The TRUE VOICE

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Archdiocese of Omaha

The TRUE VOICE

OCTOBER 2025

Fiesta 2025
Assumption-Guadalupe Catholic Church, Omaha - August 23, 2025

ARCHBISHOP
MICHAEL G.
MCGOVERN

HANDING ON THE FAITH

Dear Friends,

Often as a parish pastor and now as a bishop, I meet people who ask me about how to “hand on” our Catholic faith to children and young family members. Many adults realize that we cannot assume that our culture and everyday life will support the importance of believing in God or practicing as a Catholic. In fact, it seems that the culture has changed so much in the past 20 years that the priorities of many people have changed; so if we want faith and religious practice to be part of the next generation’s lives, we need to personally do more to inspire young people to walk with us in our Catholic journey.

What helps us hand on our Catholic faith to the next generation of our families? I think sharing with our family the importance of Jesus Christ in life. If we want the spark of faith to catch in the hearts of children and grandchildren, then we need to model the positive difference living as a Catholic makes in day-to-day life. Stories, memories and personal anecdotes can help young people discover the difference God makes in our lives. If there are stories that your own parents or grandparents shared with you about prayer or faith, take the time to share those stories with your own children or grandchildren. Young people are curious about their ancestors; young people want to know: “Where is my family from?” It seems many families have an interest in tracing their roots in terms of genealogy. How about sharing our spiritual genealogy with those following in our footsteps?

Young people are impressionable. As parents, grandparents and family members, we can make a lifelong positive impression in the hearts of young people. If, however, we keep private those experiences of God that formed us as we grew up, we may be missing the opportunity to give witness to children, a witness that can speak volumes to them. As we move toward Thanksgiving, share with your family why you are grateful to God. What are you thankful for in your life? In Advent, share with children why the presence of Jesus is so important to you. Name some ways that you felt peace, love and joy because of the presence of Jesus. Steadily sharing your memories of significant spiritual events, praying with youth,

Continued on page 2.

and showing the importance of serving our Lord can be great ways to plant the seeds of faith in the hearts and souls of the young people in our lives.

I hope this new magazine for the Archdiocese of Omaha will help the people of northeast Nebraska to hand on our Catholic faith to others. Jesus Christ is sending us out in this new initiative to share the good news of his love and mercy. Please spread the word about the Voice and encourage your family to discover in these pages stories that will give fresh hope to our readers.

You are in my daily prayers. Please keep me in yours.

In Christ,

+Archbishop Michael McGovern

To keep up with Archbishop McGovern, please follow him on Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook *Instagram*

ARCHBISHOP MCGOVERN'S CALENDAR

Oct. 5	Life Chain
Oct. 6	Red Mass, St. John's at Creighton University, Omaha
Oct. 7-8	Clergy Conference
Oct. 9	Women Religious Jubilee, St. Patrick Church - Fremont
Oct 15	Blue Mass, Skutt Catholic High School, Omaha
Oct. 28	Ordination and Installation of Bishop Ralph O'Donnell, Jefferson City
Nov. 2	Mass for Suicide Loss Survivors, St. Vincent de Paul, Omaha
Nov. 2	Consecrated Life Open House, JPII Newman Center, Omaha
Nov. 10-13	USCCB General Assembly Meeting
Nov. 15	Deacon Memorial Mass & Anniversary Celebration, St. Patrick Church, Fremont
Dec. 7	St. Vincent de Paul Society Mass & Meeting
Dec. 11	Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Peter Church, Omaha
Dec. 12	Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Omaha
Dec. 20	Seminarian Christmas Mass & Dinner
Dec. 25	Midnight Mass, St. Cecilia Cathedral, Omaha

UPCOMING CONFIRMATIONS

Mayan Community, St. Frances of Assisi, Omaha
St. Bonaventure, Raeville
St. Cecilia Cathedral, Omaha
St. Joseph, Omaha
Christ the King, Omaha
St. Pius, Omaha
St. Leo, Omaha
St. Frances Cabrini, Omaha

POPE LEO XIV

Archbishop McGovern: What the Holy Father's life can teach us

Meeting with Pope Leo XIV this summer left a deep impression on Archbishop Michael G. McGovern.

After receiving his pallium and returning from Rome, the new archbishop encouraged the faithful of northeast Nebraska to listen closely to Pope Leo, who is an effective communicator.

"The Holy Father understands the issues and is a good listener," Archbishop McGovern told the Catholic Voice. "I think he'll be very helpful for us."

There's a lesson for the faithful in the life of Pope Leo, who has served the Church as an Augustinian, as a canonist, as a missionary, as a religious superior, as a bishop and now as the pope, Archbishop McGovern said.

"The life of Pope Leo is a good example of saying yes to God in many different ways."

Like the Holy Father, Catholics should listen to God and answer His call, Archbishop McGovern said. Pope Leo also models for the Church the need to serve as role models in challenging times.

> *"God can do more with us when we say yes to God than if we say no."*
>
> Archbishop Michael McGovern

Pope Leo has already advocated for human dignity as humanity grapples with the advent of Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies.

"That's something I don't think we really have developed adequately," Archbishop McGovern said. "How do we promote an ethic that will help us to use Artificial Intelligence in a way that builds up society?"

POPE LEO XIV PRAYER INTENTIONS

OCTOBER
For collaboration between different religious traditions

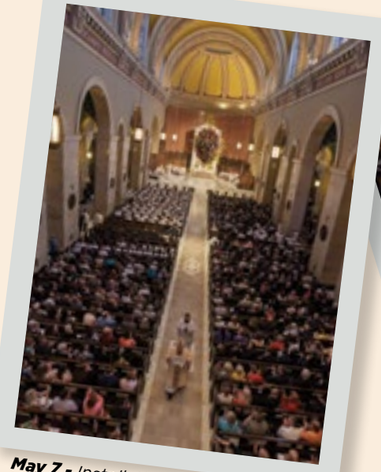
NOVEMBER
For the prevention of suicide

DECEMBER
For Christians in areas of conflict

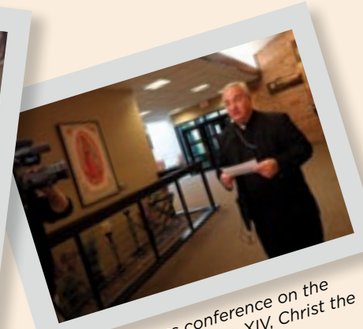
Scan to listen to more of Archbishop's interview with Spirit Catholic Radio about the Holy Father.

An Archbishop on the *move*

Highlights from Archbishop Michael G. McGovern's first months



May 7 - *Installation Mass, St. Cecilia Cathedral – Omaha*



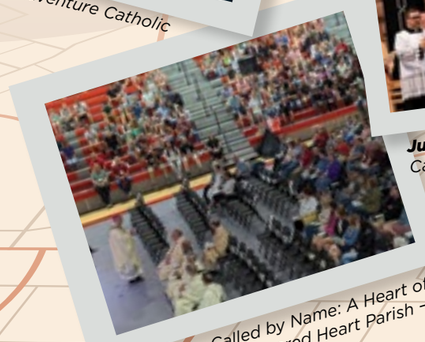
MAY 8 - *Press conference on the election of Pope Leo XIV, Christ the King – Omaha*

***June 28 -** Pallium Mass, St. Peter's Basilica – Rome*

May 17 - *Creighton University Commencement, CHI Health Center - Omaha*

May 16 - *Mass at St Bonaventure Catholic Church – Columbus*

June 5 - *Consecration of St. Patrick Catholic Church – Elkhorn*



May 30 - *Called by Name: A Heart of Jesus Revival, Sacred Heart Parish – Norfolk*

July 24 - *Virtus et Veritas Summer Leadership Camp, Camp Kateri Tekakwitha – McCool Junction*

June 11 - *Madonna Ability Alliance Ribbon-Cutting – Omaha*

July 29 to August 1 - *Seminarian Retreat, South Dakota*

August 10 - *Marriage Celebration Mass, St. Cecilia Cathedral – Omaha*

August 15 - *Feast of the Assumption, Mount Michael Benedictine High School – Elkhorn*

"People talk about Nebraska nice, which is absolutely true. People are very kind, very welcoming. I appreciate how many people have welcomed me at different places."

Archbishop Michael McGovern

August 23 - *Assumption-Guadalupe Parish Festival – Omaha*

August 24 - *125th Anniversary Mass for St. Mary Parish – Leigh*

August 28 - *Mass of the Holy Spirit, Skutt Catholic High School – Omaha*

September 13 - *Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation, Miller Park – Omaha*

September 14 - *Consortium Mass, Holy Cross Parish – Omaha*

2025

A Jubilee Year

A historic year for Catholics in northeast Nebraska

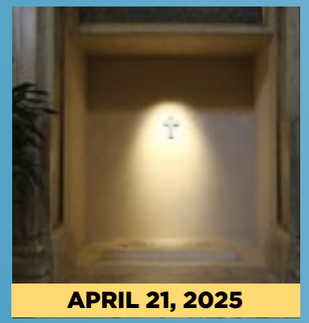
Let's take a look back at some of the biggest moments in the Archdiocese of Omaha this past year.

JANUARY 2025

Faithful begin making pilgrimages to holy sites within the Archdiocese of Omaha as part of the Jubilee Year of Hope.

MARCH 31, 2025

Pope Francis accepts the resignation of Archbishop George J. Lucas and appoints the Most Rev. Michael G. McGovern as the sixth Archbishop of Omaha.



APRIL 21, 2025

Pope Francis dies following prolonged treatment for pnuemonia.

May 3, 2025

Nine men were ordained permanent deacons.

MAY 7, 2025

Archbishop Michael G. McGovern is installed at St. Cecilia Cathedral, Omaha.

MAY 8, 2025

The conclave elects American-born Cardinal Robert Prevost pope. He takes the name Pope Leo XIV.

JUNE 7, 2025

Three men ordained priests for the Archdiocese of Omaha at St. Cecilia Cathedral.

JUNE 5, 2025

Parishioners celebrate the consecration of the new St. Patrick Catholic Church in Elkhorn.

JUNE 29, 2025

Archbishop Michael McGovern receives his pallium from Pope Leo XIV at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

AUGUST 19, 2025

Father Ralph O'Donnell is appointed fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Jefferson City in Missouri.

OCTOBER 2, 2025

Seminarian Michael Figura is ordained a transitional deacon in Rome.

SCHOOLS UPDATE

Nearly 950 Catholic school educators from across the Archdiocese of Omaha received specialized training in the Science of Reading on Oct. 3 at Marian High School in Omaha.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Twenty-six Archbishop's Scholars will graduate from Catholic high schools this spring, the first class of scholars graduating as a result of support from the Archbishop's Dinner for Education.

VOCATIONS UPDATE

Eight new seminarians are discerning for the Archdiocese of Omaha this year. They are Max Brown, Peter Ginn, Kade Wiese, Jack Van Moorleghem, Sam Wiegand, Michael Baumert, John Schroll and Andrew Mellinger.

New priests find awe, joy in their busy lives

With a few months of priesthood under their belts, Fathers Will Targy, Logan Hepp and Brian Hula shared their initial experiences of living their priestly vocation.

By SUSAN SZALEWSKI

FATHER LOGAN HEPP

Associate pastor, St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Omaha

Father Hepp likens the learning curve of ministering to the more than 3,000 families at St. Vincent de Paul to a summer memory.

"I described it to one friend as being a kid in the deep end of the wave pool without a tube. It's still fun; it's a wave pool. But every once in a while you feel like, well, I'm going to have to go underwater here just to stay afloat in some way."

Being assigned with a pastor he already knew and trusted – Father Andrew Roza, a former vocations director – has helped. Parishioners, too, have been welcoming and supportive.

"It didn't even take that long for these people to win my heart," he said. "I'm excited to be theirs and for them to be mine."

Celebrating Mass has been his favorite part of being a priest.

"To be the one holding the unconsecrated bread, and then to put it back down on the paten after the elevation and realize that's not bread – that's Jesus. That's a powerful moment."

FATHER WILL TARGY

Associate pastor, Holy Spirit Catholic Parishes: St. Peter in Newcastle, St. Joseph in Ponca, St. Michael in Coleridge, St. Jane Frances de Chantal in Randolph, St. Mary of the Seven Dolors in Osmond and St. Paul in Plainview

Rural life is new for Father Targy, who grew up in the suburb of Bellevue.

He said he's "enjoying the community and the culture and the values present in our rural communities. It's been a lot of fun as I learn the ropes of rural parish life."

The strong Catholic roots of the European immigrants who founded the parishes are evident, Father Targy said, as well as a deep agrarian faith.

"When so many people rely on the gifts that God pours out, all of those things that are not in anybody's control" – such as favorable weather – "there's a reliance on God's providence."

That comes naturally in rural communities and serves as a beautiful foundation for the life of faith, he said.

Getting to know the people of each parish has been exciting and challenging.

Alongside his pastor, Father Kevin Vogel, Father Targy is focusing on being present as much as possible.

As priests they are called to serve and happy to do it, he said.

"We're grateful for the life that God has called us to and the graces that He has given us to live the Gospel, share the Gospel and walk with His holy people in this life as we prepare for the life of Heaven."

FATHER BRIAN HULA

Associate pastor, Heart of Jesus Catholic Parishes: Sacred Heart and St. Mary in Norfolk, St. Peter in Stanton, St. Leonard in Madison, St. Patrick in Battle Creek and St. Joseph in Pierce

Celebrating the sacraments – especially the Eucharist and Confession – has been the greatest joy for Father Hula.

"That has to be at the center of my life as a priest," Father Hula said. "And it is. I can honestly say that the highlight of my day … is to celebrate Mass. That's when I'm closest to Jesus and all the saints."

Ministering to the Hispanic population "has been a great joy as well," he said. These parishioners have "a particular devotion to the Eucharist, devotion to Our Lady, just a love for the Church," Father Hula said. "It's been beautiful to be in the middle of that now as a priest serving them."

"Parish life is full," Father Hula said. "There's a lot of moving pieces, a lot that I'm trying to do, really pouring myself out."

While it's challenging, it's worth the cost, he said.

"I'm enjoying this life the Lord has called me to. It's already fruitful, and I trust there will be more good things and more fruitfulness to come."

Hispanic Congress marks milestone

'El Congreso' celebrates the past, looks to the future

"Many shared their gratitude for the archbishop's presence, which strengthened their faith and reminded them that they are not alone in a time of unease."

Deacon Gregorio Elizalde

This summer marked the 10th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Omaha's Hispanic Congress. While its decade-long history was celebrated, the congress offered several firsts.

It was the first time the congress was held at Daniel J. Gross Catholic High School in Bellevue. The two-day event, July 25-26, drew a crowd of more than 900 people from the Archdiocese of Omaha, the dioceses of Lincoln and Grand Island and from Iowa.

Gross Catholic's proximity to South Omaha and a larger Hispanic population made the venue a crowd pleaser, said Deacon Gregorio Elizalde, manager of the archdiocese's Hispanic Ministry Office.

Deacon Elizalde said that the annual event allows the Hispanic community to come together to celebrate and share their Catholic faith.

The theme of this year's congress, "Jesus is Hope for Families," was in keeping with the Church's Jubilee Year, "Pilgrims of Hope." It included talks, music and worship centering on that theme.

Of course, one of the main attractions was Archbishop Michael G. McGovern, who celebrated Saturday afternoon Mass and met with the faithful for more than an hour afterward. "People really appreciated his presence," Deacon Elizalde said. "He's the image of Christ for us."

College of Saint Mary program empowers single mothers

By MIKE MAY

Leaving a broken relationship behind, Karly Thurmond sought to make a new start and improve her prospects.

Her challenge: to do so as a single mother of infant twins, underemployed and needing to complete her college education to achieve her goals.

For several years she and her children lived with family until a friend told her about the Mothers Living and Learning program at Omaha's College of Saint Mary (CSM), an all-women college, that offered a life-changing opportunity.

"It's the best thing I could have done for me and my family," Thurmond said.

Mothers Living and Learning empowers single mothers to earn a college degree while living on campus with their children in a supportive community of other mothers, said Jackie Wilson, College of Saint Mary dean of students and Title IX coordinator.

"We try to address barriers to finishing their degrees by providing wraparound support for single mothers."

The program, which began in 2000, offers participants with up to three children a four-bedroom suite, meal plan, academic support, special parenting courses, lounge and play areas, plus evening babysitting. Day care is available separately on campus.

As an institution of the Sisters of Mercy, College of Saint Mary, through this program, embodies the sisters' charism of empowering women, Wilson said, and mirrors the work of the order's founder, Mother Catherine McAuley, to care for and support mothers and their children.

Mothers Living and Learning has supported 350 single mothers since its inception with nearly half earning degrees, Wilson said.

Costs vary depending upon the academic program chosen, she said, but financial aid is available to make the program as accessible as possible.

"Many participants are non-traditional students who may have had to drop out and have no other options to improve their earning power and pursue career goals," Wilson said.

When Thurmond enrolled in 2018 as a transfer student at age 30 with an associate degree in general studies, she was initially apprehensive about being an older student. But her concerns were soon put to rest, she said.

"I was instantly charmed by how different the College of Saint Mary campus is, how welcoming folks are," Thurmond said. "As soon as I got on campus and started to meet people, it wasn't an issue at all. ... That sense of community made all the difference."

But the biggest impact has been the example her children witnessed, she said.

"Not a day goes by that my kids (now in middle school) don't talk about their plans for school and college. The exposure that I've been able to give them of people pursuing a goal ... it was a huge thing for my kids to witness."

After graduating in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in general studies, Thurmond went to work for Community Alliance, a mental health organization in Omaha, and is now pursuing a master's degree in clinical counseling at Bellevue University, with a goal of becoming a licensed therapist.

What's more, Thurmond enjoyed a homecoming of sorts a year ago when she was hired by CSM as director of the Stevens Hall residence, which houses program participants along with other students.

"I love the mothers program and was excited to come back," she said, where, as a single mother herself, she could relate to and make a positive impact on current program participants.

For more information scan the QR code Mothers Living & Learning | College of Saint Mary

Athlete knows dedication is important in sports and faith

By RON PETAK

Isaac Guenther, right, teams up with his brother Luke on and off the field. Luke fills in for Isaac when he can't make it to his hour of Adoration.

As a three-sport athlete at Guardian Angels Central Catholic High School in West Point, Isaac Guenther understands the importance of commitment.

Whether it's taking ground balls at shortstop, working with receivers as the Bluejays quarterback or shooting 3-pointers in the gym, the senior knows effort equals success.

The 17-year-old approaches his Catholic faith in the same manner and credits his parents, Andy and Cassie, for providing a solid foundation in his desire to have Jesus in his life.

"Growing up, they taught me how important it is to pray and go to church every Sunday," he said. "That's when my prayer life started. It began as a habit, then got deeper and deeper as I grew older."

The oldest of eight children – four boys and four girls – Isaac, his mother said, showed at an early age how much his relationship with Christ meant to him.

She recalled second-grader Isaac asking to go to Confession just weeks after making his First Reconciliation.

"He had examined his conscience and wrote out a list of sins he wanted to confess," Cassie said.

That personal examination continues today as Isaac participates in Perpetual Adoration at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in West Point. His hour? Saturday nights at 11.

"The church was trying to fill up all 24 hours of every day, and that was an hour that I thought would work best for me," he said.

Praying before the Blessed Sacrament in the church chapel, he said, brings him closer to Jesus.

"Sometimes I go in there stressed about everything – teenage stuff – and when I go out, I just feel ready for the next week," he said. "I'm just more at peace after the hour."

On the rare occasions Isaac can't cover his hour, either his dad or brother, Luke, fills in.

It was in 2023, at Isaac's first Steubenville Youth Conference in Springfield, Missouri, that he grew to appreciate spending time before the Eucharist. He attended the conference again this year.

"Adoration was my favorite part by far," he said of his first conference. "I never experienced anything quite like that."

His dad, Andy, who operates the family dairy farm, said it's been a blessing watching Isaac grow in his faith.

"Isaac's always accepted faith as part of his daily life," Andy said. "The cool thing about (being) Isaac's dad was watching his faith become his own and not just something we did together."

Just as his parents were examples of living a strong faith, Isaac said, he feels a responsibility to do the same for his brothers and sisters.

Isaac is among students at a Steubenville conference.

"Everyone is called to go to Heaven, and my siblings matter a lot to me," he said. "I love them and I want them to be close to God just like I am and experience the true joy and happiness that He gives."

What's ahead in the archdiocese

OCT

- **4** Come to Me Healing Retreat – St. Patrick Catholic Church, Tekamah
- **5** Life Chain Sunday
- **6** Red Mass – St. John's at Creighton University, Omaha
- **11** White Mass – St. John's at Creighton University, Omaha
- **15** Blue Mass – Skutt Catholic High School, Omaha
- **28** Ordination and Installation of Bishop Ralph O'Donnell – Livestreamed from Missouri

NOV

- **1-30** November Rosary Rally for Vocations
- **1** *Solemnity of All Saints*
- **2** Mass for Suicide Loss Survivors – St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Omaha
- **9** *Commemoration of Local Saints, Blesseds, Venerables and Servants of God*
- **22** *Feast of St. Cecilia, Patroness of the entire Archdiocese of Omaha*
- **27** Thanksgiving
- **30** *First Sunday of Advent*

DEC

- **7** *Second Sunday of Advent*
- **8** *Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception – Holy Day of Obligation*
- **14** *Third Sunday of Advent*
- **18** Omaha Symphony St. Cecilia Choir Christmas Concert – St. Cecilia Cathedral, Omaha
- **21** *Fourth Sunday of Advent*
- **25** *Christmas – Holy Day of Obligation*

Mass celebrated by Archbishop McGovern

For more details on these archdiocesan events and more, visit Archomaha.org/events