

The Catholic Lighthouse

The Cradle of Texas Immigration



VOL. 21, NO. 8

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF VICTORIA IN TEXAS

December 2007



SPE SALVI on Christian Hope

U.S. bishops welcome encyclical on hope

WASHINGTON—*Spe salvi* (Saved by hope), the second encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, offers inspiration to all believers, said Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"Pope Benedict calls us personally and as a community to a hope rooted in Jesus," he said. Cardinal George made his remarks November 30, the day the encyclical was released at the Vatican.

Spe Salvi instructs readers that the Christian message is not only "informative" but also "performative," that is, "the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known – it is one

that makes things happen and is life-changing," Pope Benedict says. It is in receiving God through Jesus Christ that we receive hope. He illustrates this point narrating the life of the African slave, St. Josephine Bakhita.

The Pope outlines the concept of faith-based hope in the New Testament and early church and says that Christianity did not bring to the Roman world a hopeful message of social revolution. Jesus, who died on a cross, brought a totally different kind of hope. He made possible an encounter with "the Lord of all lords, an

See U.S. bishops welcome
encyclical, p. 17

MEETING AT A GLANCE

At their fall general meeting in Baltimore, the U.S. bishops...

- ✓ Received details of Pope Benedict XVI's April 15-20 visit to the United States.
- ✓ Authorized a new statement on Iraq that says some U.S. policymakers "seem to fail to recognize sufficiently the reality and failures in Iraq and the imperative for new directions."
- ✓ Elected Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago as their new president, and Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., as vice president
- ✓ Heard a briefing on an ongoing study of the "causes and context" of clerical sexual abuse.
- ✓ Voted to draft a brief policy statement on embryonic stem-cell research and a pastoral document on reproductive technologies.
- ✓ Approved a \$147.7 million budget for 2008 and a 16 percent reduction in the diocesan assessment that funds the USCCB.
- ✓ Issued the 2008 version of their quadrennial "Faithful Citizenship" election statement.
- ✓ Approved legislation specifying when a bishop must get the consent of his diocesan finance council and college of consultors before certain financial transactions or commitments. The legislation needs Vatican approval.
- ✓ Approved three liturgy related documents concerning music, celebrations of the Liturgy of the Word, and revised readings during Lent.
- ✓ OK'd a curriculum framework for catechetical materials for high school students.
- ✓ Approved a document on stewardship and teenagers.
- ✓ Approved guidelines for catechetical instruction on chaste living for children and teens.

©2007 CNS



Deacon Tommy Chen poses with his family and the Most. Rev. Daniel Flores, who ordained him to the transitional diaconate November 18 in Houston. Pictured from the left: nephew Andy Chong; parents, Kim and Lucy Chen; niece Anna Chong; great nephew Caleb Chan; brother-in-law John Chong and sister Katie Chong; sister Wendy Chan and great nephew Alec Chong. Absent was brother-in-law Stanley Chan.

Tommy Chen ordained to the diaconate

By Cynthia Brewer

Seminarian Tommy Chen was ordained to the transitional diaconate at St. Michael Catholic Church in Houston on November 10, 2007. Tommy, along with five other men from other dioceses, was ordained at a Mass presided by Most. Rev. Daniel Flores, auxiliary bishop of Detroit, Mich. and former rector of St. Mary's Seminary.

A week later on November 18, he served his first Mass and preached as a deacon at Holy Family in Wharton, his assigned parish.

Deacon Tommy Chen is the son of Kun-Ming and Lucy Chen of Point Comfort.

Below, in his own words, Tommy tells of his experience at his ordination to the transitional diaconate:

So many emotions were running

through me as I arrived at the Church of St. Michael's an hour before the ordination: nervousness, excitement, joy, and an overall sense of awe that this day had finally arrived! I could not believe that seven years ago I began this seemingly long and endless journey of seminary formation, and now it was coming to a fulfillment.

As the opening procession moved through the church, I was overwhelmed with deep gratitude to see how many smiling faces of family, friends, and the good people from the Diocese of Victoria who were present in the congregation to support and pray for me. Bishop Daniel Flores' words to us in the homily were so wise and inspirational. He taught us not to define our diaconate in mere functional terms, i.e. in what we

See Tommy Chen ordained, p. 5

ADVENT CANDLE—

The season of Advent – a time of joyful expectation leading up to Christmas began Dec. 2 this year for the Latin church. The season is marked by the lighting of candles in the Advent wreath. In Christian tradition candles symbolize Christ, the light of the world. (CNS photo illustration by Gregory L. Tracy, The Pilot)





Bishop Fellhauer's Schedule

December

- 8** 5:00 p.m., Mass, Holy Day of Obligation, Spiritual Renewal Center
6:30 p.m., Christmas dinner, benefiting multi-purpose building, Spiritual Renewal Center
- 9** 9:00 a.m., Mass, Institution of Acolytes and Rite of Candidacy for the Permanent Diaconate, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
- 14** 8:05 a.m., School Mass and blessing of new construction, Sacred Heart Church, Hallettsville
- 16** 6:30 p.m., Knights of St. Gregory Christmas gathering, Colony Creek Country Club, Victoria
- 19** 3:00 p.m., Diocesan Finance Board meeting, Chancery Office
4:30 p.m., Diocesan Building Board meeting, Chancery Office
- 24** 4:00 p.m., Mass, Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Motherhouse Infirmary, Victoria
Midnight Mass, Our Lady of Victory Cathedral
- 27** 6:00 p.m., Mass, Serra Club Christmas dinner for seminarians and religious in formation, Holy Family Church, Victoria

January 2008

- 7-11** Texas Bishops' retreat, Oblate Renewal Center, San Antonio
- 13-17** First Week of Diocesan Priests retreat, Spiritual Renewal Center, Victoria

Official Appointments By Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer

Effective immediately, the **Rev. Joseph Mai Kuan Khoa** is appointed Personal Pastor of the Vietnamese Apostolate in Palacios.

Effective January 2, 2008, the **Rev. Augustine Nsiah Asante** is appointed Parochial Vicar at St. Philip the Apostle Church in El Campo.

Notice:

Permission has been withdrawn for the Rev. Gabriel Otoo to exercise ministry in the Diocese of Victoria. The faithful are advised not to approach him for priestly services.

By order of
Bishop David E. Fellhauer

Thank You Note

Your Excellency:

It has been over 120 years since Bishop John J. Keane referred to the newly created Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., as "a living embodiment and illustration of the harmony between reason and revelation, between science and religion, between the genius of America and the Church of Christ.

It is the generosity of the people of the Diocese of Victoria with your support as their bishop that, once again, prompts my expression of gratitude for your recent gift in the amount of \$5,141.84.

As I begin my tenth year as president of The Catholic University of America, it is my continued goal the CUA remain faithful to those promises and the Catholic identity and mission upon which this institution — the "Bishops' University" — was first established.

From the bottom of my heart and in the name of the entire Catholic University community, I thank you, once again, for your generosity and support.

Faithfully yours in Christ,
Very Rev. David M. O'Connell, C.M.
CUA, President

Letter to the Editor

This past October's Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign has emphasized early detection as life saving. When experts in media interviews are asked their opinion on what's causing the epidemic in breast cancer (and they are seldom asked), a common answer is "We don't know, it's complicated." If they identify a risk it's described as "slight" and needing "more study." One in twelve got breast cancer 30 years ago, today it's one in eight; a 40 percent increase mostly in younger women. Among major cancers, only breast cancer has risen.

Most breast cancer, 80 percent, is related to life time exposure to estrogen. Our government's *Woman's Health Initiative* study reluctantly labeled estrogen as a known carcinogenic in 2002. Many, if they are not themselves victims, could probably name one or several public figures or neighbors with breast cancer. These are not postmenopausal grandmas but young women, many with children,

who are joining the army of pink clad marchers.

Should we be concerned that fifty years of human and animal studies evidencing a positive abortion/breast cancer (ABC link) have been shelved? In 2003 the National Cancer Institute announced that volunteers who took part in studies over the years could not be trusted to tell the truth if their reproductive history involved abortion (known as recall bias), so we'll have to start over. At this same event the NCI announced that they had looked at all the evidence, clinical, human and animal studies, and concluded that abortion was definitely not a breast cancer risk.

We know estrogen is a carcinogenic. We acknowledge that women can protect against its effect by not consuming the drug, and by protecting against estrogen (naturally produced mostly through menstruation) by a full term birth early in life. Ninety percent of breast cancer occurs in primitive milk-producing lobules that a woman is born with and that become physiologically mature cancer resistant units only with a full term pregnancy. Abortion increases risk by frustrating the risk reducing effect of childbirth. In addition, aborting a pregnancy vastly increases the number of cancer vulnerable breast cells. Up to 32 week's gestation, estrogen (whose blood level has increased 2,000 percent by the first trimester to a level six times higher than pre-pregnant state) effects breast growth by reproduction of primitive stage breast cells. Other hormones in the last eight weeks of pregnancy transform primitive cancer vulnerable cells into mature cancer resistant milk-producing units.

Reliable and respected experts in the field are making the ABC argument. Critics (NCI included) have not plausibly refuted the breast physiology involved and rats can't be accused of "recall bias."

Abortion is Russian roulette with a bullet in the chamber that ends the life of a child and leaves a wounded survivor. If you go there, know your risk.

Abortion is the breast cancer missing link in the estrogen chain of risk factors. Alcohol, obesity, delaying or not bearing children, pill use prior to a full-term pregnancy, hormone replacement therapy, early menarche — late menopause, plus abortion, all are independent risk factors that raise blood estrogen levels (and most are avoidable) and whose cumulative effect is the cause of our domestic and world epidemic of breast cancer.

Sincerely,
Samuel Valdivia, Victoria

Texas Catholic Conference Catholic Social Teaching. Bishops' Statements. Political Advocacy.

Subscribe to a Texas Catholic Conference newsletter today to start receiving news on the Church in Texas. Topics Include: Blog updates, Criminal Justice Reform, Education, Health & Human Services, and Life issues.

The Texas Catholic Conference is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas and is an official organization of the Church hierarchy. To register for email updates, visit the Texas Catholic Conference Web site at www.TX-catholic.org and click the "Get Involved" banner at the top of the page.

Deadline for January issue

The preferred January issue deadline this month is December 18; however, because school and church Christmas activities will happen later, please be sure to have all Christmas activity (plays, etc.) photos in *The Catholic Lighthouse* office by Dec. 21. Photos and stories may be sent to cbrewer@victoriadiocese.org. Thank you for your understanding.

Cynthia Brewer, Editor

2007 DSA MONTHLY REPORT

Since November's publication, total pledges have increased by \$ 12,647 and the amount paid increased by \$31,511 bringing our total pledged amount to \$ 697,484 and the amount paid to \$ 670,390.

The 2007 Diocesan Services Appeal will officially close on Monday, December 31, 2007. Please have your donations turned in before this date. All money received and deposited through December 31, 2007, will be credited for the year 2007.

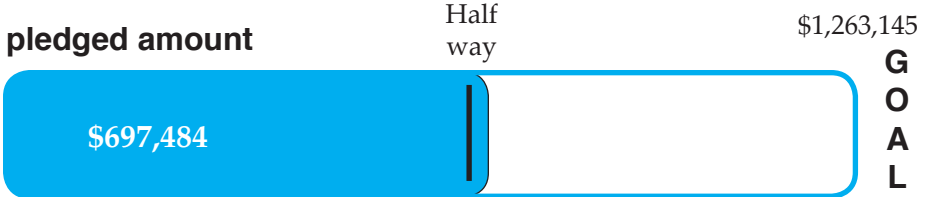
As parents we teach our children that what God has given us is valued and returned to him as time, talent and treasure in service to others. No one is ever poorer for giving to our God who is so rich in love, mercy and goodness.

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

Happy Holidays,
Business Office

Stewardship Thought:

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



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF VICTORIA IN TEXAS

Published monthly at 1505 E. Mesquite Lane — Victoria, TX 77901
(361) 573-0828 — FAX (361) 573-5725 — www.victoriadiocese.org

Publisher
The Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer

Editor
Cynthia Brewer — e-mail: cbrewer@victoriadiocese.org

Production/Advertising
Regina Matus-Janak — e-mail: janakr@victoriadiocese.org

Advertising: *The Catholic Lighthouse* cannot be held liable, or in any way responsible for the content of any advertisement appearing within these pages. All claims, offers, guarantees, statements, etc., made by *The Catholic Lighthouse* advertisers are solely the responsibility of the advertiser. Deceptive or misleading advertising is never knowingly accepted. Complaints regarding advertising should be made directly to the advertiser or the Better Business Bureau.

DEADLINE IS THE THIRD TUESDAY OF THE PRECEDING MONTH.
Subscription Price Per Year Is \$7/\$10 outside the diocese

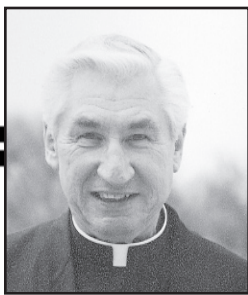
Periodical postage paid at Victoria, Texas, USPS-001015 (ISSN 0894-7740)
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
The Catholic Lighthouse - P.O. Box 4070 - Victoria, Texas 77903



FAITH POINT

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

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



Conflict at Christmas

This Christmas, much like the first one, is characterized by opposition to Christ and Christianity. Evidence of this can be seen in the number of shrill books avowing atheism such as Christopher (ironically a name that means Christ-carrier) Hitchens' *God is not Great* and Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*. Also we see the ACLU using the courts to ban public displays of Christmas or mention of religion in public schools. Universities which pretend to be bastions of free speech actually curtail religious expression and openly attempt to indoctrinate students and teach them to despise their parents' beliefs.

The sophomoric rants against religion list several complaints. Modern atheists identify Islamic fundamentalism with Christian fundamentalism and come to the conclusion that religion itself is the problem. They love to rehash killing done in the name of religion such as the Inquisition. What they fail to mention is that the killing done in the name of atheism is enormously much more vast than anything Christians attempted. Atheists have killed more people in the last century than all the religions in the world have contrived to do since the beginning of time. Atheism, not religion, is responsible for the mass murders of history. Approximately 2,000 persons were killed by the Spanish Inquisition over a three-hundred year period. Even a minor atheist dictator like Pol Pot killed more people in a month than Christians killed in three centuries.

Faced with the bitter fruit of atheism the new atheists try to explain away the killing for which their heroes are guilty by categorizing atheist regimes as actually becoming like religions. Christians are blamed not only for crimes committed in the name of God but those perpetrated in the name of atheism. This is a heads-I win-tails-you lose debate. If Christians are to be responsible for unjust deaths done by those who set aside Christian principles, then atheists must be held accountable for killing done in accordance with their principles. If we are responsible for Torquemada, atheists must be held accountable for Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Hitler, and other atheist despots whose body count numbers in the hundreds of millions.

Another complaint of the new atheists is that religion is anti-scientific. Their complaints include refusal to accept evolution by natural selection as the all-embracing answer to the universe and the chance development of nature. Most Christians have no problem with believing that existing species including humans evolved from pre-existing ones. What Christians and many others refuse to accept is that the great order in the universe and the complex organisms that emerged did so by a totally mindless process without direc-

tion. For atheists the world was created by a freak accident and it will continue to evolve by chance. There is no design, only chaos. Marvelously, chaos and disorder have been responsible for a universe in which order and design reign supreme. If evolution is to be likened to a throw of the dice, Christians will be forgiven for believing that somebody loaded the dice. To maintain that raw-dumb-matter makes a choice whether to advance or regress is totally delusional. How can raw-dumb-matter make any kind of choice? The atheist explanation of the universe is not merely bizarre but absurd.

Atheists charge that religion is anti-science and is incompatible with true science. They cite the case of Galileo which has become a nineteenth century fabrication to show that religion must be opposed to science. Galileo came up with the right conclusions but his arguments for heliocentrism were invalid. His treatment by the Inquisition had more to do with his personal conduct, which included lies, than to his scientific conclusions. A list of scientists who found no incompatibility with their religious beliefs and science includes Copernicus, Kepler, Brahe, Descartes, Boyle, Newton, Leibniz, Gassendi, Pascal, Mersenne, Cuvier, Harvey, Dalton, Faraday, Herschel, Joule, Lyell, Lavoisier, Priestley, Kelvin, Ohm, Ampere, Steno, Pasteur, Maxwell, Planck, Mendel, and Lemaitre. It was within Christendom, and uniquely there, that science flourished. The basic belief of science that the universe is rational and obeys laws discoverable by the human mind is based on Christian principles and in fact science cannot be done without these Christian presuppositions. The Church has always taught that faith and reason have their source in the same God and that they

reinforce one another. John Paul II spoke of "two wings" of reason and faith, the former lifting us to truth, the latter to Truth. Christianity, far from "spoiling everything," is actually the source of our proudest social attainments. To regret religion is to regret our civilization. Jesus' affirmation of the individual, particularly the marginalized and the outcasts was a vast improvement over the anti-democratic principles of Plato and Aristotle. Only Jesus stated that greatness was to be found in serving others. Religion is responsible for advances in civilization such as respect for all humans, abolition of slavery, and civil rights.

One choice available to us today is Christianity in which science and reason prosper, in which there is a profound respect for human life at all stages and in all social strata, in which respect for individual worth is the basis of democracy, and in which the human rights of all have flourished.

The other choice is atheism with its ri-

diculous theories of origins of the universe and of living beings, with its tendency to dictatorship and totalitarianism and with its inevitable degeneration into killing fields. God could say to us as he said to the Israelites, "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord your God, heeding his voice and holding fast to him."

(Deut. 30:19-20)

The choice, stripped to its barest essentials, is Christianity which brings life and atheism the generator of death. It is a life and death choice not just for the present but also for eternity. Following the Christ child who is God made man we have a chance at life here and hereafter.

That is a good reason to have a Merry Christmas!



Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem were conferred promotions at the annual meeting and investiture of the Southwestern Lieutenantcy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in Oklahoma City, Okla. From the Diocese of Victoria, three ladies and one knight received promotions. Attending the annual meeting (left photo) were Bishop David E. Fellhauer (KCStarHS) and Lady Joyce B. Morris (LGCHS) and her husband, Sir Joseph J. Morris Sr. (KGCHS). Also attending from the Diocese of Victoria (right photo) were Sir Otto N. Bleier, KHS, and his wife, Lady Joan C. Bleier, LHS.

Four Victorians receive promotions at Southwestern Lieutenantcy of the EOHSJ

OKLAHOMA CITY—The annual meeting and investiture of the Southwestern Lieutenantcy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was held at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City, Okla., and at area Catholic churches Oct. 12-15, 2007.

A memorial Mass, conferring of promotions and a vigil service were held at the St. John Nepomuk Catholic Church in Yukon, Okla., on Saturday afternoon, where three Ladies and one Knight of the Holy Sepulchre from the Diocese of Victoria were conferred promotions.

The principal celebrant and homilist was His Excellency, the Most Rev. Eusebius J. Beltran, KCStarHS, Archbishop of Oklahoma City. Concelebrants were the Most Rev. Daniel N. DiNardo, KCStarHS, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and Grand Prior; the Most Rev. Joseph A. Fiorenza, KCStarHS, Archbishop Emeritus of Galveston-Houston; the Most Rev. Michael J. Sheehan, KCStarHS, Archbishop of Santa Fe, N.M.; the Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer, KCStarHS, Bishop of Victoria; and other bishops, abbots and priests of the order. His Excellency Dennis M. Malloy, KGCHS, lieutenant, Southwestern Lieutenantcy, U.S.A., presided.

During the conferring of promotions, Victorians Lady Ruth Ann Boyd, LCHS (Lady Commander Holy Sepulchre), Lady Gladys Vrazel, LGCHS (Lady Grand Cross Holy Sepulchre), Lady Joyce B. Morris, LGCHS, and Sir Joseph J. Morris Sr., KGCHS (Knight Grand Cross Holy Sepulchre) were promoted from this diocese. The ceremony of investiture of EOHSJ was held on Sunday at St. John the Baptist Church in Edmond, Okla. There were no investees from the Diocese of Victoria this year. A reception and white-tie formal banquet was held Sunday evening for members and spouses.

Some of the speakers were Brother David Carrol, FSC, Ph. D., KGCHS, Under Secretary General. He is always very informative with his presentation about the Holy Land at the Saturday morning meeting for investees and members.

Msgr. Robert L. Stern, KCStarHS, Pontifical Mission for Palestine, president, spoke to all present at the annual meeting Sunday morning. The speaker at the

formal banquet, Sunday evening was His Excellency Archbishop Dr. Elias Chacour, arch-eparchy of Akka, Haifa, Nazareth and Galilee. He has become an ambassador of non-violence and someone, who not only preaches, but also lives the Sermon on the Mount. He is very supportive of education, with his hope for the growth of Mar Elias Educational Institutions (high school and college), which he began, to include over 5,000 Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Druze students who can live together, learn together and establish a common future together in Galilee for the first time in history. He told us his thoughts, information and the various happenings in the Holy Land.

Attending from the diocese of Victoria was the Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer, KCStarHS, Sir Otto N. Bleier, KHS, Lady Joan C. Bleier, LHS, Sir Joseph J. Morris Sr., KGCHS, and Lady Joyce B. Morris, LGCHS. It ended with a traveler's Mass Monday morning. The next annual meeting and investiture will be in Little Rock, Ark., October 17-20, 2008.

The Southwestern Lieutenantcy was honored to learn that soon after the end of our annual meeting that their Grand Prior, Archbishop Daniel N. DiNardo, and their Pro-Grand Master, Archbishop John Foley, were named to the College of Cardinals. They were elevated to Cardinal at the consistory held in Rome November 24, 2007. A large number of Knights and Ladies of the Southwestern Lieutenantcy, EOHSJ, traveled to Rome for this very special event.

"Enjoy Yesterday's Charm
Today's Convenience"

Daily
•
Weekly
•
Monthly



**The
Inn
on
Main**

315 N.
Main
•
Victoria

(361) 580-2794
www.the-inn-on-main.com



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, 2007

TOTALS	
— General Seminary Burse	
Previously reported	\$91,329.00
In memory of Frances Bochat by Bob and Minnie Bochat	25.00
In memory of Rev. Joseph Phamduc Trinh by Bernard and Madeline Rother	25.00
Total	\$91,379.00

— Knights of Columbus Victoria Council 1329 Burse No. 3	
Previously reported	\$7,137.50
In memory of Arthur A. Reuter by KC Victoria Council 1329	100.00
Total	\$7,237.50

— St. John the Baptist Church, St. John Burse No. 2 — In Honor of Rev. Brian Crookes	
Previously reported	\$4,376.00
In memory of Marilyn Hrnair by Robert & Louise Pesek	20.00
Total	\$4,396.00

— Rev. Charles Kolek OSB and John and Mary Kolek Burse	
Previously reported	\$1,880.00
Donation by family members of the Charles and Mary Kozel Family reunion	200.00
Total	\$2,080.00

— Catholic Life Insurance No. 51 Rev. Msgr. Eustace Hermes & Rev. Msgr. Gino Bernasconi Burse No. 2	
Previously reported	\$1,170.47
In memory of Arthur A. Reuter by Our Lady of Lourdes Altar Society	25.00
Total	\$1,195.47

— Rev. John C. Peters Burse No. 4	
Previously reported	\$180.00
In honor of St. John Seminary Class of 1967	25.00
In memory of Leonard Dominic by: Bill and Fran Byrd	15.00
Beverly Haas	10.00
Loretta Hardcastle	10.00
Doraine Buck & Alvin Kohllefel	14.00
Total	\$254.00

— Rev. Josephat R. Janak Burse No. 2	
Previously reported	\$53.77
In memory of Josephat R. Janak by Margaret Kutac	20.00
Total	\$73.77

— Rev. Theophil Okruhlik & Rev. Vincent Verdame Burse	
Previously reported	\$8,357.89
In memory of Alfonse V. Kaluza by Henry and Georgia Jedlicka	10.00
In memory of Lil Knowles by Mrs. Anton Schoener	20.00
Total	\$8,387.00

— Rev. Jerome J. Stryk Burse	
Previously reported	\$10,467.50
In memory of M/M Frank A. Stryk by Dan Stryk	100.00
Total	\$10,567.50

— Rev. Joseph A. Koebel Burse	
Previously reported	\$5,698.00
In memory of Rev. Joseph Koebel by Catholic Daughters of America Our Lady of the Rosary	250.00
Total	\$5,948.00

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 Popp celebrates his 90th birthday

SAN ANTONIO—Most Rev. Bernard F. Popp, a retired auxiliary bishop of San Antonio, celebrated his 90th birthday on Thursday, December 6.

Bishop Popp is a native of St. Mary's in Nada. He was ordained to the priesthood February 24, 1943. On June 7, 1983, he was appointed auxiliary bishop of San Antonio.

Bishop Popp will be truly delighted to receive your well wishes and can be reached by mail at his temporary residence: Most Rev. Bernard Popp, Padua Place; 80 Peter Baque Road; San Antonio, Texas 78209.



**Seminarian
Patrick Knippenberg
December 3**

Theology I
St. Mary's Seminary
9845 Memorial Drive
Houston, Texas 77024

*Patrick is from
Sts. Cyril & Methodius Parish, Shiner*



The School Sisters of Notre Dame's newly elected general council is (left to right): Sister Katherine DuVal; Sister M. Dominca Michalke; Sister Mary Maher, general superior; Sister Carol Jean Dust; Sister Marcela Rockenbach; Sister Maureen McGoe; and Sister M. Irene Ksiazak.

School Sisters of Notre Dame elect international leadership team, set future direction

DALLAS – The School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) have elected Sister Mary Maher, currently the provincial of the Atlantic-Midwest Province, as general superior to lead the international congregation. Sister Mary will work with a team of six newly-elected general councilors: Sister M. Irene Ksiazak, Poland; Sister Carol Jean Dust, St. Louis, Mo.; Sister Katherine DuVal, Mankato, Minn.; Sister Maureen McGoe, Canada; Sister M. Dominca Michalke, Germany; and Sister Marcela Rockenbach, Brazil. The newly-elected general council will begin their five-year term when they are installed on January 20 in Rome, Italy.

The congregation's newly developed directional statement, Call to Solidarity, focuses on three elements essential to the life and mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame: a deeper living of their internationality for the sake of the mission, a recommitment to their call to education that transforms and a readiness to celebrate and live Eucharist as the center of their lives.

Sister Mary and the newly elected general councilors will help the 3,700

SSNDs worldwide bring to life this new Call to Solidarity.

"The unifying mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and our ministry of transformative education place us at the heart of the world's longing to live as one interconnected community," said Sister Mary. "We look forward to collaborating with all peoples who share this vision for the future."

Dallas Province Sisters Addie Lorraine Walker, provincial leader, Dallas; Dolorette Farias, parish and mission life coordinator, Our Lady of Fatima Parish and mission churches, Van Horn, Texas; and Barbara Kraus, director and instructor, Progressive Education Program, Inc., New Iberia, La., were among the eighty-two SSND 22nd General Chapter delegates who participated in the elections and congregational direction setting in São Leopoldo, Brazil, from September 23 - October 24.

October 24, 2007, marks the opening of the 175th anniversary year of the founding of the congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame to be celebrated October 24, 2008.



DEACONS' RETREAT FOCUSES ON LISTENING TO GOD—Twenty of the diocese's deacons attended the 2007 Deacons' Retreat at the Spiritual Renewal Center October 4-6. Based on readings from the Book of Joshua, this year's retreat master, Father Robert Knippenberg, taught on the theme "Listening to God and following Instructions." On Saturday, Bishop David Fellhauer celebrated Mass, which was concelebrated by Father Knippenberg and assisted by Deacon Steve Borowicz. Pictured are Steve and Su Lin Borowicz, Margarito and Sylvia Cervantez, Chuck Glenn, Jerome and Evelyn Grahmann, Linard and Dot Harper, Bennie and Florence Holesovsky, Jim Koenig, Dennis and Georgia Kutach, Alvin Matthys, John and Eileen McCourt, Jarrel and Irene Nohavitza, Charlie and Lorraine Novosad, Ken and Lianne Ryan, Leo and Anne Sharron, Joseph and Mary Targac, Douglas Tromblee, Michael and Bonnie Vieira, Tony and Dawn Warzecha, Dick and Terri Wearden, Edward and Agnes Wendel, Bishop Fellhauer and Father Knippenberg.

Chancery Office Holiday Schedule

The Chancery Office will be closed Dec. 21 at 11:30 a.m. through Jan. 1, 2008, for the Christmas and New Year Holidays. We will re-open on Jan. 2 at 8:30 a.m.

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.



Twenty Something

By Christina Capecchi



The lesson buried in a boastful Christmas letter

Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, raw pride nipping on your prose. Stunning feats being sung in a card and kids dressed up like dynamos.

The Christmas Song we compose in the annual family letter can sound awfully sour compared with the lyrics Nat King Cole crooned.

In our modern rendition, the “eyes all aglow” belong to proud parents, not tiny tots. And those reindeer really know how to fly; they made the Honor Roll.

I’m as guilty as you. We roll our eyes at the boastful letters, then we roll up our sleeves, racking our brains for the year’s most impressive accomplishments. We wrap them in muscular language, trying to recall the active verbs of resume rhetoric like “execute” and “implement.”

Whenever possible, we reference ranks: Captain, Senior Consultant, Most Valuable, Best in Class.

To back it up, we quote from a panel of experts: the teacher, the coach, the priest, the principal, the boss.

Then we quantify our success: winning first place in soccer, scoring a 33 on the ACT, shaving two minutes off a run, taking a 10-day trip to seven countries, overseeing 20 employees.

In the end, our attempt to update friends reads more like a request for a job promotion.

Of course, it’s hard to avoid some of these techniques. They help us fill a blank page in comprehensible terms.

But on a deeper level, this holiday custom provides us with a unique opportunity for self inventory. How we sum up a year can be incredibly telling – if you read between the lines.

When my mom asked me to write my portion of our family Christmas letter, I made note of the notables. Easy enough. Then I read through it, surprised to discover that the entire paragraph pertained

to my education and career. The lingering questions being: Do I have friends? Hobbies? A life outside work?

It was a reality check. I’m reworking the paragraph – and the lifestyle.

Our achievement-centric society takes hold at a young age. By the time you finish your schooling, there’s pressure to not just begin a career, but to excel at it, to quickly earn the kind of accolades for which Christmas letters are notorious.

But the measurements we find handy and acceptable are often faulty. And the feats we deem admirable and important are often meaningless. In the scheme of things, that is because the scheme is incredibly broad, spanning back to a baby born two millennia ago. His arrival did not involve a new Lexus or an upscale B&B. Just a bumpy donkey ride and a dusty manger. He did not go on to be voted Most Popular. Truth is, he was kind of a loner, befriending lepers and defending an adulteress.

Jesus didn’t see the Pharisees for their status and power; he saw their hypocrisy. He never paraded virtue; he prayed in private. He took no stock in society’s arbitrary metrics and he made that known. St. Peter wrote, “With the Lord, one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.”

Our only true judge couldn’t care less about our rung on the corporate ladder. Rather, he asks us to be good and faithful servants, to feed the hungry and welcome the stranger in our midst.

This December, as bonuses are awarded and progress is chronicled on holly-berry stationery, remember this: What really counts cannot be counted.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn. E-mail her at christinacap@gmail.com.

Young Adult Retreat to be offered in January

A retreat is being offered to young adults, age 18 to 25 years, January 12-13, 2008, at the Spiritual Renewal Center by Holy Family Parish, the Victoria College Catholic Student Association and the Diocese of Victoria.

A retreat is a withdrawal from ordinary activities for a period of time to commune with God in prayer and reflection.

The purpose of this retreat is to build a community of dedicated young adults; to strengthen their faith; increase their knowledge about Catholic teachings; and to continue to support each other and build

long lasting Christian friendships.

The theme for this retreat is “God will not give up. Only you can give up.” It will be directed by Father Dan Morales, pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf Parish in Port Lavaca.

All young adults age 18 to 25 years old are invited to attend – invite a friend.

Registration fee is \$50, payable to Holy Family Church by January 6. For more information, please contact Judy Seiler, Holy Family Youth Office, at (361) 573-5445.



(above) Laura Boehm of Hallettville and Bubba Flores of Victoria provide liturgical music for the first Mass of the newly established Catholic Campus Ministry.



Father Greg Korenek, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Victoria, celebrates the first Campus Mass Nov. 13.

Ariana Varela of Victoria is the lector for the Mass.

A new Catholic presence at Victoria College

The start of the 2007-2008 school year, ushered in the beginning of a new ministry on the Victoria College Campus. The Catholic Campus Ministry has become a thriving ministry in only three short but event-filled months. This ministry maintains an on-campus presence under the direction of Melanie Ledwig, Kim Heinemann and Catherine Heath, instructors at Victoria College; and Gail Janecka, counselor at the college. Judy Seiler, director of Youth Ministry at Holy Family serves as mentor and liaison to the diocesan Office of Youth Ministry for this new endeavor.

On Tuesday, November 13, the first Mass, presided by Father Greg Korenek, was held on campus with over 40 college students and adults in attendance. Father David Berger celebrated the Dec. 4 Advent Mass and social with the students and faculty. Plans are in the works to

include a Lenten Mass, various social gatherings and Bible studies that include faith sharing.

We invite all college students (and friends) to participate in the upcoming activities in 2008. We also encourage all to attend the young adult retreat that will be held January 12-13 at the Spiritual Renewal Center.

For more information, please contact: Catherine Heath at (361) 573-3291 ext. 3276; Language 100C; or Catherine.heath@victoriacollege.edu or Melanie Ledwig at (361) 573-3291 ext. 3250; Johnson Hall 100A or Melanie.Ledwig@victoriacollege.edu.

Please contact Judy Seiler at judyseiler@hotmail.com for more information concerning the upcoming 2008 Winter Retreat for Young Adults or to get on the mailing list for the VC Catholic Student Association (C.S.A.).

Tommy Chen ordained to the diaconate

Continued from p. 1

can (deacons can baptize) and cannot (deacons cannot anoint the sick) do, but to remember that the essence of the diaconate is to be a sacrament to the entire Church and world of the servanthood of Christ. Therefore, the bishop reminded us, never to cease serving, especially the poor and the marginalized of our Church and our world.

As the actual Rite of Ordination began with me prostrating myself before the altar while the congregation called on all the saints to pray for us, I was overwhelmed with a real sense that the whole Church was present there with me: the saints in heaven and the People of God on earth. The actual Rite of Ordination was so beautiful, but I cannot say that I remember the details, since the whole experience was so fantastically surreal!

After I was officially ordained by the laying on of Bishop Flores’ hands and vested in the deacon’s vestments of stole and dalmatic, I don’t think that the fact that I was really ordained actually sank into my mind, until the preparation of the altar. I remember standing on the side of the sanctuary watching two of my newly ordained deacon classmates preparing the bread and the wine and thinking to myself, “Wow, they’re doing a great job doing those deacon duties.” It was then that it hit me, “I’m a deacon of the Catholic Church! I’m ordained now! I’m one of them!!!”

After the ordination Mass, I was quickly reminded that I was ordained when various friends began asking me to give them a blessing. At first I was taken

aback. My first blessings felt very awkward, because I guess the identity had not sunk in my psyche yet. But nevertheless I felt privileged and humbled to be able to dispense God’s blessings to his people.

A week after I was ordained, I returned to my assigned parish of Holy Family in Wharton to serve my first Mass and preach as a deacon. That for me “sealed” and “ratified” the ordination. The whole experience of the ordination was entirely joyful for me. I greatly and deeply appreciate all my family, friends, parishioners, priests, and deacons of the Diocese of Victoria who graced me with the gift of their presence on my ordination day and also all those who were not able to be present but nevertheless remembered me and prayed for me. I firmly believe that my vocation would not and could not have reached ordination if it were not for the constant prayers and support of all these very special people. Please continue to pray for me as I prepare for priestly ordination on June 21, 2008.



Heavenly Helpers

1406-B N. Mechanic
El Campo, Texas
(979) 543-2850

Mon.- Fri. 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Sat. 9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.



Special Gifts For
Any Occasion
Baptism • Wedding
Anniversary
Birthday • Grief

Precious Moments Figurines,
Bibles, Books & Music, Crosses,
Cards, Jewelry, Rosaries, T-Shirts
& Much More

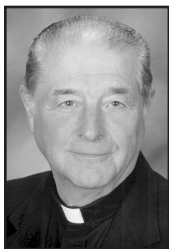
If you suspect a child has been abused or mistreated, you are required to report it to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or to a law enforcement agency within 48 hours of the time you suspect the child had been or may be abused or neglected.

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



Question Corner

By Father John Dietzen
Catholic News Service



Is Advent Much Different From Lent?

Q. I am writing about a trend in our parish recently that has made Advent almost indistinguishable from Lent. Only penitential songs are sung, the Alleluia is only recited, not sung, no decorations of any kind are allowed until Christmas Eve.

The homilies are on sinfulness and repentance. Advent Masses are almost like Good Friday. It is all very discouraging and confusing to our family. Isn't the idea of Advent to be a preparation for Christmas, with some anticipation and festivity about it? Or is this changed? (Illinois)

A. Assuming you reflect the circumstances accurately, the observance of Advent in your liturgies is, to say the least, unusual. Whoever is responsible for your liturgical planning seems out of touch with, or perhaps never learned, the church's tradition and teaching about this beautiful season.

Certainly there is a penitential aspect to these weeks, but their framework, spirit and focus differ significantly from that which characterizes the time of Lent.

At least since the time of St. Bernard, nearly 1,000 years ago, the time of Advent has focused on the three comings of our Lord: his birth in the incarnation, the final coming at the completion of his work of redemption and, between these two, his presence and saving power at work in the

community of faith through the ages.

Advent, in other words, is primarily a time of joyous waiting, anticipating the commemoration of his birth and celebrating his continued presence and saving grace among us. All this happens under our awareness that, by living the mystery of Christ, we await with him his final victory over sin and death.

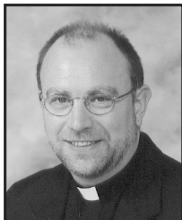
The church repeatedly emphasizes that all Advent liturgies should reflect this watchful joy. In music, visual environment and the overall tone of the liturgy, it is quite distinct from the penitential time before Easter. As the introduction to the Sacramentary (Roman Missal) says, these weeks before Christmas are a "season of devout and joyful expectation."

Throughout the centuries, even before Christianity, the acclamation "Alleluia" ("praise to the Lord") has been by nature a sung prayer. Speaking instead of singing it is like reciting instead of singing "Happy birthday to you."

The church's liturgical documents generally simply assume Alleluia is always sung. (See, for example, the 1972 decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship governing chants at Mass, No. 7). The "Instruction on Sacred Music" of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy says, "If not sung, the Alleluia should be omitted" (55).

From The Pastor's Desk

By Father Bob Knippenberg
Pastor of Sts. Cyril and
Methodius, Shiner



Body Language

When it comes to sex, people often speak a lie with the language of their bodies without even realizing it. For example, after the lead character in the movie *Vanilla Sky* slept with a woman, she said to him, "Don't you know when you sleep with someone...your body makes a promise whether you do or not?" Odds are, he was not intending to lie to her. But she was right. He had "spoken" a promise with his body that he had not intended.

Whether we know it or not, the true language of sex says, "I am completely yours. I belong totally to you." But this is often not what people really mean to say. Consider the situation of two unmarried persons having sex. They are physically doing the same thing as a married couple, but they do not mean what their bodies are saying because they have not made the marriage commitment. A married couple has made a commitment in front of the Church and many witnesses, freely offering their whole lives to each other until death. On the other hand, two unmarried persons who are dating or "hooking up" have given no promise of lifelong commitment. Therefore, they are not making a total gift of self to each other. In the end, people may choose to have sex (because God gave us free will), but no one is free to change the meaning of sex.

The language of sex is only true when it speaks of marital love. Even if the dating or "hooking up" (or "living together") couple's intentions are good, their act is still a lie expressed in the language of their bodies. They may hope to get married one day, but they do not yet belong to each other

in the eyes of God because they have not made the commitment through the means that he has established. They have made no promise to be faithful to each other until death. They don't need to get a civil divorce if they break up (although they may feel like they do). The bottom line is this: they are not husband and wife. They want one of the great joys of marriage—sexual relations, also known as marital relations—without the responsibilities and without the commitment. Isn't it interesting that one of the traditional names for sex in marriage is "the act of marriage"? The fact that sex expressed marital love so well understood that we, as a culture, simply referred to it as "the marital act." Today, this definition is barely known because sex has become such a casual, accepted behavior of unmarried people. When unmarried people have sex, it actually mocks and cheapens marriage.

Marriage carries with it many responsibilities, but few are more foundational than importance of telling the truth. While most people eventually get married, we often hear that half of marriages end in divorce. One of the major causes of divorce is infidelity. What many unmarried couples do not realize is that by speaking the truth with their bodies now—through purity and self-control—they are actually training themselves in the faithfulness that is the bedrock to future marital stability.

All of Father Bob's messages are on the Internet at www.shinercatholicchurch.org. Click on bulletins and then archives if you need to go back in history.

Local Seminar for Youth Leaders and Educators Being Offered in Victoria and Hillje—

Theology of the Body Provides Answers to Teenage Woes

Few would doubt that today's teenagers face extraordinary pressure to become sexually active. With permissive mores dominating the airwaves and high-school lunchroom conversations, young Catholics are surrounded by messages that challenge their faith and lead them to places that many do not want to go, according to chastity educators Jason and Crystalina Evert.

"I've met countless young people who, in their heart of hearts, do not want to follow the call of the culture and become sexually active, but they feel ill-equipped to respond to the challenge," explains Evert, who speaks to more than 100,000 teenagers each year at his seminars. "I believe the Theology of the Body was given to the Church for times such as this because it offers a unique, new 'language'

that absolutely resonates with audiences, including teenagers."

The Theology of the Body teachings of John Paul II have enjoyed an international groundswell of popularity in the past five to ten years. The body of work was introduced to the world during the first six years of John Paul's pontificate. In what would become his first major teaching as pope, the Holy Father used more than 130 Wednesday audiences, from 1979 to 1984, to introduce the faithful to new insights on the human person, sexuality, and God's plan for humanity.

The Office of Youth Ministry in collaboration with the Office of Catechetical Ministry and the Office of Catholic Schools is offering two training sessions on this teaching and its application on January 18, 2008, at the chancery in Victoria, and January 19, 2008 at St. Andrew in Hillje. Each of the sessions will run from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. An information, question and answer session will be held on Thursday, January 17, 2008, from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the chancery in Victoria.

"The Theology of the Body is especially important for teens who are thinking every day about their bodies and souls as they search for meaning in their lives," explains Brian Butler, a specialist in adolescent education who co-authored the Theology of the Body for Teens program with the Everts. "This theology helps them to understand the significance of their sexuality and the purpose of their lives by presenting the truth of God's life-giving and liberating love."

The Theology of the Body for Teens, published by Ascension Press, uses a comprehensive approach that includes stories, real-life examples, activities, prayers, and references to the culture that teens understand. This program takes two of the most controversial topics, God and sex, and integrates them through John Paul II's compelling vision for love and life.

The upcoming training will introduce youth ministers, directors of religious education, teachers and others who work with teenagers to the pedagogy of the pope's original teaching and how it can be introduced to young audiences. The training includes lunch and resource material, including the Theology of the Body for Teens curriculum. For more information, call the Office of Youth Ministry at (361) 573-0828 ext. 32 or 50.



Extended Program Classes

DIocese OF VICTORIA PASTORAL INSTITUTE

The Pastoral Institute is committed to making adult education a high priority in the Diocese of Victoria. As Catholics, in today's world, we need to be able to understand and live our faith; hence, a lifelong commitment of growing and responding to God's love in our everyday lives.

Rev. Eddie Winkler will teach **Catholic Morality** beginning Monday, January 7, 2008, from 7:00 - 9:15 p.m. at Holy Family Parish in Wharton.

Mr. Ron Friedel will teach **Church** at the Chancery beginning Tuesday, January 8, 2008, from 7:00 - 9:15 p.m.

There is a \$15.00 registration fee for each six-week course.

For more information, visit www.victoriadiocese.org, call (361) 573-0828, e-mail bparkan@victoriadiocese.org, or check your parish bulletin.



Diocese of Victoria Library & Media Center



Visit www.victoriadiocese.org to search the library catalog or call 361-573-0828. Library hours are Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Advent/Christmas Videos

- The Nativity Story
- An Advent and Christmas Journey (Five-part series)
- The Legend of the Candy Cane
- A Star for Jeremy
- The Little Brown Burro
- Advent with Saint Nicholas
- Timmy's Gift
- The City that Forgot About Christmas
- The Nativity
- The Greatest Story Ever Told

Advent/Christmas Books

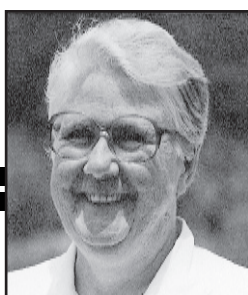
- The ABC's of Christmas
- Hail Mary: A Marian Book of Hours
- Biblical Meditations for Advent and the Christmas Season
- Mary from Nazareth
- God Day By Day: Advent and Christmas
- To Dance With God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration
- Everyday Epiphanies: Seeing the Sacred in Every Thing
- God in the Moment: Making Every Day a Prayer
- The Nativity
- The Greatest Story Ever Told

If you are not yet a Library Patron, call (361) 573-0828 and receive a Patron number, which will enable you to check out videos and books throughout the year.



SISTERLY THOUGHTS

By Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS



Prepare the Way of the Lord!

As we enter into Advent we hear St. Matthew's account of St. John the Baptist calling us to repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. We hear the Baptist echoing Isaiah: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." In those days it was the custom to prepare the roads for the arrival of the King or other important visitors. The dirt roads would have become deeply rutted through constant use, resulting in a very rough ride for the traveler. So crews would be sent to straighten out the road by filling in the ruts (valleys) and leveling the ridges (mountains).

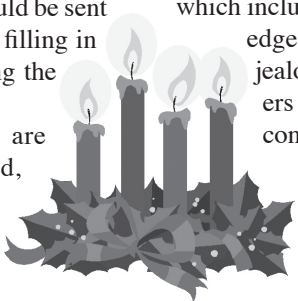
Now during Advent we are crews being commissioned, through our Baptism, to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. So our task is to discover and fill the ruts or valleys in our lives and in our society that need to be filled in; at the same time we need to become aware of and address the ridges or mountains that need to be leveled before we can fully welcome the Lord.

As we look at our own lives and the society in which we live, I'm sure you can find some valleys that need filling in. To initiate the search, we can think of some abysmal vacuums that exist in our society: lack of respect for God; lack of respect for all stages of human life; failure to promote the dignity of fellow human

beings, including those who are "different" than we are; broken relationships; misunderstandings; and the many other ruts that touch our own lives. What can we do to fill in these ridges and prepare for the coming of the Lord?

Moreover, we must also become aware of and minimize the mountains in our lives and our communities that need to be leveled. Are we tainted by mountainous obstacles to God's grace-filled arrival which include: pride, failing to acknowledge God as Creator; greed, and jealousy, taking advantage of others or failing to wish them well; consumerism, or a sense of "having to buy" excessive things; materialism, "thinking that things will bring happiness" and confusing "wants" and "needs;" individualism, and any other "ism" that causes so much social and moral woe.

Straightening the road and leveling these valleys and mountains may seem to be an overwhelming task. However, if we each start by taking little actions we can make some difference. Together, our actions can make a big difference! So let us set out on our task by leveling the pathway in our families, our workplaces, and our schools. Thus, we can "prepare the way" for the coming of the Messiah. With Him in our midst, may we all have a Blessed Christmas.



Deacon Luan Tran elected president of national deacon committee

BAY CITY — Deacon Luan Tran, deacon at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Bay City, was elected president of the National Association of Asian Pacific American Deacons (NAAPAD) at their conference in California October 13.

On the request of the executive director of the Secretariat for the Diaconate at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the NAAPAD was established in 2001 by Korean deacons to serve all Asian Pacific deacons in the United States.

The NAAPAD is one of the seven national deacon organizations in the

United States that works with the bishops' Committee on the Diaconate.



Deacon Luan Tran

Deacon Tran had been invited to join the NAAPAD in 2003 as a treasurer. In 2005 he became its president elect and now is president for the years of 2008-2010.

The purpose of NAAPAD is to bring all Asian Pacific deacons together in one body; encourage vocations to the diaconate among Asian Pacific Americans; strengthen relationship and support of Asian Pacific American deacons with bishops and priests; and to seek opportunities to col-

laborate with other American deacons.



Our Lady of Sorrows Shut-In Ministry celebrated its 20th anniversary of service this fall. Guest speaker, Sister Marian Sturm, IWBS, second from the right, spoke of how in every service we provide, we are sharing in the priesthood of Christ.

Shut-In ministry honors members, living and deceased

Our Lady of Sorrows (OLS) Shut-In Ministry celebrated their 20th anniversary with a thanksgiving Mass said by Father Stan De Boe on Sunday, October 21, 2007. The ministry has been operating since the parish reflection process formed many ministries in 1987. The annual covered-dish meeting to recruit new members was held on Wednesday, Oct. 24.

Prior to dinner, Orlando Zepeda from Kingsville and Mark Zepeda of OLS provided music. Throughout the evening, a raffle was held which raised \$804; the funds will be donated to needy shut-ins.

The guest speaker was Sister Marian Sturm, Adult Faith Family director from St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in San Antonio. Sister Marian was very helpful and dedicated in preparing parish renewal leaders in 1985 – 1987. Sister was impressed at the growth of the ministry – 88

members, which includes the eight new members who signed up that evening. Sister Marian spoke on the baptismal duties of a Christian and sharing in the priesthood of Christ. She explained, "Each time you take the Eucharist to the shut-in; pray the rosary at the nursing home and adult day care center, make phone calls or home visits; sew lap quilts for those in wheel chairs; fix Christmas and Easter baskets; operate the resale shop to raise funds for the ministry's needs; grow plants for the annual bazaar; make corsages, cakes and tamales for the Mother's Day fund-raiser; and even when you work on the treasury report, you are being priest, prophet and King."

In closing, Sister Marian commended the ministry, and with a meditation song, encouraged awareness of what it means to be Church and an active member of the Body of Christ.

On behalf of Pastor Juan Vasquez, Mary Ann Zepeda, the ministry's coordinator since the beginning, presented Dolores Martinez, Paula Alvarado, Lupe O. Martinez, and Pauline Peña with a certificate of recognition for 20 years of service. Forty members received certificates of appreciation for their service between five and 18 years. There are 43 other members who will be recognized after investing five years of active duty.

To honor the 18 deceased members of the ministry, a plaque with their names engraved on it and a lit candle for each was set on a display table along with the yearbooks.

Each year the ministry offers a Mass in November for all the shut-ins who have passed away since the past November. This year the Mass was said for 40 shut-ins by Father Stan De Boe on Thursday, November 15. As their names were mentioned during the offertory, two family members brought a rose and a candle to represent their loved one.

The ministry will meet on Saturday, Dec. 15, at the Catholic War Veteran's Hall on Main Street to prepare Christmas food boxes for 90 shut-ins.

Any Our Lady of Sorrows parishioners interested in joining the ministry may contact Mary Ann Zepeda at 575-5289.

Position Open for Principal

St. Louis Catholic High School, Lake Charles, La., is looking for a principal. Qualifications: Masters' Degree and at least 5 years educational experience. Contract effective July 1, 2008. Deadline to apply, December 15, 2007. Contact the Office of Catholic Schools at (337) 433-9640 ext. 200 for further information.

Stocks ■ Bonds ■ CDs Mutual Funds ■ IRAs



Kenneth J. French, Sr.
1501 E Mockingbird,
Ste 102
Victoria, TX 77901
PH 361/576-0178

www.edwardjones.com
Member SIPC

Edward Jones
Serving Individual Investors Since 1871

KURZWEIL
DIGITAL PIANOS

BUDDY'S TV & COMMUNICATIONS

HWY 90-A EAST
HALLETTSVILLE, TX 77964
ph 361-798-5017

Buddy & Carolyn Boehm owners



Frank Luke sales mgr
361 798 6008 cell
frank@buddystv.com



Catholic Family Fraternal of Texas-KJZT 1-888-253-2338

5.5%

Amazing Annuity & IRA Rates!!!

- Whole & Term Life Insurance for Catholics
- Special Plans for Youth & Seniors
- Single Premium & Flexible Annuities
- Traditional & Roth IRA's

*On deposits of \$4,001 or more.
Rates subject to change.





Standing: Carolyn Malik, Shiner; Eve Trevino, Corpus Christi; Shirley Seyfried, Battle Lake, Minnesota; Irene Flynn, Houston; Denise Frerich, Wichita Falls; home owner Karen Lewis, Wichita Falls; Carolyn Bachmann, Scotland; Father Hoa Nugyen, Wichita Falls; Leda Williams, Houston; Mary Anna Garcia, Houston; Carol Friend, Houston; Olga Samaniego, El Paso; and Terrie Vacek, Willis. Kneeling: Libby Ramirez, Victoria; Kathleen Taylor, Houston; Sheila Martinka, Pasadena; and Peggy Rosales, Austin.

A Home Built by Angels

By Terrie Vacek, CDA State Public Relations

Karen Lewis, the recipient of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas (CDA) Habitat for Humanity build in Wichita Falls, warmed the hearts of guests attending the dedication of her new home stating, "It was a home built by angels." Working over 300 hours in habitat homes herself, Ms. Lewis emotionally stated that, "As they built my house, God was building my heart. I have the prosperity of a new home and the love of CDA Angels." Special Guests attending the blessing of the home and dedication were National CDA officers Libby Ramirez, National Regent Elect, Victoria, Texas; Shirley Seyfried, National Secretary-Treasurer, Battle Lake, Minnesota, and the Rev. Hoa Nugyen, Court Chaplain, Wichita Falls. Susan R. Walton, Wichita Falls Habitat chairman for the Catholic Daughter-sponsored women's blitz build, expressed her gratitude to the many volunteers that came from all over Texas; Amarillo, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Denton, Houston, Huntsville, East Bernard, El Campo, El Paso, Ennis, Nocona, Olney, Pasadena, Richmond/Rosenberg, Scotland, Shiner, Victoria, Windthorst, Wichita Falls, and Willis. She was extremely appreciative of her daughters who arranged for all the volunteer meals. Shirley Seyfried, a national officer and National Habitat Chairman informed guests at the dedication that this house is only one of the four homes to receive the \$25,000 National CDA Habitat grants. The other CDA Habitat builds for 2007 include Virginia, Minnesota and Louisiana. Ms. Seyfried encouraged guests to participate in the Lent 2008 Habitat builds where CDA members will build forty homes in forty days! The Texas CDA Court will sponsor a build just outside Mexico City (with a total cost of \$8,000).

The success of this all women's build was not only the work completed on the CDA sponsored Lewis home, but the arm of love was extended by the volunteers numbering as many as 69 on one given day; that day they were actually farmed out and worked on neighboring homes. In sharing a message from National at the dedication, National Regent Elect Libby Ramirez, stated that CDA members have hearts as big as the state of Texas and they give others the gifts that our Lord gave us". Reverend Hoa Nugyen presided over the blessing of the home prior to the dedication. Serving as Court Chaplain for the Wichita Falls court he expressed "thanksgiving for keeping volunteers safe as they did the work of our Lord for another sister,

for it was done for the glory of God."

Mike Davis, Wichita Falls Habitat for Humanity Director expressed his gratitude to the Catholic Daughters of the Americas for sponsoring the Lewis Build. "Habitat for Humanity and the Catholic Daughters have, by their faith, become a match made in Heaven!" Texas State officers attending the blessing and dedication hosted by Our Lady of Good Counsel Court No. 309, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Wichita Falls, were State Regent Carolyn Bachmann, Scotland; First Vice State Regent Sheila Martinka, Pasadena; Second Vice State Regent Carolyn Malik, Shiner; State Secretary Peggy Rosales, Austin; State Treasurer Eve Trevino, Corpus Christi; and Immediate Past State Regent Olga Samaniego, El Paso. Also attending was State Public Relations and scrapbook chairman Terrie Vacek, Willis; District Deputy No. 38 Kathleen Taylor, Houston; along with Catholic Daughter members from the Houston area.

Our Lady of Sorrows CDA offers new cookbook

Just in time for holiday baking or gift giving, the Catholic Daughters Court Our Lady of Sorrows No. 2273 of Victoria has created a cookbook of old recipes titled "Our Best Recipes."

Mary Louise Garcia of Court Our Lady of Sorrows said the cookbook contains many old recipes passed down from our mothers and grandmothers.

The book is 126 pages and includes 300 recipes from appetizers to main dishes. A few favorites are mentioned: cookies, orange candy (dulce de naranja), salsa, Mexican rice, chicken enchilada, fajitas guizadas, gorditas, pollo en mole, shrimp etoufee, Texas tacos, tinga, turkey tamale casserole, Indian fry bread, pies, and buñuelos.

A picture of Our Lady of Sorrows Church decorates the cover of the cookbook, which also includes the church's history. The book may be purchased for \$10 by contacting Mary Louise Garcia at (361) 573-4051 or Delores Soliz (361) 575-7714.



May the souls of the faithfully departed rest in peace!



VICTORIA CATHOLIC CEMETERIES OFFICE HONORS ALL SOULS— On All Souls Day, November 2, 2007, about 120 faithful came to honor family and friends at the Victoria Catholic Cemeteries' Mass held at the mausoleum at Resurrection Cemetery on Laurent and Mockingbird streets. Msgr. Eustace Hermes presided at the Mass and was assisted by Deacon A. R. Wearden. Gary Rangnow, director of Victoria Catholic Cemeteries, assisted by chancery staff, provided a light reception on the grounds following the Mass. Also after the Mass, attendees were able to see the progress of the expansion construction at the back of the mausoleum.

LOCAL WOMEN ARE HELPED BY AND HELP ACS—

Wharton County Relay for Life breaks record for ACS fund raising, over 34 teams gathered in El Campo on October 21 and raised \$117,204 for cancer research; all funds will be donated to American Cancer Society. There were more than 135 survivors wearing purple shirts who started the event by their customary lap around the Ricebird stadium, later that evening 2,076 luminaries were lighted along with the sign of Hope. Pictured are Terri Beltran, Texas State Youth/JCDA Chairman and District Deputy No. 14, El Campo, and Monica Kubena of East Bernard, mother of twin girls diagnosed with leukemia. Mrs. Kubena gave her testimony of how one of her daughters was diagnosed at the age of 2-1/2 years and the other twin was diagnosed shortly thereafter. The Kubena family was featured on *Extreme Makeover Home Edition*. The girls, nine years old, are now in remission. Terri is a member of San Roberto Bellarmine Catholic Daughters Court No. 2275 and Monica is a member of St. Bernadette Catholic Daughters Court No. 1108, East Bernard.



2008 Pilgrimages to:

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico City and other Shrines

Holy Infant of Good Health on feast day, Morelia and much more...with Father Fisher Robinson
April 19 – 28, 2008

Shrines of Italy and Rome

Venice/Florence/Siena/Assisi/Cascia/Monte Cassino/St. Philomena Audience with Pope Benedict and much more...
With Father Michael Rother
June 8-20

Medjugorje and Dubrovnik

Visit the site where Our Lady has been allegedly appearing for 25 years Shrine of St. Blaze in Dubrovnik and more...
End of July or August

Shrines of France, Spain and Portugal

Fatima/Lourdes/Garabandal/La Salette/Santiago de Compostella/St. Jean Vianney — 150th Anniversary of Our Lady of Lourdes/Incorrupt body of St. Bernadette and more...
September 30 - October 15

Shrines of the United States and Canada

National Shrine of Divine Mercy/St. Anne of Beaupre/St. Joseph's Oratory/ Our Lady of the Cape and much more ...
End of October

Contact Betty Urbanovsky at (979) 543-2333 or
E-mail: burbanovsky@sbcglobal.net



Thirty-one Catholic Christians including chaperons attended the National Catholic Youth Conference in Columbus, Ohio, on November 8-11, 2007.

Youth from the diocese attend NCYC in Columbus, Ohio

By Debbie Vanelli, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

The excitement was palpable as thirty-three high-school age young people and adults from the Diocese of Victoria flew to Columbus, Ohio, to attend the National Catholic Youth Conference November 8-11, 2007, joining with 20,000 other participants.

They spent three days strengthening and learning more about their faith, hearing inspiring speakers, having fun and making new friends. The young people in attendance were pleasantly surprised to see that so many other young people shared their beliefs and were eager to express and discuss their faith.

During Saturday's closing ceremony, Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester, N.Y., said two fundamental themes had emerged from the conference for him. "To share the sacred life of the Church means we have to embrace everything that is human," he said. "There has been cause for tears among us through the weekend," he said in a reference to the death of conference participant Veronica Gantt, 16, of Las

Vegas, who was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver early Thursday. "They have been beautiful tears of compassion, understanding, and spiritual outreach. I have also seen you laugh, be inspired to dance, break into marvelous song, and extend kindness, care and consideration. ... You have been able to wrap your arms around that which is painful and that which is beautiful."

The second theme to emerge from the weekend for Bishop Clark was that "God is never finished with us," no matter what a person's age may be.

"I hope you have found this experience to be a profoundly confirming time for you and an expression of the deep love of the Church for you," he said. "And I hope that when you return [home], you share your experience and tell how your being together in these wonderful days in Columbus has spoken to your heart."

The National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) is the largest event conducted on a regular basis by the Catholic Church in the United States.

Bishops approve stewardship brochures directed to teenagers

WASHINGTON — The U.S. bishops voted at their bishops meeting November 12-15 in Baltimore on stewardship brochures directed to teenagers. The brochures will be in English and Spanish.

"The Church needs to speak to teenagers about the gratuity of God's love that leads to commitment, service and vocation at an age when they are thinking of their future," writes Bishop Robert J. Baker of Charleston, South Carolina, chairman of the Stewardship Committee, in his letter to the full body of bishops. "They make a positive contribution to the life of the Church; and it is appropriate to invite them to further participate in other ways, including the practice of stewardship."

The English brochure, *Stewardship and Teenagers*, begins with a quote from a recent speech of Pope Benedict XVI to Youth in Brazil where he appealed to young people to "not waste your youth." In a youthful and uncomplicated way, the text introduces teens to the basic pillars of stewardship, reminding young disciples that stewardship means "sharing your time, talents and treasures." Mindful that everything we have to share is a gift

from God, and that stewardship is born of love, the brochure challenges young people by reminding them that being a disciple means "sharing without counting the cost," "sharing even when we least feel like it," and even "when we can least afford it."

The text encourages teens to pray, especially with Scripture, to make an inventory of their gifts and to rejoice in the ways they are already using their talents, adding that "even the smallest act of kindness can bring joy and relief to another." It also thanks them for the gifts of energy, idealism and zeal that they already share with the Church, and tells them to not be afraid of asking the Church to "do more." "Stewardship" the document says, "is the call for all of us to do more, to be more and to love more!"

The Spanish text, *Discípulos Jóvenes*, while including many of the same topics, is not a translation from the English and was written as an original Spanish text to incorporate the cultural aspects of language and religious tradition which are unique to Spanish-speaking Catholics living in the U.S.

Youth Calendar of Events

- December 9** — Diocese of Victoria Evangelization (DOVE) Team Training from 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. at the Chancery
- January 5-6, 2008** — Youth Leadership Retreat at the Spiritual Renewal Center.
- January 12, 2008** — Basic Youth Ministry Certificate Course — Class No. 4 - **Prayer and Worship** — at the Chancery from 8:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m. Pre-registration is required
- January 17, 2008** — **Theology of the Body for Teens Training** — Information Session at the Chancery — 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- January 18, 2008** — **Theology of the Body for Teens Training** for youth ministers, priests, DRE's, and high school teachers at the Chancery - 9:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.
- January 19, 2008** — **Theology of the Body for Teens Training** for youth ministers, priests, DRE's, and high school teachers at St. Andrew in Hillje - 9:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.
- January 30 - February 2, 2008** — Annual Membership Meeting — Little Rock, Arkansas
- February 16, 2008** — Basic Youth Ministry Certificate Course — Class No. 5 - **Justice and Service** — at the Chancery from 8:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m. Pre-registration is required
- February 17, 2008** — Confirmation Retreat
- February 25-29, 2008** — Diocesan Directors Meeting — Brownsville
- March 9, 2008** — High School Spectacular — at Holy Family in Victoria
- March 30, 2008** — Youth Leadership Training, 8:45 a.m. — 4:30 p.m.
- April 5, 2008** — Basic Youth Ministry Certificate Course — Class No. 6 - **Ethics and Crisis Management** — at the Chancery from 8:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m. Pre-registration is required
- April 19, 2008** — Basic Youth Ministry Certificate Course — Class No. 7 - **Retreat Formation** — at the Chancery from 1:30 p.m. — 5:30 p.m. Pre-registration is required
- April 22, 2008** — **Sharing Faith with Young Adolescents** — a workshop for all adults who work with junior high age young people
- April 27, 2008** — Youth Leadership Training - Camp David planning - 8:45 a.m. — 4:30 p.m.
- June 1, 2008** — Rocky Mountain High staff development and parent/participant meeting at the Chancery
- June 6-8, 2008** — Camp David staff development at the Spiritual Renewal Center
- June 8-13, 2008** — Camp David, Spiritual Renewal Center
- June 16-19, 2008** — Vocation Camp at Stoney Creek Camp in Columbus
- June 20-22, 2008** — D-week Staff Development, Spiritual Renewal Center
- June 23-26, 2008** — D-week, Spiritual Renewal Center
- July 5-13, 2008** — Rocky Mountain High in Pagosa Springs, Colorado

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

Jesuit who works with gang members named one of most caring Americans

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A priest known to former gang members in East Los Angeles as "G-Dog" was among five adults and six young people honored by the Washington-based Caring Institute as the most caring people in America for 2007.

Jesuit Father Gregory Boyle, who founded Homeboy Industries in 1988 to provide "hope, not jail" for former gang members who want to turn their lives around, received one of the 2007 National Caring Awards at a Nov. 16 ceremony in Washington.

As chairman of the institute's board of trustees, former U.S. Sen. Robert J. Dole of Kansas, who was a Republican presidential candidate in 1996, described the 2007 winners as "wonderful role models and the very personification of caring."

Father Boyle's programs help an estimated 1,000 young people from nearly 600 different gangs each month. Beginning with a jobs program and a bakery, Homeboy Industries now includes a cafe as well as businesses that offer silk-screening and home maintenance services and sell merchandise with the Homeboy logo.

Youth winners of the Caring Awards were:

— Jourdan Urbach, a 15-year-old violin virtuoso from Roslyn Heights, N.Y., who has raised more than \$1.3 million for

pediatric units and medical charities.

— Mollie and Jackie Singer, 18-year-old twins from Las Vegas who started Diabetic Angels to educate children about diabetes and teach them how to watch out for their diabetic friends.

— Davin Singleton, 18, of Pasadena, Md., who created a workshop called "Dreamers: How to Become Your Dream" to empower dyslexics like himself and other children.

— Lauren Beeder of Newbury Park, Calif., a 16-year-old volunteer at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles who founded kidsCANCERvive to raise funds for research and provide online support to children with cancer and their families.

— Emily Wemhoff, 18, of Creston, Neb., founder of Project SAFE, or Save a Friend Everyday, whose fire safety efforts have saved countless lives in Nebraska.

The Caring Institute was founded in 1985 by Val J. Halamandaris after he met with Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She suggested he confront the poverty of the spirit in the developed world by identifying extraordinarily gifted people and holding them up as role models.

Each of the Caring Award winners is inducted into the Hall of Fame for Caring Americans, located in what was the first Washington home of human rights advocate Frederick Douglass.



KJZT NO. 4 DONATES GIFT TO ST. ROSE SCHOOL—St. Anne's KJZT Society No. 4 Praha donated \$897 to St. Rose Catholic School in Schulenburg November 12, 2007. The cash gift donated to St. Rose was raised through a bake sale held on August 31 and from matching funds received from the State KJZT office in Austin as a community fundraiser under the fraternal program. Those present at the donation include from left: Georgia Cerny, KJZT society president; Julia Stryk, KJZT society treasurer; Nancy Jasek, KJZT society secretary; and Ellene Brazel, KJZT society vice president. Father Tim Kosler, pastor of St. Rose Parish, is in the center.



ST. MICHAEL STUDENTS KNOW FIRE SAFETY—The City of Weimar Volunteer Fire Department sponsored the Fire Prevention and Safety Week activities at St. Michael School in Weimar October 14 – 20, 2007. Fifteen St. Michael students received cash prizes for their original artwork for the Fire Prevention and Safety Poster contest. The guidelines for the contest included original artwork using any aspect of fire prevention and safety. Fire Prevention Poster winners at St. Michael were (front row): Danielle Hilley, Zane Wanjura and Allison Gallaher; (row 2): Samantha Wick, Kaitlin Rainosek, Kyle Wick, Vance Adamec, and Brianna Noska; (row 3): Nicholas Kloesel, Todd Heger, Ryan Ramirez, Tyler Heger, Courtney Menis, Bailey Cernosek and Ana Karen Ortiz.



ST. ROSE STUDENTS HONOR VETERANS—On Thursday, November 8, students welcomed local veterans and honored them at the school's weekly liturgy. With flags raised high, veterans processed into the church as part of this special service. Following the Mass, there was a flag raising ceremony for students, veterans and guests. The students sang patriotic songs, said the pledge to the flag and learned about the historic significance of the Purple Heart award and our flag's nickname "Old Glory." After the ceremony, veterans and guests were treated to a reception in the cafeteria. St. Rose of Lima Catholic School students continued their patriotism by participating in the 45th annual Veteran's Day Memorial Service in Praha. Students sang *America* and *My Country 'Tis of Thee* during the program that included a flyover by the United States Air Force and the Commemorative Air Force.



WEIMAR'S ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL IS 2007 8-MAN FOOTBALL CHAMPS—St. Michael Swords of Weimar are the 2007 8-Man Football Champions for the Diocese of Victoria. Their record was 8-0. The championship team was coached by Mr. Roy Ulrich, Mr. Freddie Blaha, Mr. Bill Briscoe and Mr. Gary Helmcamp (top l. to r.) Team members are (front row): Justin Rosenauer, Seth Helmcamp, Greyson Ulrich, Chase Ritter and Clayton Langhoff; (row 2): Drew Billeck, Gus Williams, Dylan Blaha, Colton Smith and Daniel Gordon; (row 3): Daniel Ortiz, Sam Dobecka, Tyler Heger, Chase Firkins and Ryan Ramirez. Congratulations, St. Michael Swords!



Pictured accepting a check from KJZT Vice-President Lillie Branecky is Raphael's Refuge board member Chris Hicks. Also pictured, (l to r) are Midge Elam, administrator at RR, Evelyn Miller, Ann Bratton, Loretta Kutac, Martha Kainer, Renee Pavlica, Gretchen Zapalac, Jeanette Zouzalik and Rev. Joe Hybner, state chaplain for Texas KJZT.

KJZT St. Theresa Little Flower Society donates to Raphael's Refuge

FLATONIA—The Catholic Family Fraternal of Texas (KJZT) adopted a statewide fraternal project, recognizing each of the seventy-four 2006 Diamond Status Societies. Each society was given \$100 to be donated to a community project of their choice. The purpose behind the fraternal project is to promote community fellowship.

St. Theresa Little Flower Society No. 83 of Flatonia decided to give this donation, plus another \$100, to Raphael's Refuge for their monument to preborn and stillborn babies and to those who have died in infancy. Members of the group toured the Chapel of the Holy Innocents, the center of the monument, recently and pre-

sented the check for \$200. Light fixtures for the main entrance to the chapel will be purchased with the donation.

Each year KJZT Societies focus on participating in work projects, parish projects and community projects throughout the state. During 2006, fraternal members donated 258,370 volunteer hours and participated in 12,130 events assisting others, working to make parishes and communities stronger and more viable.

For more information about KJZT, contact info@kjzt.org. For more information about Raphael's Refuge, contact Midge at 361-865-3021, or visit the Web site at www.raphaelsrefuge.org.

**Catholic Schools
Week
Jan. 27 to Feb. 2**



Nazareth Academy wins district titles for 2007



Nazareth Academy won the district titles for the 2007 Football season, as well as the 2007 Volleyball season. The football team ended the season with a 6-2 record, while the volleyball team went undefeated at 17-0.



NAZARETH ACADEMY NAMES SPORTS FIELD AFTER FORMER PRINCIPAL—Nazareth Academy has announced that it is naming its athletic field on Southwest Moody Street, "Alicardi Field," in honor of C.R. "Duke" Alicardi. Mr. Alicardi played a pivotal role in converting the property from a vacant tract of land into a functional sports field. Mr. Alicardi served in the Nazareth Academy school administration for twelve years from 1995 to 2007 and was the school principal for the last two years. Signs showing the new name were unveiled at a Nazareth Academy football game October 25, 2007. Other individuals who helped establish the field were also recognized. From left to right are his wife, Peggy Alicardi, C.R. "Duke" Alicardi, daughters Penny Boepple and Sherri Green with great granddaughter Mykah Sowell.

Football team members and coaches are from left, bottom row: Marcus Salinas, Patrick Sohrt, Chance Bedwell, Charles Holloway, Dillon DeLaGarza, Trey Henderson, Eric Alvarez, Ervin Simmons, Brandon Hoelscher and Clayton Davidson; middle row: Chad Brockman, Neil Zamora, Kace Gandee, Joseph Tucker, Humberto Sandigo, Brandon Rivera, Jeff Beck, Matthew Rojas, Clay Stindt, Dalton Tucker and Kevin Parma; back row: Brandon Martinez, Zack Williamson, Jarrod Sullivan, Dodge Bludau, Jordan Lopez, Douglas Wall, Tyler Engelbart, Matthew Small, Dane Guerra and Matthew Henry; coach's row: Mr. Glenn Villafranca (head coach), Mr. Frank Henderson, Mr. Bob Alvarez, Mr. Richard Bludau and Mr. Paul Hoelscher.



Nazareth volleyball team members include front row from left: Meghann Hawes, Dobie Drost and Madalynn Kainer; back row from left: Analise Ybarbo, Maddy Buhler, Emily Conti, Kate Tucker, Laura Chapa and Shelby Hardin. The undefeated team was coached by Ms. Diana Stastny (head coach), Mrs. Donna Conti and Mrs. Joyce Hawes.

Honoring All Who Served

God Bless the USA!



Attending the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts Meeting in Waco was Arnold Bohuslav, Dennis Haas, Mike Hanslik, Daniel Rother, Carol Patalik, Nicholas Patalik and Gene Patalik. Nicholas was the State Winner for an essay in the 13 years and under category.

SHCS 8th Grader wins State Soil & Water Conservation Contest

HALLETTSVILLE—The Lavaca Soil and Water Conservation District attended the sixty-seventh annual meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts October 22-24 in Waco, Texas, proudly sponsoring local student Nicholas Patalik, a state essay winner for the 13 and under category.

Nicholas' essay was one of three selected from over 250 in Lavaca County last spring. These three competed against

essays from 54 other counties for a regional winner. Nicholas' was selected, and forwarded to be considered and eventually selected as a State winner. He was recognized after reading his essay to the attendees of the meeting.

Nicholas, the son of Gene and Carol Patalik, is currently an 8th grade student at Sacred Heart School. GERALYN Klimitchek was Nicholas' teacher who had her class participate in the annual contest.

State Representative Morrison visits Sacred Heart School

HALLETTSVILLE—Texas State Representative Geanie W. Morrison, District 30, was the special guest at a recent Sacred Heart Catholic School assembly honoring the 125th anniversary of the school. Representative Morrison presented the State of Texas House of Representatives Resolution No. 362 which states: WHEREAS, Sacred Heart Catholic School in Hallettsville is marking its 125th anniversary in 2007, and the school's students, teachers, and administrators and the students' parents are celebrating this

important milestone in the institution's history; and now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, That the house of Representatives of the 80th Texas Legislature hereby commemorate the 125th Anniversary of the founding of Sacred Heart Catholic School and extend sincere best wishes to its administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, and alumni for continued success. The resolution was signed by Tom Cradick, Speaker of the House; Robert Haney, Chief Clerk of the House; and Geanie W. Morrison, Member.



Above, the 4th Degree Knights of Columbus and other veterans organizations lay wreaths at the monument and at the gravesite of nine local men who died in World War II.

The 45th annual Veteran's Day Memorial Service in Praha was held November 11, 2007. Above, Otto Steinhauser, left, master of ceremonies, introduced special guests and events of the day. Ernest Chaloupka (right), Praha's Veteran's Club past chairman, spoke when Father Marcus Valenta started the first memorial service with just a few people and how it has grown over the past 45 years. The service concluded with a flyover and a flower drop over the cemetery.

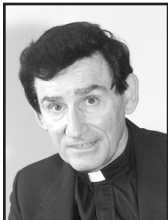
HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES—The faculty of St. Joseph School in Yoakum recently honored Carlos Sanchez for his birthday. He has been the maintenance foreman for the school for the past 26 years. In his honor the whole faculty dressed like Carlos and enjoyed ice cream and cake for break. The idea of celebrating Carlos's birthday four times a year was eagerly entertained by the faculty, but quickly vetoed by Carlos. Happy Birthday, Carlos!





The Human Side

By Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service



Getting into the spirit of Advent

Experiencing awe is a main objective of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. These exercises prompt us to literally throw ourselves into Scripture when meditating.

Advent encourages us to do this too — to enter more deeply into the life of God and to heighten our spiritual imagination.

Unfortunately, Advent is also a season when marketers attempt to heighten our secular appetites; hence the thunderous clash between the profane and sacred.

The word “profane” means to be outside the temple. Not only does the commercialized Christmas season prompt us to stay away from the temple, it employs every means possible to get us to worship in our shopping malls.

One of the biggest postmodern challenges Christians face is countering this with sacred peace.

May I suggest visiting art museums? Even though they may not be nearby, they are at our fingertips.

I got this idea from my mother years ago when she came to Washington to visit me. I wondered then where I could take her after everything she’d seen on past visits.

She suggested, “Let’s go to the religious art section of the National Gallery of Art. It’s Eastertime. Where better to get into its spirit?”

How right she was!

As we moved from paintings of the Madonna and Christ to those of notable

saints, I found myself wondering about their awesomeness.

Later I learned that the awe I was experiencing is one of the main objectives of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius.

Ignatius would say, “If, for example, we are meditating on Christ meeting Peter along the shores of the Sea of Galilee (or, for that matter, meditating on a painting that depicts this), smell the sea breezes, listen to the water lapping against the shore, imagine how Christ looked and spoke. Enter into the scene with all your imaginative powers!”

The Vatican Museum has a Web site that contains magnificent scenes from Scripture. It allows you to enlarge them and study the artist’s minute details, what he or she is trying to portray (http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/MV_Home.html).

All art galleries have similar Web sites filled with religious art. Just type in a gallery’s name and you’ll be in the midst of sacred art and holy thoughts.

Today we can experience virtual imaging and shop in massive malls filled with remarkable items. We also live in a frenzy-stimulated existence like never before.

We can’t turn the clock back! We can, however, select the best this age offers to enhance our spiritual life.

This Advent we have a magnificent means for entering more deeply into the sacred peace of God. All it takes is one click to transport ourselves from the profane to the sacred.

‘The Shepherd’s Prayer’ is this month’s Puzzle Prize

Christian Newswire—An orphaned child who survived Herod’s massacre of the infant boys of Bethlehem longs to know his true identity as well as the identity of two strangers, Jesus and Mary, whose names appear in a mysterious inscription on a lambskin blanket—his only link to his real mother and father. Making an imaginary character or a peripheral character mentioned in the New Testament the hero of a novel set during the first years of the Christian era is classic: it worked in *Ben-Hur*, the story of a Jewish prince whose life is changed by chance encounters with the Christ; *The Robe*, the story of the Roman centurion who supervised the crucifixion of Christ, then rolled dice for and won his seamless robe; and *The Other Wise Man*, the story of the fourth Magi who set out late for Bethlehem.

Following in the grand tradition of those timeless novels, Richard M. Barry builds his story around individuals who are bit players in the Gospel narrative—the shepherds who learned from the angel that the Messiah had been born. As his main character, Barry invents a young man named Anam who survived the Slaughter of the Innocents. Anam is entirely the product of Barry’s imagination; no such survivor of the massacre is mentioned in the Gospels. But Barry isn’t tinkering with the New Testament; instead he spins around Anam an imaginative, action-

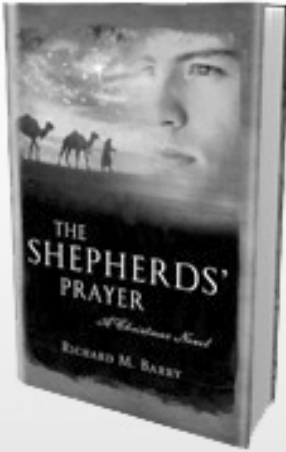
packed story that draws the reader, step by step, back to the message of Christ, the message that transformed the world.

Every story needs conflict, and Anam’s quest for his identity is fraught with confusion, disappointments, and uncertainty. But he also finds friends in unexpected places. As he gets closer and closer to

unraveling the mystery of where he comes from and who his people were, he discovers that learning the facts about his family were less important than learning who Jesus and Mary are.

Christian fiction has become one of the hottest segments of the contemporary book market and this is a true Christmas novel, one that takes its reader on a journey. I won’t be surprised if one day soon we see this novel come to life on the big screen.

You will be captivated by Anam’s quest; be assured that this novel belongs in every Christmas stocking this Christmas. Visit www.christmasbook.com to read a few sample chapters or to purchase the book or book-on-CD for only \$12.95. Also, a free study guide is available at this Web site. As a special incentive to bookstores and gift shops, this new author is making the book available on consignment for the Christmas rush. Please call Faith Market Distribution at (678) 990-9032 or visit www.christmasbook.com for more details. Bulk prices are available for organizations and ministries.



ADVENT

www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

C	G	O	C	A	N	D	L	E	S	N	F	E	U	C
X	A	S	F	E	X	P	E	C	T	A	T	I	O	N
I	U	Y	N	I	Z	E	N	D	H	C	U	M	X	L
S	D	A	E	O	F	Y	S	O	G	V	I	Z	J	I
T	E	D	S	Q	I	X	O	T	S	N	G	N	D	T
A	T	N	O	W	E	T	E	J	G	A	V	K	B	U
R	E	U	R	Y	A	L	A	O	Y	B	E	T	V	R
T	H	S	P	D	O	I	F	P	W	P	T	S	W	G
O	N	R	J	I	Q	C	T	R	I	K	D	E	I	I
F	K	U	V	A	H	Z	E	I	G	C	V	Z	Y	C
Y	O	O	C	R	X	A	N	K	N	C	I	H	K	A
E	F	F	I	Z	T	G	J	F	D	G	A	T	D	L
A	E	S	Z	H	O	W	H	A	B	R	R	S	N	E
R	T	Y	Z	C	N	V	W	N	K	K	J	C	O	A
S	A	M	T	S	I	R	H	C	E	R	O	F	E	B

ANTICIPATION
BEFORE CHRISTMAS
CANDLES
COMING OF CHRIST
EXPECTATION

FOUR SUNDAYS
GAUDETE
JOY
LITURGICAL
ROSE

SEASON
START OF YEAR
VIOLET
WAITING
WREATH

Family Puzzle Contest Winners

Because it is our Advent/Christmas issue of *The Catholic Lighthouse*, we will give away two prizes for this past month’s Family Puzzle Contest. Mrs. Vivian R. Wilson of Holy Family Church in Wharton is the first winner; she will receive Jean Denton’s “Well-Drawn Faith, featuring The Flock.”

The second winner is Ms. Haley Kubala of St. John Church in New Taiton. She will receive a gift from the Incarnate Word Gift Shop.

No children played the puzzle contest this month; therefore there were no winners.

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 Jan. 2, 2008, to: Family Contest, *The Catholic Lighthouse*, P.O. Box 4070, Victoria, TX 77903. Only youth need to include age.

Nativity Sets

Continued from p. 20

After some heavy sighs and an errant tear over the mishap, I began to realize that it wasn’t the tragedy I was making it out to be. The set was far from a realistic depiction of the first Christmas. The diminutive figurines were cartoon-like little boys and girls, dressed up in biblical costume, like a caricature of some children’s Christmas pageant at a local community center. They had infantile smiles on their painted faces. The angel wasn’t even part of the original set. I’d found her in a bin of ready-to-paint pieces and added her on a whim.

I realized, after some reflection, that it was time to grow up. Put away childish things. It was time to buy a nativity set that truly reflected the first Christmas. The beauty, the reverence, the gift of the Word-Made-Flesh. No more of the sentimental, childlike Joseph and Mary. We were ready for something more.

Conversion has been a lot like this for me. Cradle Catholics may wonder why it is so difficult for Protestants to begin to see theological truths that Catholics have always known. And once they begin to see and understand, why don’t they run into the arms of the Catholic Church without looking back?

As Catholics who recognize the well-spring we have in our faith, we might respond to potential converts like my husband did when I voiced my deep sadness over the powdery mess on my coffee table. “What’s your problem? We were

long overdue for a new set anyway.”

That may be the case, but it still isn’t easy to see it all come crashing down before my eyes. It’s so final.

Likewise, potential converts struggle with deep attachments to the past. I suppose it’s because there is something very special in our previous faith journey, and we don’t want to see any of it come to an end. There is comfort in familiarity. Change is painful, no way around it.

Even so, we realize that incomplete truth and familiar memories must step aside for the fullness of truth to take root, but putting away childish things isn’t easy.

It takes time and a whole lot of grace to say what has happened to us is really very good. A year has gone by, and I don’t miss the old nativity set that much. The memories are still beautiful to me, like the memories of the spiritual journey that came before my conversion to the Catholic Church. It isn’t so much a letting go or a throwing away, as it is a growing and accepting God’s full design for His Beloved. It is such a relief when we see that the faith we once cherished has not been lost, but it has been converted into something more. Something deeper. Something fuller. Something long overdue.

The original nativity set was very special, but the one that graces my mantel today simply takes my breath away. And so it is with conversion.



Catholic and Bible-themed toys take their place on the market

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (CNS) — Every year as December approaches retailers begin stocking their shelves and filling their Web sites with toys.

This year, Moses and the baby Jesus will share space with action figures and fashion dolls.

A test run of three lines of toys based on stories from the Old and New Testaments started this summer at a select group of Wal-Mart stores and Target.com. The tests will continue through January.

These lines, produced by one2believe toys, include "Tales of Glory" figurine sets, "Messengers of Faith" figures and "Spirit Warriors" action figures. Each toy comes with a small storybook of a well-known Bible story, such as Noah's Ark, David and Goliath, the birth of Jesus, and Jesus walking on water.

The select Wal-Marts will display the toys on the preschool aisle because the chain felt they were good items for that age range, said Melissa O'Brien, in a written statement from Wal-Mart's corporate communications department.

This is the first time Wal-Mart has carried a line of "faith-based toys," and the company will decide if it will continue or expand the offering based on customer response, O'Brien said.

Robert Winzerling, a Wal-Mart toy department manager in North Little Rock, said his store has been selling out every case of the Bible characters they've been getting.

He thinks the market for this type of toy comes from parents. "I've heard mothers talk,

especially that they didn't care for (some of the) action figures. They didn't like what it represented and wanted something more wholesome," he said.

That's exactly what inspired David Socha, founder of one2believe toys, the company that introduced the faith-based toys two years ago.

"We're trying to bring resources to parents that are wholesome and of God," Socha told the Arkansas Catholic, newspaper of the Little Rock Diocese.

He got his start in the toy business as a child when his parents ran a gift shop in Buffalo, N.Y.

The best-selling figure in his company's faith-based line is a Jesus figure.

"Frankly, I was surprised at that," Socha said. "It has really caught us off guard. It'll probably be completely sold out."

The next best-seller is the Nativity set, but Socha's favorite is Samson, whom he describes as "the toughest guy in the toy box."

Right now the company has another 75 products in development and is focusing on toys for girls. It plans to introduce a line of Bible princesses such as Ruth, Deborah and Miriam with a "focus on biblical strength."

Other religious toys available

online include characters from the Catholic prayer-based "Holy Baby" DVD series created by Wayne and Dede Laugesen of Boulder, Colo.



"Tales of Glory" figurine sets, which include toys and small books based on Bible stories, are seen in a display at a Wal-Mart store in Bentonville, Ark., in late September. Every year as December approaches retailers begin stocking their shelves and filling their Web sites with toys. This year, Moses and the baby Jesus will share space with action figures and fashion dolls. (CNS photo/courtesy of one2believe)

The characters -- Baby Scholastica and Baby Bosco -- are fashioned after saints for whom they are named.

The toys are available at Catholic gift stores in the Boulder area and can also be ordered from the Web site, www.holybaby.com.

The couple's newest product is a puzzle rosary featuring

Sunday readings from Dec. 9 to Jan. 6

December 9 — Second Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 11:1-10 Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17 Romans 15:4-9 Matthew 3:1-12
December 16 — Third Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10 Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11
December 23 — Fourth Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 7:10-14 Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7c, 10b Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-24
December 25 — Christmas Mass at Midnight	Isaiah 9:1-6 Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14
December 25 — Christmas Mass During the Day	Isaiah 52:7-10 Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 Hebrews 1:1-6 John 1:1-18
December 30 — The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph	Sirach 3:2-7, 12-14 Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 Colossians 3:12-21 Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23
January 1 — Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God	Numbers 6:22-27 Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:16-21
January 6 — 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

breakaway clasps between each decade.

"There is nothing else like it on the market," Dede Laugesen said, noting that the rosary can be "taken apart and used for family prayer."

This past summer the Laugesens took some samples of the

rosary to the Catholic Marketing Network Conference where they sold hundreds of them.

"People saw them as practical, as well as fun," Laugesen told the Denver Catholic Register, newspaper of the Denver Archdiocese. "They flew off our table."

The Christmas story is true!

By Douglas W. Kmiec
Catholic News Service

There is much in our families and in our world about which to be anxious, but the season of Christ's birth puts our mind at ease and invites us to happiness. The Christmastide's gentle warmth, even in the darkness and biting cold of winter, is unconquerable.

The carols, the decorations, the bustle of city streets are standing invitations to love one another, and in that love, to surmount difficulty.

Whether we face unwanted illness or economic hardship or simply starting again after an unrealized dream, God's becoming man in the Christ Child renews and strengthens us.

God told Moses: "I am, who am." The declaration is in the present tense. God is now — in the present — walking with us.

- He is in the gift given without expectation of return.
- He is the excitement of waiting upon the arrival of good friends for dinner.
- He is fidgety children anxious to return home from Mass to play.
- He is the steadfast Douglas fir standing ornamented in the hall.

- He is every aspect of the season's joy.

Christmas also brings tranquility. It allows the silence necessary to hear God's counsel above man's shouting and above the inner turmoil of our minds. The Babe's hands outstretched bid us to stop fretting over what might have been. The peace of the Christ Child is as much needed in large international matters as small personal ones.

"Then wisely [does] my soul elate / That strife should vanish, [and] battle cease," wrote Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his famous "Christmas Carol poem." Never was this sentiment more yearned for than at present.

In our hearts, we now know

the occupation of Iraq was a terrible mistake — not because the president was wrong not to see it as an insurgent breeding ground (it is), but because one does not inspire nonviolence with violence.

With St. Paul's words to the Corinthians clutched to his breast, our beloved Pope Benedict traveled into Muslim country for us all to reaffirm that "faith, hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is love." It is the love of the Christ Child that fortified the pope to disregard personal threat in his journey to Turkey.

It is the hope of the Christ Child that today calls upon radical Islam, and us, to forego hatred. It is the faith in the Christ Child that points toward objective truth and redeems a culture lost in relativism and material

things.

The pope's courage is a towering manifestation of love, but so is that of a mother and father who in their submission to God's will instruct their children by the most authentic witness — their own.

God said "I am, who am," and Christmas opens our mind to living with him in the present moment. In this way, what is intensely spiritual is made practically and individually tangible. Christ came not just to answer the restless antagonisms of competing nations, but the jealousy and self-centeredness that limits our lives and divides our families.

Three kings came from afar with precious gifts when all that was needed then, and now, is the gift of self.

So come, kneel before the

Christ by showing appreciation to those close at hand — whether for a dinner well made, or a home improvement well done, or simply for a hand extended or held.

What child is this? Let us hear the voice of the Christ Child in the voices of our children by learning more of their day. There is much to be shared at every age.

Yes, Christmas is a happy time because God is.

So let there be no doubt among our neighbors and our children when they search our eyes to see if we still believe. Let our actions reveal, what even a war-torn or personally troubled world must never be permitted to obscure, that we rejoice in the knowledge that the real Christmas story is true.

by Gary Cangemi

Umbert the Unborn





An invitation

to attend, or help others to attend,

the International Eucharistic Congress, held in the
beautiful North American city of Quebec - June 15th-22nd, 2008



Dear Friend in Christ,

This coming June of 2008, the Church in North America will celebrate a great event for the Faith, an event that is being watched with great anticipation.

The Holy Father has given me the privilege of leading this event, the International Eucharistic Congress, in Quebec City.

And I, in turn, have invited the Holy Father to celebrate our final Mass of the Congress.

Would there be a possibility that you and your family and friends might be able to join us in Quebec in June, and even to send us your support today?

The International Eucharistic Congress is a great opportunity for the new evangelization of North America. It is an occasion to rekindle the flame of the Catholic faith in our countries, where in the past there was a deep unity between the culture and the Faith.

Now, the urgency of Faith is obvious for an increasingly secular and materialistic world. It is not too late to regenerate Christian culture.

Each day, catechesis and testimonies will be offered to the thousands of participants—the present and the future leaders of the Church—and a solemn Eucharistic liturgy will be celebrated. There will also be processions of the Blessed Sacrament, as well as special religious events for young adults and families, and activities to promote brotherhood.

We hope that the International Eucharistic Congress will bring about a greater emphasis on the sacred character of the Eucharistic celebration, a deepened understanding of its sacrificial dimension, and a renewal of Eucharistic adoration, prayer, and good works.

This theme, the Eucharist as “Gift of God for the life of the world,” will begin with Sunday’s invocation of the Holy Spirit, who reminds the Church of all that Jesus did and then left in our care.

Monday will focus on Jesus’ institution of the New Covenant, completed by the offering of His own blood, while the following day concentrates on the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist. Wednesday invites us to explore the first result of this gift of God; in giving Himself and in being received in the faith of the Church, the Eucharistic Christ founds the Church and opens up the communion of divine persons for the communion of human persons.

The Eucharist gives life to worship, which embraces all of life, prayers and ritual gestures, but also gives life to human relationships, work, joys and sorrows, sufferings and hopes. Thus, Thursday focuses on adoration, as the evening concludes with a public procession with the Blessed Sacrament in the heart of the city.

The theme of Friday is the Eucharist and mission: it emphasizes charity and engagement for peace and justice.

Finally, the week concludes with teaching on “ordinary” holiness at the heart of the world, inspired and nourished by the Eucharist.

At this great gathering, which will be closely watched and reported by the news media around the world, public testimonies for the essential role of the Faith and witness to the centrality of Jesus in our lives will give us an unparalleled opportunity to evangelize millions upon millions of people, and especially those in our troubled countries—for example, perhaps your own neighbors, family and friends!

First, by your fervent prayers to Almighty God that the Congress will reawaken the faith and ecclesial life of the people of Canada, especially the people of Quebec. For many dioceses throughout North America, there is a direct link to Quebec, which gave birth to the Church on our continent.

Second, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, as Pope John Paul II, and now Pope Benedict XVI, have repeated so often in their magnificent teachings. We are invited to celebrate this Congress together.

Third, I invite you to help me to make this Eucharistic Congress a possibility, a reality, and a blessing for many people in Latin America and in the Third World who might never have the opportunity to experience the graces and blessings of the International Catholic gathering without your generosity and financial assistance.

There will also be a myriad of other costs associated with an event of this magnitude — yet our budget is modest, and we seek only to cover what is necessary.

Without the support of our brothers and sisters in the Faith from the United States, our effort cannot be called a complete success.

We must not fail, with the eyes of a skeptical secular world and the media upon us. On the contrary, together, united with the Holy Father himself, we must show even the doubters the way to Christ!

I need your assistance, and I thank you in advance for your generosity in helping to make the International Eucharistic Congress accessible to many people.

Yours in the Eucharistic Jesus,

Marc Card. Ouellet

Marc Cardinal Ouellet
Archbishop of Quebec
Primate of Canada
President, 49th International Eucharistic Congress

For information about attending the International Eucharistic Congress personally or with my parish group or other Catholic organization, please see our website, www.cei2008.ca. Please send your donations to

International Eucharistic Congress • 1073, boul. Rene-Levesque Ouest • Quebec G1S 4R5 • Canada

If you wish a tax-deduction, please send your check and make it payable to our U.S. address:

Archdiocese of Philadelphia, c/o Bishop Joseph Cistone • 222 North Seventeenth Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299

Your donation will be forwarded to the International Eucharistic Congress.

INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS 2008 • www.cei2008.ca • Toll free: 866-436-2008

THE POPE SPEAKS

Pope
Benedict XVI



CNS photo from Reuters

Western Christians can learn much from Eastern Christians, says pope

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christianity is not and never has been a uniquely European phenomenon, and Christians of the West can learn much from the cultural expressions of Eastern Christians, especially those of the early church, Pope Benedict XVI said.

“Today it is a common opinion that Christianity is a European religion that exported European culture to other countries, but the

reality is much more complicated and complex,” he said Nov. 28 at his weekly general audience.

“It is not only that the roots of the Christian religion are found in Jerusalem, in the Old Testament, in the Semitic world and Christianity is constantly nourished by these Old Testament roots,” he said, “but the expansion of Christianity in the first centuries” went simultaneously West and East.

In Europe, but also throughout the Middle East and over

to India, “Christianity with a different culture was formed,” he said. Christians in the East lived the faith “with their own expressions and cultural identities,” demonstrating “the cultural plurality of the one faith from the beginning.”

With fewer than 8,000 people present, the weekly gathering was held inside the Vatican audience hall, offering greater protection from the cold and wind for the pope, whose voice was hoarse.

The pope’s main audience talk focused on the life, teaching and poetry of St. Ephraem the Syrian, a fourth-century deacon.

“He remained a deacon throughout his life and embraced virginity and poverty,” the pope said.

Pope Benedict, whose new encyclical on the virtue of hope was to be released at the Vatican Nov. 30, said St. Ephraem was a model of the Christian virtues: “faith, hope — this hope that allows us to live poor and as

virgins in this world, placing all one’s hope in the Lord — and, finally, charity to the point of self-giving in the care of victims of the plague,” which he contracted and which caused his death.

In his hymns and poetry, St. Ephraem offered theological reflections using images “taken from nature, daily life and the Bible.”

His use of song, especially liturgical song, the pope said, was an effective means of religious education because “precisely by singing, celebrating, praising God, we see not only the beauty, but the truth of the faith and we encounter the truth in person, Christ.”

St. Ephraem’s reflections on God the creator, he said, are very important.

The saint taught that “nothing in creation is isolated. The world, alongside the Scriptures, is God’s Bible. By using his freedom in an erroneous way, man upsets the order of the cosmos,” the pope said.

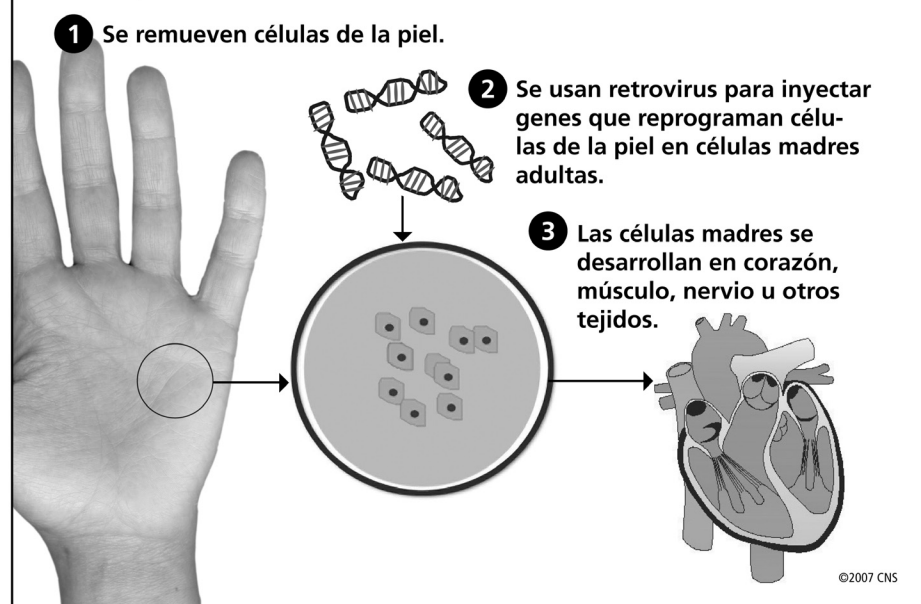
God on the gridiron

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS) — After beating the Chicago Bears in Super Bowl XLI in February, the Indianapolis Colts stormed to another strong start, winning their first seven games of the 2007-08 season. Even with a faith-filled head coach like Tony Dungy, it might have been easy for players on the team to think they are invincible. But the players know better. And consecutive losses to the New England Patriots and the San Diego Chargers helped bring that reality into perspective, as have serious injuries suffered by some of the team’s star players. Father Peter Gallagher, volunteer chaplain of the Colts, said coping with injuries is an opportunity for football players to grow closer to Christ. “I would try to get them to associate whatever they’re experiencing with the suffering of Christ,” he said. “If we can’t associate even those difficult things in our lives with Christ’s experience of those same things, then we’re really not fully trusting in his message and in his presence in our lives.”



Creación de Células Madres

Los investigadores han descubierto una nueva manera de desarrollar células madres que evitan el uso de embriones humanos.



CREACIÓN DE CÉLULAS MADRES—Agregando cuatro genes a células de la piel, los científicos han creado células madres, genéticamente compatibles al donante, capaces de convertirse en cualquiera de los 220 tipos de células del cuerpo humano. (Gráfico CNS/Nancy Wiehchec)

Los obispos aprueban los folletos de la administración dirigidos a los adolescentes

WASHINGTON—En la reunión de los obispos de Estados Unidos noviembre 12-15 en Baltimore votaron sobre dos folletos, en inglés y español, dirigidos a educar a los adolescentes sobre el llamado a ser buenos administradores de los bienes de Dios.

“La Iglesia necesita hablar a los adolescentes sobre el amor de Dios como don gratuito que lleva al compromiso, el servicio y la vocación a una edad en la que están pensando sobre su futuro”, afirma en su carta al plenario de los obispos el Obispo Robert J. Baker de Charleston, South Carolina, presidente del Comité sobre Administración de los Bienes de Dios. Los jóvenes hacen una contribución positiva a la vida de la Iglesia y es apropiado invitarlos a participar aún más en otras formas, incluyendo la práctica de la corresponsabilidad”.

Discípulos Jóvenes, introduce a los adolescentes, en un lenguaje sencillo y directo, al “llamado que Dios te hace a ser su discípulo, lo cual incluye administrar generosamente su dones”. “Este llamado implica compartir tu tiempo, tus talentos y tus bienes con los demás”, afirma el texto, “porque todo lo que tienes viene de Dios y se te ha dado precisamente para que lo compartas”.

El folleto anima a los jóvenes a hacer una decisión consciente de ver sus vidas de manera diferente, a profundizar su fe mediante la oración, la vida sacramental y el estudio de la Sagrada Escritura y la Enseñanza Social de la Iglesia, y a actuar compartiendo sus dones. “Hasta el más

pequeño acto de caridad y gentileza puede traer alegría y alivio a otras personas”, dicen los obispos.

El borrador incluye el llamado que el Papa Benedicto XVI hizo recientemente a los jóvenes del mundo en Brasil a que no desaprovechéis vuestra juventud, donde les recordó también que ísois el presente joven de la Iglesia y de la humanidad. Sois su rostro joven...Sin este rostro joven, la Iglesia se presentaría desfigurada.†

También recoge una mención del Primer encuentro nacional de pastoral juvenil hispana, “donde los jóvenes elevaron su voz profética ofreciendo sus dones y expresando su profundo deseo de participar más plenamente en la vida y la misión de la Iglesia”.

Aunque Discípulos Jóvenes incluye muchos de los mismos puntos que su contrapartida en inglés, Stewardship and Teenagers, no es una traducción de éste sino que ha sido escrito como documento original para incorporar aspectos culturales del idioma y las tradiciones propias de los católicos de habla hispana que viven en Estados Unidos.

Obispos de estados Unidos saludan encíclica sobre la esperanza

WASHINGTON – Spe salvi (Salvados en la esperanza), la segunda carta encíclica del Papa Benedicto XVI, ofrece inspiración a todos los creyentes, dijo el Cardenal Francis George de Chicago, presidente de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos.

“El Papa Benedicto nos llama individualmente y en comunidad a una esperanza anclada en Jesús”, dijo. El Cardenal George ofreció estos comentarios el 30 de noviembre, el mismo día en que fue publicada la encíclica en el Vaticano.

Spe salvi enseña que el mensaje cristiano no es sólo “informativo” sino también “preformativo”. Esto quiere decir que “el Evangelio no es solamente una comunicación de cosas que se pueden saber, sino una comunicación que comporta hechos y cambia la vida”, dice el Papa. Al recibir a Dios a través de Jesucristo recibimos la esperanza. El Papa ilustra este punto narrando la vida de santa Josefina Bakhita, una esclava africana.

Papa Benedicto XVI visitará Estados Unidos y Sede de Naciones Unidas

WASHINGTON – El Papa Benedicto XVI visitará a los Estados Unidos los días 15-20 de abril de 2008. El viaje incluirá visitas a las ciudades de Washington y Nueva York y a la sede de las Naciones Unidas.

Entre los lugares que visitará durante su estancia se incluyen la Basílica Nacional de la Inmaculada Concepción, donde el Papa se reunirá con los obispos de los Estados Unidos, y misas públicas en los estadios de béisbol de los “Nationals” de Washington y los “Yankees” de Nueva York.

“Este es un momento de gran bendición para nuestra nación”, dijo el Obispo William Skylstad de Spokane, presidente de la Conferencia de Obispos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB). “El Papa Benedicto no es solamente el líder de todos los católicos, es también una inspiración para todos los que trabajan por la paz”.

El Cardenal Edward Egan de Nueva York expresó el gozo de la gente de Nueva York: “Cuando el Santo Padre, Benedicto XVI, me dijo el pasado mes de julio que vendría a Nueva York en el mes de abril, me alegró mucho la noticia y la compartí con el Pueblo de Dios en la Arquidiócesis de Nueva York y con toda la comunidad del área metropolitana. La respuesta de todos fue una de regocijo y agradecimiento a Dios por la gracia tan grande de la presencia del Sucesor de Pedro en medio de nosotros. He asegurado al Santo Padre que le proporcionaremos una calurosa bienvenida acompañada de mucha oración. Todos esperamos esta visita con gran alegría y anticipación.”

El Arzobispo Donald Wuerl de Washington habló de “un gozo lleno de fe y enorme entusiasmo” en la Arquidiócesis de Washington.

“Personalmente, en nombre de todo el clero, los religiosos y los fieles de la Arquidiócesis de Nueva York, quiero expresar nuestra más cordial bienvenida y nuestra lealtad hacia el Santo Padre. Todos esperamos esta visita como un tiempo de renovación de nuestra fe y nuestro ministerio pastoral, y como una oportunidad de confirmar nuestra solidaridad con la Iglesia universal presente de forma visible entre nosotros por medio del Sucesor de Pedro, el Papa Benedicto XVI”, dijo el Arzobispo Wuerl.

“Es un gran privilegio para la Iglesia de

Washington el ser anfitriones de la visita de nuestro Santo Padre. Prometemos hacer todo lo que podamos para que su presencia entre nosotros sea un momento de auténtica renovación espiritual y manifestación viva del Reino de Dios entre nosotros.”

Monseñor Walter Rossi, rector de la Basílica Nacional señaló la importancia de este templo para la nación. “La Basílica fue establecida por los Obispos de los Estados Unidos como tributo de nuestra nación a María Inmaculada, así que resulta muy apropiado que los obispos de nuestro país se encuentren con el sucesor de Pedro en la casa que ellos dedicaron a la madre de Dios”, comentó.

Secretariado Pro-Vida De La Conferencia De Obispos Urge Al Congreso A Que Apoye La Ley Conocida Como “Mexico City Policy”

WASHINGTON – Mientras el Comité de Asuntos Exteriores de la Casa de Representantes convocaba ayer, 31 de octubre, una audiencia sobre la llamada “Mexico City Policy”, la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB) publicó anuncios en cuatro publicaciones capitalinas en las que urgía a los miembros del Congreso a apoyar “esta sensible legislación”. La “Legislación de Ciudad de México”, que está siendo atacada actualmente, asegura que los Estados Unidos no dé fondos a organizaciones no-gubernamentales extranjeras que promueven el aborto como forma de planificación familiar en otros países.

El anuncio a toda página de la Conferencia de Obispos en Roll Call, The Hill, CQ Today, y Congress Daily AM contiene la imagen de una mujer de un país en desarrollo sosteniendo a su hijo, junto con un comentario de Grace Olivarez, miembro disidente de la comisión consejera federal sobre población John D. Rockefeller III: “Los pobres claman por la justicia y la igualdad y nosotros respondemos legalizando el aborto”.

La audiencia de ayer incluyó el testimonio de la ginecóloga y médico prenatal Dra. Jean Kagia de Kenia, quien comparó los esfuerzos por legalizar el aborto en África con la destructiva y duradera influencia en épocas pasadas de intereses extranjeros. “La promoción de esfuerzos por legalizar el aborto en África es parte de una agenda extranjera y una forma de nueva colonización”, dijo la Dra. Kagia.

Deirdre A. McQuade, directora de planeación e información del Secretariado Pro-Vida comentó, a la luz del anuncio y del testimonio de la Dra. Kagia, que “tal como la activista latina Sra. Olivarez alzó su voz en 1972 en contra del aborto como forma de planificación familiar en los Estados Unidos, la Dra. Kagia habló valientemente hoy en nombre de las mujeres africanas”.

“Las mujeres pobres en todo el mundo necesitan ayuda para proporcionar lo necesario a sus hijos, no para eliminarlos”, dijo McQuade. “Ellas necesitan una ayuda verdadera, no la substitución falsa de más abortos”.

El anuncio, hecho posible por los Caballeros de Colón, apareció los días 30 y 31 de octubre y se puede encontrar en la página Web del Secretariado Pro-Vida junto con información sobre “Mexico City Policy” en: www.usccb.org/prolife/MexicoCityPolicyAd.pdf

*Feliz
Navidad
y
Próspero Año
Nuevo*





Ethical, scientific breakthroughs seen in new stem-cell studies

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Scientists, ethicists and church leaders hailed as a breakthrough two studies showing that human skin cells can be reprogrammed to work as effectively as embryonic stem cells, thus negating the need to destroy embryos in the name of science.

Separate studies from teams led by Shinya Yamanaka of Kyoto University in Japan and Junying Yu and James Thomson of the University of Wisconsin-Madison were published online Nov. 20 by the journals Cell and Science, respectively.

"The methods outlined in these papers fully conform to what we have hoped to see for some time," said a statement from the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia.

"Such strategies should continue to be pursued and strongly promoted, as they should help to steer the entire field of stem-cell research in a more explicitly ethical direction by circumventing the moral quagmire associated with destroying human embryos," it added.

By adding four genes to the skin cells, the scientists were able to create stem cells that genetically match the donor and have the ability to become any of the 220 types of cells in the human body.

"The induced cells do all the things embryonic stem cells do," Thomson, who isolated the first embryonic stem cells in 1998, said in a university news release. "It's going to completely change the field."

Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia,

chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, welcomed the news, expressing gratitude "for scientists who took up the challenge of finding morally acceptable ways to pursue stem-cell research, and for government leaders who have encouraged and funded such avenues."

The new technology "avoids the many ethical land mines associated with embryonic stem-cell research: It does not clone or destroy human embryos, does not harm or exploit women for their eggs, and does not blur the line between human beings and other species through desperate efforts to make human embryos using animal eggs," he added.

The White House also praised the breakthrough Nov. 20, saying that President George W. Bush's June 2007 executive order expanding stem-cell research using "ethically responsible techniques" was "intended to accelerate precisely the kind of research being reported today."

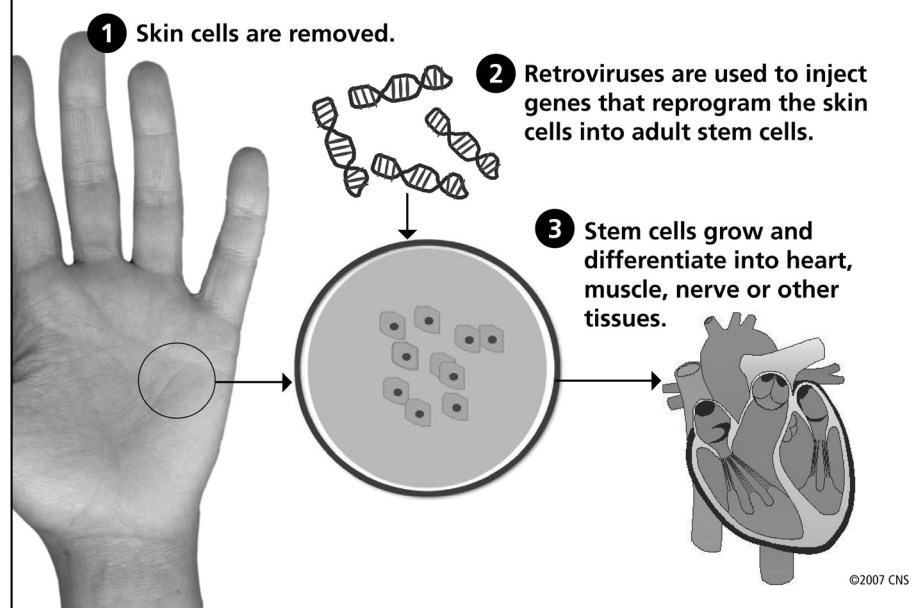
"The president believes medical problems can be solved without compromising either the high aims of science or the sanctity of human life," said press secretary Dana Perino. "We will continue to encourage scientists to expand the frontiers of stem-cell research and continue to advance the understanding of human biology in an ethically responsible way."

The findings drew similar reaction from Catholic and pro-life leaders abroad.

Australian Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, said, "While it is still early days for this research, it is a

Creating Stem Cells

Researchers have discovered a new way to develop stem cells that bypasses the use of human embryos.



CREATING STEM CELLS—By adding four genes to skin cells, scientists have been able to create stem cells that genetically match the donor and have the ability to become any of the 220 types of cells in the human body. (CNS graphic/Nancy Wiechec)

very promising discovery which will help scientists to fight serious diseases without resorting to the deliberate destruction of human embryos to obtain stem cells."

He expressed regret that the Australian Parliament had acted to permit embryonic stem-cell research when more effective and more ethical means were just around the corner.

In Great Britain, the head of the pro-life group Society for the Protection of Unborn Children said the new stem-cell studies

"show that one can be both pro-life and pro-science."

"Experimenting with embryos, on the other hand, is both bad ethics and bad science," said Anthony Ozimic. "Science advances when it respects human life, but stalls or even goes backwards when it treats human beings as mere research material."

Ian Wilmut, the Scottish scientist who created Dolly the cloned sheep in 1996, told the London Telegraph that he had decided in light of the new findings to abandon his efforts to clone human embryos and would instead concentrate on research involving the new reprogramming techniques.

Archbishop Mario Conti of Glasgow, Scotland, chairman of the United Kingdom and Ireland Joint Bishops' Bioethics Committee, welcomed Wilmut's announcement, saying: "The Catholic Church has constantly supported the work of scientists who use adult stem cells, research which has produced much more promising results and avoids the ethical dilemma involved in creating and destroying human life."

The National Catholic Bioethics Center said Wilmut's change of heart "flowed largely from practical considerations" but that the scientist also had acknowledged that the new approach was "easier to accept socially."

"Persistence in seeking creative scientific breakthroughs and actively pursuing alternative approaches can help resolve serious ethical problems and allow us to maintain the ethical integrity of science while achieving important scientific and medical ends," the statement said.

However, Thomson and the International Society for Stem-Cell Research called on scientists to continue research involving the destruction of human embryos. More study is needed to ensure that the newly made cells "do not differ from embryonic stem cells in a clinically significant or unexpected way, so it is hardly time to discontinue embryonic stem-cell research," Thomson said.

"These findings do not obviate the need for research using human embryonic stem cells," said the society in a Nov. 20 statement. "Rather, the different avenues of human stem-cell research should be pursued side by side providing complementary information."

In light of that stand by some scientists, Mailee Smith, staff counsel for the Chicago-based Americans United for Life, said: "The need for states to pass legislation that bans all forms of human cloning remains."

IRAs • 401(k)s • Pension Rollovers

We're the
Rollover
Specialists

6.00 %
APR

Retiring? Switching Jobs? Changing Careers? Starting a New Business? Roll Your Money Over to Us and Watch it Grow!

Meet the Specialists in Your Area

Charles Leopold, FIC
Hallettsville
361-798-4311

Harvey Bartosh, FIC
Weimar
979-725-8658

Steve Labay, Jr., FIC
Ganado
361-771-2674

DeWayne Kotrla, FIC
Columbus
979-732-3615

Albert Smaistrila, FIC
East Bernard
979-335-4473

Marvin Hilscher, FIC
Port Lavaca
361-552-3233

Royce Shimek, FIC
Schulenburg
979-743-4313

Eugene Rehak, FIC
Victoria
361-575-4982

Clifton Lau, FIC
Victoria
361-573-3669

CATHOLIC LIFE INSURANCE
Celebrating 106 Years of Service

*Includes Current Yield + 1.75% First Year Bonus. Interest rates are subject to change & vary by plan. Rate guaranteed for 1st year. Minimum guarantee is 3.00% SS 9-07



Father Mario Hatsheety gives Communion to Tony Lama, an altar boy, during Mass on the first Sunday of Advent, Dec. 2, in St. Catherine's Church, which adjoins the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, West Bank. (CNS photo/Debbie Hill)

Israelis, Palestinians not getting hopes up after Annapolis summit

By Judith Sudilovsky
Catholic News Service

JERUSALEM (CNS) — Media in the Holy Land showered attention on the Middle East peace conference in Annapolis, Md., but Israelis and Palestinians, jaded from years of failed talks, were not getting their hopes up too high.

"Everybody has been following it, but the results are ambiguous," said Boutros Fawadleh, a 37-year-old English teacher at Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Latin Patriarchate School in the West Bank village of Aboud. "I think Palestinians are hopeful that this conference will be different. They hope the situation will be better for (us) but from past experience (these conferences) have just been words," he said.

Though most of his acquaintances were supportive of the late-November conference, Fawadleh said, people still are not convinced that the meetings of political leaders will bring an end to the bloodshed.

In Gaza and the West Bank, the militant Islamic Palestinian faction Hamas held protests against the conference, and Palestinian police killed one Hamas protester in Hebron, West Bank.

Following the peace conference, a survey conducted by the Israeli Ha'aretz newspaper and the Department of Statis-

tics and Operations Research of Tel Aviv University found that almost 42 percent of the Israeli public called the summit a "failure."

The summit found no solution to the nagging problems of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the parties did decide a final status agreement would be reached within the year. More detailed negotiations are to begin in mid-December.

Bernard Sabella, a Catholic Palestinian legislator and member of the Fatah political movement, said he viewed the summit as another step in a long process.

"I hope it will not be similar to the Oslo process" of 1993 which failed to produce any results, he said, noting that little can be accomplished in a short meeting. "It would have been better if it would have lasted for three months and something concrete came out of it."

A lot of work still lies ahead and basic issues -- such as the viability of a Palestinian state, water resources, refugees and the status of Jerusalem -- still must be addressed, he said.

"There are still so many issues unresolved that if the process is dragged out too long we will be back at square one," said Sabella

Pope to visit New York, Washington in April, papal nuncio confirms

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI will visit Washington and New York April 15-20.

Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States, confirmed the dates of the papal trip and announced the pope's itinerary in remarks Nov. 12 at the beginning of the annual fall meeting of the U.S. bishops in Baltimore.

"Peter, the rock on which Jesus founded this church, will be among us in the person of his successor, Benedict the XVI," Archbishop Sambi told the bishops.

The official title of the upcoming papal trip is "Apostolic Visit to the United States of America and to the Seat of the United Nations."

According to the archbishop, the pope will arrive in Washington April 15 and will receive an official welcome at the White House April 16. That afternoon, coincidentally his 81st birthday, he will address the U.S. bishops.

The following day he will celebrate Mass at the new Washington Nationals baseball stadium in Washington. Later that

Bishop of Lourdes announces 150th Jubilee anniversary of apparitions

WASHINGTON - The Bishop of Lourdes, France, Most Reverend Jacques Perrier, announced November 27 in Washington, D.C., the opening of a yearlong celebration of the 150th Jubilee anniversary of the apparitions of the Immaculate Conception to St. Bernadette Soubirous in the Grotto at Lourdes.

Bishop Perrier made the announcement in the nation's capital as part of a series of visits to cities around the globe such as Paris, Rome and London.

"I invite the people of the United States to visit Lourdes during the Jubilee year or to honor the anniversary at home in their parishes with prayer, with service to the sick and disabled or by pilgrimage to local

Grotto replicas throughout the country," Bishop Perrier said.

The Jubilee Year will officially open December 8, 2007, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and conclude the following year on the same day.

A novena will be offered, downloadable from the Internet, for all those desiring to be pilgrims at home and to make possible the involvement of communities throughout the world associated with Lourdes and St. Bernadette.

Information on Lourdes and 2008 Jubilee celebrations can also be downloaded in English or Spanish from: www.lourdes-france.org and www.lourdes2008.com

U.S. bishops welcome encyclical on hope

Continued from p. 1

encounter with the living God and thus an encounter with a hope stronger than sufferings of slavery," which therefore transformed life.

This hope exceeds the physical laws of nature and evolution. It is ultimately not these laws that govern the world and mankind and have the final say; a personal God governs the universe -- "reason, will, love -- a Person," Pope Benedict says.

For the Pope, Christian hope is not individualistic. It is community oriented -- all of us are becoming the people of God -- the body of Christ, he says. Because our hope is a hope that incorporates all men and women, this hope spurs us not only to obtain eternal life, but to also manifest this hope of eternal life here on earth. We do this by striving to make our life on earth a heavenly life -- a life of productivity, justice, peace, and goodness -- a positive world order that prospers.

The Holy Father also notes the importance of Christian faith-hope in the modern age. In the encyclical letter, Pope Benedict analyzes the false utopian dreams of the modern age and points out the untold suffering they have caused human beings. From this point of view, redemption is

no longer through faith in God's saving action but from what human beings can achieve through the application of technical knowledge to all of society's problems. A praxis-oriented science draws on an understanding of progress as the overcoming of all dependency to make room for a "kingdom" in which God is no longer at the center. Pope Benedict reflects that when reason renounces faith in revelation or the moral wisdom of the great religions, it has led to scientific developments which in some cases evoke fear among our contemporaries. Just as man needs God in order to sustain hope, reason needs faith to make the world a more human place. "Reason needs faith to be completely itself," the pope says.

Pope Benedict also observes that prayer leads to hope. "A first essential setting for learning hope is prayer. . . . When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God," he says.

He adds that action and suffering are also settings for learning hope. "We can try to limit suffering, to fight against it, but we cannot eliminate it," he says. "It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love."

A person "cannot accept another's suffering unless he personally is able to find meaning in suffering, a path of purification and growth in maturity, a journey of hope. Indeed, to accept the 'other' who suffers, means that I take up his suffering in such a way that it becomes mine also. Because it has now become a shared suffering, though, in which another person is present, this suffering is penetrated by the light of love," he says also.

Pope Benedict highlights the practice of praying for the dead saying it reveals another important element of the Christian concept of hope. "As Christians we should never limit ourselves to asking: how can I save myself? We should also ask: what can I do in order that others may be saved and that for them too the star of hope may rise? Then I will have done my utmost for my own personal salvation as well," he says.

Spe salvi is the second encyclical of Pope Benedict. His first, "*Deus caritas est*," (God is love) explored the meaning of Christian love and how it is expressed in everyday life. He issued it December 25, 2005.

Spe salvi can be found at www.usccb.org/bishops/spe_salvi.pdf.

Pope among 12 religious leaders on CBS documentary 'In God's Name'

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The genesis for a documentary on why people use religion and faith as justification for some of history's most horrible acts came from one recent horrible act: the World Trade Center attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Jules Naudet, who with brother Gedeon produced the upcoming CBS documentary "In God's Name," collaborated with his older brother on "9/11," which aired on CBS five years ago. Pope Benedict XVI is one of 12 spiritual leaders, five of them Christian, featured in the new documentary, scheduled to air Dec. 23, 9-11 p.m. EST. Non-Christians include the Dalai Lama, the chief rabbi of Israel, a Hindu spiritual leader and a prominent Sunni Muslim leader. The pope was the only one of the 12 who did not sit down with the Naudets for a private interview. Historically, the Vatican has not given private interviews with the pope, Jules Naudet noted, so they researched archives and found features on the pope that yielded answers to their questions.



Prominent Catholics Call for Civility in Politics

Washington, DC— A diverse group of prominent lay Catholics — including 11 former U.S. ambassadors and former chairmen of the Republican and Democratic National Committees — have called for a more civil tone to replace the divisive rhetoric and partisan attacks that define our national political debates.

The leaders in law, politics and religion released the statement, A Catholic Call to Observe Civility in Political Debate, at a news conference at the National Press Club today. Ambassador Thomas P. Melady, the former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See and Timothy J. May, a Senior Partner with Patton Boggs LLP and Trustee Emeritus with the Catholic University of America, co-organized the statement.

“Civility should be a guiding principle in our public life,” the statement says. “Civility and its potential impact on the fabric of the Catholic Church should be of concern to all faithful Catholics, both clergy and lay people.”

“The statement directly addresses controversies over Catholic politicians whose positions on various polarizing issues conflict or give the appearance of conflicting with Church teachings,” said Ambassador Thomas P. Melady. “Some voices have been shrill. The language at times has been offensive. The level of dialogue and conversation in too many instances has not met the standards that

one expects in a country trying to establish worldwide standards for all democracies.”

It cautions Catholic politicians whose positions contradict Catholic teachings. “Catholic politicians who advertise their Catholicism as part of their political appeal, but ignore the Church’s moral teachings in their political life confuse non-Catholics by giving the appearance of hypocrisy,” it says. The statement urges lay Catholics to “avoid public statements that undermine the authority of the Church’s leaders.”

“As lay Catholics we should not exhort the Church to condemn our political opponents by publicly denying them Holy

Communion based on public dissent from Church teachings,” the statement reads. “An individual’s fitness to receive communion is his or her personal responsibility. It is a bishop’s responsibility to set for his diocese the guidelines for administering communion.” The document goes on to say that bishops and all involved in church leadership “should not permit the Church to be used, or appear to be used, as a partisan political tool.”

For a copy of the statement and list of signers, please go to: www.catholicsinalliance.org/cacg/media-center/prominent-catholics-call-for-civility-in-politics.html



POPE BENEDICT CELEBRATES ADVENT MASS AT HOSPITAL—Pope Benedict XVI celebrates Mass on the first Sunday of Advent at St. John the Baptist Hospital in Rome Dec. 2. He urged hospitals and health care workers to welcome patients with love and safeguard their dignity. “Let us open our hearts to everybody, especially if they are in difficulty, because helping those in need prepares us to welcome Jesus who comes to us” through those who are sick and suffering, he said. (CNS photo/Giampiero Sposito, Reuters)

Pope offers prayers for families of millions who died of AIDS in 2007

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI offered his prayers for the families of the estimated 2.1 million people who have died of AIDS this year, and he asked all people to work to end discrimination against those living with AIDS and HIV.

At the end of his Nov. 28 general audience, the pope spoke about the Dec. 1 commemoration of World AIDS Day.

“I am spiritually close to those who suffer because of this terrible disease and their families, especially those who have lost a relative,” he said.

“I assure all of them of my prayers,” the pope said.

“In addition, I want to exhort all people of good will to multiply their efforts to stop the spread of the HIV virus, to oppose the scorn which often strikes those who are afflicted with it and to take care of the sick, especially when they are still youngsters,” he said.

According to figures released Nov. 20 by UNAIDS, “global HIV prevalence -- the percentage of people living with HIV -- has leveled off” and the number of new infections each year has fallen.

UNAIDS estimated that in 2007 about 33.2 million people were living with HIV, 2.5 million became infected and 2.1 million

died of AIDS.

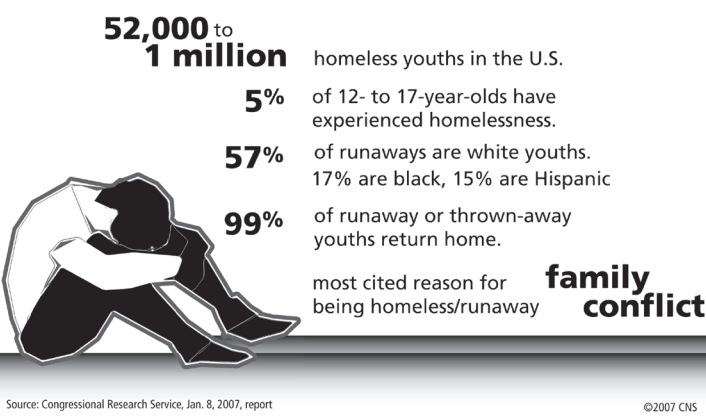
Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most affected, with an estimated 22.5 million people infected, it said.

“The number of new HIV infections per year is now estimated to have peaked in the late 1990s,” UNAIDS said, reflecting “natural trends in the epidemic” as well as greater HIV prevention efforts.

The UNAIDS data estimated that 2.5 million children under the age of 15 were living with HIV/AIDS, including 420,000 children who contracted the virus in 2007. More than 330,000 children under 15 died of AIDS during this year.

Homeless Youths

Figures on homeless and runaway young people are difficult to come by because of mobility and overlapping populations. Below are some figures gleaned from a Congressional Research Service report.



HOMELESS YOUTHS—Although figures on homeless people under age 18 are difficult to compile, analysts say that there may be 1 million or more youths who are homeless or runaways at any given time in the U.S. (CNS graphic/Emily Thompson)

Vatican diplomat: Relations with Israel better before diplomatic ties

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With new problems over visas for foreign priests and the long, ongoing negotiations needed to resolve the tax status of Catholic institutions in Israel, relations were better before there were full diplomatic ties, said Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the Vatican’s former

ambassador to Israel, in an interview with Terra Santa, a publication of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, told reporters Nov. 17 that Archbishop Sambi’s remarks reflected “his thought and personal experience.” The Vatican, Father Lombardi said, continues to hope “for a rapid

conclusion of the negotiations already under way” and for close cooperation in resolving “the existing problems.”

Although issues related to the juridical and financial status of the Catholic Church had not been fully clarified, the Vatican went ahead and launched full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1994 “as an act of trust,” certain that Israel would act quickly to finalize agreements on the legal and financial issues, Archbishop Sambi said. An agreement on the juridical questions was signed in 1997 and work on financial questions continues.

The work on the financial agreements has involved 10 years of “negotiations rendered useless by the postponements of meetings on the part of the Israeli delegation (and) by the delegation’s lack of power to negotiate. In a word, because of an absence of political will, it still has not been signed. Anyone can see what kind of trust can be placed in the promises of Israel,” he said.

Father Humam Khzouz, chancellor of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, told CNS in early November that almost a year ago priests, religious and seminarians from Lebanon, Syria and Iraq were denied one-year multiple-entry visas. In August, the policy was extended to priests and seminarians from Jordan and Egypt, Arab countries with which Israel has signed peace agreements and has diplomatic relations.

Good Neighbor. GREAT RATES.

Looking for great rates and a secure place to grow your money? Call me today for more information about a CD from State Farm Bank®.

CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSIT



Jim Steelhammer CLU ChFC
State Farm Agent
Victoria, TX 77904-1937
Bus: 361-578-4045
www.jimsteelhammer.com

90 Day	4.55% APY*
180 Day	4.45% APY*
1 Year	4.20% APY*
2 Years	4.10% APY*
3 Years	4.10% APY*
4 Years	4.25% APY*
5 Years	4.35% APY*



Bank

LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR,
STATE FARM IS THERE.®



*Annual Percentage Yields as of 12/05/07. Rates subject to change without notice. Minimum balance to open an account and obtain the stated APY is \$500. Rates apply to deposits less than \$100,000. A penalty may be imposed for a withdrawal prior to maturity. Certificates automatically renew at maturity at the then-current rate for the same term.

Vatican official says security hinges on respect of all religions

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Tolerance and security hinge on the respect and protection of all religions, a Vatican official told the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, known as OSCE.

“If the OSCE is to promote human dignity in an integral way, it must also effectively combat intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions,” said Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, the Vatican’s foreign affairs official.

Archbishop Mamberti spoke during OSCE’s 15th ministerial council meeting Nov. 29-30 in Madrid, Spain. The council is the main decision-making and governing body of OSCE, the world’s largest regional security

organization.

The Vatican released a copy of the archbishop’s text Dec. 4.

The problem of religious discrimination has become “an important political and security” issue, he said.

The only way such discrimination can be fought effectively, he said, is “if all religions are equally respected and protected.”

Archbishop Mamberti said that, while OSCE was one of the first major organizations to sound the alarm concerning intolerance against Christians in some parts of the world, Christian communities “continue to suffer from prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination and violence.”

He urged OSCE not to stop at “blanket condemnations,” but to act effectively and protect people’s fundamental freedoms.



Special Collections

Tri-Conference Fund for Retired Religious - Dec. 9 Ongoing Events

Grief Group — Have you experienced the death of a loved one? Join us in this on-going grief group on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room at Holy Family Church, 704 Mallette Drive, Victoria. For information, please call (361) 578-7572.

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.

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 2008 are: Feb. 1-3; April 4-6; June 27-29; Sept. 26-28; and Nov. 14-16. For more info., call (361) 573-0828 ext. 50. A date cannot be reserved for any couple unless a cashier's check or money order is sent in the amount of \$210 for weddings being held within the Diocese of Victoria or \$265 for weddings being held outside the Diocese of Victoria. There will be a fee of \$45 for cancellation or rescheduling.

Marriage Encounter — Marriage Encounter weekend is held at the Spiritual Renewal Center. For more information or to register, write or call Milton and Diane Rejcek, 2512 Hillcrest, Bay City, Texas 77414; (979) 245-0323; register@mevictoria.org www.mevictoria.org

Retrouvaille — 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 dates in Texas, please go to www.retrouvaille.org.

The Beginning Experience — An international ministry that helps divorced, separated and widowed individuals resolve their grief surrounding the loss of a marriage partner. For more information, go to their Web site: www.beginningexperience.org; e-mail: sanantonio@mevictoria.org; phone: (210) 734-2146.

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.

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 (361) 649-9157.

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 event: Dec. 9** — Christmas Concert featuring Mary Ann Williams and Becky Johns. **See the Web site at www.presidiolabahia.org for more information.**

Picnics, Activities, etc. December

Schulenburg — St. Rose of Lima School annual Christmas Around The World children's carnival on Saturday, Dec. 8, at the KC Hall. Festivities will begin at 4:00 p.m. with a Christmas pageant and band concert followed by a homemade stew dinner. Lots of activities for the children: pony rides, train rides and inflatable activities. Get a picture taken with Santa from 6:00-8:00 p.m. A live auction begins at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free. For more information call the school office at (979) 743-3080.

Victoria — The Guadalupe Society of Our Lady of Sorrows announces a tridium celebrating the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe Dec. 9-12. The Guadalupe Society is a Catholic organization whose purpose is to promote devotion to Mary,

the Mother of Jesus Christ, who appeared as our Lady of Guadalupe and who under that title is the Patroness of the Americas. Devotion under this title is meant to give glory to God the Father through Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary. The society is currently seeking practicing Catholics as new members. If you and your family would like to join, contact officers Mary T. Gonzales at (361) 571-4980 or Janie Saldaña at (361) 572-8536.

Upcoming Events

Southwest Liturgical Conference — 46th Annual Study Week January 16 – 19, 2008, at The Hotel Arizona at Tucson, Arizona. Early registration deadline is Dec. 10. For more information please go to: www.swlc.org. A Border-Crossing Event will be held Jan. 14 – 16; to register for this event, contact Anna Huth at Catholic Relief Services: ahuth@crs.org or (210) 366-3884, ext. 3 before Dec. 14.

Victoria — Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Jan. 20 at the KC Hall. The price is \$6 per chicken. Beans and Spanish rice available for \$1 per pint. Sale starts at 8:30 a.m. Proceeds benefit council's projects.

Hallettsville — "Night in Ol' Paris" 2008 extravaganza to benefit Sacred Heart School on Saturday, Feb. 2, 2008, at the KC Hall starting at 6:00 p.m. with a social, dinner and dance to the music of Cactus Country. Admission is \$125 per ticket (admission for two people). There will also be a silent auction. For more information and to purchase a ticket call the school at (361) 798-4251 or the rectory at (361) 798-5888.

Victoria — Spirit Wind Ministry's 9th annual "Gathering of Women" retreat with Paula D'Arcy will be held at the Spiritual Renewal Center beginning Sunday evening, Feb. 10, and ending with lunch Wednesday, Feb. 13, 2008. The cost of the retreat is \$300, which in addition to Paula's fee and travel, includes 3 nights lodging and meals. So that everyone attending has their own cabin, and to keep the retreat small and intimate, we limit the retreatant number to no more than 23. Please make your check payable to Spirit Wind Ministry and mail in c/o Susan Oakley, 103 Woodmere, Victoria, TX 77904. (There are a limited amount of small grants available.) Questions, please call: Susan Oakley (361) 576-1515; Mary Cox (361) 576-3003; Madeline Dodson (361) 573-2583; or Father Kirby Hlavaty (361) 277-9062.

Victoria — Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Feb. 17 at the KC Hall. The price is \$6 per chicken. Beans and Spanish rice available for \$1 per pint. Sale starts at 8:30 a.m. Proceeds benefit council's projects.

Corpus Christi — "Why We're Catholic When We Could Be Anything Else!" Fullness of Truth Catholic Family Conference in Corpus Christi Feb. 23-24, 2008, to be held at the American Bank Convention Center & Selenia Auditorium. Register at www.fullnessoftruth.org or call 1-800-731-4500.

Victoria — Our Lady of Victory Boy Scout Troop 364 will celebrate its 50th Anniversary on Sunday, March 2, 2008, at the Victoria Knights of Columbus Hall. The event will begin with a Scout Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Victory Cathedral. As plans are being made for this event, we ask that former scouts of this troop give us your names and updated addresses to be included. You may contact Loren Hackbarth, 361-576-3341 or Brigid Sonntag, 361-578-9454. Also, information can be entered at the troop Web site at www.olvtroop364.org.

Pilgrimage to Italy for Deaf — Official American Catholic Delegation to the International Deaf Community Papal Audience June 25, 2008. Pilgrimage to Italy June 16 – 27, 2008, includes Rome, Assisi, Florence, Padua and Venice, \$3,285 land/air from Dallas and other cities. For information and brochures, contact Travel Provider – Best Catholic Pilgrimages; 800-908-2378; FAX 888-647-2378; e-mail: info@bestcatholic.com.

Do You Have A When & Where Item? FAX To: (361) 573-5725

EWTN to broadcast Tridentine Mass during Advent; Live Christmas Masses from Rome and Washington

All times are Central Standard Time (CST)

IRONDALE, Ala. (CNS) — The Eternal Word Television Network will air a solemn high Mass in the Tridentine rite at 7 a.m. Dec. 15, live from the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, Ala.

The liturgy, which will be celebrated by clergy of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, is known as the "rorate Mass" because it begins with the Latin words "Rorate caeli desuper et nubes pluant iustum" (Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above and let the clouds rain down upon the just one).

Celebrated by candlelight and traditionally held before dawn, the votive Mass offered during Advent to honor Mary is esteemed particularly by German-speaking Catholics.

Father John Berg, superior general of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, will travel from the community's headquarters in Switzerland and will serve both as celebrant and homilist. Priests and seminarians from Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary in Denton, Neb., also will travel to Alabama to assist.

Choral Meditations on the Nativity & Solemn Mass of

TV program notes — week of Dec. 16

By Harry Forbes Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) — Here are some television program notes for the week of Dec. 16 with their TV Parental Guidelines ratings if available. *They have not been reviewed and therefore are not necessarily recommended by the Office for Film & Broadcasting.*

Monday, Dec. 17, 7-9 p.m. CST (NBC) "**Clash of the Choirs.**" In a four-night-event series, the programs follow five celebrity artists back to their hometowns to assemble an amateur choir and prepare them to compete live in a studio for the title of America's best choir. At 8 p.m. EST each night Dec. 17-20, the show will feature musical genres ranging from current pop hits to holiday classics and the choir hopefuls will be judged each night by viewers watching at home. One choir will be eliminated each evening.

Monday, Dec. 17, 8-9 p.m. CST (National Geographic) "**The Missing Years of Jesus.**" Between ages 12 and 30, Jesus' life is unaccounted for — nearly two decades missing from the man at the core of the Christian religion. Today, scholars are beginning to form a clearer picture of the missing years by re-examining stories in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and connecting them with new archaeological discoveries. Go back to Nazareth circa A.D. 6 to learn more about the blue-collar village, its oppressed inhabitants and abusive Roman rulers to see how it helped shape Jesus' personality and beliefs.

Wednesday, Dec. 19, 7-8 p.m. CST (National Geographic) "**Last Christians of Bethlehem.**" The Church of the Nativity in the heart of Bethlehem marks one of Christianity's most sacred sites: the birthplace of Christ. For centuries, it was one of the most fought-over holy places, seized and defended by a succession of armies -- including Muslim and Crusader forces. Now, Christian residents are caught in the cross hairs of growing Islamic fundamentalism and the entrenched Israeli fortress that surrounds it.

Wednesday, Dec. 19, 8-9 p.m. CST (PBS) "**Christmas With the Mormon Tabernacle Choir Featuring Sissel.**" European singer Sissel joins the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square for an annual holiday concert. A national institution in Norway, Sissel has sung all over the world. The program features traditional Christmas songs and Norwegian folk tunes, recorded from four concerts performed in December 2006 in Salt Lake City before combined audiences of approximately 85,000 (TV-G — general audience).

Wednesday, Dec. 19, 9-10 p.m. CST (PBS) "**Christmas at St. Olaf: Where Peace and Love and Hope Abide.**" This Christmas special features the renowned choirs and orchestra of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn. The program this year blends excerpts from Handel's "Messiah," Mendelssohn's "St. Paul" and Honegger's "King David" with new, specially commissioned works for chorus and orchestra (TV-G — general audience).

Friday, Dec. 21, 7-8 p.m. CST (CBS) **Ninth annual "A Home for the Holidays With Sheryl Crow."** Inspirational stories about adoption will be enhanced by performances by Crow, James Blunt, Carole King, Reba McEntire and others. Rene Russo will be among the celebrities telling stories about adoption to raise awareness of this important social issue.

Christmas Eve from The Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C.

Live from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC, USA. (2 1/2 hours long)

Dec 24, 9 p.m.

Solemn Mass at Midnight with Pope Benedict XVI

Live Solemnity of the Birth of Our Lord: Midnight Mass with the Holy Father from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. (2 hours long)

Dec 24, 5 p.m. Live

Dec 25, 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Urbi Et Orbi from Rome: Pope Benedict's Christmas-Message to the World

Live From St. Peter's Square. Join the Holy Father for his inspiring Christmas Day message to the world on the celebration of Christ's birth. (1 hour long)

Dec 25, 5 a.m. Live, and 9 p.m.

Dec 26, 2 a.m. and 4 p.m.



Bishop David E. Fellhauer and the Chancery Office Staff Wish You a Blessed Holiday!



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from (seated l-r) Msgr. Eustace Hermes, Mary Haas, Minnie Bochat, Cecilia Janak; (standing l-r) Jo Ann Martinez, Sister Gloria Cain, Martha Pearson-Vela, Sister Digna Vela, Regina Janak, Barbara Parkan, (next row) Chris Alvarez, Sister Dawn Achs, Janie Carrales, Cynthia Brewer, Jeri Joseph, Ray Beth Sills, Melissa Perales, (back row) Mike Brown, Sharon Jones, Bishop David E. Fellhauer, Debbie Vanelli and Gary Rangnow. (Not pictured, Msgr. Thomas C. McLaughlin.)

Catholic By Grace

By Denise E. Bossert



Nativity Sets

Over twenty years ago, I bought an unpainted plaster nativity set from an arts and crafts store on their after-Christmas sale. I spent a substantial amount of time during the next year painting each little piece and constructing a stable for the Holy Family. For years, my children used the figurines like puppets as they practiced retelling the story of the first Christmas.

Last year, the nativity set had a little accident. During the installation of built-in bookshelves, my husband rested a large piece of wood against the mantel. It slipped, hit the coffee table, and took out half of my nativity set.

I was not happy. I had a deep sentimental attachment to that hand-painted nativity set. Every Advent, when I lifted the tissue-wrapped pieces from a box, I would smile and replay the memories. With one loud crash, it had all come to an end.

See Nativity Sets, p. 12



A surprise reunion at son's school

By Tara Bozick -
Victoria Advocate

Paul Allan Garcia, 9, sent his father candy LifeSavers on a note saying he hoped they would work to get him back from Iraq.

His father, Sgt. Pablo Garcia, came back on Thursday, November 15, carrying the LifeSavers in the right pocket of his uniform and handed them to his son after surprising the fourth-grader at Nazareth Academy on Convent Street.

Staff at the school knew the Army father was coming to see his son after spending 14 months away and gathered the student body by the flagpole. Paul Allan, as a choir member, was directed to the steps to sing patriotic songs. Everyone was told a special guest was coming.

Paul Allan was singing "What can you say to a hero?" when he saw his father. He just bailed out, hugged his dad and started crying, mother Marisol Garcia, 37, said.

"Everyone started cheering and sniffing," Paul Allan said.

Garcia said he was shocked the whole school came out, cheering and asking for autographs. He was expecting to just walk into his son's classroom.

"I'm proud to serve the country," Garcia said. "I'm glad I'm respected for it."

Thursday evening Paul Allan received a trophy at America's Incredible Pizza for playing football with the Crossroads Youth Football League. Garcia said he was lucky to see that moment in his son's life as he missed all the football games.

"I've been hearing he's kicking some butt in football," Garcia said proudly.



Sgt. Pablo Garcia enjoys time with his sons, Paul Allan and Eric, as his wife, Marisol, looks on Thursday evening at America's Incredible Pizza. (Photo Credit: Tara Bozick/Victoria Advocate)

while serving as an information management officer in Tikrit, Iraq.

Paul Allan, who wants to join the military to parachute out of airplanes and be a doctor, wants to instigate tickle wrestling now that his father has come home.

The family plans to move to Fort Hood in Killeen after Paul Allan finishes the semester, Mrs. Garcia said. Her husband is stationed there and must report back Monday.

"It will be our first time living together as a family in three and a half years," she said. The youngest son barely got time with his father.

Four-year-old Eric, the younger son, looks forward to watching "Transformers" with his dad. Mrs. Garcia said Eric saw news segments about the war in Iraq on television and hugged the television, saying, "There's my Da-da."

Garcia said he looks forward to letting his sons teach him all the new video games he missed



Capital Campaign dollars at work

By Cynthia Brewer

The expansion and renovation of the Spiritual Renewal Center chapel is moving along since its late start in September after many rain delays.

In conjunction with the construction of the new multi-purpose building, the usage of the Spiritual Renewal Center is expected to increase as well as the size of the groups; therefore, it was necessary to renovate and enlarge the chapel as well, said Mike Brown, Diocese of Victoria finance officer.

"The width and length of the chapel are being expanded with each side widened by about 10 feet; the length will be increased by about 12 feet," said Mike Brown.

The new exterior walls will be constructed of hardy plank, which is a cement by-product. It is not subject to wood rot or termites, he said.

About 10 to 15 percent of the diocese's Capital Campaign monies will be used on the Spiritual Renewal Center's chapel.

The diocese looks forward to the rededication of the chapel around June 1, 2008.