# THE REGISTER

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALINA

OCTOBER 23, 2026

TOGETHER, LET US BE DISCIPLES OF JESUS ON MISSION.


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# 70-year friendship takes 95-year-old Smith Center parishioner back to South Korea

*BY ALAN HOLDREN*
*THE REGISTER*

A 95-year-old Smith Center parishioner is heading to South Korea this month to see an old friend. Francis Sweat met South Korean soldier, Ju Chan Kim, as they served together for separate but allied armies more than 70 years ago. Their friendship, forged through shared service, has lasted their very long lifetimes and is drawing Sweat back to Seoul.

Francis Sweat grew up on a farm near the tiny township of Cedar, in Smith County. His parents encouraged him to take over the farm, but insisted he get a degree first. It was at Kansas State University while studying general agriculture that he also joined the ROTC program.

After graduating, he went on to officer training school in Georgia for three months. Then, in 1953, he got orders to go abroad. Korea was on the horizon.

The hostilities of the Korean War had concluded the previous year. He served in the U.S. Army's 21st Infantry Regiment during the first years of the so-called "armistice agreement," a ceasefire between North and South Korea that continues to this day.

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COURTESY PHOTO

**Francis Sweat and Ju Chan Kim pose for a picture together in 1954. The two have remained friends for more than 70 years, despite living across the world from each other.**

# Running by faith, not by sight

*BY DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN*
*THE REGISTER*

Searee Bruggeman finishes every cross country race just ahead of one of her favorite runners.

Born with a rare eye disorder called cone dystrophy, Searee is legally blind and runs alongside a guide runner, who is tethered to Searee throughout the race.

Cone dystrophy causes the breakdown of cone cells vital to seeing colors and sharpness, a condition for which there is no cure. People with this condition often describe their vision as blurry with reduced central vision.

A junior at Golden Plains High School in Rexford, Searee hasn't let her visual impairment slow her down.

She also plays basketball and runs track. She is a cheerleader. She participates in forensics and the school play and is a member of the National Honor Society.

No matter what Searee accomplishes the rest of her high school career and beyond, her mother thanks God every day for an extra special gift from her daughter.

Searee has helped bring her family back to the Catholic faith.

Searee's story according to her mother, and definitely one worth hearing, goes something like this.

Layn Bruggeman grew up Catholic, had her children baptized and sent them to CCD classes – until COVID-19 changed their world.

"I was a non-practicing Catholic for years," Layn said. "Then when COVID hit, it was even easier not to go to church."

That started to change when Searee's cousin, Dally Hynek, was

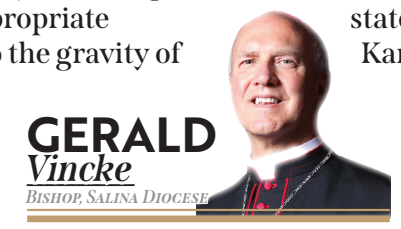
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DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

**Although legally blind, Searee Bruggeman is one of her team's top runners, thanks to the aid of her guide runner, Helen Giefer.**

# *Catholic Bishops of Kansas Call for Less Violence and No State Executions*



GERALD *Vincke*
BISHOP, SALINA DIOCESE

The death penalty has been in the news more frequently lately, particularly amid troubling discussions about publicly broadcasting executions. Although the death penalty was "long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes," its use is no longer necessary to protect the common good (USCCB).

More effective means of protecting citizens exist, while still allowing those guilty of crimes the opportunity for redemption. We see this balance of justice and mercy in the story of Cain and Abel. After Cain killed his brother, God punished Cain greatly, but also mercifully spared and protected his life. No sin places a person beyond the reach of God's immense and merciful love, nor diminishes the God-given dignity of that person and their life.

Ultimately, the death penalty undermines the sacredness of human life and contributes to a culture of death. Below is a statement from the bishops of Kansas on the death penalty.

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The Catholic bishops of Kansas stand in resolute solidarity with all who have suffered from acts of violent crime, holding a special place in our hearts for the families of Kansans whose lives were brutally taken.

We acknowledge the unspeakable pain of these losses, and we firmly support the heroic work of our law enforcement and judicial professionals who work tirelessly to keep our communities safe and peaceful.

True justice must always aim for the healing of victims and the preservation of public safety.

At the same time, we must speak out against the inherent violence and inhumanity of the death penalty, particularly when such an extreme measure is entirely unnecessary to protect society. While capital punishment has been legal in Kansas since 1994, our state has fortunately avoided its use.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person." Sacred Scripture clearly admonishes against "repaying anyone evil for evil," and warns that we should not "be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good" (Romans 12:17,21). Even for those who do not look to the Church as an authority, this principle provides a moral benchmark for the common good.

**Therefore, we respectfully urge Governor Laura Kelly to exercise the authority of her office to commute current death sentences to life in prison.** By sparing Kansas from the violence of an execution, we align our actions with the highest values of a peaceful, civilized society. We call on Catholics and all people of goodwill to pray and act to break cycles of violence, while offering our unyielding, compassionate support to everyone affected by crime. *"The Lord is close to the broken hearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed" (Psalm 34:10).*

*Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight*
*Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas*

*Most Reverend Carl A. Kemme*
*Bishop of Wichita*

*Most Reverend John B. Brungardt*
*Bishop of Dodge City*

*Most Reverend Gerald L. Vincke*
*Bishop of Salina*

# *Jesus in the Marketplace*



LORI *Garcia*
EDITOR, THE REGISTER

I realize this headline may, for some of you, evoke images of Jesus in the space before the temple, flipping tables, cracking a whip and taking names. Rightly so, I suppose, as that is usually what people think about when they hear of Jesus in the marketplace.

But my column this month is not about an angry Jesus in the temple. Rather, this is about a different marketplace. Facebook Marketplace, to be exact. And it's about experiences that I've witnessed in the marketplace where Christ was present.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with it, Marketplace is a way to have a miniature garage sale, if you will, from your phone. Let's say you have an old lamp in your garage that you never use anymore. You could take a picture of it and put it on Marketplace. A random college freshman trying to decorate her room might reach out to you wanting that lamp. You two text about the details, and then you get five dollars and she gets her lamp. It's great.

As I mentioned in my column this summer, my husband and I have been spending the last few months trying to make our house more like our own. When he bought the house, he bought it as-is, and with that came all of the previous residents' home items from their entire life. It's been one of my husband's hobby projects to slowly find new homes for many of those things, which means I have been in the passenger seat for many Marketplace transactions.

I think sometimes people in my generation can get distracted from what's important by our set lifestyles. We all have our routines and people we see on a daily basis, and we don't often stray from that.

Riding shotgun on many of these Marketplace sales has taken me, by nature of the deal, outside of my normal loop and has often introduced me to new people or opened my heart in new ways.

I knew back in college that Marketplace could be a strange but easy way to make a new connection. My roommates at the time were obsessed with Marketplace and bought many of our kitchen supplies on it. I always thought it was awesome that, on one trip to buy a soup pot, one of my roommates befriended an elderly woman who seemed just a little lonely. The two got to talking and decided to meet up to play card games regularly.

Months ago, I remember driving with my husband to a random parking lot to sell some children's cups and plates to a random woman. When we got there, we saw that her car was quite beat up and also packed with children in the back seat. I don't remember what the agreed-upon price was originally, but I do know that she left with quite the deal after we realized her situation, and we went home with another person to add to our nightly prayers.

Just this last week, I rode along with my husband on another Marketplace sale. It was an old queen-size comforter, and looked like an artifact from the 90s. I was quite thrilled that we were removing it from our house.

After we got to our destination, we saw a middle-aged woman drive up to us.

She paid my husband, he gave her the blanket, and then she told us a story. She said that her son was in the military and years ago had been in Afghanistan. One day she got a dreaded call that said they didn't know where her son was. He was missing.

She said that for weeks she cried on the comforter on her bed and prayed for his safe return. She said that her son was thankfully found, but that she had a lot of sentimental value wrapped up in that comforter. She told us that her pet dog recently tore up part of the blanket at her house and made it unusable, so she started looking around to see if she could find a replacement. And then she found that exact same blanket on our Marketplace listing.

That same blanket that I would've been happy to throw in the trash was a reminder for her of her love for her son.

So anyways, I've seen Jesus in the marketplace.

It's a beautiful thing, talking to a stranger and seeing God's hand in their life. It's silly to look at a stranger and think they aren't capable of the same emotional capacity and depth of life experience that we ourselves are. It's one of my greatest joys as an author to speak with strangers and learn how every ordinary person has an extraordinary story.

God, the Great Author, is writing each of our stories. May we be open and receptive to the opportunities where God calls us out of the ordinary. Oftentimes, it's an opportunity to encounter Him.

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# Victoria family trusts God with gift of life

*BY LORI GARCIA*
*THE REGISTER*

October brings Catholics a special opportunity to reflect on the dignity and beauty of every human life. The Church's commitment to life means supporting parents, welcoming children and recognizing that everyone, regardless of health, ability or circumstance, possesses an inherent dignity given by God.

It means trusting that life is a gift, even when the future is uncertain.

For Maegan and Caleb Scholz, that trust became deeply personal this year.

The Scholzes, parishioners at the Basilica of St. Fidelis in Victoria, already had two children, Cayden and Jennaya, nearly 5 and 3 respectively, when they learned they were expecting their third child.





COURTESY PHOTO

**The prayers that surrounded Kyah Scholz before her birth continued as she was baptized at the Basilica of St. Fidelis, surrounded by her godparents, family, and Fr. Curtis Carlson.**

"I've always wanted a third, so we were just kind of waiting for that right time," Maegan said. "We were just kind of waiting for God's time for our third, and there she came."

Maegan is a nurse at HaysMed and previously worked in labor and delivery. That experience shaped one of the decisions she and Caleb made early in their third pregnancy: They chose to have genetic screening at 12 weeks.

Maegan said the decision was never about changing what they would do with the pregnancy. Rather, she wanted to know if their baby might need specialized care and be prepared to provide it.

"I always wanted the best outcome for my babies, having that labor nurse experience," she said.

Then, one evening, Maegan saw her doctor's name appear on her phone.

"As a nurse, I know when the doctor calls you, it's never a good thing," she said.

The genetic screening showed a 66 percent chance that their baby had Turner syndrome and a 34 percent chance that everything was normal.

The screening was not a diagnosis. The couple could pursue an amniocentesis for diagnostic testing or wait and evaluate their daughter after birth. Maegan knew from her medical background and her own research that many Turner syndrome pregnancies do not continue to term.

"Our baby had about a 66 percent chance of having a one to three percent chance of making it," Maegan said.

As a labor and delivery nurse, Maegan had cared for families experiencing pregnancy loss.

"It slightly took the joy out of expecting because I was just clinging on to everything," she said. "I was scared to make any type of an announcement that we were expecting her, because I was so scared that the second I put it out into the world, she would be taken away."

There was nothing guaranteed.

So they prayed.

"We just kept praying for answers, seeking guidance," Maegan said. "We don't care what she's like, we don't care what she has, we don't care what's wrong with her. I want to be able to meet my baby, love on my baby, care for her. We'll do whatever we need to. I just want her in my arms."

They leaned on family and close Catholic friends for prayers, too.

"It's the best thing," Maegan said, "having family and huge support around, the prayer groups, and everything. It helps your mind and soul when you're dealing with hard things."

Maegan's father already prayed a daily rosary for his children and their pregnancies.

When he learned about his granddaughter, he joined the growing circle praying for her. After praying a rosary, he told Maegan he felt a deep sense of peace.

"I swear, Maegan, it was the Holy Spirit," he told her. "I think everything's gonna be fine, that little girl's gonna be just fine."

Maegan held on to those words throughout the pregnancy.

The Scholzes chose not to pursue an amniocentesis, which would have provided diagnostic testing but also carried additional risks for their baby. Instead, Maegan underwent additional monitoring.

"With every appointment that we had and doctor visit, she kept checking off check boxes," Caleb said. "Which was a big sigh of relief that she was checking off the boxes of leaning more to the side of not having Turner syndrome."

Still, they had no definitive answer.

"It was just a hoping, waiting, praying game," Maegan said.

She learned to be grateful for each day.

"Every day I was thankful," she said. "Every day I woke up hoping that she was kicking, moving, healthy, growing."

Finally, after months of waiting, the Scholzes met their daughter.

Baby Kyah appeared healthy, and her pediatrician saw no obvious signs of Turner syndrome. Genetic testing was performed on her blood, with results expected in two weeks.

Her parents had a brief scare shortly after Kyah's birth when her temperature was low, but after she was warmed and fed, she returned to her parents' room that night.

Then her older siblings came to meet her.

"Our son asked if we get to keep her," Caleb said

"Yes," they told him. "We get to keep her."

Two weeks after Kyah's birth, the genetic testing came back.

She did not have Turner syndrome.

The family received another piece of news, however. Kyah has a different chromosomal abnormality — a microdeletion on one of her chromosomes. Her parents do not yet know what, if any, effect it might have on her life.

But the uncertainty does not change how they see their baby.

"It doesn't matter to us," Maegan said. "We're just thankful that she's here."

For Maegan, faith did not mean praying for a particular medical outcome and expecting God to provide it.

"I didn't pray that everything would be fine," she said. "I prayed that He would be there for us and help me through everything that we're going through."

"Sometimes when you're in a sticky situation, you don't think He's listening, Caleb said, "but even when you feel like He's not listening, He actually is."

The Scholzes hope other parents who receive frightening or uncertain news during a pregnancy will hold on to that same trust in God's presence.

"Just don't give up hope, and know that good or bad, God's got you," Maegan said.

"It was a rough year, but the best ever at the same time," she said.

For the Scholz family, trusting God meant loving their daughter before they knew her diagnosis, praying for her and receiving each day with her as a gift. Today, Kyah is growing as expected, and her parents remain grateful to God for every day they have with their little girl.

## BISHOP'S NOV. CALENDAR

| | |
|---|---|
| **7** | Holy Fire, Hays. |
| **8** | Confirmation, St. Frances Cabrini, Hoxie. |
| **14-19** | USCCB Meetings, Baltimore. |
| **30** | Clergy Advent Day of Recollection. |

## NOVEMBER PRAYER INTENTIONS

**Diocesan intentions:**
For all those who have suffered the loss of a child, that they may find comfort in God's loving presence, strength in grief, and hope in the promise of eternal life.

**Pope Leo's intentions:**
For the proper use of wealth, that it may always be put at the service of the common good and solidarity of those who have less.

# 95-Year-Old Smith Center parishioner and veteran reflects on what makes life good

*BY ALAN HOLDREN*
*THE REGISTER*

Francis Sweat lives on the family farm near the north central Kansas townships of Cedar and Claudell, named for his great grandmother. His Smith County property has been in the family for 99 years. He was born just four years after, and he has been embracing life ever since.

## Early Life

Francis was the firstborn of four children. His father farmed and his mother took care of the home. He remembers attending Mass with them every other Sunday at the local church in Claudell, the first church in Smith County. "If we were going to communion, we fasted from midnight, went out and fed the cattle, didn't have anything to drink or anything to eat. Mass was probably at 10:30 a.m. So then you came home and you ate. Kids [now] don't understand that at all, how that was," he laughed.

He remembers driving a tractor as early as 8th grade during the Second World War. His dad started selling insurance, so he took on more and more of the farming duties. He was the only Catholic student in the entire building when he started at Kensington High School in 1945. He graduated along with 23 classmates in 1949.

His parents insisted he get a degree, so he went to Kansas State University in Manhattan to study general agriculture, majoring in animal husbandry and minoring in ag economics. He wanted to take on the family farm. At the time, the degree included classes in sheep, pork, and even beekeeping. He also completed a journalism class, which sparked a lifelong love for photography.

## Korean War

At K-State, Sweat also joined the ROTC program. After graduating, he went on to officer training school for three months. Then, in 1953, he got orders to go abroad. About 40% of new officers went to Korea and about the same amount went to Europe, mainly Germany, he remembers. They shipped him off to Korea. The hostilities had concluded the previous year; he served in the U.S. Army's 21st Infantry Regiment during the first of the armistice years, which continue until this day. He was first in the Yanngu Valley and served in at least three other locations, including six months in the "Operation Glory" honor guard, with a mix of both American and South Korean soldiers.

He remembers Cardinal Francis Spellman visiting them as the then-head of the Archdiocese for Military Services. He never crossed paths with fellow Kansan, Fr. Emil Kapaun, whose Cause for Canonization is currently underway, but he did have at least one similar experience. "We were out on a field exercise one time and I went to a Mass where the altar was the hood of a Jeep, like Father Kapaun," he recalls.

Sweat took photos throughout his tour and even visited the so-called "DMZ" - the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. He says he's proud of his service. "The South Koreans were very appreciative. They emphasized that to me several times."

## Life with Colette

When Francis returned to the U.S. in 1955, he was posted to Fort Riley, Kansas. He was back in Claudell at Mass with his brother and cousin when their parish priest said the harvest festival was coming up in Cawker City and they should go and see if they might meet someone. "And, that's how I met my wife," he remembers now. "I danced with three or four girls and they were all from Tipton. I guess my opening line to my wife was, 'I suppose you're from Tipton?'"

Colette Marie Mick took his heart that night. "We had a mission together. Something clicked with us right away. I don't really, I don't believe in love at first sight, but there was something there for each one of us, I think."



COURTESY PHOTO

**Colette and Francis Sweat shared 66 years of marriage together, after first meeting at a harvest festival in Cawker City.**

They dated for three years and got married on October 13, 1958. "I used to tell her her parents liked me better than they liked her," Sweat chuckles. "They were very accepting and welcoming." The newly married Sweats would realize they were unable to have children, so they worked with Catholic Charities to adopt their four kids. They have been the highlight of his and Colette's life, he says.

After 66 years of marriage, Colette died last year. She was battling dementia and macular degeneration. Her final two-plus years were spent in a nursing home in Smith Center. Francis made the 40-mile roundtrip to visit her daily. He was with her when she breathed her last breath at the age of 91.



COURTESY PHOTO

**At 95, Korean War veteran Francis Sweat has gained a lifetime of lessons. He stays active, attends Mass regularly and approaches his life with optimism and gratitude to God.**

## Today

95-year-old Sweat shows no signs of stopping. He lives on his own on the farm, careful in his movements because, he says, "if I fall out here, no one is going to find me." He attends Mass regularly at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Smith Center. He celebrated his 75th high school graduation anniversary in 2025. He just got a Nikon camera to continue his photography hobby with the latest technology. He grows tomatoes in raised beds in his front yard, popping the ripe cherry variety he finds directly into his mouth.

Incredibly, Sweat planned a trip back to South Korea to visit in October. He has kept up a friendship for 72 years now with a fellow honor guard member from South Korea, Ju Chan Kim. Kim and family have visited Kansas and it was Sweat's turn to go to them. He took two daughters and a son-in-law with him for his first time back in South Korea since his tour of duty.

## Life Lessons

Looking back on his life, Francis says he has a lot to be thankful for. The keys to a good life include hard work, prayer, gratitude, staying in shape, and a positive state of mind, seeing the humor in things, he says. "Know what's serious, but know that other things, they seem bad at the time, but they don't last."

"Put your trust in God and keep on doing the best you can, and help your neighbors because that's what we're here for, as a community. And, just keep a good attitude towards things. I think that quite a bit of a person's life is their attitude, how they deal with things, whether pessimistic or optimistic.

"I try to be optimistic," he says. "There isn't any use of worrying about things. Some famous person said, 90% of things you worry about were never even going to happen, so why spend your time and energy worrying about what may happen. You just deal with what you've got and do the best you can."

# 70-YEAR FRIENDSHIP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1




COURTESY PHOTO

**Francis Sweat was a part of Operation Glory, which recovered the bodies of soldiers lost behind enemy lines to be repatriated to the U.S. for identification and proper burial.**



COURTESY PHOTO

**Francis Sweat served in the U.S. Army's 21st Infantry Regiment in South Korea from 1954-55.**

He served in a variety of places over two years. Initially, Sweat served in the Yanngu Valley near South Korea's east coast, but he also spent several months in Panmunjom. There, he was with a mix of both American and South Korean soldiers as part of the "Operation Glory" honor guard. The special operation was an exchange of the deceased between the allies and North Korea, bringing home many who were lost.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency reports that the remains of around 4,200 American soldiers were returned through the operation. Kansas native, Fr. Emil Kapaun, a Korean War chaplain who died in a prisoner-of-war camp in North Korea and is now being considered for Catholic sainthood, was one of them.

"We stood there at attention and the convoy trucks passed through. We did that about every day," Sweat told The Register. There were four men representing each of the seven U.S. divisions then present in Korea, 28 total. "The Koreans found out about it… so they wanted to be there too."

Ju Chan Kim was a platoon leader of the Republic of Korea's honor guard. "Our duty was simple but solemn: to present arms as the remains arrived from the North. To us, each arrival was a hero coming home," he told the Register by text message from Seoul.

Kim was actually born and raised in Pyongyang, North Korea. "I went through the heartbreak of retreating south, leaving my mother behind in the North," he shared. "I was wounded in the war and lost many comrades."

The American and Korean soldiers serving in Operation Glory didn't share much in terms of language, but they communicated by gestures and worked side-by-side, Kim remembered.

When Sweat received orders to return to the U.S. in 1955, he stopped through the Korean Army Headquarters in Seoul to visit Kim before departing. Every Christmas since, they have exchanged gifts and letters. Sweat would send National Geographic magazines as well and even offered to help Kim continue his education in the United States, which he politely declined.

Their friendship has extended to include their entire families.

In the late 1980s, the Sweat family visited Kim's son, Wonho, as he was getting his PhD in Austin, Texas. That's where the Sweats learned many of the Korean customs.

"We were probably the only Kansas farm kids drinking Ginseng hot tea growing up," Sweat's daughter, Janet (Sweat) Schieferecke, told The Register.

In 1991, Ju Chan Kim himself came to the Sweat family farm in Smith County with his wife. The cows got out and Kim jumped right in with Sweat to get them back in the pen. They were serving together again.

"They experienced an authentic farm life during their visit," mused Schieferecke.

"I had never seen anything like those vast plains and large farms," Kim remembered. "It was a landscape unlike anything I knew in Korea. It was a new and memorable experience, made all the more special by their warm hospitality."

Sweat remembers how they marveled at how bright the night sky was here.

They came to middle America. Now, it is Sweat's turn to go back to the Korean peninsula.

"Ju Chan always said I should come to Korea," said Sweat. "And there was farming to do. Colette never did like airplanes at all. I don't think we would have got her on an airplane."

Sweat's wife of 66 years, Colette (Mick), originally from Tipton, died at the age of 91 last year.

Kim was insistent that Sweat come. "I think Ju Chan has something planned. He's sort of hinted before about some kind of an award for me," chuckled Sweat.

It hasn't been simple, but Francis Sweat is a man on a mission. He didn't know, but he didn't even have a birth certificate. That didn't stop him. He enlisted the assistance of a lawyer, got it, and was then able to get a passport.

His two daughters and a son-in-law will travel with him. They depart from Wichita, and after a nearly 13-hour flight over the Pacific Ocean from California, they will see both the Kim family and some sights over the course of a week.

They will tour the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, known as the DMZ, and the central lakes region. He visited both as a soldier, but he's particularly looking forward to the latter. "It's a part of Korea I've never been to in the daytime," he said.

Sweat would also like to see Seoul's old Imperial Palace grounds again "and take some pictures." He just got himself a latest-technology Nikon camera for that very purpose.

Fellow honor guard member, Kim, and his family are waiting to welcome Sweat and his family with open arms. "I only wish our wives were still with us to share this reunion," he said.

Kim, also 95 years old, said he is one of a dwindling number of Korean War veterans left in Korea. He's often invited to speak at ceremonies, and he imagines there will be plenty of interest in Sweat's visit by national media.

"Francis," reflected Kim, "has come to represent for me, the American servicemen who came to a country they had never known and shed their blood for its people. Our friendship is a deeply personal part of the gratitude I feel toward the United States - for its sacrifices during the war and its help in rebuilding Korea afterward."

Sweat himself says he's proud of his military service. "The South Koreans were very appreciative. They emphasized that to me several times."

In a sense, he's going back to his second home.

"We may not be able to travel as energetically as younger people," concluded Kim, "but I hope he and his family will see and enjoy as much as they can and return home with many happy memories."



COURTESY PHOTO

**Today, Francis Sweat shows no signs of stopping, still living on the farm near Cedar and Claudell that has belonged to his family for 99 years.**

**Scan the QR code above to hear more of Francis Sweat's story.**

# RUNNING ON FAITH, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

going through preparation to make her First Holy Communion a couple of years ago.

"Searee started asking questions and wanted to know more about the Catholic faith," Layn said.

So Layn began taking Searee and her younger brother, Solan, to Mass again.

"My parents have been pushing me for years to get back into the faith," Layn said of Paul and Karla Bruggeman, devout practicing Catholics who live on a farm in Sheridan County between Selden and Rexford.

"With Searee's eagerness to learn more, we started checking out more things," she added. "At Mass, when every sermon began, it was like the priest was talking directly to me. Then we would say the non-practicing Catholic prayer. It was like it was telling me something."

Meanwhile, Searee looked into joining the CYO group at the Sacred Heart Parish in Selden, and CYO members attended NCYC, the popular National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis, Ind., in 2025, known for inspiring faith experience.

"NCYC is where my faith really took off," said Searee, who received the sacrament of Confirmation at Sacred Heart along with cousin Dally last spring.

Under the direction of Coach Shanda Brown, Golden Plains has always said a prayer before a meet, no matter what the denomination of her runners might be.

"It's important for all of us to remind ourselves what we are doing and how fortunate we are to be able to compete," she said.

For Searee and Layn, it's not unusual for the daughter to ask her mom to say a rosary on their road trips between home and school. The Bruggemans live in Colby, and Layn drives her children 25 miles to Rexford every day to experience the benefits of the same small-school setting she had as a youngster.

"This has all been pretty amazing," Layn said. "We are unsure of a lot of things with Searee's vision. But she works so hard, and with the positive attitude and strong faith she has, she's going to succeed at whatever she does."

Directly in front of Searee and her cross country team is this Saturday's Class 1A sub-state meet at Tribune, where the Bulldogs hope to finish in the top three and qualify for the state meet.

Aided by Searee and her guide runner, Golden Plains qualified for state last year for the first time in school history and barely missed winning a trophy.

Their goal this year is to make it back to state, and Helen Giefer is a big part of that equation.

Giefer qualified for state meets multiple times in cross country and track during her high school days in WaKeeney and went on to run for Kansas State University.

She now works for the Thomas County Extension Service in Colby, and Coach Brown asked her last year if she would like to serve as a guide runner for Searee.

Giefer, a practicing Catholic herself, said it's been a unique learning experience for her.

"When I competed, my only obstacle was myself," she said. "I started seeing things I needed to tell Searee that kind of caught me off guard. Sometimes we are right behind another runner, and I tell her when there's a change in terrain, a hill coming up, if the course is muddy – things we take for granted when we can see them. But she can't."

"There's something really special about this," she added, "to be part of this journey."

Searee has mutual feelings for Giefer.

"I love her so much," Searee said. "She has helped me so much."

So much so that Searee is now one of the top three runners on her cross country team.

Whatever the future holds, Searee says she will continue keeping the faith, both in her Catholic practice and in life.

The progression of her visual condition is uncertain, so she is learning Braille and taking lessons on how to use a white cane to be prepared for whatever lies ahead.

One thing that Layn says they do know for certain is that there is a purpose for everything that life throws your way.

"This girl has brought me back to my Catholic faith," Layn said. "We will trust in God's plan."





DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN, THE REGISTER

**Above, Searee Bruggeman, top center, and her team say a prayer together before every race. At left, Searee's mom, Layn, gives her oldest daughter credit for bringing her back to the Catholic faith.**



COURTESY PHOTO

**Bishop Gerald Vincke blesses Searee's eyes during Confirmation ceremonies in Rexford.**

## RIGHT TO LIFE SUNDAY



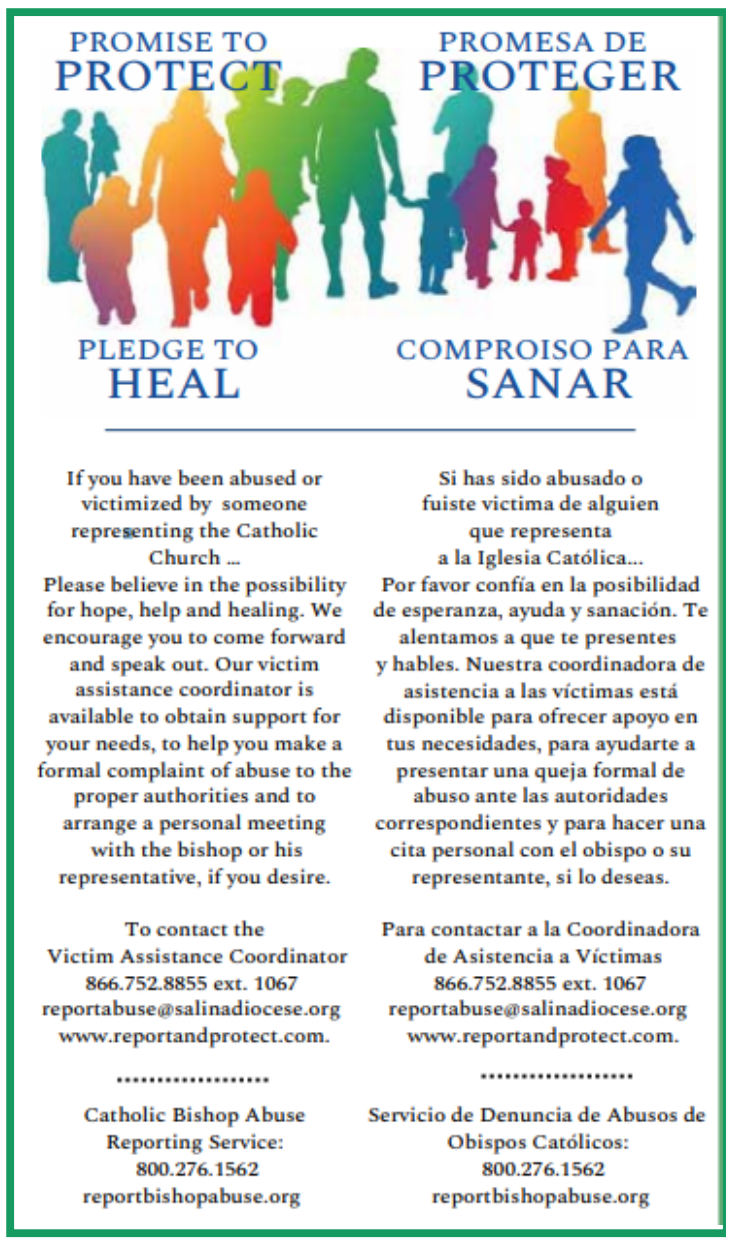

COURTESY PHOTO, BEN RUDER

**Sacred Heart parishioners in Plainville prayed for life from womb to tomb, following a luncheon provided by the Daughters of Isabella and the Knights of Columbus.**




COURTESY PHOTO

**Forty parishioners in Atwood celebrated Right to Life Sunday on October 4.**



# Seminarians witness fruits of prayer, grow in faith



Courtesy Photo

**Dcn. Kyle Pfeifer of the Salina Diocese, left, was part of the long procession into the beatification Mass in St. Louis for Bishop Fulton Sheen.**

*By Diane Gasper-O'Brien*
*The Register*

Parishes promote vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life year-round, but one week is set aside each year for prayers that focus specifically on vocations.

November 1-7 is National Vocation Awareness Week, and as the week approaches, seminarians in the Salina Diocese want people to know how grateful they are for the prayers and support they receive as they pursue their education.

The 2026-27 cohort has a variety of opportunities, from studying at seminaries in the United States and abroad to experiencing a once-in-a-lifetime chance to participate in a beatification Mass.

The diocese has welcomed seminarians from Vietnam and the Cor Jesu Apostolate, bringing the total representing the Salina Diocese in the United States and abroad this year to 15.

One homegrown seminarian was particularly moved by the power of prayer he witnessed at the beatification Mass for Bishop Sheen in St. Louis.

"It was great for everyone who has gathered at that Mass, who have prayed for vocations for a long time and to watch a procession of such magnitude and to see the fruit of people's prayer for vocations," Adam Bates said

Bates, a parishioner of St. John the Baptist in Beloit, is in his second year at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis. He participated in the long procession into the beatification Mass.



Courtesy Photo

**Phong Tran introduces himself at the Seminarian Dinner in Salina, as Dung Dau, Tien Nguyen and Adam Bates look on. Both Bates and Nguyen had the unique opportunity to attend the beatification Mass for Fulton Sheen in September.**

"Being part of that procession was such a blessing," he said.

Deacon Kyle Pfeifer, in his last semester at Kenrick-Glennon, distributed Holy Communion at the Mass, which featured clergy from around the world: 90 bishops, about 1,000 priests, nearly 260 deacons, 850 seminarians and religious, and several cardinals.

"Having the first U.S. bishop become a blessed and soon-to-be saint, it's a once-in-a-lifetime thing," Dcn. Kyle said.

"Hopefully, I'll be able to get to (Bishop Sheen's) canonization," added Dcn. Kyle, who will serve at a parish in the diocese next semester before being ordained a priest June 5, 2027, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Salina.

"Standing in the middle of the room with 80 priests, it was pretty powerful to see God's love and mercy pouring out on people," Bates said. "Then, processing into the Mass and seeing the faithfulness of God's people and witnessing their faith, it inspired me to be holy and to be a better seminarian."

Also attending the Mass was Vietnamese seminarian Tien (Joseph) Nguyen, who is grateful for the opportunities he is experiencing in America.

"I didn't know what to expect when our bishop (in Vietnam) told me he wanted to send me to another country to study and become a priest," Nguyen said.

He said he felt comfortable after talking with Fr. Andy Hammeke, vocations director for the Salina Diocese.

"I talked with Fr. Andy and realized God's plan is more better for me than mine," Nguyen said.

## DIOCESAN SEMINARIANS EMBRACE LIFE IN ROME

*By Diane Gasper-O'Brien*
*The Register*

The two Salina Diocese seminarians studying in Rome are adjusting to life abroad while embracing new opportunities.

Collin Thielen (Park) and Max Megaffin (Hays) attend the Pontifical North American College.

Both share great gratitude for the opportunity.

"I want to express my gratitude to the people of the Diocese of Salina for supporting not only Max and me here in Rome, but all us seminarians," Thielen wrote in an email. "I cannot thank you enough for your many thoughts and prayers in this time. Know of my prayers for all of you."

The two shared their experiences below.



Courtesy Photo

**Seminarians Max Megaffin and Collin Thielen take a break from their studies in Rome for a meal out with their mothers, who were visiting from Kansas.**

### Collin Thielen

On weather:

The summer is not as hot here, but it is noticeably more humid here than in western Kansas, although it is not hard for a place to be more humid than Kansas in the summer. Air conditioning is not as common here in Italy than in America and the summer evenings stay fairly warm, so it can be difficult to sleep in the warmer months. However, winter is very pleasant. Snow is basically unheard of because the temperature rarely gets low enough for snow to form.

A major difference in the school calendar:

We do not begin classes until the first full week in October and do not end until mid to late June.

Since coming to Rome:

I had the opportunity to meet Pope Leo XIV and shake his hand twice. I attended the canonization Mass of Sts. Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati. I probably would never have spent Christmas in a French monastery or Easter in a Scottish monastery.

What he misses most from home:

I miss the mutual understanding that we share simply by being from western Kansas. And BBQ – the longer I am here, the more I want it.

### Max Megaffin

Similarities:

It is always amazing to see the similarities of the different people, the main one being the love for God and desire to do His will!

Differences:

A different schedule, different academic structure, different food (for the better), but the biggest thing may be the different culture!

A daily schedule:

Our life is built and structured around the Mass, communal prayer, private prayer, classes and studies, ministry opportunities and then fraternity with the guys!

What he misses most:

My family, my friends, my diocese and my parish. No phone call or FaceTime compares to seeing and talking to your family in person. One thing that must be said is that I very much miss the Cerv's Snoball (a popular drink at a local convenience store). Only Hays natives will understand, but there is nothing sufficient for this craving in Rome when I miss my home town!




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AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE

# Holding on to hope through loss

*BY JULIA DIAZ*
*SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER*

In April of 2025 my husband Ector and I found out we were expecting twin boys. Now, with Ector being a twin and my mom being a twin, we should have been expecting twins, but it was not on our radar. We were so surprised to hear two little heartbeats at our first ultrasound.

However, the surprising news didn't stop there. We learned that our twins were mono-mono twins; a very rare and very high risk condition. Immediately we were connected with a wonderful team of doctors and we got to see our beautiful babies multiple times a week on ultrasounds.

We told our friends and family we were expecting earlier than maybe other people would share that they were expecting, but in our minds we needed all of the prayers and support we could get.

We had no idea what the future held for us or our babies, but we were so excited to start the new chapter of being parents. We wanted our loved ones to know and love our twins as much as they were able.

In June we met with specialists and made intervention plans to resolve current and prevent potential complications—we just had to wait until I was 15 weeks along.

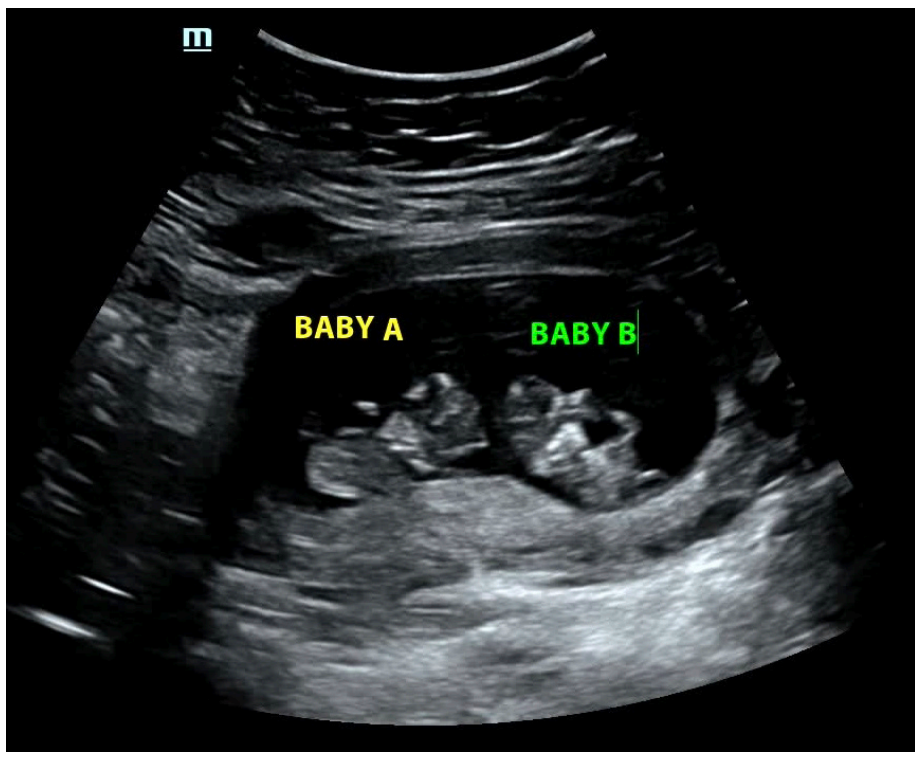
Unfortunately, we did not make it to that milestone. Instead, in July, we went in for our regular ultrasound at 12 weeks and learned that our twins no longer had heartbeats.

We were surrounded by family during delivery and while it was easily the worst day of Ector and my lives—we could feel God's love and compassion and the Holy Spirit with us. Having our Catholic faith as a foundation, especially through delivery and later that week a burial for the boys with our families, was and is a tremendous blessing.

Cecelio Jude and Nikolas John or as we call them, Cecil and Niko, were laid to rest July 11 in Gypsum Hill Cemetery. I remember vividly getting back into the car with Ector and feeling an overwhelming sense of peace as we drove back home.

There is no explanation other than the Holy Spirit. I did not feel as though my world was crumbling around me and I had more than enough reason to. After a day or so I was fully convinced the other shoe would drop, but it didn't. I like to imagine that Mary had us wrapped in her loving embrace and held us through our grieving. Sure we were mournful and emotional and still are, but of course we are—we lost two children.

That being said, it is such a comfort knowing Cecil and Niko are in heaven even if their chapter with us on Earth ended much sooner than we wanted. We hold on to the hope that we will meet again one day. Looking back, I learned more about myself and what it means to me to be a parent than I ever thought I would in those three months.




COURTESY PHOTO

**Cecil and Niko Diaz are pictured together in the womb. Though their lives were brief, their parents, Julia and Ector, continue to cherish their sons and hold on to the hope of being reunited with them in heaven.**

I now know the full weight of what Ector and I said "I am" to when we were asked, "Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?"

We are called to love and care for our children as long as they are here—even if they leave much sooner than we want or expect.

That is ever-present in our minds now as Ector and I welcomed Cecil and Niko's little sister Maria into the world late this summer. She is an incredible blessing we hold a little tighter and hug a little longer as we know all too well how precious and fleeting life can be.

*Editor's note: October is Respect Life Month, a time for Catholics to reflect on the dignity of human life at every stage. The Diaz family, along with parents from across the Diocese of Salina who have experienced the loss of a child, gathered for a memorial Mass on Oct. 18 at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Salina. Please remember these families in prayer throughout the month and consider offering a Mass for the intentions of parents who have experienced the loss of a child.*

# Remembering gratefully, responding generously



TORRIE Gregg
CATHOLIC FOUNDATION FOR

There is something about this time of year that makes me want to pause before the busyness of the holiday season begins. With November just around the corner, I find myself thinking about what I am thankful for.

When I stop to name those blessings, I usually end up thinking about people.

Family and friends who care about me. A parish where I belong. Faith to lean on when life feels uncertain. Behind each of those blessings are people who have helped shape my life.

The Church begins November by remembering, too. On All Saints' Day, we honor the saints who show us what a life given to God can look like. Then comes All Souls' Day, when we pray for the faithful departed. Throughout the month, we remember those who have died and bring them with us in prayer.

Some of the people we are most thankful for are no longer sitting across the table from us. We cannot call them or tell them about our day. But perhaps we still repeat a prayer they taught us, follow a tradition they started, or remember their advice when we need it.

That is true of our faith, too. Someone brought us to Mass. Someone answered our questions. Someone showed us what it meant to trust God or care for a neighbor.

Working at the Catholic Foundation has made me more aware of how much we also receive from people we may never meet. We worship in churches others helped build. Our students learn in schools others worked to sustain. Someone gave because they wanted the Church to be there for the people who came after them.

I am thankful they did. And I want to help do the same for someone else.

That is the spirit behind #iGiveCatholic.

Celebrated annually on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, #iGiveCatholic is an online giving day created to recognize and support the charitable, educational, and spiritual work of the Catholic Church. Across the Diocese of Salina, your generosity can help participating parishes, schools, and ministries share the faith, serve their neighbors, and nurture the next generation of Catholics.

This year's giving period runs November 16 through December 1. You can give online or make a gift by cash or check directly to a participating organization.

As you think about the people and places you are thankful for, consider supporting a participant that matters to you. Your gift can help someone else experience the blessings you have received.

To learn more and find a participant to support, visit salina.igivecatholic.org.



# WHAT'S HAPPENING

***November 1***
• All Saints' Day

• Silent Ignatian Retreat for Women, Capuchin Spiritual Life Center, Victoria.

***November 2***
• All Souls' Day

***November 6***
• Adoption Mass, S.H. Cathedral, 5:15 p.m.

***November 7***
• Holy Fire, Hays.

• Heart of the Bridegroom Discernment Retreat for Women, Immaculate Heart Parish, Hays, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

***November 14-15***
• CYO Convention, Salina.

***November 26***
• Thanksgiving.




**(If you have questions about a listed event, please contact the event's parish, office or school directly. See the Salina Diocese Calendar online for more details.)**

# Diocesan photographer celebrates groundbreaking career, begins new chapter

*By Lori Garcia*
*The Register*

Seven years ago, the Diocese of Salina's communications department looked very different. Today, it includes social media, photography, video, podcasts, a studio and redesigned website.

Matea (Gregg) Fredenberg has been part of that growth from nearly the beginning.

Fredenberg was born and raised in Hays, where she was a parishioner of St. Nicholas of Myra. She attended Thomas More Prep-Marian and Fort Hays State University, earning a bachelor's degree in communication studies.

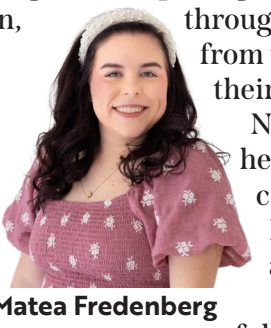
Before joining the Chancery staff, she was involved in CYO, youth council, Totus Tuus, and Prayer and Action.

Her path to the Chancery began in 2018, shortly after Bishop Gerald Vincke was named bishop of Salina. While working in media for Prayer and Action and later the Fort Hays State University campus center, Fredenberg caught the bishop's attention through her work.

When the diocese began developing its communications department, Matea was invited to interview for a position. She started as a communications coordinator and worked alongside Colleen Augustine, the diocese's first communications director, as the department began building its social media presence.

Her responsibilities expanded considerably. She became the diocesan videographer, content manager for diocesan social media, photographer and assistant editor for Faith Magazine.

"I didn't originally start out photographing in the diocese," Matea said. "I started doing photography just to fill in, and then it became part of my role."


Matea Fredenberg

The experience also opened the door to photography outside her diocesan work. She eventually began her own photography business, For Greater Glory, photographing Catholic weddings, families and events.

Her work has continued to grow alongside her responsibilities at the diocese.

In 2024, the Catholic Media Association recognized Fredenberg's diocesan success, awarding her first place as Social Media Professional of the Year. The honor came to her as a surprise.

"There's a lot of bigger dioceses out there that do a lot more things sometimes than we do," she said. "But it was really special to be recognized, especially because it was at a time when I was still doing a lot of things on my own."

Her years with the diocese have also given Fredenberg the chance to lead projects that have become defining work for the communications department.

"Doing the website and rebranding, that whole process was really special," Fredenberg said. "Just to be able to ask people what they really wanted, be able to create something for the parishes and the priests and other people to be able to navigate our website easier and in a clean way that was engaging."

Fredenberg also valued the connections photography allowed her to make.

"I had the amazing chance to photograph the seminarians throughout their formation, from their first years through their ordinations," she said.

Now, after eight years of helping build the diocese's communications efforts, Fredenberg is taking another step.

On Oct. 1, she left her full-time position with the diocese to focus on her photography business. She will continue working occasionally for the diocese as a contracted employee, collaborating on creative services as needed.

Her decision was not easy.

"I'm excited, but there's also a sadness of leaving something so familiar and that I've known for so long and I built up," she said. "It's kind of like my baby in a way, because I had such a big hand in a lot of aspects of communications department development."

At the same time, Fredenberg said she felt strongly that it was time to invest more fully in the business she had built.

"It's just like a big trust in what God wants me to do," she said. "I felt very strongly that I needed to take this step to invest in my business and my clients."

Through the transition, she has never stopped focusing the camera lens, or her heart, on God. Fredenberg leaves behind a department she helped build, but her next step continues the creativity and evangelization that have shaped her work. It is an opportunity to continue using her God-given talents in a new way.

## ANNUAL PET BLESSING


Courtesy Photo

**St. Mary's School in Ellis celebrated the feast of St. Francis of Assisi with their Annual Pet Blessing on October 5. Many students brought their pets, big and small, while others brought their favorite stuffed animal to be blessed by Fr. Dana Clark.**

Catholic Charities
OF NORTHERN KANSAS

2026 Annual Campaign

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# Catholic Charities opens Concordia location

**BY JEREE HUGHBANKS**
*CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NORTHERN KANSAS*

Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas officially opened the doors to its new Concordia office on October 5, expanding access to services and support for individuals and families in Cloud County and surrounding communities.

Located at 103 E. 6th St. in Concordia, the new office serves as a family support center where individuals and families can connect with Catholic Charities and receive assistance close to home.

The Concordia location marks a new chapter for Catholic Charities while building upon a long-standing tradition of service at 103 E. 6th St. The building previously served as Neighbor to Neighbor, a ministry established by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. Catholic Charities is grateful for the Sisters' years of compassionate service to the Concordia community and is honored to continue serving neighbors in need from this location.

"Our hope is that this office will be a place where individuals and families know they are welcome and can turn when they need support," said Megan Robl, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas. "We are excited to become an even greater part of the Concordia community and to work alongside local partners to serve our neighbors throughout the area."

The Concordia office is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The office can be reached at 785-262-9735.

Community members are invited to celebrate the new location during the Catholic Charities Concordia Grand Opening on Tuesday, October 27, from noon to 2 p.m. at 103 E. 6th St.

The celebration will include a ribbon cutting, building blessing by Bishop Jerry Vincke, facility tours, and food and refreshments. The event is open to the community, and all are welcome to stop by, tour the new space, meet the Catholic Charities team, and learn more about the services available in Concordia.

For information about the Concordia office, its services and hours, call 785-262-9735 or visit ccnks.org/concordia.

# Charity rebuilding lives

**BY JEREE HUGHBANKS**
*CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NORTHERN KANSAS*

*When a severe storm struck Junction City on June 8, Sharon Williams and her family of five suddenly found themselves without a safe place to call home. Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas provided Disaster Relief assistance to help the family move into a new home and begin rebuilding.*

*Below, Sharon shares in her own words what her family experienced and what that support meant during a time of tremendous uncertainty.*

My name is Sharon Williams, and I'd like to share how the compassion of Catholic Charities changed my family's life.

Monday, June 8, 2026, started as one of those days that just felt like a blessing. That morning, my daycare received a generous donation of toys for the children I care for. I remember thinking what a wonderful day it had been.

Then that evening, a severe storm rolled through Junction City, and in a matter of minutes, everything changed.

My youngest son had just taken off his shoes because he was hungry, and we were walking to the kitchen to make noodles. About 30 seconds later, a large tree crashed through the ceiling where he had been standing.

His shoes were still lying beneath the rubble. That could have been my son. By the grace of God, we had moved just in time.

Seconds later, a second tree struck the other side of our home, causing even more extensive damage, totaling my husband's car, and starting a fire. We had to call the fire department, and they told us our home was no longer safe. We were forced to leave.

One moment, life was going as planned. Within minutes, everything had changed. Home destroyed. Car totaled. My family of five suddenly found ourselves homeless.

For three long weeks, we lived in a hotel. But at the end of each day, the reality remained—it wasn't home.

As a mother of children with autism and other disabilities, the uncertainty and constant changes made an already heart-breaking situation even more difficult.

There were moments when it felt like there was no light at the end of the tunnel.

Then Catholic Charities answered my call. They didn't see a disaster case. They saw a family. They saw our need, responded with compassion, and gave me hope when I needed it most.

Catholic Charities helped my family move into a home by covering our security deposit and first month's rent, giving us the chance to get back on our feet and begin rebuilding our lives.

Someone I had never met chose to care. Your generosity changes real lives. It gives families like mine hope when we need it most. It reminds us that we are not alone and that, even in our darkest moments, there are people willing to walk beside us.

Thank you.

Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas provides Disaster Relief and other assistance to individuals and families in need throughout 31 counties in northern Kansas. To learn more, visit ccnks.org.

In honor of
Adoption Awareness Month,
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to a special

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118 N. 9TH ST., SALINA, KS

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Join Bishop Vincke, along with Catholic Charities staff, to pray, celebrate adoption, and connect with others whose lives have been touched by adoption.

*For further details or questions, contact Carolina Butts at 785-825-0208 or cbutts@ccnks.org.*

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# Daughters of Isabella 254 receives top awards

*BY DONETTA ROBBEN*
*SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER*

HAYS – The Daughters of Isabella, Circle 254, won three top awards at the international convention in Canada.

Queen Isabella is the highest award a circle can obtain. It is awarded for a 10 percent increase in new members over a two-year period. The circle also must donate at least $100 to respect life charities and coordinate at least five activities. Circle 254 went way beyond the minimum. They donated over $4,000 to respect life charities. Their activities included membership drives, monthly breakfasts, serving as a tour guide during an art walk at the newly renovated Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, and coordinating several other events.



COURTESY PHOTO

**L-R: Peggy Feltis, Past Regent of Circle 254 and current State Regent, Michelind Huard, International Regent, Canada, Judy Brummer, Regent of Circle 254, and Debra Klaus, Vice-Regent of Circle 254.**

"I'm very proud of all the hard work and many hours members put in to earn this award," said Peggy Feltis, past regent of Circle 254.

The circle also received the Youth Award. Circle 254 racked up 8,432 hours dedicated to the youth in the Hays community. Activities included school volunteer work, babysitting, cake walks, Sunday Food and Craft Bingos, and Saints and Sweets. They also donated over $2,000 to youth projects.

A third top award presented to Circle 254 was the spiritual award, given for spiritual activities such as coordinated rosaries, prayer services, and Eucharistic Processions. They also donated over $11,000 to churches, priests, seminarians, cemetery upkeep, and Catholic radio.

"Everyone worked hard, and I am immensely proud of our circle," Feltis said.

D of I Circle 254 includes members from three Hays parishes. The organization is founded on the principles of unity, friendship, and charity. They are committed to activities and social interaction that bring out the best in womanhood as they serve their communities.

# Diocesan Women's Council hosts convention



COURTESY PHOTO

**Above, newly elected officers of the Salina Diocese Council for Catholic Women (SDCCW) are shown with featured speaker Jesse Romero. Pictured (L-R) are Tammy Steeples, treasurer, Mr. Romero, Elaine Peters, president, and Kathy Martin, secretary.**

*SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER*

The Salina Diocese Council of Catholic Women held their 2026 Biennial Convention on August 29th in Salina at St. Mary Queen of the Universe Parish.

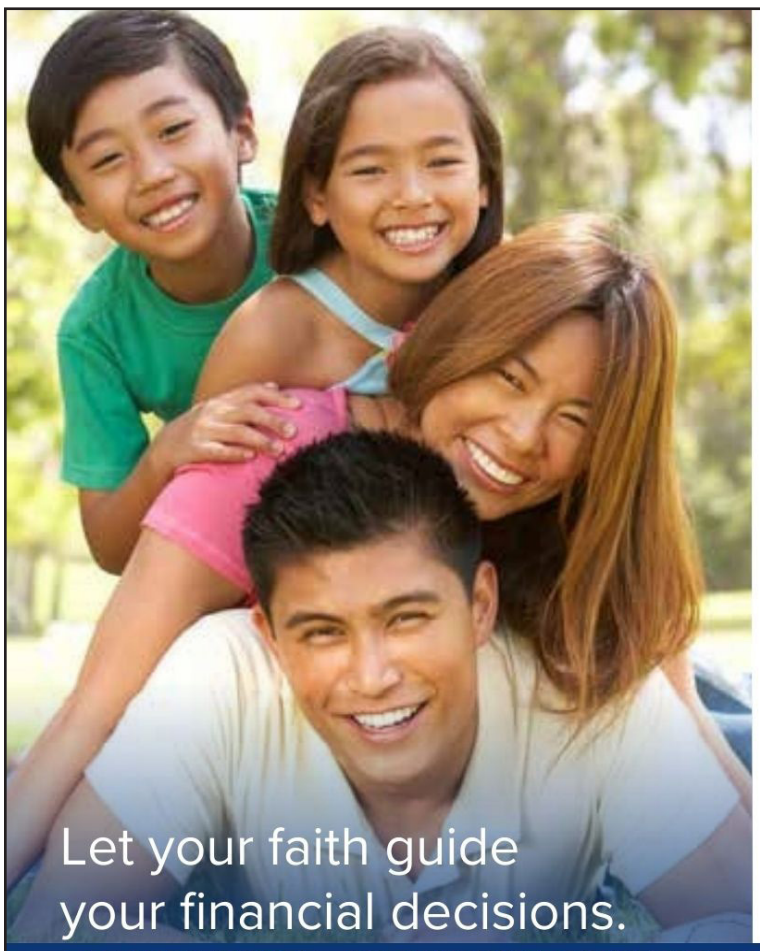
The theme for the day was "Spiritual Warfare: Shielding Our Families."

Jesse Romero, Catholic author and evangelist, was the featured speaker at the convention. Mass was celebrated by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt, assisted by Fr. Frederick Gruber.

The day's events also included a quilt raffle, door prizes, silent auction and lunch.

At the convention's business meeting, the current officers were reelected for another two-year term. The organization is seeking volunteers for First and Second Vice President. Please contact President Elaine Peters, 785-534-0546, if you are interested in serving.

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# BAPTISMS

**Santiago Sosa Castro,** son of Alejandro Sosa and Melissa Castro, was baptized September 20, 2026, by Fr. Rafael Campos at Seven Dolors Church in Manhattan.

**Wenley Kate Delgado,** daughter of Lorenzo and Kendra Delgado, was baptized September 6, 2026, by Fr. Frank Coady at St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan.

**Josephine G. Egger,** daughter of Andrew and Lucy Egger, was baptized September 13, 2026, by Fr. Donald D. Zimmerman at St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan.

**Harper June Garrison,** daughter of Nathan and Rachel Garrison, was baptized August 16, 2026, by Fr. Peter O'Donnell at St. Michael's Church in Chapman. Godparents are Ryan Hengemuhle and Sarah Boucher.

**Charlotte Rose Marge Gillaspie,** daughter of Joseph and Yara (Mendoza) Gillaspie, was baptized September 27, 2026, by Fr. Nick Parker at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

**Callahan Wayne Hummel**, son of Hannah and Kyle Hummel, was baptized September 20, 2026, by Fr. Peter O'Donnell at St. Michael's Church in Chapman. Godparents are Brady Brummett and Halle Dolechek.

**Linus Benedict James,** son of Wesly and Lindsay James, was baptized September 4, 2026, by Fr. Dana Clark at St. Mary's Church in Ellis.

**James Brady Jensen,** son of Brady and Allison Jensen, was baptized September 13, 2026, by Fr. Jarett Konrade at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit.

**Claire Elizabeth Kennedy-Cox**, daughter of Caydren and Kara Kennedy, was baptized September 6, 2026, by Dcn. Harry Hardy at St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan.

**Blair Marie Kirmer,** daughter of Richard and Stephanie Kirmer, was baptized September 20, 2026, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

**Asher Jude Long,** son of Zachary and Desirea (Renz) Long, was baptized August 30, 2026, by Fr. Damian Richards at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays.

**Kysen Roger and Harper Jean Lowe,** children of Hayden and Kelsey (Brack) Lowe, were baptized September 26, 2026, by Fr. Nick Parker at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

**Morgan Katherine Mamer,** daughter of Geoffrey Edward Mamer and Melissa Ann Mamer, was baptized September 20, 2026, by Fr. Leo Blasi at Seven Dolors Church in Manhattan.

**Collin Oliver Mayers,** son of Jared and Halle (Lohmeyer) Mayers, was baptized September 12, 2026, by Fr. Nick Parker at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

**Gracelyn Marie Miller,** daughter of Bethany and William Miller, was baptized July 19, 2026, by Fr. Peter O'Donnell at St. Michael's Church in Chapman. Godparents are Matthew Miller and Diana Miller.

**Logan Michael Muir,** son of Devin Muir and Gina Palmero-Muir, was baptized September 27, 2026, by Dcn. Tim Donohoue at Seven Dolors Church in Manhattan.

**Malia Josephina Oberle,** daughter of Joseph and Alexandra Oberle, was baptized on September 19, 2026 by Fr. Jarett Konrade at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit.

**Willa Eve Orth,** daughter of Miles and Alexis (Crispin) Orth, was baptized October 1, 2026, by Fr. Luke Friess at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

**McKenlee Grace Parker and Kayson Owen Wilson** (siblings), children of Colton Parker and Brittany Wilson, were baptized September 20, 2026, by Fr. Joseph Kieffer at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Concordia.

**Kendrick David Lara Pérez**, son of José Lara Campos and Abrilda Perez Vargas, was baptized September 19, 2026, by Fr. Rafael Campos at Seven Dolors Church in Manhattan.

**Ellie Kay Roy,** daughter of Josh Roy and Macy Nowlin, was baptized August 29, 2026, by Fr. Damian Richards at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays.

**Kendall Marie Spencer,** daughter of Cale Spencer and Shannon Paige Ney, was baptized September 27, 2026, by Fr. Luke Thielen at St. Mary Queen of Angels Church in Russell.

**Beckett Mitchell Titus,** son of Mitchell and Andi Titus, was baptized September 6, 2026, by Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan.

**Kylen Michael Werth,** son of Braiden and Mindy (Gower) Werth, was baptized September 27, 2026, by Rev. Luke Friess at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays.

**Elijah John Wolf,** son of John Russell Wolf and Mikah Marie Leon, was baptized September 20, 2026, by Dcn. Tim Donohoue at Seven Dolors Church in Manhattan.

# WEDDINGS

**Ryan Broeckelman and Brynn Boxberger** were married September 12, 2026, at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Jarett Konrade witnessed the vows. Parents of the groom are Michael and Sharla Broeckelman. Parents of the bride are Jeff and Crystal Boxberger. Witnesses were Jimmy Broeckelman and Livvy Brewer.

**Braden Fry and Leanmarie Zayas De Leon** were married September 18, 2026, at St. James the Apostle Catholic Church in Santa Isabel, Puerto Rico. Fr. Héctor Cuadrado witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Jon and Greta Fry. Parents of the bride are Jose and Lalimari Maldonado. Witnesses were Fausto Hernandez and Diana Hernandez Quiñones.

**Lawrance Gomez and Dayanara Velazquez** were married September 26, 2026, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Hays. Fr. Nick Parker witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Francisco and Violet Gomez. Parents of the bride are David and Pascuala Velazquez. Witnesses were Eberardo Banuelos and Sandra Velazquez.

**Kade Gottschalk and Rylee Werth** were married September 12, 2026 at St. Mary's Church in Ellis. Fr. Dana Clark witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Lyle and Lynelle Gottschalk. Parents of the bride are Rodney and Cristi Werth. Witnesses were Landis Fischer and Kaylee Walt.

**Garrett Pfeifer and Lauren Whelchel** were married September 5, 2026, at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Andy Hammeke witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Gerald and Marcia Pfeifer. Parents of the bride are Christopher and Staci Whelchel. Witnesses were Zach Meis and Tammy Keller.

**Mark Tate and Renee Gengler** were married September 26, 2026 at St. John the Baptist Church in Beloit. Fr. Jarett Konrade witnessed the vows. Parents of the groom are Laurence and Mariana Tate. Witnesses were Aaron Tate and Maureen Holdren.

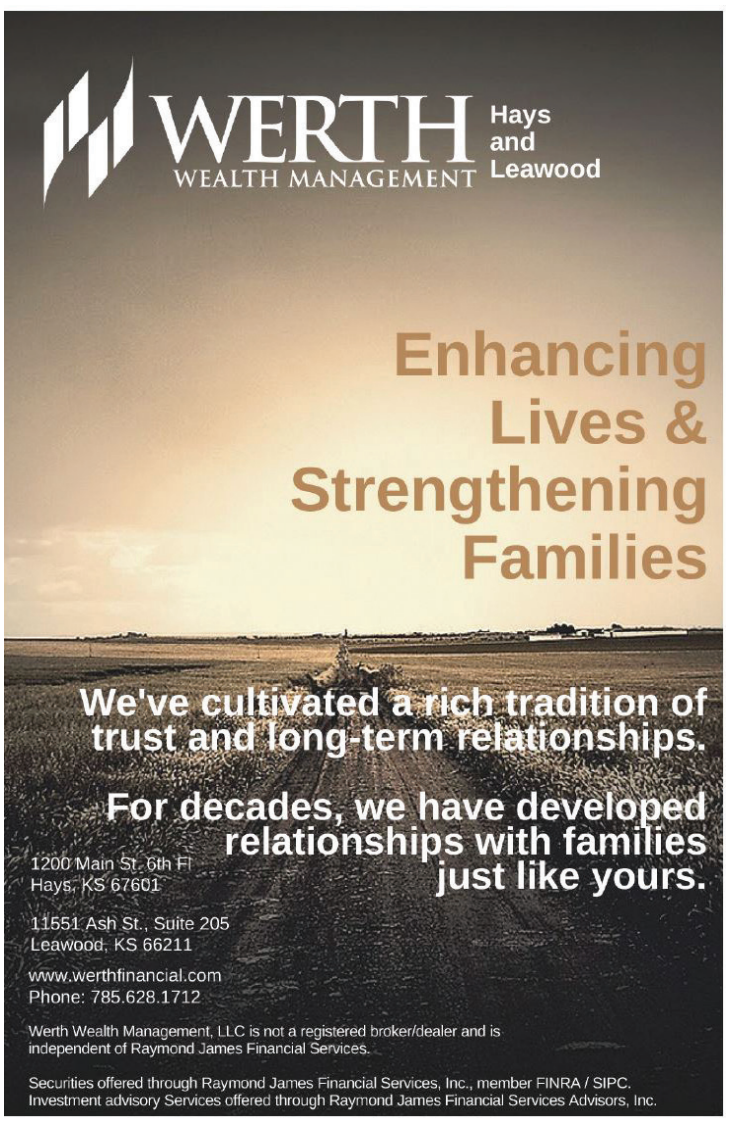
**Michael Dean Wright and Katherine Leigh Reinert** were married August 29, 2026, at SS Peter and Paul Church in Clay Center. Fr. Donald D. Zimmerman witnessed their vows. Parents of the groom are Daniel Lee Wright and Shelia Ellen Dorr. Parents of the bride are Bryan Douglas Reinert and Betsy Leigh Jennings. Witnesses were Jaiden Weixelman and Ethan Engle.

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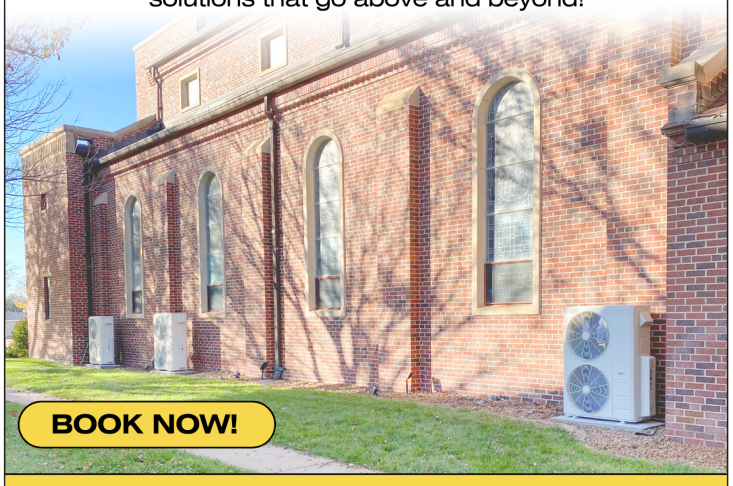





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# FUNERALS

**Robert Budke,** 66, died September 13, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated September 18 at Roberts Family Funeral Home in Beloit. Fr. Jarett Konrade presided. Burial in St. John Cemetery, Beloit.

**William J. "Bill" Fritschen,** 89, died September 23, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated September 29 at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays. Fr. Damian Richards presided. Burial in St. Michael the Archangel Cemetery, Hays.

**Dorothy M. Lang,** 95, of Hays, died September 18, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated September 24 at St. Catherine Church in Catharine. Fr. Earl Befort, OFM Cap., presided. Burial in St. Catherine Cemetery.

**Geraldine "Jackie" Pfeifer,** 92, of Hays, died October 4, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated October 9 at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays. Fr. Damian Richards presided. Burial in St. Joseph Cemetery, Hays.

**Donald L. "Donny" Wasinger, 88,** died September 18, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated September 23 at St. Joseph Church in Hays. Fr. Fred Gatschet presided. Burial in St. Joseph Cemetery, Hays.

**Norbert Michael "Norb" Windholz,** 80, died September 21, 2026. Funeral Mass was celebrated October 6 at St. Joseph Church in Hays. Fr. Fred Gatschet presided. Inurnment in St. Joseph Cemetery, Hays.

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# Planning in advance for a Catholic funeral

BY LORI GARCIA
THE REGISTER

*Last year, a priest stopped by my office in the Chancery to share the following story. It was his hope, as it is mine, that in sharing it some people may be stirred to take actions, as needed, to ensure they are cared for at the end of their lives as they were during it. Names have been ommitted for privacy reasons.*

There was a woman in my parish whom I had served for many years. I saw her at every Mass — weekends and daily. She was elderly, a widow, and her grown children had moved away. She was very sweet.

Then, one day, she wasn't at Mass like normal.

Later that week, I received a call from a funeral director telling me she had died. He wasn't calling to arrange a Catholic funeral, but simply to invite me to a service at the funeral home. Her children, who were no longer practicing the faith, had asked a nondenominational pastor in town to organize a small service.

I tried to talk with the children, encouraging them to consider that their mother would have wanted a Catholic funeral. But they wouldn't listen. She had nothing in place outlining her end-of-life wishes, and her children were left to make the arrangements.

My heart was, and is, heavy for her and her family.

It is a solemn thing, and an honor, when loved ones call me to the hospital to administer the last rites to a patient and then allow me to help them faithfully carry out their loved one's final wishes.

I only wish more adult Catholics had written out their wishes or made a plan for what they would like to happen at the time of their death. I wish more people knew about how to care for their Catholic family and friends when they pass away.

We make so many spiritual preparations. We encourage parishioners to pray and live holy lives. But we don't always point out how important it is to help our loved ones with the corporal work of mercy of burying the dead.

*As we near the end of the liturgical year, the Church turns our attention toward the reality that we are made for heaven. All Saints' Day on Nov. 1 and All Souls' Day on Nov. 2 offer a fitting reminder: We celebrate the saints who have gone before us, and we pray for those who have died. None of us knows the hour nor the day when the Lord will call us away.*




### Why does the Catholic Church have funerals?

A Catholic funeral is an act of worship, not merely a memorial. The Church gathers to pray for the deceased, proclaim the hope of the resurrection and offer comfort to the living.

### What does the Church teach happens after death?

At death, the soul separates from the body and undergoes particular judgment. Each person receives eternal retribution in his immortal soul: immediate entrance into heaven, purification in purgatory, or eternal separation from God.

### Why do Catholics pray for the dead?

The communion of saints continues beyond death. Catholics pray for the dead because our prayers, especially the sacrifice of the Mass, assist those undergoing purification.

### Who can have a Catholic funeral?

Ecclesiastical funerals are offered for the faithful departed, especially baptized Catholics. They may also be given to catechumens and, in certain circumstances, to baptized non-Catholics. Funerals are denied only in cases of manifest grave sin when scandal would result, unless there are signs of repentance.

### What about cremation?

The Church permits cremation provided it is not chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine. The Church strongly prefers burial of the body. Cremated remains must be treated with respect and buried or entombed.

### How soon after death should the funeral take place?

While no universal law specifies timing, the Church's practice is to celebrate the funeral within a reasonable time after death so that the Christian community may gather promptly for prayer and support.

Timely funeral rites allow for proper comfort for the family and the proper honoring of the deceased.

The Diocese of Salina highly recommends that funerals take place two to five days after death, except in grave pastoral or other circumstances. Delaying funeral rites for weeks can leave mourners without the support of their faith community during the most painful stages of grief.

### Can a funeral be held if someone dies by suicide?

Yes. The Church entrusts such persons to God's mercy and permits Christian funerals, recognizing that grave psychological disturbances may diminish responsibility.

**Planning your funeral is an act of faith and charity toward those you leave behind.**

### What is the difference between a Funeral Mass and a memorial service?

A Funeral Mass includes the Eucharist and is the preferred form of Catholic funeral liturgy. A Funeral Liturgy outside Mass may be celebrated when Mass is not possible. A Memorial Mass is celebrated when the body is not present.

### What is the role of the homily? Are eulogies allowed?

The homily explains the mystery of Christian death in the light of Christ's resurrection and must not become a eulogy. A brief remembrance of the deceased may be permitted, but it should not replace the homily at the Mass or overshadow the liturgy.

### Why is burial important?

Burial expresses reverence for the human body and our faith in the resurrection of the dead. The body, created by God, should be treated with dignity and deep respect even after a person's death.

### How can Catholics prepare for their own funeral?

Catholics are encouraged to live in readiness for death through faith, repentance and the sacraments, and to make their funeral wishes known in advance.

### Should I include my wish for a Catholic funeral in my will?

Yes. Catholics are strongly encouraged to make their desire for a Catholic funeral known, including through a will or other advance-planning documents. The Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Salina offers free resources and a way to create a will for free through My Catholic Will. Visit the foundation's website at givecfds.org for more information.

In today's culture, family members may not always understand the importance of Catholic funeral rites. Clearly expressing your wishes can help ensure that your faith is honored, that you receive the prayers of the Church and that your loved ones have guidance during a difficult time.

Planning your funeral is an act of faith and charity toward those you leave behind.

### Why does the Church continue to pray for the dead after the funeral?

The Church continues to pray for the dead because of the communion of saints, especially through Masses, anniversaries and All Souls' Day.

### What is the Church's message at a funeral?

The Church offers comfort to those in grief, and it proclaims that, in Christ, death is transformed. Life is not ended but changed, and through Christ we are called to eternal life.

# Give them what they need



BILL Meagher
Deacon, Salina Diocese

As a basketball coach, you know that at some point your guys will find themselves in the middle of a war on the floor, and there won't be much you can do to help them. Eventually, they have to make the plays.

So you do everything you can to prepare them for that moment.

At TMP-M, we have what is known as "Camp Meagher" during the first week of practice. The guys have given it some other names, but we don't need to talk about those here. I'm not going to lie—it is tough. But it has to be to help them build the mental toughness, physical toughness, and team toughness they will need when things get hard.

Traditionally, our season begins with us being the only 2A school in a tournament with 5A and 6A schools. We have about 15 practices to prepare our guys for what is coming.

Why are we talking about this?

Because I found myself thinking about it a lot as we prepared for the Restored Order of the Sacraments.

I had some of the same questions many of you have, and it wasn't until I looked at it through a coach's eyes that I began to see its real spiritual value for our young people.

We all know a war is happening for the souls of our young people.

They are facing challenges to their faith at younger and younger ages: social media, pornography, bullying, broken families, questions about identity, and a culture that often tells them something very different from what Jesus does.

If Confirmation strengthens the grace they received at Baptism, if the Holy Spirit increases His gifts in them and strengthens them to live their faith, and if the Eucharist gives them Jesus Himself to nourish and strengthen them throughout their lives, why wouldn't we want them to receive those graces before the pressure comes?

For me, that changed the question from "Why would we confirm them so young?" to "Why would we wait?"

There is no question that challenges and temptations will come for our young people, and as parents and teachers, we won't always be there when they do.

Let's think of those early years as preseason camp. They receive the sacramental graces, and then we work with them to grow in those gifts, grow in virtue, build a prayer life, continue receiving the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and learn to live as missionary disciples.

As a coach, I never want to look back after a tough loss and realize we could have done more to prepare my guys. I want to know we gave them everything we could before the ball was tipped.

Why would we want anything less for our young people and their faith?

## Prayer for Respect for All Human Life

October is the month the Catholic Church in the United States sets aside to pray for a greater respect for all human life, from conception to natural death.

Father and maker of all, you adorn all creation with splendor and beauty, and fashion human lives in your image and likeness. Awaken in every heart reverence for the work of your hands, and renew among your people a readiness to nurture and sustain your precious gift of life. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

*Cut this out and pray with your family!*





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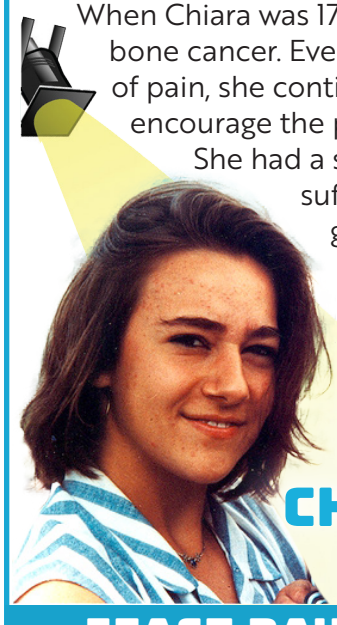

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE SAINTS

Do you know what it means when the Church calls someone "Blessed"? It means the Church has recognized that person as being in heaven, but they need another miracle to be declared a Saint. Chiara Badano is a Blessed!

Chiara was born in Italy in 1971 and loved playing tennis, skiing, swimming and spending time with her friends. She also loved Jesus and wanted to share His love with everyone she met.

When Chiara was 17, she was diagnosed with bone cancer. Even though she was in a lot of pain, she continued to trust God and encourage the people around her.

She had a special way of looking at suffering. Chiara's friends gave her the nickname "Luce," which means "Light," because of the joy and faith she shared with others.



**BLESSED CHIARA 'LUCE' BADANO**

**FEAST DAY: OCTOBER 29**

THE REGISTER VOLUME 89, NO. 10 Official newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Salina

**Publisher:** Most Rev. Gerald L. Vincke, Bishop of Salina | **Editor and advertising:** Lori Garcia, theregister@salinadiocese.org | **Business manager:** Jennifer Hood, finance@salinadiocese.org | **salinadiocese.org/publications** | • Phone: (785) 827-8746
Supported by an endowment established by Msgr. Raymond Menard (1912-2006), editor of The Register, 1944-1971 & 1975-2006.
The Register (USPS 397-740) is published the fourth Friday of the month by the Catholic Diocese of Salina, 103 N. Ninth, Salina, KS 67401-2503 and is mailed to all registered parishioners in the diocese. A $40 annual subscription is required for all others. Periodical postage paid at Salina, Kansas, and at additional mailing offices.
• *Next issue is dated November 20.* • *Deadline for news is October 30.* • *Deadline for advertising is October 30.*
*POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Register, P.O. Box 980, Salina, KS 67402-0980*

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