure in 1989, its scholarship expanded to support students attending any accredited Catholic college.

Apply if you are an active registered member of a Catholic parish in the Diocese of Salina and attending a Catholic college as a full-time undergraduate student.



Simple.
Sacred.

“**E**ven the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in God’s own image, destined to live for ever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.”

— POPE FRANCIS
to the Bishops of Ireland,
Scotland, England and Wales,
July 17, 2013

*Please join the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia
in prayer for the sanctity of all human life.*



WHAT'S HAPPENING

February 2

- Groundhog Day.

February 6-8

- Engaged Encounter Weekend, Victoria.

February 9-12

- Priests Continuing Formation Days in Wichita.

February 14

- St. Andrew's School Auction, Abilene, 6 p.m.
- St. Valentine's Day

February 18

- Ash Wednesday

February 21

- Sacred Heart School Carnival, Colby, 10:30 a.m.

February 22

- Rite of Election, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina, 3 p.m.

(If you have any questions about an event listed here, please contact the parish, office or school directly.)



WE ARE HIRING

FAITH FORMATION
DIRECTOR

AT OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP, CONCORDIA

Seeking a full-time or two part-time Faith Formation director(s). Applicants must have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith and living that faith on a daily basis. They must have a desire to work with our young people, their parents and their teachers to pass on that faith. Applications can be picked up at the parish office, or we can email it to you. A job description is also available. Please contact Fr. Joseph Kieffer at 785-243-1099 or pastor@olphconcordia.org



DEADLINE TO APPLY: FEBRUARY 16

TOGETHER IN HOLINESS™ CONFERENCE SERIES

A CATHOLIC MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT CONFERENCE

APRIL 18, 2026 | 9:45 AM - 5:00 PM
IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY | HAYS, KS

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

Join us at the first annual *Together in Holiness* marriage enrichment conference in the Diocese of Salina on **Saturday, April 18, 2026** from 9:45 am - 5:00 pm at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Hays, KS!

Whether you are newly-married or celebrating a milestone anniversary this year, *Together in Holiness* is the perfect pause from the busyness of everyday life so you can rediscover the beauty of the sacrament of marriage.

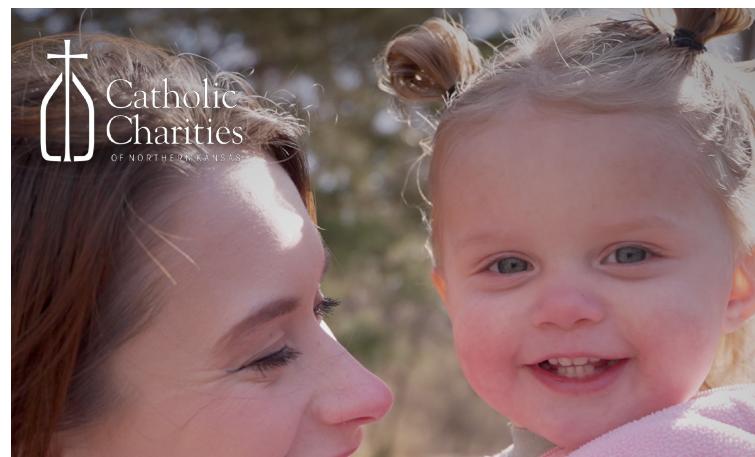
**Early Bird Couple \$54 - Discount available through March 2
Childcare \$5/Child**

Questions? Email Conference Coordinator Kirsten Zimmermann at kirsten@forlifeandfamily.org.

Iron Sharpens Iron

St Joseph
Catholic Men's Conference

St Joseph's Catholic Church in McPherson is hosting a men's conference on Saturday, February 21, 2026 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. All men 14 and older are encouraged to come and join us for a day learning and celebrating being a Catholic man. Special guest speakers will be Casting Nets Ministries, Chris Stewart and Tony Brandt. Cost for the day is \$30. For more information contact Gabe Prescott at (620) 755-1764 (Call or Text), gabe.ray.prescott@gmail.com



YOU helped build a future for her family.

"I see Catholic Charities as a part of my family because they've helped me form my family. I do not know where I would be right now if not for their help," says Kandis from Hays, Kansas. Thank you!

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

PROMISE TO PROTECT

PLEDGE TO
HEAL

PROMESA DE PROTEGER

COMPROISO PARA
SANAR

If you have been abused or
victimized by someone
representing the Catholic
Church...

Please believe in the possibility
for hope, help and healing. We
encourage you to come forward
and speak out. Our victim
assistance coordinator is
available to obtain support for
your needs, to help you make a
formal complaint of abuse to the
proper authorities and to
arrange a personal meeting
with the bishop or his
representative, if you desire.

To contact the
Victim Assistance Coordinator
866.752.8855 ext. 1067
reportabuse@salinadiocese.org
www.reportandprotect.com

Si has sido abusado o
fuiste víctima de alguien
que representa
a la Iglesia Católica...

Por favor confía en la posibilidad
de esperanza, ayuda y sanación. Te
alentamos a que te presentes
y hables. Nuestra coordinadora de
asistencia a las víctimas está
disponible para ofrecer apoyo en
tus necesidades, para ayudarte a
presentar una queja formal de
abuso ante las autoridades
correspondientes y para hacer una
cita personal con el obispo o su
representante, si lo deseas.

Para contactar a la Coordinadora
de Asistencia a Víctimas
866.752.8855 ext. 1067
reportabuse@salinadiocese.org
www.reportandprotect.com

Catholic Bishop Abuse
Reporting Service:
800.276.1562
reportbishopabuse.org

Servicio de Denuncia de Abusos de
Obispos Católicos:
800.276.1562
reportbishopabuse.org

Treasuring the gift of Catholic education

Hammeke takes over as HCS president

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN

THE REGISTER

Curtis Hammeke smiled as he sat and watched about 130 junior high students file quietly out of the Marian Chapel last semester.

In a weekly ritual at Thomas More Prep-Marian Jr./Sr. High in Hays, students in grades 6 through 8 had just attended Mass in the school chapel on a Thursday morning. And at its conclusion, it was obvious there was an order to the system.

"Beautiful, just beautiful!" said Hammeke, president of Hays Catholic Schools (HCS).

He shook his head and smiled. Some days, it's almost too much for him to comprehend.

Hammeke, following a rewarding 21-year career as athletic director at Fort Hays State University, enjoyed just a few weeks of retirement before taking over as president of HCS last summer.

A new direction for HCS

Hammeke's appointment brought the first president to TMP-Marian since the retirement of Jean Ross in 2010, and he is the first president for the combined HCS.

Establishing a president model for both schools was part of the diocesan strategic plan in 2022. Hammeke will oversee the governance of both Catholic schools while working closely with Travis Grizzell, advancement director.

Geoff Andrews, superintendent of schools for the diocese, calls it the perfect fit.

"A school principal wears so many hats already, dealing with curriculum and day-to-day operations and such," Andrews said. "Having a president to work on the outward projects and fundraising is a huge boost."

Chad Meitner, principal at TMP-Marian Junior-Senior High School for students in grades 6-12, said having a president also "makes for tighter integration for us internally and governance between the two schools, and it gives us a more clear vision for us as a district."

"Curtis is a great addition to Hays Catholic Schools with his vision and direction," said Mandy Meagher, principal of Holy Family, which offers Catholic education for students PreK-grade 5. "And he's very connected to Holy Family as well as TMP-Marian."

'Something I care about'

Hammeke said he knew he would still work at something when he retired but wanted to "do something where I can help, something that I care about."

"You can go through the mo-



COURTESY PHOTOS



Students are able to grow in their Catholic faith beginning at a young age in Hays, where Holy Family Elementary offers classes for youngsters pre-K through fifth grade. They can continue at TMP-Marian for grades 6-12. At left, Curtis Hammeke was appointed president for Hays Catholic Schools last summer.

tions, trying to make a difference," he said. "But I can't think of anything more important than our faith."

Hammeke and his wife, Annette, watched all three of their children go through TMP-Marian.

"As my faith life has grown over the years, the importance of a Catholic education has elevated," he said. "I knew it was important when our kids were here. When you have an opportunity like this in your community for your kids to experience their faith daily at school, it's a gift."

Hammeke is already busy, working on several projects related to infrastructure.

While his office is located at TMP-M, Hammeke also spends time at Holy Family, attending weekly Mass and visiting the school off and on.

"This is too large of a gift, too special for this community," Hammeke said, "not only to just keep it going but growing and prospering. We have a lot of people who care about Hays Catholic Schools, and we've been able to communicate and partner with them to make this place vibrant."

Hays is home

Hammeke said, "It never crossed my mind to leave Hays in retirement."

A native of Great Bend, he first came to Hays as a student at Fort

Hays State. Following graduation, he left Hays for several years before returning as the Tiger AD in 2004.

While his youngest son Nick and family live in Kansas City, his oldest son (Father Andy) is chaplain at FHSU's Catholic Campus Center, and his daughter Alicia Knight is assistant principal at Holy Family, where three of his grandchildren attend school.

And now, there is that special leadership role for him at Hays Catholic Schools.

"It's hard to fathom a better

environment morally, spiritually leadership-wise than seeing the formation of these kids at these places. If you have something special, do you want to hide it – or do you want share it?" he asked. "Of course you want to share it."

Especially something as special as witnessing students faithfully attending Mass.

"There is nothing more important they will do today than what they just did," Hammeke said as the students moved quietly out of Marian Chapel on that December morning. "Not today, not any day."

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Diocesan schools gear up for Catholic Schools Week

By DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN

THE REGISTER

Nearly 2,500 students in PreK-12 and their schools across the diocese are gearing up for Catholic Schools Week 2026 next week.

The annual nationwide event celebrating the positive impact of Catholic education begins Sunday, Jan. 25, and runs through Friday, Jan. 30.

That positive impact is felt every week of the school year, but CSW is always an exciting time of year for students after a few weeks following their winter vacation from school.

It's a chance for students to show appreciation to staff, volunteers and community members for their support.

Bishop Jerry Vincke takes to the road to say Masses with the students at seven different sites, which stretch into the next week following CSW.

That same sense of school pride and renewed energy has been on display beyond the classroom as well. Two diocesan boys' basketball teams already provided some spark to the second semester earlier this month.

The state-ranked and unde-



DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

Father Brian McCaffrey, chaplain of TMP-Marian, Hays, and players from TMP-M and Salina-Sacred Heart gather at midcourt of Al Billinger Fieldhouse for a prayer during basketball competition between the two diocesan schools earlier this month.

feated Knights from Salina-Sacred Heart traveled to Hays for a matchup with Thomas More Prep-Marian and left with their perfect record intact – pulling out a 48-45 victory in overtime.

TMP-M Jr. High closed out the first semester on a winning note with the girls' basketball pro-

gram completing a perfect season. The young Monarchs won all their regular-season games at the A-, B- and C-team levels, then claimed the championship of the Mid-Continent Elementary League Tournament to finish 2025 with a combined record of 33-0.

CSW MASS SCHEDULE WITH BISHOP VINCKE

Monday, January 26

8:05 a.m. – St. Mary Queen of the Universe, Salina
1:30 p.m. – St. John the Baptist, Beloit

Wednesday, January 28

2 p.m. – St. Francis Xavier, Junction City

Thursday, January 29

Noon – St. Joseph, Oakley

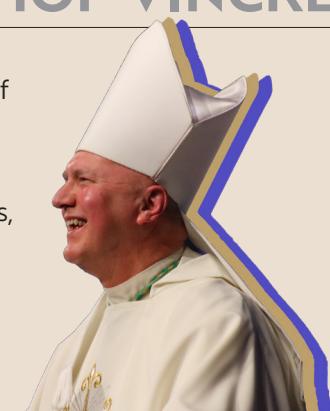
Friday, January 30

10 a.m. – Immaculate Heart of Mary, Hays

*Friday, February 6

TBA p.m. Mass – Seven Dolors, Manhattan

• Tentative schedule



TEACHER RECOGNITIONS

Teachers and administrators at the Salina Diocese schools celebrating anniversaries in five-year increments in Catholic school education this school year were recognized at the annual Teacher Institute last semester.

35 years

Kristi Anguiano, St. Andrew, Abilene
Lori Flax, Holy Family, Hays

25 years

Gery Hake, Tipton Catholic
Juanita Ottley, St. Joseph, Oakley
Nancy Sherffius, Sacred Ht., Salina

20 years

Matthew Heuer, St. John's, Beloit
Chad Meitner, TMP-Marian, Hays
Sara VonFeldt, Sacred Ht., Plainville

15 years

Stephanie Hagans, Holy Family, Hays
Russell Lueger, St. John's, Beloit
Jenny Bretz, St. Joseph, Oakley

10 years

Megan Gottschalk, TMP-M, Hays

5 years

Geoff Andrews, Diocesan Schools Superintendent, Salina
Megan Basely, St. Francis Xavier, Junction City
Cheryl Berens, Holy Family, Hays
Linda Duckworth, Manhattan Catholic
Taylor Hagge, St. Francis Xavier, Junction City
Mike Hubka, Manhattan Catholic
Amanda Juenemann, Sacred Ht., Colby
Ryan Krajicek, Sacred Ht., Salina
Christine Lohman, Manhattan Catholic
Amanda Meagher, Holy Family, Hays
Roger Mick, St. John's, Beloit
Amy Ohnsat, Tipton Catholic
Corey Ritter, St. Mary, Salina
Brenda Rose, TMP-M, Hays
Clare Stramel, Sacred Ht., Salina
Arica Zenk, Manhattan Catholic
Delaney Ziegelmeier, Holy Family, Hays

Diocesan Teacher of the Year
Jennie Helget, math teacher, TMP-Marian Junior High.

'An all-around example' of a Catholic school teacher

By DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN

THE REGISTER

He could see for himself, but it was what others were saying that also prompted Chad Meitner to nominate Jennie Helget for Teacher-of-the-Year honors for the Salina Diocese.

"I have only heard good things about how she handles all the situations that teachers can encounter in a classroom – diplomatic, kind, very creative," he listed. "She is the perfect blend: good in the classroom with kids, good with parents, good with co-workers ... an all-around example of what a Catholic school teacher should be."

Consequently, Helget – a math teacher at Thomas More Prep-Marian Junior High in Hays – will represent the diocese as its

teacher of the year at next month's annual Topeka KAIRS Conference. KAIRS (Kansas Association of Independent and Religious Schools) is the state's largest organization of non-public schools.

And Helget is honored and humbled to represent the diocese at the state conference.

"When Chad told me he would like to nominate me from TMP, I was thrilled that I was recognized within my own teaching team," she said. "But this – it was definitely a surprise!"

After moving to Hays when she was 8 years old, she attended all local schools, including Fort Hays State University.

After graduation from FHSU, she filled in at Kennedy Middle School for a semester after a

teacher passed away, and that next year, a teaching position opened up at Holy Family Elementary.

Following a 20-year career at Holy Family, she moved across town to TMP-M Jr. High.

On her nomination form, Helget was described as "dedicated, inspirational, follows seriously the belief that a supportive and active learning environment matters. Her positivity is contagious!"

She doesn't look at teaching as a job but rather a vocation.

"I love teaching, and I love being here in a Catholic school; it's very meaningful in my life," she said.

"The best part," she added, "is that I get to share my Catholic faith all day, wherever it fits in."



DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER
Cruising the classroom and helping students understand math first-hand is a common trait of TMP-Marian's Jennie Helget, diocesan teacher of the year.

SEEKING THE HEIGHTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For Cloud County Community College sophomores Clare McKain and Georgia Rolph, the response of evangelization resonated most.

"I learned that we need to receive people with love and spark their curiosity about the faith first," McKain said. "It's important to reach them with compassion and build trust."

Featured speaker Mother Olga Yaqob, founder of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth, discussed being intentionally present with our neighbors. Rolph appreciated the clear messaging.

"I loved how simple she made everything sound," Rolph said. "She made evangelization into just, 'I want you to get to heaven.' That's it. There are so many times where we overcomplicate everything, but that's the attitude we need to have."

With the trip marking both McKain and Rolph's first visit to the mountains and to SEEK, the conference's theme, influenced by SEEK patron saint Pier Giorgio Frassati, is all the more fitting: "Verso l'alto," Italian for, "To the Heights."

"My expectations were incredibly exceeded from night one," McKain said. "I met so many



COURTESY PHOTO

Front (L-R): Sarah Rieke, Caylyn Pfizenmaier, Georgia Rolph and Hallie Everett. Back: Sophia Rieke, Jarell Yardin, Clare McKain, Cody Sharp and Chase Hagemann.

incredible people and attended so many sessions, which each taught me something different about vocational discernment, being at peace with whatever God is calling me to do, learning about biblical discipleship and the Mass."

While speakers educated students about the effects of

original sin, Jesus as the God-man solution and our identity in Christ, the SEEK conference also provided Catholics with sacramental grace. Priests offered Mass, confessions and Eucharistic Adoration each day.

On day three, priests processed the monstrance to each corner of the room as incense filled the

atmosphere. Adoration lasted two hours to allow time for confessions and prayer. The students said it's unlike anything they had experienced before.

"It was so crazy," McKain said. "You could sense God's presence was in the room. I try to attend Adoration a lot, but typically when I'm in Adoration it's extremely quiet and there's just one other person. It was absolutely beautiful to see everyone kneeling and singing worship music."

The voyage provided T-Bird Catholic, the Newman club founded in December 2024 at Cloud County, with a heart on fire for Christ.

Although recruitment efforts progressed slowly, the club has 11 members via GroupMe. With a welcome back retreat this past spring and Bible studies this fall, SEEK encapsulated a ground-breaking moment for the students.

With Fellowship of Catholic University Students hosting SEEK in San Antonio and Columbus, Ohio next year, the students asked one final question before returning to the Sunflower state: "Where are we going next year?"

Catholic Cornhusker athlete shares wisdom with St. John's student

By OLIVIA TIGHE

STUDENT AT ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, BELOIT

I've followed Rebekah Allick's volleyball career since she arrived at the University of Nebraska four seasons ago. The first time you see her play you know right away she is a fierce competitor and loves what she does. She leaves it all on the court every single game. What I love most about her is that while she's a star on the court, she is very convicted in her faith. She is involved in numerous University of Nebraska Newman Center events and activities, and I had the chance to meet her there on-campus after Mass one Sunday in November. EWTN News was interviewing her and I was able to ask her some questions myself. Imagine being able to speak with your role model, a person I had seen so many times on television and appreciated so much. It was awesome! She was so humble and gracious.

Allick, a 6'4 senior middle blocker and starter for the University of Nebraska volleyball team, led her team to an undefeated 2025 regular season and a conference championship. She averaged seven kills and four blocks a game. The Huskers were ranked #1 all season long, but

unfortunately lost in a heart-breaking five-set match to Texas A&M in the regional finals. Although many members of her team were suffering from sickness or injury in that final game, she rose up and left everything on the court. The Huskers only lost by two points as she carried the team on her shoulders.

Allick has so much grit and heart. She joined the Catholic Church as a freshman at the Newman Center at the Easter Vigil Mass. She attends Mass and adoration there regularly.

during her time at Nebraska.

Allick is graduating this December and going to play pro volleyball in Madison, Wisconsin in the new year. So, I asked for her advice to students heading into college or in college.

"If you want a worthwhile college experience, stay Catholic," she said. "Losing your faith is not a flex. My point is you are going to be ten times happier. You are going to have better friends. If you want to fall in love, you actually have some-



COURTESY PHOTO
A group from St. John's, Beloit, met with University of Nebraska's Rebekah Allick (middle) in November.

If you want a worthwhile college experience, stay Catholic. . . It is worth it in so many different ways. There's a way to have fun and not lose your relationship with Christ."

-Rebekah Allick

"I think before I was Catholic, I was searching and searching and the searching hasn't stopped but it's definitely more specified," she told EWTN News that day. "I am a lot more confident in my search for Christ." Allick has stood up for pro-life causes and biological women only in women's sports

one who knows you, knows Jesus, will know how to love you, keep your faith. It is worth it in so many different ways. There's a way to have fun and not lose your relationship with Christ."

As I am preparing for college, this advice really struck out to me. I realized it is crucial to having a

fulfilling college experience. As I reflect on what she said, I am going to try my best to put my faith first in the next chapter of my life but also for years to come.

Allick will be remembered as a blocking powerhouse for the Huskers but more importantly, for her strong faith in Christ and the Catholic Church and for standing up for what she believes in. At the end of the interview, I was struck by her grit but more importantly her fearless and devoted faith to the Catholic Church.

Kansas Catholics and politics in 2026

"Do not light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house." (Matthew 5:15)

Politics and public policy is messy business. Most people prefer to leave debates and discussions to others. As Catholics, we cannot ignore what is happening in the public square. We will not hide the "light" of Catholic Social Teaching under a basket!

The Kansas Catholic Conference (KCC) is the voice of the Kansas Catholic Bishops on matters of public policy. We spread the light of the Gospel in the halls of the Kansas Statehouse and Washington, D.C.

The 2026 Kansas Legislative Session opened on January 12 in Topeka. We invite elected officials to consider proposals aimed at the common good of all citizens. Here is a brief look.

Sadly, Kansas is the growing destination for women in the Midwest for abortion, which is en-

shrined as a Kansas Constitutional "right." The latest official government data reveals more than 50 preborn children are lost through abortions in Kansas each day.

There are some steps we can take to protect women and babies from the destructive abortion industry. Too many women think abortion is their only option when faced with a difficult pregnancy. It's not! The KCC advocates for more affordable adoptions and the funding of pregnancy resource centers that provide authentic help to women.

The integrity of the family is under grave assault. The late Pope Francis declared: "Gender ideology, at this time, is one of the most dangerous ideological colonizations." The KCC continues to advocate against this insidious deception targeting our children, even as we call for the compassionate treatment of all people, no matter their declared or imagined sexual identity.

KANSAS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE REACTS TO ABORTION DATA

By LUCRECIA NOLD

KANSAS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Topeka, KS – December 31, 2025

The bitter aftermath of virtually unregulated abortion in Kansas was made brutally clear today as the Kansas Department of Health and Environment released the long overdue data on abortions in 2024. Annual Summary of Vital Statistics Kansas, 2024 (see abortion data beginning on page 114).

"Another record number of abortions in Kansas was, sadly, expected," said Lucrecia Nold, Policy Specialist for the Kansas Catholic Conference. "But a nearly 50% increase in abortions performed on young girls—minors—should be horrifying to every Kansan, most especially parents."

Key takeaways from the report include:

• A record number of abortions, totaling 19,811.

• About 76% of women were from out of state, demonstrating again that Kansas has become the abortion destination of the Midwest.

• There was a 47% increase in abortions on minors.

• Approximately 54 abortions happened each day in Kansas.

"This stark data is the appalling legacy of the 2019 Hodes decision by the Kansas State Supreme Court and the failure of the Value Them Both amendment in 2022," explained Nold.

"Few Kansans are aware that popular, common-sense laws like the Women's Right to Know Act are no longer in effect," Nold continued. "The deadly and dangerous chemical abortion pill protocol is

being dispensed with little or no oversight or concern for the health of women. Young girls are being kept in the dark by the abortion industry regarding the long-term physical and emotion implications and are exploited for financial gain."

The Catholic Church acknowledges not only the loss of innocent life but the harm to thousands of women, whose lives will be forever changed. We encourage anyone who finds themselves in an unplanned pregnancy to seek the free and compassionate support and resources found at our 50-plus pregnancy resource centers. Or for those feeling the pain and hurt of a past abortion, to seek free counseling through Project Rachel at hopeafterabortion.com.

Become better informed about Kansas politics and policy at www.KansasCatholic.org. Sign up for our newsletter. Reach out to your elected officials (we'll show you how) and pray for them. Help shine the light of the Gospel!

Chuck Weber is the executive director of the Kansas Catholic Conference. He can be reached at Chuck@KansasCatholic.org

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AROUND THE diocese



COURTESY PHOTOS
Parishioners at St. John's in Logan celebrated the Christmas season with joy. At left, Tam Kemper was honored for her 50 years as choir director. The occasion was celebrated with Tam directing a beautiful Christmas Eve choir of song and story before Mass.

At right, a few of the CCD kids shared the spirit of the season with their Nativity play. Fr. Trinity joined in to support the group.



COURTESY PHOTO
Sacred Heart Grade School in Plainville held a school-wide Advent event, in the spirit of giving for the holiday season. The students were asked to bring food for the local food pantry, for those who are in need. The students collected over 400 items to be donated. This is a picture of the student body, 53 students in preschool through sixth grade. The joy and happiness was so fun to watch as the kids watched their collection of food grow.



COURTESY PHOTO
On Dec. 7, the annual Frost Fest Parade was held in downtown Hays. Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish's entry, organized by the Hispanic Ministry, featured a brightly lit truck carrying Our Lady of Guadalupe with the IHM Parish Danza, followed by a trailer with Hays CYO and Jr. CYO members in the Living Nativity. Thanks to voters who texted their choice, IHM Parish won the People's Choice Award!



COURTESY PHOTO
A parishioner from St. Fidelis in Victoria shared with The Register a photo featuring five generations in their family. Front: Patricia Schmidberger. Back: Niki Bell holding Jack Willis Stramel, Bill Schmidberger, and Taylor Stramel holding Porter Cash Stramel.



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THRIFT STORE, FROM PAGE 3

One such moment involved a mother fleeing a domestic violence situation with her children. Through her caseworker, Catholic Charities and the thrift store were able to provide coats, shoes, and other essentials for the family. The mother was overwhelmed—not just by what she received, but by the care behind it.

In another case, a local teacher noticed two children coming to school without coats during cold weather. Thanks to donated items, the thrift store was able to provide coats, offering immediate relief during a critical moment.

Some of the most powerful moments inside the Hays Thrift Store happen quietly and unexpectedly.

One man, recently released from prison and living in a recovery residence, needed black pants for a new job. He arrived with no money and only the clothes on his back. Shannon and her volunteers found a pair of pants that would work with a belt. They also provided socks, underwear, shirts, and a sweater he could wear to church. Most importantly, he was given the support he needed to start rebuilding his life.

Reflecting on the first year, Shannon's heart is full of gratitude for the volunteers who make the thrift store possible. Day after day, they greet shoppers, sort donations, and create a welcoming space. From the moment donations arrive, care is taken to ensure every item reflects respect for those

who receive it.

When you shop at or donate to the Hays Thrift Store, your support sustains Catholic Charities programs across northern Kansas. "When you shop

here, you're shopping with a purpose," Shannon explained. "Your money goes right back into helping people in need. No matter where you are in life, you are welcome here."

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BAPTISMS

Daniel Fopefoluwa

Adefuye, son of Boyejo and Ifelayo (Adebiyi) Adefuye, was baptized November 22, 2025, by Fr. Nick Parker at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

Sloane Isidore Bentley

daughter of Chance and Kellie Bentley, was baptized November 2, 2025, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Clayton Michael Brown

son of Blake Brown and Grace Redetzke, was baptized November 22, 2025, by Fr. Dana Clark at St. Mary's Church in Ellis.

Adalyn Grace Brungardt

daughter of Tyler and Nicole (Reichert) Brungardt, was baptized December 14, 2025, by Fr. Damian Richards at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays.

Keldon Laverne Corpstein

son of Keith and Kayla Corpstein, was baptized November 15, 2025, by Fr. Luke Thielen at St. Boniface Church in Tipton.

Rigby Everett Eaves-Price

son of Parker Eaves-Price and Rebecca Eaves-Price, was baptized December 13, 2025, by Fr. Grant Huslig at Seven Dolors Church in Manhattan.

Kinsley Marie Erickson

daughter of Logan and Abby Erickson, was baptized December 13, 2025, by Fr. Quentin Schmitz at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Lainey Ann Erickson

daughter of Kyler and Lisa

Erickson, was baptized December 13, 2025, by Fr. Quentin Schmitz at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Reese Marie Erickson, daughter of Kyler and Lisa Erickson, was baptized December 13, 2025, by Fr. Quentin Schmitz at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Lauren Nicole Fairchild, daughter of Michael and Rebeca Fairchild, was baptized December 13, 2025, by Dcn. Harry Hardy at St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan.

Emmett Oliver Farney, son of David and Ashley Farney, was baptized December 7, 2025, by Fr. Tony Kulandaijesu at St. Wenceslaus Church in Wilson. Godparents are Ryan Gordon and Tricia Schwartz.

Leo Emmanuel Feitoza, son of Luis Felipe Barbosa Brago Feitoza and Eduarda Mazzardo Bortoluzzi, was baptized December 14, 2025, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Joaquin Lorenzo Franco, son of Joaquin and Arianna Franco, Jr., was baptized November 24, 2025, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Daxton James Good, son of Dalton and Jaylynn (Pfeifer) Good, was baptized November 16, 2025, by Fr. Dana Clark at St. Mary's Church in Ellis.

Lane Keith Gottschalk, son of Brandon and Maci (Knipp) Gottschalk, was baptized December 28, 2025, by Fr. Damian Richards at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays.

Rylan James Jacques, son of Brady and Sydney Jacques, was baptized December 13, 2025, by Fr. Dana Clark at St. Mary's Church in Ellis.

Drew Lavell Ludwig, son of Shawn and Hannah (Pemberton) Ludwig, was baptized January 4, 2026, by Fr. Daryl Olmstead at St. Mary Queen of Angels Church in Russell.

Emma Rose Paras, daughter of Peter and Alexis Paras, Jr., was baptized December 28, 2025, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Macarius James Schmeidler, son of Jerome and Angela Schmeidler, was baptized November 25, 2025, by Fr. Fred Gatschet at St. Joseph Church in Hays.

Truman Gerard Schmitz, son of Tracy and Morgan Schmitz, was baptized November 2, 2025, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Jonah Cole Rapheal Soukup, son of Justin and Jocelyn Soukup, was baptized October 18, 2025, by Fr. Tony Kulandaijesu at St. Wenceslaus Church in Wilson. Godparents are Kellen Dortch and Ember Dortch.

Cooper Wayne Toney, son of Stephen and Kelsey Toney, was baptized November 28, 2025, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Leo John Vajnar, son of Conrad and Haley (George) Vajnar, was baptized December 13, 2025, by Fr. Brian McCaffrey at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

Sutton Louise Vandervoort, daughter of Jacob and Taylor Vandervoort, was baptized December 28, 2025, by Dcn. Buzz Harris at St. Thomas More, Manhattan.

Noelle Therese Walter, son of Andrew and Frances Walter, was baptized November 28, 2025, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Kash Leland Werth, son of Brayden and Kristin (Huser) Werth, was baptized November 9, 2025, by Fr. Dana Clark at St. Mary's Church in Ellis.

Layla Rose Windholz, daughter of Tyler and Melanie (Flax) Windholz, was baptized November 23, 2025, by Fr. Dana Clark at St. Mary's Church in Ellis.

Luke John and Levi James Zimmerman, twin sons of Nathan and Jessa (Stramel) Zimmerman, were baptized December 6, 2025, by Fr. Brian McCaffrey at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.



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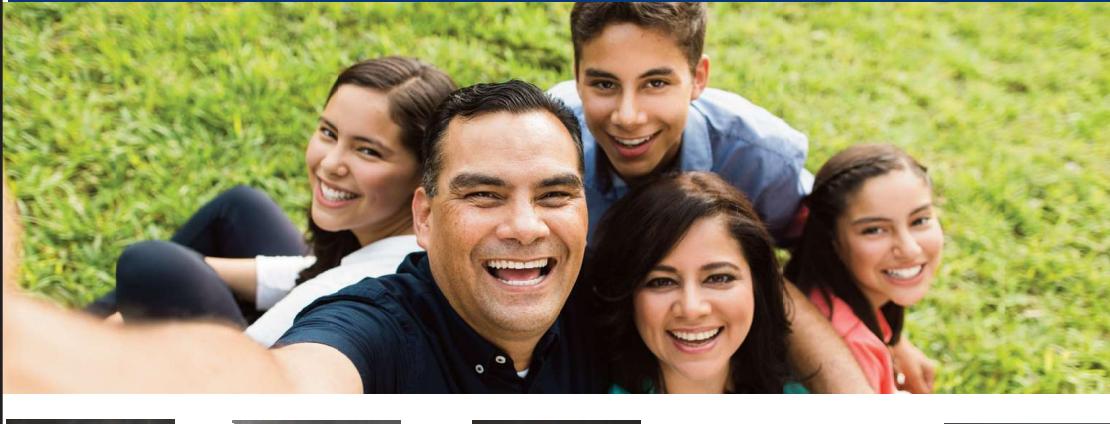
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WEDDINGS

Jeremy Leonard Dold and Danielle Janae Schroeder were married November 8, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Daniel and Joan Dold. Parents of the bride are Daniel and Kriss Schroeder. Witnesses were Matthew Davidson and Lexie Schroeder.

Gage Anthony Garcia and Lori Ann Leiszler were married December 13, 2025, at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Wichita. Bishop Gerald Vincke witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Mark and Consuelo Garcia. Parents of the bride are John and Barbara Leiszler. Witnesses were Garrett Garcia and Teresa Leiszler.

Casey Lee Hoffman and Dakota Lynne Foos were married October 11, 2025, at St. Mary Queen of the Universe Church in Salina. Fr. Kevin Weber witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are June Hoffman and the late Larry Hoffman. Parents of the bride are Craig and Tammi Foos. Witnesses were Andrew Todd and Jennifer Yohe.

Kolbran David Korbelik and Grace Elizabeth Fike were married November 21, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Matthew Davied witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are David and Yvette Korbelik. Parents of the bride are Gary and Carol Fike. Witnesses were Bohdan Korbelik and Elle Ginther.

Clay North and Whitney Befort were married December 27, 2025, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays. Dcn. Dave Kisner witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Ted and Shawna North. Parents of the bride are Bradley and Sarah Befort. Witnesses were Dalton North and Tessa Befort.

Gregory Evan Tatro and Allyson Marie Deaver were married November 15, 2025, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Andrew Walsh witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Robert and Louise Tatro. Parents of the bride are Thomas and Diane Deaver. Witnesses were Aaron Tatro and Kyanne Orock.

William R. "Bill" Berger, 82, of Hays, died January 3, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated January 9 at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Hays. Fr. Fred Gatschet and Fr. Curtis Carlson, OFM Cap., presided. Inurnment at St. Joseph Cemetery, Hays.

William "Bill" Henry Bergmann, 74, died December 13, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 18 at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Jarett Konrade presided. Burial at Simpson Cemetery.

Patricia (Keagy) Bieker, 88, died December 14, 2025. Funeral service was held December 20 at Keithley Funeral Homes Ellis Chapel in Ellis. Fr. Dana Clark presided. Burial in St. Mary's Cemetery, Ellis.

Wilma Marie Braun, 93, died December 16, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 27 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays. Fr. Don Zimmerman presided. Burial in St. Joseph Cemetery, Hays.

Deborah Jean Clore made a Solemn Profession of Faith in the Roman Catholic Church and received Confirmation and Holy Communion on November 26, 2025, by Fr. Dana Clark at St. Mary's Church in Ellis. Her sponsor was Andrea Zody. Deborah sadly passed away on December 4. A graveside service was held December 8 at Baker Township Cemetery in Quinter. Fr. Dana Clark presided.

Francis "Fritz" Drees, 88, died June 22, 2025. Drees was born in Salina, and he was a 1955 graduate of Sacred Heart in Salina. Funeral Mass was celebrated July 18 at St. Timothy's Catholic Church in Laguna Niguel, California.

Mary Dubbert, 84, died November 11, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated November 14 at St. Boniface Church in Tipton. Fr. Luke Thielen presided. Burial in St. Boniface Cemetery, Tipton.

Rodney Jay Erickson, 69, died December 11, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 20 at St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan. Fr. Frank Coady presided. Inurnment at Sunrise Cemetery, Manhattan.

Glenn Fondoble, 74, died November 30, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 4 at St. Mary's Church in Ellis. Fr. Dana Clark presided. Burial in St. Mary's Cemetery, Ellis.

Vernon Joseph "Vernie" Gross, 93, of Hays, died December 12, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 20 at St. Joseph Church in Hays. Fr. Fred Gatschet presided. Burial in St. Francis Cemetery, Munjor.

Marilyn "Mert" Hake, 98, died November 19, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated November 25 at St. Boniface Church in Tipton. Fr. Luke Thielen presided.

Burial in St. Boniface Cemetery, Tipton.

Eddie Dee Herman, 83, died December 11, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 17 at St. Joseph Church in Hays. Fr. Curtis Carlson, OFM Cap., presided. Burial in St. Joseph Cemetery, Hays.

Faye L. Kennedy, 79, died December 7, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 12 at St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan. Fr. Frank Coady and Fr. Donald D. Zimmerman presided. Inurnment at a later date.

Marvin L. King, 87, died November 23, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated November 30 at St. Mary's Church in Ellis. Fr. Dana Clark presided. Inurnment at St. Mary's Cemetery, Ellis.

Larry J. Leiker, 80 died December 5, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 11 at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Munjor. Fr. Damian Richards presided. Burial at St. Francis of Assisi Cemetery, Munjor.

Nadine Pirotte, 101, died January 3, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated January 10 at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Cawker City. Fr. Luke Theilen and Fr. Damian Richards presided. Burial at Sts. Peter and Paul Cemetery, Cawker City.

Mary Jane Reiss, 88, died November 28, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 2 at Yorgensen-Meloan-Londeen Funeral Home in Manhattan. Fr. Frank Coady presided. Interment at Kansas Veterans Cemetery, Manhattan.

Lawrence "Larry" Reno, 90, died November 25, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 2 at St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan. Fr. Donald D. Zimmerman presided. Inurnment at Wamego City Cemetery, Wamego.

James Rynard Rogers, 80, died December 12, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 19 at St. Frances Cabrini in Hoxie. Fr. Brian Lager presided. Burial in St. Frances Cabrini Cemetery, Hoxie.

Sylvanus "Syl" Rome, 86, died December 9, 2025. Funeral Mass was celebrated December 13 at St. Mary's Church in Ellis. Fr. Dana Clark presided. Burial at St. Mary's Cemetery, Ellis.

Bernard "Bernie" Stine, 88, died January 3, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated January 16 at St. Joseph Church in Yates Center, with burial after.

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Seminarians in Rome receive ministry of Lector

PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE

On January 11, His Eminence, Cardinal Fabio Baggio, C.S., Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, conferred the ministry of Lector, in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at the Pontifical North American College, Vatican City State, on 32 students. This included two from the Salina Diocese: Collin Thielen and Max Megaffin.

Addressing the new Lectors in his homily, Cardinal Baggio encouraged the seminarians who were to be installed as Lectors to proclaim the Word of God with faithfulness and joy.

He went on to say, "The bishop places the Book of the Gospels in the hands of the newly ordained deacons, by saying, 'Receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.' So too, those



COURTESY PHOTO, PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE
Seminarians Collin Thielen and Max Megaffin were among 32 students at the Pontifical North American College in Rome recently receiving the ministry of Lector.

who are installed to the ministry of Lector are to become heralds of God's Word, believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach."

Following the homily Cardinal Baggio placed the Holy Scriptures in the hands of each candidate and said, "Take this book of holy Scripture and be faithful in handing on the word of God, so that it may grow strong in the hearts of his people."

The seminarians, currently in their first year of theological formation for the priesthood, will have three additional years of theological, spiritual, and pastoral formation before being ordained to the priesthood.

The Pontifical North American College serves as the American seminary in Rome, and it allows students a first-hand encounter of the Church's rich religious and cultural heritage.

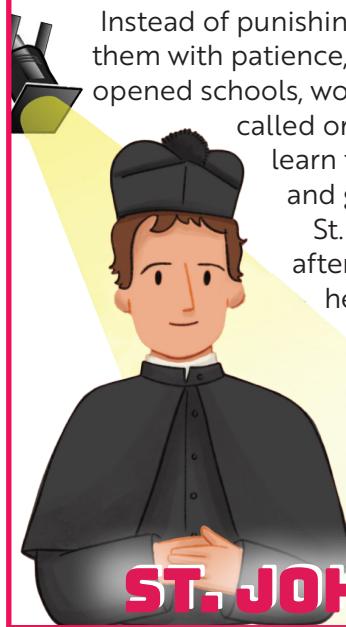
SPOTLIGHT ON THE SAINTS

St. John Bosco was born in 1815 in a small village in Italy to a poor farming family. His father died when John was very young, and his mother worked hard to raise her children with strong faith, discipline, and kindness. As a boy, John loved performing tricks, juggling, and telling stories, which he used to gather other children so he could teach them about God.

From a young age, John felt called to become a priest, but his family's poverty made education difficult. He worked many different jobs to pay for school and never gave up on his dream. After being ordained a priest, John moved to the city of Turin, where he noticed many young boys living on the streets with no education, work, or guidance.

Instead of punishing them, John welcomed them with patience, joy, and understanding. He opened schools, workshops, and safe places called oratories where boys could learn trades, receive an education, and grow in their faith.

St. John Bosco died in 1888 after dedicating his life to helping the young and the poor. We celebrate him on January 31 as the patron saint of youth, students, and teachers.



ST. JOHN BOSCO

FEAST DAY: JANUARY 31

Don't wait for ashes

I know that when this hits your mailbox, Lent will still be a few weeks away. So you may be asking, why bring it up now?

Because if you're anything like me, Lent can sneak up on you. One minute you're still finding glitter from the Christmas decorations, and the next thing you know, it's Ash Wednesday—and you're scrambling to figure out what you're giving up, adding in, or trying to fix. But I've learned over the years that when I actually take time to prepare, Lent ends up being a lot more meaningful. When I don't, it blurs by before I've really entered in.

So, here's the invitation—let's start asking the question now, "Lord, what are You asking of me this Lent?"

We've got a couple of weeks. That's a gift. It gives us time to pray, to listen, and to let God show us where He wants to do

something new in our lives. Not out of guilt or pressure—but because He loves us and wants to draw us closer.

St. Augustine once asked, "Do you wish your prayer to fly toward God?"

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Make for it two wings: fasting and almsgiving."

That's such a great image. Lent gives us those wings. And when we bring prayer alongside fasting and almsgiving, it doesn't weigh us down—it lifts us up. These aren't spiritual chores. They're how we clear out the noise and make room for what matters—hearing God more clearly and loving others more deeply.

St. John Paul II described Lent as a time to "empty ourselves of worldly distractions and allow God to fill us with His love, His grace, and His peace."

That hits home. Lent isn't just about giving something up—it's about making space for God to move.

Now let's be honest—Lent isn't always easy. St. Catherine of Siena put it simply: "Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring." That's true in life and in the spiritual life, too. And St. Thomas Aquinas didn't hold back when he said fasting "cleanses the soul, raises the mind... quenches the fire of lust, kindles the true light of chastity."

In other words, it works. But like most things that work, it takes some effort.

And maybe the most encouraging voice comes from St. Thérèse of Lisieux: "My whole strength lies in prayer and sacrifice; these are my invincible arms."

That's the kind of strength I want this

Lent—not one rooted in willpower, but in staying close to Jesus.

So let's not wait for the ashes to start thinking about Lent. Let's take these next couple of weeks to set the tone, ask the questions, and let the Lord lead.

Because when we go into Lent with clear eyes and open hearts, it's not just something we get through—it becomes something that changes us, and prepares us to truly celebrate what Jesus has done for us at Easter.

Family Prayer for the New Year



Heavenly Father,

As we begin this new year, we thank You for the gift of our family. We thank You for the joys, the challenges, and the grace that carried us through the past year.

Help us to grow together in love, patience, and kindness. May our home be a place of peace, where Your presence is felt, and Your name is honored. Teach us to listen more, forgive more quickly, and serve one another with generous hearts. In moments of stress or struggle, remind us that You are always near—our source of strength and unity.

This month, help us make time for family prayer. Even when we're busy, help us pause to invite You into our days. Let our love for one another reflect Your love for us.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—guide us in becoming the family You created us to be.

We entrust this new year to You.

Amen.



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