



The Roman Catholic Diocese of Helena

NEWSLETTER

April 2018

In This Issue

Bishop Thomas' Letter

The Vacant Diocese

**Seminarian Spotlight:
Shannon Aguare**

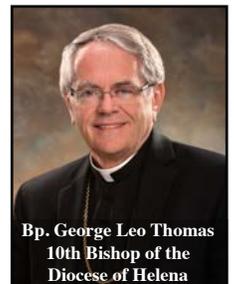
**Diocese Celebrates
Chrism Mass**

**A Grace-Filled Success Story:
Preserving Legendary
Lodge**

**Teen's Faith "Lifted" at
41st Annual
CYC Convention**

Next Issue
June 2018

'Lord, now you let your servant go in peace' A Reflection at the Threshold of Change



Bp. George Leo Thomas
10th Bishop of the
Diocese of Helena

"I am returning you to your native land." Such were the words of Pope John Paul II when he named me the tenth Bishop of Helena in 2004. The joy I experienced upon returning home to Montana 14 years ago remains palpable today as you and I stand at the threshold of another change.

In February, Pope Francis named me the third bishop of the Diocese of Las Vegas. I will be installed on May 15. A new place, new people, and new challenges await me in a diocese that is 15 times larger than our own. For the Diocese of Helena, it will be a time of prayerful anticipation as you await a new bishop.

It is never easy to leave people and a place you love. Immersing oneself in a community is a great joy of being a priest and bishop, but with joy comes the sorrow of parting. As my departure nears, I look back on 14 years and am grateful to God for the grace He has given us as a diocese, not only to weather challenges, but also for growth and renewal. I am aware, as I reflect, of the great work of Divine Providence in these past years.

Faced with sad abuse claims from the past against clergy and others, the diocese confronted its most daunting challenge. The harm to the lives of the victims was incalculable and the way forward was not always clear. With

wise counsel, we chose a path of reconciliation and pastoral care, and in the end reached a mediated settlement that avoided a protracted and costly legal battle. The process was not without difficulty and sacrifice; justice and compassion demanded that we make monetary and pastoral provisions for victim survivors. My goal was to do so in a way that, to the extent possible, preserved ministries and allowed the diocese a pathway to rebuild. Ultimately, we spent less than five hours in bankruptcy court and reached a solution praised by the judge as "a singular achievement" in his 30 years on the bench.

In the wake of the settlement, we moved ahead with a master plan for restoring fiscal stability to the diocese. Overhauling our financial structure has resulted in unprecedented transparency and accountability. I cannot overstate how important it was to me, as your Bishop, to put a plan in place for restoring funds parishes lost in the Deposit and Loan. Our creative response was to utilize fallow diocesan property to create the Trinity Development in Helena, an independent business venture that will generate revenue to restore parish funds. It is a long-term plan but we are beginning to see the early fruits. The new hotel, a Hilton Home2 Suites, opened for business this spring. Further development on the property will continue. As the Trinity project begins to prosper, the profits

will gradually restore the lost Deposit and Loan funds.

The Foundation for the Diocese of Helena currently manages \$28 million in assets that generate income for parish and diocesan ministries. These assets have been built over time through estate gifts, annuities, and other contributions that ensure ministerial support in perpetuity.

We have made unprecedented investments in youth and young adult ministry, and those investments will continue to pay dividends for years to come. This includes strong chaplaincies at the colleges and universities in the diocese as well as a vibrant Catholic Youth Coalition. We recently concluded a successful silent campaign to preserve Legendary Lodge. Nearly \$4 million in gifts and pledges will ensure the Lodge remains a cornerstone of youth ministry in the diocese into the future.

I had the privilege of ordaining 14 men to the priesthood and 18 men to the permanent diaconate for the diocese. Through all of these vocations, the Lord has called shepherds and servant-leaders from our own

families, parishes, and schools. Currently we are blessed with seven outstanding seminarians studying for priesthood, with a number of other men in active discernment. This really is a tribute to the strength of Catholic Family Life in our diocese.

Lay ministry is flourishing in the diocese as more men and women assume leadership roles in our parishes as paid staff and volunteers. In partnership with Carroll College faculty, the Program For Lay Ministry (PFLM) program enjoys an enthusiastic response to its renewed curriculum. This program is an invaluable resource for cultivating lay ministry and a culture of shared responsibility in our diocesan Church.

Beginning a new era of leadership at Carroll College, recently the Board of Trustees announced the hire of its next president, Dr. John Cech. As college chancellor and a board member, I could not be more thrilled with the selection. President Cech is a seasoned academic professional with a track record of service and success. With John as president and an engaged board, Carroll will be in good hands.

Answering the Church's call through Pope

John XXIII to spread the Gospel beyond the borders of our Diocese, in 1964, then Bishop Hunthausen, established a mission in the coastal highlands of Guatemala. Santo Tomas Apóstol Parish, La Asunción School, and Clínica Maxeña provide pastoral ministry, education, and medical services to people who might otherwise go without them. When I visit Guatemala and spend time among the people we serve, I can see their hearts overflow with gratitude for the resources that make the work of our mission possible.

In the Church's night prayer we recite the Canticle of Simeon, who said "Lord, now you let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled." I go in peace from Helena because I know the Lord has been faithful to His promises and because I know your future will be a blessed one.

I give thanks to God for the blessing you have been in my life and I ask for your prayers as I embark upon a new journey. Be assured of my prayers for you, especially that Pope Francis sends you a good shepherd, one who will love and lead you and pitch his tent among you. Take comfort from Our Lady, to whom I have turned so often in our past and to whom I entrust your future.

The Vacant Diocese

With Bishop Thomas' transfer to the Diocese of Las Vegas, the Diocese of Helena begins the interregnum, or period between bishops. Once the transfer was announced on February 28, Bishop Thomas, by canon law, became the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Helena. When Bishop Thomas takes possession of his new diocese at the ceremony of Installation in Las Vegas on May 15, the Diocese of Helena will be what is known as *sede vacante*, or a vacant see (diocese). Once the diocese is vacant, the College of Consultors (body of priests that advises the bishop on administrative matters) must meet within eight days to select a diocesan administrator.

What does a diocesan administrator do?

The diocesan administrator is bound by the obligations and exercises the authority of the diocesan bishop, with the restriction that when the diocese is vacant, there are to be no innovations. Generally, the role is to undertake the usual administrative tasks without taking new steps that would prejudice the rights of a new bishop. Msgr. Kevin O'Neill, who served as diocesan administrator prior to Bishop Thomas' installation, likened the work to the steady progress of knitting rather than tinkering.

The diocesan administrator takes office as soon as he accepts election. His office as administrator ceases when the new bishop takes possession of the diocese, usually when he is installed as diocesan bishop.

How is a new bishop selected?

The following is a general description of the complex discernment process for selecting a bishop.

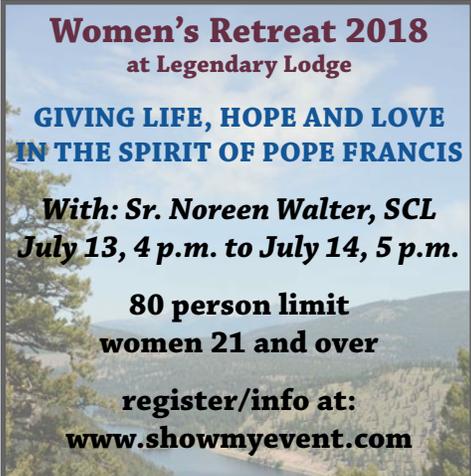
Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, will seek reports on the situation and needs of the Diocese of Helena from Bishop Thomas and other bishops, especially those in the northwest, as well as selected priests, religious and lay persons from the Diocese of Helena. The Nuncio is seeking in strictest confidence, both information about the Diocese itself and the qualities that will assist a new bishop, with the goal of surfacing the best possible candidates.

Canon law lists qualities for a bishop, including: at least 35 years of age, a priest for at least five years, outstanding in strong faith, good morals, piety, zeal for souls, wisdom, prudence and human virtues; and he should be well versed in sacred Scripture, theology and canon law and, preferably, hold a doctorate in one of these fields. Following the work of consultation, the

Nuncio will submit a terna, a list of three candidates, to the Congregation for Bishops. The Congregation will review the candidates and make a recommendation to Pope Francis, who makes the final choice and names our new bishop.

How long before The Diocese of Helena has a new bishop?

There is no strict time-frame for the process. The many factors involved in consultation and review can take at least six to eight months, and sometimes longer.



Women's Retreat 2018
at **Legendary Lodge**

**GIVING LIFE, HOPE AND LOVE
IN THE SPIRIT OF POPE FRANCIS**

With: Sr. Noreen Walter, SCL
July 13, 4 p.m. to July 14, 5 p.m.

**80 person limit
women 21 and over**

**register/info at:
www.showmyevent.com**

Seminarian Spotlight: Shannon Aguire

Cody Tredik

For Shannon Aguire, both the physical foundation of his home parish and his spiritual foundation, rest firmly on the faith of his family. "I am so inspired by stories of my great grandparents. In their time, Little Flower Parish in Browning was built with rock from the family ranch," he said. "My faith and my love of the Church were instilled in me by my family from the very beginning."

Born in Tacoma, Wash., Shannon's family moved often. "My father was a federal officer, which meant that I was raised all over the northwest. Growing up, I attended 14 different schools before we settled outside of Browning when I was in 7th grade." In his childhood, Shannon was already actively involved with his faith and his parish community. "I remember that even as early as kindergarten I had a love for faith. I had a very strong attachment to my grandmother, Nancy, who would take me with her to daily Mass. As I grew up I became more involved in ministries, sang in the choir, and attended youth camps."

Shannon became increasingly interested in politics and ran for the Montana House of Representatives in 2006, where he served until 2010. During his time there he was elected House Majority Whip. In 2010 he served in the Montana Senate for District 8. His committee work included initiatives on economic development in rural and native



America, wind energy, and family asset building programs.

"I believe that politics has prepared me to be a better servant to God," he said. "As a politician, I strived to listen well to the needs around me, and then worked hard to advocate for them. As a priest I can expand and build on this service by helping communities be stronger in faith, and in love for one another."

After leaving the political world in 2013, Shannon returned home to his family for a year, where he was able to discern what was next for his life. "It was during this time that I was asked by a former professor, who was also the director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of North Central Montana in Great Falls, if I would come and take over as Director."

For over 50 years, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has worked in Great Falls and beyond, currently providing a food bank, thrift store,

and veteran's homeless shelter. As director, Shannon planned and oversaw the creation of the Grace Home, the first north central Montana veteran's homeless shelter. "This is transitional housing for homeless veterans in the community. We would also go out with clothing and food to the bridges to offer service directly to those suffering from homelessness. It was important to bring a new level of awareness to the community about the needs of this group, and bring faith back as a primary focus of the organization."

Of the work, Shannon said; "It was a very rewarding experience in many ways, but the thankfulness that we encountered, and the beauty of seeing faith in action, was the push that sent me into seminary. As I discerned this, there was a quote that stuck with me: 'Blessed are those who give without remembering, and those who receive without forgetting.'"

Currently studying at Mt. Angel Seminary in Mt. Angel, Ore., he will complete his undergraduate studies in May, and begins graduate studies in Theology this August. "It has been an incredible two years," he said. "I'm learning every day to seek the things above, to take words like joy, peace, love, and to live them by putting them into action."

"I'm very excited to be a servant in the Diocese of Helena, for I know that the peace of Christ resides here. I'm most looking forward to celebrating the sacraments. Baptizing newborns, ministering to the sick, and being a part of those special family moments, that's what excites me most."

Diocesan Church Gathers for Chrism Mass

The Chrism Mass for the Diocese of Helena was celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Helena on March 19. Bishop George Leo Thomas presided as the oil of the sick and the oil of catechumens were blessed and sacred chrism consecrated to be used in parishes throughout the diocese in the coming year. The Mass includes a renewal of commitment by all the baptized, religious and lay pastoral ministers, deacons and priests.

The Mass is a celebration of Christ instituting the priesthood at the Last Supper and, symbolized as delegates receive the holy oils to take back to their parishes, it constitutes a fidelity to the mission of the bishop and the greater diocesan church.

Prior to Mass, a group of participants gathered at St. Mary Parish in Helena to hear lecturer, educator and this year's Chrism Mass Homilist, Fr. Mark Francis, CSV who serves as president of the Chicago Theological Union. Widely respected for his work in liturgical studies, Fr. Francis has written numerous books and articles on liturgy, including *Liturgy in a Culturally Diverse Community: A Guide Toward Understanding* (Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commission: Washington, D.C., 2012) and *Shape a Circle Ever Wider: Inculturating the Liturgy in the United States* (Liturgy Training Publications, 2000).



Fr. Mark Francis, CSV, delivers the homily during Chrism Mass.

Notably, and as this was Bishop Thomas' final Chrism Mass as Bishop of the Diocese of Helena, Msgr. Kevin O'Neill, Rector of the Cathedral of St. Helena, gave heartfelt thanks to Bishop Thomas for the leadership, sacrifice and vision that he has provided during his 14 years as Bishop.

A Grace-filled Success Story: Preserving Legendary Lodge for Future Generations

John Barnes
Director of Development Services
Diocese of Helena

Each camper might answer differently when asked what he or she remembers most about Legendary Lodge, but the disparate memories unite to weave a rich tapestry: The Lodge is a place where our youth deepen their relationship with Christ, grow in fellowship with one another, and experience adventures in an iconic outdoor setting.

Alumni and their families know the pivotal role the Lodge plays in faith formation; they know the legacy because they are part of it. Because of Bishop Thomas's vision as well as the generosity and hard work of many individuals, that legacy is destined to be part of our future, not just our past.



Fr. Val Zdilla celebrates Mass with campers.

In 2014, as Bishop Thomas undertook the monumental task of shepherding the diocese through a bankruptcy and financial reorganization, the Lodge faced an uncertain future. It could claim an appraised value of nearly \$4 million, but Bishop Thomas understood that its value in the life of our Church was beyond measure.

The dilemma was straightforward but far from simple: Sell the Lodge or find another way to generate several million dollars for other pressing needs. "The quandary literally drove me to my knees in prayer," Bishop Thomas confides. "On more nights than I can count, I found myself awake at 3:00 a.m., the hour of Our Lady, and so I prayed in earnest for a path forward."

The events that unfolded between then and now testify to the power of Mary's intercession and her patronage of our diocese.

To protect Legendary Lodge and ensure its future, Bishop Thomas launched a quiet

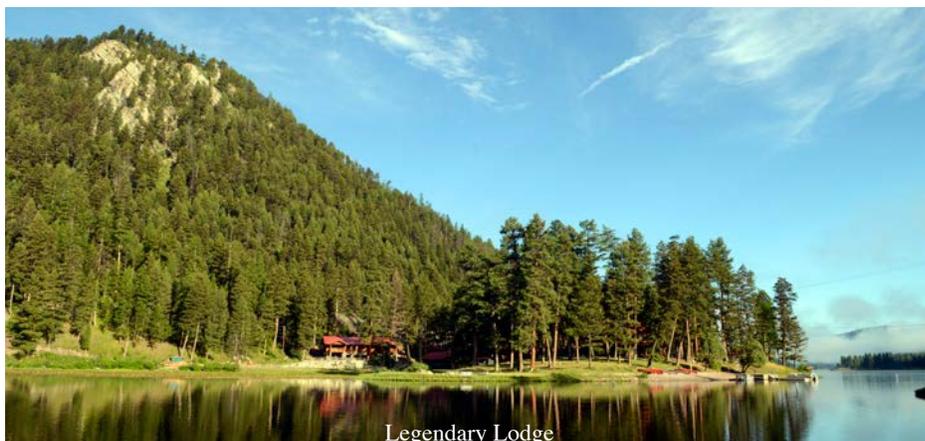
campaign to raise \$3.8 million. Mindful of people's generosity with their parishes and the Annual Catholic Appeal even in spite of their own financial challenges and economic uncertainties, Bishop Thomas insisted the campaign be a quiet one. The goal was to approach specific individuals with the means to make large gifts.

The plan was not without detractors. "Some felt this was a bridge too far, given what the diocese was going through at the time," recalls Bishop Thomas. "I told them we cannot afford to lose the Lodge, and we moved ahead with trust in God's providence and faith in our people to make this happen. Legendary Lodge is our memory maker."

More than 140 donors rose to the challenge, as did the Foundation for the Diocese of Helena and a core group of supporters whose creativity, strategic thinking, and networking abilities formed the backbone of the campaign's success. The outpouring of generosity was nothing short of miraculous, with gifts as large as \$100,000, \$250,000, \$500,000 and even \$1 million. Support came from nearly every community in the diocese, from Lodge alumni, from parents and grandparents of campers, and from others committed to protecting the legacy of a place that has touched the lives of so many.

In February of this year, the campaign to preserve Legendary Lodge met the goal of \$3.8 million in gifts and pledges.

For Bishop Thomas, who will soon depart the Diocese of Helena after 14 years at its helm, the campaign's success is a joyous milestone with providential timing. "As a bishop I go where the Holy Father sends me, but I have prayed that if a new appointment is to come, it not come until sufficient funds are pledged to secure the Lodge's future. It fills me with joy and gratitude beyond words that the Lord answered my prayers."



Legendary Lodge



Campers and Counselors on the lakeshore.

The answers to those prayers came from donors who shared their resources, from supporters who worked to turn ideas into reality, from board members of the Foundation for the Diocese of Helena, and from every person who prayed for success. It is because of them that Legendary Lodge will continue to be a place of renewal and encounter for our youth, and for all who visit.

The diocese is now focusing on long-overdue renovations that will not only expand the summer-camp capacity, but also create more space for retreats and other gatherings. Additionally, we are looking at ways the Lodge facilities might be configured and accessed for potential year-round use.

For Lodge campers, memories made on the shores of Salmon Lake endure long after the experiences that forge them. The positive impacts of those experiences are felt in every parish and community. Working together as a diocese, as the people of God in western Montana, we are committed to building on the recent success and moving ahead to ensure the Lodge's future is as rich as its past.

Teen's Faith "Lifted" at 41st Annual CYC Convention

Cody Tredik

On the weekend of March 9-11, 200 high school students gathered at Carroll College in Helena for the 41st annual Catholic Youth Coalition (CYC) Convention. The theme this year was Lifted, inspired by John's gospel as Jesus says to Nicodemus, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life." (Jn 3:14)

34 parishes from around the Diocese of Helena were represented, and a large group from the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings attended as well.

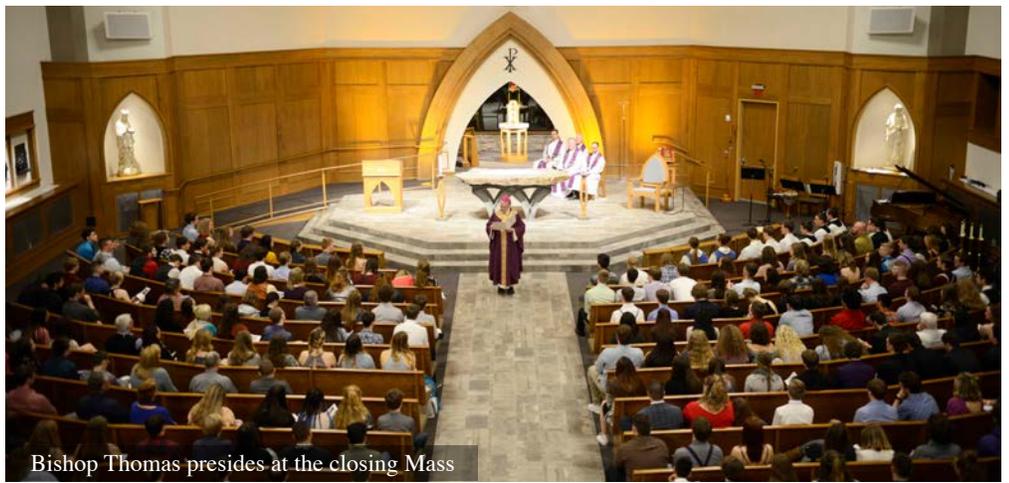
The first night began with prayer in the Carroll Campus Center, as two youth emcees, Senior Ray Shipman of Dillon and Senior Kacie Barrett of Kalispell, led the group in the opening decade of the rosary. Different parish groups came to the front to lead decades as the conference progressed.



Standing for a photo during women's session

The group transitioned to the lower campus center where most of the sessions and keynotes would take place. Two youth keynotes took the stage first. Hattie Fauque of Great Falls and Jason Miller of Arlee spoke to their peers about the struggles and successes in their personal walk of faith. Both spoke to the healing power of mercy in their lives. Frs. Christopher Lebsack and Kirby Longo led the group in reflection prior to the sacrament of Reconciliation. Priests from across the diocese came together to hear the confessions of their young people, while the CYC Board, a group of youth leaders from across the diocese and beyond who help plan and organize ministry events for the year, helped youth reflect on God's Mercy by performing shadow Stations of the Cross.

Saturday kept the momentum going with four youth keynotes throughout the day: Mollie Siebenaler of Victor, Shae Bills of Bozeman, Mia Simatovic of Hamilton, and Jovany Guillen of Dillon.



Bishop Thomas presides at the closing Mass

The main keynote for the general sessions was introduced as he came down the aisle from the back of the room in character as a sassy elderly woman named Estelle. Estelle was just one of many characterizations brought to life by Catholic comedian and storyteller Doug Brummel. Brummel is nationally known for his Lighten Up! Ministries, a traveling presentation emphasizing the importance of owning ones' faith, evangelization, and the power of the Church family. Brummel's character impressions range from a quirky non-believer looking to join the Church to a parish handyman as he zeroes in on faith and the human condition with humor and compassion.

He's presented his theater style performance at the National Catholic Youth Conference and the National Religious Education Conference. The crowd was in stitches as Brummel and his characters explored our Catholic faith with the help of volunteers from the audience.

Saturday afternoon set the students loose to attend two out of eight workshops offered around campus. The workshops varied in theme from keeping faith in college and discernment, to finding faith in pop culture. The speakers came from various backgrounds in youth and campus ministry.



Doug Brummel in character

The day concluded with a banquet dinner and Mass in the new All Saints Chapel with Bishop Thomas, his final celebration of Mass with the CYC Convention before he takes up his new assignment as Bishop of the Las Vegas Diocese.

In his homily, Bishop Thomas challenged the young people to "be bold, courageous Catholics who welcome Jesus joyfully into your hearts as your savior."

At the close of Mass, students walked back over to the campus center for a dance. The conven-



Youth react to Doug Brummel's presentation.

tion jumped, jitterbugged, and "cranked it like a chainsaw", joyfully celebrating their time together.

On Sunday morning, two final youth keynotes addressed their peers: Mallory Phillibur of Potomac and Jake Bubb of Helena. Doug Brummel also gave a final performance and address.

To close the convention, the winners of the Outstanding Youth Award were presented. The Outstanding Youth Award is given every year to a male and female high school student who is nominated by their youth ministers as being exemplary disciples, role models, and leaders in their faith communities. This year the award went to Ray Shipman of Dillon and Hailey James of Helena.

Fr. Marc Lenneman, chaplain of Carroll College, then invited the seniors up for a special blessing and commissioning as they prepare to graduate and head on to the next stage of their lives. The group prayed their final decade of the rosary, bringing the 41st CYC Convention to a close.



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Diocese of Helena

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PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Father, you call each one of us by name and ask us to follow you.

*Bless your church by raising up dedicated and generous leaders
from our families and friends who will serve your people as Sisters,
Priests, Brothers, Deacons, and Lay Ministers.*

*Inspire us as we grow to know you,
and open our hearts to hear your call.*

*We ask this in Jesus' name
Amen.*

Please Continue to Pray for Our Seminarians



From Left: Matthew Christiaens, Tyler Frohlich, Nathan Scheidecker, Bishop Thomas, Shannon Augare, Kyle Tannehill, Codi Krueger, Fr. Marc Lenneman.
Not pictured: Aidan Toombs