

Dear Padre,

Is it appropriate to display the American flag in our church?

A diocesan bishop—who often delegates this matter to the discretion of the pastor—determines regulations on whether and how to display the American flag in a Catholic church. Displaying the flag, and a book of remembrance for those serving in the armed forces, seems to have originated in many US parishes during World War II. The practice has continued through subsequent wars and national tragedies.

While the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy advised that national symbols should not be *permanent* fixtures of a worship space, they may be appropriate at worship services on a civil holiday, etc. This same committee discouraged pastors from displaying the American flag within the sanctuary itself—a space reserved for the altar, ambo, presidential chair, and tabernacle—but instead to place the flag in the vestibule of the church together with a book of petitions for the living and deceased.

Fundamentally, a church building is where the liturgical assembly gathers as one body in Christ—the same Christ of the Eucharist who is beyond time and place, who came to unite our divisions. “The church building is a sign and reminder of the immanence and transcendence of God—who chose to dwell among us and whose presence cannot be contained or limited to any single place” (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Built of Living Stones*, 2000). ●



JOAQUIN OSSORIO CASTILLO / SHUTTERSTOCK

Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR / DearPadre.org

Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.

Monday

July 6
Weekday
Hos 2:16, 17c–18, 21–22
Mt 9:18–26

Tuesday

July 7
Weekday
Hos 8:4–7, 11–13
Mt 9:32–38

Wednesday

July 8
Weekday
Hos 10:1–3, 7–8, 12
Mt 10:1–7

Thursday

July 9
Weekday
Hos 11:1–4, 8e–9
Mt 10:7–15

Friday

July 10
Weekday
Hos 14:2–10
Mt 10:16–23

Saturday

July 11
St. Benedict, Abbot
Is 6:1–8
Mt 10:24–33

Sunday

July 12
Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Is 55:10–11
Rom 8:18–23
Mt 13:1–23 or 13:1–9

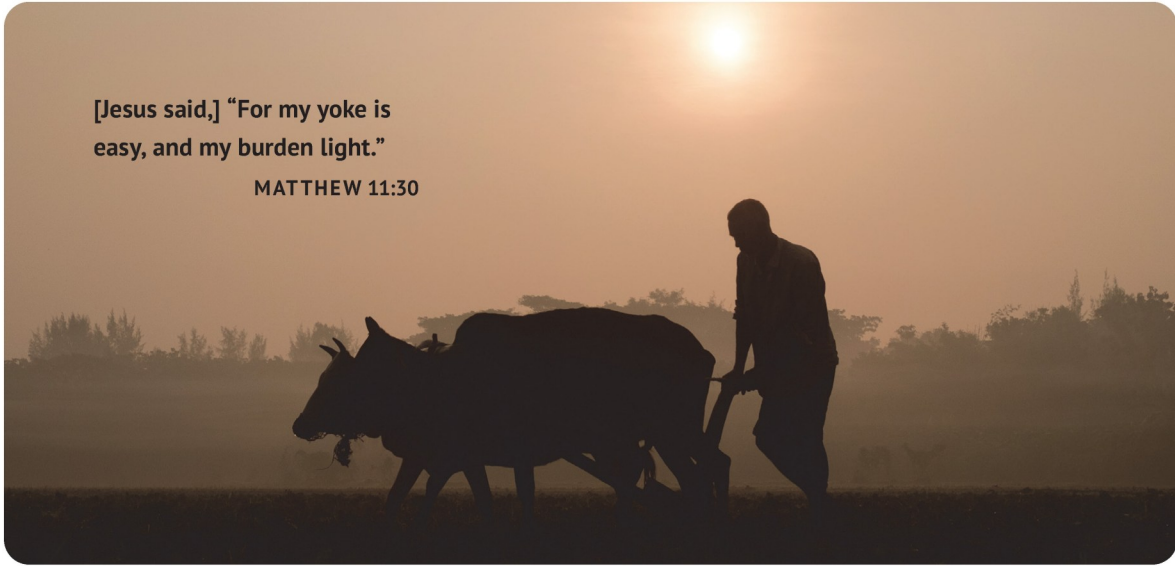
Our Parish COMMUNITY

July 5, 2026
Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Zechariah 9:9–10 / Romans 8:9, 11–13 / Matthew 11:25–30



[Jesus said,] “For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

MATTHEW 11:30



Take Up the Yoke

ANN M. GARRIDO

The invention of the yoke 6,000 years ago marked one of the great advances in human history. The yoke—a wooden beam fitted across the neck—harnessed the energy of two cattle pulling in the same direction, hastening the tilling of soil and transport of goods.

It is easy to see why, among many ancient peoples, the yoke became a symbol of subjugation. When the Roman army won a battle, they forced defeated soldiers to walk beneath a “yoke” of spears to indicate they were now in a state of servitude. The prophet Jeremiah once walked through Jerusalem wearing a yoke to warn the people they were about to be conquered by Babylon.

In Judaism, however, the Torah was also sometimes referred to as a yoke. It was a law to be submitted to, but it also was a way of life that offered an alternative to the cruel “yokes” imposed by kings. The Book of Sirach encourages youth to “Take [Torah’s] yoke upon your neck; that your mind may receive her teaching.... See for yourselves! I have labored only a little but have found much” (Sirach 51:26–27).

It is unclear exactly what Jesus meant when he invited us to accept *his* yoke, but it is likely that he was echoing the invitation of Sirach. He wanted us to know that following God’s law makes it possible for us to work together, accomplishing much that we could not do on our own. And that God’s law is a gentle law—one that enables rather than oppresses. Are you willing to receive Christ’s gentle teaching and make it your own? ●

Reflect

Is there a teaching of Jesus you find challenging?

BRICOLAGE / SHUTTERSTOCK



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Celebrating America's 250th Anniversary: A Time for Gratitude, Renewal, and Hope

As our nation celebrates the **250th Anniversary of the United States of America**, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and prayerful best wishes to each of you. This historic milestone is much more than a commemoration of our nation's founding. It is an invitation to give thanks to Almighty God for His providence throughout these two and a half centuries and to renew our commitment to building a society rooted in faith, hope, justice, and love.

The story of America is one of courage, perseverance, sacrifice, and an enduring desire for freedom. Generation after generation has worked tirelessly to preserve the ideals upon which this nation was founded while striving to create a better future for those who would come after them. As Catholics, we recognize that true freedom is ultimately a gift from God. It is not merely the freedom to do as we please but the freedom to seek the truth, to worship God without fear, to serve one another with charity, and to live lives of virtue and holiness.

This anniversary also calls us to reflect honestly on the challenges of our own time. We live in an age marked by increasing polarization, loneliness, uncertainty, and a weakening of faith and family life. Many people long for genuine hope, meaningful relationships, and a renewed sense of purpose. These realities remind us that the future of our nation depends not only on sound institutions but also on the moral and spiritual growth of its people.

As Christians, we are called to be instruments of renewal. The future of America will be shaped not only by elected leaders but by ordinary people who choose each day to love their neighbors, strengthen their families, serve their communities, and witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Every act of kindness, every prayer offered for our nation, every child raised in the faith, and every effort to promote peace and justice contributes to the common good. This is the mission entrusted to us today.

On a personal note, I consider it one of God's greatest blessings to be serving here in Iowa during this historic anniversary. As a priest from **Ghana, West Africa**, I feel deeply honored to celebrate this remarkable occasion with you. Although I was born and raised on another continent, you have welcomed me with extraordinary kindness, friendship, and generosity, making me feel truly at home among you. I am grateful for the opportunity to share something of my faith, joyful spirit, and vibrant traditions of my Ghanaian and African heritage while learning from your own deep love for God, family, and country.

As we celebrate **America at 250**, let us thank God for the blessings of the past, pray for wisdom in the present, and look to the future with renewed confidence. May we never lose sight of the values that strengthen both our nation and our communities: faith in God, respect for the dignity of every human person, care for the vulnerable, commitment to justice, and love of neighbor. Together, let us continue building a society where future generations can flourish in freedom, peace, and hope.

May God continue to bless the United States of America. May He bless our communities, our families, and each of you. And may the **Blessed Virgin Mary, under her title of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the United States**, intercede for our nation today and always.

Happy **250th Anniversary, America!**

"We at St. Mary & Joseph Parishes strive for a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ through Scripture and Sacraments, form missionary disciples, and send them forth to transform the world."



Our Three-Parish Cluster Sts. Mary and Joseph Catholic Churches Lone Tree, Nichols and Hills

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time

July 5, 2026

Church of St. Mary, 201 Short Street, Box B, Nichols, Iowa, 52766 319-330-5324
St. Mary Church, 216 West Jayne Street, Box 416, Lone Tree, Iowa, 52755 319-629-4225
St. Joseph Church, 209 Brady Street, PO Box 187, Hills, Iowa, 52235 319-679-2271

Sts. Mary and Joseph Cluster Parish Office
209 Brady Street, P.O. Box 187 Hills, Iowa 52235-0187

Father David Paintsil, Pastor; 319-679-2271; email: paintsild@diodav.org
Mrs. Carol Kaalberg, Pastoral Associate; 319-330-5324; email: kaalbergc@diodav.org
Lora Sieverding, Administrative Assistant & Bookkeeper; hillsstjosephfin@diodav.org
Nancy Waldschmidt, Director of Faith Formation; 319-331-2077; email: nwaldschmidt@gwaea.org
Cluster Website: stsmarijoseph.com Cluster Facebook: www.facebook.com/stsmarijoseph
Rev. Lou Leonhardt (retired priest); PO Box 454, Lone Tree, IA 52755 319-629-4339
Bulletin deadline: 10am Tuesday. Contact Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324 or Lora Sieverding, 319-530-5560
Hills Church entry: Lora Sieverding, 319-530-5560 or Judy Stebral, 319-331-8727

Music Ministry: St. Joseph, Hills: Lily Westemeyer, Robynn Anderson, Haylee Osmonson
Church of St. Mary, Nichols: Jean Mengel and Rhonda Meredith
St. Mary, Lone Tree: Steve Moore.
St. Joseph Prayer Line: Lucille Duwa 679-2404; Joan Gringer 679-2406
Church of St. Mary, Nichols Prayer Line: Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324
St. Mary, Lone Tree Prayer Line: Nancy Ford, 319-430-0882

*In your prayers
please remember the
sick and suffering,
those having surgery
and other issues
from our cluster and
beyond.*

Cluster Mass Intentions July 4 to July 12, 2026

Saturday	July 4	4:00 PM	Lone Tree	Marvin Klebe
Sunday	July 5	8:00 AM 10:00 AM	Nichols Hills	Paul Yedlik Maynard Rayner
Monday	July 6	8:00 AM	Lone Tree R	Leonard Cooney
Tuesday	July 7	8:00 AM 8:30 AM 10:00 AM	Lone Tree R Atrium PP CC	Bill Leonhardt Spcl Int of Becky Thomann Cluster Parishioners
Wednesday	July 8	8:00 AM 8:30 AM	Lone Tree R Atrium	Henry Leonhardt Draker family
Thursday	July 9	8:30 AM 10:00 AM	Atrium PPCC	LvngDcsd of Hebl family Martin Warson
Friday	July 10	8:30 AM	Atrium	Doris Ruth
Saturday	July 11	4:00 PM	Lone Tree	Luther Hartley
Sunday	July 12	8:00 AM 10:00 AM	Nichols Hills	Ann Wieskamp Veva Jenn

Atrium , Atrium Village Chapel,
Atrium Village, Hills.

PP CC, Pioneer Park Care Center
located at Pioneer Park Villa,
Lone Tree.

Lone Tree R, St. Mary Rectory in
Lone Tree.

Confession Schedule

*Father David is available to
hear confessions before
Mass at these times:*

St. Mary, Lone Tree
Saturday 3:30 to 3:50 pm
Church of St. Mary Nichols
Sunday 7:30 to 7:50 am

St. Joseph, Hills
Sunday 9:30 to 9:50 am
*Let us come to reconcile to God
and others!*

Bulletin deadline Tuesday at 10:00 am. Contact Lora Sieverding at 319-530-5560, hillsstjosephfin@diodav.org or Carol Kaalberg at 319-330-5324 or kaalbergc@diodav.org.

FOOD PANTRIES

Lone Tree Food Pantry is open each Wednesday afternoon from 3:30-5:00 PM. For more information, please call 319-629-4900.

St. Joseph Food Pantry is open each Wednesday morning from 10 am to noon. Mike and Lucy Parker direct our food pantry and can be reached at 319-679-2420.

PARISH COUNCILS

Minutes are posted at all church entries.

Nichols Parish Council & Finance Council: Next meeting to be announced, as needed.

Lone Tree Parish Council & Finance Council: Next meeting Monday, August 24 at 6PM, parish hall.

Hills Parish Council: Next meeting will be Monday, July 20 at 6:30 PM. Finance Council meeting Thurs., September 17, 2026, 6:00 PM.

Bible Study

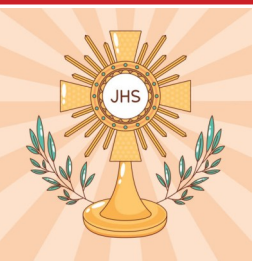
Bible Study will meet July 14 & 28 at **Atrium Village, 1st floor conference room** at 6:30 PM. Contact Melody Hobert-Mellecker—319-936-3287, call or text — if you are interested, or just come!



Patience is the ability to idle your motor when you feel like stripping your gears.



Vacation Bible School will be August 3-7 at Nichols Christian Church. 9 am until 11:30 am. For students 5-12 years old. Rides from Lone Tree to Nichols will be offered. Please contact Linda Abbott for more information: 563-357-8733.



Eucharistic Adoration
Wednesday,
July 8, 2026.
6 PM-7PM
St. Joseph, Hills

Confessions are available at this time.



Coming Soon!
Please contact Fr. David Paintsil or Carol Kirkpatrick if interested.

Liturgical Ministers—Lone Tree St. Mary Saturday 4:00 pm Cycle A Reading						
	07/04/2026 Lou	07/11/2026 David	07/18/2026 Lou	07/25/2026 David	Lone Tree	Parish Support
Greeter	Barb Dinsmore	Paula Moore	Nancy Ford	Bernie Lorack	Envelopes	\$705.00
Lector	Jill Welter	Jerry Ford	Jerry Ford	Sherry Nicola	Offertory	\$67.00
Cross Bearer	Lynn Bland	Joel Yedlik	Glen Gerot	Joel Yedlik	Cemetery	\$20.00
Servers	Jill Welter	Jerry Ford	Jerry Ford	Sherry Nicola		
Eucharist	Judy Grothe	Jerry Ford	Jerry Ford	Paula Moore		
Eucharist	Sherry Nicola	Paula Moore	Nancy Ford	Sherry Nicola		
Collection	Joan Davis	Joel Yedlik	Betty Gerot	Joel Yedlik		
	Lynn Bland	Mary Ellen Yedlik	Glen Gerot	Mary Ellen Yedlik		
Gifts	Joan Davis, Lynn Bland	Joel & Mary Ellen Yedlik	Betty Gerot, Glen Gerot	Joel & Mary Ellen Yedlik		
Commentator	Jill Welter	Jerry Ford	Jerry Ford	Sherry Nicola		

Liturgical Ministers—Nichols Church of St. Mary Sunday 8:00 am Cycle A Reading						
	07/05/2026 David	07/12/2026 Lou	07/19/2026 David	07/26/2026 David	Nichols	Parish Support
Greeter	Jeanne Green	Jeanne Green	Jeanne Green	Jeanne Green	Envelopes	\$580.00
Lector	Tom Barr	Trudi Westfall	Renetta Burlage	Missy Lenz	Offertory	\$60.00
Cross Bearer	Dennis Truesdale	David Ollendick	Michael Burlage	Adam Gauger	Peter’s Pence	\$30.00
Server	Carol Kaalberg	Trudi Westfall	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg		
Eucharist	Tom Barr	Tom Barr	Carol Kaalberg	Missy Lenz		
Eucharist	Carol Kaalberg	Trudi Westfall	Adam Gauger	Carol Kaalberg		
Collection	Kory Kaalberg	Dennis Truesdale	Wayne Mengel	Adam Gauger		
	Adam Gauger	David Ollendick	Tom Barr	Kory Kaalberg		
Gifts	Dennis Truesdale	Tom Barr	Michael & Renetta Burlage	Tom & Maggie Gouger		
Commentator	Carol Kaalberg	Trudi Westfall	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg		

Liturgical Ministers—Hills St. Joseph Sunday 10:00 am Cycle A Reading						
	07/05/2026 David	07/12/2026 David	07/19/2026 David	07/26/2026 Lou	Hills	Parish Support
Music Ministry	Robynn Anderson	Choir	Choir	Haylee Osmonson & Choir	Envelopes	\$465.00
Greeter	Judy Stebral	Marcia Mellecker	Jim & Marilyn Mills	Jim & Hope Frantz	Offertory	\$95.00
Lector	Kezia Attitse	Bob Jenn	Shelagh McDonald	Mike Waldschmidt	Dio Charity	\$20.00
	Messi Akodegnon, Emy Rivera					
Server		Jean Burr, Wendy Berry	Emy Rivera, Josh Ayelazuno	Mike Sieverding	Peter’s Pence	\$55.00
Eucharist -host	Kay Evans	Jolene Van Eschen	Jolene Van Eschen	Deanne Eden		
Eucharist - cup	Deanne Eden	Emy Rivera	Arlene Johnston	Arlene Johnston		
Eucharist - cup	Mike Sieverding	Mike Sieverding	Kristee Malmberg	Emy Rivera		
Collection	Barb Mahanna	Marcia Mellecker	Jim Mills	Jim Frantz		
	Marcia Mellecker	Mike Waldschmidt	Marilyn Mills	Hope Frantz		
Gifts	Maynard Rayner family	Veva Jenn Family	Jeremy Jenn Family	Bob & Renita Rummelhart Family		
Commentator	Lora Sieverding	Shelagh McDonald	Lora Sieverding	Shelagh McDonlad		

If you are unavailable for the above ministry assignment, please find your own replacement. Thank you.

FATHER LOU CELEBRATES



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Thank you to all who helped Fr. Lou celebrate his 70th year of ordination!

Thank you to everyone who wished me well and joined in my celebration. A heartfelt thank you to the Altar & Rosary of St. Joseph, Hills, who planned and served a great luncheon. It has been a blessing to be a part of this cluster parish and a blessing to continue to celebrate the joy of Mass. May God continue to bless our cluster parish and our parishioners.

Blessings, Fr. Lou

Rest in Peace: Our parish sympathy is extended to the family of Phyllis Sladek, who passed away June 27. Phyllis is the mother of Kay Evans. Eternal rest grant unto her O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May her soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

A group of the Seven Sisters Apostolate has been established for the cluster of Hills, Lone Tree and Nichols parishes to pray for our priest. Each day of the week one Sister commits to praying a Holy Hour for our priest. Sunday and Thursday are covered, but Sisters are still needed for the remaining days of the week. Please consider devoting one hour each week to lifting up our priest and covering him in prayer. Please contact anchoress Judee Albert at 319-325-4026 with questions or to volunteer, and visit sevensistersapostolate.org for more information.



Will you be celebrating your 50th wedding anniversary this year? If you were married in 1976 the diocese will be honoring you and your spouse on October 18th at St. Patrick's, Iowa City. Please let your parish office know your anniversary date **before** August 23, 2026.

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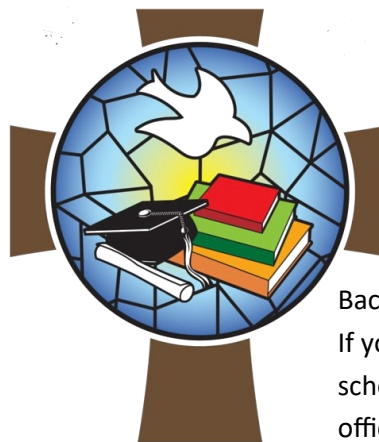


LONE TREE
RECTORY
REMOVES
FIREPLACE.
THANK YOU
TO RANDY
YAKISH AND
HIS CREW
FOR THE

AWESOME WORK!



Thank you to Jerry and Nancy Ford who instructed parish members how to use the new AED's located in our churches. Your time and talent is greatly appreciated.



Back to school is just around the corner. If you need assistance with Catholic school tuition, please let your parish office know.