

The Catholic Lighthouse

The Cradle of Texas Immigration



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December 2006



© Capture the Moment

Newly ordained transitional deacons, Gabriel Espinosa (l.) and Michael Rother, stand with the ordaining bishop, Most Reverend Joe Vasquez, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, following the ordination Mass held at St. Michael Church in Houston on November 4, 2006.

Diocese of Victoria celebrates ordination of two transitional deacons

By Cindy Brewer and Joe Jakubik

HOUSTON—Gabriel Espinosa and Michael Rother, seminarians studying at St. Mary's Seminary in Houston for the Diocese of Victoria, were among seven ordained to the transitional diaconate in

St. Michael Church in Houston November 4 by Most Reverend Joe Vasquez, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. This is the last major step leading to their ordination to the priesthood scheduled for June 2007.

Gabriel Espinosa and his family are from Gonzalez but Gabriel is currently a member of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Shiner. Michael Rother and his family are from St. Anthony Parish in Palacios.

In an e-mail interview regarding Deacon Gabriel's ordination to the transitional diaconate, he stated it is hard to describe his experience.

"Was I ready?" he asked himself. "I felt so unworthy to move forward when there are so many others who pray better, are more intelligent, possess greater gifts and charisms than me," he answered. "But the mystery is that God has called me."

He said that during his stay in Weimar this past summer he was entranced by a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. "Christ's hands were out in a gesture of blessing and they looked so real to me. I would sit there and just stare at them." Before heading out to do ministry he would kneel in front of the statue of Christ and ask for his blessing: "to become Christ's hands, and feet, and voice and smile."

"I prayed that people would see only him and not me," Gabriel said, "and that these hands of his that intrigued me, would come down on me at the ordination through his bishop and he would call on the Spirit to empower me to serve."

In his busy schedule preparing for the priesthood, Gabriel had some time during Palm Sunday to reflect on the priesthood and it seemed to sum it up for him at the moment, "Ordination to the priesthood is Palm Sunday with much rejoicing and celebrating, but then come the moments

See *Diocese of Victoria*, p. 6



CNS photo courtesy Conception Abbey

'BIRTH OF JESUS'—The Nativity is depicted in a mural titled "Birth of Jesus" in the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception at Conception Abbey in Conception, Mo. Painted by Benedictine monks in the late 1800s, the artwork is the first appearance of the German Beuronese style in a U.S. church.

Father Victor promises to lead by relationship in his new post

By Cindy Brewer

After being at Our Lady of Sorrows for the past 13 years and having served as its pastor since 1998, Father Victor Scocco has now moved on to become the Minister Provincial of the U.S. Province of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and has moved to its monastery in Baltimore, Maryland.

Father Victor's final farewell to his

parishioners took place during the parish's monthly XLT, an evening of adoration and praise, on November 9, 2006. The parishioners followed XLT with a going away dinner. Well wishers remained with Father Victor until nearly midnight.

"Leaving Our Lady of Sorrows is one of the most difficult and emotionally wrenching experiences of my life. I love

See *Father Victor*, p. 19

Pope Benedict, master of words, shows mastery of gestures in Turkey

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

ISTANBUL, Turkey (CNS) — During his four-day trip to Turkey, Pope Benedict XVI, known for his precise and incisive words, showed he was also a master of the spontaneous gesture.

While his scholarly words in a September lecture in Germany offended millions of Muslims, his prayer in an Istanbul mosque surprised and delighted many of them.

For papal watchers the contrast between the tones of his reference to Muslims and violence in Germany and his silent prayer in the Blue Mosque was not the only surprise. Pope Benedict was supposed to be the pope of strong words in contrast to Pope John Paul II, the pope of strong gestures.

The silent prayer facing Mecca, the site of Islam's holiest shrine, also seemed to be in contrast to the predictions of pundits who assured the world that Pope Benedict would be more challenging than conciliatory with the world's Muslim believers.

Retired French Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, a close aide to Pope John Paul

and a member of Pope Benedict's entourage in Turkey, told reporters Dec. 1: "I would compare the visit of the pope to the mosque to the gesture of John Paul II at the Western Wall," the Jewish holy site in Jerusalem where Pope John Paul in 2000 deposited a prayer asking God's forgiveness for the ways Christians had mistreated the Jews.

Pope Benedict's prayer at the mosque and Pope John Paul's prayer in Jerusalem "are two very important symbolic moments," Cardinal Etchegaray said. "In both cases, we did not expect it."

While the pope received a warm welcome from the moment he got off the plane in Ankara, Turkey's capital, any remaining hesitation on the part of the Turkish people melted when the pope prayed in the Istanbul mosque on his last night in the country.

From the beginning, the trip was planned as an occasion for the pope to pay his respects to Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. After a prayer service, two liturgies, private meetings and a lunch, the brotherhood

See *Pope Benedict*, p. 17

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Bishop Fellhauer's Schedule

December	
8	8:15 a.m., School Mass, Nazareth Academy, Victoria
9	6:30 p.m., Christmas Dinner, benefit for the Multi-Purpose/Youth Activity Building at the Spiritual Renewal Center
10	9:00 a.m., Mass, Installation of Lectors, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
11	2:30 p.m., St. Mary's Altar Society Christmas gathering, St. Mary's Activity Center, Victoria
12	5:00 a.m., Mananitas and Mass, Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Victoria
17	6:00 p.m., Knights of St. Gregory Christmas gathering, Colony Creek Country Club, Victoria
20	4:30 p.m., Diocesan Building Board, Chancery Office
21	8:00 a.m., Mass, Monastery of St. Clare, Victoria
24	4:00 p.m., Mass, Incarnate Word Convent Infirmary, Victoria
25	Midnight Mass, Our Lady of Victory Cathedral

Sacred Heart Church and School celebrate 125 years

HALLETTSVILLE—Sacred Heart Catholic Church and School in Hallettsville will be celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2007. The yearlong celebration will begin with a special holy hour on Sunday, January 7, at 2:00 p.m. with Bishop David E. Fellhauer presiding. This will also celebrate the 1st anniversary of the Adoration Chapel, which is open 24 hours a day from Sunday evening to Friday evening.

On Saturday evening, January 27, at 5:30 p.m., Bishop Charles V. Grahmann, native of Hallettsville, will celebrate Mass at Sacred Heart Church. A pageant presenting the history of Sacred Heart (Academy) School will follow in the gym. This will also be the beginning of Catholic Schools week. On Sunday, January 28, Bishop Grahmann, an alumnus of Sacred Heart, will celebrate Mass at 10:30 a.m. for all the Sacred Heart Alumni.

During the year, there will be monthly celebrations for the church and the school

to remember the past, to honor the present and to prepare for the future. The parish and school invite everyone to join them in these celebrations.

Exemplification of Knights to be held in Victoria in January

The exemplification of diocesan candidates to the 1st degree Knights of Columbus will be held at the Holy Family Catholic Church Education and Activity Building in Victoria on the morning of Jan. 21, 2007. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m.; ceremony begins 8:00 a.m. Following the installation of 1st degree Knights, a ceremony will be held at 10:00 a.m. for the exemplification of 2nd and 3rd degree Knights. All 1st degree Knights in good standing are encouraged to participate in the 2nd and 3rd degree ceremony. Please register at 9:00 a.m. at the entrance to the tower of the education building.

Those 1st degree members who wish to be exemplified are asked to notify their grand knights and have them inform District Deputy (153) Bob Leach, no later than Jan. 12, of the number of participants who will be attending from their council. Please contact him at (361) 573-2117 or by cell at (361) 218-9926. There is no fee for the 2nd and 3rd degree. The Holy Family KC Council 9088 degree team will conduct the 1st degree exemplification while the 2nd and 3rd degree will be under the direction of the degree team from San Antonio.

A meal will be served by Council 9088 for a nominal cost at the end of the 3rd degree ceremony (around noon).

Thank You Notes

Dear Bishop Fellhauer:

Thank you for the most recent contribution of \$25,275.22 to the 2006 Collection for the Church in Latin America.

As you know, one of the committee's major responsibilities is to provide grants to projects which address the pastoral needs of the faithful in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is through your support and the generosity of the faithful in your diocese that we have been blessed with the ability to respond year after year. In 2005, the committee was able to award 462 grants totaling 4.7 million dollars.

Faternally yours in Christ,
Most Rev. John R. Manz
Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago
Chairman, Committee on the Church in Latin America

Dear Bishop Fellhauer,

Let me acknowledge with deepest appreciation your recent check for \$22,506.66, Diocese of Victoria's contribution to the 2006 Catholic Home Missions Appeal. I am especially touched that you were able to increase your support by \$745.59 over last year.

This appeal is an expression of the *communio* to which all U.S. bishops belong. Nearly every diocese contributes as best it can. Our ministry is to channel about ninety percent of the money we receive to brother bishops who cannot offer their people even basic pastoral services without outside help.

Faternally yours in Christ,
Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain
Chairman, Secretariat for Home Missions

Your Excellency,

At the Holy Father's direction, I am writing to acknowledge the sum of \$22,053.33 which you kindly forwarded to the Apostolic Nunciature as the Peter's Pence offering of the Diocese of Victoria for the year 2006.

His Holiness is most appreciative of the charitable assistance which you and your people have given to him for his service to the Church throughout the world.

Assuring you and the clergy, religious and laity of the diocese of a remembrance in his prayers, the Holy Father cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

Yours sincerely in Christ,
Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone
Secretary of State

Official Appointments By Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer

Effective November 22, 2006, the **Rev. Donald Hayden, O.S.S.T.**, is relieved of his assignment as parochial administrator at Holy Cross Church, Yorktown, and its missions and appointed parochial vicar at Our Lady of the Gulf Church, Port Lavaca, and its missions.

Effective November 22, 2006, the **Rev. Roger Hawes** is relieved of his assignment as parochial vicar at Holy Family Church, Wharton, and appointed pastor of Holy Cross Church, Yorktown, and its missions of San Luis, Yorktown, and St. Ann, Nordheim.

Effective December 1, 2006, upon the presentation by his Minister Provincial, the Very Rev. Victor J. Scocco, O.S.S.T., the **Rev. Juan Vazquez, O.S.S.T.**, is appointed pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Victoria, Texas.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Kindly let your readers know that we will appreciate it if they send us used copies of their Catholic papers, magazines and books, Bibles, sacramentals, religious films, even clothes for our work here.

We promise all our donors prayers in appreciation. God bless you for granting our request.

Yours sincerely,
David Akomaye
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11 EMEJULU STREET, OSE
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ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA
E-mail: davidakomaye@yahoo.com

Dear Editor and Readers,

Wish you a very happy Christmas and a bright New Year. I have three schools and a parish of five thousand people. Will you kindly help me by sending pens, pencils, rosaries, used cards and used magazines and statues.

We shall be praying for you in return. Please help.

Love and blessings,
Father Paul Cruz
ST. ANTONY'S CHURCH
KANJIRAKODU P.O.
KUNDARA - 691 501
KOLLAM, KERALA - INDIA

Chancery Office Holiday Schedule

The Chancery Office will be closed Dec. 22 at 11:00 a.m. through Jan. 1, 2007, for the Christmas and New Year Holidays. We will reopen on Jan. 2 at 8:30 a.m.

Merry Christmas

2006 DSA Monthly Report

Since November's publication, total pledges have increased by \$50,606 and the amount paid increased by \$63,732 bringing our total pledged amount to \$737,059 and the amount paid to \$719,708.

The 2006 Diocesan Services Appeal will officially close on January 15, 2007. Final totals will be printed in the February issue.

Our current records indicate 22,138 registered households in the Diocese of Victoria. The number of households responding to this vital campaign is 4,434; however, several parishes use other methods of contributing; therefore, the number of responding households is actually higher overall.

As parents we teach our children that what God has given us is valued and returned to him as time, talent and treasure in service to others. No one is ever poorer for giving to our God who is so rich in love, mercy and goodness.

We at the chancery offer our sincere thanks and appreciation for your participation, and best wishes for a blessed Christmas season.

Happy Holidays,
Jeri Joseph, DSA Coordinator

Stewardship Thought: "For your heart will always be where your riches are" (Matt 6:21).

DSA Goal
\$1,237,250

Half way
marker

Total
Amount Paid
\$719,708

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The Candle of Faith Illumination

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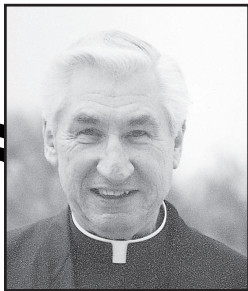
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Faith Point

By Rev. Msgr. James C. Brunner
Vicar General, Diocese of Victoria

For past articles: www.stmaryvic.com/desk.htm



Merry Post-Christian Era

In the midst of a wave of terror rooted in a form of Islam many seculars say that we would be better off without religion and that religion is the cause of most wars and an impediment to progress. They are wrong on both counts. One need only mention Nazism and Communism to realize that the real killing machines have been pagan and atheistic governments. As for progress Christianity has been responsible for most of the admirable features of Western civilization.

Alvin J. Schmidt in his book *Under the Influence* catalogs the many contributions of Christianity to civilization. Some of the items are worth noting.

Schmidt maintains that Christianity is responsible for respect for the sanctity

of human life. Christians from the beginning opposed the practice of abortion, infanticide, child abandonment and exposure. The Romans had an institution called *pater familias* which gave the head of the family power of life and death over his spouse and children.

Prior to Christianity women were oppressed in every culture. The treatment of women in some Muslim enclaves is a remnant of this. Jesus treated women with great respect. Note how he dealt with the Samaritan woman, the woman taken in adultery, and the penitent woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Under Roman law women and children were scarcely better than slaves. They had no property rights and faced severe social restrictions. Paul preached equality of the sexes: "There is not male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28) Veneration of Mary the Mother of God generated increased respect for women. A Muslim Turkish writer who visited Vienna in 1665 describes what he twice calls "an extraordinary spectacle." The emperor would stop his horse whenever a woman crossed his path and when greeted by the woman the emperor removed his hat to show respect for her. The writer remarks that infidel women are respected out of love for "Mother Mary."

Greeks and Romans had little care for the poor, the sick and the dying. Christians at the command of Jesus who identified himself with the poor ministered to them and soon this activity was institutionalized by the formation of the first hospitals. The Council of Nicea of 325 commanded bishops to establish hospices in every cathedral town. St. Basil built the first hospital in Caesarea in 369. In the Middle Ages hospitals covered all of Europe. Christian hospitals were the first voluntary charitable institutions. Nursing also arose out of Christian concern for the ill.

Although education was important in Greece and Rome, the institutionalization of education took off under the influence of Christianity. Greeks and Romans had no public libraries, says Schmidt, and no educational institutions. Early formal education arose from the catechetical schools. Unlike other cultures, Christians taught

both sexes. The rise of the modern university is an outgrowth of Christian endeavor.

Greeks and Romans looked down on manual labor. Most of the necessary work was done by slaves or their equivalent. Economic freedom was just for a select few. Christianity changed the world's attitude toward labor. Jesus worked as a carpenter and Paul as a tentmaker. Paul di-

rected that those who refused to labor should not eat. The Bible condemned sluggards. Investing labor with dignity by Christians led to the establishment of a middle class. The typical pagan society was divided into a few wealthy persons and slaves. Christianity at first tolerated slavery but Paul already

recognized its incompatibility with Christian principles. He reminded Philemon whose slave, Onesimus, had fled his master to serve Paul that the slave was really Philemon's brother. Christianity was the driving force in the abolition of slavery as it was in the civil rights struggles in our own country. The early unionists were Christians. The application of social justice principles to economic life derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

No one seriously questions the superiority of Christian ethics over pagan immorality. It is also superior to current ethical systems followed in our times in its objectivity and inalterability. One system is relativism which approves as right what most of society approves. There was a time when most of society approved slavery and so relativism is a poor guide for morality. Some tout utilitarianism ethics where the end justifies the means and that is good and right which produces the greatest happiness. It does not answer the question of what defines happiness nor does it decide whose happiness is to prevail in the case of conflicts in what constitutes it. There is a Kantian ethic which upholds individual rights and duties but becomes mired in strife in determining the ranking of rights as when the "rights" of the mother trump the right to life of her unborn child or the wishes of the father of the child.

Christianity has made immeasurable contributions to literature, art, music, science and architecture.

Without the birth of Jesus we would have something far different from what we

Without the birth of Jesus we would have something far different from what we call Western civilization.

call Western civilization. And if that different thing resembled the pre-Christian era our civilization would be enormously impoverished.

Some like to call our time the post-Christian era. Indeed there is a movement to reject Christian values on many fronts. Just to cite one area we have a far lower estimate of the sanctity of human life.

Instead of a *pater familias* we have a *mater familias* wherein women have the power of life and death over their unborn children. It is legal in our society to kill unborn human life in order to enable irresponsible sex. The Supreme Court is now considering whether it is more appropriate to kill a baby by dismembering it or by extracting it partially from the womb and sucking out its brains. Infanticide is beginning to go mainstream. The Dutch already euthanize seriously disabled infants and the English Royal Academy of Gynaecology and Obstetrics recommends the same and even has the approval of a bishop of the Church of England. Seculars want to eliminate imperfect human beings by euthanasia or eugenics. We may soon establish farms of human embryos

that will be torn apart to harvest their stem cells. Our society thinks it is permissible to cannibalize infant life to prolong the life of others. Oregon state already approves of voluntary euthanasia. Comatose but very-much-alive Terri Schiavo was starved to death by court order.

The post-Christian era bears a remarkable similarity to the pre-Christian era which required so much time and struggle to free us from it. Freedom from it resulted from the application of the Christian ethic and, as this is being abandoned both here and abroad, Western culture is approaching the pre-Christian standard. A return to that cesspool should not be looked upon as a return to the good old days or progress but as a reversion to barbarism. The price of enjoying the benefits of Western civilization is an adherence to Christian ethics.

The Son of God came to bring us life and bring it to the full. Insofar as his teachings are implemented not only religious life but civilization has also been greatly enhanced. Christians have made mistakes but they have done marvelous things by following the Child that was born on Christmas day.



RAPHAEL'S REFUGE RECEIVES DONATION FROM KJZT—St. Anne's KJZT Society No. 4 Praha has donated \$560 to Raphael's Refuge. The donation was raised through a bake sale held in September and matched with funds from the State KJZT office in Austin. The gift will be used to help with construction costs for the Chapel of the Holy Innocents being built near Flatonia. A large glass block will be engraved with the name of St. Anne's KJZT Society and will be set into one of the walls of the monument. Pictured, l-r, are Ellene Vrazel, vice-president; Georgia Cerny, president; and Julia Stryk, adult division treasurer.

Obituary

Father Eddie Winkler's father dies

SCHULENBURG—Leonard Joseph Winkler, age 83, passed away at his home in Schulenburg on Monday, Nov. 20, after being ill for five months.

The funeral was held at St. Rose of Lima Church Nov. 22 followed by burial in the church cemetery. Officiating were Rev. Tim Kosler, main celebrant; Rev. Octavio Mugerza, homilist; and Rev. Joe Hybner, who presided at the burial. Pallbearers were nephews Bobby Winkler, Chris Winkler and Mike Gansky; and grandsons Keith Banks, Paul Winkler and Scott Hughey.

A vigil was held on Tuesday, Nov. 21, at St. Rose of Lima Church, led by Father Eddie Winkler, son of the deceased.

Born at High Hill on March 10, 1923, he was the son of Adolph and Carolina (Kainer) Winkler. He attended school at High Hill. During World War II, Mr. Winkler served in the European Theater. On Feb. 21, 1949, he married Emily

Gansky at Schulenburg.

A lifelong resident of the High Hill/Schulenburg area, he worked as a salesman. Mr. Winkler was a member of the Catholic Church, Semi-Pro Baseball Hall of Fame, American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Survivors include three daughters, Linda Hughey and husband Eric of Schulenburg, Donna Winkler of Bastrop and Debra Heinsohn and husband Harry of New Braunfels; four sons, James of Pearland, William "Billy" and wife Janis of Austin, Father Edward "Eddie" of Schulenburg and Donald and wife Anne of Decatur; a sister-in-law, Elsie Winkler of High Hill; a brother, Bob and wife Angie of La Grange; and six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Preceding him in death were his parents; wife; a sister, Cleo Amoit and husband Larry; and a brother, Gilbert..

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Seminary Burses

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

As of November 29, 2006

	TOTALS
— General Seminary Burse	
Previously reported	\$74,284.00
In loving memory of Dr. Cyrus McGinty, III by M/M Robert Bochat	25.00
Total	\$74,309.00

— Catholic Life Insurance Victoria Branch 51— Rev. Msgr. Eustace Hermes and Rev. Msgr. Gino Bernasconi Seminary Burse No. 2	
Previously reported from Burse No. 1	\$735.47
In memory of Victor Froncek by Our Lady of Lourdes Altar Society	25.00
Total	\$760.47

— Rev. Msgr. Michael O'Shaughnessy Seminarian Burse	
Previously reported	\$7,719.50
In honor of Rev. Msgr. Michael A. O'Shaughnessy's birthday by: Ken and Betty Woodring	25.00
KJZT Lodge No. 111 Edna	25.00
Alice Tlucek	100.00
Total	\$7,869.50

— Rev. John C. Peters Seminary Burse No. 3	
Previously reported	\$11,476.00
In memory of Joe W. Konvicka	30.00
Total	\$11,506.00

— Josephat R. Janak Seminary Burse	
Previously reported	\$14,633.77
In memory of Josephat R. Janak's death anniversary by Ann Margaret Kutac	15.00
Total	\$14,648.77

— Rev. Theophil Okruhlik & Rev. Vincent Verdame Seminary Burse	
Previously reported	\$7,240.00
In memory of Ervin P. Hermes by: Brenda Wheaton, Jacquelyn Chr. and Elaine Raughton	10.00
M/M Anton Schoener	20.00
Richard C. Sr. & Joyce DeBord	20.00
Richard and Dolores Miller	30.00
Total	\$7,320.00

— Rev. Sean Donohue Seminary Burse No. 2	
Previously reported	\$1,855.20
In memory of Kathy Weixelman by Bernard and Madeline Rother	25.00
Total	\$1,880.20

Additional Burses for donations:

- Nicholas and Annie Grahmann Burse No. 2
- Bishop David E. Fellhauer/Catholic Life Insurance Nada, Moulton, Hallettsville, Edna-Ganado and El Campo Branches Burse No. 2
- St. John the Baptist Church, St. John Burse No. 2 — In Honor of Rev. Brian Crookes
- Rev. Jerome J. Stryk
- Rev. Msgr. Julius Petru Burse No. 2
- Rev. Joe Levya
- Rev. Marcus Valenta
- Rev. Godfrey F. Kuratko
- Rev. Msgr. John Hanacek
- Catholic Family Fraternal of Texas KJZT Burse No. 5
- Sophie Schmidt
- Rev. Msgr. Robert Schmidt
- Rev. Msgr. Vaclav Bily
- St. Mary Church — Praha
- St. Mary Church — High Hill
- Holy Rosary Church — Hostyn Burse No. 2
- Rev. Charles Kram
- Eddie & Olga Juroske and Floran & Laura Frnka
- William L. Schmidt
- Willamena and Herman Grahmann, Sr.
- Deceased Priests of Praha
- Sr. M. Perpetua Hawes, IWBS
- Jim Vacek Burse No. 2
- Knights of Columbus Council 3204 — Ganado
- Rev. Joseph Hybner

Those wishing to begin a burse or to contribute to an existing seminary burse may do so by sending their contributions with the appropriate burse designation to:
**Seminary Burse, P.O. Box 4070,
Victoria, Texas 77903**

Bishop of Las Cruces to celebrate anniversary in Bay City

BAY CITY—Most Rev. Ricardo Ramírez, CSB, of the Diocese of Las Cruces, New Mexico, will celebrate ordination anniversaries in his hometown of Bay City, Texas, in December.

On Sunday, December 31, 2006, Bishop Ricardo Ramírez will hold a special Mass of Thanksgiving at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church located at 1412 12th Street in Bay City at 12 p.m. in celebration of his 25th anniversary of ordination to the episcopacy and his 40th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood.

Bishop Ramírez was born in Bay City

on September 12, 1936. He attended the Latin American School Jefferson Davis Grammar School and graduated from Bay City High School in 1955. He celebrated his first Mass on Dec. 11, 1966, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.



CNS photo

Bishop Ricardo Ramírez

He is the first bishop of Las Cruces Diocese; he was auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of San Antonio prior to going to Las Cruces.

Everyone is invited to attend the Mass and join Bishop Ramírez in giving thanks for these years of service to the Lord and his people. There will be a reception after the noon Mass.

Reporting Abuse

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

- Call the chancery at (361) 573-0828 and ask to speak with the bishop or the chancellor;
or
- Call Rev. Gary Janak (979) 543-3770 or Sr. Emilie Eilers (361) 575-7111, Coordinators of Pastoral Care and Outreach;
or
- Write to: Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer
Diocese of Victoria
P.O. Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903
Mark your letter "Personal and Confidential"

We will also help you bring your concerns to church officials outside the diocese if the abuse occurred elsewhere and you now reside in the Diocese of Victoria.

If you are unsure about bringing a complaint or would like further information, please contact: Rev. Gary Janak at (979) 543-3770.



Bishop David E. Fellhauer recently met Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio, while there for the board of trustees meeting. Pictured from left: Bishop Paul Loverde, Bishop Roger Foys, Board Chair Bishop Daniel Conlon, Bishop David Choby, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Archbishop Elden Curtiss, Bishop Raymundo Peña, Bishop David Fellhauer, Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk and Bishop Robert Baker.

Apostolic Nuncio Visits Josephinum

Editor's Note: As a member of the board of trustees of the Pontifical College Josephinum, Bishop Fellhauer was present for this event.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — One hundred and fifty seminarians at the Pontifical College Josephinum experienced a landmark event in their journey to priesthood when Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, visited the seminary on October 22-23, 2006. The visit was the archbishop's first since his appointment as Apostolic Nuncio in December 2005 by Pope Benedict XVI.

Upon his arrival to the Josephinum, Archbishop Sambi was formally received in St. Turibius Chapel by the seminarians and the priest faculty who are responsible for overseeing the formation programs. Rector / President Msgr. Paul J. Langsfeld, STD, welcomed the archbishop: "It is a great joy to welcome you on your first visit to the Josephinum. During your time here, many people will greet and welcome you, but it is fitting that the first to do so are the 150 men who are studying for the sacred priesthood. Our meeting in the seminary's chapel for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament is a fitting reminder that the mystery of the Eucharist is the source and summit of our ministry. In this sacred place, your distinguished predecessors, the Apostolic Delegates and Nuncios, ordained hundreds of men as deacons, priests, and bishops for the service of God's people."

The Josephinum's relationship with the Holy See began with founder Msgr. Joseph Jessing's petition to make the Josephinum a pontifical school in 1893, the same year that Pope Leo XIII named the first Apostolic Delegate to the United States. Since that time, each Apostolic Delegate and Nuncio has played a significant role in the life of the seminary. Over the years the Josephinum has changed in many ways to meet the needs of the time. "Through all of the change one of the constants has been the cordial relationship we have always had with the Apostolic Delegates and Nuncios," said Langsfeld.

"I am happy to be here." The Archbishop's opening sentence became a theological theme of his first address to the seminarians. "Show you are happy to live," he told them. "It should be a great message — your smile is a message. The source of all happiness is our faith: Happy to live, because happy to believe. You know what you have to do — to feel that

life is a gift and life is a lesson to continue in you with the qualities and the capacities that God has given you to continue the mission of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. I am happy, because you are the hope of the Church."

The Nuncio was the celebrant and homilist for Mass on Monday morning, October 23. A number of bishops who send their seminarians to the Josephinum for formation were also present as concelebrants — some were on campus in conjunction with the fall meeting of the institution's Board of Trustees and others came especially to greet the Nuncio. Visiting bishops were Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk (Cincinnati), Bishop Frederick Campbell (Columbus), Board Chair Bishop Daniel Conlon (Steubenville), Archbishop Elden Curtiss (Omaha), Bishop Robert Baker (Charleston), Bishop David Choby (Nashville), Bishop David Fellhauer (Victoria), Bishop Roger Foys (Covington), Bishop Paul Loverde (Arlington), Bishop John Nienstedt (New Ulm), and Bishop Raymundo Peña (Brownsville).

Given the fact that the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States is also the Chancellor of the Josephinum, it was especially significant that Archbishop Sambi concluded his visit by opening the fall meeting of the Board of Trustees on Monday afternoon.

Sister Elizabeth Riebschlaeger, CCVI, to be installed as province team member

Sister Elizabeth Riebschlaeger, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word (CCVI), who resides in Cuero, Texas, was recently elected a Province Coordinating Team member during the Sisters' US Province Assembly.

This is equal to the former title of "Provincial Consultor."

The team is made up of four members, one full time and three part time, and each is installed for a four-year term.

Sister Bette Bluhm, US Provincial, was reelected for another four-year term and serves full time. All three part-time members are new and include Sisters Elizabeth, Joan Moral and Cindy Stacy.

"One very interesting part of this ministry," said Sister Elizabeth, "will be to meet with the corresponding members of the Mexican Province Team as well as rep-

See Sister Elizabeth Riebschlaeger, p. 8



Spinach again:

Gift giving reflects on heart, captures the holy

By Christina Capecchi
Twenty Something

I was about to go to a food drive last week when I found myself reaching for a can of spinach. I paused, paralyzed by a sense of déjà vu: I've been giving spinach to food drives since second grade.

My willingness to give, it appears, has been limited to the things I don't like. So I grabbed a can of wild rice soup and headed out.

Soon I was listening to friends discuss their difficulties finding the right Christmas presents. "Gift cards all the way," Hilary declared.

Preparing gifts can be a source of pleasure or stress, meaning or distraction.

Today we have more options than ever, bigger bells, louder whistles. And they're all available at the click of a mouse. As a result, gift giving has become less of an art and more of a science. Less physical, more formulaic.

eBay recommends eight gifts for each of its consumer categories, based on age and gender. For "Trapped in the Past," model airplanes. For "High Maintenance," fur boots. A saxophone for "Casanova" and poker chips for "Just Impossible."

But how much fun would it be to give the product of an external equation?

My Uncle Paul and Aunt Sally delight in gift giving. They deliberate over each purchase, then they hover by each recipient, studying her reaction and celebrating her satisfaction.

Receiving presents on Christmas, clearly, is secondary to the joy they get from giving.

One year my Uncle John, who was unemployed at the time, gave my mom, an avid tea drinker, an enormous sack of tea bags. He had been sweeping a social hall, and after each night, the owner let him take a handful of tea bags. Like the widow who gave two coins, his gift carried great weight.

Gift giving can inspire generosity in others — and repay the giver in surprising ways. Last year I created a memory book for my mom's 50th birthday, asking 50 friends and relatives to write a favorite memory of her.

I ended up with more than 50 stories and an education in my mom, who had many wonderful friends and adventures, in turns out, long before I was born.

Soon a series of gifts from over the years entered my mind. Each one had a small price tag and a huge significance.

The time I was five and Mom cut her favorite purple bathrobe so it would fit me.

The memory box my roommate Staci created. "The Ultimate Song Mix" my friend Bill burned for me.

Small gifts, big acts of love.

We live in a culture that spoils. TiVo records shows to match our taste. iPods create playlists to please our ears. Sleep Number beds adjust to our backs. RSS feeds adapt to our brains. We're each plunged into the center and made to be king.

Young adulthood can fuel that self-absorption. We don't have kids to dress or feed or clean; we don't have parents to dress or feed or clean. So we can focus on ourselves — our wardrobe, our social life, our career.

That's why being completely consumed creating a gift can be a joyful, even spiritual, release. "Every good and perfect gift," James 1:17 states, "is from above."

Last Christmas Eve, I could feel the stir of the Holy Spirit when I stayed up late into the night to finish a gift for my grandpa: a heritage plaque with pictures of our ancestors and relatives. The next morning, I had drooping eyelids and a leaping heart. I couldn't wait to give Grandpa his gift. And his response made my Christmas.

That same spirit stirred in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago when Jesus was born in a manger, transforming the mundane to the miraculous — the ultimate gift of God.

Christina Capecchi is a graduate student at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. E-mail her at christinacap@gmail.com.

Catholic Athletes for Christ visit the Vatican

VATICAN CITY—A delegation of Catholic athletes led by Mike Sweeney of the Kansas City Royals met with officials of the Vatican's Office of Church and Sport. Catholic Athletes for Christ (CAC) sponsored the Vatican visit. CAC founder Ray McKenna is heartened that the Vatican has a sincere and genuine interest in evangelizing the world of sports. Father Kevin Lixey hosted athletes and encouraged them to provide a strong witness for Christ, as many see the United States as the center of the sports world.

During the stay in Rome, Sweeney shared his testimony at a Theology on Tap session, with many Italians and students in attendance. He stated that his whole life turned around after he turned it over to Jesus and started to live for Christ and not himself. University of Alabama's Assistant Softball Coach, Alyson Habetz, added, "My pilgrimage to the Vatican and meeting Pope Benedict at the audience exceeded my wildest expectations. The conference and the experience are memories I will treasure my whole life."

Instituted by Pope John Paul II in August 2004, the Vatican Office of Church and Sport section is within the Pontifical Council of the Laity, and aims to foster a culture of sport that promotes athletics as a means for bringing about well-rounded growth of the person and as an instrument of peace and brotherhood among peoples. The new section is led by U.S. Father Kevin Lixey, a member of the Legionar-

ROME—A few months ago the idea to create a song as homage to John Paul II was announced and finally we can listen to the song. Its title is "Non temere" (Don't be Afraid), and it is the new CD single of Roberto Bignoli, a performer of Christian music from Milan and one of the most refined poets of our time.

According to Xt3.com Christian Magazine, disabled singer and songwriter Roberto Bignoli, since his childhood, has experienced poverty and illness, and later, drug abuse and prison. He is the son of an unmarried woman, suffered from polio and has lived for many years in various institutions. Then, the love for Jesus radically changed his life and now Roberto Bignoli is one of Italy's best known and loved Christian singers and songwriters.

The song was not created with the purpose of commercial success and will be played by many radio stations across the whole world as a personal homage of Roberto to John Paul II, the pope who loved the music and thought the art as a way to get closer to God. How can you forget the joy of this unforgettable pontiff

in front of the thousand choruses dedicated to him by the young people during the World Youth Days? John Paul II often accompanied them by raising his arms and moving them to the rhythm of the music. In reply the youngsters started singing more loudly. This is the reason why Roberto Bignoli wanted to dedicate a song to Pope John Paul II who was a friend of the young people and a friend of every-

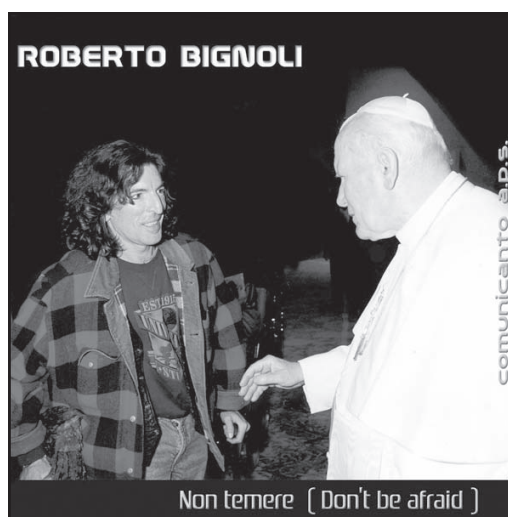
body and whose message was to love each other.

The CD was realized in collaboration with the Ass.comunicanto di Lugo di Romagna. The arranger, producer and author of the music of "Don't be Afraid" is Nico Fortarezza (secular artist). He is famous in the music show business for his collaboration with Enrico

Ruggeri.

The CD also contains an interesting videoclip, in which the authors directly address the young people, emphasizing on the positive message of the song inspired by the words of the pope. It was, in fact, John Paul II who encouraged the new generations not to be afraid and to open the doors to Christ. Roberto Bignoli follows the same way with his song "Don't be Afraid." He is offering to young people from all over the world a message of hope and infinite love, in order to remember to look at the sky and to pray through the lyrics of the song.

You may watch the Videobackstage Non temere (Don't be afraid) tributed to Pope John Paul II by Roberto Bignoli on YOUTUBE at www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKyJa8sDyi4 and read more about Bignoli at www.xt3.com/magazine/Article.asp?ID=430. Remember to click on the British flag for English language print.



ies of Christ.

Catholic Athletes for Christ (CAC) provides an integrated network of sports oriented clergy and lay people to serve Catholic athletes, coaches and staff in the practice of their faith and to utilize the unique platform given to them to reach the world for Jesus Christ and his Church. CAC is based in Alexandria, VA. More information is found at www.catholicathletesforchrist.org.

National Vocation Awareness Week - Jan. 8-12

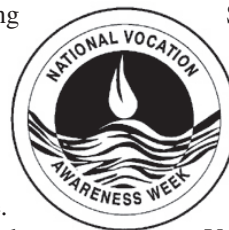
The feast of the Baptism of the Lord celebrated the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus is consecrated as the servant of God through baptism. How appropriate that this feast of the Baptism of the Lord is the beginning of National Vocation Awareness Week. As we renew our baptismal vows we strengthen our covenant with God. We ask for the Spirit to guide us as we respond to God's call to service.

The Office of Vocations for the Diocese of Victoria serves the people of the local church (priests, sisters, brothers, deacons and lay persons) in the area of vocation awareness. This responsibility also belongs to all members of the local church. We should not only pray for vocations, but support and invite consideration of a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. It is the aim of the office to empower in-

dividuals to foster and nourish all church related vocations (ordained and lay) and to give them the tools necessary to do so.

A Discernment Retreat for Men will be held Jan. 12-14, 2007, at St. Mary's Seminary, 9845 Memorial Drive in Houston. For more information on this retreat you may visit www.archgh.org/VocationOffice/mendiscernretreat.htm.

Visit the Diocese of Victoria Vocations Web site for more information at www.victoriadiocese.org. Father Dan Morales, director.



Diocesan Directory

The Office of *The Catholic Lighthouse* has just completed a new directory for the Diocese of Victoria.

This directory is in a new format; it is now in a three-ring binder. The binder format will allow us to provide updates to the directory on a timelier basis. We will no longer print a new directory each year or even every other year. This directory will serve you for many years.

Corrections received from parishes and organizations will be placed on the diocesan Web site. These changes will be made regularly, so please check the site often.

The directories are available at the chancery office at \$15 each (\$5 extra for shipping).

"It is easier to help people out of hunger, nakedness and homelessness than to relieve loneliness and hunger of heart which is so common today. Understand that the people need you as priests, not as social workers. Plenty of people can do social work, but only you can bring them peace, understanding and love — only you can bring them Jesus." — Mother Teresa

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Diocese of Victoria celebrates ordination of two transitional deacons

Continued from p. 1

leading up to the cross. There will be falls and struggles, but also many people like Mary, Simon and Veronica to assist me. There will be many crucifixions but also many resurrections."

Attending the ordination for Gabriel was his mother, Minnie Espinosa of Gonzalez, brother Michael, sisters Sarah and Orlanda, brother-in-law Mario Serrato, sister-in-law Martha Espinosa, nieces Vanessa Espinosa and Gabrielle Hernandez, as well as several aunts, uncles, and cousins. He was surprised that even one of his college professors from Wichita Falls attended.

In his interview, Deacon Michael Rother stated that all he could do during the whole ordination Mass was lift his praises to God for the gift of ordination and for God's presence in his life.

"The road to my diaconate has been a long one—six years discerning. However, I was granted the grace of joy and happiness in my desire for holy orders this past August at a retreat, which made petitioning the bishop for ordination, as is required by Canon Law, easier," he said.

"The letter I wrote pointed out much of the weight that ordination brings, especially the following phrases: 'I am fully aware of the obligations that I shall contract in the reception of this order ... I earnestly sincerely intend to observe them diligently throughout the whole of my life,' '... to the last day of my life, with the help of God,' and '...to give example of virtue both in word and in deed... '.

"The day arrived and my surety prevented any nervousness. By God's grace, I consciously participated in the Mass and with great resolve and purpose responded to all that was asked of me at the ordination: celibacy, service, preaching/teaching the Gospels, prayer, and obedience," he said.

Deacon Michael crowned his ordination day by assisting for the first time at a Mass held at St. Robert Bellarmine in El Campo.

"Each day since the ordination brings

more responsibilities as I continue my studies and assist at St. Robert Bellarmine twice a month, but joy overcomes any struggle or stress, because as I see it, I am living the dream!

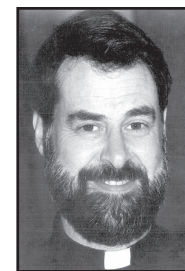
Those attending for Deacon Michael's ordination were his parents Bernard and Madeline; his brother Troy and wife, Shannon, and their children Blaise and Brenna; his Godparents who brought up his vestments; aunts, uncles and other relatives; parishioners from St. Anthony's in Palacios and St. Joseph's in Yoakum, as well as some clergy and Aggie friends.

Catholic television programming steps up

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In the weeks and months ahead, Catholics looking for quality television programming that suits their moral and social sensibilities need look no further than programming supplied by the Catholic Communication Campaign. "Our motto is 'How the Good News Gets Around,'" said CCC executive producer Ellen McCloskey. The first CCC project is "Picturing Mary," which is being offered to public TV stations nationwide in December. The hour-long documentary looks at how artists depicted Mary from centuries ago to more modern times. "It's a very good companion to 'The Face: Jesus in Art,' which continues to air on public TV stations at Christmas and Easter," McCloskey said. In January, those same public TV stations will be offered "Lives for Sale," produced by Maryknoll Productions. The documentary looks at the immigration issue but pays close attention to human trafficking. In February, another public-TV documentary that got partial funding from the CCC will air on selected PBS stations in time for Black History Month. "Sisters of Selma" examines the role nuns played in the civil rights struggles of 40 and more years ago in Selma, Ala.

NFP Questions and Answers

with Father Matthew Habiger, OSB



Dear Fr. Matthew @ the Abbey,

Please pray for my wife and me. We both acknowledge each other's stance on family planning, but unfortunately we are on opposite sides of the NFP fence. Do you know of any tools for working through the differences my wife and I have? We have a strong marriage ... we pray together every day ... but we keep coming up at odds on the issue of contraception. We both recognize this as the major issue of our marriage at the moment. In a sense it has made us both focus more on the marriage, which is good, but neither of us likes that we disagree on this issue. We are currently expecting our fourth (planned) child, so we have a few months left before the issue of NFP has an opportunity to be put into practice again. My wife is from the medical community; as such she regards NFP as a completely shoddy form of family planning.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." This quote scares me so. My wife and I are committed to working through this issue and to never let his 'prophecy' come true in our lives. We have both asked for intercession from the Holy Spirit in our marriage regarding this. Is there anything else we can do? Thanks for listening. God bless. — M.

Dear M,

There are many good books, tapes, and pamphlets on what is wrong with contraception. You can find them easily at One More Soul (www.OMSoul.com). Here is a brief list I would recommend to you and your wife: *Birth Control and Christian Discipleship*, by John Kippley (Couple to Couple League); *Contraception: Why Not?* A tape or CD by Dr. Janet Smith; *New Perspectives on Contraception*, by Donald DeMarco PhD (DeMarco explains how contraception separates people from their spouses, from God, and even from their own best interests); *Physicians Healed* (personal stories of 15 physicians who do not prescribe contraception); and *Rethinking Reproductive Medicine*.

Your wife does not seem to be well informed about the advanced stage of the art of NFP. I suggest that she contact the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of

Human Reproduction: 6901 Mercy Road; Omaha, NE 68106-2604. Tel: 402/ 390-6600.

To understand the moral evil of contraception, it requires a little reading and reflection. I am convinced that contraception and sterilization is the taproot of the culture of death. Keep reading in this area and you will discover why.

Cordially yours, Father Matthew Habiger, OSB

To contact Father Matthew with a question on NFP, email him at mhabiger@kansasmonks.org.

Since 2003, Father Matthew Habiger, OSB, has been a fulltime member of the **NFP Outreach** team of priests. His focus is primarily upon promoting God's Plan for Spousal Love, which includes counteracting the "contraceptive and sterilization culture." He has a doctorate in moral theology, a master's degree in catechetics and a master's degree in academic theology. In 1990 he began a ten-year tour of duty proclaiming the Gospel of Life throughout the world as a member of Human Life International, where he eventually served as president and chairman of the board. He has lectured extensively throughout the world in 55 countries to a wide variety of audiences on the life issues and has first hand experience of the problems confronting the culture of life. To learn more about Father Habiger, go to his Web site at www.nfpoutreach.org/Habiger.htm. His articles also appear at www.victoriadiocese.org.

Local Natural Family Planning classes

For English or bilingual sessions of the Sympto-Thermal Method (S-TM) in Palacios, call Rene and Wilma Galvan at (361) 972-5030. Available for counseling and classes. For information about the Sympto-Thermal Method in the Victoria area, contact Rudy and Estella DeLos Santos (361) 573-2624. Introductory presentations on the Creighton Model Ovulation Method are offered in Wharton at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church and in East Bernard at Holy Cross Catholic Church. Please contact Melissa Morse at (979) 335-7306 for more information or to register for classes.



DIOCESE OF VICTORIA PASTORAL INSTITUTE

Extended Program Classes

Sacraments of Initiation (Sacraments I)

Sr. Frances Cabrini Janvier, IWBS – Instructor (Victoria Center)
Rev. Bob Fisher, SVD – Instructor (Wharton Center)

Participants will study Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, the three sacraments by which persons are initiated into the Catholic Church.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) will also be explained.

VICTORIA CENTER

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Tuesdays: Jan. 2 - Feb. 6, 2007
7:00 - 9:15 p.m.

WHARTON CENTER

Holy Family Church
2011 Briar Lane
Mondays: Jan. 8 - Feb. 13, 2007
7:00 - 9:15 p.m.

Through the Pastoral Institute, Bishop David E. Fellhauer is committed to making adult religious education a high priority in the Diocese of Victoria. For more information or to register, call the Catechetical office at 361-573-0828 or e-mail calvarez@victoriadiocese.org. You can also register the first night of class. Classes are \$15.00 per six-weeks.

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

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Diocese of Victoria Library & Media Center



Book of the Month

Starlight: Beholding the Christmas Miracle
All Year Long Christmas is the reality and the rest of the year is illusion – so Father John Shea instructs us on how to keep the reality alive continuously. Filled with insight, wit, imagery, and warmth, this story will keep the light burning in the darkness all year round.

Other Books

- *Praying with the Word: Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany* by David Haas
- *Following the Star* by Rev. Mark Boyer
- *Christmas* illustrated by Our Sunday Visitor
- *Joy to the World* by Phyllis Vos Wezeman

Video of the Month

An Advent and Christmas Journey In this five-part series, Rev. Michael Himes goes in-depth into the spirituality and theology of Advent and Christmas. Each video is approximately 25 minutes long and each has a study guide.

Other Videos

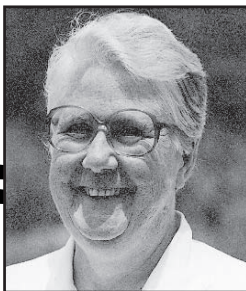
- *The Legend of the Candy Cane*
- *A Star for Jeremy*
- *The First Christmas Crib: A Story of St. Francis of Assisi*
- *The Songs of Christmas: The Stories Behind Popular Christmas Carols*
- *The Best Night of the Year: A Christmas Story for Children*

The Library and Media Center is open to all persons in the Diocese of Victoria. It houses over 5,000 books and 1,400 videos. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday, or visit us on line at www.victoriadiocese.org



Sisterly Thoughts

By Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS



Preparing for Holidays or for Christ's Birthday?

I was caught by surprise as I was driving home in the dark recently. So many Christmas decorations were up and so many lights were already shining and it wasn't even Thanksgiving!

My first reaction was, "I can't believe that it's that time already." Then when I got home, I was further astonished to find that Santa and elves and gift commercials had dominated TV programming. By the time you read this, I'm sure many of us will be in the midst of preparation for Christmas. It's apparent that we don't need reminders about what's the latest in decorations or gift-shopping; commercial ads are taking care of that!

However, in the hustle and bustle of the season, it's possible that we could use some help in focusing on whose birthday we're celebrating and whose coming is expected, so let's look at some suggestions that might be helpful:

We can focus on Jesus' birthday as an individual or as a family by reading about and reflecting on the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, in the Sunday Lectionary readings and by reading and reflecting on the Christmas story in Luke 2:1-20. We can make Advent a time of spiritual preparation and of reconciliation by participating in the Sacrament of Penance and by volunteering for church-sponsored service

projects as we are able. Our yard and house decorations can include the nativity scene as a reminder of what Christmas is really about. We can set up and pray with an Advent wreath and we can prepare a crib for Baby Jesus. After we decorate our Christmas tree we can remind ourselves of the true meaning of Christmas by saying the following prayer as a family: "Gracious God, let your blessings come upon us as we light this tree. May all who stand in its light eagerly welcome Jesus, the true Light that never fades."

Also, in the spirit of Christmas, one might give the gift of time in service to others; helping a shut-in family member, relative or friend do their Christmas shopping or wrapping; reading stories to children, and so on. We might enjoy watching favorite Christmas movies with our family or recording some of the better television Christmas programs for watching later during the Christmas season. Some of us might ask our grandparents and other elders to share a story about Christmas when they were growing up. For families with children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, baking a birthday cake for Jesus and singing "Happy Birthday" can be a powerful reminder of the feast we're celebrating.

Families might agree to give simple gifts and donate the money we would spend to a worthy cause in the person's name. Or one might give the gift of prayer—by writing a special prayer for people, and developing a prayer list of people to be prayed for each day and letting the people know that we are praying for them. Other ways to do something special is to visit a friend or relative in a nursing home, or run errands or help elderly persons with housecleaning or yard work.

We can give special gifts to Jesus in others by collecting and dropping off non-perishable food items at a local food drive and donating to the St. Vincent de Paul Society to help the poor. We can welcome Joseph and Mary, who were seeking lodging in Bethlehem, in someone who seems to be left out, alone, or a newcomer. We can honor Jesus in a special way by celebrating special feasts of his mom: the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12), and Mary, Mother of God (Jan. 1).

I hope that these suggestions are helpful as you think of ways of making Christmas a special time of celebrating the coming of the Messiah. May you have a Joyful Advent and a Blessed Christmas Season.

Lay missionary from tsunami devastated Indonesia visits Victoria

By Cindy Brewer

In a clear succinct tone, Theresia Sianaga, a young woman from Indonesia, addressed the small parish of St. Mary's in Victoria Sunday, November 26, 2006, recounting her story of surviving the 2004 Tsunami.

She was visiting the parish as a lay missionary of the Camillian Task Force, an international relief effort of the Catholic Order of St. Camillus dedicated to serving the medical, spiritual and humanitarian needs of people affected by man-made and natural disasters.

Theresia had been an accountant for four years prior to joining the Camillian Task Force (CTF). Most likely she would still have been an accountant had her life not been devastatingly interrupted by the 2004 Tsunami which hit her country as well as eleven others, killing nearly 250,000 people.

After having received help from CTF as a tsunami victim, Theresia felt the Lord calling her to continue her healing journey by joining CTF's healing ministry. For Theresia was not only a victim who had survived the tsunami, she was also a victim in that she had lost her family to the tidal wave: her 50-year-old mother, 20-year-old younger brother, and 17-year-old sister, the youngest of the family.

Theresia is a Catholic who attended the only Catholic Church in Banda Aceh, Sacred Heart Parish, on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, one of the places hardest hit by the tsunami. Her parish had a membership of 400 prior to the tsunami; now with most of its parishioners dead or having fled to Medan about 600 km away, its parishioners number less than 50.

Since joining CTF just months after the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami, Theresia has worked at many natural disaster sites including the May 29, 2006, earthquake and volcano in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. There she was comforting a young woman who had lost her husband and baby in the natural disaster. She tried consoling her by telling her she understands, "We are the same." But since she was grieving so

badly because of the loss of her new husband and infant baby son, the young woman denied that Theresia could understand. Theresia then explained to her that she had lost her family in the tsunami and that none of their bodies had been found.

The young woman, a Muslim, was surprised that Theresia, a natural disaster victim herself, was able to assist other victims. Then she asked Theresia if she were a Christian, as she pointed to the cross she wore. She said, "Yes, a Catholic," and said she was there to bring the hope that the



Marie Immenhauser and Cindy Brewer, parishioners of St. Mary's in Victoria, speak with Theresia Sianaga, a lay missionary from Indonesia, will she was at the parish on behalf of the Camillian Task Force.

Lord gives. The woman said she was proud of Theresia for coming as a Christian to help the mostly Muslim population while she was still grieving herself. Where Theresia comes from it's about 99.9 percent Muslim, she said.

She has been on mission in the United States for CTF with Father Scott Binet who was currently fund-raising in Port Arthur at the time. Theresia has been in 25 states in the past four months with CTF and will continue for two more months advocating for the Camillian Task Force.

Theresia's mission was organized by the Propagation of the Faith and St. Mary's was the only parish she visited in the area. To learn more about CTF or to become a benefactor, receive its newsletter or to be remembered in CTF's prayers, please contact them at www.CTFmercy.org or write to CTF Secretariat, 3533 N. 84th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53222.



PRAHA KJZT DONATES TO ST. ROSE—St. Anne's KJZT Society No. 4 of Praha donated \$560 to St. Rose of Lima Catholic School on Nov. 13. The funds were raised through a bake sale held in September, with matching funds received from the KJZT state office in Austin as a community fund-raiser under the fraternal program. Attending the presentation were, l-r, Ellene Vrazel, society vice president; Julia Stryk, society adult division treasurer; Rosanne Gallia, St. Rose principal; Georgia Cerny, society president; and Nancy Jasek, society secretary.

Position Available!!

Due to the retirement of the current directors, the Diocese of Victoria is looking for a new director(s) for the Spiritual Renewal Center.

Required:

- a college degree
- practicing Catholic

Preferred:

- experience in church ministry
- able to speak Spanish
- be willing to live on premises
- able to perform light maintenance

The individual(s) hired will be responsible for overseeing the day to day operations of the facility, marketing the facility and assisting with the continuing development of the Spiritual Renewal Center.

Interested applicants should submit their resume to:

Diocese of Victoria • Attn: Human Resources
P.O. Box 4070
Victoria, Texas 77903

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About sixteen of the LCWR members wielded hammers and crowbars to “gut” a house belonging to a gentleman who had his FEMA trailer parked right outside the house. They banged out sheetrock, pulled out nails and floor tiles and emptied many, many trashcans full of debris. Sisters from Victoria included three IWBS Sisters and one Missionary Catechist. Pictured from left are IWBS Sisters Emilie Eilers, Evelyn Korenek and Amata Hollas.

Women Religious visit New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS, La.—Members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) recently found a way to express their concern and support for the citizens of New Orleans in their ongoing effort to rebuild a city and build a stronger life. Region XII of the LCWR is composed of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Arkansas. Last fall, many of these women and members of their religious communities worked to welcome refugees from Hurricane Katrina. This year they wanted those who remained or have returned to their home to know that they have not been forgotten.

So, although Louisiana is designated a member of another region (Region 5), the Sisters of Region XII decided it was time to visit their neighbors. They moved their annual fall meeting to New Orleans. October 23 through 25 was a very busy time. In this quick visit these women religious heard from those who are working to re-build, saw the scars still present fourteen months later and were able to participate briefly in some of the clean-up.

On their first evening together, the Sisters heard from a panel of diocesan personnel who have been at the forefront of the re-building effort. They heard of efforts and networking in the areas of housing, medical services and Catholic schools. One simple statement made that night echoed and re-echoed in the next day's experiences: “The trauma is not over. It continues.”

The following morning, a bus tour brought home the realities as we traveled along the shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain: Metairie—where FEMA trailers, PODS (for household storage) and blue roofs still abound in the neighborhoods . . . then to

Sister Elizabeth Riebschlaeger, CCVI, to be installed as province team member

Continued from p. 4

representatives from our region in Peru and Zambia, and also the Generalate Team to envision future directions for the congregation.” They will also meet with their “cousins,” the CCVI's in Houston, regarding their joint Christus Healthcare ministry.

The team will be installed at a celebration to be held Sunday, Dec. 31, 2006, at 10:00 a.m. in the Incarnate Word Chapel in San Antonio.



The religious sisters were given caps, masks, goggles, and a crowbar to aid in the “gutting” task. They removed almost all of the sheetrock and some of the electrical wiring. This home, in the 9th Ward neighborhood, had been totally under water from Hurricane Katrina; the home's resident had to be rescued by helicopter from his roof. Above is Missionary Catechist Sister Felipa Lara, MCSH, with the owner of the home.

the lower sections: Gentilly, Bywater, Lower 9th Ward, Arabi, Chalmette . . . even a taste of East New Orleans. Hospitals and medical centers stand empty. Downtown hotels awaiting the decision of their fate: reclaim or raze. Small commercial areas beginning to operate with fast foods and other services advertise. Areas of functioning population between stretches of neighborhoods are in various stages of abandonment and efforts to rebuild.

The trauma continues in neighborhoods whose houses still display signs spray-painted by National Guard teams who searched for survivors and came again to search for those who had not survived. The trauma continues for those who live in a trailer outside a home that no longer resembles itself, that no longer echoes with beloved voices. The trauma continues so deeply for some that they cannot find the energy to enter such a parody of their home until it is no longer recognizable by familiar furniture (no matter how jumbled or destroyed), walls and flooring.

Stronger still the statement that rings in the hearts of many: We are “building the new New Orleans!” The people of New Orleans do not look back to the pain of that August in 2005. Rather, they look to the achievements and small steps forward that are happening daily. They know that the challenges they face will not allow for easy answers or quick solutions. They also know that they cannot do it alone.

And so they welcome volunteer visitors who come to help in the basic work of gutting, re-building and painting. They welcome those who come to assist in healing bodies, minds and spirits. Their hope is unbounded. Their joy is in the new life they encounter daily. Their common response to visitors continues: “Thank you for coming. It's not how much you were able to do; it's the fact that you came and wanted to help.”

Those individuals or groups that want to be a part of building the new New Orleans can contact Catholic Charities of New Orleans. Their “Operation Helping Hands” has been outstanding in using the energy of local and visiting volunteers to gut and clean homes of elderly, disabled, or uninsured victims of Hurricane Katrina. They can be found and contacted by those interested in volunteering at www.ccano.org.

Food For The Public Good



Members of the Star Touring group, from clubs throughout south Texas, distribute boxes of food and personal care items to Schulenburg Food Pantry clients and two other area food pantries. The Star Touring (Yamaha bikes) group raised the money to have the “Feed The Children” truck filled. Hunger is a very real problem in rural Texas as well as throughout the United States.

Volunteer groups band together to feed the needy

By Barry Halvorson
Victoria Advocate

SCHULENBURG — On the first weekend of October, the Schulenburg Food Pantry, the Feed the Children organization and the Star Touring and Riding Association extended a helping hand to residents of Fayette County on Saturday on the campus of Blinn College.

A full trailer load of nonperishable food and personal hygiene items were distributed in Schulenburg through the Food Pantry while 160 boxes of goods were donated to the Amen Organization in LaGrange and 65 were sent to the Celebration House in Flatonia for additional distribution.

“I come from a public health nursing background,” Pantry Board President Kathy Quinlan said.

Quinlan moved to Schulenburg from San Antonio about 10 years ago when she retired from nursing. It didn't take her long to start filling her spare time as a pantry volunteer.

“Now I'm busier than ever,” she said. “In a lot of ways, the needs in the small towns are harder to fill than in the big cities because the towns have fewer resources and a lot of the state agencies are being consolidated. For example, battered women from this area have to go to Bastrop for help while the elderly have to contact agencies in Austin. And a lot of the state agencies can only be contacted by computer or phone which can be intimidating or unavailable to the people who need the services the most.”

Several volunteers from Catholic parishes are represented on our board of directors and volunteer staff, said Quinlan.

St. Rose in Schulenburg, St Mary's in

High Hill, Queen of the Holy Rosary in Hostyn, as well as several of our neighboring Christian churches in the Schulenburg and La Grange areas and our local Jewish community donate to the pantry on a regular basis, she said.

Rita Brossmann, a local volunteer from St. Rose of Lima Parish in Schulenburg, was joined by her grandchildren Clayton and April Brossmann. Grandma said the family is trying to pass down the idea of community service by setting a good example themselves as well as involving the younger kids.

“I go just to help,” Clayton said. “I've learned to enjoy helping people. And someday, if things go wrong, you would hope there would be somebody there to help you.”

A total of 85 STAR bikers took part in the distribution effort traveling in from such diverse areas of the state as Houston, San Antonio, Fort Worth and the Rio Grande Valley.

STAR South Regional Director Paula Sandlin is a member of the San Antonio Chapter but lives in LaVernia and has seen how much the group can help others. She explained that STAR is the official owners association of Yamaha, now Star, Motorcycles.

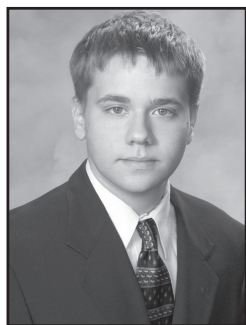
Feed the Children is STAR's official national charity. “We bought this truckload of food for \$5,400,” she said. “And it contains more than \$30,000 in food and hygiene items. They just have a lot more buying power because they are purchasing in bulk for charitable reasons, something that local food pantries can also take advantage of.”



ST. ROSE CDA DONATES TO RAPHAEL'S REFUGE—The Catholic Daughters of the Americas (CDA) Court St. Rose 1597 of Schulenburg presented a donation to the director of Raphael's Refuge, Midge Elam. “We are very grateful,” said Midge, “as we are working hard to complete the Chapel of the Holy Innocents and there are many expenses involved. Pictured left to right are Dana Daughtry, CDA St. Rose regent; Midge Elam, director at Raphael's Refuge; and Cynthia Kosler, CDA St. Rose first vice regent.



St. Joseph High students named national merit commended

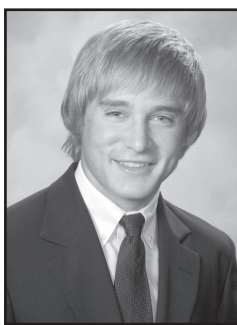


Daniel
Welder

Daniel Welder and Rhett Goodman, St. Joseph High School seniors, have been named Commended Students by the 2007 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Welder and Goodman are among 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation being recognized for their exceptional academic promise.

Commended students place among the top five percent of more than 1.4 million students who entered the 2007 competition by taking the 2005 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.



Rhett
Goodman

Life Teen announces new Catholic Podcast

LIFE TEEN's "Sunday, Sunday, Sunday" Podcast is number 1 Christian download and number 3 Religion and Spirituality download in its first day.

Mesa, AZ—LIFE TEEN, an international Catholic youth organization, announces that it is now producing a Catholic podcast titled "Sunday, Sunday, Sunday." This free podcast is a weekly preparation for the upcoming Sunday Catholic Mass readings, hosted by the Bible Geek®, Mark Hart.

Podcasts are part of LIFE TEEN's ongoing commitment to provide relevant resources to help lead teens closer to Christ. "We're excited to know the Gospel is being heard, whether it is in a church, on the street corner, or on their iPod," says Matt

Smith, Director of Internet Ministries for LIFE TEEN.

In its first day, the "Sunday, Sunday, Sunday" podcast was the number 1 Christian download and the

number 3 Religion and Spirituality download. To access the LIFE TEEN "Sunday, Sunday, Sunday" podcast search for "lifeteen.com" in iTunes or another mp3 catcher.

LIFE TEEN, Inc. was founded in 1985 and is an international Catholic movement that serves the Church by providing re-

sources and faith experiences that help lead teens closer to Christ. This is accomplished through a vibrant Eucharistic spirituality and by creating widespread opportunities for teens to grow in their faith. For more information on LIFE TEEN, visit www.lifeteen.com/press.



The right kind of treasure hunting for Christmas

By Christopher Carstens (CNS)

When I was a kid, around noon on Christmas we'd get together with our friends. The best game of the year was "Whadja get?"

We'd show our presents to each other (it was a real competition), and the person who got the best football or the shiniest toy gun was the big winner. Generally, the excitement wore off by dinnertime, and any kid still bragging about his Christmas presents the next day was clearly a pathetic loser.

"One of the problems with getting older is that they stop giving you toys. Once you're 13 or 14, hardly anything under the tree is ever as much fun as that new Barbie was when you were 7. Growing up drains the excitement out of playing "Whadja get?"

As you mature, you get to participate in the Christmas giving in an entirely new way. The big fun is no longer in getting cool stuff. The real joy comes from choosing gifts for other people. The payoff doesn't come from getting the best present. Rather, it comes from giving each well-chosen gift.

Lots of people approach shopping as a chore. See if you can get all 14 presents in two hours! Sure, you'll have a bunch of wrapped packages, but each one will clearly say, "I had to get you a present, and this was the first thing I saw." You get cologne for Dad, even if he never wears the stuff, and a scarf for Mom, even if you've never seen the scarf you got her last Christmas.

This year, look at your shopping as a treasure hunt. But other people get to keep the treasures you find.

Skip gift certificates, unless they meet a special interest. For example, you might give a pet lover a gift certificate to a doggy boutique. Otherwise, the gift certificate approach says, "I needed to get you a present, and I'm clueless about what you like."

Don't spend too much money. Taking time to choose a gift well shows how much you care. Buying an expensive gift only shows how much you could afford to spend.

If people exchange gifts, it generally is expected that they will spend similar amounts on each other. If you spend too much, it creates a sense of obligation. A gift for a good friend shouldn't cost more than the going price of a CD. The reasonable limit on a gift for a girlfriend or boyfriend is what you'd spend on a nice evening out together; say the price of two movie tickets and dinner.

The message of the well-chosen gift is always, "I care enough about you to pay attention to your interests." If your mother is a gardener, you might go to that fancy hardware store at the mall and pick up a nice set of rose shears. If it's too cold outside to garden, she might like a book about gardening. Sure, she could buy those things herself, but she probably would not take time. You're saying, "Mom, I know what you like, and I found something you'll enjoy."

Sometimes the gift of an experience together is even better than a material gift. You might take your dad out to lunch for just the two of you as a way of celebrating the holiday together or go with your mom to the museum. That gift says, "I want to spend some time with you." For a parent, that can be the sweetest gift of all.

YOUTH CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 9—Bishop Fellhauer Christmas Dinner to benefit the multi-purpose building fund, Spiritual Renewal Center

January 6-7, 2007—Youth Leadership Team Retreat

January 13, 2007—Basic Youth Ministry Certificate Class – Prayer and Worship: 8:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. at the Chancery – pre-registration is required

January 21, 2007—Youth Leadership Training –Planning – Super Extravaganza Youth Rally: 1:00-5:00 p.m. at the chancery.

February 4, 2007—Super Extravaganza Youth Rally - (formally Junior High Fiesta) at Holy Family in Victoria

February 17, 2007—NET Retreat at St. Joseph in Moulton

February 18, 2007—NET Retreat at Holy Cross in East Bernard

February 20, 2007—NET Retreat at Our Lady of Sorrows in Victoria

February 21, 2007—NET Retreat open date – contact the office to schedule your retreat.

February 22, 2007—NET Retreat at Our Lady of Sorrows in Victoria

February 23, 2007—NET Retreat at St. Anthony's in Columbus

February 24, 2007—NET Retreat at Our Lady of the Gulf in Port Lavaca

February 24, 2007—Basic Youth Ministry Certificate Class –Justice and Service: 8:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. at the Chancery – pre-registration is required

February 25, 2007—NET Retreat at Our Lady of Victory in Victoria

February 26 - March 2, 2007—Diocesan Directors in the Archdiocese of Galveston - Houston

February 27-28, 2007—NET Retreat at Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Shiner

For more information on any of these events, please contact:

Debbie Vanelli at the Office of Youth Ministry

at (361) 573-0828 ext. 32 or e-mail at dvanelli@victoriadiocese.org

or JoAnn Martinez at ext. 50 or e-mail at jmartinez@victoriadiocese.org

Web site: www.victoriadiocese.org/youthoffice

Catholic Goal set for 2007 Souper Bowl of Caring

COLUMBIA, SC—Over 1,200 Catholic youth groups have already registered to participate in the February 4, 2007 Souper Bowl of Caring. "We're asking Catholic youth to 'Stir it Up,'" said Bob McCarty executive director, National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), referring to the Souper Bowl of Caring 2007 theme. "Our goal is to see 2,007 Catholic youth groups register and participate in Souper Bowl of Caring 2007."

In 2006, 1,245 Catholic youth groups raised over \$1 million in the Souper Bowl of Caring for charities that help people who are hungry. In Texas, Catholic churches raised over \$90,000 through Souper Bowl of Caring 2006. To be counted in the national totals each group must register their participation at www.souperbowl.org and report following the event.

"The Souper Bowl of Caring teaches young people the joy that comes from serving others and concretizes Catholic social teaching," said McCarty, "We encourage Catholic youth groups to join this ecumenical movement that embodies Jesus' teaching to 'love thy neighbor' and work to transform Super Bowl weekend into the largest weekend of giving and serving in our country."

The Souper Bowl of Caring has set a

nationwide goal of \$8 million for 2007. Almost \$5 million was generated in Souper Bowl of Caring 2006 bringing the total to \$33 million since the effort began 16 years ago.

Asking for only \$1 on one day,

America's teens are transforming Super Bowl weekend into the nation's largest youth-led day of giving. Standing at church doors with soup pots, young people of many denominations in all 50 states receive donations

and every dollar raised is given to charities selected by each group.

Churches can register to participate at www.souperbowl.org. Each registrant receives a free resource kit with all the materials needed to plan and promote their event. Additional resources to support Catholic parishes in Souper Bowl of Caring projects can be accessed at www.nfcym.org/resources/components/justserve/sbc.htm.

Groups are asked to report collection totals to the Souper Bowl of Caring following the event so the nationwide impact of youth helping hungry neighbors can be announced and celebrated.

Editor's note: Please visit www.souperbowl.org for an interactive map of participants to see who participated in your area.



Help young people see value of marriage, pope urges German bishops

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The church needs to help young people realize that true happiness and fulfillment are found in permanent commitments such as marriage, Pope Benedict XVI told a group of German bishops. Young people today are afraid of definitively committing themselves to something, fearing it is "unfeasible and opposed to freedom," he said. "It is very important to help young people say 'yes' to the definitive, that it does not clash with freedom, but represents the greatest opportunity" for being free, he

said. The pope met Nov. 18 with bishops from Germany, the second group of prelates from his homeland to make their "ad limina" visits during his pontificate. Bishops make the visits to the Vatican every five years to report on the status of their dioceses. The pope told the bishops that not only are young couples shying away from the permanent bonds of marriage, they are also finding it "difficult to accept children" into their lives and give them the solid, lasting base needed to grow.



ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL ANNOUNCES HOMECOMING ROYALTY—The St. Joseph High School Homecoming Queen and King were recently crowned at half-time of the homecoming football game against San Antonio Christian Oct. 20, 2006. STJ seniors Bethany Longoria and Corbin Lauger received the honors. Other couples nominated were Madeline Bowen and Sam Foreman, Ashton Crocker and Mitchell Dornak, Julie Gonzales and Taylor Schaar, and Rachel Morris and Paul Daniel. The Flyers beat San Antonio Christian 28 - 7 to win their homecoming game.



"DEATH DEFYING FEATS" PERFORMED IN BUILDING RAPHAEL'S REFUGE—Jose Aviles roofs the cupola atop Raphael's Refuge's Chapel of the Holy Innocents during the week of Nov. 13, 2006. Fidel Medrano assists Jose while Leonel Bustos holds the ladder at its base. Jose "moved with great ease and obvious confidence" while working on the cupola Midge Elam, director at Raphael's Refuge, said. Due to high winds there were a couple of days on which they were unable to work. Raphael's Refuge is located about two miles west of Flatonia. If you are interested in helping, please contact Midge at 361-865-3021 or write to 2715 W US Hwy 90, Flatonia, TX 77941. To learn more about the project, you can also visit their Web site at: www.raphaelsrefuge.org.

Jesus Is The Reason

*In Bethlehem, God gave to us
The source of Christmas joy;
A star shown on a miracle:
The virgin birth of a boy.*

*He was born both God and man,
A Savior for us all,
The way to get to our heavenly home,
If we just heed His call.*

*So as we shop and spend and wrap
And enjoy the Christmas season,
Let's keep in mind the sacred truth:
Jesus is the reason.*

By Joanna Fuchs

St. Joseph Catholic School chapel renovated

YOAKUM, Texas—With the blue sky as a backdrop, the sun glistening through the glass panes, the birds singing their welcoming praises, and the shadow of the crucifix cast on the floor, St. Joseph Catholic School took a step back to the future. With Father Matthew Huehlefeld as celebrant, the seventh grade class, their parents, grandparents and friends held their class Mass in the newly renovated chapel on the third floor of St. Joseph Catholic School. The chorus of the opening hymn *Heart of Worship*, "I'm coming back to the heart of worship, its all about you, its all about you ..." seemed very appropriate for this special occasion.

The renovation of the chapel is a result of comments made by alumni at the alumni reunion in August of 2005. They told Michael J. Fisher, principal of St. Joseph Catholic School, the history of the chapel, how important it was to them when they were in school, and a wish that it was still there. As a result of this discussion, Mr. Fisher held discussions with several people to make preparations for the renovations. The supporters of this St. Joseph Catholic School project included: Father Roger Hawes (then pastor of St. Joseph Church), parents, teachers, students and alumni.

Since the Fall of 2005 the chapel progressed through several stages: taking materials stored to different areas, tearing down the partitions, washing walls, stripping, sanding, and staining the window frames, doors and floors, putting in electrical outlets, lights and ceiling fans, painting the walls, preparing the altar and storage cabinets, and bringing in the pews. Mr. Fisher said, "Mr. Carlos Sanchez, our custodian and an individual committed to St. Joseph Catholic School, shouldered the task of taking the lead in the renovation. This could not have happened if it were not for Mr. Carlos. He has put in a lot of time, effort, sweat and blood to help this project to come to fruition."

Many made comments on the beauty and spirituality of having Mass back in the chapel. A final high point in

the day was the special donation of a Bible to the school that was originally given by Father Mentis on October 23, 1915. The late Mr. A. R. Hagan had purchased the Bible at a church auction in years past. On October 24, 2006, Mrs. Virginia Hagan, wife of Mr. Hagan, donated



St. Joseph Catholic School's newly renovated chapel is a wish come true. The renovation of the chapel is a result of comments made by alumni at the alumni reunion in August of 2005, wishing there were still a chapel in the school itself. The renovated chapel is located on the third floor of the school.

the Bible back to the school. "The significance of the two dates of the donations did not go unnoticed," said Father Matthew. Mrs. Stacy Kvinta, a teacher and parent representing last year's 8th grade class, announced another donation. The class of 2006 is donating a cross to be suspended from the ceiling and a set of stations of the cross for the chapel. These donations bring us full circle from the beginning to present.

"It is important to remember our history and where we have been to be able to move forward and look toward our future. A sincere thank you to all of those who helped in the renovation from beginning to end. We look forward to using the chapel for Mass as well as for other important spiritual occasions," said Mr. Fisher. "As a parent told me after Mass, 'It was so moving to hear throughout the school the voices of the children singing at Mass.'"



NATIONAL YOUNG READERS DAY—

On Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2006, St. Rose of Lima Catholic School in Schulenburg was visited by local celebrity readers. Each class was visited and read to by a different guest. Staff and students welcomed County Judge Ed Janecka, Principal Rosanne Gallia, State Rep. Robby Cook, Sister Dawn Achs SSND, Police Chief Randy Mican, City Council Alderman Audrey Herbrich, Justice of the Peace Dan Mueller, Mayor Roger Moellenberndt, Superintendent Sister Gloria Cain SSND, and Sacred Heart School Principal David Smolik. Sister Dawn Achs, associate superintendent of Catholic schools, reads to a very interested class.



THE SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING—St. Rose of Lima Catholic School in Schulenburg is dedicated to helping others and in teaching our students what the true meaning of "charity toward our neighbor" is about. The students and teachers put together "Thanksgiving Baskets" for those in need. Each student in grades 3-K through 8th grade put together a basket. The students were asked to bring a non-perishable food item to be placed in the basket for a needy family so that they could enjoy a Thanksgiving meal. Also at the annual Thanksgiving Liturgy on Thursday, November 16, the St. Rose School family collected pantry goods to be donated to the Schulenburg Food Bank. Following Mass, Mr. Tom Bargas transported the donations to the food bank. The students experienced true mercy by having compassion for those in need.



Coincidence or divine intervention? ... from Saint Katherine Drexel

By Kathy Quinlan

HOSTYN—Queen of The Most Holy Rosary Parish in Hostyn and Saints' Peter and Paul Parish in Plum began a joint Social Ministry Commission (SMC) in the fall of 2004. It was at one of the first meetings, after developing a mission statement and obtaining the geographical boundaries of the two parishes, that the idea of having a patron saint for this ministry was discussed. Placing the commission under the patronage of Saint Katherine Drexel was felt to be appropriate since she was an American Saint who worked among the poor Native Americans and Indians in Texas and the Southern United States.

In 2005 after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita took their toll on the Gulf Coast, the Catholic Bishops began a Parish Partnership Program through Catholic Charities U.S.A. that was soon turned over to the Catholic Church Extension Society of the United States. According to their information, "The program was to connect Gulf Coast Parishes with parishes across the country that wished to help in the long process of recovery and rebuilding. Parishes that would like to help are asked to 'Partner' according to their interests: whether it is through a one-time gift or with the establishment of an immediate and long term relationship of spiritual and material assistance. Here is an opportunity for the Catholic Community to extend a helping hand to our sisters and brothers on their road to recovery. The damage is massive and the needs are extensive; therefore we hope to respond to their need with generosity and support".

The SMC and parishes immediately wanted to partner with a Texas parish in need due to the hurricane. They were se-

lected to partner with Blessed Sacrament Parish in Beaumont, Texas.

While on the internet reading from the 90th Anniversary booklet of "Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church: Yesterday- Today- Tomorrow Beaumont's First African American Church Celebrating 90 Years of Faith 1915-2005," one of the commission members became fascinated with their history that stated "in 1917 Josephite Father Aleris La Plante S.S.J. arrived in Texas to serve the African-American Catholics in Beaumont and Port Arthur. In October 1915. He began offering Mass in the Odd Fellows Hall on Irving

streetcar.

In the spring of 1917 the men of the parish began building a combination church and second story school. Mother (now Saint) Katherine Drexel purchased a lot and paid for the construction of a convent. The school opened in September 1917 with four Blessed Sacrament Sisters (this is the order Saint Katherine Drexel founded in 1891) teaching 176 students. By 1945 the elementary and high school had grown to 502 students with seven sisters of the Blessed Sacrament on staff.

Is it just a coincidence that Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Hostyn and Sts. Peter and Paul in Plum were "partnered" with a parish that our Patroness St. Katherine Drexel helped so many years before? We would like to believe that St. Katherine Drexel sent us a sign that she is pleased to be our patroness and with the generosity of our parishes and their joint SMC work on behalf of our brothers and sisters in need in Beaumont.

Our story is not yet finished. On

the weekend of November 11 and 12, members of Blessed Sacrament Parish, along with their pastor, Father Henry, and several of their Liturgical Praise Dancers participated in the weekend Liturgies at Queen of the Most Holy Rosary in Hostyn and Sts' Peter and Paul in Plum in thanksgiving for the spiritual and monetary blessings that brought our parishes together.

It is hoped that at a future time parishioners from Hostyn and Plum may travel to Beaumont to participate in Blessed Sacrament's Liturgies.



Liturgical Praise Dancers from Blessed Sacrament Parish in Beaumont, Texas, visit their partner churches, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary in Hostyn and Sts' Peter and Paul in Plum, in thanksgiving for the parishes' assistance following Hurricane Katrina and Rita.

street with an attendance of 200 people. In Port Arthur he offered Mass at the Longshoreman's Hall with an attendance of 100 people. He traveled between Port Arthur and Beaumont on the electric

NAZARETH ACADEMY RECEIVES GENEROUS DONATION FROM THE KNIGHTS—The Knights of Columbus Holy Family Council 9088 has again made a sizable donation to Nazareth Academy in the amount of \$40,500. The proceeds were from the 4th Annual Readin', Ritin', Reelin'



Fishing Tournament hosted by the Knights this past August. The presentation was made at N. A. November 21, 2006; pictured from left are Deputy Grand Knight Dennis Lockstedt, Tournament Coordinator Brian Ellis, Assistant Principal Nazareth Academy Scott Kloesel, and General Superior Sister Evelyn Korenek of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament.



HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC SCHOOL FLOAT WINS BEST OF PARADE—Bay City's Holy Cross School float won Best of Parade in the 61st annual Lion's Club Rice Festival Parade in Bay City on Saturday, October 28, 2006. The theme for their float was "Where Heaven and Nature Meet."



FISHER OF MEN TO FISHERMAN—Father David Berger recently went on his first fishing trip on the First Cast Guide Service with Capt. John Ashley. Father David caught this 28" red fish outside of Seadrift.



ALL SOUL'S DAY MASS SPONSORED BY VICTORIA CATHOLIC CEMETERIES—Faithful who attended the All Soul's Day Mass at Resurrection Cemetery in Victoria November 2 visited at its reception, which included sandwiches, cake and punch. The Mass, celebrated by Msgr. Eustace Hermes, was attended by approximately 130 people. To learn more about Catholic Cemeteries in the Diocese of Victoria, please visit the Web site at www.victoriadiocese.org.



ST. ANTHONY COLUMBUS FOOTBALL TEAM WINS TITLE—The St. Anthony Saints football team was recently awarded the title of Diocese of Victoria Athletic League 8-Man Football Champions for 2006-2007. This was only the second year of play after the school reinstated the football program. Team members from grades 6, 7, and 8 are (kneeling, l to r) Parker James – 6th, Ryan Untermeyer – 6th, Trenton Glueck – 6th, Cole Easterling – 6th, Clayton Theut – 6th, Collen Dungen – 6th, Luke Pflughaupt – 6th, Robert Neisner – 6th. Back row (standing, l to r) are Coach John O'Leary, Tanner Kleimann – 6th, Jacob Christen – 7th, Zachary Tesch – 8th, Jordi Theut – 7th, Dillon Matus – 8th, Jordan Glueck – 7th, Garret Culton – 6th and Harley Hartigan – 8th.



Your Family

By Bill and Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service



Shortening your list of Christmas “have-to” tasks

There aren't that many days left until Christmas. Are you all set? Cards out, cookies baked, shopping completed, gifts bought and wrapped and shipped, house decorated, tree up?

Over time, it's easy for a lot of your Christmas traditions to become Christmas “have-to” tasks. You have to send out cards, you have to bake cookies, you have to shop, you have to ...

Yes, you may want to do them, or at least some of them, but that lengthy list can sap the “merry” right out of the holiday. It can make this feast seem anything but holy.

With that in mind, here are a few suggestions for next Christmas:

—First, delete a couple of items from that to-do list. Skip them. If, for example, the Christmas tree “has to have tinsel” but you hate that chore, go tinsel-less and notice that Christmas comes anyway! If you've gotten into the routine of baking cookies to bring to work but, amid all the others goodies, co-workers hardly notice and barely acknowledge another plate of treats, skip it.

—Second, add an item or two that focus on the holy day.

—Choose the first couple of chapters of Luke's Gospel for your bedtime reading. A characteristic of Luke's writing is information about the Blessed Mother. Make it a merrier Christmas by making it a Mary-er Christmas.

—Preview some coming attractions. Unlike most Sundays or holy days, Christmas has four sets of readings, depending on what time of day Mass is celebrated. Pick the set for the Mass in which you and your family will participate, and read those selections a couple of days ahead.

If this is a busy time of year for you — Ha! That was a good one, right? — go over one reading per day for three days. (The readings are: Vigil: Isaiah 62:1-5; Acts

13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:1-25 or 1:18-25; Midnight: Isaiah 9:1-6; Timothy 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14; Dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12; Timothy 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20; and Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14.)

—Give in to that little urge to do something for someone else this Christmas, but not right now. The soup kitchen and the homeless shelter tend to be flooded with volunteers around the holidays. Of course that's wonderful, but the need is there year round, especially during the summer. Arrange now to help out later.

—Give some “spiritual” gifts. A children's lives of the saints for the little ones. A spiritual classic such as St. Therese's “Story of a Soul” or Thomas Merton's “The Seven Storey Mountain.” A crucifix, rosary, small statue or icon. A subscription to your diocesan newspaper or a Catholic magazine.

—Go to confession. Celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation is one of the best ways to prepare to celebrate Christmas. Don't be deterred if it's been a while or you aren't sure “how it's done” these days. It's the Holy Spirit who's nudging you to go! This is one of God's Christmas gifts to you. Accept it.

On the Web: Readings for the Mass

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' site features the daily Mass readings for several months. Go to: www.usccb.org/nab.

Bill and Monica Dodds are the editors of “My Daily Visitor” magazine. Monica's latest book is “Praying in the Presence of Our Lord With St. Therese of Lisieux” (Our Sunday Visitor); her Web site for Catholic caregivers is www.YourAgingParent.com.

Contact the Dodds at BillandMonica@BillDodds.com. Their Web site is www.BillDodds.com.

The World on our Web

New features bring the developing world closer to home

NEW YORK—A way to help the Missions online. A chance for kids to be part of a club making a faith-filled difference in our world. A place to find out about the Christ-filled difference missionaries are making every day. What is it?

The Web site of the Pontifical Mission Societies: www.worldmissions-catholicchurch.org. Once there, you may go to the kids Web site by clicking on the Holy Childhood Association link.

“Since we went online with our new Web site three years ago — and were ‘launched;’ in fact, by the late great mis-

sionary Pope John Paul II — technology has improved and we've tried to be part of those exciting changes,” noted Msgr. John E. Kozar, national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States. “We'll keep in step with those changes to bring the world to you on our Web — always working toward better supporting the proclamation of the ‘Good News’ of Jesus among the suffering and poor.”

We look forward to your next e-visit.” Msgr. Kozar said. “After all, we've got the world on our Web.”

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FAMILY PUZZLE CONTEST

CHRISTMAS

www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

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NOEL
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PRINCE OF PEACE
STABLE
STAR

Family Puzzle Contest Winners Drawn

Congratulations to Dorothy A. Smith of St. Mary Church in Victoria; she is the winner of the November Family Puzzle Contest and will receive *Outnumbered! Raising 13 Kids* by Mary Ann Kuharski, published by Servant Books.

There are two winners of the children's contest this month: Alyssa Davila (7) of St. Robert's in El Campo and Simone Petrosky (16) of St. Roch's in Mentz. They will each receive a gift from the Incarnate Word Gift Shop.

Thank you to all those who participated in the Family Puzzle Contest. There were approximately 45 contestants this past

month. Please try again this month.

The winner of the December Family Puzzle Contest will receive *They Must Not Be Forgotten: Heroic Priests and Nuns Who Saved People from the Holocaust*. See review on this page.

If you have not won the puzzle contest within the past six months, please send completed puzzle, name, address, phone number, and parish name by January 2, 2007 to: Family Contest, *The Catholic Lighthouse*, P.O. Box 4070, Victoria, TX 77903. Only youth need to include age. Please don't forget your phone number and parish name.

Book on Heroic Priests and Nuns to be given as Puzzle Contest Prize

They Must Not Be Forgotten: Heroic Priests and Nuns Who Saved People from the Holocaust is a powerful nonfiction book written by Dr. Sally Rogow. In her book, the author goes back to one of the darkest moments in human history to document true stories of Catholic priests and nuns who risked their lives to save Jewish men, women and children from certain death.

Between the years 1938 and 1945, about 5,962,129 Jewish people were killed by the Nazi's in Europe. Of the nearly 6 million killed in the Holocaust, 1 million were young children. Sixty-three percent of all European Jews were murdered by Hitler's regime. Based on documented accounts that have been recognized and honored by the Yad Vashem — the Holocaust Documentation Centre in Israel, and by the Roman Catholic Church, the author tells of true stories that depict how goodness can prevail even in the darkest of times.

Detailing the lives and heroic efforts of at least 12 priests and nuns, Dr. Sally Rogow tells how these brave individuals rescued thousands of Jewish men, women

and children: they took them into their facilities; they created secret hiding places; they found new homes for the children; they created false identity papers for as many as possible; and they escorted or sent as many as possible to freedom in other countries.

There is no question that the world still staggers at the memories of the Holocaust and still finds it hard to fathom how such evil could come from the hearts of men. At the same time, the world must not forget, especially the younger generation, the heroes of the Catholic faith who risked their lives for others.

They Must Not Be Forgotten: Heroic Priests and Nuns Who Saved People From the Holocaust will inspire the reader as they read these true stories of love, compassion, courage, bravery and honor.

They Must Not Be Forgotten is published by Holy Fire, 2005, Soft Cover, 132 pgs., ISBN 0-9767211-6-3, \$11.99; it may be purchased at www.Northwestwriters.com or www.Amazon.com. Try to win a copy by entering the Family Puzzle Contest.





Fourth annual Christmas Project declares, “Merry Christmas. It’s okay to say it.”

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The Alliance Defense Fund announced today it has more than 950 allied attorneys available nationwide to combat any improper attempts to censor the celebration of Christmas in schools and on public property.

“Frankly, it’s ridiculous that Americans have to think twice about whether it’s okay to say Merry Christmas,” said ADF President Alan Sears. “Thanks to the ACLU and its allies, Christmas isn’t what it used to be. It’s time to repair the damage that such organizations have done to America’s favorite holiday. An overwhelming majority of Americans oppose censoring Christmas.”

According to recent polls,

- 95 percent of Americans celebrate Christmas (Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, 2005).

- 90 percent of Americans recognize Christmas as the birthday of Jesus Christ (Gallup, 2000).

- 88 percent of Americans say it is okay for people to wish others “Merry Christmas” and the majority of Americans are more likely to wish someone they just met “Merry Christmas” rather than “Happy Holidays” (CNN/USA Today/Gallup, 2004).

- 87 percent of Americans believe nativity scenes should be allowed on public property (Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, 2003).

“ADF’s goal once again this season is to inform, educate, and help protect the rights of the 95

percent of Americans who celebrate Christmas,” Sears explained. “It’s a sad day in America when you have to retain an attorney to wish someone a Merry Christmas. The fear, intimidation, and disinformation spread by the ACLU and its allies over the years will not be changed overnight. That’s why ADF wants to dispel the myths about religious expression at Christmastime that have prompted wrongful acts of government censorship of religious speech.”

The purpose of ADF’s Christmas Project is to clear up misconceptions about seasonal religious expression on public property:

- The U.S. Supreme Court has never ruled that public schools must ban the singing of religious Christmas carols or prohibit the distribution of candy canes or Christmas cards.

- School officials do not violate the Constitution by closing on religious holidays such as Christmas and Good Friday.

- School officials are not legally obligated to recognize all other religious holidays simply because they officially recognize Thanksgiving or Christmas.

- School officials may use “Christmas Vacation” to refer to the December holiday break without offending the Constitution.

- Government-sponsored Christmas displays are not banned as some people believe. When faced with the question of whether a Christmas display is constitutional, a court simply asks, “Is the government celebrating the holiday or promoting religion?” Often, the “Three Reindeer Rule” is used by courts, whereby a judge reasons that having a sufficient number of secular objects in close enough proximity to the Christmas item (such as a crèche) renders the overall display as a constitutional community observance of the holiday.

Participating with ADF in this year’s Christmas Project are Concerned Women for America; Focus on the Family; Coral Ridge Ministries; Outreach, Inc. (upon approval from President Scott Evans); and the majority of America’s state-based family policy councils.

ADF will represent people of faith, as well as school districts or other entities, free of charge—as it has in numerous instances in recent years—to defend their freedom of speech regarding Christmas, even after Christmas is over.

ADF has prepared a free informational pamphlet titled “The Truth about Religious Expression at Christmastime.” Informational legal information letters that can be sent to school or municipal officials regarding the law and Christmas expression are also available. Concerned citizens can visit www.saychristmas.org or call 1-877-TELL-ADF.

Light One Candle

By Dennis Heaney, President
The Christophers



St. Nicholas Is Coming to Town

Santa Claus is everywhere.

At least, that’s how it appears when you see him enthroned at malls and department stores or collecting money on street corners for a variety of causes this time of year. No wonder little children pester their parents to pronounce which one is the “real” Santa and who these other guys are. The standard reply usually runs along the lines that these look-alikes are the real Santa’s helpers and that he’s busy at the North Pole getting ready to visit them – and every other child in the world – on Christmas Eve.

Of course, since children manage to spend a large amount of time coming up with questions that are embarrassing or difficult, if not impossible, to answer, this often leads to queries about how he can travel the world in one night dispensing gifts along the way. After muttering something about “It’s magic” or “Because he’s Santa” (which tends to sound a lot like “Because I said so, that’s why!”) most parents steer the conversation in some other direction as fast as they can.

There are some moms and dads though who actually try to explain that Santa Claus was originally St. Nicholas. I admire the parents who go this route and try to educate their sons and daughters about religion as well as culture and history. At a time when the spirituality of Christmas is often buried under layers of wrapping paper and tinsel, it’s good to appreciate religious traditions.

Nicholas, a bishop of Myra in what is now Turkey during the early 4th century, was known for his holiness, justice and charity. He especially loved and helped poor people and children. One of the stories most often told about him concerns the three young daughters of a very poor man who had no money for their

dowries (marriage costs). Nicholas tossed three bags of gold through the window of their house to insure that they would be able to marry. He was also said to be responsible for several miracles, including saving the lives of several young people. Eventually, these led to Nicholas becoming associated with the care and welfare of youngsters. His fame spread across Europe over the centuries along with various traditions of giving presents to children on his feast day, December 6, or at Christmastime.

In the Netherlands, he was known as *Sinterklaas*, a contracted form of *Sint Nicolaas*. And it was from the early Dutch settlers in New York that his popularity began to spread in America, helped by later writers such as Washington Irving and Clement Clarke Moore, who wrote “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (now better known as “The Night Before Christmas”). Artists and illustrators of the 19th and 20th centuries gradually created the persona of the rotund, jolly elf-like Santa Claus we know today.

But one of the most intriguing things I discovered about St. Nicholas was that he’s supposed to have participated in the early Christian church’s Council of Nicaea where he came down firmly on the side of the divinity of Jesus, as expressed in the Nicene Creed: “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God...begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.”

Now, at the start of Advent, as we anticipate the joyful Christmas celebration of the birth of Jesus, Son of God and of man, we can look at all the Santa Clauses around us and be reminded of a saint, a giver of gifts to children and those in need, but above all, a lover and follower of the Holy Child of Bethlehem.

Sunday readings from Dec. 17 to Jan. 14

December 17 — Third Sunday of Advent	Zephaniah 3:14-18a Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6 Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:10-18
December 24 — Fourth Sunday of Advent	Micah 5:1-4a Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45
December 25 — midnight The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)	Isaiah 9:1-6 Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14
December 25 — day The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)	Isaiah 52:7-10 Psalm 98: 1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 Hebrews 1:1-6 John 1:1-18
December 31 — The Holy Family Jesus, Mary and Joseph	Sirach 3:2-7, 12-14 Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 Colossians 3:12-21 Luke 2:41-52
January 1, 2007 — Solemnity of the Mother of God	Numbers 6:22-27 Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:16-21
January 7, 2007 — The Epiphany of the Lord	Isaiah 60:1-6 Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6 Matthew 2:1-12
January 14, 2007 — Second Sunday in Ordinary Time	Isaiah 62:1-5 Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 John 2:1-11

Christian ministry offers free legacy journals for grandparents

Colorado Springs, Colo.—In an effort to spur meaningful communication between grandparents and grandchildren, Christian Grandparenting Network, the nation’s leading Christian ministry focused on reclaiming the unique role of grandparents within the Christian family, is giving away free copies of its popular “Legacy Journal” to any grandparent willing to pledge to complete it for their grandchildren. Each copy of the Journal is a handsomely bound 40-page volume retailing for \$11.99 that grandparents complete for their grandchildren or together with

their grandchildren - sharing family traditions and discovering family history for the first time. The Legacy Journal is designed to spotlight the unique contributions that the Bible calls Christian grandparents to make in their families. For more information visit www.legacyjournal.org.

To obtain a copy, register at the CGN Web site www.christiangrandparenting.com or contact Rev. Harper by telephone at 719-522-1404. Supplies of “The Legacy Journal” are limited, so inquire soon to reserve your copy of this vital family resource.

Umbert the Unborn by Gary Cangemi





Behold your dream has come true

By Frederick Hermann



A little girl in pajamas kneeled for bedtime and prayed, "Dear God, thank you for the baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy."

We all want something special, that's for sure.

As babies, we cry for milk, warmth or a loving touch. As children, we want toys, sweets and love. As adults, we want a loving spouse, family, meaningful work, health and wealth. We always long for what we do not possess and pray for our heart-felt desires.

On a deeper level, we seek freedom from our limitations, fear, pride, addictions, psychological and emotional pain.

Our desolation is essentially spiritual, caused by our sins and the sins of others. We need forgiveness, reconciliation, renewal and consolation.

On the deepest level, we are really seeking God. "Our hearts are restless, until they find their rest in God," said St. Augustine.

In this, we resemble our ancestors in Old Testament times who earnestly awaited the Promised One. They longed for a messiah, foretold by the prophets and promised many times in Holy Scripture. For centuries they waited; the shepherds in their fields, weavers at their looms, carpenters at their benches, mothers in their nurseries.

Families gathered in the evenings around simple food, illuminated only by flickering candlelight or a small fire. They raised their eyes to heaven and prayed for the coming of their Savior.

They expected a rich and powerful man to rise up and conquer their enemies, liberate them from their oppressors, and deliver them into wealth, power,

and prestige.

Then one day the messiah was actually born! Word traveled slowly by foot or camel from Bethlehem throughout the ancient world.

Imagine their excitement upon hearing that the messiah was born. Think of their amazement, joy and jubilation! The long-awaited time had arrived; their hopes and dreams were realized at last!

Imagine also their confusion and perplexity upon hearing that the messiah had been born in a cold, smelly stable, to parents of such low estate. Some may have thought; "How can this be? We were expecting a prince, or a king, born in a noble palace!" They may have felt discouraged, until later events proved glorious beyond their comprehension.

Today our hopes and dreams come true the same way, at unexpected times, shrouded in quiet humility. The answer to our prayers may appear so little, disguised or obscure that it escapes our attention or admiration.

In fact, the fulfillment we seek may already have arrived, unnoticed. Like the birth of the Christ-child two thousand years ago, our hopes and dreams may have already been fulfilled.

Our salvation is often not sufficiently attractive, rich or exalted enough to suit us. The true beauty and meaning of our destiny may be hidden behind a veil of illness, adversity, or hardship. We may overlook the child, person, or event sent by God as the answer to our most ardent desires.

If we quiet ourselves, and turn our gaze toward heaven, we see more clearly. We realize that we have already received our blessings, just not as we expected. Since God is the creator of the universe and gave us his Son, we realize with astonishment that we already have everything we need, and more than we can imagine.

Now we discover the miracle of new life every day. Like shepherds in the field, we hear the voice of an angel saying, "Behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the City of David, a Savior has been born for you." (Luke 2:10)

Hermann is author of "The Spirit Set Me Free," a unique book offering hope and healing for the millions of people in jail or prison, their families and victims. He welcomes reader feedback at: RH222@sbcbglobal.net

U.S. needs Mary's help, says priest at Mass at national shrine

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The United States needs Mary's intercession to protect it from terrorism and the threat of war, but it also needs her help "at a time when the moral fabric of American society is threatened," said the homilist at a Nov. 11 Mass in Washington sponsored by the World Apostolate of Fatima. With a rising rate of divorce and cohabitation, the push for same-sex marriage, the breakdown of the family, an acceptance of abortion and assisted suicide, and the "total disregard" for the sanctity of life, the U.S. is "in need of great help," said Father Andrew Apostoli, a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal. "Why do we turn to Our Lady at this time? ... It's because the times we live in are critical and crucial to our country and to our church," he said. The two-hour Mass, which drew more than 1,000 people to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, included the U.S. bishops' reconsecration of the nation to the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

Evidence of alleged cure credited to Cardinal Newman sent to Vatican

BOSTON (CNS) — Evidence of an alleged miraculous cure in the Archdiocese of Boston attributed to the intercession of Cardinal John Henry Newman has been sent to the Congregation for Saints' Causes in Rome. The Roman postulator of the cause, Andrea Ambrosi, was assigned by the archdiocesan tribunal in Boston to be the official carrier of the package of documents, which contained two copies of the evidence. He flew from Boston to Rome and handed over the package Nov. 14 to congregation officials at the Vatican. The package, containing the sworn testimonies and the medical evidence of the healing of Deacon Jack Sullivan, 68, of Marshfield, was sealed during the closing session of the tribunal Nov. 9. Deacon Sullivan had a severe spinal disorder, but was restored to full mobility in 2001 after praying for Cardinal Newman's intercession. The package was wrapped in brown paper, tied with red ribbon and secured with the wax seal of Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston.

The Pope Speaks

Pope Benedict XVI



CNS photo from Reuters

Pope calls visit to Turkey an unforgettable experience

By John Thavis, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI called his visit to Turkey an unforgettable experience and said he hoped it would lead to improved relations between Christians and Muslims.

The pope made the remarks at his noon blessing Dec. 3 at the start of the Advent season, addressing pilgrims two days after returning from a pilgrimage of dialogue in Turkey.

The pope thanked the organizers of the four-day trip, including Turkish authorities, for ensuring that the visit was "peaceful and fruitful." He expressed his gratitude to "the friendly Turkish people" for giving him "a welcome worthy of their traditional spirit of hospitality."

He said the visit was "an unforgettable spiritual and pastoral experience, which I hope will help produce an increasingly sincere cooperation among all the disciples of Christ and a beneficial dialogue with Muslim believers."

The papal visit was designed as a primarily ecumenical trip and featured important encounters with Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.

But the pope generated the most interest in Turkey and in the world by meeting with Muslim leaders and visiting the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, where he prayed alongside a Muslim cleric while facing Mecca.

The pope recalled with special affection the "dear Catholic community" in Turkey. He said that despite its small size the Catholic minority is rich in enthusiasm and faith, and carries out its pastoral life "in conditions that are often not easy."

The pope said Turkish Catholics are, in effect, living in a continuous experience of Advent, sustained by hope and trust that God is coming.

The message of Advent, he said, is that Christ "is coming into human history, to knock at the door of every man and woman of good will, to bring the gift of brotherhood, harmony and peace to every individual, every family and every people."

As Christians await the celebration of the birth of Christ, they should renew this sense of hope with prayer and with concrete demonstrations of love, he said.

At an Advent vespers service the evening before in St. Peter's Basilica, the pope said the coming of Christ was a sign that "the real God ... is not a God who stays in heaven, uninterested in our history."

"He is a father who never ceases to think of us and, in great respect for our freedom, wants to meet us and visit us," he said.

As part of spiritual preparation for Christmas, the pope encouraged people to pray during Advent, and emphasized that good works should go hand in hand with prayer.

"In this sense, Advent is more than ever a time of communion with all those — and thank God, there are many — who hope for a more just and fraternal world," he said.

The commitment for justice should be a meeting ground for people of every culture and every nationality, including believers and nonbelievers, he said.

Blessed Frances Schervier

1819-1876
feast — December 15

The daughter of a wealthy German manufacturer, 13-year-old Frances began running their household when her mother and older sisters died. To help the poor, she sold expensive gifts from her godfather, the Austrian emperor. She became a Franciscan tertiary, and in 1845 founded the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. Mother Frances sent sisters to Cincinnati to assist German immigrants and ministered to wounded Civil War soldiers during a U.S. visit. Her community also cared for victims of the Franco-Prussian War.



Saints for Today

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Buscando Vida

Por Moises Sandoval
Servicio Noticiero Católico



Conferencia sobre Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

Para una reciente conferencia sobre Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, la Universidad de Notre Dame comisionó pinturas de las apariciones de la Virgen en 1531.

Los cuadros, una exhibición especial en el Museo Snite de la universidad, se realizaron en amatl, papel originado por los Olmec de la corteza interior de los árboles morera y higuera 1500 años antes de Cristo. La artista, Esperanza Gama, utilizó sus memorias del mundo concreto de los olores, colores, y flores frescas alrededor de los pequeños altares de la Virgen en los mercados locales de su tierra natal en Guadalajara para introducir los mundos espirituales y místicos.

Dedicó sus pinturas “a todos los inmigrantes, vivos o muertos, quienes trabajan bajo la luz del sol y la luna y rezan por nueva vida y oportunidad.” Al mismo tiempo, el Snite tenía una exhibición titulada, “Caras vemos, corazones no sabemos.” Las imágenes, escribió la encargada, Amelia Malagamba-Ansótegui, de la Universidad del Estado de Arizona, “exploran las luchas y visiones de los inmigrantes, como también sus tradiciones espirituales.”

Las exhibiciones, participantes y ponencias en la conferencia sobre Guadalupe, patrocinada por el Centro Cushwa para El Estudio del Catolicismo Norteamericano y el Instituto para Estudios Latinos, presentaron un cuadro de migración mucho más rico que la pintura prejudicial en los medios publicitarios actuales.

Hay una larga tradición mejicana, animada por ley y póliza norteamericana, de venir a los Estados Unidos para estudiar, vivir y trabajar temporal o permanentemente. El novelista mejicano Carlos Fuentes, el conferenciante principal, ha sido el profesor Robert F. Kennedy en estudios latinoamericanos en la Universidad Harvard desde 1987.

Gama, una artista desde su niñez, estudió en México, Europa y China y exhibió en Francia, México y los Estados Unidos antes de venir aquí hace 10 años como turista, donde dijo que se “casó por amor” y así consiguió sus documentos. Dice que es más fácil vivir y hacer la vida en Chicago.

María Amparo Escandón, otra inmigrante de México y autora de la exitosa novela Santitos y de la película con

el mismo título, habló en Notre Dame sobre “Guadalupe: La Virgen en La Mochila.” Actualmente viviendo y trabajando en Los Angeles, ella escribe novelas y da cursos en ficción en la Universidad de California en Los Angeles. Su abuelo graduó de Notre Dame como ingeniero.

Aunque muchos inmigrantes entran legalmente, muchos son como Humberto Ramos, uno de muchos participantes en la conferencia de México. Ramos, ahora un oficial diocesano de Los Angeles, cruzó la frontera en el baúl de un auto casi 40 años pasados. El Padre Daniel Groody, csc, director del Centro para Espiritualidad y Cultura Latina en Notre Dame, trabajó muchos años con campesinos indocumentados en el valle de Coachella en California. En un libro titulado (en inglés) Frontera de Muerte, Valle de Vida: Una Jornada Inmigrante de Corazón y Espíritu y publicado en 2002, él describe su Calvario y su profunda espiritualidad arraigada no sólo en Guadalupe sino también en religión pre-Colombiana.

Los conferenciantes—artistas, teólogos, antropólogos e historiadores de universidades como Harvard, Georgetown, la Universidad de California, Notre Dame y muchas más—enriquecieron el conocimiento del corazón de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, cuya fiesta se celebra el 12 de Diciembre. La conferencia, asistida por 400, cumplió un sueño de Timothy Matovina, director del Centro Cushwa y del Padre Virgilio Elizondo, estudioso famoso de Guadalupe, quien dijo en su síntesis:

“Guadalupe no es teoría, ni tranquilizador, ni ideología, ni tampoco una teología. Guadalupe trata de misión, de algo que se debe construir. Nuestra Señora pide un hogar, un templo para todos sus hijos—todos los habitantes de estas tierras

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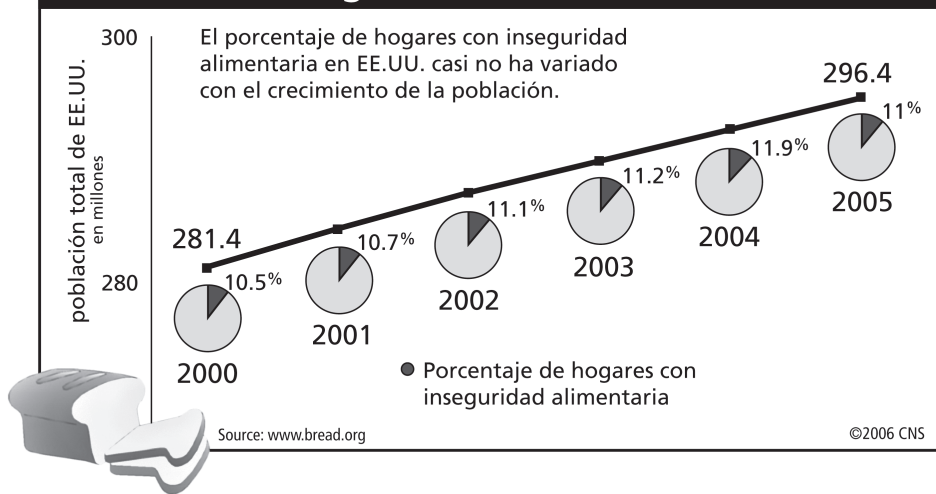
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Sacerdotes Por Vida

Por Father Frank Pavone
Director Nacional



Navidad, los cristianos y Cristo

Hace algunos años, le pidieron a un grupo de estudiantes que escribieran algo sobre el significado de la Navidad. Un estudiante escribió: “Navidad es cuando los cristianos celebran a Cristo.” Al maestro le gustó el trabajo, pero le pidió al estudiante que cambiara esa oración por “Navidad es cuando la gente celebra el amor.”

Algunos se preguntarán cuál es la diferencia. Después de todo, los cristianos son gente y Cristo es amor.

Sin embargo, hay una diferencia, y esa diferencia es tan profunda que si la ignoramos, ignoramos el significado de la Navidad y de Cristo.

Por supuesto que los cristianos son gente. Pero no toda la gente es cristiana. Ser cristiano es mucho más que ser buena persona. Se trata de convertirse en una nueva persona, compartiendo un nuevo tipo de vida – la vida misma de Dios. La Navidad no es simplemente el nacimiento de un niño, es el nacimiento de una nueva humanidad. Todos mueren en Adán, en Cristo todos vuelven a la vida. Por la fe y el bautismo somos partícipes de la naturaleza divina. En cada misa, el sacerdote dice: “El agua unida al vino sea signo de nuestra participación en la vida divina de quien ha querido compartir nuestra condición humana,” mientras agrega unas pocas gotas de agua al vino. De eso se trata la Navidad. San Agustín dijo “Dios se hizo hombre para que el hombre pueda ser Dios.”

Hoy en día es común que las predicaciones pierdan de vista esta dimensión fundamental del Evangelio. Por eso existe el riesgo de que la gente vea la Navidad simplemente como un momento para celebrar, para dar, estar en familia y desear paz en la tierra. Se trata de eso, pero

solamente porque se trata primeramente de Dios que reconcilia a la humanidad consigo en Cristo y abre el camino para que la humanidad participe de su vida divina. La Navidad es una fiesta cristiana.

Y también importa el significado de “amor.” Así es, la gente celebra el amor en Navidad, pero es solamente en Cristo que aprendemos completamente la naturaleza del amor y obtenemos la fuerza para practicarlo. “Amense los unos a los otros como yo los amé,” nos ordenó. El amor que estamos llamados a vivir es un amor que se nos revela en Cristo que se ofrece en la cruz, y es un amor que requiere que demos nuestras vidas por los otros. Es un amor forjado por el primero y más grande de los mandamientos: Amarás al Señor, tu Dios, con todo el corazón, toda tu mente, toda tu alma y toda tu fuerza. Sin el amor de Dios, no podemos alcanzar la fortaleza para amarnos los unos a los otros. Y sin Cristo, no vemos la revelación plena de Dios.

El amor tiene un contenido, y ese contenido se define por el Evangelio de Jesucristo. Amar no es simplemente una buena intención, o el contexto en el que hacemos lo que nos parece lo mejor. El amor siempre requiere algunas acciones y siempre prohíbe otras.

En Navidad, Dios llama a todas las personas a celebrar el amor que se encarnó en Cristo, creyendo en El y siguiéndolo en la vida nueva y eterna que nos trae.

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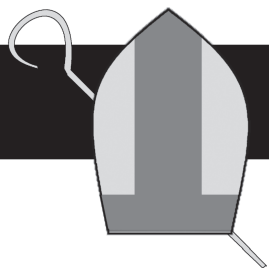


Marc Phillip Garza
Attorney at Law

For the General Practice of Law



Decisions AT A GLANCE



Among the actions taken at their November meeting, the U.S. bishops...

- ✓ Called for nonpartisan talks on a "responsible transition" in Iraq.
- ✓ Approved statement calling on those in a state of serious sin to refrain from Communion.
- ✓ Allocated funds for the next phases of national study on clergy sexual abuse of minors.
- ✓ Voted to restructure their national operations and cut the assessment dioceses pay.
- ✓ Approved document calling married couples to live church teaching on artificial contraception.
- ✓ Gave their OK to creating a "Directory for Music and the Liturgy" for use in U.S. dioceses.
- ✓ Passed a series of guidelines for the pastoral care of homosexual Catholics.
- ✓ Authorized a revision of the Lectionary for Mass for selected days in Advent.
- ✓ Elected Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., as their new secretary.
- ✓ Passed a \$139.5 million budget and a series of priorities and plans for 2007.
- ✓ Created a nongeographic episcopal region for the nation's Eastern-rite bishops.
- ✓ Approved a four-year strategic plan beginning in 2008.

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To read the U.S. bishop's document titled "Married Love and the Gift of Life" or "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination," please go to www.usccbpublishing.org and click "New."

FDA guidelines on vaccines/aborted fetal cell lines open for public comment

LARGO, Fla. (Christian Newswire)—Children of God for Life is calling on all pro-life groups, physicians and citizens who oppose the use of aborted fetal cell lines in vaccine production to respond to an open invitation by the FDA for public comment.

The FDA has issued guidelines for the pharmaceutical industry on cell line standards to be used for future vaccine development. The list includes both aborted fetal cell lines currently used in several vaccines plus new aborted fetal cell lines such as PER C6. They have also included cell lines derived from ethical sources and new innovative technologies that could be used instead.

"There are non-objectionable sources that are safe and effective. Common sense tells you that in order to effectively protect the public vaccines should be produced in a way that the entire population can benefit, not just those with no moral qualms about using aborted fetal vaccines," said the group's executive director, Debi Vinnedge.

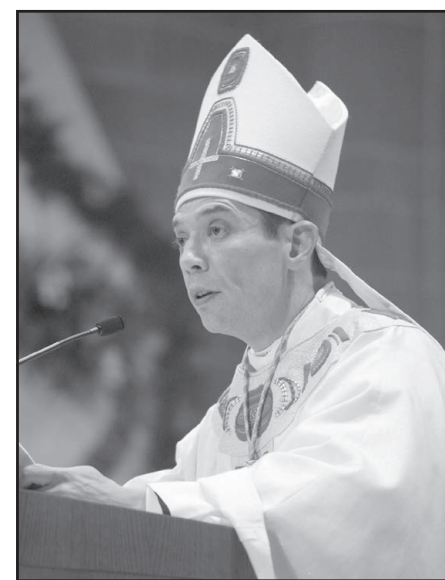
In order to hold government agencies accountable, her group is working with Human Life International to track public response. They are urging the public to register at their website and send letters to the FDA and CDC during the 90 Day Public Comment period which ends December 28th.

"A strong public response could very well change the direction the pharmaceutical companies take in future research and development," said HLI President, Father Thomas Euteneuer.

Whether you wish to file electronically or by US Mail with the FDA please register at: www.cogforlife.org/fdaalert.htm. To write without registering using US Mail write to the FDA at: Division of Dockets Management HFA-305; Food Drug Administration; 5630 Fishers Lane Room 1061; Rockville, MD 20852. You must include the docket number 2006D-0383 on US Mail correspondence to the FDA.

Write to the CDC at: Julie L. Gerberding, Director; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 1600 Clifton Rd.; Atlanta, GA 30333.

NOTE: Full story at www.victoriadiocese.org; Lighthouse Newspaper link.



CNS photo/Larry A. Peplin, The Michigan Catholic

Newly ordained Auxiliary Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Detroit, born in Palacios, Texas, professed "praise and thanks to almighty God" in his first remarks.

Palacios born priest named youngest bishop in U.S., ordained for Detroit

DETROIT (CNS) — Auxiliary Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Detroit professed "praise and thanks to almighty God" in his first remarks as a newly ordained bishop Nov. 29. "All gifts I have received in life, including the gift of this day, are contained in the primordial gift of Christ to the world," he said at the end of the ordination Mass. Bishop Flores is the 25th active Hispanic bishop in the country, the first Hispanic bishop to be ordained for any Michigan diocese and, at 45, is the youngest Catholic bishop in the United States. After the ceremony, the new bishop's mother, Lydia Flores, expressed her pride in and happiness for her son. "But, at the same time, I have mixed emotions, because I know that when I leave here tomorrow (for her home in Corpus Christi, Texas), he will be staying behind," she said. More importantly, however, her son will be serving God, and "he can't go wrong serving God," she said. Bishop Flores was born in Palacios, Texas, and grew up in Corpus Christi. He served in the Galveston-Houston Diocese (now Archdiocese) as part of the formation faculty of St. Mary's Seminary and the theology teaching faculty of the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He was made vice rector of the seminary in 2002.

Copies of Bishop Flores' prayer card, Mass book, photos and many others items are available for download at www.AODonline.org. In response to the strong demand for Bishop Flores' prayer cards, the archdiocese is printing additional cards in English and Spanish. To order, call (313) 883-8657.

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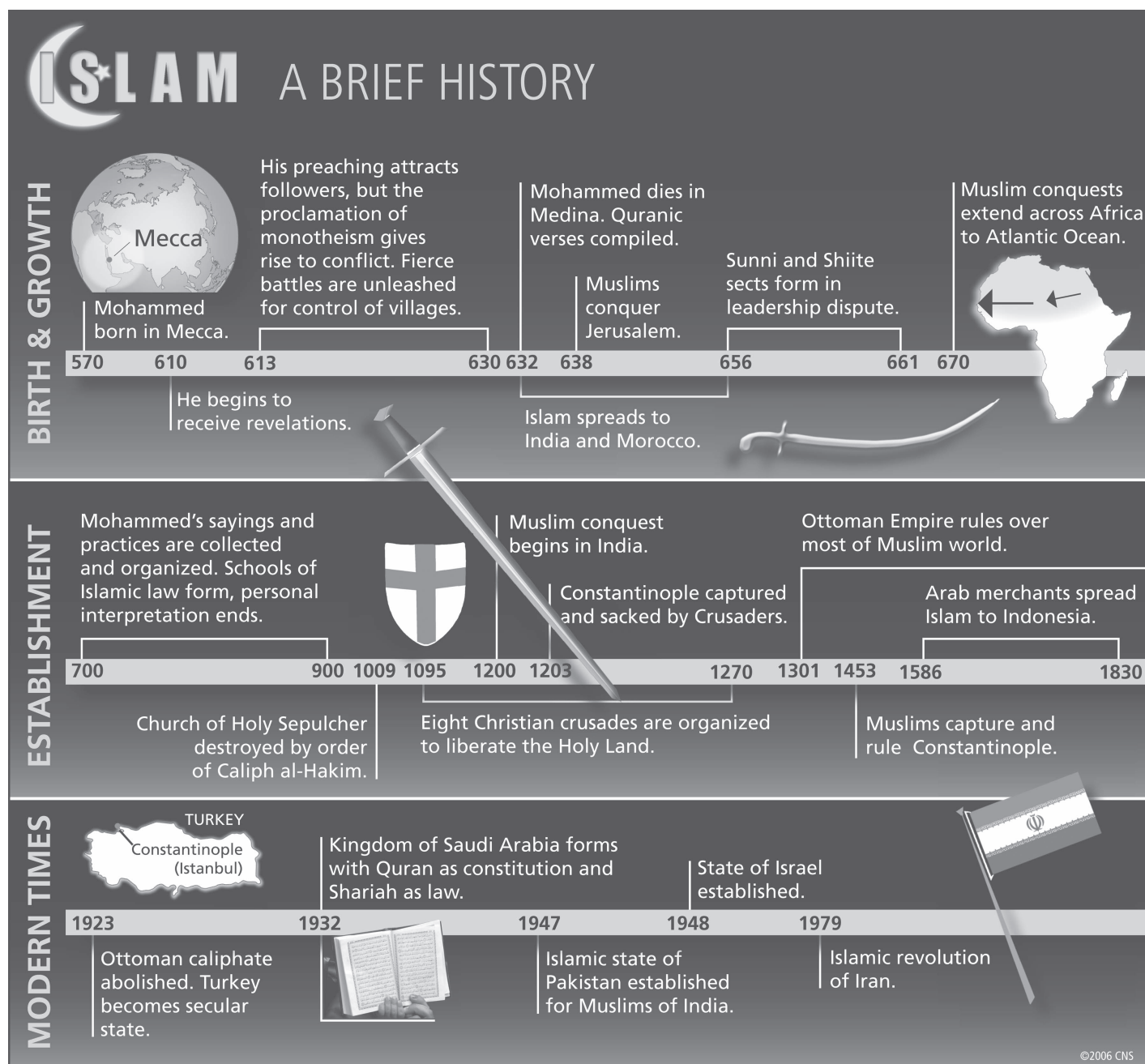
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CNS photo/ Anto Akkara

CHRISTIANS PARTICIPATE IN AIDS VIGIL IN INDIA—More than 300 Christians, including Catholic nuns and nurses, hold candles and wear AIDS ribbons as they participate in a vigil in observance of World AIDS Day in New Delhi, India, Dec. 1. The interdenominational procession began at Sacred Heart Cathedral in New Delhi.

Asian Muslim leaders to form task force promoting moderate teaching

MAKATI CITY, Philippines (CNS) — Participants in the second international conference of Southeast Asian Muslim leaders have agreed to form a task force to promote “the moderate teachings of Islam.” Taha Basman, president of the Philippine branch of the Center for Moderate Muslims, said the task force would include 10 key figures representing major Muslim organizations. The new task force was provisionally named the International Islamic Da’wah Task Force. Moderate means “having the value of patience, tolerance and respect for other people,” Basman told UCA News, an Asian church news agency based in Thailand. A person who easily gets angry and engages in acts of hatred and violence is not moderate but an extremist, said Basman, who is also a commissioner of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The Center for Moderate Muslims hosted the Nov. 22-24 meeting in Makati City, south-east of Manila. Some 150 delegates attended the conference. Basman said that aside from the task force the conference planned to counter terrorism and establish interfaith harmony by reaching out “to the grass roots to explain to constituents the reality of Islam, which is moderation.”

Indonesia, with 213 million Muslims, has the world’s largest Muslim population. Its former minister of religious affairs, Tarmizi Taher, is chairman of the board for the Center for Moderate Muslims.



CNS photo/Catholic Press Photo

POPE AND ORTHODOX ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH SIGN JOINT DECLARATION—Pope Benedict XVI and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew sign a joint declaration at the Orthodox Cathedral of St. George in Istanbul, Turkey, Nov. 30. The declaration committed the Catholic and Orthodox churches to continuing dialogue and greater practical cooperation, especially in promoting Christian values in increasingly secularized societies.

Pope Benedict, master of words, shows mastery of gestures in Turkey

Continued from p. 1

the pope and patriarch publicly professed also appeared publicly demonstrated.

But given the tensions present before the trip with both the Turkish government and the country’s Muslim majority, Pope Benedict’s positive encounters with Muslims stole the headlines. Even the Turkish papers, initially lukewarm to the idea of a papal visit, were impressed.

The daily Hurriyet reported Dec. 1: “The pope, who earned sympathy with words in the spirit of an apology to Muslims, continued to surprise the world.”

The paper, like much of the world, particularly was struck by his prayer alongside a Muslim cleric in the mosque.

Hurriyet reported the pope “turned to

ward Mecca and prayed like a Muslim.”

The Dec. 1 English-language Turkish Daily News headline read: “The pope is winning hearts and minds.”

And the article described the pope’s visit as “a moment of reconciliation” with the country’s majority Muslim population.

When the trip was over Dec. 1, one would only have to look at photographs of the pope with government officials, Muslim representatives and leaders of the Orthodox churches to see that a connection was made.

After a 30-minute free-flowing discussion Nov. 28 with Ali Bardakoglu, the country’s top Muslim official, the two appeared before reporters grasping both of

each other’s hands.

And after attending Patriarch Bartholomew’s celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Orthodox cathedral, the two blessed a small crowd together before the patriarch took the pope’s hand and held it aloft as they waved.

Even some of the obligatory gifts given during the trip seemed to conspire to carry a positive message, particularly when they were coincidentally similar, as they were at the Blue Mosque.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, pointed out that doves — the symbol of peace — were the main feature on the blue tile Istanbul’s grand mufti gave to the pope and on the mosaic Pope

Benedict gave to the mufti.

And, before leaving Istanbul Dec. 1, the pope released four white doves from the courtyard of the Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

Father Lombardi told reporters late Nov. 30, “It seems we’ve gone well beyond expectations.”

Not only were there no confrontations with Muslims over what the pope said in Germany in September, but the Germany speech seemed to give way to a new look at “the theme of relations between Christians and Muslims with serenity and depth, seeking to make important clarifications on both sides,” Father Lombardi said.



The Jordanian and Palestinian Christians: Past, Present and Future

By Cindy Brewer

Participants of the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation's Eighth International Conference in Washington, DC, were treated to hearing from two ambassadors from the Holy Land to the United States who explained living conditions and the important role Christians play in the Holy Land and the Arab world.

At the October 20 - 21, 2006, conference titled *Opening Doors of Hope in Faith*, the ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the head of the PLO Mission to the U.S. spoke in a session titled *The Jordanian and Palestinian Christians, Past, Present and Future*. Both ambassadors are Christians.

His Excellency Ambassador Karim Kavar began the session stating, "We (Jordanians) are part of the Holy Land and not remnants of the Crusades." He reminded the audience that Jesus was Jordanian by baptism, given that scripture says Jesus was baptized in Bethany "beyond the Jordan," evoking much laughter from the crowd of about 200 in the sanctuary of the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, the conference's venue.

Ambassador Kavar said that as Jordanians they see no difference between themselves and the Christians of Palestine. The

ancient Nabataeans were among the first Christians in what is present day Jordan. A Christian church has been discovered in the Nabataean capital, Petra, which dates back to the 3rd century. By 313 A.D., Christianity had become a state-recognized religion in Petra.

The Christian community is stronger in Jordan than other Arab countries or Israel because Jordan's government is stable. Jordan is a Constitutional Monarchy with democracy. "We believe in majority rule with minority rights. Minority rights means that minorities get overrepresentation," said Ambassador Kavar. The Christian community is less than five percent of the population in Jordan but is over represented by eight percent of the parliament seats. The Christian community in Jordan is also a prominent community that is well represented in the economic sector, he said.

Regarding the current situation and what lies ahead, Ambassador Kavar referred to a 1947 article written by Jordan's founder, King Abdullah I, and published in the Catholic America Magazine. In that article, written just before the 1948 war, King Abdullah called on the United States to be more engaged since they had the prominent role to play in solving the prob-

lem that he saw back then – the emigration of the Jews from Europe. He anticipated the large number of immigrants would change the demographics of the region and he expected that would cause turmoil. King Abdullah was calling on other nations to shoulder the burden of taking some of the immigrants.

"It is sad," Ambassador Kavar said, "that we are still dealing with the same issues. The problem seems to only grow bigger. But this is where we need to look to the future and we need to reinstate hope."

Speaking on behalf of King Abdullah II, Ambassador Kavar said that the actions of Islamic extremists are not representative of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims. As a Hashemite and a 43rd generation, direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, King Abdullah II takes on the moral responsibility as a Muslim when he sees crimes carried out in the name of Islam. King Abdullah says Muslims cannot just stand and watch those crimes carried out in the name of religion without taking action. He has called upon the return to traditional Islam, which is a continuation of the Abrahamic tradition. This means Judaism, Islam, and Christianity share the same principles and values.

Kavar concluded stating that "King Abdullah... doesn't feel comfortable with the word 'tolerance.' He believes that comes with somewhat of a negative connotation that, 'You know, I really hate you, but I have to tolerate you.' He would like to move from tolerance to mutual acceptance and respect."

His Excellency Ambassador Afif Safieh, head of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Mission in Washington, DC, spoke next. Ambassador Safieh has served as PLO representative to the Netherlands from 1987 until 1990 and was involved in the 1988 Stockholm negotiations that led to the official and direct American-Palestinian dialogue. He was nominated Palestinian General Delegate to the United Kingdom in 1990 and nominated Palestinian General Delegate to the Holy See in Nov. 1995. In November 2005, he assumed his duty as Head of the PLO Mission in Washington.

Ambassador Safieh said the Palestinian Christians are eight to nine percent of the global Palestinian society. "We are around 900,000 Palestinian Christians throughout the world," he said. "Our level of migration has been higher than the national average for obvious reasons." Safieh

believes, however, that today's physical dispersion of Palestinian Christians, which is a symptom of their suffering, could tomorrow be the source of their empowerment.

In Palestine proper the Palestinian Christians are not discriminated against, he said, and he hopes that none of them will have the minority complex. "Yes, we are a community, with specificities, but we are a part of the social fabric and an important one in that social fabric," Ambassador Safieh said.

In the entourage of President Yassir Arafat and now of President Mahmoud Abbas, many Christians play a very important role, he said. And some time ago "Yassir Arafat made a decision that cities and villages that happen to have a Christian significance or flavor, even though there might be demographic changes in society will always have a Palestinian Christian mayor, hence today in spite of a demographic upheaval, Bethlehem and Ramallah have Christian mayors."

"Those were very wise gestures that we all need to appreciate and understand fully the significance and the meaning," Ambassador Safieh said. "Throughout the world," he continued, "our most important supporters come from Christian circles, the mainstream churches, you. And unfortunately those who are the most hostile to our aspirations and the most reluctant to understand and admit our suffering happen to come also from Christian circles," he said.

"Christian Zionism has been a constant political embarrassment for us Christians of Palestine... All those theories about supporting the territorial appetite of Israel as a mechanism to accelerate the return of the Messiah, in addition to it being delirious theology, has been devastating politically," Ambassador Safieh said he was brought up to believe that Christ never left us. "And I believe that Christ for his return doesn't need any human help," said Safieh alluding again to Christian Zionist belief. "He visited us once 2000 years ago... with some spectacular results, and I don't think he needs Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson [his help to return]," he said to much applause.

Safieh closed by saying he believes in life before death and that even now he believes Palestine will resurrect, reminding the crowd, "In Jerusalem, we have had some experience," referring to Christ's resurrection.

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U.S. bishops urge Amnesty International to reject pro-abortion stance

WASHINGTON—Deirdre A. McQuade, Director of Planning and Information for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, has called on Amnesty International to reject a proposal from some within the organization to abandon its neutral stance on abortion in favor of a policy advocating abortion as a human right. At a press conference Nov. 20 on Capitol Hill with Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Kristen Day, Executive Director of Democrats for Life, Ms. McQuade reiterated objections to the proposal that Bishop William S. Skylstad, President of the USCCB, made in a September 15 letter to Amnesty International. His letter can be read at www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2006/06-174.shtml. "Amnesty has traditionally served as a courageous voice for the voiceless and ignored populations," Ms. McQuade said. "It should not now undermine its own mission by, in essence, siding against millions of voiceless human beings. The right to life itself is fundamental. It is the precondition of all other human rights, and its integrity depends on being acknowledged for every member of the human family regardless of race, age, gender, condition, or stage of development." Ms. McQuade noted that USCCB has worked with Amnesty International on common efforts as diverse as seeking to end the use of the death penalty in the United States, anti-apartheid advocacy in South Africa and opposition to government-sanctioned death squads in Central America.



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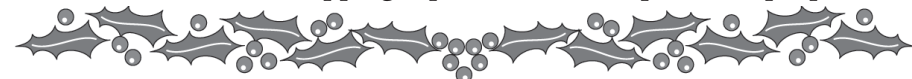
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Father Victor promises to lead by relationship in his new post

Continued from p. 1

the parish and all our parishioners," Father Victor said in an interview with The Catholic Lighthouse prior to his move on Nov. 13.

"The greatest privilege of my life has been to serve in the Diocese of Victoria," he said, "and that's the truth."

You'll never find a parish community more vibrant - in its believing and worshipping - quite like Sorrows, he said. "There's no diocese, in my opinion as warm and close knit as the Diocese of Victoria."

As reported in the November issue of The Catholic Lighthouse, Father Victor was elected minister provincial of the US province on October 10, 2006, during his order's provincial chapter. He has been elected to a three-year term.

During the provincial chapter, five men were nominated to council and of those five one was to be elected minister provincial while the other four would remain councilors.

"When I was nominated as one of the five, I said to myself, 'I hope one of the others is elected so I can stay at Sorrows,'" Father Victor said. He had mixed feelings and was kind of overwhelmed. "I really thought the others were more qualified than I," he said.

Before elections the five nominated men were given time for personal prayer. Father Victor said he prays with Scripture. He asked the Lord to give him a Scripture, and he said he was given the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

"So I realized," Father Victor said, "if I returned to Sorrows, I wouldn't be lacking in the grace needed; and if I were

elected, I wouldn't be lacking the grace necessary."

"Actually I was very peaceful and confident of God's presence."

The election resulted in Father Victor becoming the new minister provincial. The four councilors are now Father Thomas Cerulo, director of the monastery's retreat center; Father James Day; pastor of St. Ann Parish in Bristol, Penn.; Father Thomas Burke, former provincial and professor of systematic theology at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore; and Father Edward Owens, professor of Sacred Scripture at Camarillo, Calif.

Once elected, the only thing Father Victor promised the chapter was that he'd try to lead through relationship: first relationship with God then direct involvement in the lives of his brothers.

"I believe one has to lead by loving one another," he said.

The duty of the provincial minister is to run the province, he said, executing decisions for the growth and development of the province and trying to provide religious who will serve with passion and holiness of life to the local churches.

Father Victor's number one priority is vocations and vocation discernment, "I consider this to be a challenging but exciting time in religious life, a time of re-founding and I enthuse over helping men to discern God's call to share the work and patrimony (everything we've inherited in over 800 years) of our order."

I believe the church as a whole stands on the threshold of renewal and vocations. I believe vocations will be numerous, he continued.

"Look at our young people here. One

man is planning to enter the order in June and others are discerning their vocation," he said.

The order's new vocation director is envisioning new ways of doing vocation ministry, including extended visits to parishes where youth ministry is strong and extend that invitation to them.

One of Father Victor's first challenges he faced as minister provincial was to find his own replacement for pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows. With the advice of his council and approval of Bishop Fellhauer, the priest he chose is Father Juan Vazquez, who has been serving as parochial vicar of St. Lawrence Martyr in Jessup, Maryland, since Oct. 2002. Father Juan is 38 years old, having been born February 5, 1968, in the town of Paracho, Michoacan, Mexico. He was ordained August 14, 1999, at Holy Trinity Monastery in Baltimore. He once served at Our Lady of Sorrows as parochial vicar for a few months in 2002, from April to September. Father

Juan is bilingual, young and committed to youth ministry, Father Victor said.

"I hope the Trinitarians will serve here (OLS) for decades to come."

The Most Holy Trinity Province, over which Father Victor presides, is named the Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, or the United States Province. There are Trinitarian provinces in Italy, Spain, Madagascar, Canada, and 2 vicariates in Latin America (vice province - smaller); a General Vicariate in Austria, and houses in France, Korea, Gabon, Congo, and Cairo, Egypt. Father Victor will be leading, through relationship, about 65 priests and brothers in the U.S. and 14 in India, as well as 65 in seminary in India. India is a mission of the U.S. Province.

Father Victor Scocco's address is: Fr. Victor Scocco, Minister Provincial; Most Holy Trinity Seminary; P.O. Box 5719; Baltimore, MD 21282



Father Victor Scocco receives a going away blessing from the staff of Nazareth Academy following the school Mass said at Our Lady of Sorrows Nov. 10. Principal Duke Alicardi and Sister Mary Jean Bludau, IWBS, are pictured with Father Victor. He left the parish November 13 for his new post as Minister Provincial of the U.S. Province of the Order of Trinitarians.

The Movie Review Line (800) 311-4CCC

www.catholicnews.com/movies

It is updated each weekend.



Special Collections

Tri-Conference Fund for Retired Religious — Dec. 9-10

National Vocation Awareness Week — Jan. 8-12

Church in Latin America — Jan. 27-28

World Day for Consecrated Life — Feb. 4

World Day Pray for Vocations — April 29

Ongoing Events

Mini-Life-Chain—In Victoria every Wednesday before the 2nd Thursday of each month. Call (361) 578-2506 or (361) 578-2002 for time and intersection location.

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

Our Lady of the Rosary Fraternity Emerging/Secular Franciscans—meets every other Wednesday from 7:00-9:00 p.m. For dates and location call Jay Howard at (361) 574-8487.

St. Padre Pio Prayer Group meets the 2nd Saturday of each month at St. Mary Church Activity Center (audio-visual room) in Victoria for a 7:30 a.m. Mass, followed by prayer and light refreshments.

Tridentine Mass (Latin)—is held the first and third Sunday of each month at St. Mary Church, St. Mary (outside of Hallettsville on FM 340) at 11:00 a.m. For more info. call (361) 594-3024.

Engaged Encounter—Register as soon as you have contacted your pastor due to limited space. **It is strongly recommended that you attend an encounter weekend four to six months prior to your wedding date.** For a registration form, contact your pastor, visit the **Web site at www.victoriadiocese.org/family/ee.htm**, or write to: Engaged Encounter, P.O. Box 4070, Victoria, Texas 77903. The weekend is held at the Spiritual Renewal Center. The dates for 2007 are: March 2-4, April 27-29, June 22-24, Sept. 28-30, and Nov. 30-Dec. 2. For more info., call (361) 573-0828 ext. 56. A date cannot be reserved for any couple unless a cashier's check or money order is sent in the amount of \$190 for weddings being held within the Diocese of Victoria or \$245 for weddings being held outside the Diocese of Victoria.

Marriage Encounter—Weekends are held at the Spiritual Renewal Center. For more info. or to register, write or call Milton and Diane Rejcek, 2512 Hillcrest, Bay City, Texas

77414; (979) 245-0323; www.mevictoria.org

Retrouvaille—A Retrouvaille Weekend for troubled marriages will be held Feb. 2-4 at the Spiritual Renewal Center. The word Retrouvaille means 'rediscovery.' It is a program that offers the chance to rediscover yourself, your spouse, and a loving relationship in your marriage. Tens of thousands headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending. Contact Gerd and Linda Conner (979) 543-3493 or (800) 470-2230 for more information or for other dates in Texas, please go to www.retrouvaille.org.

Cursillo News—Ultreya: Witnessing to God's working in our everyday lives — song and prayers, Fridays, 7:45 p.m.; **Sabatina:** Rosary and devotion to Mary, Saturdays, 8:00 a.m.; **Holy Hour:** Every 1st Tuesday, 7:45 p.m. Events held at Our Lady of Sorrows Church and Trinity Hall.

When & Where

Singles — Catholic Singles, 40 and over, meet every second and fourth Thursday of the month at Holy Family Education Building at 7:00 p.m. Call Georgia (361) 573-9435 or Jean at (361) 578-8760 or Sue at (361) 578-3106.

Singles—Young Adults between the ages of 21 and 45 meet for an evening of fellowship and good company every 1st and 3rd Thursday at Holy Family at 7:00 p.m. Call Jim Wearden at (361) 579-9737 or Laura (361) 579-6516.

ACTS Retreats—For more information see the ACTS Web site at www.actsmissions.org.

Natural Family Planning—For English or bilingual sessions of the **Sympto-Thermal Method (S-TM)** in Palacios, call Rene and Wilma Galvan at (361) 972-5030. Available for counseling and classes. For information about the Sympto-Thermal Method in the Victoria area, contact Rudy and Estella DeLos Santos (361) 573-2624. Introductory presentations on the **Creighton Model Ovulation Method** are offered in Wharton at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church and in East Bernard at Holy Cross Catholic Church. Please contact Melissa Morse at (979) 335-7306 for more information or to

register for classes. **Natural Family Planning is the only church approved form of family planning.**

Goliad—Presidio La Bahia Museum and Visitor Center—a National Historic Landmark — is the only Spanish fort remaining in the possession of the Catholic Church in North America. A tour program is available to groups. The presidio is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and is closed on major holidays. Admission is \$3 for adults and \$1 for children under 12. The fort is handicapped accessible. For more information call (361) 645-3752. **Upcoming events: see the Web site at www.presidiolabaha.org for more information.**

Picnics, Activities, etc.

December

Victoria—Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Dec. 17 at the KC Hall. The price is \$5 per chicken. Beans and Spanish rice available for \$1 per pint. Sale starts at 8:30 a.m. Proceeds benefit council's projects.

Upcoming Events

Houston—Discernment Retreat for men Jan. 12-14 beginning at 5:30 p.m. on Friday through noon on Sunday at St. Mary's Seminary, 9845 Memorial Drive. For more information visit www.archgh.org/VocationOffice/mendiscernretreat.htm.

Victoria—Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Jan. 21 at the KC Hall. The price is \$5 per chicken. Beans and Spanish rice available for \$1 per pint. Sale starts at 8:30 a.m. Proceeds benefit council's projects.

East Bernard—The Catholic Daughters of the Americas, St. Bernadette 1108 will hold their annual Chicken Noodle Soup Supper on Wed., Jan. 31, at the American Legion Hall (Hwy. 60). Serving begins at 5:00 p.m. till sold out. Soup is \$2 a bowl, chicken salad sandwiches are \$2 each. Eat in or bring your own containers and enjoy at home. A large variety of pastries will be available whole or by the slice.

Irving—Live-in weekend Feb. 8-11 at Holy Trinity Seminary for young men ages 18-28. For more information go to www.diogh.org/VocationOffice/htsliveinweekend.htm.

For your upcoming events please let us know in well in advance at (361) 573-0828 or FAX to (361) 573-5725 so that it may be published with enough time.



Bishop David E. Fellhauer and the Chancery Office Staff Wish you A Blessed Holiday!

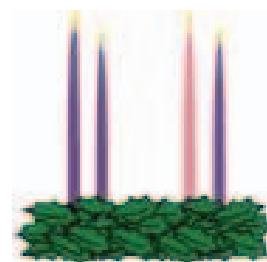


Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from (front l-r) Gary Rangnow, Regina Janak, Jo Ann Martinez, Sharon Jones; (second row) Msgr. Eustace Hermes, Cindy Brewer, Sister Dawn Achs, Barbara Parkan, Chris Alvarez, Margie Farris; (third row) Martha Pearson-Vela, Sister Gloria Cain, Ray Beth Sills, Sister Digna Vela, Debbie Vanelli, Jeri Joseph, Melissa Perales; (fourth row) Mary Haas, Minnie Bochot, Bishop David E. Fellhauer, Mike Brown and Art Vega. (Not pictured, Msgr. Thomas C. McLaughlin.)

Christmas Blessing

Dear Lord,
We thank You for being here with us
as we celebrate this cherished holiday
to honor Your precious, sacred birth.
We recognize and acknowledge
that all the material pleasures we enjoy
today,
the food, the gifts, and everything else
come from You, Lord,
through your grace, your compassion,
and Your love for us.
Help us throughout the year
to always strive to be worthy
of all the blessings You have given us,
our family, our friends and our comforts,
by living our lives in Your will
according to Your Holy Word.
We pray that You will bless this food
and everyone at this table.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

By Joanna Fuchs



Representatives from the various dioceses of Region 10 enhanced the experience through liturgical dance.

Brian Johnson, internationally known speaker, was the M.C. for the weekend.



Tony Melendez wowed the crowd with an arousing keynote and then a concert.



Rosa Guerrero, acclaimed speaker and dancer, gave an inspiring keynote.



Bishop Tamayo celebrates Mass and over 20 priests concelebrate the closing Liturgy of the 2006 Region 10 Conference.

Victoria Diocese youth attend regional conference

By Debbie Vanelli
Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

The border city of Laredo was a buzz as over 2000 high school age young people and adults from the three-state-area that comprise Region 10 (Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas) converged for a three-day, multi-cultural youth event. The Laredo Entertainment Center was home to the 2006 Region 10 Youth Conference, the largest conference ever held in the young diocese of Laredo's history.

Forty-six young people and adults from the Diocese of Victoria attended this uplifting, spirit-filled weekend. Keynote speakers included, Brian Johnson, Rosa Guerrero and Tony Melendez. The talents of the Diocese of Victoria were well represented as our own Father Dan Morales was the opening singer for Tony Melendez.

The group experienced the culture of the area throughout the conference. From the opening prayer that included Matlachines in brightly colored costumes,



(left) Members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Bay City join in the praise and worship.



Shalane Matula and Nicole Schwab from Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Shiner enjoy the conference.

as the conference was consecrated to our Blessed Mother, to the Festival Mexicana, that allowed the participants to shop at a real Mercado Marketplace and experience some of the artisans of Mexico without going across the border. In addition the students attended seminars like "The Teenage Brain, Changes and Challenges," "Woven Together in Faith," "Celebrating Christ, Celebrating Our Faith," and "Problems and Troubles: Only With Jesus You Will Survive," among a slew of others.



(right) Matlachines led the group in prayer as they performed a traditional Spanish dance.