Father Gabriel Bentil celebrates 25 years of priesthood

By Cynthia Brewer

Joy! Joy is what exudes from Father Gabriel Bentil, and the Diocese of Victoria has been blessed to experience his joyful presence for the past eight years. He celebrated the 25th anniversary of his priesthood at his parish, St. Joseph’s, in Inez on Sunday, July 19, 2009. Father Gabriel Bentil came from Ghana, West Africa, to Our Lady of Victory Cathedral in 2001 and has assisted there and at Holy Family Parish in Victoria in between his continued studies in Kent, England, and the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill. He was incardinated into the Diocese of Victoria on February 27, 2008, and assigned to St. Joseph Parish in Inez in June 2008.

See Father Gabriel Bentil, p. 19

By Sister Amata Hollas, IWBS

In 2006 we, the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in Victoria, made a decision to engage in a process of revitalization and growth. We began a “Journey of Refounding.”

Over the years there have been many who have journeyed with us as partners in mission whether they are parents, students or other individuals who have supported us in our mission. On the weekend of June 27 and 28, 2009, we invited some of them to sit and talk with us about how they see us and what our Church needs from us today. Around 50 of them were able to join us.

We, together with our Partners in Mission, embarked on a “Transformative Visioning” process which is a key element in the refounding process. We spent the weekend deepening together our refounding faith journey as we prayed about and discussed the context, culture and dreams of our lives. In a stance of contemplative listening, both the Sisters and the Partners in Mission reflected on the aching, gaping needs in our world, church and neighborhoods; we reflected on the charism of the Sisters and began to name the values, beliefs and behaviors that surround this charism (a Charism is a particular gift of the Holy Spirit to a group of Consecrated Religious for the good of the Church). As Partners in Mission, we began to unearth possible dreams as we listened to our longings, imaginings, and possibilities for a hope-filled future as we proclaim by our lives that the Word has become Flesh and dwells among us.

The Partners in Mission expressed a desire to continue on the Journey of Refounding. The Partners in Mission, p. 7

See Partners in Mission, p. 7

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DIocese of Victoria Web site: www.victoriadiocese.org
To Whom It May Concern:

In the June 2009, Vol. 23, No. 2, edition of The Catholic Lighthouse publication, there are two articles that should be of concern to Catholics who know and practice their Catholic faith as doctrine teaches.

One article, “Good review; Vatican newspaper sees Obama’s start in positive light,” presents the illusion that the pope supports President Barack Obama. I am not saying that I know the pope’s personal opinion or his stand for the Church regarding President of the United States Barack Obama, but that article leads readers to believe that the pope supports the opinion of the article. I find this insinuation very offensive since President Barack Obama openly supports the murder of viable unborn children and allowing these children to die if they survive a botched abortion. The Catholic Church in no way can support this politician due to his stand on abortion. Nothing he does can offset the effects of his promoting and supporting abortion.

Also, the article, “Engage Obama or fight him?” Law professors discuss his abortion stance,” written by supposed pro-life law professors alludes to bringing about fewer abortions; fewer abortions? One abortion is wrong and if we do not promote respect for all life then no other issues matter. “Thou shall not commit murder” is one of the Ten Commandments and we, as Catholics, should have no part watering down the issue. Although this article did go on to point out much legislation that the Obama administration has refused to ban such abortion for gender selection, partial-birth abortion and late-term abortions, the article muddles the water and any article from a Catholic publication can be influential in leading the flock in the wrong direction.

What message did the caption under the picture of Supreme Court nominee Sotomayor send in stating that “she was raised a Catholic and attends church for family celebrations and other important events” was printed in an effort to allow readers to come to their own conclusion as to whether Judge Sotomayor follows Catholic teaching. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church” (para. 2182). “… the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) …” (para. 2181). I appreciate Ms. Smith’s comments. Thank you, Cynthia Brewer, Editor.

In response to the Letter to the Editor:

Regarding “Good reviews; Vatican newspaper sees Obama’s start in positive light,” the article clearly states that the editor’s opinions cannot be read as formal Vatican statements, but it also mentions that the editor is “at the service of the thinking of the pope…” The article was a news story that stated that Obama’s thinking was very similar to Pope Benedict’s and the L’Osservatore Romano’s on several key issues. Nowhere does the article say that the Church is pleased with President Obama’s stand on abortion, and The Catholic Lighthouse has never failed to mention the damage the Obama administration’s pro-abortion stand has caused to women and unborn children in the United States and throughout the world.

In “Engage Obama or fight him? …” the article explains that two pro-life professors have differing views on how to engage President Obama on the issue of abortion. The story doesn’t say who is right or wrong; however, Robert George’s challenge to Douglas Kmiec “that if Obama truly wants to seek common ground, he would support several key policies that would discourage abortion” makes it clear George’s argument is stronger.

And finally, regarding the statement under Judge Sonia Sotomayor’s picture, that she “was raised a Catholic and attends church for family celebrations and other important events” was printed in an effort to allow readers to come to their own conclusion as to whether Judge Sotomayor follows Catholic teaching.
Under the auspices of the Victoria Diocese Knights of St. Gregory the Great, the annual Bishop’s Charities Banquet was held July 9, 2009, at the Victoria Country Club. The evening began with a social and then a buffet dinner. Rev. Bryan Heyer, parochial vicar of Our Lady of the Gulf Church in Port Lavaca, led the invocation. The Hon. Gaylan Duncan, past president of the KSG, was the master of ceremonies. He introduced the Hon. Jerry A. Hajek, president of the KSG, who presented a $12,000 donation to Bishop David E. Fellhauer for his charities. Bishop Fellhauer gave a brief update on some of the activities of the diocese of the past 12 months, ranging from religious education, to Catholic schools, the Office of Child and Youth Protection, Youth and Young Adult Ministry and Vocations, and capping off with the announcement of the total pledged on the Diocesan Capital Campaign, which is $13,484,800 with $6,381,309 so far collected. The evening concluded with entertainment by Randy Faulk and benediction by Rev. Frank Lenz, pastor of Sts. Peter & Paul Church in Meyersville.

The Traveling Angel of St. Michael Church was presented to the couple in recognition of their generous service and dedicated volunteerism. The angel will be at the Southern’s home for a year. The angel will be at the Southern’s home for a year.

El Campo Knights Elect Officers—Knights of Columbus Council 2490 recently elected new officers. They are, back row from left: Leonard Goerig, trustee; AJ Hlavaty, trustee; Wayne Bard, warden; Greg Eggemeyer, chancellor; James Kocurek, outside guard; Steven Deiss, treasurer; Winston Baker, inside guard; front row, from left: Dennis Kana, recorder; Diocesan Deputty Alvin Kulcak; Grand Knight John Tumilson; Father Augustine Asante, assistant chaplain; Deputy Grand Knight Michael Bolcik and District Deputy Kenneth Trocchi. Not pictured: Jason Ryan, advocate; Don Warschak, financial secretary; and John Hrncir, trustee. Upcoming KC events include the council’s Bar-B-Que Dinner Sunday, August 30, with a portion of the proceeds going to the St. Philip’s School Teacher Supply Fund.

At the age of 77, Edith Sitwell, an English biographer, critic, novelist, and poet, died a prophet. One of her famous quotes is “The public will believe anything, so long as it is not founded on truth.” Her saying fulfilled prophecy with the production of the play “The Deputy,” which opened in New York City, the same year she died.

Recently I went to a talk at the Holocaust Museum Houston given by Ms. Vivien Spitz, a court reporter on the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. The topic was fascinating, disturbing and horrific, all at the same time.

While there, I met a very nice woman, perhaps in her 70s; we sat together during the talk and then spoke afterwards. She was Jewish, but had not gone through the Holocaust, although some of her family members had. We made great conversation, until I asked her if she knew of anyone who had been saved by Pope Pius XII’s or the Vatican’s efforts.

Her response set me back a bit and left me dumbfounded. She retorted something to the effect of, “He didn’t do anything for the Jewish people. If anything, he did more harm than good.”

The reason for my shock is that I have read many books in defense of Pope Pius XII’s heroic, yet quietly, diplomatic efforts, which contributed to the saving of perhaps over 800,000 Jewish lives.

Books I’ve read which support this theory include: “The Myth of Hitler’s Pope” by Rabbi David G. Dulin; “Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?” by Sister Margherita Marchione, Ph. D.; and “Hitler, the War and the Pope” by Ron Rychlak, Ph.D. Another great source of first-hand information (primary sources) can be found at Pope the Way Foundation (PTWF): www.pavethewayfoundation.org; go to the bottom of the site and click on the second set of “Obstacles.”

How does a pope who is praised by Jews during and after WWII become vilified as doing nothing for them, 20 years later?

All three of the above authors, as well as the PTWF Web site, mention that since the opening of the play “The Deputy” in 1963 (New York City in 1964), which set out to malign Pope Pius XII’s papacy, there has been friction between Jews and Catholics.

Where did this play, supposedly written by Rolf Hochhuth, a German, come from?


Pacepa was the highest-ranking intelligence officer ever to have defected from the former Soviet bloc, defecting from Romania in July 1978.

The opening line of his article states, “The Soviet Union was never comfortable living in the same world with the Vatican.” He explains first how the KGB was used to counter the Catholic Church’s strong anti-Communism through the Soviet Union’s initiative to eliminate Pope John Paul II and then through its collaboration of Poland’s Communist-era political policies with Polish priests.

He then goes into detail of how the Soviet Union planned to malign Pope Pius XII and the Vatican through the initiation of the play, “The Deputy.” Pacepa found himself in the middle of the Kremlin’s effort to portray Pope Pius XII as a coldhearted sympathizer of the Nazis via an espionage plot by Romanian agents under the ploy of reestablishing Romania’s broken relationship with the Vatican. Pacepa tells the story for the first time in this article (the full story can be read by Googling: Moscow’s Assault on the Vatican).

His article states, “In February 1960, Nikita Khrushchev approved a super-secret plan for destroying the Vatican’s moral authority in Western Europe.” Pope Pius XII had died in 1958. Pacepa says that the KGB’s latest slogan was, “Dead men cannot defend themselves.”

“His (‘The Deputy’) central thesis was that Pius II had supported Hitler and encouraged him to go ahead with the Jewish Holocaust.” He explains, “It immediately ignited a huge controversy around Pius XII, who was depicted as a cold, heartless man more concerned about Vatican properties than about the fate of Hitler’s victims.”

Pacepa said the controversies caused by this play did not doom the Church as the Communists had wished; however, it did impart enough falsehood about Pope Pius XII to cause many people who had not even heard of the play to be convinced that Pope Pius was a “cold and evil man who hated the Jews and helped Hitler do away with them.”

Gary Kup, the Jewish founder and president of PTWF, shows an example of how the play has contributed to the friction between Jews and Catholics, “Throughout our research, particularly in the eyewitness accounts that we have captured on video, one glaring observation has come up over and over again. Those who actually lived through the brutality of the Nazis and...
Vocations

Seminary Burses

Seminary burses are a permanent fund used for the education of future priests for the Diocese of Victoria. The goal of each burse 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 persons, living or deceased. Publication of the burses will appear periodically when new contributions are received.

As of July 29, 2009

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Who is a Priest?

Editor’s note: The Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations has asked renowned women of faith to write reflections on their appreciation of the priesthood during this Year for Priests. The article also may be found on the USCCB Web site: www.usccb.org/yearforpriests/articles.shtml

By Victoria M. Thorn

A priest is a man, clothed in tenderness, who speaks of God’s mercy, who prophetically pronounces the truth, unpleasant as it might be and who reflects God’s love to a hurting world. Sometimes he is showering up souls and sometimes he is breaking up concrete. He’s comforting the grieving and challenging the young. He’s soothing the dying and blessing the new-born.

In the 25 years since I founded Project Rachel, the post-abortion healing ministry of the Church, I have witnessed firsthand the gift that priests are to the world. I have seen the heart of the priest repeatedly. It is generous, compassionate, willing to sacrifice for others.

At the inception of Project Rachel, when some thought post-abortion ministry was a hare-brained idea, the priests here in Milwaukee supported it, as did my bishop. As I was planning the training, one priest told me not to be disappointed because he didn’t think any priests were going to come, but 60 priests came and generously embraced this new ministry of mercy. And 25 years later, those priests are still involved in the work. If there is anything I need, they are immediately willing to help.

All over the country many priests actively keep me and the ministry in prayer, recognizing that prayer is powerful and protective.

Several times I have received calls on our referral line from elderly women somewhere in the U.S. looking to reconcile an abortion loss from 40 or 50 years ago. They have said to me ‘I can’t ask my children to take me to confession because they will say ‘Ma, you are old. What could you possibly need to confess?’ And in every case, I was able to find a priest who was going to come, but 60 priests came and generously embraced this new ministry of mercy. And 25 years later, those priests are still involved in the work. If there is anything I need, they are immediately willing to help.

A priest who speaks of God’s mercy, who prophesies to the world, one heart and soul at a time.

How many lives were touched because of his incredible generosity?

It was the pastoral awareness of the bishops of this country, who, as confessors, recognized the pain of women who had had abortions, and called for a ministry of post-abortion healing in the first Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, issued shortly after abortion became the law of the land and it is this pastoral heart that motivated bishops to personally call me after the founding of the ministry to ask how they could make it happen in their diocese.

A woman who had been convinced by her doctor to abort a child with severe malformations was called after the hospital had released her dead baby to her, as she and her husband were grieving profoundly over this loss. The hospital had referred her to a chaplain, but he had been of little use, refusing to help them bury their child.

I called an experienced Project Rachel priest and explained the circumstances to him. He was a canon lawyer with years of post-abortion experience. He went to the family, held them as they wept, gave their child a proper burial and soothed the wounds left by the insensitive chaplain, keeping them in the Church. She called to tell me what a gift he had been to them as he came into my office to thank me for the opportunity to minister to them.

A woman will often call after speaking to a priest she has been referred to, to tell me of her profound experience of God’s love and mercy through the priest. She will say “Please tell the priests how grateful we are to them for what they have said and been – the mercy and love of God made manifest, the wisdom of the Spirit speaking to our souls, indeed Father was Jesus with skin for me!” Alter Christus made manifest!”

To the many Project Rachel priests in this country and to the multitudes of confessors who soothe a woman’s terror, confront her despair, set her free of her sin and bring her home to the Lord and her lost children: Thank you from the depths of my heart. Without you, this ministry of Project Rachel would not exist! And on behalf of the multitudes of people who have been touched: THANK YOU! ALL OF YOU! You have changed the world, one heart and soul at a time.

Vicki Thorn is the founder of Project Rachel Post-Abortion Ministry; http://hopeafterabortion.com. She is also the founder and director of the National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing based in Milwaukee. Mrs. Thorn is an internationally renowned author and speaker on healing and reconciliation in the aftermath of abortion.
El CAMPO—More and more teens are turning their lives over to God and praying for guidance along their journey to adulthood. Many teens have realized the importance of prayer in their lives. One outstanding teen who lives for God and others is Courtney Janak, a recent graduate of El Campo High School.

Courtney is the daughter of Allan and Jeannie Janak and the sister of two supportive brothers, Brandon and Dustin. She is the granddaughter of proud grandparents Rose Marie Janak and Walter Gold and the niece of our very own, Father Gary Janak, pastor at St. Philip Catholic Church.

Courtney not only is dedicated to her Church and family, but she studied diligently and earned the title of Valedictorian in her Senior Class of 227 with a GPA of 5.43. In her farewell address at the graduation ceremony, she said, “I’d like to personally thank God for the blessings he has bestowed upon our senior class. He has been with us every moment, guiding and inspiring, and he joyfully shares this great moment with us today. So don’t stop believing, because Jeremiah 29:11 states, ‘For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

Courtney’s strong spiritual attitude was supported greatly by St. Philip Catholic School where she attended from Kindergarten to 8th grade. It was there where she was influenced tremendously by the Catholic atmosphere of prayer and kindness, weekly Mass and by attempting to live St. Phillips’ motto of knowing, loving and serving God and others.

She was president of the National Honor Society during her senior year and was active in various sports during high school. She was named Fighting Heart for the track team for two years. Not only was Courtney blessed with strong academic and athleticism, but she also used her God-given talent for art and created several winning pictures.

She also participated in many clubs including the FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) and helped with countless community activities. She received the Academic Excellence Award for 2008-09, the Best All-Around Senior Girl at ECHS for 2008-09, and the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) Good Citizenship Award for 08-09.

Courtney served her school and Church every chance God gave her throughout her high school years. She belonged to the Youth Leadership Team (YLT) of the Victoria Diocese for four years through which she has helped to facilitate the High School Youth Spectaculars, the Junior High Fiestas and confirmation retreats. For four years, she has been on the staff at Camp David—a summer youth camp sponsored by the diocese—and helped others strengthen their spiritual life by serving on the team of the TEEN ACTS Retreat.

She attended the Rocky Mountain High Retreat in Colorado and participated in Steubenville South—a Catholic conference in Louisiana for high school youth, which is co-sponsored by the Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio.

Courtney plans on attending Texas A&M University in College Station where she will major in psychology. She is excited about becoming involved at St. Mary’s Catholic Church and Student Center in College Station. She plans to be very active in one of the largest and most active campus ministries in the country.
The Abortion Administration

President Obama has his way he will go down in history as the Abortion President. In his first week in office he issued an executive order overturning a policy in place since the Reagan administration, which forbade foreign aid from going to organizations that funded or furnished abortions. He has repeated a mantra about reducing the number of abortions. His methodology is questionable. His party wants public funds for abortions in the District of Columbia, something that was forbidden for many years by the Doman Amendment. According to the Guttmacher Institute, fully 41% of pregnancies in the District of Columbia now end in abortion. How subsidizing abortions with tax funds is going to diminish their number is a mystery that only he understands. His words are directly contradicted by his deeds.

At the United Nations, the Obama administration continued to push for increasing access to legal abortion around the world. The US resolution calls for “universal access” to “sexual and reproductive health services including universal access to family planning.”

The sticking point is the word “services” in the context of “reproductive health.” In 2001 in negotiations on the Child Convention, a Canadian delegate blurted out, “Of course everyone knows ‘services’ means abortion.” In 2005 the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) joined with pro-abortion lobbyists groups to call for “universal access to health and reproductive health services and programmes.” They were defeated in large part by Bush-appointed US delegates who insisted that none of the terms related to health be interpreted to include abortion.

In April, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told a US House subcommittee, “We[the Obama administration] happen to think that family planning is an important part of health, and reproductive health includes access to abortion that I believe should be safe, and rare.” In this statement, Clinton contradicted the agreement reached at the Cairo Conference, which said that abortion can never be used as a part of family planning.

Obama told Pope Benedict XVI in his visit that he was committed to reducing the number of abortions. Yet his administration is helping Democrats craft a health care bill that would appropriate billions of dollars to the Freedom of Choice Act by stealth. You may recall in a previous article in this space that the Freedom of Choice Act is neither free nor does it give choices. Among other things it requires public funding of abortion and eliminates conscience protection for health providers who do not wish to participate in abortions. It also nullifies state laws states parental notification and late-term abortions. “Unless amended, the current bill mandates abortion coverage for nearly every insurance plan in America,” said Rep. Jean Schmidt (R-Ohio). “Every American will be forced to pay for these services, whether through premiums or tax rates.”

In the current draft in the House, the bill’s health care coverage requirements do not specifically mention abortion. It sounds harmless and it is meant to. But history’s “most open and transparent” administration can effectively grant abortion “rights” by not mentioning the word. House Republicans say precedent shows that courts and administrative agencies assume abortion is included unless explicitly prohibited in the legislation. When Congress remains silent, it allows courts and agencies to “mandate abortion” as Rep. Joe Pitts (R-Pa) said in a statement. It happened in the federal Medicaid statute, which required the famous Hyde Amendment to stop federal funding of abortion through Medicaid.

Basically, as Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) put it, if you pay premiums or taxes, you’ll be funding abortion. So, Obama plans to reduce the number of abortions by making them cheaper, more accessible, and penalizing insurance companies and employers that choose not to include abortion in their health care coverage. Under the current draft of the bill, if individuals decide they want something other than the minimum benefit standards set by the administration, they have to pay a 2% fee. Employers pay an 8% fee.

The cost of abortions alone often reduces the number performed. According to Planned Parenthood’s Web site, an abortion costs anywhere from $350 to $900 in the first trimester, and are probably more expensive in the second and third trimesters. Apparently Obama believes that lowering the cost of something means it will become more rare. This is voodoo economics with a vengeance.

Long National Institutes of Health (NIH) is drawing condemnation from pro-life advocates who say it ignored the majority of Americans who opposed the proposed guidelines that would implement President Barack Obama’s decision to force taxpayers to fund embryonic stem cell research. The president dissolved the President’s Council on Bioethics when ten of its eighteen members criticized his new guidelines. NIH released the new guidelines, which not only allow the destruction of “leftover” human embryos, but could open the door to their purposeful creation and destruction.

The Obama administration is ignoring the comments it solicited. Acting NIH director Raynard Kington told The Hill, a newspaper that covers Congress, that a strong majority of the comments were against embryonic stem cell research funding. The agency received more than 49,000 comments from the public after issuing a draft of its guidelines in April, Kington explained, and he noted 30,000 came from people who opposed the immoral research. Kington admitted that NIH ignored such comments as “unresponsive.” “We actually did not ask the public whether we should fund research on human embryonic stem cells. We asked the public how we should fund human embryonic stem cell research,” Kington said. Richard M. Doerr, associate director of the US bishops’ Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities stated that it was “disingenuous (for Kington) to say that comments criticizing the guidelines overall were to be ignored.”

Dr. Richard Doerr, of the US bishops’ Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities blasted the guidelines as immoral and unethical. “Embryonic stem cell research requires dissecting and cometabolizing the youngest, most vulnerable humans.” “Instead of funding more life-destroying experiments, federal funding should go toward life-saving treatments and clinical trials using adult stem cells, which are on the cutting edge of treating patients for diabetes, spinal cord injury, heart disease, multiple sclerosis, and other diseases,” he concluded.

Deirdre A. McQuade, assistant director for policy and communications in the pro-life secretariat of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, explained, “The new guidelines demanded by the U.S. President promote poor science, reflect bad health care policy, and do nothing to fund treatments with adult stem cells that are providing documented benefits for suffering patients.” “The guidelines implement a plan that will force taxpayers to foot the bill for research that involves human destruction, not healing.”

So, opposed to our health care possible front, Obama and the Democrats are determined to implement the Culture of Death. Elections have consequences. When you elect legislators who favor abortion you get publicly funded abortions. If these laws are still under consideration when this is printed, by all means, write your elected representatives asking them to oppose them. It would have been better, however, had Catholics followed the Bishops’ guidance on Responsible Citizenship. Then the pro-abortion candidates would never have been elected.

Cardinal Rigali protests move to fund abortion in DC

WASHINGTON — Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chair of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote to members of the House Appropriations Committee June 3 urging them not to fund abortions in the District of Columbia. Last week the House subcommittee considering the Financial Services appropriations bill for 2010 voted to permit direct public funding of abortion in the nation’s capital. Cardinal Rigali said that the subcommittee’s action “effectively nullifies the Doman amendment,” which for a total of 18 years has prevented public funding of elective abortions in the District.

He said this move, “presumably the first step in a broader effort to restore such funding throughout the federal government,” is misguided for three reasons.

“First, public funding of abortion is rejected by the American people, as numerous surveys of public opinion have shown,” Cardinal Rigali said. He also noted that Catholics recently sent “tens of millions of postcards to their elected representatives in Congress, opposing… any weakening or reversal of current appropriations riders on abortion.”

“Second, no lawmaker or Administrator can support such a policy change and still claim to support ‘reducing abortions.’” The evidence is overwhelming, and universally recognized by groups on all sides of the abortion issue, that the availability of public funds for abortion greatly increases abortions,” the bishops’ Pro-Life Committee Chair argued. “Third, this action takes place as Congress is working to win broad support for a much-needed major reform of our health care system.”

Cardinal Rigali noted: “This is the worst of all possible times to be injecting the divisive issue of public abortion funding into the debate on government health policy.”

Cardinal Rigali concluded by urging the full House Appropriations Committee to reverse the subcommittee’s action and retain the funding ban in current law. The full text of his letter is available at: www.usccb.org/prolife/Rigali-Doman-Amendment-2009.pdf

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CHURCH TITHES FESTIVAL EARNINGS—On June 14, 2009, the Queen of the Holy Rosary Parish, Hostyn, presented a check of $1,100 to Jennifer Boening and Sally Garrett with the Child Passenger Safety Program and $1,100 to Sharon Muzny, representing the Fayette County EMS. This money will enable the group to purchase car seats for those families that can’t afford one or to replace those involved in car accidents. The donations represent 10 percent of the profit from the parish’s May ’09 Picnic. Pictured is Jerry Zeeula, president of the Hostyn Parish Council, awarding the check, along with a small group of parishioners.

BAY CITY ORGANIZATIONS DONATE TO MEDICAL CENTER—Both the Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court Resurrection No. 2054 and the Catholic Family Fraternal of Texas, Our Lady of Snows, presented the Matagorda Regional Medical Center Foundation with a $250 check. Each donation will purchase a car seat for those families that can’t afford one or to replace those involved in car accidents. The donations represent 10 percent of the profit from the parish’s May ’09 Picnic. Pictured is Jerry Zeeula, president of the Hostyn Parish Council, awarding the check, along with a small group of parishioners.

Partners in Mission: Proclaiming His Presence Together

Continued from p. 1

foundering with the Sisters. With gratitude we are looking forward to sharing with our Partners and the larger community our Charism and Incarnational Spirituality. Our 17th century foundress, Jeanne Chezard de Matel, continues to call her Sisters to this kind of sharing.

This was an historic gathering and we, the Sisters, came together the next day and reflected again on the topics discussed with our Partners in Mission. What might God be calling us to on our “Journey of Refounding?” Among our many reflections were the following:

We are being called to a deeper contemplative life – living the Gospel and Beatitudes and being women of loving service, compassion, and joyful witness. We are being called to invite the laity to participate spiritually and socially with us on our journey. We are being called to develop our Amor Meus Spirituality Center to reach out to the spiritual needs of the Church. (Note: You may wonder what the words “Amer Meus” mean. They are Latin words meaning “My Love”. Jesus told our foundress, Jeanne de Matel, that

He wanted to rest on our hearts and on our hearts is an emblem with a heart on which are the words AMOR MEUS.)

We are being called to offer spiritual opportunities to families: family-days, retreats, spiritual experiences, counseling and spiritual direction. We are being called to reach out and invite our Partners in Mission to participate in a Mission Effectiveness process with their families. We are being called to live our lives as a crystal vaze, a life of relationship and intimacy with the Incarnate Word. Because of that relationship with God, with the Eucharist, we can have that faithfulness in reflecting the image of Jesus and be that “Crystal Vase” that their foundress calls us to be.

We are being challenged to expand our search for vocations and develop a lay vocation board; we are being challenged to share our Charism and Mission with the larger community.

With all of this valuable input, we are now beginning to consider ways in which all our Partners in Mission might become more involved in our Charism and Mission.

SWEET HOME LEGION RECEIVES DONATION—St. Ludmila’s KJZT No. 12 of Sweet Home recently presented a check to the Sweet Home American Legion No. 571 air-conditioning fund. Post Commander Harvey Matusek is presented the check from St. Ludmila’s KJZT members Mary Knezek, Lynette Havel, Ruby Orsak (KJZT president), and Mary Ann Matusek.

Time and Space for Prayer

“L”ocation, location, location— is a mantra that applies not only to real estate sales prospects, but also to prospects of successful personal prayer. In order to develop patterns that are conducive to deep prayer experiences, it is helpful to establish times and places for personal prayer.

As to the time for personal prayer, it is important to choose prayer times that match one’s personality and one’s human limitations. Personally, prefer individual prayer early in the morning, even if it means that I have to rise earlier than I would like to. If I plan to pray later in the day, there is always the danger that things that need attention will “come up” and my time of prayer will be postponed until a more opportune time. However, that opportune time keeps getting put off until the end of the day. By that time, I am so tired that I can no longer focus on prayer, so God is receiving my second-rate efforts at prayer. Therefore, I realize that it is important that I plan my day so that God truly comes first.

I have been edified by persons who tell me how they ensure personal prayer time: before their children get up, while they’re driving to work (not a good idea in heavy traffic) and marveling at the wonders of creation about them, during their lunch hour, or after their children are all tucked in for the night. I admire these folks for having succeeded in anchoring their lives in communication with God.

As to prayer space, again it is important to choose prayer spaces that match our personality and our human limitations. I have several favorite places that promote a prayerful environment. In pre-air conditioning days, one of my favorite prayer sites was inside a church with open windows. I was in the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle and at the same time I was reminded of God’s awesome acts of creation by the singing of the birds outside and the cooling breeze that flowed in through the open window. I thought that I was in the best of two worlds.

Now, with air conditioning, I no longer have that possibility, so I have had to adapt my prayer space, so I like to spend at least a little of my prayer time walking outdoors early in the morning so that I can ground myself in the awareness of being a part of the overarching reality of God’s role in creation. However, currently the attractiveness of the outdoors is diminished by the warm temperature so my time there is curtailed during the summer months.

The focal point of my indoor prayer space is a small replica of an icon of our foundress, Jeanne de Matel. In the icon, Jeanne is focused on an illustration of the Trinity so I try to combine my prayer with hers as I ask her to intercede for me. As her eyes are focused on God, she extends her hand holding a small loaf of bread, a symbol that beckons me to share my “bread” with others. I find this prayer space a great aid in personal prayer as I strive to achieve a deeper level of communication with God. I hope this example will help you, the reader, to consider time and space in your efforts to deepen your personal prayer.
Youth Calendar of Events

August 29 — Altar Server Appreciation at Splashway in Sheraton
September 3 — Theology at the Well — Chili’s in Victoria — Topic tonight: “Wrestling with Suffering and Death” — Father Stan Deboe
September 17 — Theology at the Well — Chili’s in Victoria — Topic tonight: “Discovering the Holy Spirit” — Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS
October 1 — Theology at the Well — Chili’s in Victoria — Topic tonight: “Do Apologists Apologize?” — Father Tommy Chen; Read more on page 3.
October 23-25 — Archdiocesan Conference for Catholic Youth Ministers in Houston
November 1-12 — NET Team in the Diocese
November 3 — Open — Contact the Youth Office
November 6 — Open — Contact the Youth Office
November 19-22 — National Catholic Youth Conference in Kansas City, Missouri

For more information on any of these events, please contact:
Debbie Vanelli or José Ortega at the Office of Youth Ministry at (361) 573-0828 ext. 32 / ext. 50 or e-mail at dvanelli@victoriadiocese.org or jortega@victoriadiocese.org
Web site: www.victoriadiocese.org/youthoffice

Bloomington CDA provides scholarships

BLOOMINGTON — Carol Sutton, Regent of CDA Court #2494, St. Patrick’s of Bloomington, is pleased to announce the following scholarship recipients: Ms. Natasha Ramirez, College Scholarship of $300.00. Ms. Ramirez is attending St. Mary’s University in San Antonio and is the daughter of Leon and Debbie Ramirez of Bloomington. Two high school graduates receiving $300 each are Mr. Ernest Gil Adame who attended Victoria High School, is the son of Ernest G. Adame Sr. and Rita Adame of Placedo, and Mr. Robert Sanchez, who attended Bloomington High School, and is the son of John and Natalie Sanchez of Victoria.

CDA Court #2494 has been able to award scholarships since it formed November 2001 under the prior guidance of Father Matthew Huehlefeld. Awarding these scholarships is just a small way we give back to our community, stated Carol Sutton. It’s truly rewarding to see our young students excel themselves by continuing their education. This was our first year to include a college scholarship in addition to the two high school graduate scholarships as we felt a need to assist a college student already enrolled.

Scholarship applications are usually available and passed out to the local high schools in March of each year with a listing of qualifications. They can also be obtained from any CDA Court #2494 officer and are also placed in the back of the church. Applicants are reviewed by the end of April and announced in May of each year.

Members of Court #2494 continue to work together throughout the year on fund-raiser projects. Ms. Sutton said that without their largest project, the Tamale Fund-raiser, we would not be able to provide these scholarships. We look forward to continuing our projects with everyone’s support.

If you are interested in joining our CDA Court #2494, please feel free to attend one of our meetings; we meet the second Tuesday of the month, except in July and August. Our next meeting is scheduled for September 8 in the Heritage Room at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church.

Discipleship Week — For the 11th year in a row, the Diocese of Victoria has been selected as one of five sites in the United States to host Discipleship Week (D-week). Alumni from NET ministries facilitate this retreat designed to give high school young people a deeper understanding of the Catholic Faith. This year 100 young people attended this retreat, June 22 – 25.

Rocky Mountain High 2009 — Fifty high school young people and adults from throughout the diocese attended the 24th annual retreat in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. They “braved” the 60-degree heat in beautiful Pagosa Springs July 4-12, 2009! This year, the retreat was focused on Catholic Social Teaching. Participants had the opportunity to explore in depth the various aspects and implications of the seven principles of that teaching, which included: Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; and Care for God’s Creation.

Camp David Junior High — 120 young people from throughout the diocese participated in session I, June 14 – 16, and II, June 17 – 19, at this year’s Junior High Camp David. The campers spent their time focusing on community building, learning what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in today’s world, participating in various prayer experiences and generally having lots of fun!
SACRED HEART STUDENTS RECEIVE STATE RECOGNITION — Two Sacred Heart Catholic School 7th grade students, Joshua Blaschke and Megan Harper, attended the 2009 Texas Recognition Ceremony honoring students in the 7th Grade Talent Search with high SAT or ACT scores. The ceremony was held at Trinity University in San Antonio. The Duke University Talent Identification Program’s (Duke TIP) 7th Grade Talent Search identifies students in sixteen states in the Southeast, Midwest, and Southwest who have scored in the 95th percentile on the Stanford Achievement Test. As part of the program, these academically talented students take above-level college entrance exams (SAT or ACT) to learn more about their abilities. This year, of the 67,438 participants nationally, 24,204 students (36%) have been invited to attend State Recognition Ceremonies. Megan is the daughter of Tommy and Angela Harper and Joshua is the son of Christopher “Scott” and Diane Blaschke.

ST. PHILIP RECEIVES KJT DONATION — KJT Society #84 of El Campo recently made a donation to St. Philip Catholic School in El Campo. The amount of the donation was $1,000.00 with the money going towards the school computer program. Society #84 raised the money by having a Thanksgiving Bake Sale at St. Philip’s Church after the weekend Masses, along with a matching grant from the State KJT. On hand for the presentation were the officers of El Campo Society #84, (back row, l. to r.) Leonard Leopold, treasurer; Edward Doretik, secretary; Robert Leopold, president; St. Philip’s Principal Gwen Edwards and State KJT Director Elizabeth Mokry; front row: Hannah Sutton, Michelle Sutton, Kayelyn Korenek (students at St. Philip, as well as members of Society #84).

ELEMENTARY SESSION OF CAMP DAVID — Elementary students spent an action-packed day, June 17, looking at God in nature, doing craft activities and making new friends. Seventy-five students participated this year from throughout the diocese.

3RD PLACE STATE CDA PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDED TO VICTORIAN — Rachel Grahmann won 3rd Place in photography in the Texas Catholic Daughters of the Americas State Education Contest. She was presented the award at Court St. Ann No. 369’s June meeting. Rachel attends St. Joseph High School in Victoria. She is shown with Geraldine Jurica, CDA education contest chairperson, and Court St. Ann Regent Grace Brown, all of Victoria.

By Katie Moore
Catholic News Service
HUNTERSVILLE, N.C. (CNS) — A North Carolina Catholic parish is providing a place for high school athletes to grow in their faith by adapting a national college program for their age group.

Catholic Athletes for Christ is a national organization that provides a network of sport-oriented clergy and laypeople to serve Catholic athletes, coaches and staff members at all levels of sport in the practice of their faith.

Last summer St. Mark Church in Huntersville launched the first high school version of the program.

Ray McKenna, a Washington attorney who has been involved in sports-related ministry for many years, founded the national group in response to Pope John Paul II’s call to evangelize the world of sports and the establishment in August 2004 of the Pontifical Council for the Laity’s office for church and sport.

At St. Mark, Father Patrick Hoare, parochial vicar, and parishioner Jean Whelan decided to start the Catholic athletes group as another way for teens to get involved at the parish. Life Teen youth ministry had been successful, but Father Hoare and Whelan said they felt there were youth at the parish who still were not being served.

Through prayer and research, they came across the Catholic Athletes for Christ Web site: www.catholicathletesforchrist.com. After contacting the organization, they received permission to tailor its existing college formula to meet the needs of the high school athletes.

“For many high school students, athletics is an important part of their high school experience,” Father Hoare told The Catholic News & Herald, newspaper of the Charlotte Diocese. “We are taking something they love and tying it in with faith.”

The group meets every other Wednesday during the summer. Their meetings begin and end with prayer and always include an athletic activity followed by a faith-sharing talk.

About 12 adult facilitators are on hand to supervise activities. A teen advisory board made up of rising high school juniors and seniors attend the planning meetings and offer suggestions on how to develop the program.

“They tell us what’s working,” said Whelan, adding that it was teen advisory board members who suggested the group devote one meeting to eucharistic adoration.

Whelan’s daughter, Mary Kathryn, a member of the Charlotte Catholic High School women’s soccer team, said the benefits of the program vary for each participant.

“Hopefully they get fitness, but also learn lessons about how to deal with stuff in high school and life in general,” said the rising senior at Charlotte Catholic High School and advisory board member.

She said the program has helped her approach soccer with a more charitable attitude.

Sometimes when I’m playing soccer I get aggravated and want to do things that are not very Christian-like,” she said.

“This just helps me remember that we have got to stay in our faith.”

At a recent meeting, after indoor and outdoor basketball, ultimate Frisbee and a cookout, Charlotte Catholic High School athletic director Kevin Christmas addressed the teen athletes, saying he was inspired by the fellowship he saw among them.

He talked to them about the importance of finding time for God each day, something he does by attending daily Mass.

“If we can’t give 20 minutes of our day to God, then there is something wrong in our lives,” he said.

His advice to the athletes: “Scheve in yourself, believe in your faith, and I don’t think you have anything to worry about.”

North Carolina church spearheads Catholic athlete group for teens

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TheXXI Annual Conference will begin with keynote presentation by Rev. Stanley DeBoe, O.S.S.T. Conference participants can choose from over 40 workshops throughout the day. Catholic publishers and vendors will also be available at the one-day conference. Contact the catechetical office at 361-573-0828 or email calvarez@victoriadiocese.org for more information.

The Organization of Catechetical Leadership is co-sponsoring a retreat

Our Lives Proclaim the Word Retreat for Parish Catechetical Leaders and Catechists August 21-22, 2009 Spiritual Renewal Center

Retreat director Anna Huth, M.Div., Education and Formation Program Coordinator for the Southwest Region of Catholic Relief Services will lead this overnight retreat that will give participants time to be immersed in God’s Word and to reflect on how they proclaim the Word in their lives. Throughout the retreat, particular emphasis will be placed on our solidarity as human beings created and loved by God.

Sessions will include prayer services, presentations and guided reflections. The retreat will conclude with Mass with Bishop David E. Fellhauer. The OCL Retreat flyer is available at www.victoriadiocese.org. Call (361) 573-0828 for more information.

New Testament II

The Gospel of John & The Book of Revelation

The Pastoral Institute will continue to offer the adult extended classes at the chancery in Victoria, and at Holy Rosary in Hostyn via distance learning. Beginning Tuesday, August 25, Sister Digna Vela will teach.

If you suspect a child has been abused or mistreated, you are required to report it to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or to a law enforcement agency within 48 hours of the time you suspect the child had been or may be abused or neglected.

Reporting Child Abuse • Hotline
1-800-252-5400

If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by a member of the clergy or other church personnel, you can register a complaint.

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The Pastoral Institute will continue to offer the adult extended classes at the chancery in Victoria, and at Holy Rosary in Hostyn via distance learning. Beginning Tuesday, August 25, Sister Digna Vela will teach.

If you suspect a child has been abused or mistreated, you are required to report it to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or to a law enforcement agency within 48 hours of the time you suspect the child had been or may be abused or neglected.

Reporting Child Abuse • Hotline
1-800-252-5400

If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by a member of the clergy or other church personnel, you can register a complaint.

If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by a member of the clergy or other church personnel, you can register a complaint.
Q. Can the Catholic Church ordain homosexual men to the priesthood? Some fellow parishioners say, What’s the difference? If they do their job and remain celibate it’s not a matter of contention. Others say it is an issue because the person is not whole, is not reconciled in this important part of his personality, has set God aside in his life and would be a negative example blocking God’s grace for others. What is your answer? (New York)

A. First, I need to say that this second description and judgment of homosexual- ity in men (or women) is questionable, to put it mildly. Surely it does not reflect the attitude of the church, which teaches that homosexual acts do not choose their condi- tion and must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity, and without discrimination (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2358).

To declare that homosexual persons have set aside God, are not reconciled in their physical makeup and block God’s grace to others is to best a rash judgment and, furthermore, does not fit experience.

In my 55 years as a priest I’ve known and worked with a number of homosexual priests. To my knowledge they were not sexually active, and nearly all have been good, prayerful, effective and dedicated in their ministry.

To answer your question, a Vatican instruction on admission of men with ho- mogeneous tendencies to seminaries and holy orders, dated Nov. 29, 2005, prohibits men with “deep-seated homosexual tendencies” from entering the seminary. The precise meaning of this phrase was not spelled out, apparently leaving it to bishops and other architects to interpret it more specifically. And many have done so.

According to the German bishops’ conference, for example, such “deep- seeded” tendencies are those which can lead to situations that gravely hamper a correct relationship with men and women. The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the bishops’ conference of Switzerland, the president of the Bish- ops’ Conference of England and Wales, and others, understood it rather along the same lines.

Some individual bishops seem to have taken a narrower view. It will require time and experience to learn how the prohibition should work out in practice.

Q. Our son just finished his first year of college at what we were told is one of the “real” Catholic colleges in the country. He has been surprised, however, by some of the groups he is urged to partici- pate in to be a more authentic Catholic. Frankly, we share his confusion. Some make us hesitant, especially one, which is allegedly tied to appearances of the Blessed Virgin. Another experience that gives him, and us, some concern is the claim that no one can be a “good and loyal Catholic” except their way. Sometimes they sound very narrow. Have you any suggestions on how to deal with this? (Michigan)

A. Your concern is a healthy one, and, as my mail reveals, is shared by a number of faithful and well-informed Catholics.

Good common sense is always the first judge in such dilemmas. After that, Catholic tradition suggests some solid basic guidelines.

It is always good to remember that ours is a big church. In all its 2,000 years it has been at its best and most alive when there has been a room for a whole rainbow of ways for people to pray, to think, to live out their faith and grow in holiness.

Just because something does not appeal to us, doesn’t necessarily mean there is something bad about it. Without respect for, and willingness to explore, honest varieties within the appropriate framework of faith, the church stagnates, intellectually and spiritually.

One danger sign to look for is any position that rejects out-of-hand what the church is teaching today. We’ve experienced sad examples in the past few decades of individuals and larger Catholic factions who refuse to accept any developments in the church since the Second Vatican Council.

In their opinion, present teachings and practices conflict with what they view as the “golden age” of Pope Pius V and the Council of Trent in the 16th century, and therefore deserve no respect or recognition by authentic Catholics.

We believe, on the contrary, that the same Holy Spirit who was with the church in the past is with it now.

Another warning flag is the claim that this or that faction constitutes the “elite” in the church. They are the genuine orthodox Catholics. Anyone not with them, or who sees things differently, is at best a second- level Catholic.

These types of movements (one might even call them cults) have been around since the beginning of Christianity. We read about them already in the New Testa- ment.

Exaggerated claims like this seem to be a common temptation for enthusiastic religious associations. In my 55 years as a priest I have but or participated in dozens of spiritual and apostolic movements. All have accomplished much good.

Nearly every one, however, went through a stage when it was tempted to consider itself something like an eighth sac- rament, to assume that no one is a genuine, full Catholic until he or she has done their “thing” or seen things their way.

Naturally, groups and societies who pursue this course always have the highest motives, to “purify” the church and so on. But unchecked, such attitudes often lead to gross arrogance and intolerance. When sufficiently large, they can cause enormous personal pain, persecution and hurt to the body of Christ. But still they surface every generation or so.

The eucharistic liturgy, the sacraments, the Gospels, intelligent efforts to grow in knowledge of the faith, and the basic prayer and spiritual exercises contained in continuous Christian tradition still suffice to make good, loyal and faithful Catholic Christians.

Finally, the best criterion of all in evalu- ating any phenomena in the church is the old standby: What are their fruits, their results? Do they bring to the Catholic com- munity (parish, diocese, universal church) greater hope, unity, charity, kindness, peace and other fruits of the Spirit listed by St. Paul in Galatians 5:22-23?

Or do they foment mistrust, secretive- ness, elitism, hostility and bickering, divi- sion and oppression?

You can guess which ones St. Paul and Christian tradition recommend.

(Questions may be sent to Father Dietzen at Box 3315, Peoria, IL 61612, or e-mail: jldietzen@aol.com.)

Mary R. Luhrs
January 18, 1938 – July 15, 2009

Mary R. Luhrs was a wonderful ex- ample of being a disciple of Jesus. At her funeral, one of her nephews said that she always wanted others to know about Je- sus. Her years of service to the religious education program and as a catechist at St. Michael Parish in Weimar. She prepared well for these ministries by attending catecheti- cal and theological classes, retreats, and catechetical leader training sessions. In 2002 Mary received the Pastoral Institute Extended program certificate for completing 144 clock hours of theological study. During this time, she also too catecheti- cal classes, and in 2006, after completing the hours necessary for the PI. Extended program again, she also received the Ad- vanced Catechist certificate. She seemed never to tire and was always willing and eager to learn more about the Catholic faith and traditions. In 2007, Mary was among those honored at the annual catechetical conference for serving as a catechist for more than twenty years.

At the onset of Disciples in Mission, Mary received training and participated in the small group faith-sharing process. She believed so strongly in sharing her faith that she continued with her small group each Lent with Disciples on the Journey. Mary and her husband, Richard, also served on numerous committees and participated in various meetings offered by the catechetical office. Each time Mary was invited to be a part of a commit- tee, she responded with a “yes.” She was a member of the Organization of Catechetical Leadership and served as vice-president from 2002 – 2004. It was a blessing to have Mary R. Luhrs a part of committees, conferences, and retreats, as well as workshops and meetings. She will be missed. Mary was a fine example of a catechetical leader.

A Prayer for a Lately Deceased Person

Absolve, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the soul of Thy servant N... from every bond of sin, that being raised in the glory of the resurrection, he may be refreshed among the Saints and Elect. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Six Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament celebrated the anniversaries of their religious professions recently. Front, l-r, Sister George Vasek, 75 years; Sister Pauline Marie Ermis 70 years; Sister Scholastica Friesenhahn 70 years; Sister Sylvia Grahmann 60 years; back, l-r, Sister Mary Theresa Fritz, 50 years; Sister Stephana Marbach 50 years; Sister Mary Virginia Sheblak 60 years; Sister Serena Etzler 50 years and Sister Odilla Korenek 50 years.

Eight Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament celebrated the anniversaries of their religious professions recently. Front, l-r, Sister George Vasek, 75 years; Sister Pauline Marie Ermis 70 years; Sister Scholastica Friesenhahn 70 years; Sister Sylvia Grahmann 60 years; back, l-r, Sister Mary Theresa Fritz, 50 years; Sister Stephana Marbach 50 years; Sister Mary Virginia Sheblak 60 years; Sister Serena Etzler 50 years and Sister Odilla Korenek 50 years.

During her 50 years of religious profession Sister Serena ministered in the following schools: St. Ludmila Academy in Shiner (16 years), St. John School in San Antonio (2 years), and Nazareth Academy (27 years). Sister Serena also spent many hours assisting at the schools’ athletic events as score keeper.

Sister Serena retired from the active teaching ministry in December, 2007, and now assists in staffing the IWC Gift Shop and making rosaries.

• Sister Mary Theresa Fritz, daughter of the late Adolph and Justina Janish Korenek, was born in Nada, Texas. Sister came from a family of four boys and eight girls. She attended St. Mary School for grade school studies and did three years of high school at Garwood High School. She received her high school diploma from Nazareth Academy.

• Sister Odilla Korenek, daughter of the late Adolph and Justina Janish Korenek, was born in Nada, Texas. Sister came from a family of four boys and eight girls. She attended St. Mary School for grade school studies and did three years of high school at Garwood High School. She received her high school diploma from Nazareth Academy.

Sister Odilla entered Nazareth Convent and became a postulant in 1957, received the habit of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in 1958 and pronounced her first vows on August 6, 1959.

Sister Odilla received a BA degree with a major in history and a minor in Spanish from Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Texas. Sister earned a MA degree from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, and spiritual direction certification from St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas.

During her 50 years of profession, Sister Odilla ministered as teacher and/or principal at the following schools: Sacred Heart School in Selma, Sacred Heart School in Crosby, Sacred Heart School in La Grange, Our Lady of Victory School and St. Joseph High School in Victoria, and St. Agnes School, St. John School, St. Leo School and Blessed Sacrament Academy in Shiner. Sister Odilla also ministered in the Diocese of Victoria as Director of the Farm Aid Outreach and the Gulf Coast Organizational Effort. In 1990, Sister was missioned to develop new programs needed by San Antonio’s south side which developed into the Matlab Learning Center at Blessed Sacrament Academy. At present Sister is development director, executive director and supervisor of the Child Care Development Center, Parents’ Academy, and Charter Schools in San Antonio and Corpus Christi.

Sister Odilla has also served as a counselor on the Congregational Leadership Team for the last nine years.

Celebration on Sunday, July 12, 2009

The Most Reverend David Fellhauer, Bishop of the Victoria Diocese, officiated at the 2:00 p.m. Mass and gave the homily. Co-Celebrants were Bishop Charles Grimm, Rev. Celestino Say of Victoria, Rev. Charles Sonnier of Sweet Home, Rev. Joseph Kariuki of Plum, Rev. Michael Lyons of Ganado, and other clergy guests. Rev. Donald Hayden, O.S.S.T., Convent Chaplain, was Master of Ceremonies.

• Sister M. George Vasek, celebrating 75 years of profession, is the daughter of the late August and Mary Srub Vasek. Sister was born in East Bernard, Texas. The family moved to Wharton where Sister received her grammar education at Lawson Public School. She completed her high school education at St. Ludmila Academy in Shiner.

Sister George entered St. Ludmila as a postulant on October 5, 1923 and received the habit of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Sacred Sacrament on July 24, 1933. She made her first profession of vows on September 5, 1934. Sister was awarded a BA degree with a major in English and a minor in Spanish from Incarnate Word College in San Antonio. She did post graduate work in the area of library science and held a professional elementary teacher certification, provisional high school certification and librarian certification.

During the 75 years of her religious profession, Sister George ministered as a teacher, librarian and/or administrator in the following schools: St. Ludmila Academy and St. Paul School in Shiner, Maranh Public School, Hostyn Public School and Radhost Public School, both near La Grange, St. Jerome School in Plum, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Selma, Sacred Heart School in Crosby, and St. Mary School in Nada. Sister George also served as Treasurer at Burns Hospital in Cuero from 1942-1946.

Sister George retired from the active education ministry in the Fall of 1993 and resides at Incarnate Word Convent. She has assisted in various household duties when able and is very much involved in the Apostolate of Prayer. Her sense of humor and kindness has reaped her a host of lasting friends.

• Sister Pauline Marie Ermis, one of nine children, is the daughter of the late Ignac and Annie Vacaivik Ermis of Plum, Texas. Sister Pauline Marie completed grammar school at St. Jerome School in Plum and attended high school at St. Ludmila Academy in Shiner.

She entered St. Ludmila Convent on September 15, 1937 and pronounced
East Bernard family hopes for Adult Stem Cell cure

By Cynthia Brewer

EAST BERNARD—Sam, eight years of age, and Madison, 11 years old, are the grandchildren of Daniel and Carolyn Pilcik, parishioners of Holy Cross in East Bernard. Sam and Madison live in Fullbloom, California, with their parents, Paulette and Brad Britton. This August, however, they will be spending some time visiting grandma and grandpa, their aunt, Sandy Logan, and uncle, Mark Dujka, in Texas. The visit is part vacation and part hopeful medical treatment for Sam.

Sam was born a healthy, active baby to Paulette and Brad on April 23, 2001. In four months time, from 15 to 19 months of age, Sam went from a happy, active toddler to a reclusive little boy. Sam was diagnosed with autism at the age of two years and nine months. According to Sam’s aunt, Sandy, autism is not a mental or behavioral disorder, rather it is a medical condition that manifests itself in the digestive tract and the immune system. “When these systems are wrecked, kids look like they have a mental disorder,” Sandy said in an e-mail interview.

“Sam was very sick and either threw up or had diarrhea for a year,” Sandy said. For the past five years, Sam has undergone many tests and treatments for his condition. His tests showed he had a very low functioning immune system, was mercury toxic, and the viral activity in his body (from his vaccines) was almost four times higher than the acceptable levels.

Since the testing, Sam has also had years of in-home therapy, speech, occupational and physical therapy. He is now eight years old and can now walk and has begun speaking in short sentences.

When Sam was born, his parents had his umbilical cord blood saved, just in case someone in the family could use it. “They never imagined one of their own children would need it,” Sandy said.

According to Sam’s family, umbilical cord blood is being successfully used to treat Cerebral Palsy and brain injury in the United States; however, there are no doctors using adult stem cells to treat autism in the United States. But Medistem, an American company located in the San Diego area, is using adult stem cells to treat autism in their treatment clinics under the name ICM in Costa Rica and Panama.

The Brittons say they are not concerned with the safety of the procedures or the competency of the doctors, as many Americans go to Costa Rica to the CIMA clinic for excellent, modern, medical care. Many hospitals and clinics there are associated or built by American hospital associations or pharmaceutical companies.

The Brittons will begin their hopeful journey August 5, stopping by the Pilcik’s, where Madison will stay, while Sam and his parents go on to Costa Rica August 9. Sam will have blood tests on Monday, August 10, and a catheter inserted. Unfortunately, the family will not be able to bring Sam’s own umbilical cord blood to Costa Rica and will have to use donor cells.

He will have transplant injections Tuesday through Friday. Then he and his parents will fly back to Texas to join Madison and have a short family vacation before school starts August 31 in California.

Upon returning from Costa Rica, Sam will continue therapies to assist in his recovery and retraining. Less than 10 percent of all of his treatment is covered by insurance, the school district or state programs, Sandy said.

The family says they are blessed beyond belief that they have roots in a town like East Bernard. “So many have been so generous and we could not be more grateful,” Sam’s parents said. “It is our deepest hope and prayer that one day Sam will be able to write his own thank-you note to the whole town.”

Please go to www.samschope.com to learn more about Sam, his treatment, and funding for his transplant. Go to the bottom of his Web page to watch videos about the success of his type of adult stem cell transplant.

Theology at the Well returns

Theology at the Well, the highly successful Catholic program geared toward young adults, married or single, returns to Victoria. The exciting and informative meetings will take place every other Thursday evening at 6:45 p.m. at Chili’s Restaurant from September 3 to November 12. Those attending will hear interesting discussions on current issues in the Church and have the opportunity to meet other Catholics while enjoying good food and drinks.

Topics for the upcoming meetings will be:

Sept. 3 – “Wrestling with Suffering and Death” – For many people, suffering and death are severe challenges to their faith. If God loves us so much, why does he allow such pain to exist? How do we maintain our faith through the trials? Does our faith allow us to approach suffering differently? Father Stan Delloe explores these questions and helps us learn to use suffering and death for good.

Sept. 17 – “Discovering the Holy Spirit” – Jesus reassured his followers that he would send an Advocate to guide them after his Ascension. As we strive to live in this world, we are comforted by the knowledge that we were sealed in the same Spirit at our confirmations. However, it can be hard to know if he is guiding us.

Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS helps us learn how to find and follow the Spirit.

Oct. 1 – “Do Apologists Apologize?” – with Father Tommy Chen

Oct. 15 – “Jesus of Nazareth,” part 1 – with Father David Berger

Oct. 29 – “Jesus of Nazareth,” part 2 – with Father David Berger

Nov. 12 – “Going to the Movies … or not?” – with Father Bryan Heyer

For more information, please contact: Debbie Vanelli at the Office of Youth Ministry at (361) 573-0828 ext. 32 or at dvanelle@victoriadiocese.org.

There is no admission charge.

KJZT DIAMOND STATUS ACHIEVEMENTS ASSIST COMMUNITY—KJZT Society No. 101 earns Diamond Status through various activities: bake sale, “Join Hands with KJT,” Flag Day, Lenten Supp parish activity and community service. Twenty-four members of KJZT No. 101 and KJT No. 115 “Join Hands” in June cleaning and beautifying flower beds of an elderly parishioner of Our Lady of Victory Cathedral in Victoria. They followed the workday with a pizza party in the backyard. KJZT Society No. 101 also raised $1,500 from a recent bake sale and donated the funds to the Community Action Committee of Victoria for meals it delivers to senior citizens, and this year County Commissioner Wayne Dierlam (Precinct 4) signed the Flag Day Proclamation for KJZT. With the $100 they received from state funds for achieving Diamond Status they will donate a TV Mass at Our Lady of Victory for Living and Deceased Members of KJZT August 9. Congratulations to Society 101!
August 15 ~ The Assumption

Jesus arose from the tomb and ascended into heaven; this is the doctrine of the Assumption of Christ. Catholics believe that Mary’s body was taken up to heaven by the power of her Son, so a different word is used: the Assumption of Mary.

While there is no historical proof of the Assumption, there are impressive negative proofs: At no time in history has Christendom venerated a grave or tomb of the Blessed Virgin; until the 5th century there was not even a legend concerning her place of burial. While the remains of thousands of saints have been preserved and venerated from the earliest ages of the Church, no such shrines or relics of Mary have been found; there is absolutely no relic of Our Lady’s body in existence, nor has any person or city ever claimed to possess such a relic.

While there is no explicit mention in the Bible of the glorification of Mary’s body, there are several implicit revelations of the Assumption: Gen. 3:15; Luke 1:28; and Rev. 12:1-2. St. Epiphanius, a 4th century bishop, was the first to ask what happened to Mary’s body. From the middle of the 5th century, a feast was celebrated on August 15 in a shrine near Jerusalem. Near the end of the 6th century, the feast was called the “Dormition of Our Lady.” In the 8th century the feast spread from Rome throughout Europe and the pope gave it the name of the “Assumption of Mary.”

In the first 16 centuries of Christianity, no reputable theologian ever questioned the dogma of the Assumption, which was formally defined Nov. 1, 1950.

Puzzle Contest Prize is “The Rosary” book

“The Rosary – A Journey to the Beloved,” written by Gary Jansen and published by Faith Words, will guide readers to connect with God through prayer in an approachable way. The book explains the history and significance of the rosary, as well as instructions on how to get the most of the meditative and spiritual exercise of repeating prayers.

“The Rosary” walks readers through each of the twenty mysteries combining biblical excerpts and reproductions of famous biblical artwork by Tissot, Raphael, Gaugin and many others to illustrate the power of this beloved act of devotion.

“The Rosary” (Faith Words, ISBN: 978-0-446-53584-7) can be purchased for $11.99 on many Web sites.

For a chance to win “The Rosary – A Journey to the Beloved” in a drawing, please send completed puzzle and form to The Catholic Lighthouse.

Family Puzzle Contest Winner to win “The Rosary”

Edna Bludau of Sacred Heart Parish in Hallettsville has won the July Family Puzzle Contest, and will receive the book “A Civilization of Love – What Every Catholic Can Do to Transform the World” by Supreme Knight Carl Anderson and published by Harper One.

Our Turn

By Therese J. Borchard
Catholic News Service

Six ways to make your marriage last

You often hear that half of all marriages end in divorce. But marriage is actually doing much better than that these days, says Benedict Carey and Tara Parker-Pope. They collaborated on a piece for the New York Times called “Marriage Stands Up For Itself.”

“A comparison of 10-year divorce rates among college-educated men married in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s shows that divorce is becoming less common,” said Dr. Stevenson, the Wharton researcher. Among men who married in the 1970s, for example, about 23 percent had divorced by the 10th year of marriage. Among similar men married in the 1980s, about 20 percent had divorced by the 10th year. Men married in the 1990s are doing even better—with a 10-year divorce rate of 16 percent.”

Christian writer Steven Wickstrom and others say the divorce rate for a Christian couple who actively pray together is less than 1 percent.

I kid you not: less than 1 percent.

What else can you do to improve your odds?

In his blog post called “5 Secrets to a Successful Long-Term Relationship or Marriage,” John Grohol, CEO and founder of PsychCentral.com, lists five core ingredients to a good marriage or long-term relationship: Compromise, Communicate. Choose your battles carefully. Don’t hide your needs. Don’t underestimate the importance of trust and honesty.

No relationships are perfectly 50-50 arrangements. Usually one person does an extra load of laundry. But for a marriage to thrive, there must be compromise, some give and take. Not just take.

Says Grohol in stressing the importance of communication: “Relationships live and die not by the sword, but by the amount of discussion. If two people can’t find a way to openly and honestly communicate their needs and feelings to one another, the relationship doesn’t stand much of a chance long-term. Couples must find a way to communicate regularly, openly and directly.”

Choosing your battles carefully eliminates half the fights right there, and it adds value to the disagreements that can’t be avoided.

Many of the psychologists I’ve interviewed for my Beliefnet.com blog “Beyond Blue” say that hiding needs, for example, is precisely why so many marriages fall apart. One or both partners weren’t getting their needs met and were afraid or unable to communicate that with the other.

For more marriage information go to: www.foryourmarriage.org
**FAITH & FAMILY**

**The Catholic Lighthouse**

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**Sunday Readings from Aug. 9 to Sept.**

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**IWBS Jubilee 2009**

first vows on June 5, 1939. She received her BA degree from Incarnate Word College in San Antonio with a major in history and a minor in social science, and held a teacher’s permanent elementary certificate.

During the 70 years of her religious profession, Sister Pauline Marie taught in the primary, elementary and junior high grades at the following schools: Immaculate Conception School in Sealy, Holy Trinity School in Duaseme, Pennsylvania, Sacred Heart School in Hallettsville, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Selma, St. Mary School in Nada, Holy Cross School in East Bernard, St. John School in San Marcos, Nazareth Academy in Victoria, St. Michael School in Weimar, Holy Cross School in Bay City, Holy Trinity School in Corn Hill, St. Ludmila Academy in Shiner and Blessed Sacrament Parish School in San Antonio.

Sister Pauline Marie retired from full-time active classroom duties in 1995 to reside at Incarnate Word Convent where she assisted in various household duties. She now resides in the infirmary where her cheerful presence is an inspiration to all as she engages in the apostolate of prayer and suffering.

- Sister Scholastica Friesenhahn, the daughter of the late Gregor and Marie Fey Friesenhahn of New Braunfels, is the youngest of seven children. Sister grew up on a farm and attended St. Joseph’s School in Comal; she completed her high school at Blessed Sacrament Academy in San Antonio.

Sister Scholastica entered Blessed Sacrament Convent as a postulant on January 6, 1938, became a novice on July 20, 1938 and made first profession of vows on July 26, 1939. Sister received a BA degree with a major in English and a minor in history from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio and a MA degree with a major in education and a minor in math from Incarnate Word College in San Antonio.

During her 70 years as a member of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, Sister Scholastica taught on the elementary, junior high and high school levels in the following schools: Sacred Heart School in Hallettsville, St. Agnes School and St. Leo School in San Antonio, St. Ludmila Academy in Shiner, Sacred Heart School in Floresville, Immaculate Conception School in Sealy, St. Agnes School in San Antonio, St. Ludmila Academy in Shiner, Sacred Heart School in Hallettsville, Blessed Sacrament Academy in San Antonio, Blessed Sacrament Parish School in San Antonio, and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School in Houston. She also ministered at St. Joseph High School in Victoria as a teacher in the 1970’s and served as registrar during the 1990’s.

Sister Mary Virginia Sheblak is the daughter of the late Elmer and Annie Hollas Sheblak of Edna. She was the eldest of five children—one girl and four boys. Sister completed grammar school at Hayes School near Edna and is a graduate of Nazareth Academy in Victoria. She became a postulant in 1947, was received into the novitiate in 1948, and pronounced her first vows on June 7, 1949.

Sister Mary Virginia received a BM degree with a major in music and a minor in education from Incarnate Word College in San Antonio and a master of education in music from Southwest Texas State University. She also received certification in liturgy from the University of Notre Dame.

For the past 60 years Sister Mary Virginia has taught on the elementary, junior high and high school levels in the following schools: St. Michael School in Weimar, Sacred Heart School in Floresville, Immaculate Conception School in Sealy, St. Agnes School in San Antonio, St. Ludmila Academy in Shiner, Sacred Heart School in Hallettsville, Blessed Sacrament Academy in San Antonio, Blessed Sacrament Parish School in San Antonio, and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School in Houston. She also ministered at St. Joseph High School in Victoria as a teacher in the 1970’s and served as registrar during the 1990’s.

Sister Mary Virginia presently serves as Secretary General of the Congregation.

- Sister Sylvia Grahmann is the daughter of the late Nicholas and Annie Grafe Grahmann of Hallettsville. Sister Sylvia is one of 11 children - six boys and five girls.

Sister Sylvia received her elementary education at Sacred Heart School in Hallettsville; she is a graduate of Nazareth Academy in Victoria. Sister became a postulant in 1947, entered the novitiate in 1948, and pronounced her first vows on June 7, 1949.

Sister Sylvia received her BA degree with a major in English and a minor in philosophy and Latin from Incarnate Word College in San Antonio. She also earned a MA degree with a major in English and a minor in education from Incarnate Word College. Sister then attended St. Mary’s University from which she received a MA degree in theology.

During the 60 years of being a member of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, Sister Sylvia taught on the elementary, junior high and high school levels. She taught in the following schools: St. Leo School in San Antonio, Holy Trinity School in Corn Hill, Holy Cross School in Bay City, Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in Selma, St. Ludmila Academy in Shiner, Immaculate Conception School in Sealy, Sacred Heart School in Crosby, Sacred Heart School in Hallettsville, St. Paul High School in Shiner, and Blessed Sacrament Academy in San Antonio.

Sister Sylvia retired from the active ministry of teaching in 2004 and came to reside at Incarnate Word Convent where she assists in various household duties. She loves visiting with the other Sisters and playing dominos and card games.

Sister Sylvia’s sister, Sister Anastasia Grahmann (also a Sister of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament) went to her eternal reward on June 17, 1997.

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**Twentysomething**

By Christina Capecchi

E-mail: Christina@ReadChristina.com

**Traveling light: storing up treasures in heaven**

**Wife have too many shoes?**

The billboard on Interstate 94 caught my eye. The solution it advertised, off the next exit, was not a Goodwill or a therapist, but a storage unit. Why get rid of the stilletos when you can pay $50 a month to stash them somewhere else?

Millions of Americans have purchased storage, locking up the Hummel dolls, tax returns and soccer trophies they don’t need but can’t quite part with. At the end of 2008, self-storage facilities occupied 2.35 billion square feet, making it physically possible for every American to stand under the total canopy of self-storage roofing.

My canopy of choice has been the ping-pong table in my parents’ basement, beneath which you’ll find Mead spiral-bound note-books detailing my introduction to the Pythagorean theorem and the periodic table. Those royal blue and Kelly green pads signal such youthful diligence that they have not yet made their way to the recycling bin they warrant.

Last night I examined the bins below the staircase. I was struck by how many years were mixed together, how time was compressed into a single cardboard box. Baseball cards, birthday cards, pressed in a single cardboard box. A rhyming dictionary and a cookbook. Crinkled newspapers stacked on a busted Gateway laptop.

These days, it’s not just physical stuff we store. It’s also digital: documents, pictures, spreadsheets, Power Points, mp3s, pdfs. “Current statistics show that one in every 10 hard drives fail every year,” warns the online storage site Mozy, which claims more than 1 million users. “Unfortunately, computers are vulnerable to hard drive crashes, virus attacks, theft and natural disasters, which can erase everything in an instant.”

That appeal to fear drives us to buy 100 gigabytes or 1,000 or – what the heck – unlimited space.

It seems we cannot discard or delete, and we do not want to sift through our stuff and make those tough judgment calls about what to keep and what to give. So we shove it in attics, garages and hard drives, protected with padlocks and passwords. We don’t even look there, except for the monthly bill to remind us it’s there.

This hunter-gatherer-hoarder impulse is a cultural and spiritual malady: overconsumption with no accountability. Our baggage is heavy and dusty and jumbled, and we cannot manage it. We do not even try.

As disciples of Christ, we must travel light so our hands and hearts are free to build his See Traveling light, p. 18

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**Continued from p. 12**

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CARITAS IN VERITATE - Comentario

Por Mar Muñoz-Vivas, subdirectora de relaciones públicas de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos

Citas in veritate, la verdad en la verdad, son las palabras que dan comienzo a Caritas in veritate, la encíclica de Benedicto XVI. El título en sí recoge ya el mensaje central de la carta, dejando que el resto del texto lo desarrolle como los hilos de una madeja que se va desenrollando o piezas de un rompecabezas del cual ya tenemos una foto completa en la cubierta de la caja.

El nombre lo dice todo. Sin la verdad, la caridad, también traducida como amor, no tiene significado ni propósito, se convierte en mero sentimentalismo, "un envoltorio vacío que se rellena arbitrariamente" (3), dice el papa. "La caridad es el don más grande que Dios ha dado a los hombres, es su promesa y nuestra esperanza" (2). A menos que entendamos que el hombre, creado a imagen y semejanza de Dios, ha sido hecho para dar y recibir amor no podemos entender que la solidez y la fe y que deben guiar todos nuestros actos.

Sólo si aceptamos la verdad de la dignidad del hombre y la mujer, que éstos están hechos para el amor y la comunión, y que esta verdad se antepone a cualquier otra, tendrán sentido la búsqueda de la justicia y del bien común. Sólo entonces seremos capaces de ver que cualquier cosa que viole la dignidad de una vida humana, que le impida alcanzar todo su potencial o la transforme en capital dispensable, es una "injusticia" que reclama la restauración de la justicia, y que todos tenemos una responsabilidad en ello.

El nombre lo dice todo. Pero ¿por qué "en la verdad"? Y ¿qué verdad? En el modo relativista de pensar actual parece no haber cabida para verdades absolutas, ni parámetros de sentido y acción válidos para todos. M. Vivas señala: "la verdad no es tu verdad. Y así, la afirmación "la caridad en la verdad" no parece tener mucho sentido en un mundo desprovisto de significado último y verdades transcendentales. Como voz que clama en el desierto, el papa Benedicto continúa predicando el evangelio de la verdad y sostiene que sí existe una Verdad última de la cual se derivan todas las demás verdades. Sí, existen cosas que dañan y destruyen a la humanidad y existen otras que la elevan y la llevan a alcanzar su pleno potencial. Sí, existen principios y valores universales que pueden ser percibidos por la razón y la fe y que deben guiar todos nuestros actos.

Nuestra tierra es arida, Señor Emvienos lluvia
Nuestra tierra es guerna, Señor Emvienos lluvia
Nuestra tierra es lecho de río a la llanura
Nuestra tierra es grano, todos ellos hacen la sed, Señor Emvienos lluvia

Por volar el aire, porque la paz sonará, porque la iglesia comunica a la arcoíris, a los molinos, a la esfera que nos rodea, a la vida. Dar agua de la vida a beber de nuevo. Eliminar esta sequía, esta prueba, esta cepa, esto que hay mucho sentido en un mundo desprovisto de verdad no es tu verdad. Y así, la afirmación "la caridad en la verdad" no parece tener mucho sentido en un mundo desprovisto de significado último y verdades transcendentales. Como voz que clama en el desierto, el papa Benedicto continúa predicando el evangelio de la verdad y sostiene que sí existe una Verdad última de la cual se derivan todas las demás verdades. Sí, existen cosas que dañan y destruyen a la humanidad y existen otras que la elevan y la llevan a alcanzar su pleno potencial. Sí, existen principios y valores universales que pueden ser percibidos por la razón y la fe y que deben guiar todos nuestros actos.

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Por Mar Muñoz-Vivas, subdirectora de relaciones públicas de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos.
3rd Biennial
JCDA State
Convention Held

By Terrie Vacek, CDA State Public Relations Chairman

Over 300 members of the Texas Junior Catholic Daughters of the Americas (JCDA) traveled to Houston for the 3rd Biennial JCDA State Convention June 27-29, 2009. To emphasize the convention theme, “Princesses of Christ,” the JCDA 2007-2009 state officers welcomed the delegates and members by pampering them with new hairstyles, painted nails and make-up! The girls and CDA Court sponsors created a huge ‘thank you’ card during their opening Fun Night at the Roof Top of the Westin Oaks Hotel in the Galleria. It was presented to Houston Mayor Bill White following his welcome to Houston and their convention.

Convention business included a report on the events of each JCDA court; approval of 2007 convention business; credentials; and nominations and the election of 2009-2011 state officers. Additional craft activities were offered to Juniorette members.

There are currently 56 JCDA courts throughout Texas with 801 members. The three-fold program of ‘Message, Service and Community’ was reflected in the talks given by guest speakers throughout the weekend. Reverend John Peters, State JCDA Chaplain, shared the highlights of the past two years including the first JCDA retirement held at his ranch in Hallettsville. Libby Ramirez, National CDA Regent from Victoria, spoke about the history of JCDA beginning in 1926. Terrie Beltran, JCDA/Youth State Chair from El Campo, reported on JCDA’s growth, noting that six, new courts were installed in this term and two more were expected over the next few months. Terrie Beltran, the JCDA State Chaplain. JCDA 2007-2009 state officers were presented the following awards at the convention:

- Outstanding 2007-2009 JCDA Member was awarded to Kyla Schaecherl, Court St. Paul #1962, La Grange.
- Saint Elizabeth Ann Adult Advisor Medal had a tie and was awarded to Carolyn Malik, Court St. Paul #1604, Shiner, and Marsha Kreyemeyer, Court St. Therese of Lisieux #2211, Sugar Land.
- Membership and Retention Contest awards were presented to Court St. Paul #1604, Shiner, receiving Platinum Level, and Court Sacred Heart #797, Hallettsville, receiving Gold Level.
- JCDA Court Newsletter Contest winners were: 1st Place – Court St. Paul #1604, Shiner; 2nd Place – Court Annunciation #1962, La Grange; and 3rd Place – Court Saint Bernardette #1108, East Bernard.
- Banner Contest winners were: 1st Place – Court Sacred Heart #829, West; 2nd Place – Court Mary St. John #219, Baytown; and 3rd Place – Court Sacred Heart #797, Hallettsville.
- Scrapbook Contest winners were: 1st place: Court St. Paul #1604, Shiner; 2nd Place - St. Theresa of Lisieux #2211, Sugar Land; and 3rd Place – Court Annunciation #1962, La Grange.

Eleven members of Shiner’s Court #1604 Junior Catholic Daughters, along with six senior CDA members attended the Biennial State JCDA Convention held in Houston, June 27-29, 2009.

Newly Elected 2009-2011 JCDA Board pictured above are, CDA State Regent Sheila Martinka, JCDA State Chair Terri Beltran, State JCDA 1st Vice President Kimberly Kallies, State JCDA 2nd Vice President Sarah Prosko, State JCDA President Maya Cuellar, State JCDA Secretary Danielle Duplessis, State JCDA Reporter Felicia Garcia and State JCDA Chaplain Rev. John Peters.

Peggy Rosales, Austin; State Secretary Eve Trevino, Corpus Christi; and State Public Relations Chairman Terrie Vacek, Willits. Almost 600 attended the banquet, including JCDA members, CDA advisors, parents, CDA state officers, CDA state parliamentarian and state chairmen. One would think they were at Cinderella’s Castle in Disney Land among the twinkling tiaras; even Reverend John Peters joined the festivities wearing a lighted rhinestone tiara!

The keynote speaker, Jade (Vacek) Marcantel, Houston (former JCDA Charter member of Saint Bernardette Court #1108, East Bernard) dazzled the girls with her humor and grace. She engaged the participation of banquet guests by having each guest tell others at their table that they are “Daughters of the King.” Quoting Blessed Mother Theresa (referring to her as BMT), Marcantel challenged the girls “to spread love everywhere you go and to let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.” She challenged the girls saying that princesses do a good job consistently and always give thanks to those who serve with care and kindness. In an incredibly way, Jade connected with the girls through encouragement by emphasizing their personal value to God and community.

Terrie Beltran recognized each of the newly installed courts from 2007-2009: Our Lady of the Body of Christ Court #2548, Corpus Christi; Court Our Lady #2373, Farmers Branch; Court Daughters of the Immaculate Conception #2581, Denton; Court Marie #344, Texarkana; Court Cathedral #246, Corpus Christi; Court Our Lady of St. John, Houston. She then thanked and presented personal awards to the outgoing 2007-2009 JCDA officers and the JCDA State Chaplain. JCDA 2007-2009 state officers were President Beth Krenke, East Bernard; First Vice President Sarah Omelas, Baytown; Second Vice President Ashley Stilley, Sealy; Christina Muench, secretary, Houston; and Laura Aguilar, reporter, El Campo. In turn, the 2007-2009 officers presented a thank you bouquet of flowers to Mrs. Beltran.

JCDA delegates met for a caucus Saturday night. The election of new officers Sunday morning was followed by an installation Mass with celebrant Rev. John Peters. Delegates elected to serve the 2009-2011 term are President Maya Cuellar, Garland; 1st Vice President Kim Kallies, Deer Park; 2nd Vice President Sarah Prosko, La Grange; Danielle Kupplechian, secretary, Houston; and Felicia Garcia, reporter, El Campo.

A bid for the 2011 JCDA Convention was made by La Grange Court #1962. To learn more about the JCDA and the Catholic Daughters of the Americas please visit the National Web site at www.catholicdaughters.org or Texas at www.texascda.org. The convention feature story with photos may be viewed on the State Web site.
HOLY LAND — In the course of his papacy, John Paul II shunned the materialism of the modern age to live in poverty and simplicity, the pope’s association with the Jewish community and artifacts are included in this exhibit to one another.”

Christians and Jews, to first be a blessing of Abraham, we are called to be a blessing to one another.”

The pope’s 1993 appeal marking the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was created and produced by Xavier University of Cincinnati, Hiller Jewish Student Center of Cincinnati, and The Shetlen Foundation of New York. The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati served as lead financial sponsor with major underwriting by Xavier University.

Also displayed at the HMH, in the Central Gallery from July 17 – Feb. 7, 2010, is “Besan: Muslims Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust.”

U.S. Bishops Urge Congress to Observe Respect for Life, Access for All in Health Care Legislation

WASHINGTON — “Genuine health care reform that protects the life and dignity of all is a moral imperative and a vital national obligation,” said Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., as he outlined the policy priorities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on the issue of health care in a July 17 letter to Congress. The letter supported efforts to pass health care reform, but warned against inclusion of abortion.

Writing on behalf of the bishops as chairman of their Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Bishop Murphy said the bishops have advocated comprehensive health care reform for decades and recommended four criteria for fair and just health care reform: respect for human life and dignity, access for all, pluralism and equitable costs.

“One of these criteria need special attention as Congress moves forward with health care reform,” Bishop Murphy said.

On respecting life and dignity, he said, “No health care reform plan should compel us or force us to pay for the destruction of human life, whether through government funding or mandatory coverage of abortion. Any such action would be morally wrong.”

After citing protections from public funding of abortion in U.S. law, Bishop Murphy added, “Health care reform cannot be a vehicle for abandoning this consensus which respects freedom of conscience and honors our best American traditions. Any legislation should reflect longstanding and widely supported current policies on abortion funding, mandates and conscience protections because they represent sound morality, wise policy and political reality.”

On the issue of access for all, Bishop Murphy said, “All people need and should have access to comprehensive, quality health care that they can afford, and it should not depend on their stage of life, where or whether they or their parents work, how much they earn, where they live, or where they were born. The Bishops’ Conference believes health care reform should be truly universal and it should be genuinely affordable.”

He went on to cite that, even after the implementation of health care reform, some families, including many immigrants, will not be covered and urged Congress to adequately fund clinics and hospitals that serve as a safety net for these people.

The full text of Bishop Murphy’s letter can be found online at: www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/2009-07-17-murphy-letter-congress.pdf.

Mexican bishops criticize federal police for drug raid during Mass

MEXICO CITY (CNS) — The Mexican Catholic bishops’ conference has criticized federal police for bursting into a Mass in Mexico’s western Michoacan state to apprehend an alleged drug-cartel lieutenant.

“Nothing explains this kind of action inside a religious place and much less in these moments when Mexico is noted internationally as an insecure and violent country,” the bishops said.

The Aug. 1 raid marked the first time that police officers have burst into a parish to arrest suspects linked to organized crime, said Father Mateo Calvillo Paz, spokesman for the Archdiocese of Morelia, which is in Michoacan. Father Calvillo said police “took advantage of the Mass to assault a large number of ‘narcs’ and avoid bloodshed, but showed ignorance of the importance of the Mass.”

Traveling light: storing up treasures in heaven

Continued from p. 15

“...go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” That billboard motivated me. I’m downsizing my shoe collection. The stilettos were slowing me down.

Christina Capocchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights.

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Pope expresses sadness at death of Aquino, praises her leadership

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI expressed his sadness at the death of former Philippine President Corazon Aquino and praised her commitment to freedom and justice for Filipinos. Aquino, 76, died Aug. 1 after a battle with colon cancer. Tens of thousands of Filipinos lined the streets Aug. 5 as her coffin made its way from San Juan City to Manila’s cathedral for a wake and an Aug. 5 funeral. Aquino was installed as president in 1986 after a church-led people’s uprising in Manila deposed President Ferdinand Marcos and paved the way for restoring the country’s first female president until step-down in 1992.

Turkish government denies Christian request for church in Tarsus

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Despite a personal request from Pope Benedict XVI and repeated requests by Christian leaders in Turkey, the Turkish government has decided that the only church in Tarsus, the city of St. Paul’s birth, will remain a government museum. The Church of St. Paul, built as a Catholic church in the 1800s and confiscated by the government in 1943, was used throughout the 2008-2009 year of St. Paul for prayer services by Christian pilgrims. After the end of the yearlong celebration, the Turkish government decided the building could not be used exclusively for worship. The government decided to return to the practice of allowing Christians to pray in the church as long as they made reservations three days in advance and bought an admission ticket.

Catholic official asks Nigerian state to pay for 11 burned churches

LAGOS, Nigeria (CNS) — A Catholic official in northeastern Nigeria has asked the Borno state government to pay for 11 Christian churches burned by Islamic extremists. Father Heladahu John William, administrator of the Diocese of Maiduguri, also said it was wrong to conclude that the five days of violence in late July were not related to religion because “no single mosque was reportedly damaged.” Father William made the appeal Aug. 1 and chronicled the violence in Borno, Bauchi, Yobe and Kano states. Red Cross and military officials said that in Maiduguri alone, more than 700 people were killed in an uprising by Boko Haram, an extremist Islamic group that opposes Western education and insists on the imposition of Shariah, or Islamic law.

A master’s degree in secondary education from Southern Arkansas University and his Catholic school administration certification from the University of Dallas.

He had been the assistant principal and director of student life from August 2004 to June 2005 before becoming the principal at the Highlands School in Irving, Texas. Before returning to STJ in January 2009, he worked for two years as a program manager for the Army ROTC college scholarship program.

Prior to becoming an educator, Mr. Win- stead served in the U.S. Army for over 26 years as a Logistics officer and retired as a colonel in July 2001. He and his wife, Lillian, have four children, three of whom have graduated from the University of Dallas, and the youngest, Michael, who will begin STJ as a freshman this year.

Before becoming principal at Holy Cross, Mrs. Kucera taught third grade at Tenie Holmes Elementary in Bay City. She received her bachelor’s in business administration and her master’s in educational administration, both at UHV in Victoria. She and her husband, Shane, have two children, Tyler, nine years old, and Julianne, six years of age.

If you are wondering what day your local Catholic school will be returning, please find your school listed below. If you have any questions on how you might enroll your youngster, please contact a Catholic school near you for more information or visit the Web site at www.victoriadiocese.org.

Back to School!

August 17
Sacred Heart Elementary and High, Hallettsville; St. Michael Elementary, Cuero; Shiner Elementary and High, Shiner; Our Lady of Victory Elementary, Victoria; Nazareth Academy, Victoria; St. Philip Elementary, El Campo; St. Joseph High School, Victoria; St. Joseph Elementary, Yoakum; and Holy Cross Elementary, Bay City

August 18
St. Anthony Elementary, Columbus
August 19
St. Rose of Lima Elementary, Schulenburg, and Our Lady of the Gulf Elementary, Port Lavaca
August 20
St. Michael Elementary, Weimar
By Cynthia Brewer

Don Jank, a parishioner of Our Lady of Victory Church in Victoria, recently returned from 76 days of volunteer work at “El Calvario” Church in San Salvador, El Salvador.

His work consisted of helping to paint the outside of the church and assisting Father José Del Carmen Escobar with the construction of a shelter that will house 20 homeless people at night.

Don, a retired cash register repairman and a graduate of St. Joseph Catholic School in Yoe-kum, is 72 years old. Don’t let his age fool you; this work isn’t for the faint-hearted. At the church, Don worked from the top of a 24-foot ladder and at times with a safety harness on a ledge with a 30-foot drop below.

The El Salvador trip in winter/spring of 2009 actually happened because of his openness to helping as a tourist in Lima, Peru, in 2007, which then led to “Mission Honduras” work in October 2008, and now he’s already got volunteer work set up for January 2010 in the Dominican Republic. Regarding the volunteer work, he says, “It opened up for me, so health permitting, I’m going.”

“What started this whole thing was an October trip to Bolivia, Peru, Panama and Costa Rica in 2007,” Don said.

While he was visiting as a tourist for two days in Lima, Peru, he decided to visit one of the poorest sections of the city. He came across a haled building project of a three-level soup kitchen (comedor) for squatters on a Peruvian mountainside.

“The Peruvian government provides all the food for soup kitchens, free of charge,” Don said, “but the people in the communitie have to build the building and serve the food.” Each day, the volunteer cooks receive a free meal for themselves and can take five meals home with them.

While visiting with a worker in charge of the building project, he asked what it would take to finish it.

“I was told it would take 53 sacks of cement to complete it and they could finish it in 60 days,” he said. Less than a couple hundred U.S. dollars and the squatters would have access to one meal a day.

A missioner’s work is never finished …

“I was impressed,” Don said. “Talk about the Holy Spirit working.” With Don’s assistance, cement was purchased for the project and the project was completed in a couple of months.

The following year he decided to work with the Catholic charity “Mission Honduras.” He spent three weeks in Honduras shoveling cement and rock to build a foundation for a six-foot, chain-linked fence within the Mission Honduras compound and painting homes for orphans and abandoned mothers with children. While there, he met a group of 12 medical volunteers who treated 700 people in one week.

While journeying to Honduras in 2008, he stopped for a three-day visit in San Salvador. This is where a friar introduced him to Father José Escobar, who told him about his project for the homeless. Of course, this chance meeting led to his 76-day trip this year to San Salvador.

It was Father José’s original plan to get 100 homeless persons off the streets at night, but the money from his order, Padres Somascos, of Italy was diverted to the African missions.

The shelter he was able to build will provide beds, meals and showers for 20 men each night.

The project has been completed! Don just received a call on July 27 from Father Escobar telling him that eight homeless people planned to stay at the shelter that night. Two people will stay with them and attend to their needs.

Since Don left in March 2009, political turmoil has brought about chaos in the country. Father José had written to Don telling him that four vendors were killed outside of the church for not making “rental payments” to pandilla (gangs) and a grenade was thrown at the church gate, killing three and injuring 10.

“They just elected a new president there and perhaps this is all related to political unrest,” Don reflected. “Or it could be just the ‘poverty stricken’ people speaking out in an extremely violent manner.”

The poverty that exists in El Salvador can lead to criminal activity, as the government mandated daily wage is only $8 for ten hours labor; however, they use the US dollar monetary system.

“El Salvador is a country of only 8,000 square miles – about the size of Louisiana,” Don said, “but when I left in March of this year, the papers reported 18 murders each day.”

“I was quite surprised by the violence,” Don said, “but I think it is related to political unrest.”

Don’s assistance was crucial in saving the shelter from being destroyed by the gang members.

“Please pray for these good people, not to mention Father José,” Don said, “that the crimes being committed there will subside or cease sometime soon.”

Don goes on his next spiritual adventure in January 2010. He will be working with “Mission Honduras” in the Dominican Republic, one of several of its international sites, teaching English to Spanish-speaking high school students. He will be leaving Jan. 23 for eight weeks.

Currently he is having trouble with his vocal chords. “If my vocal chord problems don’t straighten out and I’m unable to teach,” Don said, “I’ll work on a building project in the same location. My plane fare has been paid, so I’m going regardless of the ‘voice problems’ I might have,” he said.

Don emphasized that one does not need to be highly educated to do volunteer work, “God asks for availability, not ability, to do his work,” he said.

Please contact the stateside volunteer coordinator, Joanie (Joan Fabiano), for information about “Mission Honduras International” at P.O. Box 56007, Chicago, Ill. 60650; Phone: (773) 631-2916; Fax: (773) 751-2201; e-mail: donations@missionhonduras.com or go to their Web site at http://www.missionhonduras.com.

A homeless man from San Salvador, who, hopefully, will find a bed at Father Escobar’s evening shelter now that it’s open.

A missioner’s work is never finished …

“Of all the statues in El Calvario Church, to me the most beautiful one was in the priest’s dining area,” Don said. The statue, El Niño Jesus, has a gentle glow of fiber optic lighting behind it.

Mr. Don Jank on mission.

PRAYER FOR RAIN

By Marty Egan of Sts. Cyril & Methodius Parish, Shiner

Our earth is parched, Lord
Send us rain
Our land, from river bed to plain
Our pastures wide, our fields our grain
They all do thirst, Lord
Send us rain

Our earth is scorched, Lord
Send us rain
The hot wind blows, it will not wane
Give water of life to drink again
Remove this drought this test, this strain

Our earth is parched, Lord
Send us rain
Let not our pleas be cried in vain
Through the Spirit, in Jesus’ name
Please send us rain
Please send us rain

By Marty Egan of Sts. Cyril & Methodius Parish, Shiner

Please send us rain
Saint Isidore, patron of farmers, pray for us
Saint Florian, protector against fire, pray for us
Saint Barbara, patroness of firefighters, pray for us
Saints Cyril and Methodius, pray for us
Our Lady of Victory, patroness of our diocese, pray for us
Our Lady of the Annunciation, patroness of Texas, pray for us
It's powerful, it's wise, it's challenging, it's ancient and yet modern: it's Pope Benedict XVI's new encyclical letter "Charity in Truth" ("Caritas in Veritate").

Building on over 100 years of Catholic social teaching with a special concentration on Pope Paul VI's encyclical "The Development of Peoples" ("Populorum Progressio"), Pope Benedict takes his predecessor's groundbreaking teaching on international development -- with its emphasis on economic justice for all as the basis for peace and poverty -- and applies it to the economic crisis currently facing the whole world.

Among the contemporary issues the pope focuses on are globalization, microfinancing, intellectual property rights, embryonic research, technology and the environment. And among the old critical issues he concentrates on are poverty, hunger, abortion and violence.

To both new and old areas of concern, the Holy Father applies the always relevant, ancient teaching of the church: that "love is God's greatest gift to humanity, it is his promise and our hope."

Love (or charity) guided by truth teaches us to care for the needs of our human family, especially the vulnerable and poor.

In the truth of God's loving plan, human beings must always come before everything else, including profit. Profit is useful if it is a means toward a good end. However, "once profit becomes the exclusive goal, if it is produced by improper means and without the common good as its ultimate end, it risks destroying wealth and creating poverty," wrote the pope.

And that is primarily what caused our current economic crisis. Wealth was destroyed, and most of all, poverty was created as a result of a lust for profit that put the accumulation of money and other assets above the good of all.

As a result of this greed, well over 100 million additional people are now hungry.

According to a recent U.N. report, for the first time in history more than 1 billion fellow human beings are now starving or undernourished! This unjust distribution of wealth is totally unacceptable to the Holy Father -- and should be totally unacceptable to us as well.

According to a recent U.N. report, for the first time in history more than 1 billion fellow human beings are now starving or undernourished! This unjust distribution of wealth is totally unacceptable to the Holy Father -- and should be totally unacceptable to us as well.

"The Holy Father urges us to look at our planet as a living being. And he warns that if we continue to destroy our environment, we will end up destroying our own life source. The pope is calling us to better understand and act on the whole of Catholic social teaching."

WASHINGTON−Charity in Truth (Caritas In Veritate), Pope Benedict XVI's third encyclical, will be available for purchase as a book July 20, in English and Spanish, according to the USCCB Publishing Office.

John Carr, executive director of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development (JPHD), said the pope's encyclical "offers a much needed ethical analysis of the global economic crisis and an essential moral framework on how to move forward as one human family."

"The Holy Father insists that ethics and a priority for the poor need to be at the heart of economic life," Carr said. "The pope challenges each of us to put charity and truth, justice and the common good at the heart of our economic choices and everyday lives."

"Charity in Truth (Caritas In Veritate) covers several issues integral to Catholic Social Teaching. The pope places charity at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. He also calls for a new way of doing business to ensure the stability and welfare of all stakeholders, including workers and society at large. The global economy, problems with non-renewable energy resources, and a need for a new world political authority are other issues the pope discusses in the encyclical."

The USCCB’s Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development is developing study and reflection guides to accompany Charity in Truth (Caritas In Veritate). The guides include session templates with excerpts from the encyclical, short prayers, and discussion questions. Paul Henderson, USCCB Publishing director, highlighted the value of the study guides as “aids for people to reflect on the Holy Father’s encyclical and put it into action in their own communities.”

Charity in Truth (Caritas In Veritate), Publication numbers 7-049 (English) and 7-806 (Spanish), is $6.95 per copy and can be ordered online at http://www.usccb.org/jphd/caritasinveritate/. The study guides will be available as free downloads at http://www.usccb.org/jphd/caritasinveritate/.
Pope prays priests will be in love with Christ

By Catholic News Service

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI prayed that the world’s priests would be totally in love with Christ and would serve God and their brothers and sisters like many saintly priests did.

Reciting the Angelus prayer Aug. 2 with visitors gathered in the courtyard of the papal villa at Castel Gandolfo, Pope Benedict spoke about the 2009-2010 Year for Priests.

In deepening an understanding of the role of priests, he said, the church’s calendar of saints offers “true models of spirituality and priestly dedication.”

Remembering St. Alphonsus Liguori Aug. 1, the church honored a “great master of moral theology and model of Christian and pastoral virtue,” he said.

The celebration Aug. 2 of the “Pardon of Assisi,” a plenary indulgence St. Francis of Assisi convinced the pope to grant in 1216 — and one which still is granted annually at Franciscan churches and shrines — demonstrates the concern of St. Francis for the forgiveness and salvation of all people, he said.

The feast of St. John Vianney, patron of parish priests, is Aug. 4. The Year for Priests coincides with the 150th anniversary of the French priest’s death and Pope Benedict said he would talk about the saint during his weekly general audience Aug. 5 at Castel Gandolfo.

Pope Benedict said he also wanted to remember Pope Paul VI, who died Aug. 6, 1978, in Castel Gandolfo.

“His life, so profoundly priestly and rich in humanity, remains a gift to the church, for which we must thank God,” the pope said.

He prayed that Mary would “help priests to be totally in love with Christ, following the example of these models of priestly holiness.”

By Father Peter J. Daly

Parish Diary

It’s Only Money

By Catholic News Service

It’s only money.

In tough economic times, it is important to remember that.

A few weeks ago we had a terrible spate of murders and suicides in our area, all of them thought to be related to the recent economic meltdown.

In one terrible case a man killed his wife and three children and then took his own life. He was apparently $460,000 in debt, half of it on credit cards. He had been a good Catholic, worker and father. He just gave up.

Across the Potomac River from me, the acting chief financial officer of Freddie Mac, the huge government-backed mortgage company, took his own life at age 41. He had worked for Freddie Mac for 16 years, his entire professional career.

He had watched the company melt down. He had become the acting CFO only a few months before. Under huge stress, he tried to resign. His boss was concerned and told him to take a few days off and think it over.

He went home and reportedly hung himself in the basement.

Just to the north of me in Baltimore, a lawyer from Long Island, who was visiting his daughter, a sophomore at Loyola College, killed his wife and two daughters and then himself at a suburban hotel. The housekeeping staff made the terrible discovery.

Evidently the lawyer had run some kind of investment fund. It had gone bankrupt.

One friend of his had invested $300,000. The friend needed the money immediately.

In despair and shame the lawyer annihilated himself and his family.

These men despised. Why?

In God’s great mercy, I’m sure they are forgiven. God knew their clouded thinking. God knew the dark curtain of despair that had come over them.

But these poor men were wrong.

We have to remember that money is only money. It is not the measure of our worth. It is not our true security. It is not our ultimate salvation.

For men especially, so much of our identity is tied up in our ability to provide for our families. Our self-worth comes from our work. Failure as a provider and a worker seems like failure as a father, husband and person.

But it isn’t. We need the resignation of Job: “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

We need the acceptance of the father of the prodigal son in Luke’s Gospel. So, the money was gone, but the boy is alive. Kill the fatted calf and let’s rejoice.

Money is important in consumer culture. It gives us security. It gives us dignity. And work gives us joy because we feel productive.

But when it all collapses, it is not the end.

If these men had confided in their wives and children, I’m sure each would have said, “It’s OK, Dad, we can start over. So long as we have each other, we will survive and thrive.”

If only they had called their pastors.

In the last few months, I have dealt with three different families facing financial ruin and foreclosure. What did I try to get across to them?

Do not despair.

You are more than your bank account.

You are more than your house.

You are more than your credit rating.

As Christians, our hope is not in the things of this world. Our hope is in Christ. That is more than a theological proposition. It is the bedrock on which we build our lives.

See the lilies of the field. See the birds of the air. Are you not worth more than these?!

Work and security are important. But money is only money.

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Special Collections
Retired and needy priests of the Diocese - Sept. 5-6

Ongoing Events
To see the full listing of all upcoming ministries within the Diocese of Victoria see the diocesan calendar at: www.jhlvc.com/misc/calendar.htm or call the office for information at (361) 573-1820.

Engaged Encounter—Register as soon as you have contacted your pastor due to limited space. It is strongly recommended that you attend an encounter weekend four to six months prior to your wedding date. For a registration form, contact your pastor, or visit www.viatiocatholic.org/famil-

Engaged Encounter—Register as soon as you have contacted your pastor due to limited space. It is strongly recommended that you attend an encounter weekend four to six months prior to your wedding date. For a registration form, contact your pastor, or visit www.viatiocatholic.org/family-ency.htm, or write to: Engaged Encounter, P.O. Box 4070, Victoria, Texas 77903. The weekend is held at the Spiritual Renewal Center. Dates for 2009 are: Sept. 11-13 and Nov. 20-22. The dates for 2010 are: Feb. 26-28, April 16-18, June 25-27, Sept. 24-26 and Nov. 19-21. For more info., call (361) 573-0828 ext. 30. All registrations are on a first come, first serve basis and you must accompany registration form.

Marriage Encounter—A Marriage Encounter weekend will be held at the Spiritual Renewal Center Aug. 28-30 beginning at 7:00 p.m. Friday evening. The Marriage Encounter Weekend is open to married couples, Catholic and non-Catholic. World-wide Marriage Encounter is designed to make good marriages even better. To register, please contact Milton and Diane Rejcek at (979) 245-0323 or at: register@mevictoria.org

Picnics, Anniversaries, etc.
August
Weimar—St. Michael Harvest Feast Aug. 9 at the Veteran’s Memorial Park. A fried-chicken and stew dinner begins at 11:00 a.m. at $7 p/p for adults and $4 p/p for $4 p/p for children 12 and under. There will be entertainment for all: train ride, country store, cakewalk, ring toss and more. Auction begins at 12:30 p.m. with fresh fruits and vegetables available throughout the day. Music by Shiner Hobo Band 12:00-2:00 p.m. Czecoholics 2:00-6:00 p.m. and The Red Ravens 6:00-10:00 p.m. There will be a Men’s Softball tournament Saturday and Sunday, contact Carl Prihoda at (979) 263-8380.

Praha—St. Mary Parish Picnic Aug. 15 with Mass at 10:00 a.m. (weekend Mass Sat. at 6:00 p.m./Sunday at 8:30 a.m.). A dinner will be served from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. featuring Praha stew and fried-chicken at $7 p/p for adults and plates-to-go and $4 p/p for each child. There will be a cakewalk, country store and much more. The auction begins at 1:00 p.m. Music throughout the day and evening with Praha Brothers Band 1:00-5:00 p.m.; Debro Brothers 1:00-3:00 p.m. and 5:00-7:00 p.m. and Red Ravens from 7:00-10:00 p.m. Food available throughout the afternoon and evening with hamburgers available after 4:00 p.m. For more information, please visit www.otwmeyerspraha.org.

Victoria—Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Aug. 16 at the KC Hall (3610 N. Ben Wilson at Airport). The price is chicken and beans. Spanish rice and cauliflower for $1.50 plus tax. The Knights of Columbus Council 1329 will have a chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Aug. 16 at the KC Hall (3610 N. Ben Wilson at Airport). The price is chicken and beans. Spanish rice and cauliflower for $1.50 plus tax. The auction begins at 12:30 p.m. in the annex.

Victoria—St. Mary’s Altar Society Retreat, Sept. 30; Retreat of sisters of St. Joseph, Oct. 31. For more information, please contact Milton and Diane Rejcek at (979) 245-0323 or at: register@mevictoria.org

Parish holds “Movie Night”

SHINER—On Wednesday evening, June 24, parishioners of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church in Shiner gathered together for the first ever parish movie night sponsored by the parish altar server program. The idea of having a movie night as a way for parishioners to get together to enjoy fellowship with one another without having to work to raise funds for some parish cause. And what better way to do that than to gather together in the air-conditioned parish hall on a hot summer’s evening and enjoy free hot dogs, popcorn, nachos, cookies and drinks, while watching the 1966 comedy classic “The Trouble with Angels,” starring Hayley Mills, June Harding and Rosalind Russell. “The event was a total success! The altar server adult sponsors and I who organized this event really did not know how many people to plan for. We were hoping for 30 people, but instead we had close to 100 children! Everyone had a great time eating the dessert, listening to the story and then enjoying the evening even though some of us in the kitchen who never stopped serving the movie treats!”, Father Tommy Chen, parochial vicar of Sts. Cyril and Methodius said. “We are definitely planning another parish movie night and we hope even more parishioners will come out!”

East Bernard—Holy Cross Bazaar Oct. 11
Victoria—Our Lady of Victory Catholic Parish Festival Oct. 11 at the community center; doors open at 11:00 a.m. A buffet style barbecue beef and sausage dinner will be served. There will be a country store, cakewalk and much more to enjoy. The auction begins at 12:30 p.m. in the annex.

Lake Eagle—Parish of the Naivity Picnic Oct. 18 at the pavilion located at 545 South Ave. Food will be served from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The auction begins at 1:00 p.m. Food will be served throughout the day along with a variety of booths, games, activities and a dance.

La Salle—St. Theresa Fall Festival Sept. 18

Seadrift—St. Patrick Annual Turkey Dinner will be held Oct. 25, at the parish hall. Serving begins at 11:00 a.m. Plates are $7 p/p.

Praha—Veterans Memorial Service, Nov. 8 at 9:30 a.m.

Masses • Retreats • Conferences
Victoria—Charismatic Healing Mass, Wednesday, Sept. 2 at 7:00 p.m. with Father Stan De Boe O.S.S. T. as celebrant at Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 108 W. River St., Victoria, Rosary begins at 7:00 p.m.; Mass at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Adoration, Praising, Singing
Victoria—Our Lady of Sorrows Prayer Group invites you to come and meet Sonia Sanchez, singer and evangelizer from Pharr, Texas, Sept. 16 at 7:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Sorrows Church.

Irving—2009 Seminarian Welcome Dinner at Holy Trinity Seminary of the Diocese of Dallas, Oct. 6, at 5:00 p.m. at the Fairmont Hotels & Resorts. www.holytrinityseminary.com/wd2009/

San Antonio—Catholic Women’s Conference, Sept. 11 – 12, at St. Matthew Catholic Church, 10703 Wurzbach Rd., 78240. The mission of the CWC is to renew families and society by enriching women’s relationship with God, fostering appreciation for the personal dignity of women and inspiring women to use their feminine gifts for the good of all. Early-registration $45/Regular reg. (after Aug. 12) $55. Fee includes box lunch and conf. packet worth $25. For more information contact Sarah Stratis at cwc@catholic.org or (210) 521-3377.

Victoria—St. Mary’s Altar Society Retreat, Sept. 30; Retreat Master: Father Charles Sonnier; Time: 9:30 a.m. – noon; Ends with Mass and Lunch; More information to follow.

Houston—Rejcek’s Annual Fall Picnic Sept. 19, 2009—Education Center and Memorial: www.hhm.org/cp/home.aspx

Houston—2009 Scripture Seminar: The Psalms in the Life and Worship of the Church, with Father Lawrence Boadt, CSP, and Dr. Renata Michalak, 5 – 8, St. Mary’s Seminary. For more information, please visit www.TXcatholic.org or contact the Texas Catholic Conference at (512) 339-9882.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land—Father José Ángel Ortiz of the Diocese of Corpus Christi invites you to follow the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, Pray on the Mount of Beatitudes, receive Holy Communion at the Church of the Beatitudes and walk in the steps of our Lord in the Sea of Galilee. Pray for our Diocese, for our priests and for our parishes. For more information, please visit www.catholic.org or call Fr. Jose Ortiz at (361) 643-4505 or e-mail: greg@catholic.org.
By Cynthia Brewer

Deacon David Valdez not only preaches to parishioners at Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Wharton, Texas, but also to those wishing to obtain a concealed handgun permit.

Deacon David has been a Texas Department of Public Safety Certified Concealed Handgun Instructor for eight years and a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Victoria since his ordination on July 29, 2006.

Why would a Catholic clergyman be a trainer for concealed handgun license (CHL)?

Deacon David says it’s simple, “To spread the Gospel message of the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.”

“In the beginning it was just a gun class,” he said. “As I went through the diocesan program, the class began to change, and when I was ordained, it really changed.”

“I realized that people who attend the class are searching for knowledge,” Deacon David said, “they just don’t realize what that knowledge is yet.”

In class, a student’s first thought may be that they’ll learn all about guns and how to use them, but when they get there, they find out that God is present, even in the “bad guy.”

“I’m paid to teach state law, but I’m obligated by my ordination to teach divine law,” he said. “So I teach both, with divine law always superceding state law.”

Deacon David is one of three instructors in Wharton County, one of 1,500 in the state of Texas.

Deacon David teaches that we’re not supposed to protect items with a gun; only lives are worth protecting with a gun. The purpose of using deadly force is to stop someone from hurting us.

“Notice it is to ‘stop’ someone, not to kill someone,” he said. “If your intent is to kill someone, then you’re a murderer. There is not one penal code that gives one the right to murder.”

“He’s taught his children that if they’re out in the field and something looks suspicious, go to the house and call 911.

“If you’re still being threatened, barricade yourself in your room, and if they still come after you, then shoot, pray for them, for they weren’t shown the way, the truth and the life.”

The gun is intended to stop the aggressor. People will ask David, “What about hitting the kneecap?” He responds, “If you hit my kneecap, you make me mad, and when you’re nervous, you’re not going to be able to aim at such a small target.”

Aim at the mass—not to kill, but to stop.

“They might die, he said, “but that wasn’t your intention.”

This again is a teaching of the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes St. Thomas Aquinas in para. 2263: “The act of self-defense can have a double effect: the preservation of one’s own life; and the killing of the aggressor… The one is intended, the other is not.”

Love Your Enemies—

“I like to confuse the people who come in wanting a license to “shoot to kill,” or who have an attitude of “it’s us against them,”” Deacon David said.

“We want to point the finger at the gang member,” he said. “We’re so good at saying he sinned, but we don’t know his situation, only God knows. We should be asking, who is showing them the goodness of Christ?”

He tries to get the students to have compassion, to realize the criminal is someone’s father, son, or daughter who’s been led down the wrong path.

Recently, a Muslim gentleman in class commented that if someone kills a person, he deserves to die. Deacon David sees these instances as teaching moments. By the next day at the shooting range he could see that his teachings were beginning to unfold for him. The gentleman stayed an extra two hours just to discuss these new thoughts.

I never recognized them as a person.”

Deacon David teaches these classes three to four weekends a month at his and his brother’s Ace Hardware store in South Houston.

If you’re interested in Christian CHL training, contact VALFLO ACADEMY at Chamberlin Ace Hardware in southwest Houston at (281) 495-8844, and ask for the deacon.

Deacon David Valdez on the day of his ordination at Our Lady of Victory Cathedral in Victoria July 29, 2006.

Deacon David Valdez, a Texas Department of Public Safety Certified Concealed Handgun Instructor, teaches CHL classes at his family business, Chamberlin Ace Hardware in southwest Houston, almost every Saturday of the month. The only weekend he does not teach is when he is assigned to preach at the Masses at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Wharton. His students will hear a mixture of state and divine law in his classes.

Concealed Handguns … A Ministry?

David teaches that we’re not supposed to use firearms.

The state of Texas uses the “Child, Parent and Adult Ego States” to teach non-violent dispute resolution in CHL classes because the state doesn’t want the one permitted to carry a gun to start a fight; they want him to de-escalate it. Deacon David uses the same methods, but with a Christian twist.

The best way to avoid a confrontation is to remain in the adult ego state — which is non-biased, not prejudiced. Deaon likes to call it the Christian-ego-state.

“One of the biggest teaching moments is when we’re discussing how to talk to one another,” David says. When we get angry we tend to talk in an authoritative, parent state, but the only response we can expect is an uncooperative one; then it’s like two children arguing.

Deacon David uses the example of avoiding an argument/flight over a parking space: If you pull into a parking space and someone confronts you saying, ‘You could see that I was waiting to park there,’ you can argue about it or de-escalate to convert the angry driver to an adult state.

To do this, he suggests apologizing and saying, ‘Oh, I didn’t realize that, but I can see that now. I’ll move.’ Just take his word for it and go back to your car and offer to move.

“When you do this, you shock the other guy,” the deacon said. “He’s embarrassed to look you in the face. Most likely he’ll turn away and say, ‘That’s OK, I already found another spot.’ You’re ‘killing him with kindness.’

“The Christian ego state always puts the other person first. We have an opportunity to be Christ to someone who is angry and hurt and bring peace to him. If we remember this,” he said, “to treat the person like Christ in the beginning, a lot of bad situations can be avoided.”

– Don’t shoot people over garage sale items—

The state says we have the right to shoot someone if they’re taking our stuff.

– Don’t shoot someone if they’re taking our stuff.

Deacon David teaches that we’re not supposed to use firearms. Videotapes and books are available to help teach children about firearms.

So you own or carry a firearm you are responsible for whatever happens with that firearm. Firearms have no mind of their own. They are simply tools, which must be used properly by people trained in their safe handling and operation.

Firearms should never be allowed to fall into unauthorized or untrained hands. Children should never have access to loaded firearms. In fact, it is not legal to allow unprivileged access to firearms to anyone under 18 years of age. Children should be trained to never touch a real firearm without responsible adult supervision.

Never make a firearm the focus of taboo or curiosity. Videotapes and books are available to help teach children about firearms.

Basic Gun Handling & Shooting Safety Rules

Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.

Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

Be sure of your target and what’s behind it.

Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

Check twice to be sure the gun is unloaded.

Treat every gun as if it was loaded.

Be sure the gun is safe to operate.

Know how to use the gun.

Use only correct ammunition.

Use eye and ear protection.

From p. 22 of Texas Concealed Handgun License Training handbook.

Safe storage of guns:

Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons.

Make sure storage places are safe from children.

Make sure storage device works safely.

Check the chamber twice to make sure it’s empty.

Store ammunition separate from firearms.

From p. 23 of TCHLP handbook.