



THE REGISTER

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALINA

JULY 24, 2026

TOGETHER, LET US BE DISCIPLES OF JESUS ON MISSION.

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Highway to Heaven

Totus Tuus gives children path to follow Christ

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

A television series in the mid- to late-1990s featured a probationary angel who was sent to earth to help people in need.

"Highway to Heaven" featured good moral values while always offering a message of kindness and humanity.

Parishes in the Salina Diocese are helping their youngsters travel their own highways to heaven by offering summer Totus Tuus programs for school-age students.

The diocese sent out five teams of college-age missionaries to conduct the week-long summer programs in a record-number 29 parishes this year.

"I think this program is an incredible investment in the life of the future Church," said Jen Bentzinger, mother of four children who took part in Totus Tuus at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Goodland. "This is an intense week for kids, and there is nothing like it; so much can be taught."

"Our rural community is limited in its access to Catholic activities and opportunities," she continued. "We do not have a Catholic school. We do not live close to Catholic summer camps or other activities offered year-round in larger communities. So Totus Tuus is a huge gift to the kids in our small parish. It helps to meet the desire in our children to go



DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

(Above) Missionary Jane Letourneau helps Vivian Martin practice lectoring before one of the daily Masses at Our Lady of Perpetual Help church in Goodland. At left, children in the day program in Goodland take a dance break between classes.



deeper in their faith and to live their lives more fully in Christ."

One June morning in Goodland, Landon Vorhies, a co-leader of the diocese's Team 5, was busy telling students in the second/third-grade class a story about a man having several choices to take a path to a church.

The students listened intently as

Landon explained how our vocation of trying to get to heaven is much like that.

"Ultimately, we get to choose," he said. "But we need God to help us make good choices."

Landon's next question got an eager burst of hands in the air: "What are some ways we can ask God to help us?"

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St. Patrick's church closes

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

Faith. Trust in God. Mary Jo Meyer said those values have been ground rules during her time in the St. Patrick Parish in Gypsum.

And that has been a long time.

So the 89-year-old Gypsum resident doesn't plan on straying from those foundational principles – even while watching the parish she has attended her entire life undergo a monumental change.

Because of declining numbers in the congregation, the church closed July 1.

On the day of St. Patrick's last official Mass (on June 27) Mary Jo

showed up early just like usual, lighting the candles and spending some quiet time alone with the Lord while remembering all the good times while raising five daughters with her husband, Fred.

Even during some sad times, such as Fred's death in 2020, Mary Jo's faith has been her rock on which to stand, and she is keeping much that same attitude moving forward.

Now, Mary Jo and other parishioners will most likely attend Mass in one of the three parishes in nearby Salina, where St. Patrick's records will be transferred to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



COURTESY PHOTO

St. Patrick's Parish in Gypsum held its last official Mass on June 27.

Obedience and the heart of Communion:

Q&A with Bishop Vincke

When I was in the seminary, I remember a wise, elderly priest saying that there are many sins, but the root of sin is disobedience—much like our first parents, Adam and Eve.

A bishop recently mentioned that one of the greatest qualities of St. Francis was his obedience. He was denied three times by the pope to do what he felt in his heart to do (and I'm sure it was a good thing). But he knew that obedience was more important than his personal preference.

Many people have asked me about the Priestly Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), which has been in the news a lot lately. It's a topic that also asks us to reflect on the importance of obedience. Here are a few questions and answers:

What is the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX)?

The Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) is a priestly fraternity founded in 1970 by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. It was established to preserve traditional Catholic worship and practices following

the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

While the SSPX celebrates the Traditional Latin Mass and maintains many traditional Catholic devotions, it has also

rejected or refused assent to certain teachings of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent Church teachings. For many years, it existed in an irregular relationship with the Catholic Church.

tuted a schismatic act. The Decree also declared that those specifically named had incurred the penalty of excommunication established by Church law and warned both clergy and lay faithful not to adhere to the SSPX's schism.

Why is consecrating bishops without the Pope's permission such a serious matter?

The Catholic Church is built upon communion with the successor of St. Peter. Every Catholic bishop exercises his

with these unauthorized consecrations. The Holy See explained that its Decree was issued to safeguard the unity of the Church and to help the faithful understand the seriousness of separating oneself from communion with the Roman Pontiff.

What does "schism" mean?

Canon Law defines schism as "the refusal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him" (Canon 751). Simply put, schism is a break in communion with the Pope and the Catholic Church.

Is this about the Traditional Latin Mass?

No. The Church continues to preserve the Traditional Latin Mass as part of her liturgical heritage, even though its celebra-

tion is governed by current Church law.

Can Catholics attend SSPX Masses?

Catholics should not seek out or participate in the liturgies or ministries of the SSPX.

Are the sacraments celebrated by SSPX priests valid?

Because the Holy See has warned the faithful not to adhere to the SSPX's schism, Catholics should not seek sacramental or spiritual ministry from the SSPX. Instead, they should receive the sacraments through ministers who remain in full communion with the Catholic Church.

Final Thoughts:

Ultimately, it comes down to obedience. May we all, especially in this jubilee year of St. Francis, pray to have hearts of obedience like his.

“Ultimately, it comes down to obedience.”

-Bishop Gerald Vincke

Why is SSPX news-worthy now?

On July 2, 2026, the Holy See issued a Decree concerning the episcopal consecration of four bishops by the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) on July 1, 2026. Because these consecrations took place without the required papal mandate and against the will of the Holy Father, the Holy See declared that they consti-

ministry in union with the Pope and the College of Bishops. Consecrating bishops against the express will of the Holy Father is not simply a disciplinary matter. It is a public rupture of the unity Christ intended for His Church.

After decades of dialogue and repeated efforts at reconciliation by several popes, the SSPX nevertheless proceeded

PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS CON EL OBISPO VINCKE

Cuando estaba en el seminario, recuerdo que un sacerdote anciano y sabio decía que hay muchos pecados, pero que la raíz del pecado es la desobediencia, al igual que ocurrió con nuestros primeros padres, Adán y Eva.

Un obispo mencionó recientemente que una de las mayores cualidades de San Francisco era su obediencia. El papa le negó tres veces hacer lo que él sentía en su corazón que debía hacer (y estoy seguro de que era algo bueno). Pero él sabía que la obediencia era más importante que su preferencia personal.

Muchas personas me han preguntado sobre la Fraternidad Sacerdotal San Pío X (SSPX), que ha aparecido, con frecuencia, en las noticias últimamente. Es un tema que también nos invita a reflexionar sobre la importancia de la obediencia. Aquí hay algunas preguntas y respuestas:

¿Qué es la Fraternidad Sacerdotal San Pío X (SSPX)?

La Fraternidad Sacerdotal San Pío X (SSPX) es una fraternidad sacerdotal fundada en 1970 por el Arzobispo Marcel Lefebvre.

Fue establecida para preservar el culto y las prácticas tradicionales católicas tras el Concilio Vaticano II (1962–1965).

Si bien la SSPX celebra la Misa Tradicional en Latín y mantiene muchas devociones católicas tradicionales, también ha rechazado o se ha negado a aceptar ciertas enseñanzas del Concilio Vaticano II y a enseñanzas posteriores de la Iglesia. Durante muchos años, existió en una relación irregular con la Iglesia Católica.

¿Por qué la SSPX es noticia ahora?

El 2 de julio de 2026, la Santa Sede emitió un Decreto relativo a la consagración episcopal de cuatro obispos por parte de la Fraternidad Sacerdotal San Pío X (SSPX) el 1 de julio de 2026. Debido a que estas consagraciones se llevaron a cabo sin el mandato papal requerido y en contra de la voluntad del Santo Padre, la Santa Sede declaró que constituían un acto cismático. El Decreto también declaró que las personas específicamente nombradas habían

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 5

NEIGHBORS NEAR & NEIGHBORS FAR

SEMINARIAN COLLECTION



Our diocese is blessed to have 15 seminarians for the upcoming school year! We are excited to journey this path with them wherever the Spirit leads. Be a part of their discernment through prayer, through service, and through financial means.

If you feel called to give financially, it's as easy as dropping an envelope into your parish collection labeled "Seminar Collection."

¡Nuestra diócesis tiene la bendición de contar con 15 seminaristas para el próximo año académico! Nos entusiasma acompañarlos en este camino, allí donde el Espíritu nos guíe. Participe en su proceso de discernimiento mediante la oración, el servicio y el apoyo económico.

Si se siente llamado a colaborar económicamente, es tan sencillo como depositar un sobre en la colecta de su parroquia con la etiqueta "Seminar Collection" (Colecta para seminaristas)

GYPSUM PARISH CLOSURE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I'll definitely miss the people," she said. "But this wasn't a surprise. We just don't have the numbers anymore."

It was a bittersweet moment for Father John Wolesky and the other 10 families in the small parish in central Saline County gathered for one final Mass.

Fr. John served St. Patrick's off and on since the 1990s. Coincidentally, his official retirement began on the same day of St. Patrick's closing.

During his homily, Fr. John gave a little history of St. Patrick's, while reminiscing

about all the sacraments that have been performed over the years in this church.

"With those sacraments we have been given, we are a holy nation," he said. "Sometimes we lose the luster of all that, and we need to realize God has given us everything."

He encouraged the congregation that no



DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

Friends and family join parishioners at St. Patrick's in Gypsum on June 27 for the final Mass before the parish closed. At left, Mary Jo Meyer reminisces about the parish she has belonged to for nearly 90 years.

matter where they attend church from here on out, to keep the faith.

"No matter what happens, the Lord is always there," he said. "Take this to heart and know that God is always there for us."

According to a 1936 newspaper story in the Gypsum Advocate, the first Catholic Church built in Gypsum was in 1902.

However, Catholic services were held long before that, dating as far back as 1882 when Mass was said at local homes.

One of the names associated with that long history was Karber – Mary Jo's maiden name. The last funeral held at St. Patrick's was that of Mary Jo's brother, Gerald Karber, who was laid to rest on June 6.

The current church

building was dedicated in the late 1940s. A new parish hall was built in 2011 with much in-kind donations of material and volunteer labor.

Decisions have not yet been made for the future of the church building and parish hall.

AUGUST INTENTIONS

Diocesan intentions:

For the 2026 Salina Diocese Eucharistic Conference, that God may grant safe travel to all who attend, and that the Holy Spirit may set their hearts on fire, sending them home as joyful missionary disciples to proclaim the saving Gospel and bear abundant fruit.

Pope Leo's intentions:

Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.

BISHOP'S AUG. CALENDAR

- 1 Eucharistic Conference, FHSU Campus, Hays.
- 2 150th Volga Celebration at St. Joseph, Hays.
- 4-5 144th K of C Supreme Convention, Aurora, CO.
- 6-9 Marian Days (Vietnamese) in Carthage, MO.
- 16 Rural Life Day: Century Farm and Half-Century Business Award at St. John the Baptist, Beloit.
- 22 St. John's Harvest Festival, Beloit.



DONATE FROM YOUR HARVEST

Now could be a great time to turn bushels of grain into a gift to your faith—whether that's supporting the Bishop's Annual Appeal, our seminarians, or another Catholic ministry close to your heart.

WONDERING HOW IT WORKS?

The farmer notifies the elevator that the harvest commodity being delivered or stored is to be given to the Catholic Foundation for Diocese of Salina. The elevator will contact the Catholic Foundation, who will then sell the grain at market rate to the elevator. The elevator will send a check to the diocese. The farmer who donated the commodity will receive a gift letter and acknowledgment from the Catholic Foundation for Diocese of Salina.

MAKE YOUR HARVEST COUNT!

To learn more about making a gift of a commodity of grain, please call 785-827-8746 or email development@salinadiocese.org, Catholic Foundation for Diocese of Salina.



Christ in the Eucharist leads one couple to marriage, another man to seminary



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Thomas Braun (right) took steps to look into a priestly vocation after spending regular time in Eucharistic Adoration. He volunteered over the summer for the Salina Diocese through Totus Tuus, along with his teammates (L-R) Deacon Gabriel Friess, Clare McKain, Alliana Thomasson, and Kynli Koenigsman.

By CHASE HAGEMANN
THE REGISTER

Spending time before Christ in Adoration can be a time for calm and connection with the Lord. For many students at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan, it can also be a cause of clarity in discernment.

Such was the case for student Halley Plath. Facing spiritual desolation amid the pressures of life, Halley asked the Lord to show her the desires of her heart. Sitting alongside her boyfriend at the time, she opened the Word for guidance. After weeks of being unable to hear God's voice, Halley joyfully

received her calling to Holy Matrimony.

"I was reading in Adoration and despite all these outside noises happening at the time, I was ready to be married and I knew Nathan was on that path too," Halley said. "Having Holy Scripture in Adoration and hearing the Lord speaking to me through His Word, I was like, 'Yes! I am ready to be engaged and prepare to be married to Nathan.'"

Soon after, kneeling in front of the altar at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center, Nathan proposed to Halley. After nearly a year of prayerful discernment and preparing to

approach the same altar to say their vows, the two became one in Holy Matrimony on June 13.

Prior to meeting her husband, Halley embraced a dating fast to discern whether God called her to religious life. Among many intentional steps, she attended a retreat in Wichita with an openness to consecrated life.

During both periods of discernment, Halley prayed holy hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament on the altar alone and with her now-husband. The Lord ultimately called her back to dating, resulting in her vocation of marriage.

"It's not always going to feel good to do what the Lord asks you, but I do think there were particular blessings and graces that He gave me in the fact that He gave me exactly what I wanted," Halley said. "A prayer that I bring to Adoration often is, 'Lord, show me the desires of my heart.' When properly oriented, the desires of our heart draw us into a deeper relationship with Christ, and to serve and love Him better. In little ways, He was able to mold my heart to prepare me for where I'm at now."

As Halley and Nathan Plath confirmed their calling to marriage through Eucharistic Adoration, time before the altar can call others in another direction.

Although Thomas Braun has yet to begin formation, the recent college graduate will be headed soon to St. John Vianney for his



COURTESY PHOTO, SAMANTHA KOPECKY

Christ in the Eucharist helped inspire a vocation for Halley and Nathan Plath, who were married on June 13.

first year of seminary.

A Fellowship of Catholic University Students missionary encouraged Braun to sign up for 3 a.m. Adoration at St. Isidore's when Braun was in college. Braun, who was still new to the Catholic faith, admittedly said he didn't know what to do during that time.

However, after establishing the routine of growing in prayer, Braun started hearing Christ speak to him.

"After a little while I sensed Christ saying, 'I want you to be a priest for me,'" Braun said. "Initially, I felt this great peace. I was like, 'OK, I've got an answer.' But then I realized what that meant."

At the time, Braun dated a student who attended the University of Kansas. She invited him to Mass and answered questions about Church teaching.

Reflecting on his journey into the Church, Braun remembers the breakthrough that directed him to become Catholic. He kept "feeling like something was missing, like a key component wasn't there." Feeling disappointed and ready for lunch, he killed some time with a video on Fr. Mike Schmitz's keynote at SEEK 2015.

"I was watching 'The Hour That Will Change Your Life.' It was all about

the Eucharist: the scriptural basis of it, and where we get the idea of it being Jesus's body and blood," Braun said. "I was halfway through the video texting my girlfriend at the time, 'How can I become Catholic?'"

Braun said she replied, "Don't joke about that. That's not funny," but he doubled down, "No, I'm serious. I need to be Catholic."

Little did Braun know that his life-changing decision to become Catholic would lead to a series of tough decisions. Although he is going to experience his first semester of seminary in the fall, Braun understands that a journey of faith is a lifetime of discernment.

For both Halley Plath and Thomas Braun, vocational discernment was rooted in a willingness to spend time in the presence of Christ. The intentionality behind their habits of prayer and regular reception of the sacraments opened their hearts to the will of God.

Sitting face to face with Jesus in the Eucharist allows Him to transform us and helps us receive our calling. Adoration is a place where Christ reveals the desires of our heart, calling us to a vocation that fills us with peace and builds up the Church.

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALINA

EUCCHARISTIC CONFERENCE

JULY 31 - AUGUST 1, 2026

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New Executive Director appointed for Kansas Catholic Conference

Archbishop Shawn McKnight, Kansas City, announced the appointment of Mr. Paul Malley as the new executive director of the Kansas Catholic Conference (KCC). The KCC serves as the voice of the Catholic bishops of Kansas in the arena of public policy. Mr. Malley will begin his tenure on September 8, 2026.

Mr. Malley brings nearly three decades of executive leadership, public policy, and advocacy experience to his new role as executive director of the Kansas Catholic Conference. Most recently, he served as president of Aging with Dignity and Five Wishes, a national organization inspired by the life and work of St. Teresa of Calcutta, where he advanced policies and initiatives that uphold the dignity of all people. Throughout his career, he has worked closely with Church leaders, legislators, and community partners to advance the Church's mission in the public square.

The Kansas Bishops, serving the dioceses of

Wichita, Salina, Dodge City, and Kansas City in Kansas, conducted a nationwide search for the next executive director of the KCC. They sought a faithful and forward-thinking leader with a strong grounding in Catholic social teaching and the prudence to engage effectively in the public arena.

"The Catholic bishops of Kansas are delighted that Paul has accepted our invitation to serve as the next executive director of the Kansas Catholic Conference," said Archbishop Shawn McKnight of the Kansas City Archdiocese. "His deep faith and extensive professional experience will not only be a resource for us in our capital city, but also for the formation of our clergy and laity in the rich tradition of Catholic social doctrine."

Over nearly 30 years, Mr. Malley has built a national reputation as a principled advocate and trusted leader at the intersection of faith, healthcare, and public policy. He has testified before Congress and state legislatures, helped shape national aging policy

through an appointment to the White House Conference on Aging, and served as a leading voice on issues affecting vulnerable populations. A respected communicator, he has been featured in the national media, including on CNN, NBC News, and ABC News, and his insights have been featured in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and USA Today. Mr. Malley holds a master's degree in communications from Florida State University. He and his wife, Almira, are the parents of six children.

As he prepares to begin his tenure as the new executive director of the KCC, Mr. Malley expressed his deep gratitude to the Kansas bishops for his appointment and his enthusiasm for representing the Church in the public arena, furthering the common good, and protecting the inherent human dignity of each person.

"I am deeply grateful to the bishops of Kansas for their trust and for this incredible opportunity to serve as executive director of the Kansas Catholic

Conference. Leaving the Sunshine State is a big change, but my family and I could not be more excited to call the Sunflower State our new home," said Paul Malley. "I am eager to get to know the vibrant communities, parishes and people of Kansas. Together, we will continue to be a strong voice in the public square, championing the common good and protecting the inherent God-given human dignity of every person."

The Kansas Catholic Conference serves as the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Kansas, advocating for policies rooted in Catholic teaching. Guided by the



COURTESY PHOTO

Paul Malley will begin his tenure with the KCC in September.

dignity of every human person, the Conference works to protect human life, defend religious freedom and promote the well-being of families and communities through engagement with lawmakers and public officials.

ELECTION DAY

AUGUST 4, 2026

"In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and political life is a moral obligation." (USCCB)

As the election approaches, I ask you to keep our nation, our state, and all who seek public office in your prayers. Please take time to learn about the candidates, reflect prayerfully, and participate in the election. Thank you for being faithful Catholic citizens and for seeking God's will as we work together for the common good.

-Bishop Vincke

LA OBEDIENCIA, VIENE DE LA PÁGINA 2

incurrido en la pena de excomunión establecida por el derecho de la Iglesia y advirtió tanto al clero como a los fieles laicos que no se adhirieran al cisma de la SSPX.

¿Por qué es tan grave consagrar obispos sin el permiso del Papa?

La Iglesia Católica está edificada sobre la comunión con el sucesor de San Pedro. Todo obispo católico ejerce su ministerio en unión con el Papa y con el Colegio de los Obispos. Consagrar obispos contra la voluntad expresa del Santo Padre no es simplemente una cuestión disciplinaria. Es una ruptura pública de la unidad que Cristo estableció para su Iglesia.

Después de décadas de diálogo y de repetidos esfuerzos de reconciliación por parte de varios papas, la SSPX procedió, sin embargo, con estas consagraciones no autorizadas. La Santa Sede explicó que su Decreto fue emitido para salvaguardar la unidad

de la Iglesia y ayudar a los fieles a comprender la gravedad de separarse de la comunión con el Romano Pontífice.

¿Qué significa "cisma"?

El Derecho Canónico define el cisma como "el rechazo de la sumisión al Sumo Pontífice o de la comunión con los miembros de la Iglesia sometidos a él" (Canon 751). En otras palabras, el cisma es una ruptura de la comunión con el Papa y con la Iglesia Católica.

¿Se trata de la Misa Tradicional en Latín?

No. La Iglesia continúa preservando la Misa Tradicional en Latín como parte de su patrimonio litúrgico, aunque su celebración está regulada por la legislación vigente de la Iglesia.

¿Pueden los católicos asistir a las Misas de la SSPX?

Los católicos no deben buscar ni participar en las liturgias o ministerios de la

SSPX.

¿Son válidos los sacramentos celebrados por sacerdotes de la SSPX?

Debido a que la Santa Sede ha advertido a los fieles que no se adhirieran al cisma de la SSPX, los católicos no deben buscar ministerio sacramental o espiritual de la SSPX. En su lugar, deben recibir los sacramentos a través de ministros que permanezcan en plena comunión con la Iglesia Católica.

Reflexiones finales:

En última instancia, todo se reduce a la obediencia. Que todos nosotros, especialmente en este año jubilar de San Francisco, oremos para tener corazones obedientes como el suyo.



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Get to know Michaela Sasse: *Diocesan Director of Consecrated Vocations*

By CHASE HAGEMANN
THE REGISTER

Seeing a growing need to support women discerning religious life, the Diocese of Salina hired its first director of consecrated vocations this past April. Michaela Sasse now serves in the newly created role, helping women navigate a call to consecrated life while filling a long-time need in the diocese.

Sasse is no rookie to the assignment. She worked prior alongside Co-Director of Vocations Fr. Andy Hammeke at Fort Hays State University's Comeau Catholic Campus Center. During that time, Sasse regularly accompanied women discerning their vocation.

"I had been helping Fr. Andy facilitate a women's discernment group throughout Lent, and we had a positive response," Sasse said. "I was consistently meeting with 15 women per week at Fort Hays State who were interested in discerning religious life."

Meeting with students quickly became the highlight of her week. As she accompanied more women, she began envisioning what that ministry could look like across the entire Diocese of Salina.

At the time, Sasse did not hold an official title with the diocese, but her role at Ft. Hays led to a bigger calling.

Bishop Gerald Vincke recognized both the growing need and Sasse's passion for the work, encouraging her to explore how she could serve the diocese in a larger capacity.

"I just shared ideas with Bishop Vincke and Fr. Andy as I thought about them," Sasse said. "Then at one point, Bishop Vincke asked if I would like to meet at the chancery to discuss my role further, so I met with him and Fr. Gale [Hammerschmidt], and at that point the [director of consecrated vocations] role was created."

The opportunity came as Sasse was already discerning a move back to Kansas. Originally from Smith Center, she had been living in Hastings, Nebraska, but felt God calling her home. She eventually returned to Kansas, where she now serves the diocese while also practicing as an optometrist in WaKeeney.

A graduate of Fort Hays State University with a degree in biology, Sasse earned her doctorate of optometry degree from Southern

College of Optometry. She continues to balance her professional career with vocational ministry.

Her desire to accompany other women comes from personal experience.

Over the past several years, Sasse has been discerning a call to consecrated virginity. Along the way, she encountered obstacles that many women face when exploring religious life, experiences that ultimately inspired her to advocate for others on the same journey.

"I was a senior at Fort Hays State when I read an article about a consecrated virgin," Sasse recalled. "I remember it giving me a lot of pause and being like, 'I think that's what the Lord is calling me to in life,' which was bizarre to me because I'd always wanted to get married. I always wanted a family, so my initial reaction was shock."

As Sasse explored religious communities, she encountered unexpected challenges. Several communities encouraged her to finish school before discerning further, and she later discovered that many religious orders require candidates to pay off student loan debt before entering.

"From that point I kind of developed my own mindset of, 'Well, I don't think I'll ever be able to fully discern until I pay off my student loans,'" Sasse said. "So I went on dates throughout this time. I just always felt super restless after a date, even if it was really good. I dated—I was in relationships—but I never had peace with any of it."

After one particularly meaningful relationship ended, Sasse brought her disappointment to prayer.

"The Lord said, 'It doesn't work because I want to spend more time with you,'" she recalled. "I had gone from crying to being like, 'That's why it never works out. He's still calling.' At that point I felt like the Lord was asking me to spend more time with him in Scripture. I prayed with the daily Gospel reading, and I really felt like the Lord spoke to me."

That mindset made an impact.

First Salina Diocese Director
of Consecrated Vocations



"It was a switch from resistance to not just acceptance, but joy," Sasse said.

Today, Sasse continues the process of discernment. The hoops and hurdles she experienced sparked her passion to advocate for women's discernment.

"I want to help build a culture that supports people in their journeys," she said.

In addition to meeting individually with women and leading discernment groups, Sasse has expanded resources for those exploring a vocation. The Diocese of Salina's Consecrated Vocations webpage now includes recommended reading, discernment resources, and information about upcoming events.

Sasse will also be hosting a Meet and Greet with religious sisters at the Eucharistic Conference, on the second floor of the Coliseum during registration (5-7 p.m.) on Friday, July 31. The event is open to all, not just discerning women, and is an opportunity to make connections.

Women interested in learning more about religious or consecrated life are encouraged to contact Sasse through the Diocese of Salina's Office of Consecrated Vocations.

Rural Life Day celebration on the horizon

By DAVID EDELL
SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

The Rural Life Commission will once again be celebrating Catholic Rural Life Day. The event will be held on Sunday, August 16 at 3 p.m. at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. The signature events of Rural Life Day are the Msgr. John George Weber Entry Farm Awards and Half-Century Business Awards.

The Weber Century Farm Awards are presented to families who have lived on farms in the Salina Diocese or have farmed land in the diocese, or owned farms in the diocese for 100 years or more. Each family who receives the award will relate a brief (5 minute) history of their family farm; from the original settlers down to the current generation of family working the farm. The familial stories always highlight the importance of faith in their continued working with the land.

The Weber Half-Century Business awards are presented to families who have owned

and/or operated a business (non-farming or ranching) within the Diocese of Salina for 50 or more years. As with the Century Farm awards, each family will be asked to relate a brief history of their business and the importance of faith within their business dealings.

One hundred years as a family farm is an amazing achievement. In the past 100 years, life and nature have thrown many curve balls at the family farm. These families would have worked through six major wars, endured the "Dirty Thirties," ridden the rivers of at least four economic depressions or recessions, the "Dry Fifties," endured the rollercoaster ride that is commodities speculation, and many other regional historic economic and familial impacts. It's no wonder that these family stories are a treasure trove of faith, family, and love within the Diocese of Salina.

Applications for the Century Farm Awards may be found in the Rural Life Office section of the diocesan website. The form is to be



completed and submitted online. If a paper application is required, please contact Art Befort (crl@befort.org or 785.282.4732). Applications are due NO LATER than August 1, 2026.

Families are encouraged to attend the festivities at Rural Life Day. We will be taking family photographs. The family photos and history will be printed in The Register after the event.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

August 1

• Eucharistic Conference, Fort Hays State University Campus, Hays.

August 2

• Volga 150 Celebration, Mass, St. Joseph, Hays, 10:30 a.m.

August 9

• Volga German Sesqui-centennial Mass & Celebration, St. Fidelis, Victoria, 1 p.m.

August 22

• Harvest Festival, St. John's, Beloit, 4:30 p.m.
• Plainville School Auction, 4:30 p.m.

August 29

• Salina Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Biennial Convention, St. Mary's, Salina, 9 a.m.

(If you have questions about a listed event, please contact the event's parish, office or school directly.)



CATHOLIC
RURAL LIFE
SALINA DIOCESE

RURAL LIFE DAY

With the Century Farm and Half-Century Business Awards

Sunday, August 16 at 3 p.m.
St. John the Baptist Parish, Beloit

Application Deadline: August 1



Salina Diocesan Council of Catholic Women

Biennial Convention Featuring

Jesse Romero

Spiritual Warfare: Shielding our Families

August 29, 2026

Check-in 9:00 am  Convention opens 9:30 am
Mass and Memorial Service – 11:00 am
Closing Prayer – 4:00 pm

St Mary Queen of the Universe Parish Center
230 E. Cloud St., Salina, KS 67401



Jesse Romero is a retired deputy sheriff, husband, father of three grown children, and Catholic Evangelist acclaimed for his dynamic, upbeat Christ-centered presentations. He has been on Catholic radio for over 20 years and is currently hosting his own show on YouTube and other platforms, called "The Jesse Romero Show." He is the author of several books that will be available at the convention.

REGISTRATION FOR SDCCW 2026 CONVENTION

NAME: _____ PARISH: _____

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REGISTER BY AUGUST 14, 2026, by mail: Tammy Steeples, PO Box 99, Palco, KS 67657
COST \$30 PER PERSON WHICH INCLUDES LUNCH
Please make checks payable to SDCCW.

Online registration with credit card also available at [Salinadiocese.org/events](https://salinadiocese.org/events)

Hotel rooms (\$119/night) for SDCCW attendees blocked at the Courtyard by Marriott in Salina until August 13th. Call hotel directly (785-309-1300) and ask for the group rate.

FALL FORMATION CLASSES OFFERED

By COLEEN STEIN
CSTEIN@DCDIOCESE.ORG

Looking to deepen your faith? Two online pastoral ministry formation courses are being offered this fall. "Women in Scripture" (taught by Fr. Robert Schremmer) explores the lives and significance of biblical women, while "Theology and Methods of Ministry" (taught by Trish Keller) examines the call

to ministry rooted in Baptism and the role of the laity in the Church. Courses are available for college credit or personal enrichment and are taught via Zoom by experienced Catholic educators. Classes begin in September. For more information or to register, contact Coleen Stein, Director of Adult Formation, Catholic Diocese of Dodge City, cstein@dcdioocese.org.

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Email Kim Hoelting for the full job description:
kim.hoelting@salinadiocese.org

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Prayer, action, sleep — repeat

BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

The benefits of Prayer and Action are many — for many — a ripple effect, if you will.

College-age students get the chance to organize work weeks and lead high school teenagers and parent volunteers for two months of service across the Salina Diocese.

The 2026 version of the popular summer program for the diocese will conclude next week in Ellsworth.

It will be a summer to remember for team leader Adam Bates and his crew.

"As a team director, there are a lot of decisions to be made, a lot to keep track of," said Adam, a second-year seminarian in the diocese. "It can get hectic at times, but it's been a great experience."

Some residents never forget the love shown them during those weeks, either.

One of those was Paul Chopp, a member of St. George Parish in the tiny town of Munden in north central Kansas.

When Chopp learned that Belleville was one of the P&A locations for students to work this summer, he inquired about having them paint his house in Munden, about 11 miles from Belleville.

He was surprised when one of the work crews showed up one day not only to paint but also to keep him company on the first anniversary of his daughter's passing.

"They prayed with me, and we had a meal together in my backyard," Chopp said, adding how that became a habit during P&A's last week in the area. "I've lived here since 1970, and that's the only time I can ever remember having 20 people together in my backyard."

Shannon Birkhead, a member of St. Thomas More Parish in Manhattan, attended P&A for the first time because her two high school-age children, Ethan and Emma, wanted to participate this year.

"It was nice to see the



COURTESY PHOTO, EMMA ROBERTS

Munden resident Paul Chopp, second from left, enjoyed praying with Prayer & Action participants each day before and after they worked on painting his house.



MATEA GREGG, COMMUNICATIONS

Prayer and Action team members spent half of their summer in Belleville, where they made connections, repaired buildings, and helped student volunteers grow in their faith.

love they have for Christ," Shannon said. "I saw that fire in all the kids, the Holy Spirit working in them."

Like many in the St. Thomas More group, Shannon was most moved by their interactions with Mr. Chopp.

When they learned his daughter in her late 40s had died a year ago, on June 24, while

waiting for a liver transplant, they decided to just be there for him.

Paul, 83, lives alone since his wife, Marcia, passed in 2017. He was impressed with the compassion of the students and also with their work ethic.

"They worked together so well and were so conscientious," Chopp said.

"They wanted to do a good job. They were painting my house as if it was their own house."

"I felt Christ in all that we did," Shannon said in agreement. "I felt so close to God, and He was definitely there with us that week."

Youth groups from all around the diocese sign up for P&A at different weeks throughout the eight-week program.

Following a week break after a month in Belleville, the team headed to Ellsworth, where it greeted new groups of volunteers all throughout the month of July.

Salina resident Sara Lee decided to participate as an adult sponsor this year after her oldest daughter, Addie, told her mom that P&A was "a top-tier experience."

Sara now agrees with her daughter, who will be

a senior at Sacred Heart High School in Salina this fall. They both were joined for the week by Addie's younger sister, Emmie, a sophomore-to-be at Sacred Heart. They are already making plans for next year when youngest sister Laney can join them.

"All the people coming with that same purpose, it's hard to explain the feeling you get," Sara said. "You meet so many people and feel like you have known them a long time. There's a connection. And

we're all there for the same idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it."

Karrigan Thompson, who will be a senior at Sacred Heart High this fall, agreed.

"I like the fact that I get to meet so many new people that have the same faith as me," she said. "We make new connections and get to do it all while helping the community. We're loving our God and loving our neighbor at the same time."



COURTESY PHOTO

Adult sponsors Renee Thompson and Sara Lee, Salina, help clear logs cut from trees at a residence in Ellsworth.



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TOTUS TUUS ENRICHES SUMMERS, FROM PAGE 1

Landon later explained how God has helped him in his faith journey, particularly during his first year as a college student at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

His emphasis of study is mechanical engineering, so he plans to get some hands-on, practice experience with internships in that field in future summers.

But this year, he said he wanted “to use this summer to grow in faith and learn how to be good with kids and to serve the Lord.”

Landon’s hometown is Olathe (population 150,000) which is in the Kansas City Archdiocese. But he became involved at St. Isidore Student Center at Kansas State this past year, becoming familiar with the Salina Diocese. So he chose to work at Prayer and Action out west this summer.

He said he has thoroughly enjoyed the change of pace from city life. His team’s assignments this summer were at mostly small communities in the diocese.

“I’m not used to everyone knowing everybody and having connections everywhere,” he said. “It’s been a great experience. I’ve been impressed with how well versed the kids



DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

Our Lady of Perpetual Help parishioners Gus Bentzinger, front, and Jamison Sis get ready to serve Mass during Totus Tuus in Goodland.

are in their knowledge and their faith.”

The other co-leader of that team was Jane Letourneau, a native of Beloit and a senior-to-be at Benedictine College in Atchison.

Jane, who graduates next year with a degree in elementary education, is the oldest of nine siblings. But she relished the chance to get more experience with youngsters.

“I have really learned how to improvise this summer,” she said with a laugh. “But what I have really enjoyed is learning a lot from the kids, letting them teach me as much as I teach them. They are so full of knowledge as well.”

Totus Tuus programs in 2026 stretched from

Sharon Springs near the Colorado border to Hanover in northeast Kansas, just 7.5 miles from the Nebraska border – and everywhere in-between.

“The continued growth of Totus Tuus in our diocese is a reflection of something much bigger than a successful summer program; it is a sign that our local Church is alive and growing,” said Jamie Kuhlman, assistant director of youth ministry for the diocese.

“Families are looking for opportunities that help their children build a relationship with Jesus from an early age. There is a genuine desire to pass on the Catholic faith, and Totus Tuus gives children



DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

Landon Vorhies, co-leader of Totus Team 5, explains a lesson to the second/third-grade class at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Goodland.

the opportunity to experience it in a way that is joyful, engaging, and meaningful.”

The Bentzinger family can certainly attest to that.

The Bentzingers had started opening their house to a couple of missionaries, even before their oldest daughter, Clare, was old enough to participate.

About four years ago, Justin and Jen Bentzinger decided to host the entire team.

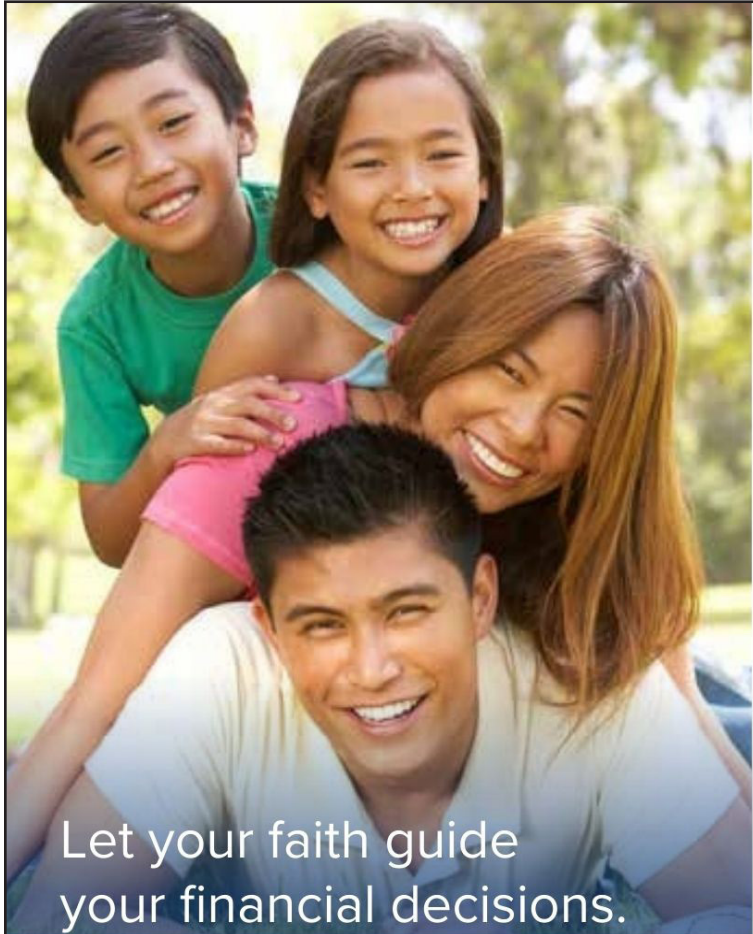
“It is such a gift to have those missionaries come into our home to share laughter and chores and faith, to have our kids see the faith lived out in young

adults they look up to and to watch them practice kindness and discipline,” Jen Bentzinger said.

The Bentzinger home on a farm about a mile west of Goodland is a full house during Totus Tuus week.

Jen’s sister, Sarah Fipp, brings her four children from Arvada, Colo., to visit their cousins – and to participate in Totus Tuus.

“We are blessed with space and enjoy opening it up to others,” Jen said. “It’s a synergetic relationship, and Totus Tuus is a gift to our family. It’s always a highlight of our summer and is a super enriching week.”



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Sts. Philip and James, Phillipsburg, Confirmation, May 23



St. John Nepomucene, Beardsley, Confirmation, May 20



St. John the Baptist, Beloit, Confirmation, May 3



Sts. Philip and James, Phillipsburg, First Holy Communion, April 26

CATHOLIC SCOUT EARN SCHOLARSHIP

Catholic Scouting America awarded Janis Curit from Junction City the \$4,000 Emmett J. Doerr Memorial Scout Scholarship. Curit belongs to St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church and is a member of Scouting America Troop 41 in the Coronado Area Council.

Curit truly embodies the idea of servant leadership. When asked why volunteering is important to him, Curit responded, "As a Catholic Scout, I volunteer as a way to live out both the Catholic faith, and the Scout Oath. Specifically, that of helping others at all times, and fulfilling the ideal of showing one's faith through action... the knowledge that others are better through my involvement is worth the many hours that could have been spent doing something else."

In service to the Catholic Church, Curit volunteered at St. Francis Xavier Parish as an altar server. He also participated in the National



Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) and the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage.

Curit served the community through extensive engagement with several organizations, including a food pantry and senior center. He also held numerous leadership roles in his scouting troop.

The NCCS Scholarship Committee selects scholarship recipients based on their demonstrated leadership, service and commitment to making a positive impact in their communities. More details about Catholic Scouting can be found at catholicscoutingamerica.org/college-scholarships/

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'God of the Plains' song written by priest still popular 50 years later

By DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
THE REGISTER

As a newly ordained Catholic priest of the Capuchin Franciscan order in the mid-1970s, Father Duane Reinert couldn't understand why a couple of clergy at his new parish didn't seem to appreciate the beauty of rural Kansas.

So he began writing down desirable qualities about Kansas, and he eventually turned them into a song.

"God of the Plains" became so popular that it made its way into a parish songbook at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Hays and has been sung in churches of many denominations ever since.

This year, during the 150th anniversary of Catholicism in Ellis County, the song is being sung in multiple churches across the region, including upcoming "ancestors" Masses the next three consecutive Sundays: July 26, St. Ann's, Walker; Aug. 2, St. Joseph's, Hays; and Aug. 9, Basilica of St. Fidelis, Victoria.

Cheryl Glassman, president of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance, said the alliance asked her to think of a signature song for the 2026 sesquicentennial celebrations. "God of the Plains" immediately came to mind.

"They thought it was important to have a song that unifies Ellis County Christians who were of Volga-German descent," she said. "Music is God-driven. I couldn't think of a better song to represent that than 'God of the Plains.'"

Fr. Duane, in his first assignment at St. Joseph Parish in Hays in 1976, had quietly listened while a priest and a religious education director said they couldn't wait to get out of Kansas. They were both from other states, who had been assigned to serve at St. Joseph, and Fr. Duane felt they were blind to the natural beauty of his home state.

"After hearing that noise for a period of time," Fr. Duane said, "I would sit down and write all the different things about why Kansas is valuable and a great place to be, things that were too subtle for them to see and appreciate."

Things like rolling hills, wheat fields, whispering wind and grazing cattle – all "telling of God's presence many ways."

A lot of those hallmark characteristics of Kansas were ingrained in Fr. Duane, who grew up in the



COURTESY PHOTO

Father Duane Reinert, a native of the Salina Diocese, used his guitar-playing skills while writing the song "God of the Plains" back in the late 1970s.

Blue Hills of Osborne County.

"Through the process of writing down things, I reflected on what was worthwhile about Kansas. I thought I could tighten that up and have lyrics for a song," said Fr. Duane, a self-taught guitarist from his days at St. Francis Seminary in Victoria.

Thus, "God of the Plains" was born.

It was on his farm southwest of Osborne and his hometown parish of St. Aloysius where Fr.

Duane learned at an early age what he wanted to be when he grew up.

Fr. Duane said he can remember "playing priest" at home even before he went to school. When adopted siblings, ages 4 and 3, joined him in the Reinert family when he was 3, he had a mini congregation with whom to "play Mass."

"We grew up in a pack," he said with a laugh.

From that time on, Fr. Duane felt the calling to become a priest.

Because he was born on the feast of St. Francis and was christened Duane Francis at birth, he always had a penchant for the Franciscan order, which operated a high school and seminary just about an hour away in Victoria.

He graduated from St. Francis

in 1967, attended seminary in Pennsylvania and Maryland and was assigned to serve as a transitional deacon at St. Joseph in Hays.

He was ordained at St. Joseph in 1976, served as a priest there for a couple of years and later led the campaign to build a new Comeau Catholic Campus Center at Fort Hays State University in 1984.

Since then, he earned a doctorate in counseling, worked at various parishes and ministries around the province and now is a professor and counselor at Conception Seminary College in northwest Missouri. His home base is Lawrence, where he regularly serves Native American parishioners of the Potawatomi Nation about halfway between Manhattan and Lawrence.

Except for a Reinert family reunion each fall, folks back home don't get to see much of their native son-turned priest/songwriter these days.

But for many, "God of the Plains" brings back a lot of memories and reinforces the fact that it is easy to find God – even in the middle of rural Kansas.

"I got an email from someone asking for permission to sing the song this year," Fr. Duane said. "It's published and copyrighted, so anyone can sing it. But it's quite an honor that Ellis County and the area is doing that."

Especially during this, his 50th jubilee year of priesthood.

God of the Plains

By Fr. Duane Reinert

Verse 1

From the glitter of the sunrise
at the dawning of the day.
Till the evening twilight rains
darkness on our way.

A quiet on the plains
whispers in the wind.
Close your eyes,
and you can hear it say:

REFRAIN:

God of the Plains,
listen to Him sing.
Riding on the shifting wind
like a swallow on the wing.

Verse 2

A beauty that is subtle
rises from the plains.
Rolling hills and wheat fields
and cattle out to graze.

The beauty of the plain
whispers in the wind.
Telling of God's presence
many ways.

REFRAIN

Verse 3

When it's hot and dry and
windy,
it seems that He's not there.
But then the evening twilight
rings rain clouds in the west.

"I am present!" He proclaims,
"I whisper on the wind,
I shower down My love,
my very best!"

REFRAIN

Verse 4

The gentle floating angels
attend his throne of blue.
Know that He is infinite,
in majesty He reigns!

"I am present with power,
I whisper in the wind.
Know that I am Lord,
God of the Plains!"

REFRAIN

©1978



Dominican Sisters offer Open House

The Dominican Sisters of Peace, located in Great Bend, are offering the public a chance to visit with them during an open house on September 27, from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Many of the sisters who currently reside there will be moving to other Dominican Sisters of Peace convents, since the Great Bend convent is closing its doors at the end of the year.

"We have spent almost 125 years ministering to people in Kansas, in various states, and in Nigeria. We are thankful for that and for the faithful lives lived in this building but now God is leading us to new homes. We hope the community will wish the Sisters well in their move and in their next ministries," said longtime resident Sister Charlotte Brungardt.



Catholic Charities: Providing caring support for people in need



COURTESY PHOTO

Amy visits with Jessica Sampson, LSCSW, Director of Family Support Services at Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas. After facing years of personal loss and unexpected crises, Amy found hope, healing, and practical tools through counseling, giving her the confidence to navigate life's challenges with renewed strength.

By JEREE HUGHBANKS

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NORTHERN KANSAS

After graduating high school, Amy's life changed in an instant. While attending Kansas State University, her mom passed away the week before finals.

Amy pushed through, but the weight of grief was too much, and she ended up flunking out. Determined to move forward, she enrolled at Cloud County Community College in Concordia, where she found out she was pregnant.

"I came back with two things from Concordia—a degree and a daughter," Amy said.

Amy made the decision to raise her daughter on her own. "It was not easy, but I did it."

As life's challenges continued, Amy realized she needed someone to talk to. In 2015, she connected with Jessica Sampson, Director of Family Support Services at Catholic Charities, and began counseling.

About a year ago, Amy's life was turned upside down once again when her husband was diagnosed with kidney failure. That same night, two of their cars

were set on fire, and flames spread to their home where her daughter and her boyfriend slept. Thankfully, her daughter woke up—or Amy might have lost them all.

Through every season—grief, loss, and crisis—Amy had Jessica.

"She doesn't judge what I say or feel, or what I've been through," Amy said.

Through counseling, Amy learned to process what she's been through and manage relationships, boundaries, and stress in healthier ways. That support kept her going.

"I could have let everything get me down," Amy said. "I've had to live."

Today, Amy continues to move forward—no longer carrying everything on her own.

"Catholic Charities has really changed my life," she said. "I would not be where I am today if it wasn't for having somebody I could talk to that I felt like I could actually trust."

You made that support possible.

"Without you," Amy said, "I don't think people could go to counseling if they needed it. Thank you."



YOU gave him strength, dignity, and hope.

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

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Bonita (Karst) Ney

Bonita Marie (Karst) Ney died June 26, 2026, at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita. She was born December 7, 1943, in Great Bend to Robert C. and Frieda B. (Mai) Karst and grew up in the greater Galatia-Susank metropolitan area. She attended North Star country school, walking uphill both to and from class. Occasionally her dad let her ride the pony to school, carrying a hot potato in her pocket to warm her hands in the winter. (We cannot attest to the accuracy of this story.) She graduated from Hoisington High School with the class of 1961, where she played saxophone in the school band, then attended Wichita Business School and worked at Farmers State Bank in Beaver.

On August 31, 1963, she married her high school sweetheart, Merlin K. Ney, at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Hoisington. As a Lutheran at the time participating in a Latin Catholic Mass, she hoped (in English) that the proceedings were valid and binding. Together they raised four sons: Bruce, Kevin, Merlin Jr., and Jason.

They lived in Hays, Minneola, Galatia, and Russell before settling on a farm south of Russell along the Smoky Hill River, where they made

their home for more than 40 years.

Bonita worked at Russell Livestock Commission Company and later spent about 21 years in the Russell County Appraiser's Office before retiring. She also served as religious education coordinator at St. Mary's Catholic Church for 23 years, retiring in May 2026.



She was a devoted wife, homemaker, and dedicated boy mom, then a doting grandmother and great-grandmother. She volunteered as a room mother, 4-H leader, and Booster Club member, and was active in Rotary and Zeta Mu. She could butcher a chicken like nobody's business, was a good dancer, and once made the same favorite jumpsuit in at least four different fabrics. She loved wooden spoons and wire-handled fly swatters, canned or froze anything that could be preserved, and believed a good vacuum cleaner was one of life's pleasures. Rarely idle, she always found ways to help others, enjoyed gardening, flowers, mowing the lawn, creative cooking, and treasured her morning coffee.

She is already sorely missed. Her funeral was held July 1 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Russell, with burial at St. Catherine's Catholic Cemetery in Dubuque.

Sister Mary Fran Simons

Sister Mary Fran Simons died July 1, 2026, at Nazareth Motherhouse in Concordia. She was 92 years old and a Sister of St. Joseph for 70 years. She was born in Raton, New Mexico, on July 1, 1934, to John and Margaret McDonald Simons, the second of four children, and was baptized Mary Francis.

She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 9, 1955. On March 19, 1956, Mary Francis received the habit of the Sisters of St. Joseph and was given the name Sister John Paul, later changing back to her baptismal name. She pronounced first vows in 1957 and final vows on March 19, 1960.



In 1960 Sister Mary Fran Simons received her AB from Marymount in Latin followed by a MA in 1967 in Latin from St. Louis University. She taught in schools staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Salina, Abilene, Concordia, and Grand Island for 18 years. After retiring from teaching, S. Mary Fran served as a chaplain at Valley Hope Center, Chandler, AZ for 34 years. She retired in 2020.

Sister Mary Fran Simons was preceded in death by her parents and siblings. Her funeral was July 8 in the Motherhouse Chapel with Fr. Barry Brinkman presiding. Burial in the Nazareth Motherhouse Cemetery.

Sister Donna Otter

Sister Donna Otter died May 19, 2026, at Nazareth Motherhouse in Concordia. She was 87 years old and a Sister of St. Joseph for 67 years. She was born in Clayton on September 22, 1938, to Frank and Margaret Bates Otter, the fifth of eight children, and was baptized Donna Regina. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph, Concordia, on September 8, 1958. On March 18, 1959, Donna received the habit of the Sisters of St. Joseph and was given the name Sister Frances de Chantal, later returning to her baptismal name Donna. She pronounced first vows in 1960 and final vows on March 19, 1963.

Sister Donna received her BA in psychology from Marymount College in 1963. Donna taught schools staffed



by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Aurora and Chicago, IL; and in Oakley. From there she joined the first mission in Brazil for the next 28 years serving in the Administration of the Mission and a member of the Formation Team. She returned to the U.S. in 1993 for an extended stay but returned to Brazil in 2005 for another 10 years. She served in El Paso at the Hospitality House and in Junction City at the Open Door Homeless Shelter. In 2018 Sister Donna retired.

Sister Donna was preceded in death by her parents, three sisters and three brothers. She is survived by one sister. Her funeral was May 23 in the Motherhouse Chapel with Rev. Barry Brinkman presiding. The burial was in the Nazareth Motherhouse Cemetery.

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BAPTISMS

Carter Joe and Bennett Allen, twin sons of Cooper and Molly (Soyez) Windholz, were baptized May 17, 2026, at St. Fidelis Church in Victoria.

Tadeo Martinez Apodaca, son of Jose Luis Martinez Solis and Bianca Judit Apodaca Lozano, was baptized May 16, 2026, by Fr. Brian Lager at St. Frances Cabrini Church in Hoxie.

Cecilia Rose Bates, daughter of Brandon and Ellie (Bellerive) Bates, was baptized June 7, 2026, by Fr. Adam Urban at St. Mary Queen of the Universe Church in Salina. Godparents are Adam Bates and Emily Bellerive.

Iris Lorraine Belobrajdic, daughter of Travis James Belobrajdic and Meg-Ann Nicole Belobrajdic, was baptized June 13, 2026, by Fr. Leo Blasi at Seven Dolores Church in Manhattan.

Lyla Rose Butts, daughter of Zachary and Carolina (Conde Ramirez) Butts, was baptized June 7, 2026, by Fr. Adam Urban at St. Mary Queen of the Universe Church in Salina. Godparents are Jacob Fleming and Maria Victoria Rojas.

Isabella Caldera, daughter of Conrad Caldera and Andrea Torres, was baptized June 13, 2026, by Fr. Adam Urban at St. Mary Queen of the Universe Church in Salina. Godparents are Abelino Soto and Patricia Soto.

Alani Celeste Camacho, daughter, Amelia Celine Camacho, daughter, and Caiden Camacho, son, of Jesus Camacho Maldonado and Madelaine Georgette Macedo, were baptized June 21, 2026, by Fr. Rafael Indave Campos at Seven Dolores Church in Manhattan.

José Rogerio Soltero Celaya, son of Felipe and Mary Soltero, was baptized June 26, 2026, by Fr. Kyle Berens at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit.

Eleanor Louise Cox, daughter of Jonathan Matthew Cox and Tiffani Nicole Williford-Cox, was baptized June 20, 2026, by Fr. Leo Blasi at Seven Dolores Church in Manhattan.

Adelaide Brookins Cullinane, daughter of Andrew and Shelby Cullinane, was baptized May 3, 2026, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Violet Aurora Debrot, daughter of Damian and Jaden Debrot, was baptized June 3, 2026, by Fr. Joseph

Kieffer at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Concordia. Godparents are Oakley Champlin and Valentina Acosta.

Riggen Lee Doll, son of Mason Doll and Adell Riedel, was baptized June 20, 2026, by Deacon Kyle Pfeifer at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

Charlotte Ann Garza, daughter of Daniel Luke Garza and Julie Ann Garza was baptized June 7, 2026, by Fr. Leo Blasi at Seven Dolores Church in Manhattan.

AnnaLynn Kay Gehring, daughter of Blake and Allison (Vahling) Gehring, was baptized June 6, 2026, by Fr. Nicholas L. Parker at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

Damian Maxus Gibson, son of Jordan Alexander Gibson and Maria Soledad Vasquez-Gibson, was baptized May 3, 2026, by Fr. Leo Blasi at Seven Dolores Church in Manhattan.

Tucker Lee Haverkamp, son of Anthony and Ashley Haverkamp, was baptized June 28, 2026, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Ximena Guadalupe Flores Hernandez, daughter of Jesus Martin Flores and Angelica Josefina Hernandez, was baptized May 23, 2026, by Fr. Leo Blasi at Seven Dolores Church in Manhattan.

Brooks Brett Hertel, son of Brett and Kendra (Werth) Hertel, was baptized June 28, 2026, by Fr. Damian Richards at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays.

Beckett Scott Kuhlmann, son of Truitt and Kaitlin Kuhlmann, was baptized June 7, 2026, by Fr. Trevor Buster at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Eloise Blake Kuhlmann, daughter of Trey and Ashlyn Kuhlmann, was baptized June 28, 2026, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Abigail Cathryne Kutina, daughter of Andrew Replogle Kutina and Kara Nicole Kutina, was baptized May 17, 2026, by Fr. Leo Blasi at Seven Dolores Church in Manhattan.

Zelie Marie Meagher, daughter of Taylor Meagher and Elizabeth (Zabel) Meagher, was baptized June 7, 2026, by Deacon Tim Donohue at Seven Dolores

Church in Manhattan.

Grayden John Neuhauser, son of Kris and MacKenzie Neuhauser, was baptized June 7, 2026, by Fr. Trevor Buster at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Juliette Rose Pearson, daughter of Jadin and Amy Pearson, was baptized June 7, 2026, by Fr. Trevor Buster at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Peyton Nikole Reilly, daughter of Dylan Thomas Reilly and Taylor Elizabeth Reilly, was baptized May 9, 2026, by Fr. Leo Blasi at St. Patrick's Church in Ogden.

Gabrielle Anne Ross, daughter of Quinten and Jordyn Ross, was baptized May 31, 2026, by Fr. Peter O'Donnell at St. Michael Church in Chapman. Godparents are Anders Mikkelsen and Annie Ross.

Mary Josephine Rourke, daughter of Alan and Ryan Rourke, was baptized May 9, 2026, by Fr. Michael Leiker at SS Peter and Paul Church in Clay Center.

Andi Jane Starnes, daughter of Dane and Valerie Starnes, was baptized June 14, 2026, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

Eloise Jean Steinbrock, daughter of Drake Steinbrock and Shaylea (Lawson) Steinbrock, was baptized May 9, 2026, by Fr. Joseph Kieffer at St. John's Church in Clyde.

Natalie Grace Stouffer, daughter of Lucas and Megan Stouffer, was baptized June 14, 2026, by Fr. Earl Befort at St. Catherine Church in Catharine. Godparents are Kaden VonFeldt and Erin Sims.

Adamari Madonna Taddiken, daughter of Shawn and Nicolette Taddiken, was baptized June 7, 2026, by Fr. Andrew Rockers at St. Mary's Church in Clifton.

Colson Joseph Treaster, son of Grant and Marcina (McNabb) Treaster, was baptized February 11, 2026, by Fr. Adam Urban at St. Mary Queen of the Universe Church in Salina. Godparents are Boone Robertson and Kelsey McMill.

Lucy Katherine VanLoenen, daughter of Eric and Gina VanLoenen, was baptized April 18, 2026, by Fr. Frederick Gruber at St. Frances Cabrini Church in Hoxie.

WEDDINGS

Christian Keith Bartel and Rose Elizabeth Loyle were married May 30, 2026, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Joshua and Stephanie Bartel. Parents of the bride are Paris and Katherine Loyle. Witnesses were Isaiah Bartel and Madison Loyle.

Phillip John Carson and Brianna Michelle Tillotson were married June 27, 2026, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Trevor Buster witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Phillip Carson and Terrie Carson. Parents of the bride are Brian and Carnell Tillotson. Witnesses were Dominic Mesh and Jade Mendoza.

Tyler Dale Collins and Taylor Benton Case were married June 20, 2026, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Bryan and Lisa Collins. Parents of the bride are James and Jeanne Case. Witnesses were Casey Cheek and Chelsey Bieberle.

James Michael DeRouchey and Kyanna Jo Lankton were married May 30, 2026, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Joel and Julene DeRouchey. Parents of the bride are Patrick and Lacy

Lankton. Witnesses were Trayton Hartwich and Kyla Lankton.

Tanner Diehl and Samantha Roth were married June 27, 2026, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays. Fr. Nick Parker witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Todd Werth and Angie Diehl. Parents of the bride are Anthony and Shelly Roth. Witnesses were Lucas Kraus and Addie Roth.

Caleb Eilert and Elizabeth Meyer were married June 6, 2026, at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Brian Lager witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Joe and Kari Eilert. Parents of the bride are Tony and Lindy Meyer. Witnesses were AJ Eilert and Erin Walter.

Ethan Thomas Heinrich Senne and Tess Olivia Albin were married June 20, 2026, at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Larry and Lori Senne. Parents of the bride are Antony and Jena Albin. Witnesses were Scott Gulick and Chloe Albin.

Jeffrey Hurley and Rebecca Asuncion were married June 20, 2026, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays. Fr. Nick Parker witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Kenneth and Barbara Hurley. Parents of the bride are LaVon and Peggy Cole. Witnesses were Tray Hurley and Korryn Gregg.



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WEDDINGS

Joseph Nicholas Lubbe and Emily Marie Chmidling were married May 23, 2026, at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Trevor Buster witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are James and Barbara Lubbe. Parents of the bride are Craig and Angela Chmidling. Witnesses were Jake Lubbe and Grace Sanford.

Joseph Cannon Molen and Emma Sue Nobert were married May 8, 2026, at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Sean and Annemarie Molen. Parents of the bride are Larry and Kara Nobert. Witnesses were Harper Molen and Elizabeth Bechard.

James Dennis Nobert and Emily May Jones were married June 5, 2026, at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Lance and Megan Nobert. Mother of the bride is Lori Jones. Witnesses were Oliver Nobert and Riley Girard.

Nathan Daniel Plath and Halley Dolores Jones were married June 13, 2026, at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Eric and Raquel Plath. Parents of the bride are Trent and Annie Jones. Witnesses were Dylan Plath and Delaney Jones.

Grant Scaletty and Elizabeth Laville were married on June 6, 2026, at St. Michael Church in Chapman. Fr. Peter O’Donnell witnessed their vows.

Andrew Joseph Schwinn and Lakin Rose Denny were married June 26, 2026, at

St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Lawrence and Sharon Schwinn. Parents of the bride are James and Lori Denny. Witnesses were Adam Schwinn and Claire Denny.

Titus Shafer and Kieran Nicole Boeger were married May 22, 2026, at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Trevor Buster witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are John and Nichole Shafer. Parents of the bride are Mike and Marnie Boeger. Witnesses were Kolbe Shafer and Emma Sharpton.

Colton Michael Shirack and Delaney Rose Holthaus were married June 13, 2026, at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Matthew and the late Bonnie Shirack. Parents of the bride are Benji and Tonya Deters. Witnesses were Hunter Base, Zoe Carter and Katie Holthaus.

Payton Matthew Stephens and Mackenzie Rebekah Denver were married June 4, 2026, at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Gary and Brenda Stephens. Parents of the bride are Gregory and Genae Denver. Witnesses were Gary Stephens and Gregory Denver.

Austin W. Thrailkill and Makinsey Renee Farber were married June 6, 2026, at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Drew Hoffman witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Kasey and Gina Thrailkill. Parents of the bride are Kelly and Staci Farber. Witnesses were Josh Mark and Paige Mark.

Theresa Ann Adamson, 62, died June 27, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated July 3 at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Jarett Konrade presided. Burial in Elmwood Cemetery, Beloit.

Peter Anthony Cocozzoli, 52, died June 1, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 8 at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt presided.

George M.B. Fink, 85, died June 17, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 25 at St. Michael Church in Chapman. Fr. Peter O’Donnell presided; Fr. John Wolesky was concelebrant. Burial in St. Patrick Cemetery, Chapman.

Matthew Joseph Gengler, 2, died June 5, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 10 at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Jarett Konrade presided. Burial in St. John’s Cemetery, Beloit.

Della Mae (Forgue) Grant Hefner, 95, died June 12, 2026, in Concordia. A private family service was held with burial June 19 at St. Concordia Cemetery in Concordia with Fr. Joseph Kieffer presiding.

Thomas Anthony Kiesler, 89, born Sept. 10, 1936, in Louisville, KY, died Feb. 24, 2026, in Clarksburg, MD. Funeral Mass was celebrated May 29 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Concordia. Fr. Joseph Kieffer presided. Burial in St. Concordia Cemetery.

Oscar Montero, 23, died April 28, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated May 8 at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Jarett Konrade presided. Burial in St. John’s Cemetery, Beloit.

Dean Arthur Neuburger, 67, died May 22, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 8 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays. Fr. Nick Parker presid-

FUNERALS

ed. Inurnment in St. Joseph Cemetery, Hays.

Georgine “Jeanie” Staab, 92, died May 30, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 13 at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays. Fr. Damian Richards presided. Burial in St. Joseph’s Cemetery, Hays.

Jose Angel Nava Vazquez, 53, born April 14, 1973, in Guadalajara, Mexico, died May 29, 2026, in Concordia. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 3 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Concordia. Fr. Joseph Kieffer presided. Burial in St. Concordia Cemetery.

Victoria Lynn “Vicky” Wells, 71, died June 4, 2026.

Funeral Mass was celebrated June 10 at St. Joseph Church in Damar. Fr. Ernest Amoako-Opere presided. Inurnment in St. Joseph Cemetery, Damar.

Elizabeth Ann “Betty” (Soukop) Woody, 97, died June 13, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated June 20 at St. Patrick Church in Lincoln. Fr. Mark Wesely presided. Interment at Beverly Cemetery, Beverly.

Judith Works, 66, died May 15, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated May 30 at St. Isidore’s Catholic Student Center in Manhattan. Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt presided.



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THIS SUMMER, CONSIDER A ST. FRANCIS-INSPIRED ROADTRIP

By LORI GARCIA
THE REGISTER

As we pass the midway point in the summer, and in this Jubilee Year of St. Francis, consider loading up the car and taking a one-tank trip across Kansas to see the sights and visit parishes named after the saint of the year.

You could also take the family to see parishes that, although not named after St. Francis, are serviced by the Franciscans.

Until next January, the faithful can receive a plenary indulgence 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.

Those who are elderly, sick, or for serious reasons cannot go on pilgrimage, can still obtain the plenary indulgence by spiritually joining in jubilee celebrations and offering their prayers, pains, or sufferings to God.

If you do decide to make the trip, along with fun stops to see the local flora and fauna, consider praying for those who can't travel, and ask for St. Francis's guidance.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE SAINTS

St. Lawrence was a leader in the early Church in Rome. At just 22 years old, he became a deacon and served the pope. Later, he was appointed archdeacon of Rome, a special role in which he cared for the Church's treasures and distributed aid to the poor.

During a time of persecution, Roman officials told Lawrence to hand over the Church's wealth. He asked for three days to gather it, but instead he gave everything to those in need. When the officials returned, Lawrence brought the city's poor, sick, and suffering people, saying, "Here are the treasures of the church."

You see, the church is truly rich, far richer than your emperor!"

For his courage, Lawrence was martyred by being burned on a bed of hot coals. He is the patron saint of firefighters, comedians, deacons, and cooks.



ST. LAWRENCE
FEAST DAY: AUGUST 10

An audience of one

Recently, I was listening to a reflection by Jeff Cavins on the Gospel account of the scribes and the widow's offering. As I listened, I realized that while I want to be the widow in the story, I too often look more like the scribes.

In this Gospel, Jesus warns about the scribes who loved recognition. They wanted the places of honor, the respect of the crowd, and the appearance of holiness. Then Jesus points to a poor widow who quietly drops two small coins into the treasury.

Jesus was sitting across from the treasury, watching people make their offerings. One after another, people approached and put in their gifts. Then the widow arrived and dropped in two small coins. It was only then that Jesus called His disciples over. Of all the people He had been watching, she was the one He wanted them to notice.

While others may have been concerned with what people thought of their gift, the widow simply came to give what she had to God. Jesus saw a heart completely surrendered in trust.

I think that's exactly what Jeff Cavins was getting at when he said that, as disciples, we have an audience of one.

I think this is one of the great challenges of our time. It's easy to spend so much time wondering what everyone else thinks that we forget to ask the most important question—

What does God think?

A widow with only two small coins to her name surely had worries of her own. Yet instead of clinging to what little she had, she entrusted it to God.

When life becomes stressful, I tend to hold on tighter. I worry more. As a coach, I know how easy it is to start watching the scoreboard instead of simply coaching the next possession. Spiritually, I can do the same thing. I start watching everyone's reactions instead of keeping my eyes on Christ.

Peace is found in trusting the One who loves us most. Maybe that's the invitation you and I need today.

An invitation to set down some of the stress that comes from trying to meet everyone's expectations. To soften the anxiety that comes from constantly wondering what others think. To stop measuring our worth by applause, recognition, success, or approval and instead rest in the knowledge that we are beloved sons and daughters of God.

Tomorrow morning, before you

check your email, your phone, the news, or social media, ask yourself one question—Who am I trying to please today?

If the answer is Jesus Christ, you're already on track for a great day.

Jesus watched an entire crowd place their offerings in the trea-

sury, yet the widow was the one He wanted His disciples to notice.

May we live each day for that same Audience of One.

Note: If you are looking for a simple way to deepen your daily prayer, I highly recommend Jeff Cavins' Daily Reflections on the Hallow app.

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JULY PRAYER:

Most Precious *Blood* of Life Eternal

Most Precious Blood of Life Eternal, price of sinful man's redemption, by whose saving streams the thirst of souls is quenched, and their stains are washed away, Thou Who dost plead the cause of man before the throne of infinite mercy, from the depths of my heart I adore Thee and desire, as much as lies in my power, to make atonement for the injuries and insults that are constantly offered Thee by mankind, and especially by those who rashly dare to blaspheme Thee.

Who will not bless and praise this Blood of infinite value? Whose soul would not be inspired with love for Jesus Who shed It all for us? What would be my fate, had I not been redeemed by this Divine Blood?

And what drew Thee from the veins of my Saviour even to the last drop? It was love! O boundless love, which has given us this saving balm! O priceless balm, welling from the fount of immeasurable love!

Grant that all hearts and tongues may praise Thee, magnify Thee, and give Thee thanks, now and throughout all ages.

Amen.

 CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of SALINA



THE REGISTER

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