My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

First, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your gracious welcome to me as the Eleventh Bishop of Helena. I have been so very touched by your enthusiasm and support. Since the day of my announcement as your bishop, at the celebration of my ordination and installation Mass and at my visits to each deanery, your warm and joyful greeting has been wonderful. My family was overwhelmed by the welcoming spirit of our diocesan Church. I am enjoying my initial days in the Diocese of Helena! It has been an excellent and very busy beginning!

The deanery celebrations in November and December were a wonderful experience! Thank you to the Deans and everyone who worked to make them so successful. I am very grateful to everyone who attended and thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and taking the opportunity to get to know the good people of the diocese. To see how many of you attended and to experience the great friendship and love you shared was truly a blessing. Your enthusiasm to meet me, and that you were excited because of your faith, was beautiful and very edifying to me.

What a beautiful diocese we have! It was my first opportunity to travel through many parts the diocese. It was clear to me that the beauty of God’s creation here is complemented by your kindness, faith, joy, family life and work. It was a great first visit. I’m very happy to be following those up with week-long deanery visits, the first of which was to the Butte Deanery in January. I’m looking forward to being in the Bozeman Deanery in March and Missoula, Kalispell, and Conrad Deaneries in the months to come. I will also look for creative ways to be with you, including this Diocesan Newsletter, Friday Video Messages, and an audio podcast that Catholic radio in our diocese is generously airing. As plans continue, I’m encouraged that we are off to such a good start!

As I write this, I am preparing to travel with my brother bishops from Region XII to Rome for the Ad Limina Apostolorum visit. In English, this translates to, “at the threshold of the Apostles”. While there, we will meet as a group with the Holy Father on February 3rd, visit some of the curial offices, and celebrate Mass at the four Basilica Churches (St. Peter’s, St. Mary Major, St. Paul Outside the Walls and St. John Lateran). The Region XII Bishops will then travel to Siena for our annual time of retreat before returning to the United States in mid-February. I pray for you each day and will seek the special intercession of the Holy Apostles while in Rome. Please pray for God’s continued blessing on our diocese and for me as we seek Him together in all things.

In Christ, I am

Most Reverend Austin A. Vetter
Bishop of Helena
Bishop Vetter’s Ad Limina Visit

Just before going to print, Bishop Vetter sent these photos back from the Ad Limina in Rome. Keep an eye on his weekly video series and diocesan social media where we can look forward to learning more about his visit after he returns. (Photos courtesy of Vatican Photo Service)

Students Spend Christmas and New Year’s on Rome Pilgrimage

Cody Tredik
Communications Services

“We were watching a video at youth group one Wednesday night about two years ago, and as it was talking about one of the saint relics, the students asked if it could actually be seen,” said Laura Toeckes, the Pastoral Assistant and Director of Religious Education at St. Joseph’s Parish in Choteau. “And I said, 'Absolutely! Someday I’ll take you, and you can see it in person!'”

That idea took hold in the hearts of the students, and over the next two years, Toeckes’ comment became a plan. In Spring of 2019, ten high schoolers, and two sets of willing parents, from Choteau and Fairfield were signed up to make a pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi, and Cascia.

Toeckes got in touch with several acquaintances who would be in Rome at the time of their journey, including Sr. Mary Woelkers, a graduate of Carroll College, and a member of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and John Pankratz, a seminarian for the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings studying at the Pontifical North American College (NAC). Both agreed to offer their guidance.

Additionally, as the dates of their travel approached, the Diocese of Helena’s newly ordained Bishop Austin A. Vetter celebrated Mass in Conrad during his December deanery visits. Most of the aspiring student pilgrims met him for the first time and received a blessing. He also offered some unexpected help.

“As I was chatting with Bishop about some of our recent plans falling through, he told me about his two nephews also studying at the NAC,” Toeckes said. “He told us: ‘Tell the NAC to give you the number for the Vetter boys, they’ll take care of you!’” A few phone calls later, Steven and Nicholas Vetter confirmed that they would be available and happy to assist the group during their time in Rome.

The group pilgrimage started on Christmas Day with the first decade of a traveling Rosary in the airport. They arrived the 26th and met Steven Vetter, who helped them find their lodging. He walked with the group during a portion of their time in Rome, and offered his knowledge at sacred areas such as the Basilica of St. Peter.

While in Rome they also visited the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Holy Stairs, and the Vatican Museum. On the Feast of the Holy Family they attended Pope Francis’ Angelus in St. Peter’s Square.

“I really liked seeing St. Peter’s with Steven, seeing the Pope, and climbing the holy stairs on our knees.

Continued on page 3.
Student Pilgrimage Continued.
These were some of my top moments of grace,” said Blake, a sophomore.

“We also walked to the Pantheon for Mass, and one of the first things out of one of our Montana kids’ mouth was: ‘Wow, it looks like a giant grain bin!'” Toeckes said.

The pilgrimage also took them to the smaller towns of Assisi and Cascia, where they spent time with St. Francis, St. Clare, and St. Rita. They celebrated New Year’s Eve in the main square in Assisi, with live music and dancing.

“It was such a joyful evening,” Toeckes said. “Many of the students said it was the best New Year’s of their lives! And it was very amusing to watch them dance and sing along to the Italian bands’ interesting renditions of popular American music!”

On the day they were to leave Assisi, one of the of religious women who ran the house they were staying at mentioned them to the Archbishop of Assisi, Domenico Sorrentino. Archbishop Sorrentino celebrated Mass for them and, while travel plans prevented accepting his offer to have lunch, he gave them a blessing that was prayed over St. Francis of Assisi by the bishop of his time.

Maggie, a freshman, said: “I really loved seeing the things our Lord has touched and where His saints lived and walked. It was such a powerful experience.”

Returning to Rome, they met up with seminarian John Pankratz who gave the group a day-long tour dedicated to St. Paul, visiting St. Paul of the Three Fountains, where Paul was martyred, and the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, where he is buried. The day was a profound experience for many of the youth.

“The part that strengthened my spirit the most was probably going to the spot where St. Paul was killed. Something in me just clicked at that location. I’m not sure why,” Matthew, a freshman said.

They joined Sr. Mary Woelkers and two other sisters of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary for tea. They were treated to a rooftop reception by seminarians at the Pontifical North American College, and dinner with Steven and Nicholas Vetter, alongside some of their brother seminarians. Later, the group prayed a special Diocese of Helena CYC blessing over the Veters.

“My top faith-filled moments were the time of silent prayer in Assisi, getting to talk with the sisters and seminarians, and our traveling rosary,” Amy, a sophomore, said. The group concluded their traveling rosary in the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport and arrived back in Montana on January 5th.

With so many incredible experiences, some of the students are still processing the trip, like Luke, a junior who said: “Wow, just wow. It’s going to take me a while to think about everything. This has just been amazing.”

“My biggest grace from this journey was a total abandonment and reliance on God,” Toeckes said. “Jesus planned everything here, and we just had to let him. Being in these places where so much was given, it reminds us to give it all over, and that the Lord lavishly honors our generosity.”

The Young Adult Exodus
Dan Bartleson
Communications Services

There’s a lot of discussion about how we keep our young adults from leaving the Church. Statistics are that for every new Catholic added to the roles, six leave. Many good books are available about it as the problem is dissected discussed. I certainly don’t have a comprehensive answer but had the pleasure to get to know a young lady, a Carroll College senior, serving an internship in the office next to mine. Her story reminded me that I do have the means, and responsibility, to do my part.

Katie Korbuszewski’s early family life points clearly to an intentional and active Catholicism. Adopted out of Guatemala, Katie always attended Mass with her mom, dad, and brother (including on vacations). She went to faith formation at her home parish and attended Catholic Grade School. Katie’s mom stepped back from her work as a stockbroker to be at home with the kids early on and later picked up part-time work at the parish to help make ends meet. Faith and knowledge wove richly through the rhythm and spirit of family life.

In seventh grade, her world expanded with a simple mission trip to a food bank in Bellingham, Wash. Attending Mass, praying, working at the organic farm, and spending time with food bank patrons made a big impression during what she called her “first big adventure.” How to operate in the world as a disciple became more concrete. She saw her beliefs put into action and that it changes lives.

On a simple campus tour, she saw there was a chapel in every residence hall and great opportunities to grow in faith at Carroll College. She enrolled because it just “felt right” compared to other colleges. She naturally jumped into campus ministry, going on to become a peer minister. Campus ministry for her was transformative in many ways, especially through the mentors she gained there, who, “Inspire me daily.” she said. She also served as a camp counselor at the diocese’s Legendary Lodge youth camps and through a Cathedral Choir Scholarship.

Katie is currently an intern in the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (OYYAM) for the Diocese of Helena. Through Carroll’s Vision and Call ministry internship program Katie said she’s grown to appreciate the care and effort it takes to run events – even the details. Kevin Molm manages OYYAM and described her as “Professional, diligent, and enthusiastic.” Regarding the youth events, she said, “To see young people take away graces is really beautiful.” Both a Communication and Theology major, her career prospects are already forming as her gifts, education, and passion have come together - with faith directing her steps.

So, at an age when many drift away, Katie gives clear witness. Why? The reason seems clear: prayerful family participation in the life of the Church, real-life experiences of service alongside competent Catholic mentors, and opportunities to explore God’s call to discipleship. Katie’s encouraging example gives us a great deal to reflect on. Where and when we are most responsible for creating a path for the Katie Korbuszewski’s in our lives, and what more can we do?
Walking with Moms in Need
Matthew Brower
Director, the Montana Catholic Conference

On January 22 we commemorated a tragic anniversary—47 years since the U.S. Supreme Court rendered its landmark decision Roe v. Wade. I dare say it is impossible to name a judicial decision over the last half-century that has been more divisive or impactful at almost every level of our culture.

Ponder for a moment what 62 million additional people in this country over those years would look like. What good we would have encountered and experienced from the presence of those precious lives! 62 million masterpieces of God’s creation revealing to the world the depths of God’s love for us—each of us.

At times, addressing this overwhelming crisis can seem almost impossible. I think part of the reason is that with abortion, much of the focus has been on tackling the issue as a legal problem. While it certainly is that, and our work toward the legal protection of all unborn children is both important and necessary, we need to broaden our perspective and ask ourselves probing questions.

Why do women choose abortion? What role does poverty play? Domestic violence? Lack of a supportive network of family, friends and community? And, significantly, how do we address these issues both in public policy and “on the ground” in our families, communities, places of business and parishes?

It seems to me that, even aside from the progress made toward the establishment of legal protection of the unborn, we have every reason to be hopeful and feel empowered to make a difference in our fight for life. Why? Because we are offered an infinite array of opportunities to address the scourge of abortion, not just at election time or during the next legislative session but right here, right now.

But are we equipped and courageous enough to answer the call—to be the hands, feet and heart of Jesus to those in need?

The U.S. bishops have long recognized the need for our pro-life work to encompass far more than legislative advocacy and this year they are launching a year-long initiative entitled Walking with Moms in Need: A Year of Service (www.walkingwithmoms.com).

Set to begin on March 25, 2020 (Solemnity of the Annunciation) and run through March 25, 2021, the initiative seeks to equip parish communities with vital information about available local resources for mothers facing challenging pregnancies. Parishes are also asked to help identify potential gaps in necessary resources so that expectant and new moms have access to the help that will aid them in making life-affirming choices.

As Archbishop Joseph Naumann, Chairman of the USCCB Pro-Life Committee, said in introducing this initiative, “The parish community is uniquely positioned to encourage a collaboration of resources at the local level and to increase awareness of help available to mothers and families in need.”

Please prayerfully consider how you can support this initiative in your own parish.

For more information about Walking with Moms in Need or other pro-life work in the Diocese of Helena, please feel free to contact me at (406) 442-5761 or director@montanacc.org.
Legendary Adventure Camp Coming in 2020!

Fr. Kirby Longo
Parochial Vicar, St. Ann Parish, Butte

The Fathers of the Church spoke of God’s two books, the Holy Scriptures and the Book of Nature. The scriptures reveal God in His love and mercy, while the book of nature helps display God’s “eternal power and divine nature.” The glory and grandeur of the created world lifts our hearts to the heavens, for we see in it a generous God who gives good things with abundance and abandon.

Countless people from all walks of life have come to love and revere the beauty of Montana, and as Catholics, we understand creation offers an immersion in the profound love of God. So - with intention and great expectation - into the wilderness we go!

Legendary Adventure Camp (LAC) will integrate a breathtaking wilderness experience with the foundations of our faith in the context of a 6-day backpacking adventure. We will celebrate Mass each morning and dig into our rich Catholic tradition each evening after covering up to seven miles of wilderness trail. Our days will include climbing mountains, catching cutthroat trout, and learning wilderness survival skills.

LAC is a collaboration between Legendary Lodge, Carroll College, and COR Expeditions, which is an outreach of Wyoming Catholic College. We are grateful for Carroll College’s support, and we are excited to be contracting guides from COR. The strong relationship with Carroll and Legendary Lodge is well known, and the partnership with COR is an excellent way to provide a safe and unique wilderness experience. COR guides lead groups on wilderness excursions all over the U.S. They are certified and educated thoroughly and are ready to navigate the wilderness for our groups.

“Go with haste into the mountains!”

These words from Luke’s Gospel commissioned the very first Bishop of Helena, Bishop Brondel. They were invoked last November again by the Papal Nuncio as Bishop Austin Vetter was ordained and installed as our new bishop. As Chaplain of LAC, I’m very happy to call to adventure the youth of our diocese with the same invitation. Let us “Go with haste in the mountains” together, to encounter Christ!
Catholic Women’s Conference
*Jesus is in the Healing Business*

April 18, 2020 | Helena Civic Center

The annual Women’s conference seeks to foster an appreciation for the personal dignity of women in Christ, to encourage, teach, and challenge women to know and love God, and to inspire women to use their feminine gifts to transform the family and society.

**Speakers**

Judy Landrieu Klein, Ph.D.
Sr. Tracey Dugas
Megan Murphy
Jeanne O’Connell

**Schedule**

Friday, April 17
6:00 PM - Rosary and Mass at Cathedral of St. Helena
(Family Event - All Women, Men and Children Welcome!)

Saturday, April 18
7:00-8:45 AM - Registration/Exhibitors, Vendors, & Coffee
8:00 AM - Welcome-Instructions for day
9:15 AM - Conference Talks Begin
12:00 PM - Lunch with Special Presentation
1:00 PM - Conference Talks Resume
3:25 PM - Divine Mercy Chaplet and Closing Remarks
5:00 PM - Mass at Cathedral of St. Helena
6:00 PM - Conference Concludes

Helena Civic Center
340 Neill Ave, Helena, MT 59601

Registration:
$50.00 - Before 3/18/20
$60.00 - After 3/18/20

More info at: helenacwc.com

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Catholic Men’s Conference
*In the Steps of Saint Joseph*

March 21, 2020

The Montana Catholic Men’s Conference seeks to gather, affirm and challenge Catholic men. Amidst prayer, sacrament, fraternity and excellent presentations, we seek Christ so that, together, we better fulfill the responsibility of our vocation in the world. Sons, brothers, fathers, husbands and priests seek to follow the Good Shepherd, and live "life to the full" found in Him. (John – Chapter 10)

**Speakers**

Doug Tooke
Bishop Austin A. Vetter
Fr. David Severson

**Schedule**

Saturday, March 21
8:30 AM - Welcome/Check-In
9:00 AM - Morning Mass followed by Reconciliation
11:00 AM - Bishop Vetter (Presentation)
12:00 PM - Lunch
1:00 PM - Doug Tooke (Presentation)
2:00 PM - Fr. David Severson (Presentation)
3:00 PM - Doug Tooke (Presentation)
4:00 PM - Closing
5:00 PM - Vigil Mass at Cathedral of St. Helena

Brondel Center (downstairs)
Cathedral of St. Helena
530 N Ewing St., Helena, MT 59601

Registration: $50.00
More info and registration at: mtcatholicmen.org
Accompanying Youth on Their Journey of Faith and Discernment

Dawn Brannman
Youth Ministry Director, St. Mary’s Parish, Helena

On January 10th and 11th, a group of approximately 30 Youth Ministers, Directors of Faith Formation, and others who work with youth gathered at Fairmont Hot Springs for a Youth Ministry Retreat. The retreat was organized by Kevin Molm, Director of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Originally, the retreat was going to be led by Tom East from the Center for Ministry Development, but due to a death in the family, Tom was unable to attend. As we were reminded in the retreat though, God is alive and actively working and on very short notice, Doug Tooke of ODB Films was able to step in and lead our retreat!

The primary content of our retreat was based on Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Christus Vivit - Christ is Alive!* Although this encyclical was written to young people, it has much to offer for adults who are accompanying youth on their faith journey. We explored the idea of what it means to accompany youth when our whole culture is missionary territory. We were challenged to embrace new ways of sharing the Good News with youth and to allow the work we do to be of God. Doug reminded us that, “We can plan the perfect program, but we need to surrender our plan and just let God do what God does.” It was really a great reminder to us that while we have to have a good work ethic, changing hearts is really a work of the Holy Spirit and sometimes our greatest challenge is to just remember that.

The retreat was a great opportunity to connect with others throughout the diocese who work with youth. Working with youth is an amazing call and a genuine honor, but it also involves much sacrifice. Sharing with others in the diocese who encounter similar joys and challenges was life giving. This retreat was also meant to renew us in our own personal relationship with Christ as well as hopefully renewing our ministry. We always want to help youth develop a prayer life and to experience silence. This retreat was an amazing opportunity for us to pray together and allow the Lord to remind us of His great love for us.

There were many blessings on this retreat, and one of them was the gift of Bishop Vetter’s presence! Bishop Vetter was able to come and celebrate Mass with us, join us for lunch and speak to us! Bishop Vetter offered all of us who work with youth support and encouragement. He affirmed the work that we do and encouraged us to be creative in providing opportunities for youth to experience Christ’s transforming love.

“Always lead with beauty”, was an invitation that Doug gave us. This retreat was definitely an opportunity to experience beauty. We were able to leave the retreat renewed and refreshed, praying once again, “Use Me, Lord.”

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**A week of service, learning, and solidarity.**
Centered on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, JOP is about engaging in meaningful, Christ-centered relationships with the Blackfeet people.

**JUSTICE OUTREACH PROJECT**

**JULY 7-12, 2020**
**BROWNING, MT**

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This Newsletter provided in part by the generous donors to the Annual Catholic Appeal.
Men in priestly formation for the Diocese of Helena 2019-2020

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.

- Cathedral Photo: Jason Savage Photography -