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Fr. Molina to speak for HL Christians at OLV Masses Dec. 4, 5

By Cynthia Brewer

Mgr. Michael Harrold, pastor of Our Lady of Victory Cathedral in Victoria, has once again allowed the Knights of Columbus #1329 to hold a Holy Land Christian Ecumencial Foundation olive wood gifts sale and sponsorship of Christian schools through a child sponsorship drive at his parish during Advent. The sale and drive will be held in the OLV cafeteria following each Mass Dec. 4 and 5.

To assist the Holy Land Days sale, HCEF has enlisted the help of Father Juan Molina, a Trinitarian priest who once served as parochial vicar at Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Victoria and now serves as Foreign Policy Advisor for the Office of International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, DC.

Father Juan will speak on behalf of HCEF and about the plight of Holy Land

See Fr. Molina, p. 6

The Catholic Lighthouse to use “new media”

By Cynthia Brewer

Readers of The Catholic Lighthouse may now watch CatholicTV’s most popular programs on the diocesan Web site and soon begin following The Catholic Lighthouse on Twitter.

With the assistance of Ryan Sprinkle, the Diocese of Victoria’s new IT person, The Catholic Lighthouse will be able to, as Pope Benedict says, “bring the message of Christ and the teaching of his Church to the attention of the wider public.”

Anyone with access to the Internet may watch CatholicTV’s programming at anytime by going to the “Lighthouse Newspaper” page of the Diocese of Victoria’s Web site and clicking the Catholic TV video player widget. And beginning January 2011, The Catholic Lighthouse will also be using “new media” to keep readers updated on current Catholic events through “tweets” on Twitter.

According to CatholicTV, it is a nationally-televised television network that has been broadcasting for the past 56 years from the Archdiocese of Boston and now streams a live feed 24-hours a day at CatholicTV.com. Heeding Pope Benedict XVI’s call to greater utilize the power of television and new media, the CatholicTV Network features its cable TV station, Catholic Web site, mobile apps and widget.

When one goes to The Catholic Lighthouse page of the diocesan Web site at: www.victoriadiocese.org/lighthouse/lighthouse.htm, one will see the CatholicTV widget right under the digital version of the most recent edition of The Catholic Lighthouse. By clicking on the widget, one has access to all of CatholicTV’s most popular programming. Celebrate Mass online, pray The Rosary, enjoy programs on prayer, the saints, the Scriptures and the Catholic Church on America’s Catholic Television Network.

Under the leadership of Cardinal Sean O’Malley, archbishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, CatholicTV received the prestigious Gabriel Award for “Television Station of the Year” by the Catholic Academy of Arts and Sciences.

See The Catholic Lighthouse, p. 3

Shiner student selected one of H. S. Heisman male national finalists

By Cynthia Brewer

SHINER—Many of you are familiar with Dave Thomas, the man who founded Wendy’s. You probably know quite a bit about his restaurants, but you may not know about the many programs he started to improve the community around him. One of those programs is the Wendy’s High School Heisman Award, which he founded 16 years ago to recognize and motivate high school students to achieve excellence in all facets of life.

This award is designed to recognize high school seniors who excel in academics, athletics and in their communities. In his own words, Dave believed that “the students of today are important for our tomorrow,” and that “each student can be a positive role model for their peers, classmates and society.” This year, these guidelines motivated more than 55,000 students across the country to apply for this prestigious high school award.

The field has narrowed to 1,020 State Finalists, two of which are from Shiner Catholic School. Blue Hybner and Emily Wagner are the two students who moved on from the state round of competition.

Out of the 1,012 State Finalists, 102 State Winners were named: one male and one female from each state. Blue Hybner was announced as Texas’ top male for the Wendy’s High School Heisman award. From among our 102 State Winners, the national judging panel has selected six males and six females.

See Shiner student selected, p. 4
Effective November 22, 2010, the Rev. Tommy Chen is appointed Director of Pro-Life Concerns for the Diocese of Victoria.

**Photo Submissions**

The Catholic Lighthouse has been receiving submitted photos from parishes and organizations that are not high enough quality to be printed on newsprint. Please submit only photos that fall under these preferences: crisp and clear (not fuzzy or blurry) digital photos sent via e-mail, preferably at 300 dpi or above (picture size can be large, meaning crisp and clear (not fuzzy or blurry) digital photos sent via e-mail, preferably at 300 dpi or above (picture size can be large).

December 5 8:00 a.m., Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Hostyn 6:00 a.m. Mass, Sts. Peter & Paul Church, Plum
6:00 p.m., Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus Christmas gathering, Holy Family Church, Victoria
8 8:15 a.m., Mass, Nazareth Academy School Gym, Victoria
9 6:30 p.m., Holy Sepulchre Christmas gathering, Victoria Country Club, Victoria
10 6:00 p.m., Celebration of Archbishop Drossaerts Assembly #1311 Knights of Columbus 60th anniversary, Knights of Columbus Hall, El Campo
11 5:00 p.m., Mass, Incarnate Word Chapel, Spiritual Renewal Center, followed by 6:00 p.m. social and Bishop's Christmas Dinner, Spiritual Renewal Center
12 10:00 a.m., Mass, dedication of new Family Life Building, Holy Family Church, Victoria
13 2:00 p.m., Altar Society Christmas gathering, St. Mary Church, Victoria
5:00 p.m., Retirement Reception for Sharon Jones, Chancery Office
15 3:00 p.m., Diocesan Finance Board meeting, Chancery Office
4:30 p.m., Diocesan Building Board meeting, Chancery Office
23 11:30 a.m., Chancery Office closes for the holidays
24 4:00 p.m., Mass, Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Infirmary, Victoria
Midnight Mass, Our Lady of Victory Cathedral
28 6:00 p.m., Mass, Serra Club seminarians and religious in formation Christmas gathering, Holy Family Church, Victoria

January – 2011

3-7 Texas Bishops' Retreat, Oblate Renewal Center, San Antonio
9 10:00 a.m., Mass, Blessing of restoration of St. Mary Church and remodeled rectory, High Hill
9-13 First Week of Diocesan Priests' Retreat, Spiritual Renewal Center
15 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Workshop and meeting, Permanent Deacons, Family Center, Sacred Heart Church, Hallettsville
16-20 Second Week of Diocesan Priests' Retreat, Spiritual Renewal Center

**Official Appointments By Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer**

**Bishop Fellhauer’s Schedule**

**DIOCESAN DEACONS HONORED**—The Serra Club of Victoria held the Diocesan Deacon Appreciation Dinner Oct. 26 at Holy Family Church in Victoria following a Mass concelebrated by Bishop David Fellhauer and Msgr. Eustace Hermes and assisted by Deacon Steve Borowicz. The Serra Club of Victoria Northwest and the wives of the deacons also attended. Pictured are, back row from 1 to r., Deacons Larry Rossov, OLV, Victoria; Dennis Kutach, St. Joseph, Yoakum; Joe Machaek, Sts. Cyril & Methodius, Shiner; Milburn Kram, St. Joseph, Mission; Bishop David E. Fellhauer; Deacons Pat Kubala, St. John Nepomucene, New Taft; Joe Koenig, St. Mary, Victoria; Anthony Warzacea, St. Michael, Cuero; and Linard Harper, St. Joseph, Yoakum; front row, Deacons Paul Natek-Sr., Sts. Cyril & Methodius, Shiner; Jerome Grahnmann, St. Philip, El Campo; Leo Sharron, St. Michael, Cuero; John McCourt, Sts. Peter and Paul, Plum; and Queen of the Holy Rosary, Hostyn; Charlie Novosad, St. Anthony, Columbus; Steve Borowicz, Holy Family, Victoria; Sonny Rogers, Sacred Heart, Hallettsville; Fred Soto, St. Patrick, Bloomington; and Jarrel Nohavitsa, St. Philip, El Campo.

**KC #1329 AWARDS**

**KNIGHT AND FAMILY OF THE YEAR**—The Knights of Columbus #1329 of Victoria awarded the Knight and Family of the Year awards at the 2010 KC/ CDA Awards Banquet held on Oct. 19 at the KC Hall in Victoria. Grand Knight Pete Moya presents Family of the Year award to Family of the Year, James “Jimmy” Hatch, the Knight of the Year award.

**Annual Collection for Retired Sisters, Brothers, and Religious Order Priests – Dec. 12**

WASHINGTON — Catholics across the United States will join together to “Share in the Care” of senior religious as part of the annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR), to be taken up in most parishes December 11-12. The collection, coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) in Washington, provides financial support for the day-to-day care of thousands of elderly Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.

Despite the overwhelming generosity to this fund, many religious communities continue to lack resources sufficient to support retirement and elder care. Of 573 communities submitting data to the NRRO in 2009, fewer than seven percent were fully funded for retirement. Like many other Americans, religious communities struggle with the ever-rising cost of health care. In 2009 alone, the total cost of care for nearly 35,000 women and men religious past age 70 exceeded $1 billion.

As a result of the 2009 collection, which garnered over $28.1 million, the National Religious Retirement Office was able to distribute more than $23 million in financial assistance to 477 communities, representing more than 45,000 women and men religious. By underwriting necessities, such as prescription medication and nursing support, these funds help religious communities provide for the ongoing care of elderly members. Additional funding was allocated to initiatives targeted for religious institutes with the greatest needs.

“Despite the troubling statistics, many religious communities have made great strides in addressing their funding deficits,” notes Sister Bader. “Religious are humbled by the generous donations to this fund and determined to make the most out of every dollar.”

**DSA & Reflection of Faith Capital Campaign Updates**

**2010 DSA**

| Diocesan Goal: | $1,349,880.00 |
| Parish Pledge Totals: | $665,556.84 |
| Parish Contribution Totals: | $631,930.98 |
| Number of Parish Families Participating: | 3,554 |

**Reflection of Faith Capital Campaign**

| Diocesan Goal: | $9,000,000.00 |
| Parish Pledge Totals: | $12,969,859.12 |
| Parish Contribution Totals: | $8,356,692.56 |
| Number of Parish Families Participating: | 6,757 |
By Beth Dotson Brown

Change is often accompanied by fear that challenges priests in the United States when preparing to use the new translation of the Roman Missal. Yet, amidst the newness of the prayers there are also opportunities that Church leaders say can give congregations to a richer liturgical and spiritual life.

“I think we’ve always had an opportunity for a deeper prayer, but I do think the translation is allowing more nuanced out of the text than we’ve had before,” says Father Paul Pence, an author, lecturer and a pastor in Missouri. “So we get some new possibilities for catechesis and for spirituality with this translation.”

The deeper appreciation of the liturgy begins with the priest who will lead the people in the missal. Msgr. Anthony Sherman, executive director of the Secretariat of Divine Worship of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), sees this as an opportunity for priests to further develop their own spiritual life so they can ignite the faith of the congregation.

“The basic context of the Eucharistic prayers is the same, there’s no opportunity for priests … to take a look at some of the background material,” he says, noting the USCCB Web site has numerous resources materials posted.

He notes that in order for the missal to be successfully implemented, “TheFather needs to be able to relate each prayer. And the only way one can approach this in a more prayerful manner is to educate oneself on the background of the prayers, theological concepts contained in the prayer, because then you can more intelligently and convincingly proclaim them for the people.”

Father Turner agrees. “Our greatest challenge is to get inside those and make those sound like our prayer and not just the missal’s prayer,” he says. “We need to spend time with the prayer ourselves, being prayerful also thinking what deeply they mean, imagining some context in our own lives that can make this prayer more authentic for us.”

Although priests always tried to do this, the new language in the translation presents them with possible stumbling blocks they will need to work through.

Because the new translation is truer to the Latin syntax, the sentences are sometimes long and grammatically complex. There is also a strong symbolic dimension to these changes, the easier it will be for the congregation to learn them.

Although many people will not be available until a year after the final translation is approved, “it’s not too early for a priest to begin preparing their congregations for these changes,” Msgr. Sherman suggests priests read over the text to learn the best way to proclaim them. The more comfortable the pastor becomes with these changes, the easier it will be for the congregation to learn them.

“The books we use to celebrate are at the center of our liturgical experience. The missal binds us all together. Every single country in the world has that text as the basis for the translation.” Therefore, every country will be using a new translation.

The process of translation has been long and difficult and included the participation of a number of people who have significant experience with the text. For instance, one reason the new missal was needed was that Pope John Paul II canonized a great number of saints. The new missal will include texts to celebrate these saints.

“These prayers will have to work on us in our private lives and our prayer life and also to have a general purpose, to have a meaning in the life of everyone in the Church being able to appreciate these prayers in a way that we never did in the past.”

Thank You Note

Your Excellency:

I gratefully acknowledge the check in the amount of $30,131.91, which you sent to the Archdiocesan Vocations Office for the Peter’s Pence contribution from the Diocese of Victoria for 2010.

[Such a gesture has not only a practical significance as a sign of communion with the Pope and attention to the needs of one’s brothers; and therefore your service [and that of your faithful] possesses a refined ecclesial character. —Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the members of the St. Peter’s Circle, 25 February 2006]

I assure you that this sum will be transmitted to the Secretariat of State on your behalf.

May God, who is infinitely generous, reward you and continue to bless you and the work you are doing for your parishes.

With prayerful regards, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop Pietro Sambi
Apostolic Nuncio
(Papal Ambassador to the United States)
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 income from this amount is yearly allotted to the education of seminarians. The burses are in memory of or honoring of an individual priest or lay persons, living or deceased. Publication of the burses will appear periodically when new contributions are received with the approval of the Diocesan Council.

As of November 29, 2010

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By Melony Overton
PORT LAVACA WAVE

“Africans were the first human beings to dance and reflect on their humanity in terms of a world beyond the physical, the spiritual world of gods and ancestors. Religion and culture are therefore inseparable from the beginning.” — Father Fisher, West African Religious Traditions

Father Robert Fisher, 73, a Divine Missionary, has been a priest for 45 years. In that time, he has written a book, traveled to distant lands, taught seminarians and college students and learned how to live a life of faith.

In all his travels, whether in the U.S. or abroad, Rev. Fisher has made it a priority to delve into the culture of the host country wherever his vocation takes him. Father Fisher serves the parish communities of St. Ann in Point Comfort, St. Joseph in Port O’Connor and St. Patrick in Seadrift.

He is originally from Southeast Missouri and went to high school and college in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. He also attended college near Rochester, New York. The seminary and the college were both run by the Divine Missions.

Father Fisher was ordained in January 1965, in Techni, Ill., at the age of 28. He received his doctorate in liturgical studies at the Pontifical Ateneo of Saint Anselmo in Rome in 1968. While there, he learned the art of authentic Italian cooking. He learned Italian and worked with locals in the vineyards and olive groves. He taught liturgy and sacraments in seminaries in the United States for three years and in Ghana for 13 years.

“I enjoy teaching. I like theology and liturgy. I help young men prepare for the ministry. I help them to preach the Gospel and perform the sacraments so they can help other people,” he said.

In October, Fisher visited former students in the Philippines. He said vocations to the priesthood are strong in the Philippines, Ghana, India and Indonesia. Ghana has 18 dioceses alone. Many of his former Ghanaian students have been assigned to parishes within the Diocese of Victoria.

In Ghana, Fisher worked in parishes in the rural areas known as “the bush.” He learned the native Akan language. For example, “Onayme” is the Akan word for God. He grew fond of the native dishes - a meal made from ground food or peanuts and “toofoo” or a dough ball made from casaba root and plantains or with African yams and water.

“When I was taking my morning prayer I would ask, ‘The African is a person of dance.’” - West African Religious Traditions

Father Fisher returned to the U.S. in 1986, and he took his love of teaching and his unique experiences among the African people with him. Back in the U.S., he taught theology and philosophy at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans for six years and at Prairie View A&M for four years.

In his book, Fisher wrote, “Religious dances thus have a social function, in the sense that their purpose is to generate systems of action that may promote good or evil for the harmony between the spirit and material worlds, and as social control over the totality of a society’s acts, the means of oracles, shrines and customs.”

Fisher learned that the Akan are a very ritual-minded people and in the book he explains the dynamics and structures of traditional African religion and how they resonate in African-American religious life.

In order to report authentically to the readers, Fisher took on the role of amateur ethnologist, delving deeply into the Akan proverbs, dances, drumming, their religious beliefs about God, the lower deities, life and death, family, children and tribes.

“The cultural language is as important as the spoken tongue. It creates community; it provides a religious sense of the presence of the spiritual order and moral values. It creates the environment for connecting the past with the future and change.” - West African Religious Traditions

Keeping his resume diverse, Father Fisher is the director of St. Augustine’s Retreat Center at Bay St. Louis, Miss., until Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005. The retreat center is on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi.

In his book, Father Fisher wrote, “I thought of going into the attic of the retreat center, but I couldn’t reach it.”

That morning, the storm surge hit Bay St. Louis. While the retreat center near the retreat center began to swell with water.

“Water came in under the doors, through the windows and through the walls.”

Shiner student selected one of six male national finalists

Continued from p. 1

Vocations

The Catholic Lighthouse

Page 4 — December 2010

Shiner student selected one of six male national finalists

as National Finalists. Blue Hybner was selected as one of those 12 students! Blue and his family will be travelling to New York City to participate in the collegiate Heisman weekend festivities with the other 11 National Finalists! There, Blue will receive his awards in person from Archie Griffin, the only athlete to ever win six Heisman Trophies. While in New York, Blue will receive a gold medal, $100 Wendy’s gift card and a $2,000 donation to St. Paul High School.

During Heisman weekend in New York, one male and one female will be selected from among the 12 national finalists as the 2010 Wendy’s High School Heisman National Winners. Viewers can support Blue by checking out his profile online at WENDYSHEISMAN.com and watching the Wendy’s High School Heisman television special on ESPNU Sunday, December 12, to see who will be named the 2010 National Winners.

We want to congratulate Emily Wagner and Blue Hybner and wish Blue the best of luck at the national level.
Advent: Getting Prepared and Waiting

A time to travel in the diocese, I enjoy seeing the neatly plowed fields and the rows of hay bales. The farmers have prepared their fields and now are waiting for winter rains to replenish the depleted soil moisture. The ranchers have been able to move hay that will nourish their livestock during the coming winter.

"What a fitting metaphor for Advent," I think, since Advent, too, is a time for getting prepared and waiting. To prepare the field for the next growing season, the farmer has had to plow under the stubble from the previous crop, fertilize the field, and prevent unwanted weeds. Then he or she has to wait for the rain and the time for new growing.

Similarly, the rancher has worked hard to accumulate hay for the winter season; now he or she waits, hopes, and prays that the supply will last throughout the winter.

Moreover, in our own back yards and in our neighborhoods, we have another visual metaphor for this season. The trees are being stripped of their leaves and we see little or no evidence of life. However scientists tell us that there is a lot of unseen development and strengthening going on in the roots of trees during the winter.

Now, the question is "Am I as prepared spiritually for the coming celebration of the birthday of Jesus as the farmer and rancher are practically prepared for the coming winter?" Am I growing internally during this season, while stripping myself of what is not necessary or might even hinder my relationship with God and those about me? As we ponder these questions, we might review some ways that we can prepare during Advent. We know that prayer and the sacraments are at the top of the list of preparation activities. Seeking and finding Jesus, who may be waiting for us to recognize him in others, helps us to prepare for the celebration of his becoming one of us. So let us continue to use the prepared field, the accumulated hay and the stripped trees as reminders for us to prepare and wait during this season of anticipation and longing! May we all have a blessed Christmas!

Shiner Catholic School Honor Roll

SHINER—High Honors—All grades 94 and above; Honors—All grades 85 and above

St. Paul High School Honor Roll

• Seniors
  High Honors: Tyler Blanton, Lan Nguyen, Devin Peck, Emily Wagner
  Honors: Dustin Adamek, Dylan Easterling, Josie Egan, Blue Hybner, Brandon Schreiber, Stephanie Syphries, Kyle Wallace, Paige Werner

• Juniors
  High Honors: Kali Kocian
  Honors: Jacob Croll, Brett Hodges

• Sophomores
  High Honors: Katie Denson, Abby Hull, Dakota Kresta, Madison Kutz, Matt Mats
  Honors: Dylan Barton, Rose Egan, Rachel Fikac, Adam Holobanek, Cole Hybner, Katrina Kocian, Katelynn Lentz, David Lujan, Jon McElroy, Bethany Pokluda, Justin Siegel, Ted Wenske, Kyle Wilgus

• Freshmen
  Honors: Ben Janeczko, Hannah Nosovac, Travis Raube, Nicolette Siegel, Samantha Siegel, Melanie Wagner

St. Ludmila Elementary Honor Roll

• Eighth Grade
  High Honors: Kurt Chunda, Kyle Chunda, Emily Malinovsky
  Honors: Brett Banta, Abby Irvin, Kolten Kneese, Alexia Krizie Kresta, Sean Kresta, Victoria Kusak, Daniel Linares, Samantha Natal, Emily Pokluda, Lori Soefje

• Seventh Grade
  High Honors: Alexis Cantu, Jed Janeczko, Alex Kneese, Morgan Patel, Kali Kocian
  Honors: Thomas Bell, Ryan Geiger, Natalie Jackson, Derek Kapavik, Kelsey Longoria, Shaelyn Malavek, Claire Pavliska, Niki Werner

• Sixth Grade
  High Honors: Trinity Kusak, Sydney Miles

The Catholic Lighthouse

By Bishop Michael Pfleger, OMI
Diocese of St. Angel0

CULPABILITY

The question of eternal damnation is another source of pain for family members, especially for parents of children who have killed themselves. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (no. 2282) states that grave psychological disorders may diminish the responsibility of the one who has committed suicide. People, especially the young, plagued with serious psychological diagnoses may impulsively decide, clouded by feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and despair. They lack the ability to clearly and objectively appraise their life crisis. Their intellects are clouded, their emotions are in chaos, and their wills are weakened. For all those who are wondering whether their loved one is happy or suffering punishment, Jesus’ prayer of mercy and forgiveness from the cross is an invitation to trust in the Lord. He knows that the deepest recesses of each of us, and his love and mercy are greater than anyone can ever know or understand.

Today, suicide is not seen exclusively as a moral problem but also as a mental social, health problem. Many experts in the field of mental health and pastoral care believe that most suicides are irrational. Those who take their lives are so emotionally disturbed that they act compulsively, on the perception of reality so distorted by anguish that their freedom of choice is greatly restricted. Therefore, although the act of suicide is objectively wrong, the individual circumstances may make it subjectively guiltless.

COMPASSION AND DECIDE TO LIVE

The Church teaches compassion and mercy towards those who take their own lives, and calls us to offer them comfort and service to their family members and friends. No matter the tragic mistakes, each one of us has a right to confirm these individuals who take their own lives. More importantly, judgment should be left to God. As our faith teaches us, one of God’s ways is to take care of us so strongly reflected in Jesus’ ministry.

Eventually, our faith helps us to let go of the “why” and to look for the who. Is Someone who can heal us from the wrenching pain of having lost a loved one, especially a child, Jesus? Each family who has experienced a suicide in their family can choose to trust in God’s merciful love and to allow his grace to heal their deep wound. May each, supported by the persons in a wider community, have the faith to trust in our Heavenly Father!

Those who are left with memories of suicides, memories intensify rather than lessen the pain. Some suicide rob them of pleasant memories of the deceased. There were no last goodbyes and no chance to say “I’m sorry.” Perhaps the most common response to death through suicide is a feeling of guilt. The survivors are obsessed with replaying their own thoughts and actions about their personal role in precipitating the event. They blame themselves and search for evidence of their failures and omissions.

One of the most agonizing effects of suicide is the sense of disgrace or social embarrassment the survivors experience. Remember mental illness can affect any one. Suicide can happen to anyone, in every family, and for “the best of people.”

Survivors, especially parents, must learn to let go of the past, put it all in the hands of our merciful Savior Jesus Christ, and entrusting their lives and their lost ones to the care of Mary our Mother. They must decide to live. Survivors with the help of trusted friends and professionals must work to come to the awareness that they cannot blame one for their own sadness and unhappiness forever. They need to make a decision to live. They need to discuss their feelings of sorrow and comfort with priests, religious, counselors and other caring people. Survivors, go frequently to Mass to receive in Communion the most merciful person, Jesus Christ, and place your sorrow and pain on the altar united to the sufferings of Christ who died for us and we will lead us to the new life of resurrection. Survivors, join prayer groups and grief groups made up of people suffering similar tragedies.

One survivor has said to begin to take care of themselves, to reaffirm their own goodness, they find their way back to hope. They provide the strength to go on living, and friends provide the comfort to go on living. They do not forget their sorrow or their loved ones, but slowly new experiences and more happy memories emerge to heal the hurt. Survivors especially need to receive often the sacrament of God’s mercy, reconciliation, and at each Mass hand over their anguish that their freedom of choice is so greatly restricted. Therefore, although the act of suicide is objectively wrong, the individual circumstances may make it subjectively guiltless.
Knights and Lady’s of the Holy Sepulchre, from left, Otto and JoAnn Bleier, Joseph and Doris Hild, Joseph and Joyce Morris, and Daniel and Jo Ann Jalufka. Cardinal Daniel Di Nardo from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston was principal celebrant at the investiture Mass.

Fifth successive year SWL of the Equestrian Order donates $1 million to Holy Land Christians

ALBUQUERQUE — The annual meeting and investiture of the Southwestern Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was held at the Hyatt Regency in Albuquerque, New Mexico Oct. 22-25. There were two new members from the Diocese of Victoria invested and three members promoted.

A Traveler’s Mass was said at the historic San Felipe de Neri Church in Old Town, Friday evening, Oct. 22. The celebrant was Most Rev. James S. Wall, KCHS, bishop of Gallup N.M. There was also a Traveler’s Mass held in the hotel, due to the large group attending and the small size of the church; the celebrant was Father Bennett J. Voorhees, KCHS, and other visiting priests of the order.

An orientation meeting for investees, members and guests was held in the Hyatt Encantada Ballroom Saturday morning. Some members went to the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center.

Before noon, members, promoters and investees were taken by bus to the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis in Santa Fe (the city of Holy Faith), N.M. Saturday afternoon recitation of the most holy rosary was said following the Memorial Mass and Profession of Vows, all held in the newly restored basilica.

Promoters from the Diocese of Victoria are Lady JoAnn Jalufka to Lady Commander with Star Holy Sepulchre; Lady Joann McCullough and Commander with Star Holy Sepulchre; and at the Saturday morning orientation meeting.

Attending from the Diocese of Victoria were Sir Joseph J. Morris Sr., KGCHS, Lady Joyce B. Morris, LLCHS, Sir Daniel Julufka, KCHS, Lady JoAnn Jalufka, LC*HS, Sir Otto N. Bleier, KCHS, Lady JoAnn C. Bleier, LCHS, Sir Joseph C. Hild, KHS, and Lady Doris C. Hild, LHS. The annual meeting and investiture next year will be held in San Antonio at the Grand Hyatt Regency Oct. 21-24, 2011.

The principal celebrant and homilist for the Saturday Mass was His Excellency Daniel Cardinal Di Nardo, KGCHS. Concelebrants were archbishops, bishops, priests and deacons of the order.

A white tie reception and seated dinner was held Sunday night for members and spouses only in the Grand Pavilion land and at the Saturday morning orientation meeting.

Priesthood Sunday celebrated—St. Agnes Church Parish Family in Edna celebrated Priesthood Sunday on Oct. 31. Parishioners had joined in a novena for prayer for vocations, in thanksgiving for their pastor, Father Michael Petering, and for Father Petering’s ordination as a deacon from Oct. 17-23. A liturgy was held at the Sacred Heart Catholic Center after the 10:30 morning celebration of Mass. All enjoyed the covered dish luncheon, with desserts and ice cream. A drawing for door prizes was held after the luncheon. Picture is Father Michael Petering with parishioners and youth from the religious education program.

Fr. Molina to speak for HL Christians at OLV Masses Dec. 4, 5

55 YEARS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION—The Sacred Heart Hallletville class of 1955 held its 55th reunion on November 6, 2010, in Hallettsville with a memorial service, followed by a meal at Jalisco’s Restaurant. The seven classmates who have died were remembered: James Bludau, Dorothy (Raiensk) Schindler, Leon Schindler, Gladys (Henneke) Schindler, Annie Mae (Dornak) Smolik, Bernice (Morkovsky) Monganroth and Celestine Menschaca. Pictured are 16 of the original 34 graduates, front row, l-r: Milton Shimik, Helen Ann (Pesk) Schindler, Katherine (Janak) Kahanek and John David Henneke; second row 1-r: Frances (Matala) Holly, Rita (Grahmann) Zaruba, Mary Jo (Eilers) Dry, Patricia (Haas) Hesler, Mary Rose (Strass/Grafe) and Jo Ann (Pavila) Jalufka; third row 1-r: Daniel Kuhn, Frederick Leopold, Rose Lee (Silva) Janik, Ervin Grafe and Gilbert Gerlich. Not Pictured was Dorothy (Kanak) Zaruba.

Many in the diocese are familiar with the olive wood sales, but few may know much about HCEF’s Child Sponsorship Program.

HCEF’s Child Sponsorship Program links a sponsor in the West with a student in the Holy Land. Sponsorships foster unity in Christ among Arab and Western Christians and help Holy Land Christian schools continue to provide quality Christian education in difficult economic times.

The sponsor’s contribution of $300 annually, or $25 a month, goes to the child’s school rather than to the child’s family. Sponsorship is intended to help the schools continue to provide a solid Christian education and thereby benefit the entire student body. But sponsors will be able to form a relationship with their sponsored child, as the child will write to their sponsor three times each school year as part of their English language studies.

Because schools are so much a part of the family and community life of people in the Holy Land, they are the main presence of the faith in the lives of most families. Public schools in Palestine and Jordan are 98 percent Muslim; therefore, Christian children have a hard time maintaining their Christian faith in that environment. While private schools typically turn away students who cannot pay tuition, the Holy Land’s Christian schools recognize the importance of their role in preserving the Christian presence, which is currently less than two percent of the population. Thus they subsidize the tuition of Christian students whose families cannot pay, which are the great majority of students.

Interestingly though, one third of the 18,000 children in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Jerusalem are actually Muslim. However, because they are learning in a Christian environment, the children learn to become friends, not enemies, and all children learn the message of Jesus.

One can see why Christian parents prefer to send their children to Christian schools and why Christian schools are so important in the Holy Land.

To learn more about HCEF’s Child Sponsorship Program, please go to http://www.hcef.org/images/reports/FAQ2006.pdf

Mass schedules at OLV are Saturday at 5:30 p.m., and Sunday at 7:30, 9:00, and 11:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Olive wood sales will also be held at Holy Family in Victoria on Dec. 12 and Dec. 14. Our Ladies of Sorrows, Dec. 12, and Trinity Chapel Dec. 19.
Church leaders urge religious education to stay within the faith | Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Domestic abuse reporting by mail to Diocese of Victoria

Church leaders invite abuse survivors to come forward with any report on abuse, even in other dioceses | Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Airport security detects engagement ring | Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Catholic church,

1. Church leaders urge religious education to stay within the faith

2. Church leaders invite abuse survivors to come forward with any report on abuse, even in other dioceses

3. Airport security detects engagement ring
**Bishops Launch Campus Web Site to Promote Catholic Social Teaching, Life and Dignity**

**WASHINGTON**—The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development has collaborated with eleven Catholic organizations to create a Web site to help college students and campus ministers promote Catholic social teaching on campus. The Web site, “Transforming Our World: Our Catholic Faith in Action,” can be found at www.usccb.org/campus. Site elements include principles of Catholic social teaching, prayer materials, small group resources, tools for action and multimedia, such as videos and podcasts. The home page features quotes from Church leaders, ideas of the week and an invitation to site visitors to submit resources and ideas for possible features on the Web site. Collaborators hope the Web site will become an online clearinghouse featuring “best practices” to promote Catholic social teaching on campus.

**Region X youth experience Catholic Social Justice**

By Debbie Vanelli
Director of Youth Ministry

Nearly 2,000 Catholic youth, clergy and chaperones brought in the Region X Catholic Youth Conference with a bang on Nov. 12, filling the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock, Ark., with song, music and energy performance and commanding an interactive experience. Masala’s high-energy performance and commanding presence drew everyone into the rhythm with drums and plastic tubes, known as “boomwhackers,” distributed to the crowd.

“Are you ready to make a joyful noise?” he shouted. “This is you! This is what happens when we all connect! One heartbeat!”

The celebratory mood and pounding heartbeat was more than just a party for the delegates. The speakers and performers were priming the crowd for the work to come over the weekend and back home in their parishes.

“From the time we were baptized, we were commissioned to go out and serve the world,” said featured speaker Brian Johnson, director of youth ministry for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. “We must be the hands, the feet, the eyes and the heart of Christ in the world. You are not too young to do that. Be open to what God has in store for you.”

The night’s third featured speaker, recording artist VaLimar Jansen underscored the message. Relating her experiences on an annual mission trip to Caribbean nations, she urged the young people to look for opportunities to serve, even if it takes them outside their comfort zone.

“Solidarity doesn’t mean we just work for those close to us,” she said. “Every single being on earth is valuable to God. Every single person is rare and unique to God. We do what we do so the world will give us praise. The reward is in the serving.”

The teens eagerly began a day of interactive experiences on Saturday by traveling to various sites throughout Little Rock and experienced social justice first hand.

Heifer International’s mission is to end hunger and poverty and care for the earth, by giving families a handup, not just a handout. Heifer empowers families to turn lives of hunger and poverty into self-reliance and hope.

Minnie Jean Brown, one of the original Little Rock Nine from Central High School, the first school to be desegregated, spoke to the young people in attendance, who happened to be the same age as she was in 1957. She gave them a first hand perspective and a challenge to never forget and always stand in solidarity for what is right.

Marianne Linnane, Respect Life director in Little Rock, presented a womb to tomb teaching explaining how precious each life is by using “4000 Crosses” that were then erected at one of Little Rock’s busiest intersections to represent the holocaust that takes place in the United States as 4,000 babies are aborted each day.

Catholic Relief Village’s mission of solidarity was taught throughout their entire workshop by encompassing all aspects of Catholic Social teaching: Sanctity of Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Rights and Responsibilities, Social Nature of Humanity, The Common Good, Subsidiarity, Solidarity, Option for the Poor and Stewardship.

Butterfly Project – In an effort to remember the 1.5 million innocent children whose lives were lost in The Holocaust, handcrafted butterflies were made and donated to the Holocaust Museum in Houston to create a breath-taking exhibit currently scheduled for Spring 2013, for all to see. See www.hhm.org.

Our Lady of Sorrows Life Teen Band from the Diocese of Victoria was honored to be the featured band at the Region X youth conference in Little Rock, Ark.

**Conference for adults who work with youth**

The Texas Mission Council would like to invite adults who minister to youth and who lead youth in mission at home or overseas to their annual conference February 25-27, 2011. This is an event for adults interested in and/or involved in participating with youth in the mission of Jesus, either overseas or locally. The theme for the conference is YOUTH IN MISSION. Come join others, from all over Texas who minister to youth, for a weekend full of fellowship, reflection and a sharing of experiences. There will be opportunities to hear from youth who have gone on mission trips and from youth ministers who have led them. The conference will be held in easily accessible Fort Worth this year, so don’t miss out on this great event.

For more information, contact Al Mira, Diocese of Jefferson County, at (214) 821-4501 or check out the Web site: www.texasmissioncouncil.org.
CATHOLIC YOUTH CHOIR

Seeking High School singers to apply now to the 2011 NATIONAL CATHOLIC YOUTH CHOIR

Who: Catholic students entering grades 10, 11, and 12 in fall of 2011

When: Camp and tour, June 14-28, 2011
Where: Saint John’s Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minn.

Cost: $900, scholarships available (includes tour expenses)


What 2010 choristers are saying about NCYC:

“NCYC is the best!” - "I love the music, the counselors and friends we made. Dr. Theimer helped me to sing more fluidly and make a more relaxed sound..." - "I am grateful for more than just singing the notes and words." - "I feel much more confident and have a lot more self discipline and strength." - "It was extremely hard, but I did have a sense of accomplishment the next day." - "As I stood there in silent meditation, I reflected upon the rights that we were born with and that were not being granted to the defenseless children in the womb. The right to life is the most basic right of any human being." - "As I was flipping through my Bible recently, something different caught my eye. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, "Two are better than one... for if they fall, one will lift up the other, but one who is alone is alone and falls and does not have anyone to help." Instantly, I realized that whatever my reasons are for being a "loner," I am actually ignoring a huge gift from God - friends. As I read this passage, one big question occurred to me: Why are two better than one? First of all, we are given friends so that we are not alone. We have a God who craves communion, or being close to others. Because we are made in God's image, we also have a deep need for friends. Even Jesus valued friendship; he actually had twelve disciples! But I believe the love in friendship reflects Christ's unconditional love and desire to be close to us. Many friends have many purposes. They help us survive in times of sorrow, when we are too weak to continue on our own. On the other hand, friends also enable us to feel needed, to give of ourselves and serve a purpose. Another important aspect of friendship is trust. It is so important that we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and open up to others, knowing that there is a bond of trust. One of the hardest, but most vital, parts of friendship is accountability. This means that we should be honest with each other when we are falling short. I like to say that "true friends stab you in the front." Although it sounds extreme in the literal sense, it is another way of saying that true love hurts sometimes. "Tough love" is crucial for meaningful relationships. But we also have to remember that to accept our friends as they are. This is something we all struggle with because at times we find ourselves wanting more from our friends and being unsatisfied. However, Jesus accepts us the way we are and loves us through all of our imperfections. So, as Christians, we are called to do the same.

Last, but not least, friends remind us that we are not alone anymore and that we all need one another. We are One Body, One Church. All people, even the closest of friends, have differences. But we can use our differences to build up others. Because the ultimate goal of friendship is to help each other gain eternal salvation, real friends work to strengthen each other's souls. God knew when he created humans that we could not survive alone, that we truly need have a need for companions and that we can help each other enter Heaven. So, no matter what, let's never forget our friends and all they truly mean in our lives.
DUKE TALENT SEARCH—Twenty-two seventh grade students of Our Lady of Victory School in Columbus have qualified to take the SAT or ACT test in December or January under the Duke Talent Search Identification Program. Duke University has been identifying 7th grade students with strong intellectual abilities and giving them the opportunity to take these tests designed for 11th and 12th grade students. Since 1980, more than 2 million gifted students have participated in the Duke TIP’s Talent Search. Our Lady of Victory proudly announces that these students have joined this prestigious group. Those 7th grade students who qualified are pictured above: Front row (l-r) Travis Roell, Kathryn Janecek, Stephen Turek, James Heath, Grant McDaniel and Xavier Solis; middle row: Alexander Mahon, Lauren Omecinski, Faithful Navigators of Assembly 1131. James has the distinct honor of being the last knight to join Assembly 1131 before the assembly turns 60 years old this coming December. Assembly 1131 will celebrate this anniversary on December 10 at the Knights of Columbus Hall in El Campo. The special event will be open to the public and feature a dinner, dance and prizes. Tickets are available from Hector Gutierrez 979-332-8338 or 979-543-2709. Also attending the event from El Campo was Mr. and Mrs. John Hrncir, who’s son, Curtis, also joined the 4th Degree. Curtis now lives in Conroe and is a member of Our Lady of the Pines Assembly 1759. Pictured from l. to r. are District Master Sir Knight Peter Tan, Sir Knight James Kocurek, Vice Supreme Master Our Lady Of Guadalupae Province Sir Knight Paul Weigl and State Secretary Sir Knight Jim Collins.

COLUMBUS CARNIVAL POSTER CONTEST WINNERS—St. Anthony Catholic School in Columbus announced the first place winners of the Halloween Carnival Poster Contest. Students who placed first thru third in each grade level from Kindergarten thru 8th grade received free tickets to use at the carnival. St. Anthony Halloween Carnival took place on the school grounds October 30 and closed with the Punk-N-Rock performance by the 7th and 8th graders. Pictured are poster winners, front row, l to r: Sydney Glueck, Alexis Medrano, Addyccin Kunkel, Caleb Mikesh and Brianna Orange; back row: Taylor Dungen, Andy Theut, Isabel Theut and Kristin Walla.

KC 1131 EXEMPLIFIES 4TH DEGREE KNIGHT—James Kocurek achieved the highest order of the Knights of Columbus, the Fourth Degree, Oct. 30 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Conroe, Texas. He was knighted in the ceremony known as an exemplification and is now a member of the Archbishop Drossaerts Assembly 1131 of El Campo. Assembly 1131 is part of the Knights of Columbus, Fourth Degree, Our Lady Of Guadalupae Province, First District of Texas. James is also an officer in the Knights of Columbus Council 2490 of El Campo. James was joined by his wife, Lori, and Gerry Mikesa, Faithful Navigator of Assembly 1131. James has the distinct honor of being the last knight to join Assembly 1131 before the assembly turns 60 years old this coming December. Assembly 1131 will celebrate this anniversary on December 10 at the Knights of Columbus Hall in El Campo. The special event will be open to the public and feature a dinner, dance and prizes. Tickets are available from Hector Gutierrez 979-332-8338 or 979-543-2709. Also attending the event from El Campo was Mr. and Mrs. John Hrncir, who’s son, Curtis, also joined the 4th Degree. Curtis now lives in Conroe and is a member of Our Lady of the Pines Assembly 1759. Pictured from l. to r. are District Master Sir Knight Peter Tan, Sir Knight James Kocurek, Vice Supreme Master Our Lady Of Guadalupae Province Sir Knight Paul Weigl and State Secretary Sir Knight Jim Collins.

ROSARIES FOR UNITY & PEACE PRAYED AT GROTTO—Hostyn’s Queen of the Holy Rosary Grotto was the location from which many prayers were offered to God by both children and adults on Sunday, Oct. 17. Groups from Queen of the Holy Rosary Parish in Hostyn and Sts. Peter & Paul Parish in Plum joined with one million children around the world to pray for unity and peace. Pictured on the left are parishioners from Hostyn. Msgr. Stanley Petru, pastor of The Queen of the Holy Rosary Parish, welcomed everyone. Lillian Kallus led the Scriptural Rosary. Pictured on the right are parishioners who traveled on pilgrimage from Plum. Father Joseph Karuki, parochial vicar in Plum, welcomed the group with a prayer. The recitation of the rosary was led by Elsie Vasek. Parish musicians, Ken Brothers and Mickey Supak, closed the gathering in song.

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VICTORIA GIRL SCOUT TROOP WINS BRONZE AWARD—Congratulations go to Girl Scout Troop 9579 sponsored by Our Lady of Victory Cathedral. They earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award, which is the highest award given to girls in the 4th and 5th grades. They sponsored Mid-Coast Family Services Crisis Unit by making blankets and sensory bottles for the children in the Crisis Unit. They also made Valentine Cards and Easter Baskets earlier in the year. The Girl Scout Bronze Award requires each girl to spend a minimum of 15 hours in service work for a sponsored organization. Pictured in front row are Kimberlee Hathaway and Emily Schoener; back row: Troop Leader LeeAnn Hathaway, Baylee Young, Mary Grace Konarik, Christa Schoener, Caitlin Walsh and Co-leader Veronica Walsh.

Advent, a season of joyful expectation before Christmas, began Nov. 28 this year. The Advent wreath, with a candle marking each week of the season, is a traditional symbol of the period. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)
DIOCESE

The Catholic Lighthouse
Page 11 — December 2010

By TAPPS – Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools

• Remember that you are at the contest to support and yell for your team, and to enjoy the skill and competition – not to intimidate or ridicule the other team or its fans.

• Remember that school athletics are a learning experience for students and that mistakes are sometimes made. Praise student-athletes in their attempt to improve themselves as students, as athletes, and as people, just as you would praise a student working in the classroom.

• A ticket is a privilege to observe the contest, not a license to verbally assault others or be generally obnoxious.

• Learn the rules of the game, so that you may understand and appreciate why certain situations take place.

• Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials. Understand that they are doing their best to help promote the student-athlete, and admire their willingness to participate in full view of the public.

• Recognize and show appreciation for an outstanding play by either team.

• Refrain from the use of any controlled substances (alcohol, drugs, etc.) before, during, and after the game on or near the site of the event (i.e. tailgating).

• Use only cheers that support and uplift the teams involved.

• Be a positive role model at events through your own actions and by censoring those around you whose behavior is unbecoming.

Information found at: http://www.tapps.net/PDF/Athletics/General/Sportsmanship.pdf

Lady Cards Win State Cross Country

Kocian, Siegel - All-State

For the third consecutive year, the St. Paul Lady Cardinals are the TAPPS 2A State Cross Country Champions. St. Paul defeated runner-up Muenster Sacred Heart by 17 points with a score of 40.

Leading the St. Paul team, Kali Kocian finished 9th with a time of 14:11. Samantha Siegel (the lone Cardinal freshman) was right on her heels placing 10th at 14:14. Both runners earned places on the All-State Cross Country Team. Kali, as well as Emily Wagner, has run on all three state championship teams.

Other runners for St. Paul were: Kate-lynn Leist, Ashton Kutac, Emily Wagner and Mary Adamek and Davi Spaeth. Mason Matias ran in the boys’ division.

Cross Country practice is held at 6 a.m. each morning, requiring dedication of each runner, as well as their family. The athletic department is grateful to the many moms who attended practice and assisted with supervision. With one exception, all of the female runners also played volleyball.

The junior-high cross country team also had a good season. The girls won the Weimar meet and came in 2nd at the Shiner and Moulton meets. The boys finished 7th in Shiner and in Moulton. They placed 5th in Weimar. With many male runners, there is tremendous potential.

OLV “A” VOLLEYBALL TEAM WINS DISTRICT—The Our Lady of Victory Volleyball “A” team won the Victoria Diocese Athletic League (VDAL) South Zone Championship with a winning season of 23 wins out of 27 matches. “Both of our teams (A and B) had a great year. Our biggest problem throughout the year was our inconsistency in serving, and that kept us in trouble most of the year,” said Coach Bob Leach. “Overall they played very well with lots of spirit. The parents were wonderful – we had a great deal of support from faculty, staff and parents.” The “B” team, made up of all 7th graders, went undefeated, winning all 18 of their matches.

EL CAMPO PARISH HOLDS FUN-RUN FUNDRAISER — St. Philip Catholic School in El Campo hosted their annual 1 mile, 5K, and 10K Family Fun Run Saturday morning, November 13. Approximately 105 participants competed in the cool weather while supporting the St. Philip School Athletic Fund. Pictured is Shane Singleton, a 5th-grade student, crossing the finish line and placing first in the 5K. (Inset) Finishing the 1-mile Family Fun Run is Colleen Rasmussen and son, Bryce.

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How Advent accents the need for tradition

As Advent approaches I find myself thinking back to how my children and I used to meet with other families to make our Advent wreaths. It was another time and another place, but the memories of this joyful camaraderie have remained with me.

We did a lot of laughing as we wrestled with wire, evergreens and candles. Never for a minute did we ever question why we made Advent wreaths. We all knew that the circular wreath symbolizes eternity and that the candles represent the coming of the Christ child to be the light of the world.

But why we made them together was something else. We knew we were carrying on with a tradition of a lot of meaning, and we felt that by getting together we were emphasizing the importance of this tradition.

I always remember the Broadway musical that put “Tradition” in lights, “Fiddler on the Roof.” The father sang about the customs of his people with humor, but no one missed the message: These traditions are the force that hold a people together.

The same is true for Christians, especially Christians who are drawn to revive traditions that link us to the miracle of the birth of Jesus.

A teacher told me once that a tradition begins with an experience or expression of a truth that deeply touches or reflects basic human values and the needs that people share. So important is this experience that it transcends the moment and continues to live — played out again and again by generations that follow.

New Literary Tragicomedy Gives Advice to Atheist Icons Dawkins and Hitchens

Clever, serial satire about theism and atheism is a rollicking good read!

From the first letter she writes, A.F. Christian (which stands for “A Former Christian”) has her reader spellbound. “Thanks for all Your hard work, the rest of us slept once and for all that the so-called ‘God’, that LOSER, is everything you say he is: the biggest fraud of all time, cosmic zero, ultimate no-show — and after all those centuries and promises too!...If this was Facebook, no one would be friending him now.” And so the series of letters begins from a young adult, “former” Christian to the “spokesmen of the New Atheism” as a thank you for liberating the world from the superstition and prejudice of the “Biggest Loser”, aka God.

A wickedly witty satire, The Loser Letters chronicles the conversion of a young adult Christian to atheism. With modern humor rivaling that of the media lampooning Onion, found on college campuses all over America, A.F. Christian’s open letters to the likes of Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens explain her reasons for rejecting God and the logical consequences of that choice.

Newspaper biographer George Weigel of the work, “Mary Eberstadt is one smart cookie. If you don’t believe me, ask Satan.”

Author Eberstadt, a popular social critic, focuses much of her writing on issues about American society, culture and philosophy. The Loser Letters is a unique response to books on atheism using brilliant writing that combines biting wit, satire and inspiring insights on innate truths about God and man.

The Loser Letters is the first major satire work of Christian apologetics since C.S. Lewis wrote The Screwtape Letters. Written in an appealing writing style and thus, a tradition is born. In time, the action might assume some coloration different from that of the original, but in essence it does not differ.

It’s not hard to see why tradition is needed. It gives us roots in the past and connects us to our ancestors; it provides a sense of not being alone but being part of a people.

A tradition makes us remember that there is a larger picture. Remembering that gives us a certain security.

The Advent season puts a focus on traditions that have made us all part of the family of the Lord.

These days I am in a new cycle. I still gather wire, evergreens and candles to make an Advent wreath, but for grand- children. It is something both tangible and mystical that is being passed on to them.

When we complete the Advent journey and arrive at Christmas Eve, that is when our traditions really are underscored.

We’ll be delighted by the Christmas tree and the Nativity scene we all look forward to seeing each year. We’ll eat the traditional foods I make, handed down to me by my Italian grandmother. Then with my daughter, Mary, playing the piano and my son, Frank, on the guitar, we’ll all sing traditional Christmas carols. We’ll be conscious of our humaneness and of the miracle of one birth that led to the rebirth of the world.

And we’ll be grateful for our traditions, which remind us that we are never alone, that we belong to the One who came at Christmas.

We repeat the action so as to keep us linked to that original, valid experience, and thus, a tradition is born. In time, the action might assume some coloration different from that of the original, but in essence it does not differ.

Published by Ignatius Press, The Loser Letters is truly unique: a black comedy about life, death and what we dare to believe or not believe.

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By Father Michael Lyons
The Catholic Church is the most important hospitable institution in the world. Even though our detractors often call us “backwards” and “outdated,” the Church is always looking forward with joy to what God is doing in our lives and in the world.

Just check out the words of the Preface (the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer) for the second part of Advent: “In his love, Christ has filled us with joy to celebrate his birth, so that when he comes at the end of the world, he may find us watching in prayer, our hearts filled with wonder and praise.” As Catholics, we recall the past to inform the present with an eye toward the future; it’s never looking back just for the sake of looking back.

I recently came across an excellent essay called “The End of Advent” that was published in the December 2007 edition of First Things. The essay was written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “I heard the bells on Christmas Day.”

After a pleasant (yes, I said pleasant) trip to Irving Berlin’s “I hear the Bells on Christmas Day,” I found something oddly backward-forward looking about Christmas music—something that insists not substituting its melancholy for the somber contrition and sorrow of looking backward. That paragraph prompted me to survey some of the Christmas music that has been playing in the store or on my radio stations throughout Advent. What I found was amazing: when the song comes to the line, “God rest ye merry gentlemen,” there are a few seconds of silence. Why? Because the song requires welcome in an age that perceives the threat. But this is not to say that we gladden the heart, even when we may have little to offer. “Come let us adore him (today), filled with wonder and praise.”

“The Christmas Song,” “Clementine,” “Silent Night,” “The First Noel,” “It’s Beginning to Look Like a Lot of Christmas,” “Rocking Around the Christmas Tree,” “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,” “White Christmas,” “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” and others give us a nice Christmas-card-type glimpse at what the events of December 2007 look like, in the end, all of which can offer for the present is “Sure, it’s Christmas once more.” (“It’s Beginning to Look Like a Lot of Christmas”)

The Catholic Church, meanwhile, reinforces the world that the historical occurrence of the birth of Jesus Christ inform the present and have eternal implications. Truly, there are glad tidings of great joy: A SAVING BORN IS CHRIST WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD!! Relish the end of this Advent and enter into the glorious joy of this Christmas season! With the birth of His Son, God says much more than “Merry Christmas.” He says, “I love you enough to send My own Son that you can be known to me forever.”

Father Michael Lyons is Pastoral Associate of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in North Carolina. This essay first appeared in the December 21, 2008, Assumption Parish bulletin.

By Deirdre A. McQuade, assistant director for Policy & Communications at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, ret. By Deirdre A. McQuade, as assistant director for Policy & Communications at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, ret.

Following the Christmas season’s birth, song focuses on God’s mercy in the historical event of Christ’s saving mission, today and enter into the glorious joy of this Christmas season! With the birth of His Son, God says much more than “Merry Christmas.” He says, “I love you enough to send My own Son that you can be known to me forever.”

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The Pope SPEAKS

Pope Benedict XVI

By John Thavis

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI welcomed the beginning of Advent with a prayer for life and a defense of the human embryo.

The pope presided over an evening prayer service at the Vatican Nov. 27, part of a worldwide pro-life vigil. He said it was an appropriate initiative to launch Advent, the liturgical period in which the church prepares to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

In a homily, the church’s teaching against abortion comes from its teaching about the dignity of every human life and its concern that the unborn is most vulnerable to “the selfliness of adults and the clouding of conscience.”

“There are cultural tendencies that seek to anesthetize consciences with spurious arguments,” the pope said.

Regarding the human embryo, the pope said science itself has demonstrated the embryo’s autonomous capacity of interaction with the mother, the coordination of its biological processes, the continuity of its development and its complexity as an organism.

“It’s not a question of a collection of biological material, but of a new living being, dynamic and marvelously ordered, a new individual of the human species,” he said.

“This is how Jesus was in Mary’s womb; this is how we each were, in our mother’s womb,” he said.

The pope cited the early church author Tertullian, who reasoned that abortion is wrong because, as he wrote, “He is a man, who is to be a man.” The pope added that “there is no reason not to consider him a person from the moment of conception.”

By John Thavis

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is continuing its tradition of providing online resources for the Advent and Christmas seasons with suggestions for daily prayer, reading, reflection and action. As a special spiritual gift this season, USCCB is providing a downloadable book of scriptural reflections for Advent and Christmas featuring the words of Pope Benedict XVI from his homilies, speeches and other addresses during his papacy.

“This has become one of the most popular features on the bishops’ website,” said Helen Osman, secretary of Communications for USCCB. “It is a great one-stop resource for families and individuals seeking ways to enter more deeply into the spirit of the Advent and Christmas seasons.”

Other resources on the Web site include a list of recommended holiday-themed movies, prayers and blessings from the USCCB publication Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers, and suggestions for remembering the immigrants and the poor throughout the season.

The Advent/Christmas site (http://www.usccb.org/advent) was created by the USCCB Department of Communications with funding from the Catholic Communication Campaign.

Bishops’ Web site offers Resources for Advent and Christmas Seasons Including Book of Reflections from Pope Benedict XVI

Pauline Books & Media produces Psalms and Prayer iPhone App

BOSTON — Pauline Books & Media has released a new app for the iPhone and iPod Touch called Healing Psalms and Prayers by the Church for Catholics. The new Healing Psalms and Prayers app for the iPhone and iPod Touch called Healing Psalms and Prayers is the first app on the market that can be used by families and individuals to pray daily with contemplative music which take up real concerns in the lives. Healing Psalms and Prayers is the app created by Pauline Books & Media, the publishing house of the Daughters of St. Paul. Other apps by PB&M include: Rosary Miracle Prayer and Saint a Day. (continued on next page)

All apps are available for download in the iTunes store or via www.downloadsforcatholics.com. Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PaulineBooksMedia for special promotions, coupons, free downloads, and more! Pauline Books and Media is the publishing house of the Daughters of St. Paul, an international Congregation of women religious whose mission is evangelization through the means of social communications for USCCB. “It is a site,” said Helen Osman, secretary of Communications for USCCB. “It is a great one-stop resource for families and individuals seeking ways to enter more deeply into the spirit of the Advent and Christmas seasons.”

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The Catholic Lighthouse
Page 15 — December 2010

Pope’s remarks in book renew condom debate
By John Thavis
Catholic News Service
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In a new book Pope Benedict XVI said the use of condoms may be a sign of moral responsibility in some specific situations when the intention is to reduce the risk of AIDS.

The pope addressed the issue in the book-length interview, “Light of the World,” published in Italy in June, in which he was interviewed by Catholic journalist Andrea Tornielli. The Vatican newspaper published excerpts from the book Nov. 20, including the comments on condoms.

In the book, the pope repeated what he said during a trip to Africa last year, that “we cannot solve the problem (of AIDS) by distributing condoms” because condoms exclusively on condoms damages human sexuality, making it “banal” and turning it into a kind of “drug,” he said.

But the pope went on to say that in particular cases – he mentioned prostitutes – condom use may be justified as a first step toward taking moral responsibility for one’s actions.

“Here is the key passage as translated in an earlier edition of the book. The pope was asked whether it was “madness” to forbid a high-risk population to use condoms.

“The pope answered: “She of course does not regard it as a real or moral solution. But, in that case, there can be nonetheless, in the intention of reducing the risk of infection, a first step toward a different way, a more human way, of living sexuality.”

It was the first time Pope Benedict – or any pope – has publicly said that condom use might be acceptable in some cases.

In an earlier statement, Father Lombardi said Nov. 21 that the pope was not “reform- ing or changing” the church’s teaching on sexual responsibility but rather considering an “exceptional situation” in which sexual activity places a person’s life at risk. While the pope was not morally justifying disor- dered sexual activity, he was saying that the use of a condom to reduce the risk of transmitting the disease may be an act of moral responsibility, Father Lombardi said.

William and Kate? We have royal weddings here
By Thomas J. Wehner, editor
The Catholic Post, Diocese of Peoria, Ill.

The announcement that there will be a royal wedding in 2011 topped the news on Nov. 16. Camera flashes were blinding when Prince William and Kate Middleton made their appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to confirm the news. Speculation began about every detail of the approaching wedding – the date, the location, the dress, the line of succession, etc.

It was good to see such excitement about marriage in a week that otherwise showed how enshrined it is.

The day before the royal announcement, at the fall gathering of the U.S. Catholic bishops in Baltimore, an alarm was sounded regarding threats to traditional marriage. Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., minced no words in likening present legislative challenges to the definition of marriage to the period just before abortion was legalized in 1973.

“If you had seen Roe vs. Wade coming three years out, what would you have done differently?” asked Archbishop Kurtz in urging bishops not to play politics with the church’s teaching on the sanctity of marriage.

How badly those efforts are needed was made clear the day after William and Kate’s announcement. A study by the Pew Research Center was released, showing, among other findings, that 39 percent of Americans believe marriage is becoming obsolete. With one in three American children born with a parent who is divorced, separated, or never married, more people are accepting the view that wedding bells aren’t needed to have a family.

As the church in the world that mindset, we’d like to make an announcement of our own. Assemble the press. Blare the trumpet. Commemorate all the ways:

“The Diocese of Peoria is delighted to announce there will be not one but nearly 10,000 royal weddings within its borders in 2011. The quest of honor at Catholic wedding Masses and interfaith ceremonies from Rock Island to Danville will be none other than Jesus Christ the King, who blesses his sons and daughters with grace, seals their covenant with the Holy Spirit, and feeds them at a banquet rich beyond imagination.”

The buzz surrounding Prince William and Kate’s announcement shows that our culture, which repeatedly challenges marriage, still likes a royal wedding. We Catholics would do well to be better remem- ber, embrace and proclaim the presence of our King — and Queen Mother — at our wedding ceremonies and within our marriage preparation.

We thank all who did so in 2010, in- cluding not only brides and grooms but families and friends who model Christ- centered marriage as well as those on the diocesan and local levels who assist with marriage preparation. And we extolly every one who are planning a royal wedding in 2011.

Cremation and the Catholic Church
By Father Bob Knippenburg
Fish, Sts. Cyril & Methodius Parish
Web site: www.sacsmsnher.org under “Recent Forms.”

Cremation is allowed by the Catholic Church when cremation is “in keeping with just motives contrary to Christian teaching” (cf. Code of Canon Law, canon 1176 §3).

However, cremation does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Catholic Church clearly prefers and urges upon cremation of a body the deceased be present for the funeral rites (i.e., the Vigil for the Deceased and the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside Mass) since the presence of the human body better expresses the values, which the Church affirms in funerary rites.

We must never forget that the body of a deceased Christian is also the body once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation and fed with the Bread of Life. The body of the deceased brings forcefully to mind the Church’s conviction that the human body is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead. This conviction in faith finds its expression in a sustained and insistent prayer that commends the deceased person to God’s merciful care so that his or her place in the Communion of the Saints may be assured. A further expression is the one traditionally taken to prepare the bodies of the deceased for a burial that befits their dignity and celebration of their final resur- rection in the Lord.

Hence, unless extraordinary cir- cumstances (“convenience” is not an extraor- dinary circumstance) dictate otherwise, cremation of the deceased should take place AFTER the Funeral Mass. After the cremated remains are returned, a gravesite Rite of Committal should take place. When extraordinary circumstances are present, the Church does allow the cele- bration of the Funeral Mass (or Funeral Liturgy outside Mass) in the presence of the cremated remains.

One final note, the cremated remains of a body should always be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are car- ried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains must be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the rever- ent disposition that the Church requires. A plaque or stone, which records the name of the deceased should always be present at the place of burial or entombment.
NATIONAL

The Catholic Difference

By George Weigel

Thoughts at the Alamo

On a recent visit to San Antonio to help launch a new project at the Catholic University of America, Paul II Catholic High School, I had the opportunity to re-visit the Alamo, one of my favorite historical sites. It was a moving experience at the cathedral church of the Archdiocese of San Antonio where a few blocks from each other; their proximities prompt a reflection on the paradox of history and the heartache of national life; and the contemporary challenges facing Catholicism on both sides of the Rio Grande. North and South, such that, in his history of the Civil War, Battle Cry of Freedom, David McPherson (who rigorously opposed Polk’s policy), and young soldiers like Ulysses Lincoln (who vigorously opposed Polk’s policy) and young statesmen like Abraham Lincoln (who vigorously opposed Polk’s policy) and young statesmen like Abraham

By Deirdre McQuade, PhD

WASHINGTON — Deirdre McQuade, PhD, a research professor at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and a member of The Catholic Lighthouse newspaper section of www.victoriadiocese.ca

The Catholic Conference urges Catholics to Be Faithful Citizens During Texas’ 82nd Legislative Session

Austin — The elections are over, bills are being drafted, and before we know it, the 82nd Texas Legislative Session will be under way. This year’s House and Senate election results have left Capitol observers and advocates scrambling to reth

Bishops’ spokeswoman urges life-saving preventive health services for women

WASHINGTON — Deirdre McQuade, a research professor at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and a member of The Catholic Lighthouse newspaper section of www.victoriadiocese.ca

Washingto

"Pregnancy is not a disease"

"As you study the vital question of preventive services for women under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), I urge you to focus on services that will offer authentic care and save lives," she said. McQuade serves as associate director for policy and communications at the bishops’ Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, a role she has held since the enactment of the new health care act.

"Pregnancy is not a disease — indeed, contraception and sterilization pose their own unique and serious health risks to women and adolescents. In addition, contraceptives and sterilization are morally problematic for many Catholics, including religiously-affiliated health care providers and insurers."

According to McQuade, the preventive services recommendations under the law are...
Guns Fueled in Mexico

A Haitian resident

However, these personal reasons times women may have serious

ing contraceptive services as

veloping some of the very condi

scription contraception actually

for policies such as “no organi

affirmed fundamental principles

and Neighborhood Partnerships

how the initiatives of the White

Peace Commission series, which

spoke at the university earlier this

for breaking the law. Rivard

across the border and into the

that make their way from Texas

from south of the border, “it’s

Mexico and Central America has

of covering violent conflict in

top journalist who is a veteran

US penchant for

programs

of required preventive services

recommendations on a final list

these considerations will be taken

become a hollow pledge.”

and finances the ongoing violence in

in their names, may select board

and include religious references in

documents such as mission state

marks. People who receive social

services as well be entitled to

other organization if they object to

character of a provider. Each such

beneficiary should receive written

notice of that option. The changes

affected the pope’s April 23 address

since President George W. Bush

created the predecessor to the

organization and Obama renamed

the office and placed it in a

broaden focus in 2009.

Pope says Catholic newspapers have ‘irreplaceable’ role

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI said the Cathol

ic press has an irreplaceable role in forming Christian consciences

and reflecting the church’s view of

point on contemporary issues. Despite

the crisis in print media today, the Catholic newspaper still

has a vital role to play in

diocesan communications, the pope said.

He made the remarks Nov. 26 to

members of the Italian Federation of

Bishops' spokeswomen urge life-saving preventive health services for women

She continued, “Use of pre

scription contraception actually

increases a woman’s risk of de

veloping some of the very condi

tions that the ‘preventive services’ listed in the Internal Final Rules are designed to prevent, such as stroke, heart attacks and blood clots (primarily for women who also smoke), so a policy mandating

contraceptive services as ‘preventive services’ would be in contr"
Modern Day Money Changers and Closing the Loophole

My commute to work is blissfully short—just enough time for one or two songs on the radio. So when I hear a commer- cial, I am quick to change the station. Yesterday as I headed out, I heard a peppy woman encouraging me to get $2,500 in cash for an auto loan. Annoyed, I tried another station where I was urged to get quick cash now with no credit check. When my third station offered another payday loan commercial, I was disgusted enough to simply turn off the radio altogether. The claim of payday lenders is that they offer a solution to fami- lies who face short-term crises. However, instead of promoting financial stability for families, these lenders actually benefit more from a family’s financial struggles. Payday and auto title loan businesses have tripled in number in Texas since 2006, when they discovered a loophole in Texas law allowing indirectly for usurious fees for loans that trap people in debt. Payday and auto title lenders in Texas charge upwards of 800 percent APR for a $300 loan. More than 75 percent of payday loans are taken out within 2 weeks of the previous loan in order to fill the financial gap caused by the loan itself. Because of the debt trap, in Texas an aver- age payday borrower pays $840 for a $300 loan. Regulatory standards are almost nonexistent in place for small dollar lenders, but payday and auto title loan operators take advan- tage of a loophole in Texas law to avoid that regulation. They use the loophole to get around Texas laws that cap rates and fees for consumer loans by claiming that they are not lenders but Credit Service Organizations. Legitimate credit service organizations (CSOs) help people clean up their credit and pay off debt. Payday and auto title loan operators advertise no credit check for fast cash. In the teachings of our faith we have many warnings about usury and the exploi- tation of people. Lending practices that take unfair advantage of an individual’s dire cir- cumstances are unjust. Such practices risk the stability of the family. Catholic Social Teaching demands respect for the dignity of persons, preferential concern for the poor and vul- nerable, and the pursuit of the com- mon good. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church tells us, “Usury is a scourge that is also a reality in our time and that has a stranglehold on many peoples’ lives. Although the quest for equitable profit is acceptable in economic and financial activity, recourse to usury is to be morally condemned. Those who use usurious and avaricious dealings lead to the hunger and death of their brethren in the human fam- ily by indirectly imposing usurious interest, which is imputable to them.” (341)

These principles, coupled with our teaching on economic justice, compel our questioning of current payday lending prac- tices. In the upcoming legislative session, the Texas Catholic Conference calls on the legislature to close the loophole in our state law that allows payday, auto title, and other consumer loans to operate as CSOs, and provide a level playing field by requiring that all lenders and brokers of payday, auto title, or other consumer loans be licensed and comply with the same standards and consumer protection laws of licensed lenders in the Texas Finance Code. In the meantime, my car radio will be off. For more information visit www.TXcatholic.org or www.TexasFaithFor-FairLending.org

Pope says nuclear weapons remain threat to humanity VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI said nuclear weapons remain a threat to humanity, and he urged steps to curb their proliferation. Addressing Italy’s new ambas- sador to the Vatican on Nov. 27, the pope recalled that this year marks the 55th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He said the “horror” of the bombings becomes more poignant every year. “This tragedy strongly reminds us how necessary it is to persevere in the efforts toward nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and toward disarmament,” he said. “Nuclear weapons remain a source of great worry. Their possession and the risk of their eventual use generate tension and mistrust in numerous regions of the world.”

He said he expected in Japan some reminder of the world’s need to find political solutions to international problems, and of the need to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. That’s something the international community should promote by patiently establishing economic and political sanctions against the use of force, he said.

Vatican II’s most challenging document turns 45

The most important event in the modern history of the Catholic Church was born 45 years ago.

On Dec. 8, 1965, the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church’s 21st and most recent ecumenical (general/ world-wide) council, officially concluded.

Pope John XXIII (now blessed John), who presided over the council, and Pope Paul VI, who closed it, together with the world’s bishops, wanted to make the ancient Catholic faith relevant to contemporary men and women of all cultures. They called for modern Catholics to fully embrace the ageless Gospel message of love, justice and peace, and to use it to heal and transform our suffering world!

The roadmap they designed to help guide us on this urgent argument was Vatican II’s powerful and prophetic document on social justice and peace, “Gaudium et Spes” (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). Many observers call this the most important docu- ment in the church’s social tradition.

The compelling tone of this entire document is reflected in its first sentence: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the grief, and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

The document instructs us to do no less than bring the transforming power of the Gospel to the world’s often greedy and violent cultural, political and economic institutions.

But sadly, we have not responded well.

The bishops’ clarion call to social justice and peace has been ignored by too many.

Pope Paul VI and the world’s bishops declared that “abortion and infanticide are unacceptably criminal.” Yet, 45 years later, abortion on demand and throughout all nine months of pregnancy still continues to claim the lives of approximately 50 million unborn babies in the U.S. every year.

And throughout the world the number is in the
tens of millions. The bishops insisted that “the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone.” But sadly, according to the United Nations, more than 1.4 billion fel- low human beings live in extreme poverty and are struggling to survive on less than $1 a day.

One very significant reason as to why the poor remain poor is due to an insatiable, unappetizing appetite for military spending on war and war and war.

The world’s bishops declared that “the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree.”

Yet, according to the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, world military spending exceeded $1.5 trillion dollars in 2008, and the United States was responsible for more than 44 percent of total spending — 800 percent higher than what Russia spent.

Just imagine the good that could be accomplished with such huge sums of money. Global poverty could be completely eliminated! And the bishops were right: the arms race has injured the poor to an “intolerable degree.”

Furthermore, considering “the horror and pervasiveness of modern warfare, the world’s bishops at Vatican II declared: “All these considerations compel us to understand the inhumanity of war as the cause of an entirely new attitude... Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.”

The world’s unblessed, poor and war-torn people are still waiting for Catholics and governments to develop this entirely new attitude toward abortion, poverty and war.

Must they wait another 45 years?
Special Collection - Tri-Conference Fund for Retired Religious — December 12

Ongoing Events

The Gabriel Project — meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Holy Family Church, 201 Briar Lane, Wharton. The Gabriel Project is a ministry of the Office of Respect Life for the Diocese of Victoria. It is devoted to the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of pregnant and post-abortion women. For more information, please contact Deacon Linda Rice at (979) 245-0323 or at: dbconner@vicnet.net.

Retrouvaille — The Marriage Encounter Weekend is open to married couples. Catholic and non-Catholic. Weekend starts at 6:00 p.m. on Friday and ends by 1:00 p.m. on Saturday. For further information, please call (361) 984-1880.

Marriage Encounter — The Marriage Encounter Weekend is open to married couples, Catholic and non-Catholic. Weekend starts at 6:00 p.m. on Friday and ends by 1:00 p.m. on Saturday. For further information, please call (800) 461-3313 or visit their Web site at: www.marriageencounter.org.

Catholic Family Services — For a listing of e-mail and Web sites only, please call (979) 543-4366.

Fund-Raising Events

Retirement Sale at the Revised Roman Missal — will be held Feb. 2 - 5, 2011, in Smithville. For more information, please contact Mark Stockbauer at (979) 543-3493. Questions? Call Mike Allison at (361) 865-3021 or at: lbconner@vicnet.net.


dedication of spiritual patrimony, purpose, direction and basic needs. If interested in volunteering in this ministry please call (979) 532-5593, Monday thru Friday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

for information about the ACTS community movement in the El Campo Deanery, to dovetail an upcoming ACTS retreat application, or to submit a viewing request the parishes across the El Campo Deanery, please visit their site at: http://ecdeaneryacts.org/.
Pilgrimages, Tours, etc.

Victoria— Where Texas History Begins will be open to the public through January 29, 2011. Viewing hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Museum of the Coastal Bend, located on the campus of The Victoria College, at the corner of East Red River and Ben Jordan. Visit www.museumofthecoastalbend.org for more information. Admission is $5.50 and $2.50 for seniors and children, and $2 for students ages 4 through 8th grade. Admission is free for museum members, faculty, staff and students of The Victoria College and the University of Houston - Victoria for children under 4 years of age.


Have an event? Contact us at (361) 573-5725 (FAX) or e-mail: janakr@victoriadiocese.org

Solemn Vespers – Please join the IWBS Sisters on the operating table, after being given a drug that stopped her heart, she was given visions of the future. Following her recovery she shares her experiences with people all over the world. She has been called a mystic and a visionary by priests and bishops, but the only title she claims is Warrior of the Poor. For more information, please visit the Web site at: www.sanantoniobe@yahoo.com; e-mail: sanantoniobe@yahoo.com; phone: (210) 742-1146.

Natural Family Planning — For information about the Sympo- taneous Birth Control - the Menstrual Cycle, contact David and Annie Coffey at victoriafpnetwork@yahoo.com. The final class will be held on Sunday, Dec. 12, at 4 p.m. in Our Lord of the Lourdes Catholic Church Library, Somerville, TX. For more information, please call Sister Louise Marie Jones at (979) 335-7551.

Bay City— Weekly Men’s Group: “That Man Is You! – A Light to the Nation.” This group is for Catholic school teachers weekly Friday morning beginning with breakfast at 5:45 a.m. Program ends by 7:10 a.m. All men are welcome. That Man Is You! is transforming men, families and society as it presents the vision of man fully alive! Combining the teachings of the Church and wisdom of the saints with the best research from modern science in an interactive, multimedia format, That Man Is You! puts this vision within the grasp of every man www.thatsmanisyou.com. This is a Men’s Question? Call Mike Allison at (979) 479-1370 or Allen Green at (979) 245-2598. Victoria — Missing something in your life? Do you need an uplift- ing experience? Why not try some PR ASHE and WO RDS. Come Join Inmate Word Prayer Group Monday nights from 7:00-9:30 p.m. at Inmate Care Audiatorium. For more information call Paula at (361) 575-7120 or at: Louise Marie using at victoriadiocese.org.

Tivo! — Our Lady of Guadalupe Church invites you to a Hea- ling Mass and Prayer Service every First Friday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Mark your calendars now for next month. Mass is followed by praise and worship/adoration, healing prayers, praying over, etc. Counseling available. Please come; bring your family and friends. (Of course, feeding of the Lord is free!) For more information, please contact Rev. Gabriel P. Cofio at (361) 286-3349.

ACTS Retreats — For more information on ACTS retreats, please go to ACTS Web site at: www.actsmission.org. For more information about the ACTS community movement in the El Campo Deanery, to

LAGRAANGE— The Texas Czech Heritage and Cultur- al Center in La Grange, Texas, is announcing the opening of a holiday museum exhibit titled “Nativity Around the World,” which will be open to the public from December 1 through January 6, 2011. The scenes and displays of the exhibit were selected for their imaginative approach to the Nativity, their distinctive cultural features, craftsmanship and artistic medium. The scene from Uganda is made from banana leaf; the one from Viet Nam, from recycled magazines; the one from Jerusalem, from polished Olive wood. And there is one that measures two inches carved out of an Ecuadorian Tagona nut.

“The Nativity is an important event in human history,” said Jim (Doc) Ayres, TCHCC museum chair, “and we invite everyone to witness these very interesting interpretations of it.” Surrounding these scenes as a special feature are three, three-dimensional panoramic scenes by Moravian artist Ferdinand Pribyl (1840-1915). This special picture was taken front of one of the scenes while it was being assembled. Pictured are James Farrell, Elizabeth Stock- bauer-Harris and Elizabeth Stockbauer, descendants of the artist.

A special feature are three, three-dimensional panoramic scenes by Moravian artist Ferdinand Pribyl (1840-1915). This special picture was taken front of one of the scenes while it was being assembled. Pictured are James Farrell, Elizabeth Stockbauer-Harris and Elizabeth Stockbauer, descendants of the artist.
Parishes help raise funds for Guatemalan orphanage

By Cynthia Brewer

A place that has been near and dear to the heart of Father Dan Morales, current pastor of St. Mary’s in Victoria, is Asociacion Obras Sociales del Santo Hermano Pedro (Social Work of Saint Brother Pedro or Las Obras Orphanage), the second largest health care provider in Las Antigua, Guatemala.

Father Dan has been visiting Las Obras Orphanage in Guatemala since 2005, as well as inviting friends and parishioners from throughout the Diocese of Victoria to join him. As diocesan vocation director, he has also taken diocesan seminarians with him for the past two years.

Although the term orphanage generally brings images of children playing about, Las Obras Orphanage is quite different from the normal mental image that the term brings to mind. For the past 29 years, Las Obras has provided care for newborns, children, adults, and the elderly, all with disabilities, such as cleft lip and palate, cerebral palsy, paralysis, blindness, and other handicaps. Most of the patients are abandoned or have come from extremely poor families whose contribution, when given, cannot cover the cost of their care.

Las Obras, a 230-bed, non-profit organization, is run by Franciscan brothers, providing 24-hour/seven days a week, long-term or permanent residential care for all ages from all over the country. The orphanage’s medical facility has treated 174,978 patients, and 93,066 procedures have been performed, since its establishment.

The main source of visiting doctors at Las Obras come from Faith In Practice, a Texas non-profit organization. Their mission is to improve the physical, spiritual and economic conditions of the poor in Guatemala through short-term medical, surgical and dental mission trips and related programs of education. In 2006, Faith In Practice completed the expansion and renovation of the operating rooms at Las Obras, thus providing five state-of-the-art operating rooms.

As part of his devotion, Father Dan hosted the director of Las Obras, Father José Giuseppe Contrun, at his parish from Oct. 30 – Nov. 16, taking him to places throughout Texas networking with medical personnel and developing and marketing people who are interested in helping Las Obras.

Father José is a Franciscan who grew up in Italy, but has spent the past 38 years in Central America, 17 of which have been spent in Guatemala serving the poor, abandoned and sick, just as St. Brother Peter, a Spaniard who is buried in Antigua, had done in the 1600s.

With Father Dan interpreting Spanish to English, Father José spoke at several parishes and organizations in the diocese as a means of raising money and awareness for the orphanage and healthcare center that, due to political reasons, has been closed by Father Dan, “thanking them for raising the funds to enable the (Diocese of Victoria) seminarians to visit and work there each year.”

To St. Mary’s RCIA group, he showed a video of the works of the Asociacion Obras and spoke to the class Nov. 9. In speaking about the seven sacraments with the candidates and catechumens, Father José said, “The sacraments aren’t just for us – for our personal selves – but to help us serve – to serve Christ through serving the poor.”

Fundraisers for Las Obras were held at Our Lady of the Gulf in Port Lavaca Nov. 11, and Father José spoke at each of the Masses at St. Philip Parish in El Campo Nov. 12 and 13. Parishioners who have visited the orphanage with Father Gary Janak held a dinner for Father José Nov. 13.

Father Dan invites people to come to Las Obras to volunteer for a week at a time, caring for babies or doing handyman jobs, while also taking a weekly RCIA class. Go to www.obrasmanriquepedro.org to learn more. And Faith In Practice invites doctors, dental professionals, translators, computer operators, cooks and spiritual leaders to join their teams in a week-long mission experience assisting them to meet the medical needs of Las Obras’ patients; please contact them at www.faithinpractice.org.

Father José Giuseppe Contrun

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from (seated l-r) Sharon Jones, Tanya Froehliche Weihnachten, Chena tova Merry Christmas Joyeux Noel Mele Kalikimaka Vesele Vianoce Chung Mung Giang Sinh Natale hilare et Annum Faustum! Frohe Weihnachten Nollaig Shona Dhu!