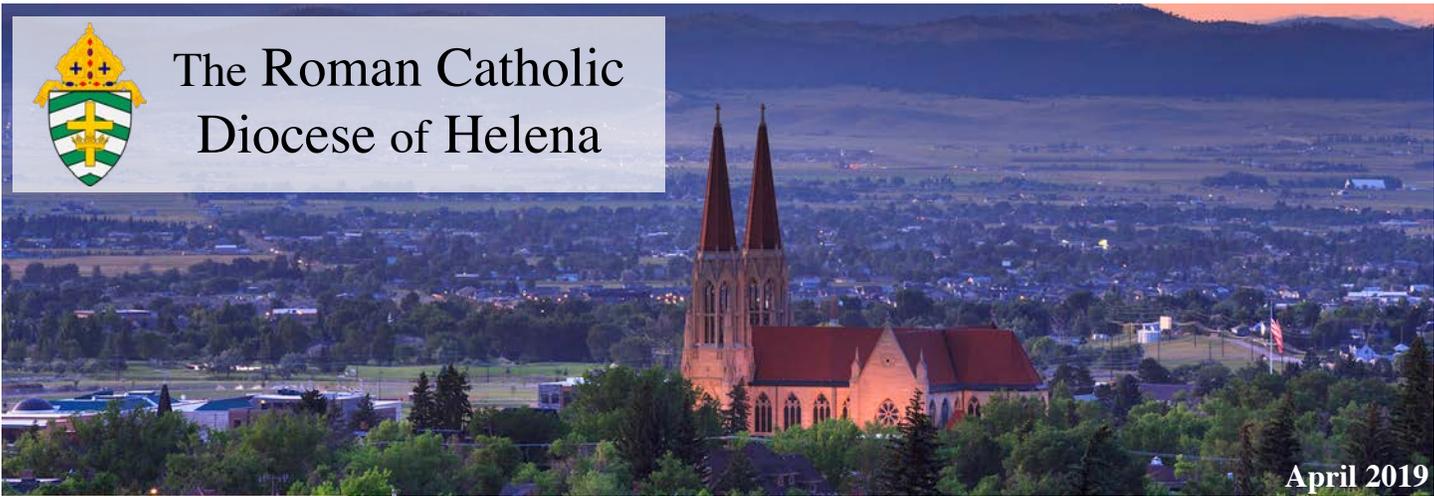




The Roman Catholic Diocese of Helena



April 2019

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Faithful Intimacy and Courage in All Seasons

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As I write to you the Church has recently celebrated the Solemnity of the Annunciation which was preceded by the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of Mary, and the remembrance of the great missionary Saint Patrick. How symbolic these festivals are of the essence of Lent.

When told that she was to be the Mother of God, Mary of Nazareth responded through Faith to the will of God with a resolute "Amen". Despite the tremendous change, such a response would bring to her life and relationship to her espoused, as well as to her family and community. She remained undaunted and unafraid to let the Holy Spirit overshadow her and lead her into a profoundly new relationship with God. We too are called through grace to a deeper awareness of God in our lives. Our responsibility is to better know, love and serve the Lord even when it means we must carry His Cross and continue the completion of its victory with sacrificial love. This may hold us up to misunderstanding and ridicule or even rejection, but we are commissioned to go forth and give witness to the way to fullness of Truth and Life in Christ.

Saint Joseph was also challenged to accept the seemingly improbable circumstances and consequences of his beloved's complete cooperation with God's salvation plan for every soul in every place and time. He had to set aside any plans or expectations he may have entertained in order to so completely accept the Truth revealed to him by the angel. Once again, in good times or in bad; in sickness or in health; with confidence or great concerns, he welcomed his wife and his savior into his heart and home. What welcome can we give within our hearts and in our homes to the Lord? How have we made ready the way for Him in our daily lives. How like Saint Joseph do we trust in God?

One need not be of Irish decent to appreciate the life and ministry of Saint Patrick who, with courage and conviction, witnessed willingly to Christ. The prayer associated with this missionary reminds us that we must let the Lord leads us; be the pathway beneath our pilgrim feet; be the One who protects us and accompanies us as we journey, and is the most welcomed guest in the recesses of our hearts. Not being afraid of Christ, nor to venture forth in His name which is above all other names, is Patrick's hallmark.

It seems then that there are two basic ingredients to each of these Holy Witnesses' profession of Faith: intimacy with God that leads to making radical choices for the salvation of souls and the building of the Kingdom; and fearlessness in sharing the will of God in the face of disbelief, disinterest or rejection. Our Lady says, "Do whatever He tells you". Saint Joseph responds with loving obedience to the angelic counsel he receives. Saint Patrick goes forth to baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In making and living our profession, may we never forget that we are each children of God and may we never fear the call of our name. We are in such great company with the holy women and men of so many different times and circumstances who walked with Faith, responded in Love and engendered Hope! Let us go forth and live our lives in Christ to the glory of the Father and through the Holy Spirit this Lenten Season and all the seasons of our hearts and minds and souls.

Blessings always,

Msgr. Kevin O'Neill
Diocesan Administrator

To Visit the Imprisoned

Dan Bartleson
Director of Communication Services

"I was told there were good men in this world, but this is the first time in my life I ever met any." So stated an inmate at Montana State Prison during a Discovery weekend put on by the Catholic Sponsored Prison Ministry. Although he was mostly silent from Friday's start to Monday afternoon, his singular statement to the group touched on what Christ can do when we engage the corporal work of mercy; when we visit the imprisoned.

Prison Ministry Director, Moe Wosepka explained, "It sure isn't that we told him to straighten up. We just show goodness, we smile, we visit, and we shake hands." The personal connection between inmates and Prison Ministry team members begins at Discovery weekends and carries on each month at Ultreya gatherings. Consistent, positive human connection is often absent from an inmate's life. "They've been abandoned by and have abandoned loved ones and haven't met anyone who's kept a promise," Wosepka said.

Discovery weekends are held twice annually at Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge, once for high security and once for low security inmates. A weekend is also held at Crossroads Correctional Facility near Shelby. The Prison Ministry team coordinates prayer, singing, fellowship and personal discussions around the fundamentals of Christianity. Prisoners

participate in conversation, choose songs and some even speak with the group on a given topic or share thoughts at appropriate times. Sharing responsibilities for the weekend helps invite personal connection and foster an openness to a community of faith at monthly Ultreya meetings.

Ultreya gatherings in Deer Lodge and Shelby include music, a guest speaker and an inmate testimony or sharing. Ultreyas make up in frequency what they lack in time compared to weekends. According to Wosepka, the regular meetings make the most difference. "The magic number is 18 months. After that family contact tends to evaporate, sometimes for good reason. They look forward to seeing us. Some have zero visitors, no letters, no outside contact. We are like the uncle that didn't forget them even though no one else in the family remembers them. Many grew up without a father in the home. We promise we will come back, and we do, every single month, sometimes for over 20 years."

Wosepka has seen the fruits of the ministry over time, saying, "Some of the inmates and I have grown in the program together. I've seen major changes in the men, from a young punk becoming a 30 to 40-year-old man saying he doesn't want to live this way anymore." The ministry has worked with inmates who pursue their CDL or more education as they consider entering the workforce and make concrete plans for life after incarceration.

The average length of service for a volunteer in Prison Ministry is about 10 years. Wosepka, with 19 years, considers himself one of the junior members compared to John "Mac" MacDonald of Missoula/Hamilton, who has been involved for 40 years. The 32 men, and three women, who volunteer hail from Billings, Bridger, Red Lodge, Belfry, Lewistown, Great Falls, Helena, Polson, Belgrade, Three Forks and Missoula. "I have to admit I'm involved as much to be around the team as to serve the inmates; they are my heroes. They are committed, faithful, powerful Christians and this is not an easy ministry," said Wosepka.

Volunteers go through mandatory training on the realities and risks of prison ministry, inmate behavior and prison procedure. Calling it a good fit for some, Wosepka pointed out that it can also stretch one's personal faith, "It's edgy and works well for people who like edgy. It also challenges us with the forgiveness part of our faith journey – which is one of the most difficult parts. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us can become very real, very quickly."

The ministry receives some funding through the Diocesan Annual Catholic Appeal and is in need of volunteers.

Is Christ calling you to visit the imprisoned?
Contact Moe Wosepka
Anote4moe@gmail.com
(406) 461-8106

Evangelization at the Capitol

Matthew Brower
Executive Director
Montana Catholic Conference

Montana's 66th regular legislative session is quickly drawing to a close with adjournment "sine die" likely to come before the beginning of May. Much more will be determined during the last few days of the session and the period immediately following as the remaining bills that have passed are transmitted to the governor's desk.

Throughout the session, the Montana Catholic Conference (MCC) has been striving to bring a Catholic voice to the legislative process. At times we have been successful helping to advance good legislation or stop bad legislation. At other times we have been on the other side witnessing good bills die or those we oppose move forward. However, regardless of whether we've "won" or "lost" we have always tried to remain consistent in our approach and the principles that guide our public policy positions.

Quite often, the testimony we provide will start with something like the following:

"The Roman Catholic Church consistently affirms the dignity of the human person and the sacredness of every human life. Every person has an inherent dignity and value. This dignity is not something earned by our good behavior but rather something we all enjoy by virtue of the fact we are children of God. It is imperative that society recognize, promote and defend this dignity for all, with no exceptions."

Beginning our testimony this way provides a context for our policy position by articulating the first permanent principle of the Church's social doctrine—the dignity of the human person.

Whether it's advocating for a bill to increase protections for infants born alive following an abortion (Senate Bill 354), legislation to prohibit life without parole sentences for juvenile offenders (House Bill 429), or a bill to abolish the death penalty in Montana (HB

350), our advocacy positions begin with the belief that all human life is sacred and the dignity of all persons must be recognized and protected.

While it can be tempting to measure our "success" at the Capitol using easily quantifiable criteria like number of bills won versus number of bills lost, it's important to remember that the work of the conference really is the work of evangelization. So often the more important questions are, "Have we been consistent and accurate in stating our positions in accord with Church teaching? Have we helped engage the lay faithful in the civic and legislative process in a manner consistent with their baptismal call? Have we, by our witness, brought people closer to Jesus Christ?"

In politics, it can be easy to lose sight of the most important questions. I pray the work of MCC this session has helped keep matters in proper perspective and am grateful to all those in the parishes and pews who have been partners in this effort.



The sign at La Asunción Institute is the work of students.

Director's Update: Guatemala Mission

Deacon Michael Seipp
Director, Guatemala Mission



Clinica Maxeña's canteen helps provide nutritious meals for visitors.

February 12th and 13th, 2019 found me traveling from Helena to our mission in Santo Tomás la Union, Guatemala. This would be my third overall trip to the Mission and my second in the last 10 months. The most anticipated element of the trip, as always, was the engagement and encounter with the people of Guatemala particularly the people we serve, young and old, of Santo Tomás la Union and the surrounding villages. My experiences during the trip were new; either looking through a different lens at places I had seen, or through a lens of discovery at places new to me.

La Asunción Institute continues to live out its mission for the young people of the mountain villages. The damage to the facility resulting from the earthquake of 2017 has been repaired and remediated. Ongoing maintenance and repairs continue at the school even as it continues to expand vocational offerings to the students who board there. Programs include sewing, welding and agriculture and offer graduates the means to support their family and build up surrounding communities.

Clinica Maxeña, facing increasing competition from "for profit" medical clinics, continues to provide emergency, preven-

tive and nutritional services to those with little or no means to pay. Poverty and malnutrition are widespread. The Clinic with its medicinal garden, chicken egg projects and cantina is working to overcome malnutrition particularly in infants and children. Clinic staff, who are also part of the Santo Tomas parish pastoral health team, operate the government-sponsored First Infancy program. The program provides nutrition and health information and best practices for children (birth through 5 years of age) and their mothers. The program is delivered to remote mountain communities with onsite visits.

Evidence of the success of our nutrition programs can be seen in the faces of those who do without. I met Wendy who was born two months premature and left the hospital after seven days weighing 2 pounds. Today she is 5 years old, weighs 15 pounds, runs and speaks not only K'iche (the native dialect) but also Spanish. She easily qualifies as the poster child for the successes of the nutrition program.

During my stay we were able to make two home visits/wellness checks for families living in impoverished and difficult family



Deacon Seipp visits with Wendy and her mother.

conditions. Even though their homes were very humble, we were treated as honored guests and were able to encounter the children and parents in their surroundings.

My trip concluded with a meeting with the

Bishop of the Diocese of Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu, Bishop Pablo Vizcaíno Prado. We spent one hour with Bishop Pablo and I reiterated the Diocese of Helena's support for the Mission, Clinic and School.

Our prayers, donations and efforts continue to provide critical assistance to the people of Santo Tomás la Union and surrounding area. Our Mission, Clinic and School are blessed to have strong, local leaders who are accountable not only to each other, to their mission, to the Diocese of Helena but to the people they joyfully serve. Thank you to those who have made a one-time gift or sacrificial pledge to the Annual Catholic Appeal which funds approximately 38% of the 2019 operational costs of the Mission, Clinic and School. Your continued prayers, donations and participation in the Annual Catholic Appeal are very much needed and appreciated. Our continued involvement creates endless possibilities among our brothers and sisters in Christ at our Guatemala Mission.

Women's Retreat 2019
at Legendary Lodge

LIVING A GRACE-FILLED LIFE
~ GRATITUDE ~

With: Sr. Noreen Walter, SCL
July 19, 4 p.m. to July 20, 5 p.m.

70 person limit
women 21 and over

register at:
www.showmyevent.com

Legendary Lodge Camps

H.S. Leadership Camp - June 23-28
Jr. High Camp #1 - July 7-12
Jr. High Camp #2 July 14-19
High School Camp - July 21-26
Boys 5th & 6th Grade - July 28 - Aug 2
Girls 5th & 6th Grade - Aug 4-9

Register at:
legendarylodge.org

CYC Convention 2019 - Ignite

Cody Tredik
Communications Staff

On fire, but not consumed. This is what Moses saw, to his amazement, when he saw the burning bush while communing with the Lord. Besides being featured in the Mass readings that weekend, this passage also describes the energy and joy on display at the annual Catholic Youth Coalition Convention, held at Carroll College March 22-24.



Youth at the Guatemala Mission table in the vendor court.

Approximately 225 high school students from the Diocese of Helena and beyond gathered in the Campus Center to pray, learn, share laughs, and invite the Holy Spirit to re-ignite their passion for the Lord and their faith.

Ted, a High School Senior from St. Francis of Assisi parish in Hamilton, said "This is my third CYC Convention, and I always love coming to convention and learning more about my faith."

Emcees Liz McMahon from the University of Montana, and Jamie Severson from Carroll College kicked off the weekend. "I hope that you guys are ready for all of



Keynote Speaker, Jamie Cleaton

the fun and incredible things we have planned this weekend, and that you're open to encounter Christ amidst it all," McMahon said.

The emcees introduced Frs. Kirby Longo and Christopher Lebsock, priests serving in Butte and Helena, respectively. They gave an introduction to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and led the students through an examination of conscience before giving them the opportunity to head into the

Campus Center Cafeteria, where priests from across the diocese were waiting to offer the Sacrament. "I really enjoyed the talk with Fr. Kirby and Fr. Lebsock," Hattie, a four time CYC attendee from Great Falls, said. "They prepared us very well for Reconciliation which, for me, was an incredible experience, and so refreshing."

The first full day of Convention started with a bang as attendees were introduced to their main keynote for the weekend, Jamie Cleaton. In his first session, Cleaton teed up a laptop computer that had theoretically chosen to exist as a golf ball. The resulting drive, and mess, helped illustrate his message that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand, especially in the spiritual life.

Cleaton is a youth minister and national Catholic speaker from San Diego, Calif. He encouraged young people to witness to their love for Christ, saying, "If we're truly ready to let the Holy Spirit move in our lives, we can be making a difference at our schools, in our homes and parishes, even checking out at the grocery store."

After Cleaton's address, students split up to attend gender sessions followed by several workshops. Topics ranged from prayer to Catholic Social Teaching and were led by youth ministers, young adults, priests, women religious, and members of the Catholic Youth Coalition (CYC) Board. The CYC Board also assisted in prayer experiences, games, and many other services throughout the weekend, a result of their planning over the course of the year. Some of their number also gave youth keynote speeches and shared stories of their own struggles and victories in their faith jour-



2019's Outstanding Youth Award recipients.

neys.

Saturday concluded with dinner followed by Mass with Monsignor Kevin O'Neill at the Cathedral of St. Helena. He urged the young people to stay close to the Lord and love generously, sharing a story of conversion from his own childhood. Students returned to Carroll to celebrate with a dance and a talent night where youth could showcase musical acts, skits, and more.

"From the moment we came in on Friday, there was just a bunch of kids having so much fun," said Katie, a junior from Missoula. "It's just so cool to see so many people your age here together and having a good time."

Sunday morning saw Jamie Cleaton's final address, as well as two youth keynotes and a question and answer session with Fr. Kirby Longo. The morning focused on the young people's mission to go out ignited and ready to share what they had experienced.

This year's Convention closed with a final blessing over the senior students, and all those gathered. The prayer for the young people was that they would be the Church, be ignited by the Holy Spirit and go forth to live their call to discipleship; filled, and

Justice Outreach Project

High School Students! Join us for a week of labor, cultural exchange and fellowship, as we engage the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

**July 9-14, 2019
Browning, MT**

Register through dohyouth.org

Heart of a Priest - Holy Relic in Belgrade

Cody Tredik
Communications Staff

Faithful from across Montana made their way to Belgrade on March 26th to experience the incorrupt heart of the parish's patron, St. John Vianney.



Fr. Gilbaugh greets students from St. Andrew School.

Normally enshrined in Ars, France where Vianney served, the holy relic is on pilgrimage across the United States under the guidance of the Knights of Columbus. The heart was available for public veneration at St. John Vianney parish through the afternoon, followed by Mass, confessions, and more time for prayer and veneration in the evening.

St. John Vianney was a parish priest in the village of Ars in the early 1800's. During his life he faced great apathy and antagonism against the priesthood and the Church, but it was in this struggle that he poured his devotion and love. It is said that up to 300 pilgrims visited Vianney each day between 1830 and 1845. Through his work, pilgrims and the people of Ars returned to the Lord with a vibrant faith. He was known for spending 12-hour days in the confessional, and even took on part of the penances that he would give to his flock. After passing away in 1859, St. John Vianney was canonized in 1925 and his body was found to be incorruptible and preserved from decay. Today, he is recognized as the universal patron of parish priests.

"It's an extraordinary sensation to think that he is here with us in a spiritual and physical way," Fr. Eric Gilbaugh, pastor at St. John Vianney parish, said. "And it's wonderful to see all the people who have come: children, parents, elders. It's very gently beautiful the way that holiness draws us together."

Parishioners and priests, both local and from various parts of the diocese, were in attendance. Additionally, students from St. Andrew's Catholic School in Helena and Divine Mercy Academy in Belgrade came to learn

more about St. John Vianney and experience the relic.

"It just blew me away to be in the presence of the heart of a man who really lived and ministered to so many. That's the part of him that loved," said one attendee, who came with a group from Ss. Cyril and Methodius parish in East Helena. "I felt an incredible gentleness and mercy, it was beautiful," said another from the group.

"It was a very emotional and serene experience for me," a parishioner of Resurrection parish in Bozeman said. "It was a good place to reflect and pray for the priests and for vocations, as well as that the world becomes a better place."

Experiences like these impassioned the Knights of Columbus to shepherd the heart of St. John Vianney across the country. The relic first came to the U.S. for an international convention for the Knights in Baltimore in August 2018.

"It was there that the Supreme Knight asked the rector of the shrine in France if it could return to the U.S., entrusted to the Knights of Columbus, and travel throughout the country for the faithful to pray for priests, bishops, and renewal in the church," said Peter Sonski.

Sonski, a Knight of 13 years, is the Education, Outreach, & Visitor Services Manager for the Knights of Columbus Museum in Connecticut and is one of three custodians of the relic on its American pilgrimage. Montana marks the 27th state for Sonski and the relic tour since early March.

"We're all a part the larger Church, and the ambition is to bring the relic to the faithful where they are," he said. "I'm so delighted that we could visit the Diocese of Helena, and that people here could have an intimate moment with the heart. It seems very appropriate that the patron should visit the parish of St. John Vianney."

The parish in Belgrade couldn't agree more. The Catholic community, formerly the Valley of the Flowers Mission, was rededicated in 2013 as St. John Vianney Parish.

Deacon Warner Holm, who has served the parish with his wife Patty since 2012,



A line of visitors continued throughout the afternoon.

expanded on the relationship the parish has with the Saint. "It's such an incredible opportunity for us. Father Gilbaugh has always been very close with St. John Vianney, from visiting the shrine in France to attending St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver. Throughout the years, our community also embraced and took on a great love for this Saint. It was the community that brought forward that name as we prepared to become a parish. He had truly become our patron. Now with him visiting us, it almost brings things full circle for Father and for our parish."

"He is my favorite Saint," Fr. Gilbaugh said. "This only reinforces the closeness I feel to him. I've been blessed to celebrate Mass in Ars at the shrine where the heart is usually



Holy relic of the incorrupt heart of St. John Vianney

located, and while it's one thing to pilgrimage there, for him to make a pilgrimage to us is especially humbling. It's like being visited by a good friend, but one that you'd be honored and humbled would visit you. For many to this point, St. John may have remained an idea, but I hope that the presence of his heart drives home for people that he was a real person just like us, and that they come to the conclusion that the Lord's work in our lives today is no less real."

The relic tour returned to Connecticut on April 1st with stops in New England and New York before returning to France later this spring.



The Roman Catholic
Diocese of Helena

NEWSLETTER

April 2019

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.*

Men in priestly formation for the Diocese of Helena



Dillon Armstrong



Matthew Christiaens



Tyler Frohlich



Dcn. Nathan Scheidecker



Kyle Tannehill