In Africa, pope challenges attitudes, cultural trends

By John Thavis

Catholic News Service

LUANDA, Angola (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI’s right statement oppos- ing condom distribution in AIDS preven- tion drew sharp criticism and was seen by many as a distraction from his main message in Africa.

But a closer look reveals that very little of what the pope had to say during his March 17-23 African journey was easy or accommodating. On issues ranging from abortion to corruption, from women’s rights to economic development, he preached the Gospel in a way that took issue with com- mon practices and prevailing attitudes.

His conviction, expressed on his first day in Cameroon, is that Christianity is the answer — the only real answer — to the chronic problems plaguing Africa. His fear is that Africa, caught up in economic and cultural globalization, will follow the secularized West and lose touch with its own best values.

“Condom campaigns are, to Pope Benedict, a small but very real part of this threat. But his concern extends to virtually every area of social, economic and political life.

“At a time when so many people have no qualms about trying to impose the tyranny of materialism, with scant concern for those needing therapies!”

Science’s Rightful Place

By Richard M. Doerflinger

LIFE ISSUES FORUM

Though tempered by sober realism, President Obama’s inaugural address in January delivered a message of hope — including a hope that science will help our nation solve its serious problems. “We will restore science to its rightful place,” he said, “and wield technology’s wonders to raise health care’s quality and lower its costs.”

But now the president has decided to force U.S. taxpayers to subsidize research that requires destroying live human em- byros. That decision actually ignores his pledge to take science seriously — because science is moving on, and embryonic stem cells are becoming “obsolete.”

That’s the considered judgment of the first female director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Bernadine Healy, writing in the March 4 issue of U.S. News and World Report. Dr. Healy cites a recent study in Israel, showing the formation of multiple tumors in a boy’s nervous system after he was treated with derivatives from early fetal stem cells.

In January, a study in Nature Biotech- nology confirmed that embryonic stem cell cultures generally contain abnormal cells that can cause cancer — and there is no simple way to tell which cells are abnormal, as they have a normal genome and may seem to be the healthiest and most viable cells. Dr. Martin Pera, stem cell expert at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, comments: “Ultimately it may be difficult or impossible to rule out with certainty that a given culture is totally free of abnormal cells.” How reassuring for those needing therapies!

Producing genetically tailored embry- onic stem cells that cannot be rejected as “foreign” by a patient’s body also remains a challenge. To solve this problem, teams around the world have tried to obtain use- able stem cells from cloned human embry- os, but failed. Cloning also requires a huge supply of women’s eggs — and according to the February 1 issue of the American Journal of Epidemiology, the drugs needed to stimulate women’s ovaries to produce these eggs boosts the women’s risk of, yes, cancer. The bizarre approach of using eggs from animals instead was approved last year in Great Britain, but scientists now find that animal eggs (big surprise) do not work.

The three oils are 1.) the oil of catechu- ments, used in the baptismal ceremony of adults and infants; 2.) the oil of the sick, used in the sacrament of the anointing of the sick; and 3.) the sacred oil of chrism, used for baptism, confirmation, the or- dination of priests and bishops, and the Chrism Mass displays unity of priests

By Cynthia Brewer

One of the most solemn Masses of the year is the Chrism Mass, which, in our diocese, is celebrated on the Tuesday of Holy Week. It is the Mass where the bishop consecrates the chrism and blesses the oils used by the priests in various sacraments.

The Lancet said the pope made “an out- rageous and wildly inaccurate statement about HIV/AIDS” during an interview with journalists on a flight to Cameroon March 17.

“The pope has publicly dis-trusted scientific evidence to pro- mote Catholic doctrine on this issue,” said The Lancet editorial posted online be- fore the publication date.

Pope Benedict had said, “One cannot see Lancer criticisms, p. 16
Deceptive or misleading advertising is never knowingly accepted. Complaints regarding advertising may be reported to the Office of the Archbishop. A toll-free number (877) 606-7466 is provided for those outside Texas. In Victoria, call (361) 573-5725. Check availability nationally at 1-800-635-3473, or log on to www.usccb.org.

Shuttin’ the Gate …

By Cynthia Brewer, editor

U.S. Catholic newspaper editors can find it difficult satisfying all their readers, even though we’re all Catholic. We should be on the same page, as we each have the Church’s teachings and principles, either in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) or at various Catholic Web sites that provide copies of the CCC, Bibles, encyclicals, etc. One of the best sites for this information is www.usccb.org, the Web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

But when Catholic editors are sent “letters to the editor” or phone calls in response to the news chosen for one’s diocesan paper, one would be amazed at the varying differences and responses among their readers.

Here is one example of two different responses to “Pro-Life” political stories printed in The Catholic Lighthouse. The first story was printed in the February issue (p. 8). “In praise of George W. Bush” by George Weigel, and the second story was in the March issue (p. 11). Regarding the photo used with the story, “Archbishop says he’s glad Pope stressed pro-life teaching to Pelosi.”

In response to the first story, I received a two-plus-page letter denouncing the fact that the title “pro-life” was used to describe President Bush. To imply that President Bush was “PRO-LIFE” as an outrage, the writer wrote: he continued describing George W. Bush as one of the most evil men to ever walk the earth.

The Hallettsville writer is upset that Mr. Weigel, this editor and the Catholic Church, see to use the term “pro-life” only when it applies to the unborn; rarely the born. He makes a good point!

To satisfy the need for the born to be included in “pro-life” terminology, I wonder if we “pro-life Catholics” could be more sensitive to remember to include those on death row, those dying from hunger throughout the world, and those killed in war and through other injustices when we’re performing “pro-life” activities?

However I would not agree with the author of the letter that President Bush was one of the most evil men to have walked the earth, and I thought the article about him implied quite clearly that most American voters were unhappy with the 43rd president.

But with regard to …?!? Should I use a different word? An emphatic “pro-life” (“fetal”) (nationally and internationally), we as Catholics should be thankful for President George W. Bush. Especially in light of all the “anti-birth” legislation his successor, President Barack Obama, has rescinded since his inauguration.

This statement and the article in no way condemn Mr. Bush’s and Congress’ decision to go to war against Iraq, something I believe was very wise and what many now agree did not fit the requirements of the “Just War” theory.

It’s obvious that Mr. Bush made a very bad mistake with, as of March 10, 2009, 4,576 coalitions, of whom 4,259 were American military, (http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/iraq/forces/aversalities/2009.03.html; 91,077 to 452 Iraqi civilians killed from violence (http://www.iraqbodycount.org/); 30,182 U.S. military injured (http://www. ghq.mil/medicine/overview/top/iraq_casualties.html); and well over 150 military suicides, all since the war began.

Regarding the second story, a young lady called to voice her opinion that Speaker Nancy Pelosi was featured on the front page of The Catholic Lighthouse with Pope Benedict XVI. She stated that it was wrong to honor the U.S. speaker and representative by putting a picture in the paper of her with the pope. The caller from Nada said Mrs. Pelosi’s “pro-choice” vot- ing record was offensive, especially since she is a Catholic. I held her to be the first to agree with her.

I apologized that the photo offended her, and then explained that I used that photo with Speaker Pelosi and Pope Benedict more to emphasize her hypocrisy as she kissed the pope’s ring in public but always voted against the Church’s teachings when it came to abortion. I was then sure to tell her that the story that went with it stated that the pope told her “all Catholics, especially law-makers,” like herself, “must work to protect human life at every stage,” and that the archbishop said, if ever Mrs. Pelosi approved of abortion, she would say what she’d say to anyone, “If you don’t accept what the Church teaches, you shouldn’t present yourself for Communion because Communion means you’re in agreement with what the Church teaches.”

So although we editors feel we’re pretty well balanced when putting many “pro-life” (pro-life articles, as well as those about stories about poverty, war, greed, unemployment, immigration and crimes against humanity in Africa, Gaza, Colombia and even the Balkans in our Catholic publications, it seems we still can’t please everyone.

I think this is the problem, and/or the reason why I think those, like our readers from Hallettsville, get upset because they see the strong focus on the unborn as an unfair focus. I agree with him that the unborn do receive an uneven focus from “pro-life” efforts; however, the unborn also receive an uneven focus from “pro-death efforts.” Although some don’t count the numbers, I believe that 42 – 44 million abortions worldwide each year, of which 1,200,000 occur in the United States, validates why abortion is the focus of “pro-life” efforts.

I spoke to Rev. Michael Lyons of Assumption Parish in Canada, and he explained why, although the focus may seem uneven, it is valid. It was because the taking of a life from the womb (abortion), something declared “intrinsically evil” by the church, has been made legal by our government. So the fact that abortion has been made legal is why there should be an outcry against it.

Whereas, as evil as all wars are, they are not always declared “intrinsically evil” by the church. Although even prior to the Iraq War, the pope, U.S. bishops and many priests said there were “grave moral concerns about military intervention in Iraq and the unpredictable and uncontrol- lable negative consequences of invasion and occupation (http://www.usccb.org/congress%26airaqwar_revised.pdf),” war in general is not always labeled ir- trinsically evil. Sometimes it is necessary (perhaps to stop genocide as in WWII). But, War, with careful consideration, is sometimes allowable, whereas abortion, according to the Church, never is. Unfortunately the United States did not seem to use “careful consideration” before going to Iraq, and neither do states use “careful consideration” before entering a war, and neither do states use “careful consideration” before entering a war.

To learn more about all these issues, please go to http://www.usccb.org/ and click on “Small Bites” under “Life Issues.” You will find a tab titled Capital Punishment and another, Justice and Peace, which will direct you to International Issues for War & Peace.

The Hallettsville letter, as well as other letters, may be found on our Web site at www.victoriadiocese.org/lighthouse/ lighthouse.html. An explanation will follow in lower in another issue as to the title of my column, “Shuttin’ the Gate.”
Seminary Burses

Seminary burses are a permanent fund used for the education of future priests for the Diocese of Victoria. The goal of each bursary is $15,000. The interest from this amount is applied yearly to the education of seminarians. The burses are in memory of or in honor of an individual priest or lay person, living or deceased. Publication of the burses will appear periodically when new contributions are received.

As of March 26, 2009

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Dear Bishop Fellhauer:

On behalf of Cardinal Francis George, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I extend my gratitude for your contribution of $7,443.84 from the 2008 Catholic Relief Services Collection in your diocese.

Our national collections are catechetical opportunities. They help the Catholic faithful practice Gospel stewardship and provide tangible expressions of solidarity with the Universal Church. The Catholic Relief Services Collection, in particular, impacts the lives of millions of our brothers and sisters around the world and here at home.

The success of this collection is dependent on the good work of the diocesan leaders who guide and support local efforts to promote the collection. We would be grateful if you would also convey to your priests and parishioners our heartfelt gratitude for response to The Catholic Relief Services Collection.

Because of your personal support and the generosity of American Catholics, we have the ability to respond year after year. The millions of people that benefit from the Catholic Relief Services Collection continue to rely on our abiding financial support, prayers and pastoral solidarity.

Be assured of my prayers for you and your people during these Lenten days.

Gratefully yours in Christ,
Most Rev. John G. Vlazny
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon
Chairman, Committee on National Collections

A Note from Father Mensah

March 6, 2009
Dear Bishop Fellhauer,

This is to inform you that I have a new duty station. I was asked about a month ago to become the Command Chaplain at U.S. Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. My tour in Halfax, N.S., was thus cut short by about six months. I arrived on the island last week for this twelve-month tour of duty.

I will return to Victoria, Canada, after my tour of duty. I will also be attending the San Antonio Diocesan Clergy Institute this summer. This will give me a chance to learn, to advocate and strategize, to share and support one another ... at the Washington DC Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill; CSMG Partner Wrap-Around Meetings February 4 – 6, 2010.

Learn more at www.catholicsocialministry-gathering.org.
FAITH POINT

By Rev. Msgr. James C. Brunner
Vicar General, Diocese of Victoria
For past articles: www.stmaryvic.com/desk.htm

Lame Excuses are Better than None

The reigning moral system among supporters of relativism is relativism. That means that there is no objective right and wrong, things are not right and wrong in themselves, but right and wrong differ from place to place, time to time, and person to person. The measure of right and wrong is not something outside us, but must come from within ourselves.

Relativism is intellectually absurd, impractical, and in any case not consistently followed by the persons who preach it. It is self-contradictory. It is like saying that it is true that there is no truth. If it is true that there are no objective guides to judge such things as the immorality of homosexual marriage, then it is also true that there are no objective reasons for anyone to tolerate them. If gay marriage is morally good, support for it must be held. If relativists think so, then why is not my condemnation of them also morally good because I think so? If all moral opinions must be tolerated why do we not tolerate the views of thieves, child molesters, or terrorists? Under relativism contradictory moral opinions have equal value. I think this bill is genuine and you think it is counterfeit. The genuineness of the bill is an objective matter that can be verified and opinions have nothing to do with it. So also acts are right and wrong irrespective of what anyone thinks about them.

No society could survive a consistent application of relativism. In relativism the rapist is just as moral as the victim. How dare the victim impose her morality on the rapist? How intolerant! Why should we not tolerate the views of thieves, child molesters, or terrorists? Relativism makes people who violate the objective moral code feel good about themselves. Those who violate marriage vows or seek new partners can condemn their immorality and even assure their consciences because their interior feelings told them it was right to escape a stiffing marriage which was imprisoning them.

Relativism offers no check on those who invoke self-discovery as a reason to perform actions traditionally considered as improper or immoral. “Love made me do it” may ease one’s conscience and make one feel less evil. But the consequences of evil acts for others are not mitigated by self-fulfillment or authenticity. Relativists do not want an external code that would condemn them applied to themselves for sins that they like, but certainly want one for sins that they dislike that they might commit against them. Relativism is a useful cover for immoral sexual activity. Don’t want the kid you have brought into the world? Kill him. Your wife is a shrew? Get rid of her. Grandpa getting on in years and becoming a bit of a hassle for you? The cost of his maintenance is eating into your inheritance? Kill him. Having a bad time? Kill yourself. Relativism makes the world a more hospitable place for abortion, infanticide and euthanasia.

Relativism saves adulterers from criticism because he or she is following an internal light and, according to them, the inner self is not prone to evil as religion states but inherently good. Relativism offers a lame excuse, but a lame excuse is better than none at all. It is rather the husband who returned unexpectedly and found a strange man hiding in the bedroom cabinet. When the husband questioned the morality of the bill, the man replied, “Everybody has to be somewhere.” As I said, a lame excuse is better than none.

Relativism is irrational, impractical and not consistently believed or practiced even by relativists. However, it serves a useful purpose—it makes sinners feel better about themselves. As long as sinners love their sins, relativism will have a long life.

Paul of Tarsus

Letter to the Editor

2/17/09

To the Editor:

To all who read this – you are alive and seeing this letter because your parents said Yes to Life, not to pressured to limit or eliminate any child.

Today’s political thrust is to force “pro-choice” policy on all people of this country and use millions of our tax dollars to do it.

Neither of these bills (Mexico City Policy, FOCA or Prevention First Act) defends life, liberty and (the) pursuit of happiness for unborn citizens destroyed in abortion. Yes, all in the womb from the moment of conception are to be protected, as you and I expect to be protected in our United States of America.

For the unborn let your Senators and Representative hear “I want to live” from you.

Sincerely,
Elsie Ferek
Schulenburgh, Texas

Catholic Life Insurance recognizes two locals for service.

SAN ANTONIO – Two local men were recently honored for service by Catholic Life Insurance, the nation’s ninth largest fraternal benefit society. Albert Smaistrla, FIC, of East Bernard, was honored for 25 years of service, while Bert Kenna, FIC, of Yoakum, received a five-year designation during a special ceremony held January 17, 2009, at the 2009 Leaders Conference. Kenna also received the “Field Underwriter of the Year” award. The three-day conference was held January 16-18, 2009, at the Westin-InterContinental Conference Center in Austin, Texas.

Catholic Life Insurance was founded in 1901. The San Antonio-based company offers health, accident, disability, retirement, mutual savings, and IRA and fraternal benefits to individuals, families, and businesses. Catholic Life is financially strong with assets exceeding $762 million and insurance-in-force surpassing $1.7 billion.

For more information, visit www.clic.org.

Bert Kenna, FIC, of East Bernard
Albert Smaistrla, FIC, of Yoakum

Stocks / Bonds / CDs
Mutual Funds / IRAs

Youth Minister Position Available

The combined Catholic parishes of St. Anthony’s, St. Peter and Paul and St. Roch in the Columbus, Texas, area (70 miles west of Houston) is accepting applications for a youth minister. Responsibilities will include CCE and Confirmation trainings as well as various youth ministry activities. The primary focus at this time is young people in grades 9th through 12th. The salary for this full-time position is commensurate with applicant’s training and experience. Interested applicants may request a job description and/or submit their resumes to kahlcld@ catholic.org.
By Cynthia Brewer
Archbishop Elias Chacour, author of “Blood Brothers” and Archbishop of the Melkite Catholic Church in Galilee, will be speaking at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2, 2009.

Several people in the Diocese of Victoria have purchased or been given a copy of Archbishop Chacour’s book, “Blood Brothers,” by either my self, Dr. Lisa Heinrich-Null or Sister Digna Vela, IWBS.

In his book he tells the story of his family’s plight as refugees from an Israeli military takeover of his hometown, Biram, (in Israel), in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. His story traces his journey to the priesthood and becoming a bridge of peace among the Christian, Jewish and Muslim people of the region.

In 2006 he was elevated to Archbishop of the Melkite Catholic Church in Galilee, which includes the jurisdiction of the Church in Akko, Haifa, Nazareth and all of Israel. He is also an internationally known peace activist and three-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize (1986, 1989 and 1994).

Archbishop Chacour will be speaking Friday, May 1, at 7:00 p.m. at the Immaculate Conception Chapel at the Oblate School of Theology (OST) (no charge).

The Building Bridges Conference will be held Saturday, May 1, from 8:20 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. at Tymen Hall at St. Mary’s, and will feature Archbishop Chacour, as well as Israeli and Palestinian Jewish, Muslim and Christian women speaking for peace in the Holy Land. Cost for the conference is $65 / $25 for clergy, religious, groups and students.

Mass will be held at 5:30 p.m., with a banquet following at 7:00 p.m. at the Grotto Center for $10 (reservations required/100 person limit).

To register, go to: www.ost.edu, Quick Links, Continuing Education, then Building Bridges or call (210) 341-1366, ext. 226. OST is located at 225 Obilatte Drive, San Antonio, TX 78216.

St. Mary’s A&M Fund-Raiser Needs You

St. Mary’s Catholic Center provides Catholic Campus Ministry to the 12,500 Catholic students at Texas A&M and Blinn College — up 1,500 from four years ago! Perhaps some of these students are parishioners of yours or the sons, daughters or grandchildren of parishioners. Approximately 90% of Catholic students attend non-Catholic colleges, such as Texas A&M.

If the future leaders of the Church and society are to be formed using the riches of the Catholic faith, effective Catholic campus ministry at a time when young adults make decisions that affect the rest of their lives is essential. A study has shown that students involved in campus ministry programs in college are more likely than other Catholics to:

• Attend Mass at least once a week
• Be registered members of their parishes
• Be “very involved” in parish or other religious activities
• Give money to a Catholic parish or another Catholic organization
• Consider a religious vocation for themselves or encourage someone else to do so

In other words, we believe that Catholic Campus Ministry complements the work you do in your parishes. After graduation, students bring their devotion to the faith and the skills they learned at St. Mary’s to parishes all over Texas and beyond.

Although the students are generous, they are not able to support the cost of the ministry. St Mary’s relies on benefactors, foundations and fund-raisers, such as the 2009 Winner’s Choice Raffle. The 2009 Winner’s Choice Raffle is one way St. Mary’s raises the funds needed for this vital work. This year’s lucky winner gets to choose either a 2009 Chevy Cobalt LS Coupe, 2009 Chevy Colorado Regular Cab Truck, or a $15,000 scholarship to any post high school educational endeavor. To purchase tickets, call 1-888-240-TAMU during business hours or visit www.aggieatholc.org.

Your support DOES make a difference because 114 Aggies have been ordained to the priesthood, permanent deaconate or made their final vows in religious life. Since 2000, 82 Aggies have entered the seminary or formation programs for religious orders. Even when Catholic colleges are considered, Texas A&M is a national leader in the number of former students who listen to God’s call to the priesthood or religious life. Throughout Texas, thousands of faith-filled lay Aggie Catholics are assuming leadership roles in their parishes, community and within their chosen professions.

Thank you for your support of the Aggie Catholics! When you invest in St. Mary’s, you are investing in the future of the Catholic Church! Get your tickets today for the drawing on Thursday, April 23, 2009.

Victoria College students and Catholic Student Association team members Kathryn Wilson, Anna Do, Erica Ortiz, Stephen Alvarado, Brian Ramirez and Travis Johnson, win 3rd place in the VC Pirates Women’s Volleyball Team sand castle competition March 5. Inset: Anna Do and Kathryn Wilson show off their 3rd place prize.

Chris Mass displays unity of priests

The Victoria College Catholic Student Association joined six other teams competing for prizes at a sand castle building competition hosted by the Victoria College VC Pirates Women’s Volleyball Team on the campus sand volleyball court Thurs- day, March 5, 2009.

The competition was an effort to bring about more attendance at the college volleyball games.

The Catholic Student Association (CSA) won 3rd place in the Castle Build- ing Competition and was the only “student team” to place; 1st and 2nd places went to faculty and staff teams.

“Our kids were especially creative de- signing their castle,” Heavenly Abode. It featured a cross on top, and various Chris- tian symbols were etched on the walls and within the moat,” said Guila Janecka, CSA advisor. “Some of the members met for the first time at the competition, so their teamwork was especially impressive!”

In all the excitement, Youth Minister Judy Seiler overheard a statement from those participating that “The Catholics definitely had the best team spirit and the strongest spectator support.”

The CSA team won four tickets to the Spring Break on the Coast Concert at the Old Concrete Street Amphitheater in Corpus Christi for their endeavor.

The Catholic Lighthouse

The Isleinian Jewish, Muslim and Christian symbols were etched on the walls and within the moat,” said Guila Janecka, CSA advisor. “Some of the members met for the first time at the competition, so their teamwork was especially impressive!”

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YWBS Sisters hosting discernment weekend

The Incarnate Word and Blessed Sac- rament Sisters are hosting a Discernment Weekend for single Catholic women (high school seniors through 50 years of age) on April 25 – 26, 2009, at Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria, Texas. If you are interested, you may check them out at www.iwbsvictoria.org or call (361) 575-7111 or e-mail iwbsvoc@yahoo.com for more details.

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PCLs of St. Mary's, St. Mary, honored

By Cynthia Brewer

The Catholic Office of the Diocese of Victoria has chosen two parish catechetical leaders (PCL) to honor during the month of April. The office has chosen Miss Angela Hermes and Mrs. Cindy Svetlik, both of St. Mary’s Parish outside of Hallsville.

Miss Angela Hermes was the first PCL of the parish of St. Mary’s in the small community of St. Mary, Texas, was Mrs. Marie Klekar. She was PCL from 1945 until she resigned in 1980. In 1980, Mrs. Klekar asked Miss Hermes to take her place as PCL.

“I was teaching since 1945 and became a PCL in the year 1980, 64 years in all,” said Miss Hermes. Her sister, Annie, was teaching the first communicants from 1945 – 1985. “She resigned and told me to take her place, so I taught the first communion class for 24 years.”

Besides answering the call to fill in where she was needed, Miss Hermes said she chose the PCL to teach the children about God and his great love for us.

To assist her teaching skills, she took the catechist classes offered from the years 1991 to 2004 by Sister Digna Velas, I.B.V.S., the diocesan catechetical director.

She noted that she found most challenging about her ministry was having the children make the “Sign of the Cross” properly, while her happiest moments include reading all the first communicants receiving Jesus for the first time in holy Communion. The first communicants also do the readings of that Sunday, she said she enjoys seeing them take their turns to do their reading.

Miss Hermes is very active in her parish, currently in the secretary, sacristan and general overseer. She is a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, as an altar server and a commander; a charter member of the Serra Club of the Diocese of Victoria Northwest; a Catholic Daughter of the Americas, Court Sacred Heart 797; weekly Holy Hour Adorer at Sacred Heart Adoration Chapel; extraordinary minister of Holy Communion; a member of the church finance council; and a rosary minister of Holy Communion.

Miss Hermes will celebrate her 85th birthday on May 4, 2009. St. Mary’s Parish will have a birthday party for her that evening at 7:00 p.m. at the parish hall.

Mrs. Cindy Svetlik has been the parish catechetical leader at St. Mary’s for the past 10 years; she said she began helping when more things became electronic. She had a computer with the Internet, which allowed the parish to communicate with the diocesan offices.

St. Mary’s Parish has 67 children in its catechetical program this year, she said, which follows a traditional school model with grades K through 11, first Communion and confirmation. The parish has 10 catechists and three substitutes besides Mrs. Svetlik, who teaches the 9th grade.

Keeping up with the ever changing kids and their learning styles is what Mrs. Svetlik finds most challenging; however, seeing them every week and watching them grow into their faith as adults is most rewarding to her.

She remains an active member of her parish by being the advertising chairperson for the parish picnic, as well as being the altar server chairman and organizing the annual server trip.

She has been married to her husband, Al, for the past 26 years and has two children, Erik, 16, and Erin, 12.

Thanks to Miss Angela Hermes and Mrs. Cindy Svetlik for all you do for your parish.

“St. Anthony Messenger” Examines Catholics as a Sacramental People

CINCINNATI — The joys and challenges of marriage regulation or covenant Catholics experience with confession; the blessings of baptism, Eucharist and confirmation; the peace and comfort of anointing of the sick; and absolution present and future of holy orders: These sacraments provide sustenance and grace along our faith journeys. Yet there is still a good deal of mystery and discovery with each of them.

St. Anthony Messenger provides a new look at seven sacraments with its April special issue of “Sacramental People.” Staff members tackle reconciliation, Eucharist, marriage and anointing, while two priests weigh in on the sacraments of initiation and last rites. Woven throughout three of the articles are reflections from readers submitted through e-mail and regular mail. Each article also has a short section on how Vatican II influenced that sacrament’s celebration. Each article is posted at www.AmericanCatholic.org.

Membership in the Freemasons

Q. What is the Catholic Church’s stand on membership in the Freemasons? Are Catholic men allowed to join, according to church law? (Virginia)

A. Anyone familiar with the history of Europe and the Americas during the past 250 years is aware that the character of Masonry changes dramatically from one place to another. Political and anti-religious intrigues so common to Masonry in Latin America and Europe have, with some notable exceptions, not been evident in the United States.

Apart from the 32nd-degree southern jurisdiction on the Scottish Rite, which often has been accused of actions prejudicial to Catholics and the Catholic Church, Masonic organizations in our country generally avoid the more sinister aspects of international Masonry.

Individual Catholics here, including bishops, have publicly praised the abilities and immense good works of Masons and in so often share in their activities. However, the major objection of Catholics against Freemasonry has not been only its sometimes anti-Catholic and anti-religious activities in some places, but its quasi-religious character, some of which seems contrary to Christian doctrine.

It is in this particular that inspired the strongest condemnation yet of membership in Freemasonry. A lengthy report from a committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1985 titled “Freemasonry: Irreconcilable with Catholicism and Christianity” states: “The principles and basic rituals of Masonry embody a naturalistic religion, an institutional organization in which is incompatible with Christian faith and practice.”

The study also noted the “politically reactionary and racist” nature of most U.S. Masons today. With the exception at that time of one local lodge in Jersey, which admits blacks, it says, all women, men under 21 and African Americans are barred from Masonic initiation.

Local bishops may not make a more lenient judgment or dispense in this matter, according to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The Catholic position is similar to that of many other Christian churches around the world, which forbid or discourage affiliation with Freemasonry.

Q. My granddaughter and her fiancé intend to have an outdoor wedding in a few months. A retired Catholic priest claims to have a license to marry couples outdoors and will perform the ceremony. Will this be a valid marriage in the eyes of the church? (New York)

A. Many factors are involved here, and it is impossible to give a general response without more details. However, a few things are relevant. First, there is no such thing as a Catholic “license” to perform outdoor weddings.

Though dispensations may be given in individual circumstances, Catholic weddings are generally to take place in a church or other Catholic sacred location. You omit so many details that would be necessary to respond to your question.

If you have a concern (and are involved in such a way that you might have some responsibility and influence over what this couple finally decides), you can talk to the priest involved or to your parish priest, describe the circumstances and seek his insights into what is planned.

Q. I belong to a rosary-making club, and we make special black rosaries to wear around the neck. We send them particularly to men and women in the armed forces. We were told this is wrong, but isn’t it a better sign of faith than other jewelry someone might wear? (Michigan)

A. No, a rosary is not jewelry. It is a sacramental intended solely as a help to prayer and meditation on the lives of Jesus and his mother, and should not be worn as a necklace.

I realize some people do use them with the intention of proclaiming their faith, but there are other sacraments (e.g., sacraments with sacred images, for example) more appropriate and respectful to accomplish that purpose.

Q. (“Catholic Q&A: Answers to the Most Common Questions About Catholicism”) is a 536-page collection of columns by Father Dietzen, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York.)

(A free brochure in English or Spanish outlining marriage regulations in the Catholic Church and explaining promises in a mixed marriage is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Father John Dietzen, Box 3315, Potea, IL 61621.)

(Questions may be sent to Father Dietzen at the same address, or e-mail: jjdietzen@aol.com.)

By Father John Dietzen

Catholic News Service
ST. PHILIP IS THE WINNER OF KC FISH FRY PROCEEDS—El Campo
Knights of Columbus Council 2490 donated $3,200 to St. Philip Catholic School from its recent Fish Fry profits. The Knights also donated $200 to the kindergar
ten class for selling the most tickets, $100 to the second-grade class for second
place, and one month’s tuition to kindergartner Brittany Baker for selling the
most tickets. Congratulations to all the winners! Left to right: Chairman Larry
Staff, Principal Gwen Edwards, Grand Knight A. J. Hlavaty, and Program Direc
tor Greg Witcher.

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SISTERLY THOUGHTS

By Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS

Living the Paschal Mystery – Part II

W e all know that the Paschal Mystery is the way Jesus attained our salvation through his passion, death and resurrection. We also realize that if we have united ourselves with the sufferings and dying of Jesus, we can find God on the other side of dying to self. Saint Paul tells us “If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” I think that all of us may have experienced the Paschal Mystery more than we may realize and that each of us can reflect on occasions in which something had to have died before we could open up to that new life-giving “something” that gave us hope and passion for continuing the quest to follow Jesus into the unknown ahead.

That “something” can be looked upon as experiencing the “resurrection” or “full
ness” of the Paschal Mystery. So, do I know what it is to be “filled” with the good
things of God? Do I know what it is to be a person of hope? Do I believe that Jesus
will continue to be adored, proclaimed, and served in the Church of today and
tomorrow?

Do I realize that every time I partici
pate in the Mass, I am participating in this awesome mystery? What a delightful
adventure we can all participate in, having the privilege and grace of coming to know
the revelation of God! Just think about those moments of harmony in prayer and song that we experience in fervent response in Liturgy when the sacred place and the assembly resonate with the sound of the unify
ing Spirit? Think of the strength that is found when the members of a family or the members of a parish strive to ac
complish a common goal? Reflect on the blessings that have followed the sorrows, or “dying”, in your life, and ask yourself, “How am I opening myself to God in the “fullness” of the “resurrection”? Happy Easter!

In memory Charlie J. Novosad

Deacon Novosad’s father

Charlie J. Novosad, father of Deacon
Charlie A. Novosad of Columbus, passed
away Monday, Feb. 23, 2009, in Austin. He
was the last survivor of the first generation of 12 children of John Novosad and Frances
Matyastike Novosad of Fayetteville. He was
born April 25, 1921, in Moulton.
His youth was mostly spent doing farm
work until 1942 when he married Margaret
Matyastike Novosad of Hallettsville, Texas.
Within three weeks of their marriage
he was drafted into the United States Air
Force where he served until his discharge
in 1945. He returned home to his bride and
they settled in Houston.
Charlie worked at Dentler Potato Chip
Company while attending welding school
at night. He completed his welding school
and was hired at Mosher Steel Company
where he stayed until his retirement.
In 2004 Charlie and Margaret moved to
Columbus so that their son could take care
of them in their “golden years.” Charlie
was a hardworking man and did his best
for his family making sure his children had a better life. He was a loving grandfather and great-grandfather.
He is a life member of the Knights of
Columbus council 2917 and the American
Legion Post 654 of Houston. Charlie and
Margaret were partners in helping their
family, friends and the Catholic Church
wherever they were residing. He will be
truly missed.
Charlie J. Novosad is survived by his
wife of 66 years, Margaret M. Novosad of
Columbus; a daughter, Elizabeth J. Martin
and husband, Tony of Gilbert, S.C.; a son,
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Eleven Ways to Help Yourself Stay Sane in a Crazy Market

1. **Have a game plan**

Having predetermined guidelines that recognize the potential for turbulent times can help prevent emotion from dictating your decisions. For example, you might take a core-and-satellite approach, combining the use of buy-and-hold principles for the bulk of your portfolio with tactical investing based on a shorter-term market outlook. You also can use diversification to try to offset the risks of certain holdings with those of others. Diversification may not ensure a profit or guarantee against a loss, but it can help you understand and balance your risk in advance. And if you’re an active investor, a trading discipline can help you stick to a long-term strategy. For example, you might determine in advance that you will take profits when a security or index rises by a certain percentage, and buy when it has fallen by a set percentage.

2. **Know what you own and why you own it**

When the market goes off the tracks, knowing why you originally made a specific investment can help you evaluate whether your reasons still hold, regardless of what the overall market is doing. Understanding how a specific holding fits in your portfolio also helps you consider whether a lower price might actually represent a buying opportunity.

3. **Remember that everything’s relative**

Most of the variance in the returns of different portfolios can generally be attributed to their asset allocations. If you’ve got a well-diversified portfolio that includes multiple asset classes, it could be useful to compare its overall performance to relevant benchmarks. If you find that your investments are performing in line with those benchmarks, that realization might help you feel better about your overall strategy.

Even a diversified portfolio is no guarantee that you won’t suffer losses, of course. But diversification means that just because the S&P 500 might have dropped 10% or more over a certain period, or have an informal threshold below which you will not allow an investment to fall before selling. There are ways to do so short of a total makeover.

4. **Tell yourself that this too shall pass**

The financial markets are historically cyclical. Even if you wish you had sold at what turned out to be a market peak, or regret having sat out a buying opportunity, you may well get another chance at some point. Even if you’re considering changes, a volatile market can be an opportune time to turn your portfolio inside out. A well-thought-out asset allocation is still the basis of good investment planning.

5. **Be willing to learn from your mistakes**

Anyone can look good during bull markets; smart investors are produced by the inevitable rough patches. Even the best aren’t right all the time. If an earlier choice now seems rash, sometimes the best strategy is to take a tax loss, learn from the experience, and apply the lesson to future decisions. Expert help can prepare you and your portfolio to both weather and take advantage of the market’s ups and downs.

Words to Ponder

“Investors should remember that excitement and expenses are their enemies. And if they insist on trying to time their participation in equities, they should try to be fearful when others are greedy and greedy when others are fearful.” — Warren Buffett

“Most of the time common stocks are subject to irrational and excessive price fluctuations in both directions as the consequence of the ingrained tendency of most people to speculate or gamble ... to give away to hope, fear and greed.” — Benjamin Graham

“In this business if you’re good, you’re right six times out of ten. You’re never going to be right nine times out of ten.” — Peter Lynch

Disclosure Information -- Important -- Please Review

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Keeping your cool can be hard to do when the market goes on one of its periodic roller-coaster rides. It’s useful to have strategies in place that prepare you both financially and psychologically to handle market volatility. Here are 11 ways to help keep yourself from making hasty decisions that could have a long-term impact on your ability to achieve your financial goals.

6. **Consider playing defense**

During volatile periods in the stock market, many investors reexamine their allocation to such defensive sectors as consumer staples or utilities (though like all stocks, those sectors involve their own risks, and are not necessarily immune from overall market movements). Dividends also can help cushion the impact of price swings. According to Standard and Poor’s, dividend income has represented roughly one-third of the monthly total return on the S&P 500 since 1926, ranging from a high of 53% during the 1940s to a low of 14% in the 1990s, when investors focused on growth.

7. **Stay on course by continuing to save**

Even if the value of your holdings fluctuates, regularly adding to an account designed for a long-term goal may cushion the emotional impact of market swings. If losses are offset even in part by new savings, your bottom-line number might not be quite so discouraging.

If you’re using dollar cost averaging — investing a specific amount regularly regardless of fluctuating price levels — you may be getting a bargain by buying when prices are down. However, dollar cost averaging can’t guarantee a profit or protect against a loss. Also, consider your ability to continue purchases through market slumps; systematic investing doesn’t work if you stop when prices are down.

8. **Use cash to help manage your mindset**

Cash can be the financial equivalent of taking deep breaths to relax. It can enhance your ability to make thoughtful decisions instead of impulsive ones. If you’ve established an appropriate asset allocation, you should have resources on hand to prevent having to sell stocks to meet ordinary expenses or, if you’ve used leverage, a margin call. Having a cash cushion coupled with a disciplined investing strategy can change your perspective on market volatility. Knowing that you’re positioned to take advantage of a downturn by picking up bargains may increase your ability to be patient.

9. **Remember your road map**

Solid asset allocation is the basis of sound investing. One of the reasons a diversified portfolio is so important is that strong performance of some investments may help offset poor performance by others. Even with an appropriate asset allocation, some parts of a portfolio may struggle at any given time. Timing the market can be challenging under the best of circumstances; wildly volatile markets can magnify the impact of making a wrong decision just as the market is about to move in an unexpected direction, either up or down. Make sure your asset allocation is appropriate before making drastic changes.

10. **Look in the rear-view mirror**

If you’re investing long-term, sometimes it helps to take a look back and see how far you’ve come. If your portfolio is down this year, it can be easy to forget any progress you may already have made over the years. Though past performance is no guarantee of future returns, of course, the stock market’s long-term direction has historically been up. With stocks, it’s important to remember that having an investing strategy is only half the battle; the other half is being able to stick to it. Even if you’re able to avoid losses by being out of the market, will you know when to get back in? If patience has helped you build a nest egg, it just might be useful now, too.

11. **Take it easy**

If you feel you need to make changes in your portfolio, there are ways to do so short of a total makeover. You could test the waters by redirecting a small percentage of one asset class into another. You could put any new money into investments you feel are well positioned for the future but leave the rest as is. You could set a stop-loss order to prevent an investment from falling below a certain level, or have an informal threshold below which you will not allow an investment to fall before selling. Even if you need or want to adjust your portfolio during a period of turmoil, those changes can — and probably should — happen in gradual steps. Taking gradual steps is one way to spread your risk over time as well as over a variety of asset classes.
OLV PLACES SECOND IN MATHCOUNTS—Our Lady of Victory School’s eighth grade team of Andrew Stewart, Aaron Kovar, Ahmad Sabaugh and Luke Kobas placed second in the city-wide MathCounts competition in February 2009. Aaron Kovar also placed fourth in the individual competition. The second-place finish qualified the team to advance to the State competition in Austin March 28. Alternate team members were Amber Warren, Elizabeth Nelson, Cody Janak and Luke Wenske. MathCounts is a national mathematics competition for middle school students.

SACRED HEART STUDENTS RECEIVE ACT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARD—Five Sacred Heart Catholic High School students from the Hallettsville area received the “Texas Student Achievement Award” from the Texas ACT Council for their performance on the PLAN (the Pre-ACT) Assessment. The students receiving this recognition from the Texas ACT Council are: Cody Dornak, son of Larry and Donna Dornak; Haylee Grahmann, daughter of Allan and Jamie Grahmann; Cameron Heger, son of Roy and Stacey Heger; James Hemmi, son of Phillip and Rosemary Hemmi; and Hannah Smith, daughter of Mrs. Stacie Ortolon. These students are on target to meet or exceed ACT’s College Readiness Benchmarks by graduation. ACT’s College Readiness Benchmarks are empirically-based and identify the level of achievement necessary in English, mathematics, reading and science to have a successful college freshman experience. “We want to recognize that student PLAN (Pre-ACT) achievement is the result of a strong commitment by Sacred Heart Catholic High School teachers, staff, administrators and parents to increase college readiness for all students,” said Karen Pennell, ACT Assistant Vice president and Southwest Regional Manager.

The 2009 Catechism Contest of Holy Family Catholic Church in Victoria, sponsored by Knights of Columbus Council 9088, was held Saturday, February 28, 2009, in the educational building auditorium. The four finalists from each grade represented the highest test scores from grades 1 – 8. A Jeopardy-type board was used in the finals.

Each grade was awarded 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place prizes of $100, $25, $25 and $10. Final winners were as follows: Grade 1: Kesli Pratka, 1st; Trent Nieto, 2nd; Branton Winkenweder, 3rd; and Halsey Carroll, 4th; Grade 2: Alexander Bonor den, 1st; Carly Oracion, 2nd; Kagan Migl, 3rd; Andrew Barton, 4th; Grade 3: Myah Malley, 1st; Ally Raven, 2nd; Blaine Harrison, 3rd; Kaylee Raven, 4th; Grade 4; Chelsea Carroll, 1st; Jerrett Faires, 2nd; Brandon Svatek, 3rd; Grade 5: Samuel Bonorden, 1st; Joshua Calzada, 2nd; Brey- an Sturm, 3rd; Reid Goodwine, 4th; Grade 6: Hannah Malloy, 1st; Gregory De Los Santos, 2nd; Kristen Salazar, 3rd; Kayla Hohi, 4th; Grade 7: Joshua Hawken, 1st; Justin Grahmann, 2nd; Juan Mata III, 3rd; Grade 8: Andrea de Los Santos, 1st; Travis Moloskey, 2nd; Katie Gray, 3rd; and Ashley Fujino, 4th.

“Besides the students learning the basics of their faith, it was gratifying to see so many parents and grandparents at the contest,” remarked Carol Lehnhart, director of Religious Education. “It was obvious that both students and parents had worked hard in preparation for the contest.”

Dennis Lockstedt, grand knight of KC sponsored Knowledge Bowl winners announced.

SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WIN 3RD AT KNOWLEDGE BOWL—The Sacred Heart High School Knowledge Bowl team consisting of Emma Gray, Ethan Svetlik, Chance Rath and Doug Gray placed third in the Knowledge Bowl held last Friday at the Victoria College Student Center. This year’s Knowledge Bowl was coordinated by the Rotary Clubs of Victoria to benefit the Victoria Adult Literacy Council. Student and adult teams answered questions ranging from math problems to geography and sports. Sacred Heart also had two other teams. Jeff Tuttle, James Hemmi, Lyndsie Blandell and Joey Janak were the members of one team, and Hannah Smith, Haylee Grahmann, Michael Adams and Jennifer Kallus were members of the other team. Congratulations on a job well done!

Youth leaders say famine experience expands teens’ awareness of need

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic youths involved in a hunger awareness project said the effort has made them more aware of the needs of others, according to Eileen Kuns, a youth leader at Christ the King Church in Mesa, Ariz. Christ the King Church was one of several churches and faith communities of all denominations nationwide that took part in the World Vision Lenten 30-hour famine involving teen participants at churches across the country to help the hungry.

According to World Vision, 14,000 adults and children die from hunger and malnutrition every day. Also participating was St. Philip Catholic Church in Norwalk, Conn., which has organized a 30-hour famine for six years in a row with themes such as “Fed Up,” “Act Fast,” “Fast for Food” and “Starve Hunger.” This year’s theme was “Will Starve for Food,” and 137 high-school students participated. DiMarco and Kuns both remarked that their teens gained a greater understand- ing of the needs and dignity of others as well as a greater sense and respect for themselves. She added that she tries to instill in youths the difference between charity and justice. “We are always ready to respond to a need, but I encourage them to go one step farther — to work tirelessly to change the situations that place people in need,” DiMarco explained. “If someone is thirsty, it is certainly right and good to give them a cup of water. But, then, find out why there is no water, and work to change that — build a well. That is what it means to be a Christian, to put your faith into action,” she said.

Youth Calendar of Events

April 8 — Campus Ministry Association, Mass at 2:00 p.m., Student Center at Victoria College
April 18 — Youth Ministry Certificate Class – Ethics and Crisis Management
April 24 — Bishop Fellhauer Benefit Golf Tournament
April 26 — Youth Leadership Training, Chaney
May 2 — Youth Ministry Certificate Class - Retreat Formation
June 12-20 — Camp David
June 22 – 25 — Discipleship Week at the Spiritual Renewal Center
July 4-12 — Rocky Mountain High, Pagosa Springs, Colorado
July 19-22 — Quo Vadis, Boys Vocation Camp at the Spiritual Renewal Center
July 26-29 — St. Theresa Vocation Camp at Incarnate Word Convent, Victoria
October 23-25 — Archdiocesan Conference for Catholic Youth Ministers in Houston
November 19-22 — National Catholic Youth Conference in Kansas City, Missouri

For more information on any of these events, please contact: Debbie Vanelli or Jose Ortega at the Office of Youth Ministry at (512) 573-0828 ext. 32 / ext. 50 or e-mail at dvaneli@victoriadiocese.org or jorgetta@victoriadiocese.org

Web site: www.victoriadiocese.org/youthoffice

13-day Shriners of Italy and Rome Tour
Sept. 7 – 19, 2009 with Father Tommy Chen

Fly into Rome and proceed to Assisi to experience the life of St. Francis and then the historic city of St. Clare. From there, to view the incorrupt body of St. Rita (a saint of the impossible), Lecce, to see the Holy House Jesus grew up in, which was miraculously moved from Nazareth to Loreto, Italy. Lancianum, to see the great eucharistic miracle of the 8th century; San Giovanni Rotondo where our beloved saint, Padre Pio, lies in state; Cave of St. Michael the Archangel; Benedictine Abbey in Monte Cassino (529 a.d.), great St. Pio's home (a saint of the impossible); then four days in the Eternal City of Rome, the great seat of our Mother Church, where we will have an audience with Our Holy Father Benedict XVI and visit all the great basilicas.

For more information, please contact Betty Urbansky at burbanovsky@bcslocal.net or 979-543-2333

The Catholic Lighthouse
Page 5 — April 2009

TEENS
Sterling Behrens, representing the Hostyn Youth Group, donated $65 to “Meals on Wheels”. La Grange Volunteer Fire Department received a check for $1,310.33, the other 25 percent.

Rosary Parish, Hostyn, recently donated 10 percent of its October picnic to three holy rosary parish tithes on its picnic earnings—

...the priest speaks to the couple, as well as the congregation. They are reminded that through the exchange of wedding vows, they are committed to a lifelong relationship. The words “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do you part” are part of the ceremony. The couple doesn’t make a promise to “stay together as long as we like each other and can get along.”

The rite of marriage takes place as the priest asks the couple several questions that affirm their commitment and faith to one another and to God. After joining hands, the couple exchanges their wedding vows and then place rings on one another’s fingers. The rings witness to the couple, the community and the world that the couple is living in a relationship committed to each other through faithful loving.

After lighting their unity candle, their visible symbol of unity, the ceremony continues with the celebration of the Mass. Following the Eucharist many couples stand before the statue of Mary asking for her intercession in keeping their covenant and keeping their new family focused on Christ. The final blessing is given and the newly married couple is presented to the congregation.

Stressing that marriage is not a contract but a covenant, the Generation of Faith participants were reminded that a couple getting married is making a lifelong commitment. A contract is when people exchange goods and services; a covenant is when people give themselves. They are entering a covenant between God and each other and are expected to live their vows each day of their married life.

In keeping with the true celebration of a marriage ceremony, all participants gathered following the “wedding” for a reception of punch and cupcakes. The mock wedding was a fun, interactive way to remind members of our parish of the importance of marriage vows and the commitments that place along each step of the way.

Mock wedding held for WMD in East Bernard. The youth were the actors: priest: Eric Youngblood; bride: Racere Kennek; groomsman: Justin Polak and Taylor Perez; and bridesmaids: Jostie Potts and Cattie Dusek.

The gymnasium at Holy Cross High School in San Antonio was a buzz with activity Saturday, March 7, as boys and girls from throughout the state participated in the Knights of Columbus Free Throw State Competition. Four diocesan youth placed in state this year.

SAN ANTONIO — Two girls and two boys from the Diocese of Victoria placed in the state Knights of Columbus Free Throw Competition held at Holy Cross High School in San Antonio March 7, 2009. One of the athlete’s scores goes onto international competition and another places for the second year in a row.

Samantha Gable placed 1st in state in the girls’ 11-year-old division from the Father Roman Janak Council 2902 in Schulenburg and will have her scores sent to the international competition in New Haven, Conn. Callie Witte placed in state for the second time in two years. Callie, of Council 1582 in Yoakum, placed 2nd in state in the girls’ 13-year-old division.

Andrew Newlar placed 2nd in state in the boys’ 13-year-old division. He placed 2nd for Holy Family Council 9088 in Victoria.

Jacob Novosad placed 2nd in state in the boys’ 14-year-old division. He is from the Father Joseph Kopp Council 3244 in Moulton.

Congratulations to all who played in any of the KC Free Throw Competitions beginning with the council level.

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SONGS AND SMILES FOR RESIDENTS—The winter and spring holidays were a busy time for the Holy Rosary Youth Group of Hostyn. From Christmas to St. Valentine’s Day, the youth group visited the local nursing homes in the area, Monument Hill, Care Inn and The Jefferson Place. It was a joy to see residents join in with their voices and clap along. During their visits, each resident received decorated ornaments and cards, which the youth made. When departing from their final stop, they had a special request by Ms. Velma Tietjen, who was seated outside with her dog, Benji. The kids were more than happy to relax and sing a few more songs and play with the puppy.

Sacred Heart Studies Native Americans—Mrs. Zavesky’s fourth graders at Sacred Heart Catholic School in Hallettsville recently learned about the Native American tribes of Texas. Each student was required to build an Indian home for display. As a final project, they painted beautiful ceremonial robes and headbands. These robes were enjoyed by the students as they chanted and danced to an Indian song. They also formed a circle and danced for rain, and miraculously, a few sprinkles fell. Even “Big Chief,” Mr. David Smolik, got in on a little of the action. Our special thanks to Mrs. Angela McConnell who was instrumental in designing the robes.

JCDa Court St. Paul #1604, Shiner, Celebrates National JCDa Day—The Junior Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court St. Paul #1604, Shiner, celebrated National JCDa Day by participating in the Liturgy of the 7:30 a.m. Mass. Following announcements, Rev. Bob Knippenberg blessed eight religious recognition pin medals, which were awarded to the following: Family of God – Anna Adamek, Sydney Hermann, Grace Irvin, Bailey Machacek, Bethany Nevudl and Mallory Pokluda; I Live My Faith – Samantha Siegel; Marian medal project – Mary, the First Disciple – Michele Caka. The juniors are offered the opportunity to achieve these medals through the youth ministry office of the Victoria Diocese and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. Following Mass, the juniors motored to the Shiner Nursing and Rehab Center to distribute the almost 300 cookies which they baked earlier in the week to the residents of the local nursing home. This is an annual event for the junior court in Shiner. Pictured is resident Adel Henkhaus receiving a bag of cookies from her great-granddaughter Delynn Pesek and surrounded by members of Court St. Paul.


Preparing for Lent—Father Tommy Chen led the Lenten Mini-Retreat sponsored by the Altar Society of Holy Family (Victoria) February 21, 2009. Mass was celebrated followed by Father Chen’s interesting and inspiring talk titled “The Spirituality of Chicken Keeping” from “The Life of the Christian Soul reflected in The Life of the Chicken.” Father Tommy, parochial vicar of Sts. Cyril & Methodius in Shiner, gave examples beginning with The Egg, The Incubation, The Hatching and The Brooding. Lent is about taking comfort and refuge under the loving wings of protection of our Lord who, like a mother hen, wants to gather us beneath his wings … beneath the cross, which is our protection, our life and our salvation. Pictured, left to right: Ms. Ann Jalufka, chairman; Father Tommy Chen; Irene Marler, president of the Altar Society; and Marjorie Tasin, co-chairman.
By Cynthia Brewer

The Fox, the Foetus (Fetus) and the Fatal Injection is an incredible, compact book that explains how Western society treats abortion and euthanasia and why this treatment must be changed.

Part I, the 47 pages divided into three parts: The Fox and the Foetus; The Fatal Injection; and The Doctor and the Patient, Rabbi Daniel Levy succinctly shows how the erosion of society’s morals has influenced how we humans have twisted our thinking when it comes to life and death issues.

Daniel Levy is the rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation in Leeds, United Kingdom. I saw a review of his book in The Catholic Lighthouse a few years ago and then bought a copy.

His book is directed to the Jewish community as he uses the Torah (Hebrew Scripture) and Jewish teachings to educate the faithful on what the Jewish faith teaches concerning human life—from the womb to the tomb. These teachings are of the same foundation as Christian teaching and only strengthen the Christian’s argument in defense of the right to life issues.

Some examples of Rabbi Levy’s teachings include the following:

The fox of the title of his book is used as just one of the examples in Part I that shows how Western Civilization has put the treatment of animals before the treatment of humans. Recently the British Parliament legislated to outlaw the use of hounds in fox hunting. It turned out to be one of the longest battles of parliament in recent history, lasting hundreds of hours, but in the end it was passed with the help of emotional members imploring their fellow lawmakers to spare the foxes “which are left lonely and endued by foxes.” A fluffy, tearful-eyed fox is able to get the sympathy of humans better than an ultra-sound scan of a child sucking a bottle or burning his mother’s womb, Rabbi Levy laments.

In Part 2 – The Fatal Injection, the author concentrates on euthanasia, assisted suicide and suicide and how the autonomous thinking of secular, Western society tries to make us believe that “... as humans we do not interfere with the way society tries to make us believe that ‘... everyone has the right to die and enjoy the end of their existence in comfort and dignity, on their own timetable.’”

“Every second of existence is a gift. Every day is a gift, every minute is a gift. It is a gift to the individual, it is a gift to society, it is a gift to God. ‘Love is patient, love is kind—love always conquers.’ That is the Easter theme. There is always a resurrection even though God never abandons us. As with Jesus, we must be open to the possibility of clinical depression or another disease, especially in children. Is it not ironic that the biggest killer of all remains unchecked?”

“EFRAT Organization has been dealing with the problem of abortion since 1977. Over these years we have heard tens of thousands of tales. After hearing thousands of stories, and dealing with women of all sorts, we have made an amazing discovery. Never, in all the years, have we encountered a woman who regretted maintaining her pregnancy. Once their babies were born, their mothers were thrilled with them, and rejoiced in their presence.

“... this fact is a very powerful one and should be noted by professional dealing with the issues. No other medical procedure (giving birth), which a woman is considering, will enable her to ‘savor with perfect sincerity,’ I have no regret.”

The Catholic Lighthouse will give away one copy of The Fox, the Foetus and the Fatal Injection as its Family Friendly Book Contest prize, and it has three copies of the book on hand for purchase at USD $15, or purchases may be made via Pay Pal at the author’s Web site: www.torahethics.net for 8 British Pounds (around $11.50 USD plus shipping). To listen to a summary of the book by the author, go to www.torahethics.net.uk/book/77903. Only youth need to include age.

By Sister Margie Lavonis, CSC

Sisters of the Holy Cross

Recently I read some reflection on what I would say if I were to give a homily on Easter Sunday and how I would relate the message of Christ’s death and resurrection to the world situation, particularly here in the United States.

I would start by reminding the listeners that Christ’s death and resurrection assures us that God’s love and God’s good can, and does, come out of suffering.

There are times when our faith in this truth is challenged, like now, with our country in the midst of a financial crisis. But thanks to the teachings of our Lord, we continue to have serious problems. Many businesses are going bankrupt and others are laying off workers or cutting wages.

Home values are rapidly decreasing and many are not able to pay their mortgages. Poverty and violence are escalating. Even the weather in many places seems out of kilter, causing terrible storms and other un-natural disasters. This turmoil and suffering could easily cause us to question God’s presence in all of this. And ask why God is permitting this to happen? Even worse, some ask why God is doing this to us! Needless to say, these serious and often overwhelming problems are not things that make one want to stand up in Church and shout an Easter alleluia! Or are they?

Our faith in God’s promises gives us cause to continue to sing alleluia. The celebration of Easter provides us with a good opportunity to reflect on situations in our past or of others that we know now resulted from suffering. This is the pattern of our lives.

Perhaps you were broken hearted at not being accepted at the college of your choice or ended up in a school that offered many opportunities you would not have enjoyed, and you probably would not have met your spouse had you gone elsewhere. Or maybe you lost a job you loved at a company where you dedicated the best years of your life, and as a result found some new work that challenged and brought you more satisfaction. In addition, it may have given you more time to spend with your family and allowed you to get involved in activities you always wanted to do but did not have time.

Another example might be an experience of clinical depression or another illness that has made you more compassionate and understanding of others who suffer physical or mental illness.

Right now many Americans question whether good can possibly come out of the present economic situation in our country. You might also like to offer a few things that I hope will help to happen, or I see already happening. Those of us who are used to having much more than we need, will learn to live with less and appreciate the many things we often take for granted. Others who are in better financial situations might reach out to others in need. Already there are heartwarming stories of people who are collecting food to fill pantries that have been depleted because of the unusually high demand. Many are thinking more about others and are not just absorbed in their own lives.

People will spend more quality time with their families, going out to eat and enjoying one another’s company instead of rushing from one thing to another. Many of us will have learned the difference between needs and wants and will begin to appreciate the plight of the poor.

I believe when recovery comes many of us will have experienced what is really valuable in life. Hopefully, we will discover the falsity of making money and material goods our first priority and will learn the importance of relationships and sharing with others. Love will be more important than riches. And then the message Jesus gave his followers.

The powerful message of Easter is that God is Risen even as we are! As with Jesus, God does not leave us in our suffering. There is always a resurrection even though we may not see it right away. God’s love always conquers. That is the Easter message, one that we really need to hear right now.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

Family Puzzle Contest Winner will win “The Fox, the Foetus and the Fatal Injection”

Bernice Vaske of St. John Parish in St. John has won the March Family Puzzle Contest drawing and will receive the book The Bible Made Easy by Rev. Timothy P. Schnell.

The winner of the children’s contest is Molly Michalky, 7, of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Freiburg. She will receive a gift from the Incarnate Word Gift Shop.

This month we had over 41 adult contestants and four child contestants! Thank you to all those who entered.

If you have not won the puzzle contest within the past six months, please send completed puzzle, name, address, phone number and parish name by April 28 for a chance to win the April Family Puzzle Contest. The winner will receive The Fox, the Foetus and the Fatal Injection by Rabbi Daniel Levy of the United Hebrew Congregation in Leeds, Britain.

Send to: Family Contest, The Catholic Lighthouse, P.O. Box 80003, Victoria, TX 77903. Only youth need to include age.
Detroit's all God's Children. Amen.

churches, schools, communities and world a safer place for them the vision and grace needed to fulfill the special com and voice of children and young people" everywhere. Give Dear Lord, We ask You to bless these Your holy people who

ing day,” said the social studies school, and he said he spent years siblings grew up in the parish, at

in St. Florian Church for Good

the Texas Rangers, Ochab will be beloved Tigers facing off against

mound at Comerica Park, just

for us on that cross.”

Hamtramck resident. “He died

said the 47-year-old lifetime

Home opening day this year falls

day crowd is coming to an end.

Detroit Tigers as part of the opening
to protect children, and bulletin guides, articles on church efforts to facilitate activities to highlight the need for prevention efforts.

Youth Protection has developed resources in English and Spanish to assist church groups, the U.S.

Blessing

Dear Lord, We ask You to bless these Your holy people who have participated in the Church’s efforts to help stop child sex abuse. Open their hearts to Your call to be the “ears, eyes and voice of children and young people” everywhere. Give them the vision and grace needed to fulfill the special com mitments that each of them has made to making their homes, churches, schools, communities and world a safer place for all God’s Children. Amen.

Baseball home opener on Good Friday ends 20-year attendance streak

By Marylyn G. Hewitt

Catholic News Service

HAMTRAMCK, Mich. (CNS) — Michael Ochab’s 20- year streak of rooting for the De troit Tigers as part of the opening day crowd is coming to an end. Home opening day this year falls on Good Friday, April 10.

“It’s a no-brainer for me,”

said the 47-year-old lifetime

Blessing

By Weimar Gedenke

“Time to remember”—

Share in the life,

Between Houston and San Antonio (off I-10)

Arts & Crafts, Kids Area, Dancing, & More!

German Music, Food, Exhibits, Games,

and Voice of Children and Young People Everywhere. Give

Michael Ochab poses with some of his Detroit Tigers gear inside St. Florian Church in Detroit where this year is also open ing day for the Tigers’ season. CNS (photo/Marylyn G. Hewitt, The Michi gan Catholic)
La Pasión del Señor Viernes Santo

El escándalo de los abusos sexuales es uno de los temas más problemáticos que ha enfrentado la Iglesia en los últimos años. Como padres, sin embargo, nos preocupamos del abuso sexual de menores no es un problema sólo en la Iglesia. Los datos muestran que este es un problema social que ocurre en muchos otros ambientes (guarderías, escuelas públicas, clínicas, hospitales, campamentos de verano, la misma familia) y muchas veces en mayor medida que en la Iglesia aunque con mucho menos publicidad.

En esta de prevención e información que se ha hecho la Iglesia en los últimos años.

Los padres, sin embargo, nos preocupamos de que el abuso sexual de menores no sea un problema sólo en la Iglesia. Los datos muestran que este es un problema social que ocurre en muchos otros ambientes (guarderías, escuelas públicas, clínicas, hospitales, campamentos de verano, la misma familia) y muchas veces en mayor medida que en la Iglesia aunque con mucho menos publicidad.

Por nuestra parte mi esposo y yo no estamos dispuestos a que a nuestros hijos se les conviertan en una estadística más. No podemos evitarlo con información, diálogo y mucha, mucha oración.

La Parroquia OLS y la capilla Santísima Trinidad presentan la Pasión del Señor en vivo el Viernes Santo 10 de abril 2009. El Señor Obispo David Felberhauser y los Padres Trinitarios estarán presente como testigos del sufrimiento y la muerte de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Es una representación que se ha estado llevando a cabo desde hace años 28 años atrás en la diócesis de Victoria.

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By Derek Becher ©1999
Alberta, Canada

In all of our weakness, we scorned and humiliated You. Despite the good You brought, and the love You shared, Together, we condemned You to a horrifying death Only because You were different from us - loving all unconditionally, You loved the poor, You helped the sick, and the downtrodden. And yet, betrayed and denied by those You loved, We beat You and had You scourged: Your head became bloodied by the thorns, and Your back - shredded by the whip. And we accused You as You stumbled, carrying that heavy wood. And in the midday darkness, to the dismay and despair of those who still cared, We nailed Your hands and Your feet to the wood And raised You there so that Your body would sag, Like the spirits of those who loved You; And still, You forgave us for torturing and condemning You. And then, in the darkness, and the silence, You breathed Your last as one of us. In the despairing hours that followed, hope had vanished And sorrow overcame the weary hearts of those who loved You, Bringing mourning and tears from their splintered hearts. But on the third day, in the midst of our anguish, You conquered death and sin And appeared beyond the tomb we laid you in, And again, You welcomed Your friends to be with You. Immeasurable hope and joy filled our hearts as we saw Your gentle smile! O Lord, despite our weaknesses, our sins, our betrayals and denials, You welcomed us to be with You, and wiped away our guilty tears. Forgive us Lord, forgive me, for we have sinned; But truly, we long to share eternity with You. And only because of your triumph over death Do we have hope to be with you once more.

EWTN’s Holy Week Programming

Irondale, AL – EWTN Global Catholic Network’s extensive Holy Week programming from Rome, Washington, D.C. and Hanceville, Ala., will include a brand new “Way of the Cross,” with meditations on the plight of persecuted Christians in India and the oppressed peoples of Sudan and the Congo. The meditations, written by Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil of Irondale, Alabama, represent the second consecutive year that Pope Benedict XVI has chosen to focus on the persecution of the Church. Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-Kiu who works with persecuted Christians in China and was one of last year’s optimizations, called on the Church to remember the persecuted, as they experience “in their bodies the Passion of Jesus.” Highlights of EWTN’s Holy Week programming, including full coverage of this year’s “Way of the Cross,” fromed the Coliseum in Rome, are listed below:

Solemn Mass of Palm Sunday with Pope Benedict XVI – The Holy Father leads a procession through St. Peter’s Square in Rome before celebrating the Solemn Mass of Palm Sunday Liturgy there. Airs 2:30 a.m. CT, Thursday, April 9.

Easter Vigil Mass with Pope Benedict XVI – The Holy Father celebrates The Solemn Easter Vigil Mass live from St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Airs 2:00 p.m. CT, Saturday, April 11.


Celebration of the Lord’s Passion with Pope Benedict XVI – The Holy Father presides over the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion at The Vatican Basilica in Rome. Airs 10:00 a.m. CT, Friday, April 10.

Commemoration of the Lord’s Passion with the MVFA’s – The Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word preside over The Solemn Commemoration of the Passion live from The Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem. Airs 3:00 p.m. CT, Friday, April 10.

Way of the Cross with Pope Benedict XVI – The Holy Father presides over The Stations of the Cross live from The Coliseum in Rome. Airs 2:15 p.m. CT, Friday, April 10.

Pope declares year of the priest to inspire spiritual perfection

By Carol Glatt Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI declared a year of the priest in an effort to encourage “spiritual perfection” in priests.

The pope will open the special year with a vesper service at the Vatican June 19 — the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the day for the sanctification of priests. He will close the celebrations during a World Meeting of Priests in St. Peter’s Square June 19, 2010.

The pope made the announcement during an audience March 16 with members of the Vatican Congregation for Clergy.

During this jubilee year, the pope will also proclaim St. John Vianney to be patron saint of all the world’s priests. At present he is considered the patron saint of parish priests.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the death of this 19th-century saint who represents a “true example of a priest at the service of the flock of Christ,” the pope said.

St. John Vianney is widely known to Catholics as the Cure (parish priest) of Ars who won over the hearts of his villagers in France by visiting with them, teaching them about God and reconciling people to the Lord in the confessional.

In his address, Pope Benedict said the priestly ministry consists of total adherence to the ecclesial tradition of participating “in a spiritually intense new life and a new lifestyle which was inaugurated by the Lord Jesus and which the apostles made their own.”

Priestly ordination creates new men who are bestowed with the gift and office of sanctifying, teaching and governing, he said.

The pope underlined the necessary and “indispensable struggle for moral perfection which must dwell in every authentically priestly heart.”

The pope said he was calling for the special year for priests in an effort to foster the priest’s yearning “for spiritual perfection, upon which the effectiveness of their ministry principally depends.”

“...the awareness of the radical social changes over the past decades must stir the ecclesial energies to look after the formation of priestly candidates,” the pope said.

This means great care must be taken to ensure permanent and consistent doctrinal and spiritual formation for seminarians and priests, he said, specifying the importance of passing down, especially to younger generations, “a correct reading of the texts of the Second Vatican Council, interpreted in the light of all the church’s doctrinal heritage.”

Priests must also be “present, identifiable and recognizable—— for their judgment of faith, their personal virtues and their attitude—— in the fields of culture and charity which have always been at the heart of the church’s mission.”

“...Priests must also be present, identifiable and recognizable—— for their judgment of faith, their personal virtues and their attitude—— in the fields of culture and charity which have always been at the heart of the church’s mission.”

“To the centrality of Christ leads to a correct valuation of ordained ministry,” he said, adding that, without priestly ministry, there would be no Eucharist, no mission and even no church.

A fax was sent to all parish pastors about an International Priests’ Retreat in Ars on Formans (France) — “The Joy of Priesthood” — to be held on the 150th anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, Sept. 27 — Oct. 3; more info: www.retreateurs2009.org

Pope Benedict XVI Intentions

April 2009

General: That the Lord may bless the farmers with an abundant harvest and sensitize the richer populations to the drama of hunger in the world.

Mission: That the Christians who work in areas where the conditions of the poor, the weak and the children are most tragic, may be signs of hope, thanks to their courageous testimony to the Gospel of solidarity and love.


(1 Corinthians 11:25-32 NAB)

23) For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, broke it, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 24) In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant established in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 25) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

27) Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. 28) A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. 29) For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30) That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying. 31) If we discern ourselves, we would not be under judgment; 32) but since we are judged by (the) Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.
New Mexico Repeals Death Penalty

WASHINGTON — The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) congratulated the bishops of New Mexico and other advocates on their successful efforts to repeal the death penalty in New Mexico.

“The bishops of New Mexico and many others worked tirelessly to see New Mexico become a leader in turning away from the death penalty in our country,” said Kathy Saile, director of the Office for Domestic Social Development at the USCCB.

On March 18, Governor Bill Richardson signed HB 285 into law making New Mexico the second state to repeal the death penalty since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the use of the death penalty in 1976. In December 2007, New Jersey Governor Corzine signed legislation repealing the death penalty in that state. Fifteen states now have laws banning the death penalty.

Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development at the USCCB, wrote to Governor Richardson, a Catholic, on March 16, urging him to sign the legislation, saying it “would help begin building a culture of life in our country.”

Bishops say Catholic institutions’ use of Reiki therapy inappropriate

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Reiki therapy, an alternative medicine originating in Japan, is unscientific and inappropriate for use by Catholic hospitals, clinics and retreat centers and people representing the church, the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Doctrine said March 26.

“The bishops said the technique — which involves a Reiki practitioner laying hands on a client — also is encouraged as a ‘spiritual’ kind of healing, but that for Christians “access to divine healing” comes through prayer to God. A Catholic who puts his or her trust in Reiki “would be operating in the realm of superstition,” they said.

The U.S. bishops outlined their position in “Guidelines for Evaluating Reiki as an Alternative Therapy,” which is available online at www.usccb.org/dpp/doctrine.htm.

The guidelines described Reiki as a healing technique “invented in Japan in the late 1800s by Mikao Usui, who was studying Buddhist texts.”

“Since Reiki therapy is not compatible with either Christian teaching or scientific evidence, it would be inappropriate for Catholic institutions, such as Catholic health care facilities and retreat centers, or persons representing the church, such as Catholic chaplains, to promote or to provide support for Reiki therapy,” the guidelines said.

SAN ANTONIO — The Department of Judicial Vicars of the Texas Catholic Conference held its 34th annual spring conference at the Oblate Renewal Center March 10-11, examining the roles of judges and other personnel who serve in Tribunal Ministry.

The presenter for the event was Father Patrick R. Laggas, judicial vicar and vicar for canonical affairs for the Archdiocese of Chicago. Father Laggas has worked in Tribunal Ministry since 1982, and served as secretary of the Canon Law Society of America from 2000 to 2002. He received his doctorate in canon law from St. Paul University in Ottawa in 1988. His writings have appeared in The Jurist, Loyola Magazine, Liguorian, and Marriage and Family. Although the marriage nullity process is a legal process in the church, the Code of Canon Law and Dignitas Conubii — the Vatican instruction on the norms to be observed by ecclesiastical tribunals in matrimonial proceedings — still contain many places where judicial discretion is called for. In these cases, the judge acts as pastor, deciding what is good and equitable. Papal texts have also drawn attention to this aspect of judicial ministry.

This presentation examined some of these texts and the ways in which the judge exercises pastoral discretion in handling a case. Attending from the Diocese of Victoria, was Father Gary Janak, pastor of St. Philip the Apostle in El Cenldad. To read full story please go to: www.victoriadiocese.org/lighthouse/lighthouse.htm under EXTRA — EXTRA.

Military Books

CNS — In “God in the Foxhole,” Charles W. Sasser gets the obvious out of the way in the introduction. When he notes the adage that there are no atheists in foxholes.

For the following 300 plus pages, he demonstrates the validity not only about nonbelievers in foxholes, but also in tents, headquarters, fighter bombers, ground vehicles and anywhere else military personnel serve and get reassurance that “War” is a series of engaging stories, “War in the Garden of Eden” reads like a series of March 16, urging him to sign the legislation, saying it “would help begin building a culture of life in our country.”

Lancet criticizes pope’s remarks that condoms increase spread of HIV

Continued from p. 1

overcome the problem with the distribution of condoms. On the contrary, they increase the problem.”

He said halting the spread of HIV could only come about through “a humanization of sexuality” that includes abstinence outside marriage and fidelity within marriage, as well as the continued care of those struck by the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the head of a Harvard University research center said the center had found “no consistent associations between condom use and lower HIV-infection rates,” and that 25 years into the pandemic, we should be seeing if this intervention was working.

Dr. Edward C. Green, director of the AIDS Prevention Research Project at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, told National Review Online March 25 that “the best evidence we have supports the pope’s comments.”

Dr. Green told Christianity Today: “This is hard for a liberal like me to admit, but yes, [the criticism is] unfair because in fact, the best evidence we have supports [the pope’s] comments.”

“There is a consistent association shown by our best studies, including the U.S.-funded ‘Demographic Health Study,’ between greater availability and use of condoms and higher — not lower — HIV-infection rates,” he said.

Green said when an individual uses a condom thinking it will reduce the risk of exposure to HIV, that person may also take part in riskier behaviors. “The chances of one would take without condoms, for example, by having multiple and concurrent sexual partners.

Fidelity or reducing the number of sexual partners in one’s lifetime “is the most important single behavior change associated with reduction in HIV infection rates,” he said.

Male circumcision is the only about nonbelievers on the contrary, they increase the problem.”

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In Africa, pope challenges attitudes, cultural trends

Continued from p. 1

for the most deprived, you must be very careful,” he told Africans in Cameroon. “Take care of your souls,” he said. “Do not let yourselves be captivated by selfish illusions and false ideals.”

News accounts usually leave out the words that inevitably followed these pal pal warnings, but for the pope they were the most important part of his message in Africa: “Only Christ is the way of life.” “The Lord Jesus is the one mediator and redeemer.” “Christ is the measure of true humanity.”

The information the pontiff asked of Africans was, as he described it, one that must begin with a radical conversion to Christ that redirects every aspect of life.

“The Gospel teaches us that reconciliation, true reconciliation, can only be the fruit of conversion, a change of heart, a new way of thinking. It teaches us that only the power of God’s love can change our hearts,” he said at an outdoor Mass in Angola.

The pope kept reminding listeners that, in his view, inside and outside Africa the Christian message lived to the full is profoundly countercultural.

That was eminently clear when he addressed young people in an Angolan soccer stadium, telling them that their power to shape the future was directly dependent on their “constant dialogue with the Lord.”

“The dominant societal culture is not helping you live by Jesus’ words or to practice the self-giving to which he calls you,” he said. In fact, he said, today’s “individualistic and hedonistic” values prevent young people from reaching maturity.

At his Mass the next day, the pope continued in the same vein, saying that “living by the truth” was not easy in the face of the “hardened attitudes” of selfishness that dominate much of contemporary social relations.

Abortion was very much on the pope’s mind in Africa. His first speech on the continent reminded Africans of their traditional values and said the church was the institution best able to preserve and purify them — unlike agencies that want to impose “cultural models that ignore the rights of the unborn.”

In a speech to foreign diplomats, he laid down a direct challenge to international organizations that, in his words, were undermining society’s foundations by promoting abortion as a form of reproductive health care. The pope announced for next October’s Synod of Bishops, delivered by the pope to African bishops, said globalization “infringes on Africa’s rights” and tends “to be the vehicle for the domination of a single, cultural model and a culture of death.”

The pope hit hard on African wars and ethnic conflicts and repeatedly held out Christianity as the answer. If Africans grasp that the church is “God’s family,” he said in Cameroon, there is no room for ethniccentrism or factionalism. In effect, he presented the church as the only institution capable of bringing Africans together in a way that goes beyond political or economic expediency.

Although the pope had two one-liners about corruption, typically portrayed in the West as the quintessential “African” problem, he did not engage in finger-pointing — even in Cameroon, which is usually at the top of the corruption charts of human rights organizations. Indeed, he called Cameroon a “land of hope” for Africa.

The reason is that he knows local African church leaders are already on the front lines in denouncing political corrup-

Science’s Rightful Place

Continued from p. 1

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Science and ethics are pointing the way forward together. The only thing standing in the way now is an ideology favoring embryo destruction — an ideology that is reflected in the president’s new executive order, but that the American people do not support.

Mr. Doerringer is Associate Director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Go to www.usccb.org/prolife to learn more about the bishops’ pro-life activities.

The transformation the pontiff asked of Africans was, as he described it, one that deserves a similar change in attitude from the developed world — not “more programs and protocols” but “conversion of hearts to sincere solidarity.”

His visit to the sick in Cameroon illustrated that the church must invest its resources in love and care for the needy, but with a special focus: Human suffering can only make sense in light of Christ’s crucifixion and his “final victory” over death, he said.

Even the pope’s defense of women’s rights in Africa was very much a “Benedict approach, based not on human rights declarations but on the biblical account of creation. Here, too, his point that men and women have “complementary” roles will no doubt find critics.

The pope’s method in Africa was not to lay down the law but to lay down a challenge, asking people to examine their own lives and their relationships in the light of the Gospel. He believes that Christianity is a perfect fit for Africa but that, in view of cultural trends, it won’t necessarily be an easy fit.

Catholics march on a street toward a court in Hanoi, Vietnam, March 27. The court upheld convictions against eight Roman Catholics arrested during a land dispute with the government, after authorities revoked their lawyer’s license and barred him from attending the appeal. (CNS photo/Reuters)
When Given Opportunity

By Tim Scordato

Louvrette Clearvay (LCS) is one of the most prestigious Catholic institutions in Haiti where thousands of students have received an education. The school was founded in 1968 and it is located in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince. The school's mission is to provide education and formation to underprivileged young people in Haiti.

Last month, construction continued at the Center for Rehabilitation in Port-au-Prince. Construction work has begun on the new center, which will expand the services that the school offers to its students.

The Center for Rehabilitation, on average, holds 45 victims of car accidents, sexual violence, muggings and other traumatic experiences. Many of Doctors Without Borders’ patients are reading you this article in order to get in for emergency surgery and sent to Dr. Emmanuel for rehabilitation. Services are given free of charge. The clinic also keeps social workers and psychologists on staff to help traumatized patients re-enter society.

Dr. Emmanuel says he would like to continue his work for Doctors Without Borders because they are different from other medical clinics. A true LCS grad, he reports rapid turnover and commitment to victims of poverty, violence and natural disasters. “They are working so all human beings can have access to health — equal...” he said.

Fifteen years ago, Emmanuel never would have believed he would become a doctor. From the beginning, Louverture Cleary, he lived in Cité Soleil, “the biggest...” and most miserable shantytown in Haiti,” he said. Many people look down upon the Cité Soleil area but Dr. Emmanuel says they are dishonest and uneducated. Emmanuel wanted to show that was untrue, and all he needed was the opportunity to prove himself.

Louvrette Clearvay School gave Emmanu...
Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser May 17 at the KC Hall. The price is $6 per chicken. Beans and Spanish rice available for $1.50 per plate. Kids under 12. The fort is handicapped accessible. For more information, please call Amedeo Colucci at (361) 575-2608 or (361) 365-1722 for time and intersection location.

St. Francis and St. Clare Fraternity/Secular Franciscans — monthly meeting dates call Mary An LeBlanc at (361) 575-1858.

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St. Wenceslaus 47th Annual Bazaar April 19 at the St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, 3230 N. Business 281, Victoria. Sale starts at 8:30 a.m. Proceeds benefit council’s projects.

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**Jubilee Indulgence**

There are three different ways to obtain the special indulgence for the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of St. Paul.

- **Make a pilgrimage to the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome**
  - Receive the sacrament of reconciliation
  - Receive the Eucharist
  - Pray for the intentions of Pope Benedict XVI

- **Visit St. Paul’s tomb and recite the Our Father and the Creed “adding pious invocations in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Paul.”**

- **Participate in a local liturgy or prayer event dedicated to St. Paul**
  - The service must be indicated by the local bishop or take place at a shrine or church chosen by the bishop or at one dedicated to St. Paul.
  - Receive the sacrament of reconciliation
  - Receive the Eucharist
  - Pray for the intentions of Pope Benedict XVI

**'Spiritually join' the Jubilee celebration**

If you are prevented from going on a pilgrimage or cannot participate in a public event because of illness or other serious reasons, you can receive the indulgence by firmly promising to go to confession and receive Communion soon and by offering “prayers and sufferings to God for Christian unity.”

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**Cyprus has good example of ecumenical relations, says patriarch**

By Judith Sudilovsky

Catholic News Service

JERUSALEM (CNS) – The amicable relations between Cyprus’ small Catholic community and the majority Greek Orthodox Church are a “good witness” to the importance of tolerance and ecumenical cooperation, said Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal of Jerusalem.

“The there are good ecumenical relations between the Catholics and the Orthodox,” he said. “It is still a beautiful island. The government is Greek. It is Christian. There are none of the tensions there among Muslims, Christians and Jews and political tensions as there are here. It is more relaxed there.”

The patriarch spoke to Catholic News Service March 4 following a visit to Cyprus in mid-February. Cyprus is part of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Despite its different makeup and dissimilar character compared to the rest of the patriarchate – which includes Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories – Cyprus is an integral part of the diocese, Patriarch Twal said.

Most Latin-rite Catholics reside on the Greek half of Cyprus, said the patriarch, although there is a community of Melkite Catholics and a Maronite Catholic parish on the Turkish side. The Latin community consists mainly of foreign workers from Southeast Asia and Poland and British retirees, he said. The British retirees and the Polish foreign workers help those more in need, he added.

He also said that during this year of St. Paul, Cyprus has seen an influx of pilgrims who come to visit Paphos, where the saint preached.

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**CANDIDATES PRESENTED TO THE BISHOP**

Candidates are presented to Bishop David E. Fellhauer at the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion on the first Sunday of Lent, March 1, 2009, at the Lady of Victory Cathedral in Victoria. Candidates have already been baptized and are continuing their conversion to the Christian faith by receiving the sacraments of confirmation and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil Mass, Saturday evening, April 11. Last year, 58 candidates from 13 parishes entered the Church; whereas, this year the numbers have doubled with 116 candidates from 15 parishes preparing to continue their conversion.

Pray for the candidates on their journey to the fullness of faith.

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**IWBS Gift Shop expands in time for Easter and First Holy Communion**

By Cynthia Brewer

The Incarnate Word Gift Shop at the IWBS Convent has moved down two doors into its new location, which offers double the space and allows shoppers an opportunity for a leisurely browsing and shopping experience.

Going to the gift shop each month to purchase the prize for the child winner of The Catholic Lighthouse’s Family Puzzle Contest has always provided me with a little escape from our busy world. Just walking from the back parking lot through the gardens to the gift shop can be a mini-retreat experience. Now it beckons me to stay longer as it has ample room for browsing (don’t tell the bishop where I’m at).

The renovation and removal of a wall between two empty rooms next to the original gift shop took place in January. The shop was able to remain open while the renovations transformed two former Annunciation College classrooms into a spacious gift shop and office for Sister Gregoria Berger, shop manager, and her staff of four other religious sisters.

Sister Gregoria has been the manager of the gift shop since January 2005, upon Sister Teresa Marie Miller’s retirement from the position. Sister Adele Marie Machela, with her 17 years’ experience, assists in the shop. Sisters Carola Hajdik, Maria Estefana Robles and Serena Etzler joined the gift shop staff within the past two years.

The Incarnate Word Gift Shop offers gifts for every religious occasion and is ready for the upcoming holy days and special events, including Easter, First Holy Communion, confirmation and graduation and ongoing events such as baptisms and weddings.

They carry a supply of books, Bibles and various religious articles for all ages, including statues, crucifixes, rosaries, pictures, jewelry, prayer cards and religious medals.

Since its expansion, it has added hand-work done by the IWBS Sisters, such as doilies, cup towels, pillowcases and baby blankets.

The Incarnate Word Gift Shop is open Monday thru Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. They are closed on Sundays, Holy Days and major holidays. The IWBS convent is located at 1101 N.E. Water Street in Victoria. Drive south on Navarro Street to Water, take a left, cross the two sets of railroad tracks, take the first entrance (on right) to the convent and drive around to the back parking lot. Walk towards the breezeway joining the buildings, and the shop will be about the fifth door on the right, next to the statue of our Lord Jesus.

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**CATECHUMENS PRESENTED TO THE BISHOP**

Catechumens are presented to Bishop David E. Fellhauer at the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion on the first Sunday of Lent, March 1, 2009, at the Lady of Victory Cathedral in Victoria. Fifty-two catechumens from 13 parishes are planning to enter the Catholic faith by receiving all three sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil, Saturday evening, April 11; those numbers are up from last year’s 32 catechumens. Above are the catechumens and their godparents with Bishop Fellhauer; please keep them in your prayers.