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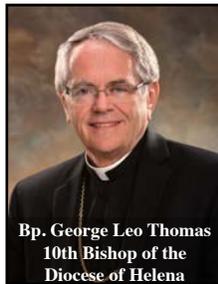
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**Bp. George Leo Thomas**  
10th Bishop of the  
Diocese of Helena

## Calling Forth Intentional Disciples

Most Reverend George Leo Thomas, Ph.D.  
All Saints Chapel Dedication Carroll College

Nov. 1, 2017

On September 22nd, 2016, the highly-respected Public Religion Research Institute out of Washington D.C. published their findings on the state of religion in America.

The study is entitled, Exodus: Why Americans are Leaving Religion - - and Why They're Unlikely to Come Back. The findings are corroborated by Gallup, Pew, and Georgetown's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

I venture to say that every person seated here will resonate with the findings of this research, whether here at Carroll College, in your own family of origin, or within your circle of friends. The combined studies have produced these sobering statistics:

- Only 30% of Americans who were raised Catholic are still practicing
- Another 38% hold onto their Catholic identity, but seldom or never attend Mass
- 29% no longer consider themselves to be Catholic at all
- The final 3% are now part of a non-Christian faith

If we apply these statistics to the national population, the results are even more startling. Ten percent of all adults in the United States are ex-Catholics, while only 2.6% are converting to the Church on an annual basis. Four in ten young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 are religiously unaffiliated, a fourfold increase in one generation. In other words, "Nearly four times as



**Bishop Thomas presiding at the dedication of  
All Saints Chapel at Carroll College.**

many adults have left as have entered the Catholic Church in the past decade." (Weddell p. 26)

When Catholics are asked about the reason they departed, the responses are many and varied, but a number of important influences emerge and show a pattern that should glean our attention. "No precipitating reason, but rather I just drifted away," is the most frequently cited response. A variation on that theme, "I consider myself spiri-

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*Bishop, (Continued from p.1)*

tual but not religious,” is a response endemic in the millennial generation. Specific reasons include banal liturgy, vapid preaching or disgust over the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Others point to vehement disagreement with the Church’s moral stance on homosexuality, women’s ordination, birth control, abortion or divorce and remarriage. To be sure, the combined studies are sobering and astounding when taken at face value.

From my vantage point however, they provide important keys for opening our doors and our hearts to those who have departed or simply drifted away from the Church in recent years. Over a dozen years ago, I became aware of the extensive social science research being conducted on youth and young adults in Seattle, Washington. The research conclusions jumped off the page and our Diocese began three pastoral initiatives that have paid high dividends for over a decade.

**1.** In her book entitled *Forming Intentional Disciples*, Sherry Weddell states clearly and convincingly: “Catholics who leave, leave early. Nearly half of cradle Catholics who become unaffiliated are gone by age 18.”

In response, we ramped up our ministry to youth and young adults. We hired the best youth and young adult ministers we could find. We placed three of our finest priests on our college campuses, including our own highly regarded Fr. Marc Lenneman here at Carroll College. We infused resources into our ministry to youth through the Catholic Youth Coalition, Legendary Lodge, Justice Outreach Project, youth bible studies and parish and deanery youth programs.

**2.** A full decade ago, our research told us that we could no longer assume that religious identity and religious affiliation would be handed on within the context of family, or inherited



View from the balcony in All Saints Chapel, Carroll College.

by osmosis in the context of stable integrated family life.

In addition to the presence of skilled pastors and youth and young adult ministers, we saw the value of commissioning peer ministers and spiritual mentors, young adults who love the faith, and model Catholic discipleship in our campuses, deaneries, and parishes across the diocese. Our own Doug Tooke was the mastermind behind that productive effort.

**3.** The third insight comes from the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, and is also affirmed by research. I describe this as the unfinished work of the Church that, if left unaddressed, will aid and abet a pattern of attrition hemorrhaging, defection, and mediocrity.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stated clearly and unequivocally that the primary and fundamental vocation of every baptized Christian is the universal call to holiness. The call to holiness is the sine qua non, the non-negotiable, the common denominator, the shared

DNA that all the Baptized hold in common-- the lay faithful, priests, deacons, bishops, women and men religious, no exceptions, no hold outs, no way, no how.

In the words of Saint John Paul II, “All of Christ’s followers are invited and bound to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfillment of their own state in life.” (*Christifideles Laici*, 44). This call is rooted in baptism and sustained in all the other sacraments, most especially the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In his seminal writing a decade ago, the late Avery Cardinal Dulles describes a generation of Catholics who are catechized but unevangelized. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, is clear and definitive in calling Catholics across the globe to be missionary disciples who encounter Jesus Christ personally and deeply. In her book, Weddell also offers a stunningly important insight. “The majority of Catholics in the US are sacramentalized but not evangelized. They do not know that an explicit, personal attachment to Jesus Christ—personal discipleship-- is normative Catholicism as taught by the apostles and reiterated time and again by the popes, councils, and Saints of the church.”

On this feast of All Saints, on the occasion of the dedication of the All Saints Chapel, and in light of these sobering research findings, I want to ask you individually and collectively, a challenging and difficult question. How are you spiritually at this juncture of your personal life?

Are you aware of this personal call to holiness? At this moment in your life, do you have that intentional, intimate and personal attachment to Jesus Christ as Lord of your life, or are you a casual, camouflage, occasional Catholic described in the literature?

I believe that the answers to these questions

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Stations of the Cross in All Saints Chapel, Carroll College.



Bishop Thomas placing the relic of St. John Paul II in the new reliquary.

## St. John Paul II Parish in Bigfork Receives First Class Relic

Cody Tredik

On October 29, St. John Paul II parish in Bigfork celebrated the dedication of a first class relic *ex sanguine*, or from the blood, of their patron saint. After five years of praying, hoping, and working, the parish graciously received a piece of the former pope's garment, stained by the blood from his gunshot wound in May of 1981.

Bishop Thomas began the Mass by recounting the miraculous events that led to its acquisition.

"Roughly four years ago, the Knights of Columbus sent me a letter requesting my assistance in obtaining a first class relic of St. Pope John Paul II, which began a long process of attempting to find such a relic," Bishop Thomas said.

"Bishop Thomas was told everywhere he went that due to the worldwide demand for, and the scarcity of, such a relic, it was incred-

ibly unlikely that we would get one," said Fr. Craig Hanley, pastor of St. John Paul II parish in Bigfork.

Then, after four years and "exhausting all possible avenues," Bishop Thomas reached out to now retired Archbishop Elden Curtiss, a former bishop of the Diocese of Helena and the Diocese of Omaha. In the

past, Archbishop Curtiss had worked very closely with the recent Archbishop Emeritus of Kraków, Poland, Stanisław Dziwisz. Dziwisz was a long time aide to St. John Paul II during his papacy. Three weeks later, the parish in Bigfork received its first class relic.

In his homily, Bishop Thomas said, "It's my deepest hope that this parish, named for John Paul the Great, would use his life's example as a model to gather, to care for, and to nourish the faith of this people."

After his homily, Bishop Thomas moved in procession to the reliquary, where he administered a blessing and the relic was installed. He then took a moment to pray, requesting the intercession of the saint.

Bishop Thomas remarked, "It was through four years of persistent work that we were blessed to finally receive the relic, but the effort to acquire a relic was very much parishioner-led. It was requested, helped, and finally celebrated by the people of this parish."

The Knights of Columbus began the process with the initial request, and another parishioner, Neal Garbenis, designed and built the reliquary. In addition to being active in his home parish, Garbenis is a well known local contractor and cabinet shop owner.

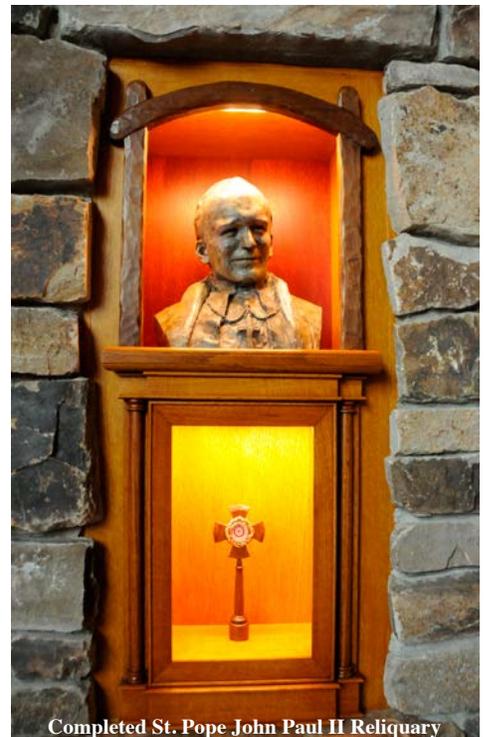
"It was a big honor to be asked by them," Garbenis said. "I wanted it to be simple, representing the church and John Paul, who was a very simple man. I was trying to decide how to put it into the rock wall, and then Terry Mimnaugh showed me the bust, because before that there was to be a picture above it. And that was it! My design changed to add the bust compartment to the top, and it all came together from there."

The bust Garbenis speaks of was crafted by local Bigfork artist Terry Mimnaugh, who is an active member and well known across the state of Montana for her paintings and sculptures. She created the larger bust of St. John Paul II which stands in the entrance to the church. The idea was suggested by Bishop Thomas as a way for the community and pilgrims to easily identify the origin of the relic.

"We feel so honored and blessed to have a relic of this caliber of probably the best known modern saint," Fr. Hanley said. "It is an inspiration to us on a daily basis to have that extra connection to our patron which the relic makes possible. In addition, we're sure that the founding pastor, Monsignor Don Shea, who was here when this process began, would be very proud and happy to see this incredible relic installed."



Neal Garbenis closing the reliquary to complete installation.



Completed St. Pope John Paul II Reliquary

## Diocesan Youth Join 25,000 at National Convention

Joan Shepherd  
Communications Intern

Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium filled with the energy of 25,000 Catholic Teens, Youth Ministers and chaperones for the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC). NCYC took place November 16th-18th, and invited young people to fellowship, learning, and a deeper appreciation of the vastness and the importance of the Catholic Church.

NCYC is one of America's largest established meetings of young Catholics. At 97 people strong, the Diocese of Helena contingent included 58 youth and 39 adults from 23 parishes, Carroll College, Carroll's Kateri Institute and Catholic Girl Scouting.



Youth often wear hats to stand out in the crowd of 25,000

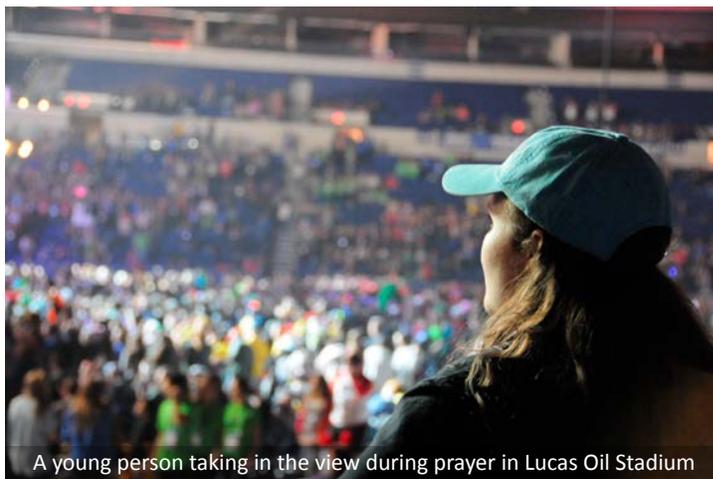
This year's conference featured many well-known and inspiring Catholic keynote speakers including Chris Stefanick, Sr. Miriam Heidland and Fr. Joseph Espailat. Matt Maher and TobyMac provided music with a strong Christian

witness and worship experiences. However, when a teen took the stadium stage to give a personal testimony, it had a powerful impact for many of the youth. The experience brought home that each of us, at any age, are already witnesses to Christ's transforming love.

"This was the first time this has happened at NCYC," said David Casey. Casey is Youth Minister at Our Lady of the Valley Parish in Helena and has been to NCYC several times.

He said, "For a youth to be a keynote, that idea came from our Diocese of Helena convention four years ago when Fr. Joseph Espailat came and saw our CYC kids giving keynotes. He brought that idea back to the National Youth Convention. That sense of relationship building within local parishes and NCYC is exciting to see."

The convention theme, "Called", explored God's call to each of us, towards our vocations and to be saints. "The call is ongoing," said Archbishop Charles Thompson from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to a group of high-schoolers, "It involves an ongoing relationship with God and



A young person taking in the view during prayer in Lucas Oil Stadium

that we acknowledge that we are children of God and called to be so much more. We often think of saints as only a few people out there, when really every baptized Christian out there is called to holiness and called to mission and that's sainthood. Holiness through submission is sainthood."

The powerful experiences of prayer, confession and Eucharist amongst peers helped those in attendance realize the need within the church for the younger generations to grow personally in grace and virtue, especially by taking action and contributing to their faith communities.

High school student, Kacie Barrett, from St. Matthew Parish in Kalispell, said, "I love how this event shows that the church is alive and that there is so much more to the church than rules and regulations, kneeling and standing, but rather that the church is alive, full of vibrancy and energy, and there is so much more to it."

## Not Your Average Maroon

Dan Bartleson

Randy Larson always wanted to be a Maroon. His big brothers, Conor and Jarrett, graduated from Butte Central Catholic Schools and Randy wanted to follow. But, his special needs meant he would require instruction that BCCS couldn't offer, until now. His parents, Kristina and Dave, were thrilled when Randy was accepted into the new Esther Sullivan Cote Resource Program in November.

Karla Ahlborn, special education teacher at Butte Central, started Randy in 5th grade music as she began to design his curriculum. Soon after, she placed him in 5th grade religion. Randy named religion as his favorite class, saying "I like being able to learn about the Catholic Faith and science." The class also lengthens his school day to four hours. When asked about longer days, a man of few words, he said "It's fun having longer days." Ahlborn is

pleased with Randy's progress and is glad to see that the school can meet his needs. "He's just so happy to be here. He's all smiles each morning and it just makes your day," she said.

An added highlight for the Larson's came recently when Fr. Kirby Longo accepted Randy in the 7th grade basketball program. Fr. Longo likes what Randy brings to the team. He said, "Randy is here to play basketball because it's fun. Players can often be training and competing in pursuit of winning and it's a great reminder for us during games to have that spirit of fun." His teammates are always supportive and his presence on the court inspired cross-town rival, East Middle School's players to encourage and



Butte Central's 7th Grade Maroons, Randy Larson is back row 4th from the left.

cheer him on at a recent game.

The Larson's value what Butte Central has done for their family as it helped Conor and Jarrett grow in their Catholic Faith and prepare for college careers. These days, according to Kristina, "We're just feeling super blessed by the school. For them now to have this program it really is a huge gift. And just, what an amazing thing!"

*Bishop, (Continued from p.2)*

are pivotal in securing the future of the church, if we are to revitalize the heart and soul of the entire faith community. There are eight markers that active disciples of Christ hold in common with one another, markers that are present on this college campus, markers that I share with you on the Feast of All Saints:

Discipleship is an explicit decision, a radical decision, to follow Jesus Christ, and to claim him as Lord and Savior of your life. Have you made that intentional decision to follow him, and to welcome him as your Lord and Savior? Have you made that decision to follow him, intentionally, deliberately, and trustingly?

Discipleship is lived out in community. Disciples of Jesus do not go it alone. Are you walking in the company of other believers, supporting one another, challenging one another, praying for one another?

Discipleship is nourished in daily prayer, and sustained by Word and Sacrament, most especially Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, characterized by St. John Paul as *Inaestimabile Donum*, the church's most priceless treasure. What is the state of and quality of your prayer life, the marker of friendship with Jesus Christ? Have you discovered that place deep within your soul, that sacred sanctuary where friendship with Jesus Christ is nour-

ished and cultivated?

Discipleship is expressed through Beatitude living, the connection between faith and compassion, worship and charity, liturgy and justice, prayer and service, selfless works of charity and compassion, always with a preferential option for the poor. Are you walking the talk, or only serving the Lord in an advisory capacity?

Discipleship is marked by constant conversion, a change of heart. Are you responding to God's amazing grace that heals the wounds of sin and selfishness, and sets aside all that diseases the soul and robs us of peace of mind? Are you encountering Christ, the Divine Physician, regularly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Are you an agent of healing in your family and wider community?

Discipleship invites others to "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord", first by the example of a good life, and then by personal invitation. Is your life attracting others to discover Jesus Christ, and inviting them to live the Sacramental life of the Church? Discipleship is joyful, invitatory, emanating peace and happiness. "O Lord," wrote St. Teresa of Avila, "Please spare me from sour-faced saints."

Discipleship is never self-referential, self-en-closed, or self-congratulatory. It is lived out in

communion with the wider community, and never loses sight of unity with the wider Church, including the See of Peter, the local bishop, and the people in mission territories.

Discipleship is at home with both faith and reason described by Pope John Paul as two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of the truth. The intentional disciple is well-formed and informed, a student of the church and a student of culture and society. They understand the value of dialogue over diatribe, persuasion over polemics, invitation over invective, and a theology of the marketplace over a theology of the walled city.

I believe that intentional discipleship is what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council had in mind when they described the universal call to holiness. I am more and more convinced that intentional discipleship is a force for the future, and an initiative that we as a diocese and wider Church must address.

All Saints Chapel is a visible symbol of our love and support of the young Catholic. It is a powerful reminder that you and I, by virtue of our Baptism, are being called into deeper and daily discipleship in the circumstances of our lives. My earnest prayer is reflected in the words of the psalmist as he prayed with all his heart: O that today you would hear his voice and harden not your hearts.

## Guatemala Mission: Solidarity, Service Through Education and Medical Care

Founded in 1964 by Archbishop Raymond Hunt-hausen, the Guatemala Mission continues serving those in need through Santiago de la Asunción School, and Clinica Maxeña medical clinic including 40 communities in the surrounding area.

### *Santiago de la Asunción School*

While the *Alegria y Fe*, program operated by the Jesuit Fathers in Central America, provides basic education costs, our diocese continues to fund the Internado program. This supports 180 students who live at the school during the week, administrative costs, and funds the library, and school maintenance.

### *Clinica Maxeña*

Directed by Sheila McShane, the clinic provides medical, dental, and pre-natal care to about 20,000 individuals each year. Poverty in the area means that patients cannot afford to travel to a government hospital for specialized treatment or even pay the very small fee requested by the Clinic. The clinic provides essential services to the poor and helps with transportation whenever possible. Clinica Maxeña also coordinates outside service groups (pictured, R). In October, Dr. Martin Fishman and a medical team traveled from California to provided surgical eye care. They successfully removed 33 cataracts, provided 21

laser treatments and donated optical equipment to the clinic.

The generosity of diocesan donors and hard work of Mission staff help us walk in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Guatemala. Education and medical care at the Mission empower the people to build communities that embody a lived Catholic Faith.



Dr. Fishman's medical team providing eye care.

## 51 Gather for Diocesan/Carroll Lay Ministry Program

The Program For Lay Ministry (PFLM) drew 51 students to St. John Paul II Parish in Bigfork in October and November. The two-year program is offered jointly by the Carroll College Theology Dept. and the Diocese of Helena office of Formation Services. Entitled *Theological Foundations*, the course gives students a firm foundation and a deeper their understanding of faith as they

endeavor to "Think with the Church."

Anna Bremmer is a financial consultant and PFLM student. She said, "As a Certified Catechist who came to Montana from the Seattle Archdiocese, I am highly impressed. The Montana Diocese's PFLM curriculum is an exemplary combination of enlightening historical context and theological content that feeds the reasoning intellectual mind and connects one's heart to Catholic teaching and tradition. The instructors from Carroll College are outstanding!"



John Ries Ph.D., during the October session.

Dr. John Ries, Chair of Theology at Carroll College, presented Fundamental Theology at October's inaugural session. November featured Chris Fuller Ph.D. on Sacred Scripture and January will be on Christology with Dr. Eric Hall.

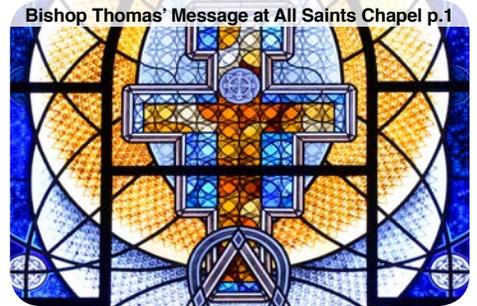
Pastor at St. John Paul II, Fr. Craig Hanley, said, "Many Catholics really want to dive deeper into the truths of our faith, and the Program for Lay Ministry gives them a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do just that."



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# The Roman Catholic Diocese of Helena



NEWSLETTER

December, 2017

*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: Aiden Toombs**