

The Catholic Lighthouse

The Cradle of Texas Immigration



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December 2008



Msgr. Stanley Petru stands in the newly constructed Eucharistic Chapel at Queen of the Holy Rosary Parish in Hostyn. (TCL photo by Regina Matus-Janak)

Msgr. Stanley Petru celebrates 60th anniversary and 86th birthday

HOSTYN—The parishes of Queen of the Holy Rosary in Hostyn and Sts. Peter and Paul in Plum celebrated the 86th birthday and 60th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood of Msgr. Stanislaus Joseph Petru on the weekend of November 23, 2008.

Msgr. Petru was born on Nov 22, 1922, in Shiner to Frank and Johanna Petru. He was ordained to the priesthood May 27, 1948, by the late Archbishop Robert E. Lucey. In 1979 he was elevated to Domestic Prelate by his Holiness Pope John Paul II with the title Rev. Monsignor.

He has served in Queen of the Holy Rosary and Sts. Peter & Paul parishes for the past 16 years. Prior to this assignment, he had served at six other parishes in the Diocese of Victoria and two parishes in the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

He made a lot of improvements to the Holy Rosary Parish by replacing the old dining hall and dance hall. In 2004, an office building was added. His latest achievement is the addition of the new narthex to the church that includes the Eucharistic Chapel, which Bishop David E. Fellhauer blessed prior to the Mass of Thanksgiving for Msgr. Petru.

Msgr. Petru is known for his love of roses, animals and Christmas lights. Due to deadline schedule, the full story of Msgr. Petru's anniversary will be in the January issue of *The Catholic Lighthouse*.



'HOLY NIGHT' BY CARLO MARATTA—Angels surround Mary and Jesus in "Holy Night" by Italian Baroque painter Carlo Maratta. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 11 in 2009. (CNS photo/courtesy of Art Resource)

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Cardinal George Voices Hope for Obama Administration, Points to Possible Obstacles to Our Desired Unity

BALTIMORE—Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), voiced hope for the Obama Administration but pointed to possible obstacles to our desired unity, in a Nov. 12 statement at the end of the annual fall assembly of the USCCB.

"The bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States welcome this moment of historic transition and look forward to working with President-elect Obama and the members of the new Congress for the common good of all," he said.

He said that "the unity desired by President-elect Obama and all Americans at this moment of crisis will be impossible to achieve," if the administration's policies increase abortions. "Aggressive pro-abortion policies, legislation and executive orders will permanently alienate tens of millions of Americans, and would be seen by many as an attack on the free exercise of their religion."

"We express again our great desire to work with all those who cherish the common good of our nation," he added. "The common good is not the sum total of individual interests: it is achieved in the working out of a common life based

upon good reason and good will for all." Cardinal George's remarks follow:

STATEMENT of the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

"If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor; if the Lord does not watch over the city, in vain does the watchman keep vigil" (Psalm 127, vs. 1).

The Bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States welcome this moment of historic transition and look forward to working with President-elect Obama and the members of the new Congress for the common good of all. Because of the Church's history and the scope of her ministries in this country, we want to continue our work for economic justice and opportunity for all; our efforts to reform laws around immigration and the situation of the undocumented; our provision of better education and adequate health care for all, especially for women and children; our desire to safeguard religious freedom and foster peace at home and abroad. The Church is intent on doing good and will continue to cooperate gladly with the government and all others working for

these goods.

The fundamental good is life itself, a gift from God and our parents. A good state protects the lives of all. Legal protection for those members of the human family waiting to be born in this country was removed when the Supreme Court decided *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973. This was bad law. The danger the bishops see at this moment is that a bad court decision will be enshrined in bad legislation that is more radical than the 1973 Supreme Court decision itself.

In the last Congress, a Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) was introduced that would, if brought forward in the same form today, outlaw any "interference" in providing abortion at will. It would deprive the American people in all fifty states of the freedom they now have to enact modest restraints and regulations on the abortion industry. FOCA would coerce all Americans into subsidizing and promoting abortion with their tax dollars. It would counteract any and all sincere efforts by government and others of good will to reduce the number of abortions in our country.

Parental notification and informed

See Cardinal George, p. 7



Bishop Fellhauer's Schedule

Dec.	
7	6:00 p.m., Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus Christmas gathering, Holy Family Church, Victoria
8	8:15 a.m., Mass, Nazareth Academy, Victoria
9	4:00 p.m., Blessing of relocated Gulf Bend Center, 6502 Nursery Drive, Victoria
10	11:00 a.m., Mass, blessing of the newly renovated chapel and dedication of the new altar, for clergy and religious only, Spiritual Renewal Center, Victoria
12	5:30 a.m., Mañanitas and Mass, Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Victoria
13	5:30 p.m., Mass and Bishop's Christmas dinner at the Spiritual Renewal Center, Victoria
14	9:00 a.m., Mass, Installation of Lectors, Permanent Deacon Candidates, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
17	3:00 p.m., Diocesan Finance Board meeting, Chancery Office 4:30 p.m., Diocesan Building Board meeting, Chancery Office
23	11:30 a.m., Chancery closes for the holidays
24	4:00 p.m., Mass, IWBS Infirmary, Incarnate Word Convent Midnight Mass, Our Lady of Victory Cathedral
30	6:00 p.m., Mass, Serra Club Christmas gathering for seminarians and religious in formation, Holy Family Church, Victoria
Jan. 2009	
5-9	Texas Bishops' meeting on the 5th, followed by Retreat, Oblate Renewal Center, San Antonio
11-15	First week of Diocesan Priests' retreat, Spiritual Renewal Center, Victoria

On Friday, December 12th, the chancery office will close at 9:00 a.m. so that the staff may attend a reflection on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a Mass celebrated by Bishop Fellhauer and have lunch at the Spiritual Renewal Center. The chancery office will re-open at 1:00 p.m.

Diocesan Services Appeal '08 Approaches Goal

To date the Diocese of Victoria has collected \$632,552.20 (97%) of the \$650,224.98 pledged to the 2008 Diocesan Services Appeal. Thank you to the more than 3,600 parishioners who supported the Diocesan Services Appeal.

The Diocesan Services Appeal (DSA) is an annual appeal to support the operations and services of the Diocesan Chancery Offices, including Bishop, Vicar General, Tribunal, Chancellor, Business, Catechetical Ministry, *The Catholic Lighthouse Newspaper*, Office of Catholic Schools, Vocations, Youth & Child Protection, Youth & Young Adult Ministry, Reception, Seminarians, Permanent Diaconate and Spiritual Renewal Center.

At the beginning of the year, each parish is given a 2008 DSA Goal. This year's total goal for all parishes is \$1,282,100. Parishes that do not reach their goal through their parishioners contributions will make up the difference from parish funds. If you have not had the opportunity to give to the DSA, please prayerfully consider pledging a gift to support this vital appeal. Please contact your local Parish Office for a 2008 DSA Pledge Card.

Please note that if you would like to give to the 2008 Diocesan Services Appeal, your gift must be postmarked by December 31, 2008, in order to apply towards the 2008 appeal. Any gifts received after December 31, 2008, will be applied to the 2009 appeal.

Sue Ellen Galvan,
Diocese of Victoria
DSA Coordinator

Memorial held for deceased 3rd and 4th degree Knights

A memorial Mass was held on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2008, for deceased members of Victoria's 3rd Degree Knights of Columbus Council 1329 and 4th Degree Knights from Victoria Assembly 1126.

Family members of the deceased 3rd Degree Knights received a Bible and a potted plant in their family member's memory. Those honored were Richard Cullen, John S. Gwosdz, James E. Klosel Sr., Jerome "JC" Mzyk, Arthur A. Reuter, Oscar A. Schulte, Joseph P. Wyatt, Joe Nevlud Sr., Fred J. Sanchez, Ignacio S. Ybarbo and James Zandonatti. The presentation was made by KC Council 1329 Grand Knight Pete Moya, assisted by Dennis Boehm, financial secretary.

Family members of the deceased 4th Degree Knights of Columbus Victoria Assembly 1126 (from Victoria, Calhoun and Goliad counties) received a chalice and/or ciborium to be given to a parish or priest in their family member's honor. Those 4th Degree Knights thus honored were Rev. Wolfgang Mimms, O.S.S.T., Steve Borowicz Sr., Alfred Ramirez, Russell Fox, Blas Alvarado, Fred J. Sanchez, Joe Rubio, Ron Brown, Herman Baass, Ignacio S. Ybarbo and Joe J. Nevlud Sr. The presentations were announced by Faithful Navigator George Wenzel and presented by Faithful Comptroller Mike Brown and Faithful Admiral Bob Bryarly.

The Mass was held at Holy Family Church and celebrated by that parish's pastor, Rev. Greg Korenek; Msgr. Eustace Hermes concelebrated. Eddie Huse led the rosary prior to the Mass, and Jerry Uptmor led the music for the memorial ceremony.

The 4th Degree Knights from Calhoun County (Victoria Assembly 1126) celebrated a memorial Mass on September 25 for its deceased members: Emil Kurtz, Edwin Janecka Sr., Fred Jedlicka and John De La Cruz. The Mass was celebrated at Our Lady of the Gulf Parish by Father Bryan Heyer. Again, Faithful Navigator George Wenzel announced the presentations, while Faithful Captain Andrew Vasquez and Faithful Admiral Bob Bryarly assisted.

The 21st national annual appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious will be conducted in parishes on December 13-14.



NOTICE

Regarding Charitable Donations

Qualified Charitable Distributions for IRA Owners age 70 1/2 and older can donate tax free from their Traditional IRAs directly to a qualified charity.

Other important details regarding your Charitable Donation include:

- must be a direct IRA transfer to a qualified charity
- \$100,000 per person maximum
- can satisfy required minimum distribution
- this provision is available for distributions made through December 31, 2009



The Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court St. Ann #369 (Victoria), had a tie for Daughter of the Year; therefore, Sandra Genoway (l.), Daughter of 3rd Quarter, and Lillian Thurk (r.), Daughter of the 2nd Quarter, shared the honor of the 2008 Daughter of the Year Award. Regent Grace Brown (c.) presented the award.

Victoria KCs and CDAs hold Awards Banquet

On Tuesday, October 21, 2008, the Knights of Columbus, Council #1329, and the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court St. Ann #369, held an Awards Banquet at the KC Hall on Ben Jordan Street in Victoria, Texas.


The awards followed a social and meal prepared by fellow Knights and Catholic Daughters. The emcee for the evening was Chris Krejci. Rev. Celestino Say of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church led the invocation. The guest speaker was Rev. Stan DeBoe, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church. Deacon Dick Wearden led the benediction.

Special guests included the Knights of Columbus State Treasurer Jim Collins and Catholic Daughters of the Americas National Regent Libby Ramirez. Grand Knight Pete Moya presented the awards for the Knights of Columbus and Regent Grace Brown presented the awards for the Catholic Daughters of the Americas.

The Catholic Daughter of the Year award was shared by Lillian Thurk and Sandra Genoway, due to a tie. They were selected from the Catholic Daughters of the quarters: first quarter, Grace Brown; second quarter, Lillian Thurk; third quarter, Sandra Genoway; fourth quarter, Irene Brosch.

The KC Family of the year was selected from the KC families of the quarters: Jeremy and Anne Martin; Wayne and Joan Conaway; Charles and Margaret Kutchka; Harvey and Mary Haas. The KC family of the year was the Charles and Margaret Kutchka Family.

The KC member of the year, Chris Krejci, was selected from members of the quarters: Loran Hackbarth, Stanley Stryk, Gary Rangnow and Chris Krejci. (The Knights were pictured in the November issue of *The Catholic Lighthouse*.)



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Seminary Burses

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

As of November 24, 2008

	TOTALS
— General Seminary Burse	
Previously reported	\$92,909.00
In memory of Alma B. Brosch by M/M Bob Bochat	<u>25.00</u>
Total	\$92,934.00

— Rev. John C. Bily Seminary Burse	
Previously reported	\$7,434.00
In memory of William J. Henke, 86th birthday by M/M Franklin Addicks	<u>25.00</u>
In honor of Annie Henneke's 86th birthday by M/M Franklin Addicks	<u>25.00</u>
Total	\$7,484.00

— Catholic Daughters Court of St. Ann #369 Seminary Burse #2	
Previously reported	\$6,283.99
In memory of Helen Janca by M/M Benjamin Matus	<u>10.00</u>
Total	\$6,293.99

— Rev. Sean Donohue Seminary Burse #2	
Previously reported	\$4,074.36
In memory of Vlasta Kovar by Bernard & Madeline Rother	<u>25.00</u>
Total	\$4,099.36

— Knights of Columbus Victoria Council #1329 Seminary Burse #3	
Previously reported	\$8,107.50
In memory of Herbert Schoener Sr. by K of C #1329	<u>100.00</u>
Total	\$8,207.50

— Knights of Columbus Holy Family Victoria Council #9088 Seminary Burse	
Previously reported	\$520.00
Donation from KC Holy Family Council #9088	<u>200.00</u>
Total	\$720.00

— Rev. John C. Peters Seminary Burse #4	
Previously reported	\$3,544.00
In honor of Fr. John Peters' 60th birthday by: Daniel and Dorothy Rother	<u>10.00</u>
Robert and Leona R. Steffek	<u>60.00</u>
Hunnie and Sylvia Steffek	<u>20.00</u>
Richard and Wilma Schaefer	<u>20.00</u>
Total	\$3,654.00

— Rev. Msgr. Stanley Petru Burse	
To honor Msgr. Stanley Petru's 60th Anniversary of ordination by Sherry Hale	<u>\$25.00</u>
Total	\$25.00

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 BURSES
DIOCESE OF VICTORIA
P. O. BOX 4070
VICTORIA, TX 77903

Thank you to parishioners and KJT members

EL CAMPO—KJT Society # 84 in El Campo held a Benefit Bake Sale Fund-raiser Nov. 22 and 23, 2008, after the Masses in the front of St. Philip Church in El Campo. The Bake Sale benefited the KJT Priest & Religious Retirement Fund and also St. Philip's Catholic School. Members donated various home baked items as well as monetary donations. The bake sale was able to raise over \$700.00 to go to these two worthy causes. Thanks to the parishioners of St. Philip's, as well as members of El Campo Society # 84, for making this project a great success.

parishioners of the following parishes to randomly draw the name of a priest serving in the Victoria Diocese and to remember him in their prayers for a year. Your name was included in that drawing. We appreciate all you do for the Church and for us as individuals. May God continue to bless you and your ministry, Serra Club of the Diocese of Victoria Northwest."

The participating parishes included: Ascension of Our Lord, Moravia; Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Praha; Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, High Hill; Queen of Peace, Sweet Home; Sacred Heart, Flatonia; Sacred Heart, Hallettsville; St. Ann, Hochheim; Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Cistern; Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Dubina; Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Shiner; St. John the Baptist, Ammannsville; St. John the Baptist, Koerth; St. John the Baptist, St. John; St. Joseph, Yoakum; St. Mary, Hallettsville; St. Michael, Weimar; St. Rose of Lima, Schulenburg; and St. Wenceslaus, Holman.

Joe Ramos' journey to the diaconate

Joe and Letisia Ramos are members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Bay City. They have one beautiful daughter, Stephanie, who is 16 years of age and is in the 11th grade. Joe will be consecrated a permanent deacon in 2009. These are Joe's answers to an interview with *The Catholic Lighthouse* in November 2008.

When did you first think about becoming a deacon for the church?

I have had the desire to serve the Church ever since I was 17 years old.

What caused you to think you might want to be a deacon?

I felt this continuous desire of serving God and I felt I needed to look into it.

How did you hear/feel God's calling to you to become a deacon?

I was actually told by a few parishioners when I was a young man that I should be a priest. I actually went to some "come and see experiences" but I never looked into it more deeply.

How did you go about looking further into the possibility of becoming a deacon? Who did you contact? Or did you read up on the duties of a deacon first and then contact someone?

As I remember our Deacon Luan Tran asked me if I had ever considered the diaconate. I told him that I had always felt God was calling me to serve him. I must admit that Deacon Tran asked me a second time before I actually responded. I then contacted Father Gabriel Maison, director of the Diaconate Formation for the Diocese of Victoria. After applying, Father Gabriel sent me an invitation to "come and see."

How has Father Gabriel helped you?

Father Gabriel has helped me in so many ways. He has helped me by encouraging me not to be afraid — that we all are a bit afraid at first but we still have to go forward and get our feet wet.

Father Gabriel can be tough, but he does it because he wants us to do the best that we can. I can see for myself that it is his challenging us that is making us grow into better persons. I too have experienced this man's beautiful heart as I had a personal situation that I was dealing with and he was right there for me, and for that I am so grateful to him.

What were your spouse's first thoughts/words when you told her of your interest?

My wife, Letisia, told me she was happy I was doing this and she knew I always wanted to serve God in some way. She said she would support me in this all

the way.

What have been some of the greatest joys of the journey?

One of the greatest joys for me is having my wife coming along on this journey with me. Holy Mother Church and Father Gabriel are so wise in allowing the wives to be involved. I know that without my wife, I could not have come this far or done this. I'm telling you, God knows what he does! My other greatest joy is serving at the altar of God. Ever since I was instituted as an acolyte, I have enjoyed helping our wonderful pastor, Father Gerry Cernoch.

What have been some of the most difficult times of your journey/schooling, etc.?

While it has been difficult to leave our daughter with relatives or friends while we are gone to our class most weekends, our daughter, Stephanie, has been very understanding and supportive of us. The academics at times can be hard, but we are learning so much about our faith. Even when we have several assignments due at the same time, with God's help and our doing our part, it always gets done and it always works out.

What are you looking forward to about your ordination?

I look forward to serving all of God's people. However, I come from a predominantly Hispanic parish and am able to speak Spanish fluently. I want to use this gift God has given me to minister to Spanish speaking people.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about the ministry of the diaconate?

I would advise them to pray about it first and discuss it with their parish priest. If they believe God may be calling them, they need to contact Father Gabriel Maison, director of the Diaconate for the Diocese of Victoria. I would tell them it is a tough program, but what you learn academically and spiritually is such a blessing. I feel this program, especially the spiritual formation classes with Michael Fonseca, our spiritual director, has helped me to get closer to God.

What is your profession/job? How has your journey/ministry affected your work?

I work for the city of Bay City as an animal control officer. I have been there for almost 17 years. I am trying to live the Christian life everywhere I go. I want to thank God, my employer and supervisors because they have been so supportive throughout my five-year journey.

See Joe Ramos' journey, p. 8



Joe and Letisia Ramos

Thank You

Your Excellency,

I am writing to inform you that the sum of \$23,764.06 which you sent to the Apostolic Nunciature as the 2008 Peter's Pence offering from the Diocese of Victoria has been duly transmitted to the Holy See.

His Holiness deeply appreciates this support for the works of his ministry. He knows that it reflects your people's communion with the Successor of Peter, and he asks God to reward you with the gifts of his love.

Praying that Almighty God will grant joy and peace to you and to all those entrusted to your pastoral care, the Holy Father cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing.

With personal good wishes, I remain
Yours, sincerely in Christ,
+ Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone
Vatican Secretary of State

Have you Prayed for a Priest Today?

HALLETTSVILLE—The Serra Club of the Diocese of Victoria Northwest is sponsoring a program in which parishioners in 18 parishes will pray for a particular priest for a year. Parishioners chose "their" priest on Priesthood Sunday, Oct. 26, 2008.

Serra USA designates the last Sunday in October as a time to especially express our appreciation to our priests for all they do for us.

At each of the 18 parishes in the northern part of the diocese, names of all the priests in the Diocese of Victoria were placed in a basket in which parishioners drew one name.

So each priest in the diocese will have a dozen to over 100 parishioners praying for them for the next year.

All the priests in the diocese were sent notes telling them of the program and thanking them for all they do. The letter sent to each of them said: "In the celebration of Priesthood Sunday, the Hallettsville area Serra Club (with the approval of Bishop David Fellhauer) has asked the

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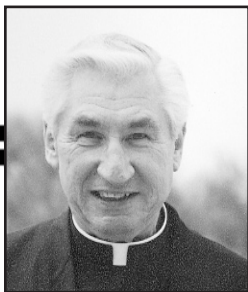
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FAITH POINT

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

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



Christmas in October

October 19-31, 2008, twenty-nine of us made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We entered Israel at Tel Aviv and we toured the church of St. Peter at nearby Jaffa (Joppa); at Jaffa, Peter raised Tabitha from the dead (see Acts 9:36-42). From there we traveled to Caesarea on the Mediterranean where we toured the remains of Herod's city built in a typical grand manner. It boasted a hippodrome, Roman baths, theater, a miles-long aqueduct, and spacious palaces. We celebrated Mass at the Stella Maris church in Haifa and continued top Mount Carmel monastery of Elijah the prophet and saw the cave where he sometimes dwelt. It was here that Elijah won a contest with 450 prophets of Baal to determine which deity, Yahweh or Baal, would send fire from heaven to consume a sacrifice. Yahweh of course won and the 450 prophets of Baal were slaughtered for being false prophets. There is a view from here of the Valley of Jezreel better known as the Valley of Armageddon.

We drove north through the Golan Heights and at Caesarea Philippi we visited the shrine of the god Pan. Then to Capernaum where we saw a 3rd century synagogue and excavations of what had been Simon Peter's home. We offered Mass at the Mount of the Beatitudes and visited the octagonal church there. We saw the mosaic floors of the Church of the Multiplication at Tabgha where Jesus fed 5,000 men with a few loaves and fish. We then visited the church of Peter's Primacy where Peter declared that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God." We inspected a 2,000 year-old boat at Kibbutz Ginosar and then rode a modern replica of the boat, dubbed the "Jesus boat," to Tiberias.

The next day we visited Mount Tabor, the traditional site of the Transfiguration, and offered Mass there. From there we went to Nazareth to visit the magnificent basilica of the Annunciation and a nearby church, which was allegedly St. Joseph's workshop. From there we went to Cana where Jesus changed water into wine at a wedding feast, and there five of the married couples in our group renewed their wedding vows and celebrated with baklava and wine.

We next went to excavations at Beth Shean, a Roman city, dating back to the time of King Saul, the first Israelite king. After that archaeological site we crossed the Jordanian border to visit Mount Nebo from which Moses viewed the Promised Land that he was not allowed to enter and Petra, one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. Petra was a Nabataean city in an unlikely place in the desert. It thrived because it was a crossroads for spice caravans that came from as far away as India and China. The outstanding feature of this city is the funerary monuments, which were made to look like normal structures but were actually carved out of the sandstone mountains. We crossed back into Israel at Eilat, a port city, and visited the Under Sea Observatory and saw the colorful coral and fish of the Red Sea. We drove to Timna Park, site of King Solomon Copper Mines, which were actually first exploited by Egyptian miners. The place also has Solomon's Columns, huge columnar stone formations, with which Solomon had no connection but were so named because they reminded people of the columns that Solomon erected in the temple. We spent the night at Ein Bokek on the Dead Sea and swam in the waters

of the Dead Sea, which have such a high concentration of salt and other chemicals that the human body cannot sink in its waters.

The following day we visited a Bedouin camp where we rode camels and ate barbecue as part of Middle Eastern hospitality called "hafla."

Masada was next on the list. It was a mountain fortress built by Herod as a place of refuge in case of assassination attempts. Herod had reason to be paranoid because he was extremely cruel and was hated by the people. Although the mountain fortress was high above the surrounding valley it boasted Roman baths and all the luxuries of a ground level palace. It was the last holdout of about a thousand Jewish men, women and children, against Roman occupation. When the Romans built a ramp to the fortress and were going to breach its defenses the Jews committed suicide rather than submit to the Romans. The same day we toured Qumran, the site of the Essene community, a sort of strict monastic order, who were responsible for what are called the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls were found in nearby caves in 1947. The sect apparently hid them there when fleeing from the Roman occupation. The Essenes never returned and the scrolls, in ceramic jars, were found accidentally by a Bedouin shepherd boy. The scrolls have had an enormous impact on biblical scholarship. The Essenes had an Isaiah text that antedated Christ, which is substantially the same as the Masoretic text on which Isaiah is based today.

We can scarcely mention all the biblical sites we saw in Jerusalem. We followed the Via Dolorosa (Sorrowful Way) of the fourteen Stations of the Cross. We offered Mass in the Holy Sepulcher and saw the church of the Flagellation. We visited the Garden of Gethsemane and the Church of the Agony also known as the Church of All Nations. We visited the Hasmonai tunnels under the Western or Wailing Wall. On the Mount of Olives we visited the Pater Noster (Our Father) church where Jesus taught the Apostles the Lord's Prayer. We viewed the Dominus Flevit (The Lord Wept) church where Jesus wept because he foresaw the destruction of the city that he loved. We visited the church of St. Peter in Gallicantu (the Cock's Crow) and Mount

Zion, which is the site of the Dormition church where Mary is supposed to have departed from this world. Ephesus in Turkey also lays claim to this. We visited the Cenacle, or Upper Room, where the Last Supper took place. We traveled to Ein Karem and visited the church of John the Baptist and the church of the Visitation.

We visited Bethlehem where we offered Mass. It was the Mass of Christmas and we sang Christmas carols, something that happens there every month of the year. We visited the nearby Shepherds Field and the chapel of the Angels.

On our last day we visited the Western or Wailing Wall, which is part of a retaining wall that Herod built for the temple that he reconstructed on Mount Zion.

Space allows only for the barest outline of our itinerary. However, readers can get more details from the pictures that I have posted on the Internet. To access them go to <http://www.fototime.com>. Find "Guest Login" and in the space provided type in didache@suddenlinkmail.com. Click on Go. Click on the first thumbnail photograph that appears to get a larger picture. To advance click on Next at the top of the picture. For an even larger picture click on the enlarged photograph. There are pictures of explanatory signs and maps and it may be necessary to enlarge the pictures a third time to read them. There will be a + sign in a small circle to designate the area you want enlarged. I hope that you are as impressed with them as were we pilgrims who were privileged to walk the land where Jesus trod.

Substitute Adorers Needed



St. Mary's Adoration Chapel in Victoria is always in need of substitutes. There is an opening for Fridays from 5:00-6:00 p.m. If you are willing to be an adorer or to fill in when an adorer needs a substitute, please call Cleo Boldt at 573-6161 or St. Mary's Rectory at 573-4328.

Scholarships for Catholic Laity Now Available

SAN ANTONIO — Catholic Life Insurance is currently accepting applications for the Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship from Catholic laymen and women pursuing graduate education in theology and church-related professions.

"Today many dedicated Catholics, who are not ordained clergy or women religious, serve parishes as Parish Coordinators or Administrators, as Pastoral Associates, Directors of Religious Education, Youth Ministers, Liturgists, and many other roles," said Msgr. Droll. "This scholarship can help provide the funds to earn the advanced educational degree in theology or religious studies that is often required for these positions."

The scholarship is open to students who are currently enrolled in Catholic graduate schools of theology or religious studies and who have already completed a bachelor's degree. The applicant, who does not have to be a Catholic Life member, must be a practicing Roman Catholic and must reside in one of the states in which Catholic Life operates which are Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, or Mississippi. The scholarship funds are paid directly to the

school where the student is enrolled. All applications must be received by Catholic Life no later than February 16, 2009.

To obtain an application and an outlined list of eligibility requirements, please call Catholic Life Insurance at (210) 828-9921 or 1-800-292-2548 or write to Catholic Life Insurance, attn: Communications Department, P.O. Box 659527, San Antonio, TX 78265-9527. Applications may also be downloaded from the company website at www.cliu.com. Winners will be announced in June 2009.

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

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Edward Jones, its employees and financial advisors are not estate planners and cannot provide tax or legal advice. You should contact a qualified tax or legal professional regarding your specific situation.

Date: December 16, 2008

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Place: Holy Family Auditorium - 704 Mallette Dr., Victoria, Texas 77904

RSVP: (361) 576-0178



Kenneth J.
French, Sr.
1501 E Mockingbird,
Ste 102
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MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING



Victoria Diocese members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem attend the Southwestern Lieutenancy and Investiture in Little Rock, Ark. Oct. 17-20. From left are Lady Jo Ann Bleier, LHS, and Sir Otto Bleier, KHS; Lady Joyce Morris, LGCHS; Lady Jo Ann Jalufka, LCHS; Sir Joseph Morris, KGCHS, and Daniel Jalufka, KCHS.

EOHSJ holds annual meeting

By Lady Joyce B. Morris, LGCHS

The Southwestern Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (EOHSJ) held their annual meeting and investiture in Little Rock, Arkansas, Oct. 17 – 20, 2008, at the Peabody Hotel with most functions at the Statehouse Convention Center adjoining The Peabody.

The fundamental purpose of the order is the preservation of the faith in the Holy Land. The EOHSJ relives in a modern manner the spirit and ideal of the crusades, with the arms of faith, of the Apollotale and of Christian Charity. It must provide spiritual, moral and material support to the Christians who still live in the Holy Land. There are many projects the order supports.

On Friday evening, a Travelers' Mass was said downtown at the beautifully refurbished Cathedral of Saint Andrew. The Mass and homily were said by Rev. Msgr. J. Gaston Hebert, KCHS. Following the Mass, some members attended a reception-dinner at the Clinton Presidential Center.

On Saturday morning, an orientation for investees and members was held in the convention center. In the afternoon, the Memorial Mass, conferring of promotions and Vigil Service were held at the Statehouse Convention Center. Lady Audre S. Morrison, of the Diocese of Victoria, was promoted to Lady Grand Cross Holy Sepulchre (LGCHS).

The principal celebrant and homilist was His Excellency The Most Rev. Anthony B. Taylor, bishop of Little Rock. Concelebrants were the The Most Rev. Eusebius Beltran, KC*HS, archbishop of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, bishops, abbots and priests of the order. Honored guests were His Excellency Dennis J. Looney Jr. KGCHS, member of the Grand Magisterium, and his wife, Lady Marie M. Looney, LGCHS. His Excellency Dennis M. Malloy, KGCHS, Lieutenant, Southwestern USA presided.

A reception and black-tie dinner was held in the foyer and ballroom of The Peabody Hotel Saturday evening. Benediction followed the dinner in the Statehouse Convention Center with an all night Adoration Chapel in the Manning Room of the hotel, ending at 7 a.m. Sunday morning.

On Sunday morning the S.W. Lieutenancy Annual Meeting was held and reports were read. Members heard from His Excellency Dennis J. Looney Jr., KGCHS; Msgr. Robert L. Stern KC*HS, president of Pontifical Mission for Palestine; and other speakers.

The Mass and Ceremony of Investi-

ture was held on Sunday, Oct. 19, at the convention center. The principal celebrant and homilist was His Excellency The Most Rev. Eusebius J. Beltran, KC*HS, archbishop of Oklahoma. Concelebrants were the Most Rev. Michael J. Sheehan, KC*HS, archbishop of Santa Fe, other bishops, abbots and priests of the order. Rev. C. Don Greenway, KC*HS, was the deacon for the Mass. His Excellency Dennis Malloy, KGCHS, Lieutenant presided. Honored guests were Lady Virginia W. Malloy, LGCHS, His Excellency Dennis J. Looney Jr., KGCHS, member of the Grand Magisterium and his wife, Lady Marie Looney, LGCHS, and officers and members of the council. The general chairpersons were Lady Mary Claire Bowen, LC*HS, and Lady Lauraetta M. Edgar, LGCHS. There were no investees from the Diocese of Victoria.

The Masses and ceremonies had beautiful music and were very inspiring.

A reception and white-tie dinner was held on Sunday night for members and spouses. It was held in the foyer and ballroom of the Peabody Hotel. Speakers included Brother David Carol, FSC, Ph.D., KGCHS, of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. The convention closed with a Travelers' Mass at the convention center Monday morning.

Attending from the Diocese of Victoria were Sir Joseph J. Morris, KGCHS; Lady Joyce B. Morris, LGCHS; Sir Daniel Jalufka, KCHS; Lady Jo Ann Jalufka, LCHS; Sir Otto N. Bleier, KHS; and Lady Jo Ann Bleier, LHS.

The next Annual Meeting and Investiture will be in Houston, October 16 – 19, 2009 at the Hilton Americas.

National Migration Week — January 4-10

WASHINGTON—The Catholic Church in the United States will celebrate National Migration Week on January 4-10, 2009.

This year's theme, Renewing Hope, Seeking Justice, "reminds us of our obligation to bring hope to the hopeless and to seek justice for those who are easily exploited," said Bishop John C. Wester of Salt Lake City, chair of the USCCB Committee on Migration.

Individuals, families, schools and parishes need opportunities like National Migration Week to learn the realities about newcomers entering their communities," said Todd Scribner, education coordinator for the Migration and Refugee Services of the USCCB.

Resources can be found at the USCCB Web site: <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/nmw.shtml>.

New Law Promotes Marriage Education Classes

Couples Who Complete Courses Can Waive Marriage License Fee, Waiting Period

AUSTIN - The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is spreading the word about a new state law that was made effective on Sept. 1. It encourages couples to attend marriage education classes before taking the plunge. Couples who complete the skills-based course will pay less for their marriage license.

House Bill 2685 increases the marriage license fee to \$60. However, the fee will be waived for couples who complete a free, eight-hour, community-based, premarital class, and those couples can forgo the 72-hour waiting period to get married. Counties may continue to charge up to \$12 in local fees for a marriage license.

HHSC has contracts with community-based organizations that are working to build a network of classes across the state that meet the requirements for the marriage license discount.

The state's initiative, called "Together in Texas," promotes marriage education classes that provide eight hours of training on communication skills, conflict resolution and other elements of a healthy marriage. Couples can find classes in their area by calling 2-1-1.

The Catholic Engaged Encounter, provided by the Diocese of Victoria, is an approved form of marriage education. The weekend-long marriage preparation, which includes meals and lodging, is held at the Spiritual Renewal Center, and there is a fee. Couples completing a C. E. Weekend will receive the state-issued certificate required to waive the \$60 mar-

riage license fee.

Any couples wishing to be married in a Catholic Church in the Diocese of Victoria must complete an Engaged Encounter Weekend; the community-based, premarital class is not sufficient preparation for a sacramental marriage in the Diocese of Victoria.

As of Sept. 1, couples who complete the approved marriage preparation class will receive a certificate that they can take to their county clerk when they apply for their marriage license. The certificate is good for one year and serves as proof that the couple is eligible for the discounted marriage license fee.

Upcoming dates for the Diocese of Victoria Engaged Encounter are February 6 – 8, March 13 – 15, April 24 – 26, June 26 – 28, September 11 – 13 and November 20 – 22.

For more information on C. E. E., contact your parish priest.

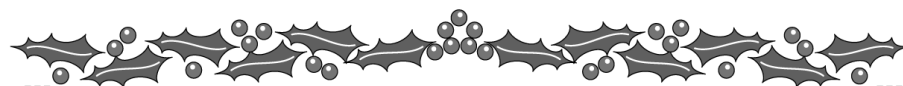
Youth Minister Position Available

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Victoria seeks a highly motivated and energetic full-time youth minister. Responsibilities include but are not limited to: Faith formation; Youth/adult leadership development; Youth-oriented liturgies; Social and service ministries; and planning at least one retreat per year. Requirements include: A degree in Theology, pastoral studies or at least 3 years experience in youth ministry; Bilingual in English/Spanish is recommended; must possess great communications skills, relational and organizational skills. Must be practicing and committed to the faith and traditions of the Catholic Church. Salary is negotiable, includes health benefits and paid vacation time. Please submit resumes, your vision of YM or questions to Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, Attn: YM Search Committee, 208 W. River, Victoria, TX 77901; (Phone) 361-575-2293; (E-mail) frstan@ourladyssorrows.org. *Job opening subject to close at anytime.

"Come and See" Weekend

The Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Sisters are hosting a "Come and See" Weekend on January 10-11, 2009, for single Catholic women between the ages of 18 and 50 years of age who want to know more about Religious Sisters and their way of life at Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria, Texas.

If you are interested, you may check them out at www.iwbsvictoria.org or call (361) 575-7111 or e-mail iwbsvoc@yahoo.com for more details.



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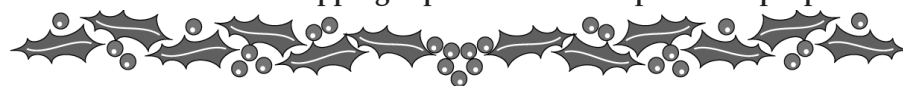
Child's Guitar 30" – Assorted Colors	\$39.95
Youth Guitar 34" – Assorted Colors	\$59.95
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Snare Drum w/ stand and sticks	\$129.95
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3-Row Button Accordians	\$349.95
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Diocese of Victoria Publishes Sixth Edition of “Disciples on the Journey”

Beginning in the year 2000, the Diocese of Victoria participated in the PNCEA program *Disciples in Mission* for four years. The program was such a big success and so many people expressed a desire to continue to share faith around the Sunday readings during Lent that the Diocesan Catechetical Office decided to publish a Lenten lectionary book for small faith-sharing groups of adults, families, and teens. The first edition of *Disciples on the Journey*, published for Lent 2004 in both English and Spanish, was sold in the Victoria Diocese and in other parishes outside the diocese. Since then, *Disciples on the Journey* has been published every year with sales not only in the Victoria Diocese, but in parishes across the United States and Canada. In recent years, as many as 20,000 books have been sold annually.

This year the brochure for *Disciples on the Journey Lent 2009* was sent to every parish in the United States. A group of volunteers came to the chancery to help with the mailing of over 1600 sample books that were sent to diocesan offices and parishes in various dioceses. *Disciples on the Journey* continues to be a unique

Lenten resource since it is the only such book published for the three groups of adults, families, and teens.

Because Scripture is such a rich source of inspiration for prayer, reflection, and faith-sharing, a book such as *Disciples on the Journey* can be used year after year. We hear the same Scripture readings at the Sunday and weekday liturgies in different cycles; however, the powerful Word of God in Scripture can continue to inspire and enrich the faith life of each of us every time we read it. It has been said that the best way to meet Christ is to share faith. Also, sharing faith around the Sunday Scriptures can help make the Word of God come alive.

Bishop David Fellhauer has written a commentary for the book every year. Other commentaries have been written by various clergy from the Victoria Diocese. Bishop Fellhauer, Monsignor James Brunner, and Father Clement Quainoo have each written two commentaries for *Disciples on the Journey Lent 2009*. Sister Sara Ann Sharkey, O.P. from Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio wrote the commentaries for the three Scrutiny Sundays included in this year's book.

Lent is a special liturgical season for conversion and renewal. Everyone in the diocese is invited to participate in a faith-sharing group for Lent 2009 using *Disciples on the Journey*. Those who have been in a group before are invited to consider starting a new group of their own by inviting neighbors and friends to join. Those who have never participated are encouraged to consider joining a group in their parish this Lent.

For more information or to order books, call (361) 573-0828 or e-mail dj@victoriadiocese.org.



Bibles for Christmas

This Christmas, give a gift that will continue to give in ways that will reflect the love of our God. The New American Catholic Bible Personal Study Edition from Oxford University Press can make a wonderful Christmas gift to loved ones who are interested in reading and learning more about the Word of God. The Office of Catechetical Ministry has copies available for \$35.00. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday. Call 361-573-0828 for more information.

Heritage Center / Pathways with Patti

Nova Scotia — July 6-14-09
Featuring a Whale Watch & Military Tattoo

Grand Mediterranean Cruise
Oct. 15-27-09 – Carnival Dream
Italy, Croatia, Sicily, Spain and Morocco

Galveston to Bahamas
2 inside cabins & 1 Balcony
available on May 17-24-09 – Carnival Conquest

??Coming in March??
Mystery Tour
Call 361.552.2695 or
361.920.3216

Diocese of Victoria Library & Media Center



Books, Videos, & DVDs

As Catholics the Advent and Christmas season is a time for individuals and families to prepare their hearts and minds for the coming of Jesus the Christ into our world. The following items may be helpful to you during this season of great anticipation, hope, and rejoicing.

Videos / DVDs

- An Advent & Christmas Journey
- Advent with Saint Nicholas
- The Legend of the Candy Cane
- The Little Brown Burro
- Preparing for Christmas
- The First Christmas Crib
- The Angel's Advent Lesson
- A Star of Jeremy
- Timmy's Gift
- The Songs of Christmas

Books

- Advent is for Children
- Starlight: Beholding the Christmas Miracle
- Biblical Meditations for Advent & Christmas
- The ABC's of Christmas
- Christmas
- Can You Find Bible Heroes?

Go to www.victoriadiocese.org to browse our on-line library catalog, or for more information, email calvarez@victoriadiocese.org.

DIOCESE OF VICTORIA PASTORAL INSTITUTE

Continuing Adult Faith Enrichment

Scripture Classes to Continue On-line and In-person

Psalms and Wisdom

“He set me free in the open; he rescued me because he loves me.” Psalms 18:20

January 6 - February 10, 2009

Sister Digna Vela, IWBS, will continue to teach Scripture classes for the Diocese of Victoria Pastoral Institute at the chancery in Victoria and at Holy Rosary in Hostyn via distant learning.

The class will look at the post exilic period. The Books of Psalms and Wisdom includes the period of rebuilding after the Babylonian Exile and the prophets during this time. The course will examine the Book of Psalms, Israel's prayer book, as well as the Wisdom literature of Israel which includes the Book of Job.

Classes will be offered on Tuesdays from 9:15 to 11:30 a.m. and from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. Registration is \$15. Bibles are available for \$35. For more information call (361) 573-0828 ext. 24 or visit www.victoriadiocese.org

Diocese of Victoria 2nd Annual Catholic Knowledge Bowl

Are you looking for a way to have fun, learn more about your faith, and possibly be a winner? If so, the second annual Catholic Knowledge Bowl is for you!!!

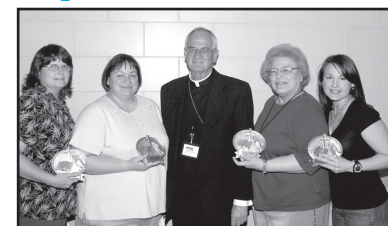
Date: Sunday, January 25, 2009

Time 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Place: Holy Family, Victoria

Who can participate?

All persons interested in forming a team of four can register. Clergy, religious, chancery staff, and KB committee member are not eligible to be on a team.



2008 1st Place Winners

Registration

Register online at www.victoriadiocese.org or call (361) 573-0828

Adult teams can include parishioners, catechists, members of the KCs, CDA, ACTS groups, etc.

Teen teams can include youth group members, school friends, etc.

Family teams can include youth group members, school friends, etc.

FUN, FOOD, FRIENDS, PRIZES, and much more...

Registration fee: \$20 per team

Registration deadline: January 16, 2009

Study questions can be downloaded from www.victoriadiocese.org.

Prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in each of the three divisions will be awarded.

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.



PASO-A-PASO CONTINUES TO WALK—El Campo's St. Robert Catholic Daughters #2275 team, "Paso-A-Paso," participated in the Wharton County Relay for Life, an event that raises funds for cancer education, research and awareness. The team members have participated in Relay for Life since 1999. They strongly believe the walk is not over until a cure for cancer is found. Their team raised \$1,500 this year. Members are from left (4th row): Amanda Cordova (support), Johnny Molina (survivor), Christian Cordova (support); (3rd row): Adelma Martinez, Lorine Molina, Mary Cantu, Nora Molina, Helen Escobar, Eddie Cantu, Abel Dominguez (support); (2nd row): Wanda Martinez, Ellie Garcia, Annie Munoz, Eloisa Cantu, Carmen Dominguez, Vicky Limas; (1st row): Hailey Flores (mascot/support), Elma Escobar (captain). Team members not pictured are Ellie Diaz Cedillo and Jennifer Limas. Cancer survivors adopted by the team were Clara Baker, Johnny Molina, Sophie Nunez and Gabriel Trevino.



NATIONAL PUBLIC SQUARE ROSARY RALLY—The St. Anne Society of St. Mary Parish at High Hill prayed the rosary Oct. 11 in union with the National Public Square Rosary Rally. More than 30 members of the society prayed the rosary for our nation at the gazebo in downtown Schulenburg.

Cardinal George Voices Hope for Obama Administration, Points to Possible Obstacles to Our Desired Unity

Continued from p. 1

consent precautions would be outlawed, as would be laws banning procedures such as partial-birth abortion and protecting infants born alive after a failed abortion. Abortion clinics would be deregulated. The Hyde Amendment restricting the federal funding of abortions would be abrogated. FOCA would have lethal consequences for prenatal human life.

FOCA would have an equally destructive effect on the freedom of conscience of doctors, nurses and health care workers whose personal convictions do not permit them to cooperate in the private killing of unborn children. It would threaten Catholic health care institutions and Catholic Charities. It would be an evil law that would further divide our country, and the Church should be intent on opposing evil.

On this issue, the legal protection of the unborn, the bishops are of one mind with Catholics and others of good will. They are also pastors who have listened to women whose lives have been diminished because they believed they had no choice but to abort a baby. Abortion is a medical procedure that kills, and the psychological and spiritual consequences are written in the sorrow and depression of many women and men. The bishops are single-minded because they are, first of all, single-hearted.

The recent election was principally decided out of concern for the economy, for the loss of jobs and homes and financial security for families, here and around the

world. If the election is misinterpreted ideologically as a referendum on abortion, the unity desired by President-elect Obama and all Americans at this moment of crisis will be impossible to achieve. Abortion kills not only unborn children; it destroys constitutional order and the common good, which is assured only when the life of every human being is legally protected. Aggressively pro-abortion policies, legislation and executive orders will permanently alienate tens of millions of Americans and would be seen by many as an attack on the free exercise of their religion.

This statement is written at the request and direction of all the bishops, who also want to thank all those in politics who work with good will to protect the lives of the most vulnerable among us. Those in public life do so, sometimes, at the cost of great sacrifice to themselves and their families; and we are grateful. We express again our great desire to work with all those who cherish the common good of our nation. The common good is not the sum total of individual desires and interests; it is achieved in the working out of a common life based upon good reason and good will for all.

Our prayers accompany President-elect Obama and his family and those who are cooperating with him to assure a smooth transition in government. Many issues demand immediate attention on the part of our elected "watchman" (Psalm 127), May God bless him and our country.

One day at a time ~ a deacon's journey with diabetes, from dialysis to transplant

Continued from p. 20

kidney, I'd get a call," he said. "It's God's plan. You can't question the good, you can't question the bad."

He said he was comfortable with the fact that he had diabetes, "But I wanted to get off dialysis," he said. "But if it wasn't in God's plan, then that's fine with us."

It must have been in God's plans. The surgery was a success!

The new kidneys were working fine, and he was released from the hospital.

But the diabetes began acting up. He was suffering from a high acid rate – acidosis. A couple of days after he came home from the hospital in San Antonio, he was sent to DeTar Hospital; then home again, then back to DeTar and then ambulated to San Antonio. This went on for about a month before the acid leveled.

Jim says now he's a thousand times

better than after the surgery; he's just a bit weak, but he gets to feeling better each day.

"I'd like to say our faith has been there all along; all the waiting only increased it," Laurie said. You can't do anything about it; you don't have enough energy to do anything about it."

"We had a lot of Sisters praying for us," Laurie said, "not just the sisters, but people all over the diocese; people we didn't even know."

"The people who worked on the benefit amazed me; that's what increased my faith," Laurie said. "And people still call and ask what they can do."

Jim still has diabetes, and he gives himself four insulin shots a day, but of the surgery he says, "Oh, it's a miracle definitely! Life is a miracle; it's a huge gift."

Diabetes

A startling report released in June by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that almost 24 million Americans have diabetes, one-fourth of whom do not know it. In Texas, 1.3 million adults have been diagnosed with diabetes, and an estimated 418,000 are believed to have undiagnosed diabetes, says the Texas Diabetes Council.

Worse, in 2005 24% of all Texans diagnosed with diabetes reported that they could not get medical care for their condition due to the cost, and at least 18% of diabetics in Texas lack health care coverage. Lifetime health care costs for someone with diabetes average 2.4 times higher than for a person without diabetes.

Diabetes is a group of diseases marked by high levels of blood glucose resulting from defects in insulin production, insulin action, or both. Diabetes can lead to serious complications—like cardiovascular disease, vision loss, kidney disease, nerve damage and premature death. But 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity, combined with a 5-10% reduction in body weight, can produce a 58% reduction in diabetes, according to the Diabetes Prevention Program.

Most people with diabetes have Type 2, which was previously called adult-onset diabetes. In the past, Type 2 diabetes was diagnosed primarily in people over age 45. But now—due to an increasing trend of overweight and obesity—more young people have the disease.

Type 1 diabetes (previously called juvenile diabetes), is usually diagnosed in children, but can be found in adults. In Type 1, the body can't produce insulin, the hormone needed to convert sugar into starches and other materials the body needs. Although treatable, this form of the disease increases risks of heart disease, blindness, nerve and kidney damage.

The June CDC announcement also revealed that an additional 57 million Americans have prediabetes—which

occurs when blood glucose levels are elevated but not high enough to warrant a diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes. People with pre-diabetes are more likely to develop diabetes within 10 years and are at higher risk for heart attack or stroke.

In 2006, the state of Texas spent \$11 million on special treatments for diabetes care and just \$3.1 million on outreach programs and diabetes prevention initiatives.

Your doctor can order a blood test to check your blood glucose (sugar) levels. If you don't have a family physician, contact your local hospital to find out if they will be doing health fairs or screenings, or call the American Diabetes Association (see below) and ask how you might obtain such a test in your community.

Watch for future Mind, Body and Spirit columns on healthy lifestyles, chronic disease prevention, and health care advocacy from the Catholic Health Association of Texas or visit www.chatexas.org.

For further information on diabetes, prediabetes, and the prevention of these diseases, visit the American Diabetes Association at <http://www.diabetes.org/about-diabetes.jsp> or call 1-800-DIABETES. For Texas-specific information and programs focused on the prevention of diabetes, visit the Texas Diabetes Council at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/diabetes/default.shtm> or call (512) 458-7490.

"Mind, Body & Spirit" is a monthly offering about health matters presented by the Catholic Health Association of Texas and the Bishops' Subcommittee on Health Care.

To read about Deacon Jim Koenig's kidney transplant, please see page 20.

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National Catholic Rural Life Conference Bulletin

Periodic news items & alerts about rural life and environmental justice issues.

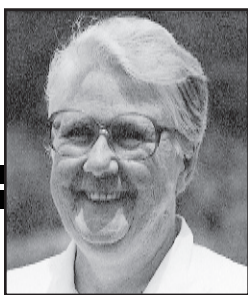
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Visit <http://www.ncrlc.com> and click into Weekly E-Bulletin for live links. You'll also see other items of interest under WHAT'S NEW.



SISTERLY THOUGHTS

By Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS



Call to Advent Action!

As we celebrate the hopeful season of Advent, let us reflect on the Life that has changed all lives and opened the gates to eternal life for all humanity. It is this Life that is the center of the Christmas celebration. A little Baby was lovingly welcomed into this life and was protected from the king who would have cut his life short. This Baby would grow up and become a source of physical healing and spiritual life.

Let us then celebrate his birth by promoting life – both the right to physical life and spiritual life – during this season of joyful anticipation. To begin, let us inform ourselves on current Church teaching and follow our bishops' directives regarding the "Culture of Life." If we have not already done so, let us check these out – with help from our bishops' letters and from our trusty "Catechism of the Catholic Church" – and let these directives guide us in our daily lives and in our public arenas as our new president takes the reins in the government of our country.

Whenever we see a failure to respect all stages of human life, let us speak up for the victims. Let us pray for those of our leaders who profess to be "Pro-Choice," that they may be inspired by our words and example to make legislative choices

for life. May the new national administration focus on the dignity of each of its present and future constituents; and let us be instrumental in helping to implement this Pro-Life focus.

May our Advent be a time of anticipating new life and protecting those who are vulnerable to the whims of those who make and follow misguided laws. Let us remember that God is the Creator and Master of Life and that as God's created beings, we witness to and defend God's laws and uphold the dignity of every one of our fellow human creatures.

Let us rejoice together as we celebrate that awesome moment in time when the Son of God assumed our human nature in order to lead us to His Father!



Christmas Blessings to All!

Nation Gets a "D"; Texas Receives "F"

WHITE PLAINS, NY—The United States is failing hundreds of thousands of its youngest citizens on the day they are born, according to the March of Dimes. Texas faces a crisis level of premature births that is driving up health care costs and special education budgets; preventive action is needed starting now.

In the first of what will be an annual Premature Birth Report Card, the nation received a "D" and not a single state earned an "A," when the March of Dimes compared actual preterm birth rates to the national Healthy People 2010 objective. The grade of "F" indicates how far Texas, with a preterm birth rate of 13.6, is from the Healthy People 2010 objective of 7.6 percent of all live births. Latest available data (2005) show that the national preterm birth rate is 12.7 percent.

The only state to earn a "B" was Vermont. Eight states earned a "C," 23 states earned a "D," and 18 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia got failing grades of "F."

In addition to providing state rankings, the March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card analyzes contributing factors and prevention opportunities, including rates of late preterm birth, smoking, and uninsured women of child-bearing age.

The Report Card offers four basic recommendations that can make a difference: federal support for more research; expanded access to healthcare coverage that includes smoking cessation programs; a voluntary review by hospitals of C-sections and inductions to ensure that professional guidelines are followed; and workplaces that support maternal and infant health.

November 12th marked the nation's 6th Annual Prematurity Awareness Day, a time when the March of Dimes mobilizes volunteers and parents to draw attention



COUPLE OF 14 CHILDREN CELEBRATES 60TH ANNIVERSARY—Bernie and Edna Bludau celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with their 13 children at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Hallettsville at a Mass offered for their intentions October 12, 2008. Bernie Bludau and Edna Klesel were married at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Schulenburg, Texas, October 11, 1948. The couple had 14 children; one of whom, Stephen, is deceased. All of their children attended Sacred Heart Elementary, and 13 of them graduated from Sacred Heart High School in Hallettsville. Sister Mary Jean, an Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Sister, attended convent high school at Nazareth Academy in Victoria. The Bludaus also have 13 grandchildren. Bernie is a carpenter and farmer, while Edna has been a homemaker; they continue to be involved in projects at Sacred Heart Church. Pictured with Edna and Bernie Bludau (front row, center) are their 13 children (front row l. to r.): Loretta (Wayne) Carpenter, parents, B.J. Bludau; 2nd row: Stan (Vanessa) Bludau, Bernice Bludau, Mary (Don) Mathis, Sr. Mary Jean Bludau, Debbie (Wayne) Wallace, Cindy (Lee) Otten; back row: Jennifer (John) Esteves, Gerrie (John) Daly, Doris (Dave) Chandler, Theresa (Johnny) Hunt and Scott Bludau. Father John Peters, the pastor of Sacred Heart, gave a special blessing to the couple after the Mass. The Bludaus and Father John Peters share a bit of history, as the same priest, Father Alois Goertz, who married the Bludaus, also baptized Father John the following weekend.

Joe Ramos' journey to the diaconate

Continued from p. 3

Any special thoughts? Stories?

I want to thank my parents for giving me the gift of faith. I remember my mom showing me how to make the sign of the cross when I was about three or four years old. Even though my mom spoke no English and had a limited education, she taught us the very best way that she knew how. I remember my dad always telling us how important it was to go to Mass. Our dad always spoke to us of the things of God. I remember my paternal grandmother always praying the rosary. I remember my maternal grandmother always had a little "altarcito" (altar) in her bedroom with little flowers made of Kleenex® tissue paper and in the middle she had a crucifix with a statue of Blessed Mother.

My parents and grandparents played an important part of who I am. I would also like to thank our pastor, Father Gerry Cernoch, who has helped me so much. He supports me wholeheartedly. I have gotten to know Father Gerry better in the last year, and he is such a good man and a very good priest. I know he would not want me to make a big fuss about him, but I have to say it with all of my heart that he is such a good example to all of us.

to premature birth (birth before 37 weeks gestation), which affects more than 530,000 babies each year in the United States. Premature birth is the leading cause of newborn death and a major cause of lifelong disability.

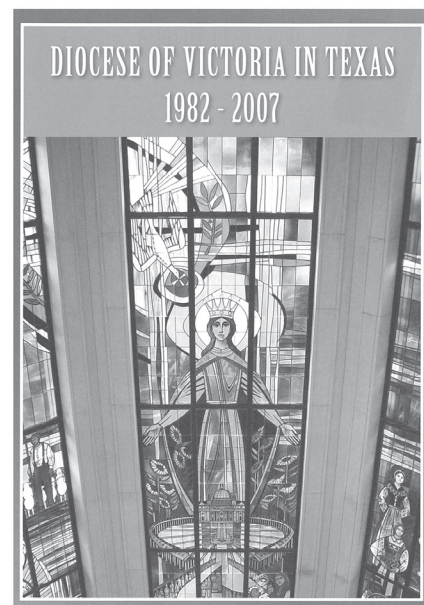
In this election year, the March of Dimes invites all Americans to help send a message to our new president and to federal and state lawmakers by signing the 2008 Petition for Preemies at marchofdimes.com/petition.

The purpose of the petition and the Report Card is to raise public awareness of the growing crisis of preterm birth, so elected and appointed officials will commit more resources to address this problem and policymakers will support development of strategies that benefit mothers and babies.

Preterm birth is the leading cause of death in the first month of life in the United States. The preterm birth rate has increased more than 20 percent since 1990 and costs the nation more than \$26 billion a year, according to the Institute of Medicine report issued in July 2006.

Babies who survive a premature birth face the risk of serious life-long health problems including learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, blindness, hearing loss, and other chronic conditions including asthma. Even infants born just a few weeks too soon have a greater risk of breathing problems, feeding difficulties, temperature instability (hypothermia), jaundice and delayed brain development.

The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. Its mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit www.marchofdimes.com or www.nacersano.org.



They're Here!!!! Diocese of Victoria History Book Available

The history of the diocese is the history of many of our families who were pioneers to this new nation. Many of them faced great hardships to arrive at this part of the world we now know as the Diocese of Victoria.

As the diocese observed the twenty-fifth anniversary (last year) of its establishment, it is great to recall the history which has brought many this far in the journey of faith, hope and love.

The history book is a 8 1/4" X 11 3/4" hard cover, 168 pages of glossy paper in full color throughout at the cost of \$32 each, \$35 if mailed. The books are available in most local parishes and at the chancery office.

The chancery is located at 1505 E. Mesquite Lane in Victoria.



NA students research Victoria County's proposed nuclear plant

Nazareth Academy students, Marian Howard and Charles Holloway, have created a four-minute video report on the proposed nuclear plant here in Victoria County.

The students' goal was to create an objective, non-biased report that addressed the major fears for the plant in order to aid the people of Victoria in making their own decisions as to whether to support the building of the plant or not.

Knowing that research of the topic beforehand is important in being able to ask intelligent questions during interviews, the students utilized the Victoria Advocate print edition; attended the Exelon community information meeting; took a trip to the site of the proposed nuclear plant; and researched the internet (SpeakUpVictoria.com, the Victoria Advocate Online, and the Exelon Web site). Marian and Charles then spoke to individuals who were both against and for the nuclear plant, including Mr. John Figer, spokesman for Texans

for a Sound Energy Policy, as well as Mr. Bill Harris, Exelon Community Outreach Manager.

In all, the students filmed close to two hours of footage that they had to edit down to four-minutes. Marian and Charles created the report due to the motivation of the YouTube/Pulitzer Organization's "Project: Report" competition. They had each previously entered the first round of the competition last month with their own video reports on local community members they felt the world needed to know about. Though they did not finish in the top 10, they were offered the opportunity to participate in Round 2 of the competition, which requires a 4-minute or less story about something happening in the local community that has a worldwide impact. Marian and Charles decided to tackle the issue of the proposed nuclear plant here in Victoria County. The report may be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCR7EegibUs>.

Youth Calendar of Events

January 4-9, 2009 — Head and Heart Immersion Course in Exton, Pa.

January 10-11, 2009 — Youth Leadership Retreat at the SRC, Victoria

January 17, 2009 — Youth Ministry Certificate Class — **Leadership Development - Planning and Programming**

February 1, 2009 — Youth Leadership Training, Holy Family, Victoria

February 15, 2009 — Youth Leadership Training, Chancery

February 22, 2009 — High School Spectacular, Holy Family, Victoria

February 24-27, 2009 — Region 10 Directors Meeting in Dallas

February 28, 2009 — Youth Ministry Certificate Class — **Prayer and Worship**

March 15, 2009 — Confirmation Retreat, location TBA

March 16, 2009 — Confirmation Retreat in Bay City

March 21, 2009 — Youth Ministry Certificate Class — **Justice and Service**

March 24, 2009 — Sharing Faith with Adolescents

March 29, 2009 — Confirmation Retreat, St. Michael in Cuero

April 18, 2009 — Youth Ministry Certificate Class — **Ethics and Crisis Management**

April 24, 2009 — Bishop Fellhauer Benefit Golf Tournament

April 26, 2009 — Youth Leadership Training, Chancery

May 2, 2009 — Youth Ministry Certificate Class — **Retreat Formation**

June 12-20, 2009 — Camp David

June 22 - 25, 2009 — Discipleship Week at the Spiritual Renewal Center

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

P-L-U-S message given at Junior High Fiesta

By Debbie Vanelli, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Pray, Learn, Unity, Serve (PLUS) — four things that all of us should be striving to do. This was the cusp of the enthusiastic message that Mike Patin brought to 300 junior-high youth at the recent Junior High Fiesta, which was sponsored by the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Diocese of Victoria.

Mike is a gifted speaker for people of all ages, but he has a special chemistry with junior-high young people. His witty humor and constant variation of activities kept the young people on their toes the entire day.

Mike has worked with teenagers and adults in a variety of settings, including as a high school teacher and as a diocesan youth

God through words and actions from the minute they stepped in the door.

The Youth Leadership Team of the diocese served as community-building

team leaders, prayer leaders and masters of ceremony for this annual event. Their dedication and enthusiasm encouraged complete participation of all of the participants.

The Knights of Columbus served a delicious hamburger cook-in for the crowd. The end of the day ended most appropriately with Mass. Celebrants for this Mass were Rev. Dan Morales, Rev. Donald Hayden, Rev. Greg Korenek, Msgr. Peter Agbenu, Rev. Michael Petering, Rev. Gary Janak, Rev. David Berger and Rev. Michael Rother.

(top) The Youth Leadership Team led the participants in a variety of activities.

(left) The attentive crowd hung on every word of Mike Patin's keynote presentation.

(bottom) Praise and Worship led by the Life Teen Band of Our Lady of Sorrows from Victoria had everyone on their feet.



ministry director, beginning in 1984. Since 2003, he has worked full-time as a speaker and "faith horticulturist."

He holds a master's degree in pastoral studies from Loyola University of the South in New Orleans. He also has received a certificate in youth ministry Studies from the Center for Ministry Development and a certificate of advanced studies in pastoral life and administration from Loyola University.

The young people were also treated to incredible praise and worship music by the Life Teen Music Ministry of Our Lady of Sorrows that had them praising

College Scholarships Now Available

SAN ANTONIO—Catholic Life Insurance, the nation's 8th largest fraternal life insurer, is now accepting applications for the 2009 All American Scholar Program from Catholic Life members who are graduating high school seniors.

Thirty non-renewable scholarships worth \$1000 each will be awarded to students whose academic achievement, leadership skills and community service set them apart from others. To be eligible, the applicant must be a graduating high school senior who is a Catholic Life Insurance member at the time of application. Winners will be announced in May 2009.

Interested individuals may call the Catholic Life Communications Department at (800) 292-2548 or (210) 828-9921 or visit the company web page at www.cliu.com for an application. All applications must be received in the home office by March 2, 2009.

Founded in 1901, Catholic Life Insurance offers life insurance, IRAs and retirement annuities to businesses and individuals living in Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Mississippi. For information on becoming a Catholic Life member, please visit the company Web site to locate a nearby agent.

'Don't water it down,' says young Catholic

LINTHICUM, Md. (CNS) — Megan Nappi didn't mince words as she sat in a circle with young adults from Baltimore and Washington, surrounded by some of the nation's leading adolescent catechesis experts during the four-day National Symposium on Adolescent Catechesis. Asked what advice she would give on teen faith formation, the University of Maryland student and member of Our Lady of the Fields Parish in Millersville told the 100 attendees there: "Don't water it down." The response drew audible gasps, and even applause, from the gathering of academics, educators, youth ministers, bishops, catechists and other leaders. The symposium, held Nov. 5-8 at the Maritime Institute and Conference Center in Linthicum, was a project of three national Catholic youth formation groups brought together in one organization called the Partnership for Adolescent Catechesis.



Knights of Columbus Council 2490 of El Campo receives the international Star Council Award from Supreme Knight Carl Anderson. Pictured are, l. to r., Billy Fuechec, financial secretary; Rev. Gary Janak, chaplain; Grand Knight A.J. Hlavaty; Keith Flynn, field agent; and Kenneth Trochta, district deputy 148.

Local Knights of Columbus Council Receives Top International Award

EL CAMPO—Knights of Columbus Council 2490 of El Campo has earned the distinction of Star Council, one of the organization's top awards, for the 2007-2008 fraternal year. The organization's headquarters, located in New Haven, Connecticut, made the announcement.

The award recognizes overall excellence in the areas of membership recruitment and retention, promotion of the fraternal insurance program and sponsorship of service-oriented activities. The award was presented to the membership by district deputy, Kenneth Trochta, at the monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 28.

In announcing the local winner of the Star Council Award, Carl A. Anderson, chief executive officer of the organization, said, "Please accept my sincere congratulations upon attaining this prestigious award. Your dedication to the order is seen in the high standard of excellence you have achieved. At the same time, I encourage you to carry forward this enthusiasm to

meet the challenges that will face the Knights of Columbus in the years ahead. May this award be a reminder and an inspiration to the members of your council to continue to promote the ideals of Columbianism for the good of the Church, your community and the order."

"Receiving the Star Council Award is quite an honor for KC Council 2490. We're extremely proud of this accomplishment," proclaimed Grand Knight A. J. Hlavaty, head of the local council.

The Knights of Columbus is the world's largest Catholic lay organization. It provides members and their families with volunteer opportunities in service to the Church, their communities, families and young people. With more than 1.7 million members in over 13,000 councils around the world, the Knights of Columbus annually donates more than \$144 million and 68 million hours of service to charitable causes.

Please visit www.kofc.org for more information.



ALL SAINTS COME TO SACRED HEART—Each year on November 1, the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of All Saints. It is a day to remember all the ordinary people, like us, who lived their lives according to God's commandments and the beatitudes that Jesus taught. True to his promise of raising the faithful to new life with him, these people now enjoy the happiness of heaven. They are models for us and can be our heroes. Students at Sacred Heart Catholic School celebrated this feast on Friday, October 31, the eve of All Saints' Day, with a special Mass planned by the fifth grade class. More than 30 students in grades two to five dressed like their patron saint or one of their favorite saints. They processed into church before Mass as the congregation prayed the Litany of Saints. As each student came forward, a fifth grade student led the congregation in praying to the saint who was represented. This helped all to recall many different saints and to picture how they looked. It was a profound reminder that we all belong to the Communion of Saints. Right now we are saints in the making so that one day, when God calls us home, we will be ready to join all the saints in glorifying God.

Chancery Office Holiday Schedule

The Chancery Office will be closed Dec. 23 at 11:30 a.m. through Jan. 2, 2009, for the Christmas and New Year Holidays. It will re-open on Jan. 5 at 8:30 a.m.



Nazareth Academy students paint murals on the school's cafeteria walls to help brighten Mrs. Emily Gomez' (cafeteria manager) and the NA students' lunch environment for "Make a Difference Day." Pictured above are Olivia Chapa, Kaley Bitterly and Clara Allen (inset).

NA Students Make a Difference

On "Make a Difference Day," Saturday, October 25, 2008, nine Nazareth Academy Jr. High students came together in service to transform their school's old cafeteria into "The Nazareth Academy Café."

One morning the cafeteria manager, Mrs. Emily Gomez, was overheard making a wish out loud. Mrs. Gomez said that she wished she could add some color and life to her cafeteria...to share with all of her students who enjoy lunch there each day.

So the students got together to make a big wish come true for her and painted murals of fresh nutritious foods from the food pyramid growing in a vegetable garden, as well as a large fruit tree that is home to a painting of a small hoot owl.

The students painted "Nazareth Academy Café" in bold red and black-stenciled lettering over the cafeteria food warmer station. In the back of the cafeteria, students painted their schools motto, "Jets 4 Jesus!" They also painted a beautiful portrait of a "Jet" flying close to the clock on the back wall.

As the paint dried, students removed the old, blue twin sheets that had been used as curtains in the cafeteria windows. Students cut out new curtains from red and off-white checkboard fabric and

sewed them with a sewing machine a student brought from home. Students hung the new curtains in each window of the cafeteria.

Mrs. Emily serves over 300 students a day in her cafeteria. The students painted murals and hung curtains, not only to add color and life to the "Nazareth Academy Café," but the murals serve as a positive example of where healthy food is grown and they will promote nutritious food choices for our present students and students in the future.

Nazareth Academy sent in their "Make a Difference Day" project to the Paul Newman Foundation, which originated "Make a Difference Day." Mr. Newman's foundation gives away \$100,000 each year for 10 projects that make a difference in the lives of others and would continue to benefit them in the future. If NA is selected, they have the opportunity to receive \$10,000 from the foundation. This is the 18th year for "Make A Difference Day."

The nine Jets 4 Jesus who served to "Make A Difference" were Clara Allen, Kaley Bitterly, Olivia Chapa, Katie DeGand, Shannessy Hall, Marian Howard, Shayla Marshall, Kimberly Parma and Kristin Sontheimer.



SACRED HEART SCHOOL HONORS LOVED ONES—Each year Sacred Heart School celebrates All Saints Day and All Souls Day by taking a trip to the Sacred Heart Cemetery in Hallettsville. Father John Peters, pastor of Sacred Heart Church, blesses the graves, and the students recite the rosary as a way of remembering those loved ones who have passed on. Before the rosary the students are given the opportunity to visit the graves of loved ones and friends.



Our Lady of Victory becomes a Blue Ribbon School

By Cynthia Brewer

Our Lady of Victory School celebrated its achievement of being named a nationally recognized 2008 Blue Ribbon School of Excellence on Friday, November 21, 2008. The school community, students, staff, parents and supporters attended an awards ceremony in the gym followed by a reception in the cafeteria.

The No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools Program is an award from the U.S. Department of Education that honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools that demonstrate academic excellence.

Our Lady of Victory School (OLV) is the first school in the city of Victoria to receive the Blue Ribbon School of Excellence distinction. For the Diocese of Victoria, it is the second school to receive this award – St. Michael's in Weimar was awarded it in 2006.

OLV qualified for the award by achieving in the top 10 percent of the country in math and reading on the nationally-normed Stanford Achievement Test. Only 50 private schools in the nation receive this award annually. Our Lady of Victory School is one of only four private schools in the state to receive the award.

"The Blue Ribbon program seeks not only to recognize outstanding schools, but to identify effective practices used to adapt teaching and learning that supports student achievement," said Sister Leonita Barron, IWBS, principal of OLV. "This great honor speaks of the dedication of our students, teachers, administrators and families."

Highlights of the ceremony included remarks by local dignitaries, a performance by the school choir and a special program by the student body. Mr. Robert Kovar, president of the School Advisory Council for OLV, was the emcee of the event welcoming and thanking all for their support and for being there for their celebration.

Bishop David E. Fellhauer opened the celebration with a prayer of thanks for the teachers and educators, especially the

Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Sisters, and asked for God's blessings on the diocese's teachers and students.

Principal Sister Leonita gave the open-

superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Victoria, and other dignitaries, including representatives of U.S. Congressman Ron Paul and Texas Represen-

B-B-O-N:" Brilliant, Language, Unique and Experience; and Religion, Involvement, Blessings, Basics, Opportunity and National.

The OLV choir, led by director Beth Waak, then sang two beautiful songs, "I Will Give You All My Worship" and "The Lord's Been Good to Me."

Msgr. Michael Harrold, pastor of Our Lady of Victory Cathedral, closed the morning celebration with a talk on the future of OLV School – what it could be in 2020 by using the "miracle of electronics." He wanted to focus on the future,

not the past, as OLV celebrated 50 years of existence this year.

All were invited to a reception in the school cafeteria following the morning activities.

For over 50 years, Our Lady of Victory School has had the tradition of academic excellence in a Christian environment. The school currently has 490 students in grades Pre-K 3 through 8th.



ing address stating, "It is my joy and pleasure to welcome you to our Blue Ribbon festivities. Words cannot express the gratitude I feel today for the many educators who have gone before me, those with whom I have worked over the years and those whose dedicated work continues today. Today belongs to our students, teachers and parents. ... We are a Blue Ribbon School because of you," she continued.

Mayor Will Armstrong, along with city council member Paul Polasek, proclaimed November 21, 2008, "Our Lady of Victory School National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence 2008 Day." Mr. John Quarry,



tative Geanie Morrison, congratulated OLV for its achievement.

Letters were also received from Texas Governor Rick Perry, State Senator Glenn Heger and the U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings.

The student body then performed a skit with each class calling out the meaning of each letter in the title of "B-L-U-E / R-I-

clockwise from top left: Mayor William Armstrong presents Principal Sister Leonita Barron, IWBS, with a proclamation; OLV student body performs a skit; the Blue Ribbon banner hangs in the school gym; Sister Leonita and Assistant Principal Dr. Linda Stuart with a cake at reception; and Sister Leonita and the student body sing the school song.



IWBS ASSOCIATES CONSECRATED—Nine IWBS associates were consecrated to the Incarnation on Sunday, November 16, 2008, at a Mass celebrated by Bishop David E. Fellhauer at the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Chapel in Victoria. The associates join the religious congregation in its mission of being an extension of the Incarnation of God's Son in the world today. The experiences of their formation have strengthened them in the conviction that the Lord is calling them to live the Gospel by following the charism of the IWBS congregation. Having completed their formation, the following made consecration as Associates of the Incarnation (front row, left to right): Margaret Molnoskey, Yoakum; Sylvia Kempinski, Edna; Kathleen Hanselka, Victoria; and Lillie Vecera, Yoakum; 2nd row: (Sister Emiliana Grafe, IWBS, Director of Associates); Claudia Ennis and Tracy Kutach of Yoakum; Elizabeth Corte, Victoria; and Theresa and Rudy Bordovsky of Yoakum. Bishop David Fellhauer, pictured second row, right, celebrated the Mass and presided at the associates' consecration.



PERPETUAL COMMITMENTS MADE TO THE INCARNATION—Eight women made the perpetual commitment as Associates of the Incarnate Word Sunday, November 16, 2008, at the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Chapel in Victoria. By the grace of the Holy Spirit and the support of Mary Immaculate, those making commitments as associates bind themselves more closely to the Church, to work toward building up the community of faith and love, and to be ministers of the Gospel and instruments of extending the Incarnation among all people. The following made their perpetual commitment (seated left to right): Margaret Bludau of Hallettsville, Eloise Tagliabue and Ruth Ann Boyd of Victoria and Emmerlin Dworsky of Hallettsville; (second row, left to right): (Sister Emiliana Grafe, IWBS, Director of Associates), Cheryl Benavidez of Victoria, Marcella Janak of Yoakum, Edith Molberg of El Campo and Willie Marie Kahlich of Cuero. Bishop David Fellhauer celebrated the Mass and presided at the consecrations.



Football collectors' item to be December Puzzle Contest Prize

Notre Dame Golden Moments ~ 20 Memorable Events That Shaped Notre Dame Football

The winner of the December Family Puzzle Contest will win *Notre Dame Golden Moments ~ 20 Memorable Events That Shaped Notre Dame Football*. Even if you don't watch football, surely there's a guy in your life who would love this book as a gift.

Written by John Walters, a 1988 Notre Dame graduate who has worked for Sports Illustrated for 13 years, *Notre Dame Golden Moments* will stir the hearts and enthusiasm of Notre Dame alumni and fans all over the country.

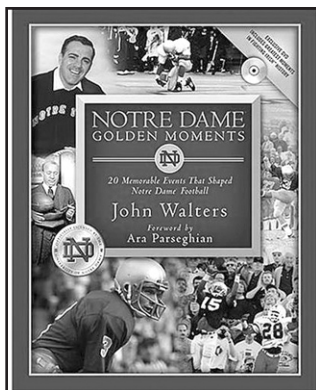
The book covers the "Top 20" games and events that have shaped the mystique of The Fighting Irish, as selected by a poll of Notre Dame fans. The book includes a 60-minute DVD that features game highlights, key plays, and dominant players who have helped build a loyal following from coast to coast.

The richness of Notre Dame's storied football tradition goes beyond national championships. There's more to it than Rockne, the Four Horsemen, the Gipper, Leahy, Holtz, the Rocket, and all the Heismans. The Fighting Irish football legacy never rests on its lore or laurels. Newly memorable chapters continue to write themselves. You never know when. The beauty of it is that memorable Notre Dame moments can occur on any given Saturday, even in the middle of otherwise lackluster seasons.

Other prominent college football programs have rightful claims to great teams of the past, legendary coaches, terrific rivalries and unforgettable heroes.

Notre Dame has all that, and arguably to a greater degree. It has the 18-13 victory over Ohio State in 1935, billed as

the Game of the Century. It has the 12-6 "Win One for the Gipper" knockoff of Army in 1928, the down-to-the-wire 31-30 triumph over Miami in 1988, Harry Oliver's 51-yard field goal as time ran out on Michigan in 1980, and Joe Montana's Cotton Bowl – served chicken soup for the soul against Houston in 1979. Even the ties have a cherished spot in Notre Dame history, starting with 0-0 versus Army in 1946 and 10-10 against Michigan State in 1966.



Notre Dame Golden Moments provides an exhilaratingly detailed and insightful account of the twenty most memorable moments in the school's football history, as voted on in 1999 by Notre Dame fans participating in the Century of Greatness program. This uniquely comprehensive book sets the stage for each

of these great moments, effectively taking the reader back to the week of each game and inside the locker room and huddle for events spanning eighty years. This book and accompanying 60-minute DVD offer a highlight-reel history of Notre Dame football, covering everything from Ara to Zorich. This is a keepsake to be treasured by Notre Dame football fans looking for a fresh take on all the stories behind the big games.

Notre Dame Golden Moments, celebrating the history and traditions of the Fighting Irish is written by John Walters and published by Rutledge Hill Press. Although it was printed in 2004, it can still be found for sale on the Internet; price is \$29.99.

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 December 22 for a chance to win this book. Send to: Family Contest, *The Catholic Lighthouse*, P.O. Box 4070, Victoria, TX 77903.

Tracing the traditions Angels and oxen: Tracing the traditions of Nativity sets

By Patricia Kasten

We're all used to seeing them this time of year: the infant Jesus in a crib, Mary and Joseph, angels, shepherds and farm animals. Nativity scenes date back to Bethlehem. But after that first Nativity, the world had to wait for 1,200 years to see it again.

In the ancient Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, there is no crib or manger. Only a silver star marks the place of Jesus' birth. (There is a stone feed trough nearby.)

In Rome, since the fifth century, the Basilica of St. Mary Major has had a Nativity grotto that contains five boards of sycamore wood of Middle Eastern origin. They are said to be the manger of Jesus. Since the fifth century, this grotto chapel has represented the cave at Bethlehem and, each Christmas morning, the pope says Mass there.

However, modern Nativity sets were started by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223. That year, the saint reproduced the Bethlehem scene at the Franciscan hermitage in Greccio, Italy. Francis hoped a living Nativity would bring people closer to his beloved Christ. So he built a stable complete with a manger and live animals,

including an ox and an ass. He hoped they would emphasize the poverty and humility of the Incarnation.

After Francis' death, three years later, his brother friars spread the manger scene custom across Europe. Their goal of a Nativity scene in every church met with success, and elaborate manger scenes became a matter of local pride in countless villages.

By the 18th century, making Nativity sets was a cottage industry, and places like Portugal and Italy became centers for the craft. The nobility began to compete over the size of their displays and Nativity sets in homes also became popular.

Kasten has been a Catholic journalist since 1985 and is currently associate editor of The Compass in Green Bay, Wis. She has a master's of theological studies degree from St. Norbert College in De Pere and advanced catechist standing with the Green Bay Diocese. She is also author of the Scripture Search puzzles, printed in several Catholic papers and many parish bulletins. She can be reached through www.tri-c-a-publications.com. © 2008 TRI-C-A Publications xwr

See p. 15 for story on St. Francis

CHRISTMAS

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L	M	Q	B	V	N	P	A	T	E	P	M	U	R	T
M	R	S	U	S	N	E	C	M	J	Y	R	H	D	W
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ANGELS
BETHLEHEM
CENSUS
DREAM
EMMANUEL

HEROD
HOLY FAMILY
JESUS
LUKE
MATTHEW

NOEL
PRESENTATION
TRUMPET
VIRGIN BIRTH
WISEMEN

Family Puzzle Contest Winners

Lillian Rabel of Sacred Heart Parish in Hallettsville is the November Family Puzzle Contest winner and has won "White Water, Bears, Dry Flies and other ways God Speaks to Guys" by Randall Cirner.

Because there were only two contestants in the youth contest, both Samantha Holub, 11, of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Schulenburg, and Scott Wenske, 8, of St. Joseph Parish in Moulton, will receive a gift from the Incarnate Word Gift Shop.

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 December 22 for a chance to win *Notre Dame Golden Moments* book and DVD (see review on this page). Send to: Family Contest, *The Catholic Lighthouse*, P.O. Box 4070, Victoria, TX 77903. Only youth need to include age.

The Counseling Corner

Help Your Children Learn the Value of Holiday Gifts

By the American Counseling Association

This holiday season will be a financial challenge for many families. But while the shaky economy has Moms and Dads paying closer attention to holiday costs, our kids are still being buried by the barrage of advertising for toys and games they "just can't live without."

Helping your kids successfully navigate the holiday "buy, buy, buy!" season requires more than simply saying "no." Keeping the holidays special, memorable and enjoyable means re-directing your children's enthusiasm and energies beyond all the hottest toys and into areas that will help generate warm, long-lasting memories.

Start by creating a realistic holiday budget. Set limits within a budget that won't bankrupt the family and that will limit January bill-paying stress.

Next, help your kids create their own budgets for holiday gift giving. Set an example by talking about your budget, how you've saved for holiday gifts and how you want to find gifts that will mean something special to the recipient.

One option to help get a child's emotions involved is to talk about personal, homemade gifts. Help your child write a holiday poem or story. Or look to gifts your child can make. A drawn picture, an art project, a series of digital photographs, some cookies or other holiday treats you make together – the list of meaningful,

personal gifts that don't have a big price tag is a long one.

You also want to minimize the stress that the commercial merchandising of the holidays always brings. Let your kids develop a wish list, but make clear it's just wishes, not a shopping list. Let them know it's your right to choose their gifts in order to make their presents special. For older kids, let them research the cost of desired gifts so they can begin connecting a dollar figure with their wants.

One final suggestion is to focus some of the holiday enthusiasm on those less fortunate than your own family. Local agencies offer many ways for you and your family to volunteer or provide help while gaining memories that truly make the holidays special.

While it's tempting to be super-parents who can fulfill their children's every wish, it isn't a healthy reaction to the season. Focus on decorating and cooking and having everyone give a little something of themselves, and you'll find your holidays can not only be more affordable, but less stressful, and more memorable, loving and valuable than just the buying of gifts.

"The Counseling Corner" is provided as a public service by the American Counseling Association, the nation's largest organization of counseling professionals. Learn more about the counseling profession at the ACA Web site, www.counseling.org.



God and Geese – A Christmas Story

There was once a man who didn't believe in God, and he didn't hesitate to let others know how he felt about religion and religious holidays. His wife, however, did believe, and she raised their children to also have faith in God and Jesus, despite his disparaging comments.

One snowy eve, his wife was taking their children to service in the farm community in which they lived. They were to talk about Jesus' birth. She asked him to come, but he refused. "That story is nonsense!" he said. "Why would God lower himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!" So she and the children left, and he stayed home.

A while later, the winds grew

stronger and the snow turned into a blizzard. As the man looked out the window, all he saw was a blinding snowstorm.

He sat down to relax before the fire for the evening. Then he heard a loud thump. Something had hit the window. He looked out, but couldn't see more than a few feet. When the snow let up a little, he ventured outside to see what could have been beating on his window.

In the field near his house, he saw a flock of wild geese. Apparently they had been flying south for the winter when they

got caught in the snowstorm and couldn't go on. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter. They just flapped their wings and flew around the field in low circles, blindly and aimlessly. A couple of them had flown into his window, it seemed. The man felt sorry for the geese and wanted to help them. The barn would be a great place for them to stay, he thought. It's warm and safe; surely they could spend the night and wait out the storm. So he walked over to the barn and opened the doors wide, then watched and waited, hoping they would notice the open barn and go inside.

But the geese just fluttered around aimlessly and didn't seem to notice the barn or realize what it could mean for them.

The man tried to get their attention, but that just seemed to scare them, and they moved further away. He went into the house and came with some bread, broke it up, and made a bread crumb trail leading to the barn. They still didn't catch on.

Now he was getting frustrated. He got behind them and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered in every direction except toward the barn. Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn where they would be warm and safe. "Why don't they follow me?!" he exclaimed. "Can't they see this is the only place where they can survive the storm?"

He thought for a moment and realized that they just wouldn't follow a human. "If only I were a goose, then I could save them," he said out loud.

Then he had an idea. He went into the barn, got one of his own geese, and carried it in his arms as he circled around behind the flock of wild geese. He then released it. His goose flew through the flock and straight into the barn – and one-by-one, the other geese followed it to safety.

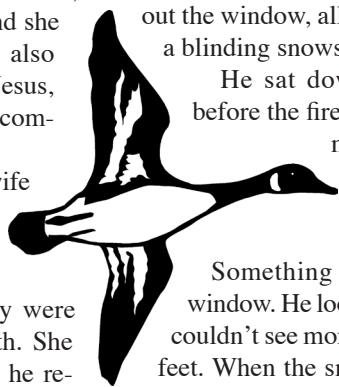
He stood silently for a moment as the words he had spoken a few minutes earlier replayed in his mind: "If only I were a goose, then I could save them!" Then he thought about what he had said to his wife earlier, "Why would God want to be like us? That's ridiculous!"

Suddenly it all made sense. That is what God had done. We were like the geese – blind, lost, perishing. God had His Son become like us so he could show us the way and save us.

As the winds and blinding snow died down, his soul became quiet and pondered this wonderful thought. Suddenly he understood why Christ had come. Years of doubt and disbelief vanished with the passing storm. He fell to his knees in the snow, and prayed his first prayer:

"Thank You, God, for coming in human form to get me out of the storm!"

Editor's note: This was sent to the author in a forwarded e-mail. Author unknown – from several sources.



Cutting Edge

By Sister Margie Lavonis, CSC
Sisters of the Holy Cross



A simple but powerful truth

I have to admit that it is rare for me to remember a homily the next day, let alone several years later! But I do remember one such homily that a Holy Cross priest gave one Christmas at our motherhouse. He said that while he was praying about what he was going to say in his homily God told him, "Just tell them that I love them." It was a simple but powerful message.

The greatest expression of God's love was the sending of his only son Jesus whose mission was to reveal to the world God's love for each person. Jesus commissioned his followers to show this same love. Jesus is God's Christmas gift to us. As the saying goes, Jesus is the reason for the season!

The season of Advent helps ground us in why we celebrate. It is quite a contrast to the secular "holiday season" that often begins with Christmas displays even before the witches and goblins are taken off the store shelves.

Surrounded by the material hype and the message to buy, buy, buy, it is not easy to keep Advent and to focus on the true meaning of Christmas. We often get so caught up in the frenzy that we sometimes forget why we give gifts. Gifts are signs of love and for us the greatest gift of all is Jesus. Maybe our present economic crisis with so many out of work or with limited cash flow will help us to realize this more deeply this year.

It takes a strong individual to shelter himself or herself from the material whirlwind. I want to offer some suggestions for what we can do to help keep focused.

First of all, we can reflect on the daily Advent Mass readings. These bible readings remind us of the history of our salvation and what life was like without the Messiah. The Jewish people

longed for a Savior. Do we long for Jesus in our lives or do we take his presence for granted? Do we try to recognize Jesus in all we meet? Do we even think about or talk to him during the day?

Another suggestion is to send cards with a religious message, ones that remind the receiver that it is Jesus' birthday and that the wonder of the season is that God would actually become a human being to show us just how much he loves us. We can also tell each person what he or she means to us. (I always feel cheated when someone I haven't heard from for a long time merely signs his or her name. I want to know what is happening in their lives.)

We can also share God's message of love to the less fortunate by helping the poor, visiting the lonely, serving at a soup kitchen, patching up some of our relationships that need healing or doing those important things that we tend to procrastinate about. Or maybe we need to spend less time shopping and more time with friends and family.

And lastly, remember that a gift should express one's love. It is the act of giving that is important, not the size or price of the item. We must go against our culture that tries to teach us that more is better. We must resist the temptation to judge a person's love for us by the type of gift given. Sometimes people would rather have some of our personal time than receive whatever material gift we can purchase. Another way to show our love is to make our own gifts or to do something that involves giving of ourselves. An example would be to promise to babysit a certain number of times free of charge or to dedicate a Saturday to work around someone's home. Use your imagination. All it costs is some personal time.

Sunday readings from Dec. 7 to Jan. 18

December 7 — Second Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11 Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14 2 Peter 3:8-14 Mark 1:1-8
December 8 — Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Genesis 3:9-15, 20 Psalm 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4 Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12 Luke 1:26-38
December 12 — Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe	Zechariah 2:14-17 Judith 13:18bcd, 19 Luke 1:26-38 or 1:39-47
December 14 — Third Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11 Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 John 1:6-8, 19-28
December 21 — Fourth Sunday of Advent	2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29 Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38
December 24 — The Nativity of the Lord Christmas at the Vigil Mass	Isaiah 62:1-5 Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29 Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 Matthew 1:1-25
December 25 — The Nativity of the Lord 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 28 — The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph	Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 Colossians 3:12-21 Luke 2:22-40
January 4, 2009 — Epiphany of the Lord	Isaiah 60:1-6 Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6 Matthew 2:1-12
January 11, 2009 — The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord	Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 Acts 10:34-38 Luke 3:15-16, 21-22
January 18, 2009 — Second Sunday in Ordinary Time	1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19 Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20 John 1:35-42

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La diabetes

Así que, amados, puesto que tenemos tales promesas, limpiémonos de toda contaminación de carne y de espíritu, perfeccionando la santidad en el temor de Dios. (2 Corintios 7)

En junio de este año, se hizo público un informe de los Centros para el Control y Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC) que declaraba que 24 millones de residentes de los EEUU padecen la diabetes, de los cuales un cuarto no sabe que la tenga. En Texas, unos 1.3 millones de adultos han sido diagnosticados con diabetes y aproximadamente 418,000 de ellos no se dan cuenta de su enfermedad todavía, según los datos del Consejo de la Diabetes de Texas.

Peor todavía, en el año 2005, unos 24% de todos los tejanos diagnosticados con la diabetes reportaron que no podían obtener el cuidado médico necesario para su condición debido al costo y además, por lo menos el 18% de los diabéticos en Texas no tienen seguro médico. El costo del cuidado médico de por vida para un diabético es un promedio de 2.4 veces más alto que una persona sin diabetes.

La diabetes es un grupo de enfermedades indicadas por altos niveles de glucosa en la sangre que provienen de defectos en la producción de la insulina, el trabajo de la insulina o ambos. La diabetes se puede llevar a varias complicaciones serias—tales como enfermedades cardiovasculares, la pérdida de visión, falla de riñón, problemas del sistema nervioso y la muerte prematura. Sin embargo, solo 30 minutos de ejercicio riguroso—combinado con una reducción de peso corporal de 5 a 10%—puede resultar en una reducción de 58% en la diabetes, dice el Programa para la Prevención de Diabetes (Diabetes Prevention Program).

La mayoría de la gente con diabetes tiene el tipo 2 (dos). En el pasado, la diabetes tipo 2 principalmente se diagnosticaba en adultos mayores de 45 años. Sin embargo, debido a una tendencia creciente de sobrepeso y la obesidad, cada vez más jóvenes también padecen de la diabetes tipo 2 hoy día.

La noticia del CDC en junio también reveló que encima de los que son diabéticos unos 57 millones de residentes del país llavan la pre-diabetes. Esa condición sucede cuando la sangre lleva niveles elevados de la glucosa pero no alcanza a un nivel tan alto para que sea la diabetes. Las personas con

la pre-diabetes tienen más probabilidad de desarrollar la diabetes tipo 2 entre 10 años y tienen un alto riesgo de tanto el infarto como el derrame cerebral, dice el CDC.

En el año 2006, el estado de Texas gastó \$11 millones de dólares para los tratamientos especiales requeridos por el cuidado de la diabetes y solo \$3.1 millones fueron gastados por programas para la prevención de la diabetes.



Para información sobre la diabetes en Texas, visite al Consejo de la Diabetes de Texas en su sitio de Web: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/diabetes/default.shtm> o llame sin costo a 1-888-963-7111, int. 7490

Para mayor información sobre la diabetes, la pre-diabetes y la prevención de

esas condiciones, visite a la Asociación Americana de la Diabetes al <http://www.diabetes.org/about-diabetes.jsp> o llame sin costo a 1-800-DIABETES.

Encuentre más información sobre el estilo de vida saludable, la prevención de enfermedades crónicas y la defensoría del seguro médico para todos o visite hoy al sitio de Web: www.chatexas.org.

Bienvenidos a La Mente, El Cuerpo y El Espíritu, una ofrenda de temas sobre la salud, presentada por la Asociación Católica para la Salud de Texas y el Subcomité de los Obispos para La Salud. El propósito de esta columna es informar a los tejanos católicos acerca de los asuntos de la salud que hacen impacto a nuestro estado y la nación. Nuestras organizaciones comparten la profunda creencia que una acción de convicción es fundamental a la ciudadanía fiel.

Encuesta Muestra Apoyo Mayoritario De Católicos A Favor De Una Reforma Migratoria Integral

WASHINGTON—Una encuesta reciente a nivel nacional llevada a cabo por Zogby Internacional mostró que la gran mayoría de los católicos en Estados Unidos apoya que se abra un camino hacia la ciudadanía para los 12 millones de personas que se estima viven en el país sin documentos migratorios.

La encuesta fue realizada entre el 17 y el 20 de octubre de este año, con una muestra representativa de 1.000 personas que se autoidentificaron como “Católicos Romanos”. La encuesta fue comisionada por *Migration and Refugee Services* (MRS) de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB por sus siglas en inglés). El margen de error es de +/-3,2 puntos porcentuales.

Un 69 por ciento de católicos encuestados dijeron que apoyarían un camino a la ciudadanía para inmigrantes indocumentados a condición de que estos se registren con el gobierno; el 62 por ciento apoyó la medida con la condición de que se les requiera que aprendan inglés. Los obispos estadounidenses han apoyado por largo tiempo propuestas de reforma migratoria y caminos hacia la ciudadanía para inmigrantes indocumentados que incluyen ambos conceptos, registrarse y aprender inglés.

“Estos resultados demuestran que los católicos, como muchos otros estadounidenses, quieren una solución al desafío que representa la inmigración ilegal y que están a favor de que los inmigrantes

indocumentados se integran plenamente en nuestras comunidades y en nuestra nación”, dijo Johnny Young, director ejecutivo de MRS. “Es evidente que aquellos que se oponen a la legalización de los indocumentados son una minoría”.

Otros resultados indicaron que el 64 por ciento de los católicos se oponen a la construcción del muro en la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México, y que tres de cada cuatro católicos están de acuerdo en que la Iglesia tiene la obligación moral de ofrecer ayuda humanitaria a los inmigrantes independientemente de su estado legal.

Todd Scribner, coordinador educativo para las iniciativas y programas de MRS/USCCB, afirmó que los resultados de la encuesta demuestran que los esfuerzos de los obispos estadounidenses para educar a los católicos sobre las realidades de la inmigración están produciendo fruto.

“En general, los católicos están de acuerdo con sus obispos en que se necesita una solución integral y humana a nuestros problemas de inmigración”, dijo Scribner. “Los importantes esfuerzos educativos de los obispos, a través de la campaña *Justicia para Inmigrantes* y de sus propias enseñanzas, han ayudado a generar apoyo en la comunidad católica a favor de una reforma migratoria integral”, añadió.

Los obispos lanzaron esta campaña educativa, *Justicia para Inmigrantes*, en el 2005 para concienciar a los católicos sobre la necesidad de una reforma migratoria integral.

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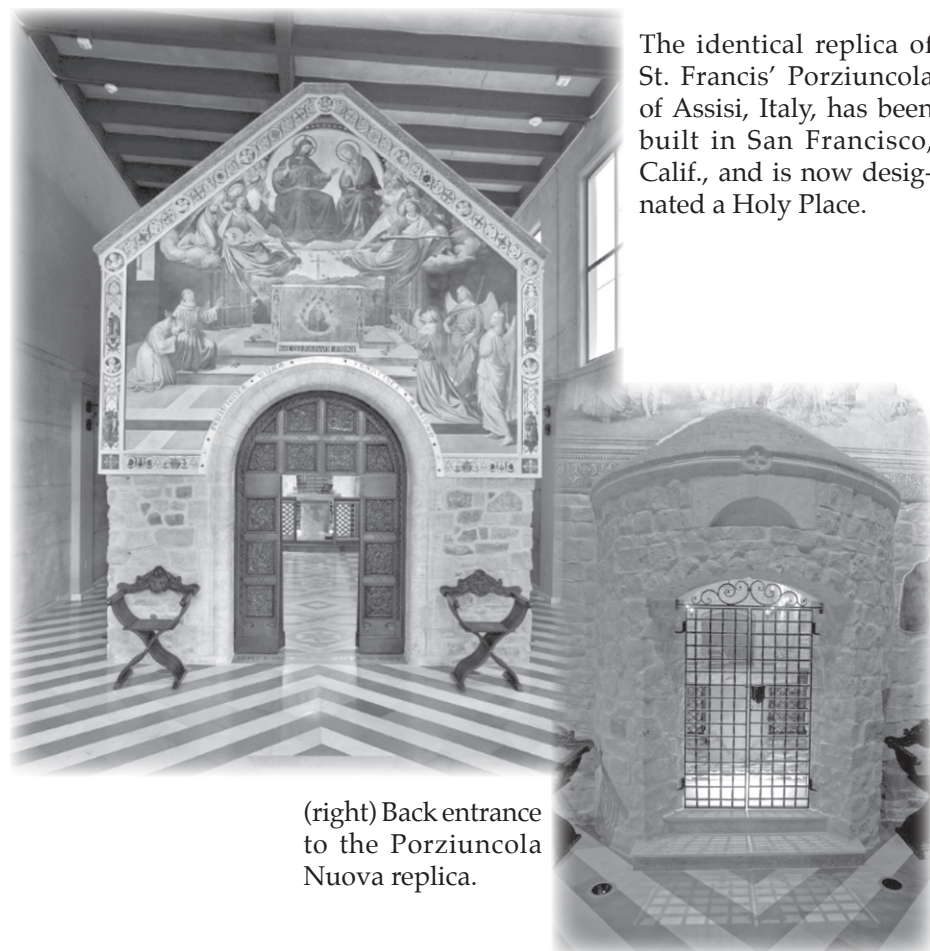
La Novena Misionera de Navidad

Esta Novena busca, alrededor del Pesebre y reunidos en familia, retomar esta maravillosa tradición Latinoamericana en clave misionera, y des esa manera compartir, con todos nuestros hermanos y hermanas, la dimensión del amor pleno de Dios manifestada a toda la humanidad: El nacimiento de su único hijo Jesucristo.

Temas

1. Nuestra Familia es Misionera
2. Jesús nos trae la Vida
3. Jesús viene para amarnos, para enseñarnos amar.
4. Jesús viene a liberarnos
5. Jesús viene a reconciliarnos
6. Somos promotores de Vida y Esperanza
7. Somos constructores del Reino de Dios
8. Somos hijos e hijas de Dios
9. La solidaridad, expresión del Amor de Dios.

La novena cuenta con un cancionero de villancicos y luego de leer la Palabra de Dios, ofrece momentos para reflexionar, aplicar el evangelio a nuestra vida cotidiana y comprometer a la familia a ser cada vez más misionera. Ya esta disponible en la oficinas de Obras Misionales Pontificias en Ecuador, y desde luego la pondremos en nuestra página Web <http://www.cam3ecuador.org/espanol/ponencias.html>



(right) Back entrance to the Porziuncola Nuova replica.

Fifth Designated Holy Place in the World – is San Francisco's *Porziuncola Nuova*

SAN FRANCISCO — The doors to the replica of St. Francis' famed Porziuncola were officially opened in San Francisco, Calif., September 27, 2008. Archbishop George Niederauer, Angela Alioto Esq., Cardinal William Levada and Mayor Gavin Newsom opened the doors to the fifth papally-decreed holy place in the world, the *Porziuncola Nuova*, located on Columbus Street at Vallejo Street, in North Beach's "Little Italy." The *Porziuncola Nuova* is an international site of global peace, attracting pilgrims and the spiritually-inclined from across the globe.

The ambitious four-year plan started with the construction of the only replica of St. Francis' famed *Porziuncola*, or "little corner of the world," which St. Francis restored by hand in his home town of Assisi, Italy, and which remains a revered destination for the faithful from all over the world. "Since the official opening on September 27, 2008, thousands, from all over the world have walked through the doors in search of peace through prayer," said Alioto. "St. Francis' message – peace and goodness – is a simple one that speaks to all people to this day. San Francisco is named after Saint Francis of Assisi. This city and his city of Assisi are sister cities. It has been a dream come true to witness how this beautiful *Porziuncola* has inspired people of all faiths – or even no faith – to come and feel the power of St. Francis' message of universal love."

"San Francisco has long been a city of doers than talkers, of realities that come from dreams and of hope for all," Mayor Gavin Newsom stated. "The four issues which St. Francis stood for are what we are as a city: take care of the sick and the poor, peace not war, love the environment and take care of all animals. This little 'Porziuncola Nuova' is something to celebrate. It is an extraordinary effort."

As part of the opening celebrations, Pope Benedict XVI declared the *Porziuncola Nuova* the first papally-ordained holy place in the United States, and the fifth in the world. Additionally, Pope Benedict XVI granted a plenary indulgence almost identical to the fabled "Pardon of Assisi" to all who enter the *Porziuncola Nuova*, which essentially pardons pilgrims for all of their sins. The original Porziuncola in Assisi, Italy, one of the other four papally-

decreed holy places, continues to be one of the most revered and widely visited holy places in the world.

The *Porziuncola Nuova* is housed inside the small building called "*Luogo Di Santa Chiara*," which is adjacent to the National Shrine's main church. The *Porziuncola Nuova* features all the details of Saint Francis' *Porziuncola* in Assisi – rock for rock, fresco for fresco, marble floor stone for marble floor stone, it is an identical replica, the only one of its kind in the world. The frescos, doors and marble floors have all been done by artists in Assisi and in Citta del Castello, Umbria, Italy. The opening of the *Porziuncola Nuova* replica marks the completion of the first phase of The Renaissance Project's four phases. Subsequent phases include creating a welcoming piazza San Francesco, on Vallejo Street; significant upgrades to the upper church's exterior and interior; and introducing a University of Padre Pio, a political think-tank based on Franciscan principals. White papers on all subjects will be generated on all subjects including but not limited to music, poetry, history, religious and political theories, art, and much more, all inspired by Franciscan thought. The Renaissance Project will also ensure the preservation of a national landmark and historical treasure. The original Parish of St. Francis was erected in 1849. When the inside of the church was completely burned in the 1906 earthquake, the decision was made to rebuild. Steel frames were added to the walls, the roof was replaced and the artwork restored. The church is known for its beautiful murals depicting the life of its St. Francis, and has been designated a historical landmark. The parish was closed in 1992 and reopened in 1998 as the St. Francis Shrine Church. In 1999, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops recognized it as the National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi. Then on August 2, 2008, the Pope declared the *Porziuncola Nuova* a Holy Place. In phase two, the Renaissance Project will provide added seismic stability to the upper church, a historical landmark, and will also enhance both the exterior of the church and the beautiful art within.

To see and learn more, please go to: <http://www.shrinerenewal.org/>.

THE POPE SPEAKS

Pope Benedict XVI



CNS photo from Reuters

More must be done to prevent children's suffering, death, says pope

By Carol Glatz Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — More must be done to remedy the poverty, conflicts and neglect that lead to the suffering or death of millions of children around the world, Pope Benedict XVI said.

The pope said he hoped the gross imbalances between developed and underdeveloped countries and the rich and poor would be "repaired as soon as possible with resolute action in favor of our smallest brothers and sisters."

Many children around the world urgently need help, the pope said Nov. 15 during a private audience with participants of a Vatican-sponsored conference on "The Pastoral Care in the Treatment of Sick Children."

Participants in the Nov. 13-15 conference, sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry, discussed ways the church and Catholic health care workers could address the medical, pastoral and spiritual needs of sick children and their families.

"I am thinking above all about the little ones who have been orphaned or abandoned because of poverty and the breakdown of the family; I'm thinking of the young innocent victims of AIDS or war and the many armed conflicts under way in different parts of the world; I'm thinking of the infants who die as the result of poverty, drought and hunger," the pope said, noting that 4 million newborns die within the first month.

"The church does not forget her smallest children," he said.

While the church applauds what the world's richest nations are doing to improve living conditions in poorer countries, it also urgently calls for greater attention to children so that they "may look at life with trust and hope," said the pope.

A child's full human dignity must be recognized and respected at every stage of development, even in the womb, he said.

The weaker a human seems, the more precious that person is in the eyes of God, he said.

Pope Benedict said work must continue to be done to prevent childhood diseases by offering proper medical care, improved hygiene and better living conditions.

He also noted the difficulties health care workers and families face in finding the right balance between insisting on and discontinuing therapies.

He said that as medical personnel try to guarantee the appropriate treatment for the needs of their smaller patients they also must resist "succumbing to the temptation of experimentalism" or treating sick children merely as objects for research.

The pope underlined the emotional trauma illness has on a child's family and urged medical personnel to use "the language of tenderness and love" when communicating with their patients.

During his address Nov. 13, Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, head of the health care council, condemned "inappropriate prenatal genetic manipulation," the lack of health care and using economic arguments to decide whether to cure a child or not.

Another conference participant, Vito Ferri, a psychologist who specializes in treating cancer patients, told Vatican Radio that a child's debilitating illness hits the whole family like "an existential earthquake."

Families today already are fragile with little outside support and many often are abandoned to deal with a crisis on their own, he said in a Nov. 14 interview with Vatican Radio.

Pope Benedict XVI Intentions December 2008

General: That in the face of a spreading culture of violence and death, the Church through her apostolic and missionary activity may promote with courage the culture of life.

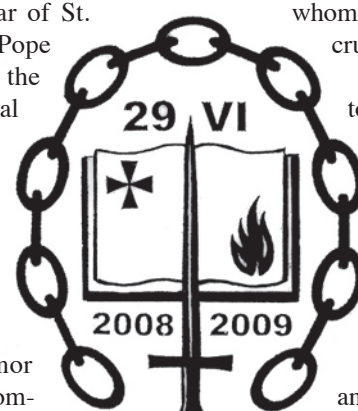
Mission: That especially in mission countries, Christians may show with acts of fraternal love that the Child born in the stable at Bethlehem is the luminous Hope of the world..

The Year of St. Paul 2008-2009

This is the official logo for The Year of Saint Paul. As we are nearly halfway through this special year of St. Paul, as designated by Pope Benedict, let us review the significance of this special logo.

The chain represents the imprisonment of Paul in Rome.

The sword is symbolic of his martyrdom. As a Roman citizen, Paul could not be crucified nor stoned, the two most common means of execution, but rather was accorded the "honor" of beheading by sword.



The book represents his epistles.

The cross is emblematic of Christ, of whom Paul said, "We preach Christ crucified" (I Cor. 1:23).

The tongue of flame refers to the Holy Spirit.

2008 and 2009 are the dates of the Pauline Year.

29 VI represents June 29 (29 June [VI = sixth month]), the ending of the Pauline celebration and the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Reprinted from Shiner's Sts. Cyril & Methodius Church bulletin.



FATHER AND DAUGHTER ATTEND RALLY ASKING CALIFORNIA LAWMAKERS TO MODIFY LOANS—Alfredo Ochoa and his 1-year-old daughter, Josefina, attend a rally to ask state lawmakers to stop home foreclosures and help modify loans at the state Capitol in Sacramento, Calif., Nov. 25. About 50 people participated in the rally to support legislation seeking a 120-day foreclosure moratorium to let distressed homeowners and lending institutions modify troubled loans. (CNS photo/Max Whitaker, Reuters)

Retirement Fund for Religious helps local Sisters

Catholic parishes in the Diocese of Victoria will conduct the 21st annual appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious on December 14.

The Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary and the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, both in Victoria, benefited this year from grants that were made possible by this appeal. Religious institutes that are known and revered for their ministry in the diocese but are headquartered elsewhere benefit through grants that are directed to the institutes' motherhouses.

The Diocese of Victoria contributed \$32,893.62 in 2007, an almost eight percent decline from donations of \$35,627.83 in 2006.

Since the first national annual appeal took place in Catholic parishes in 1988, NRRO has raised more than \$550 million. The Retirement Fund for Religious collection has been the most successful appeal in U.S. Catholic Church history.

During the past two decades, however, the gap between assets available for retirement and the cost of living/health care for elderly women and men religious has widened from \$2 billion to \$9 billion and is expected to grow. In 2023, the combined Social Security benefits of all retired

religious is projected to be \$184 million a year, but cost of care will total more than \$1.6 billion annually

Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for Immigration Reform Among Catholics

WASHINGTON—A recent Zogby poll of Catholics nationwide showed overwhelming support for reform of our nation's immigration laws, with Catholics supporting a path to citizenship for the estimated 12 million undocumented persons in the country. The poll conducted October 17-20, included a sample of 1,000 people who self-identified as Roman Catholics and was commissioned by Migration and Refugee Services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (MRS/USCCB). About 69 percent of Catholics polled supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, provided they register with the government; 62 percent supported the concept if they were required to learn English. The U.S. Catholic bishops have long endorsed a path to citizenship for undocumented persons that would include requirements to register with the government and to learn English.

Highlights of 2008 USCCB fall general assembly

By Chaz Muth
Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE (CNS) — At the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Nov. 10-12 fall general assembly in Baltimore, the bishops:

— Heard their president, Chicago Cardinal Francis E. George, acknowledge the historic significance of the election of President-elect Barack Obama and pray that the incoming president will be able to succeed in his task for the good of all.

— Warned the new administration and new Congress that lifting existing federal abortion restrictions would permanently alienate tens of millions of Americans and could be seen as an attack on religious freedom.

Interactive Advent Web Site Offers Prayer, Reflection, Activity Suggestions

WASHINGTON—An interactive Web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) provides resources for prayer, reflection and action throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons (www.usccb.org/advent). The focal points of the site are the interactive calendars for the Advent season, which began with the first Sunday of Advent, November 30, and the Christmas season, which ends on January 12, with the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord. Clicking on each date on the calendar brings up a menu of resources for reading, prayer, reflection and action. Another highlight of the site is the Festival of Lesson and Carols, which can be heard live online or downloaded for later listening. The Web site includes biographies from Catholic News Service on many of the saints whose feasts are celebrated during the Advent and Christmas seasons along with audio "Saint of the Day" podcasts from Franciscan Radio. Other resources on the Web site include a list of recommended holiday-themed movies from the USCCB's Film and Broadcasting office, prayers and blessings from the USCCB publication Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers, and suggestions for remembering the needs of immigrants and the poor throughout the season.

— Said the church will continue in a time of economic crisis to reach out to those in need, stand with those who are hurt, and work for more just and compassionate policies.

— Approved another lengthy section of the English translation of the third edition of the Roman Missal, which must now be confirmed by the Vatican.

— Chose the Revised Grail Psalter produced by the monks of Conception Abbey in Missouri over the Revised New American Bible translation of the Book of Psalms for liturgical use in the United States.

— Overwhelmingly approved a liturgical service in English and Spanish for blessing children in the womb.

— Elected Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, as USCCB secretary-elect and chose chairmen-elect for five USCCB committees.

— Approved a \$144 million budget and a lengthy list of plans and programs for the USCCB in 2009.

— Set a host of goals for five task forces on issues ranging from strengthening marriage to addressing cultural diversity in the church as priority initiatives through 2011.

— Heard a report from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development that it cut off funding earlier this year to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, known as ACORN, for reasons unrelated to the organization's current troubles over voter registration and partisan politics.

— Voted in favor of a revised process for submitting "varia" — new issues that an individual bishop or group of bishops would like to see considered by the full body.

— Explored how domestic and international charitable organizations have found encouragement and helpful guidance in Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical, "Deus Caritas Est" ("God Is Love").

— Learned The Catholic University of America in Washington has had a record-breaking year for freshman enrollment and for national fundraising, but lost millions in investments in the 2008 economic meltdown.

Pro-life Initiatives Lose Throughout Country

CHICAGO, Ill. — Americans United for Life (AUL) released an analysis of the results of the life-related ballot initiatives voted on in various states on November 4. The election saw pro-life ballot initiatives on abortion defeated in California, Colorado, and South Dakota while initiatives legalizing physician-assisted suicide in Washington state and destructive embryonic stem cell research in Michigan were approved.

Dr. Charmaine Yoest, President & CEO of AUL said: "We applaud the work of those who strove to protect human life through state ballot initiatives this year. We will continue working at both the state and federal levels in the days ahead to advance the culture of life. These results do not square with an American electorate that is increasingly pro-life. The life movement will reassess and regroup for the next election cycle with new ways to communicate that even the weakest amongst us should be welcomed in life and defended in law."

California: Defeat of Proposition 4 (Parental Notice)

For the third time in six years, California voters failed to pass Proposition 4, or "Sarah's Law," an amendment to the

California Constitution that would have protected parental rights and the safety of minors by ensuring that parents are notified of their minor daughter's abortion at least 48 hours prior to the abortion.

"The defeat of Proposition 4 is a loss for California parents and children who remain vulnerable to sexual abuse, coerced abortions, and inadequate care at abortion facilities" said Denise Burke, AUL vice president of legal affairs. "Proposition 4 would have put California in line with the rest of the nation, as the vast majority of the states have enacted parental involvement laws."

Washington: Approval of Initiative 1000 (Physician-Assisted Suicide)

In Washington state, I-1000 was approved by voters, making Washington the second state — after Oregon — to legalize physician-assisted suicide. The newly enacted measure creates financial incentives for healthcare insurance companies to deny coverage for life-saving treatment and to pressure vulnerable patients to choose physician-assisted suicide. In addition, the measure does not provide adequate safeguards for those suffering from treatable mental illnesses, and requires physicians participating in patient

suicides to falsify death certificates.

"The approval of Washington Initiative 1000 poses dangers for the rest of the nation," stated J. Margaret Datiles, AUL staff counsel. "Now that physician-assisted suicide has been legalized in a state other than Oregon, assisted-suicide advocates will be working relentlessly to legalize the practice across the country."

Michigan: Approval of Proposal 2 (Embryonic Stem-Cell Research)

Michigan voters approved Proposal 2, the "Stem Cell Initiative." The amendment legalizes destructive research on human embryos and will allow government funding for research on human embryos produced in fertility clinics.

"It's deeply troubling that a state would vote to legalize destructive embryonic stem-cell research at a time when research using adult stem cells is making such progress. It is truly a waste," added Smith.

South Dakota: Defeat of Initiated Measure 11 (Abortion Ban)

South Dakota failed to pass Initiated Measure 11, a constitutional amendment that would have banned abortions in South Dakota, except for those performed in cases of rape or incest, or when continued

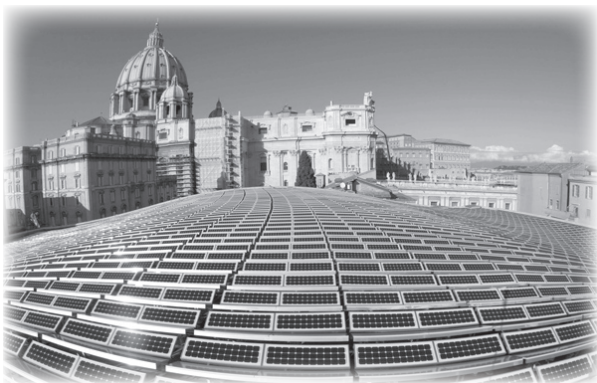
pregnancy severely endangers the woman's life or health. In 2006, South Dakota voters failed to pass a similar ban.

"Although ultimately unsuccessful, Initiated Measure 11 furthered the debate over the impact of abortion on women, the unborn, and our nation," said AUL Senior Counsel Clarke Forsythe. "Given the mounting evidence of the negative impact of abortion, this is a discussion that we must continue to pursue in the days ahead."

Colorado: Defeat of Proposition 48 (Human Life Amendment)

Colorado voters failed to pass Proposition 48, the "Colorado Equal Rights Amendment," which would have amended the Colorado Constitution to define "person" as "any human being from the moment of fertilization," impacting actions undertaken by the state and its officials.

"As with the South Dakota abortion ban, the Colorado Human Life Amendment sparked needed debate and discussion within the pro-life movement," said Denise Burke, AUL vice president of legal affairs, "We are confident that the pro-life movement will emerge from this election cycle stronger, wiser, and more determined."



SOLAR PANELS COVER ROOF OF PAUL VI AUDIENCE HALL AT VATICAN—The Vatican won the 2008 Euro Solar Prize for turning the football field-sized roof of its Paul VI audience hall into a giant solar-power generator. The Vatican has installed its first solar-generated electrical system and committed itself to renewable energy for 20 percent of its needs by 2020, a target set for all the European Union. A German company, SolarWorld, donated and installed 2,400 solar panels on the top of the Vatican's audience hall after Vatican officials had made public their plans to convert the rooftop into a solar-power generator. The gift is estimated to be worth about \$1.55 million. (CNS photo/Tony Gentile, Reuters)

Bishop says Texas Catholic hospitals performed direct sterilizations

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The bishop of Tyler, Texas, has concluded that Catholic hospitals in his diocese have violated ethical directives by performing sterilizations. “As a bishop, I am deeply saddened and upset by this news,” said Bishop Alvaro Corrada, in a Nov. 21 statement published in the Catholic East Texas, newspaper of the Diocese of Tyler. “As bishop of the Diocese of Tyler, I have to admit my failure to provide adequate oversight of the Catholic hospitals as regards their protection of the sacred dignity of each human person.” Bishop Corrada's statement follows an investigation by his diocese after a national Catholic newspaper reported claims last July that thousands of sterilizations, and possibly some abortions, took place in 23 Texas Catholic hospitals from 2000 to 2003. Initially, officials from Trinity Mother Frances Hospital in Tyler and Christus St. Michael's Health System in Texarkana told the diocese they were in compliance with the U.S. Catholic Church's “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Services,” he said in the statement. “Sadly, subsequent investigation reveals that there had been a serious misinterpretation of the ERDs and that in fact many direct sterilizations had been done and continued to be done at the time of the article,” Bishop Corrada said.

Bishop Morin establishes task force to review CCHD funding of ACORN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A task force has been convened to review how funds from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development have been used by local affiliates of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, commonly known as ACORN. Auxiliary Bishop Roger P. Morin of New Orleans, who chairs the U.S. bishops' CCHD subcommittee, said in a mid-October letter to his fellow bishops that the task force is part of a multi-pronged effort designed to ensure that church funds are being spent according to the guidelines of the bishops' domestic poverty-fighting program. Bishop Morin's decision to form and lead the task force follows an earlier decision to suspend \$1.13 million in grants to 40 local ACORN affiliates for the funding cycle beginning July 1, 2008. The grants had been approved by Bishop Morin's subcommittee and by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at its June meeting. The suspension came soon after CCHD officials learned that ACORN disclosed June 2 that Dale Rathke, the brother of ACORN founder Wade Rathke, had embezzled nearly \$1 million from the organization and its affiliates in 1999 and 2000. For full report, please go to <http://www.usccb.org/> or <http://www.victoriadiocese.org/lighthouse/lighthouse.htm>.

Mumbai bishop urges Indians to forgive, unite after attacks

MUMBAI, India (CNS) — Auxiliary Bishop Bosco Penha of Mumbai urged Catholics and people of all religions to forgive and unite after the terrorist attacks that killed nearly 200 in Mumbai Nov. 26. He said the church condemned “this dastardly act of terrorism.” All Catholics, he said, should “go on their knees to pray and get involved in building bridges” among people of all religions and “spread peace, harmony and brotherhood in the city.”

Disaster Fatigue: Hurricanes Dolly and Ike

By Jennifer Carr-Allmon, Associate Director,
Texas Catholic Conference

Reflecting on the many changes of this past year, it is important to remember our brothers and sisters affected by Hurricanes Dolly and Ike. These storms wreaked havoc along the Texas gulf coast and left hundreds of people homeless. In 2005, the entire United States rallied to aid those impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and Texas Catholic Charities agencies were among the first to provide practical assistance to those in need. It was exhausting and required millions of dollars in assistance. Now, our Catholic Charities agencies are once again providing disaster assistance here in Texas, but this time they are struggling to meet the needs of the community. In their own words, here are the appeals for assistance from the Catholic Charities Agencies of Texas:

“We have a long-term recovery plan to assist those who did not get assistance from FEMA or the state. There are at least 5,000 homes needing repair. Many families have lost everything. Although volunteer groups are prepared to repair the homes, available funds for building materials are limited. Catholic Charities, together with other faith communities, are working together to assist these families, but with current funds we will only help a small percentage of families in need. We need all the help that we can receive. Every effort makes a difference for someone still hurting and needing help. To contact Catholic Charities of Brownsville, call 956-702-4088.”—Sister Norma Pimental, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Brownsville.

“Hundreds of families in our service area experienced significant damage to their homes and many homes and businesses were completely destroyed by the storm surges resulting from the hurricane (Ike). Two small communities in our diocese (Smith Point and Oak Island) were completely destroyed—leaving hundreds of families without homes or jobs. Our community has moved past the emergency response phase and into the recovery phase of this disaster, which means providing case management

services for the victims of the storm. We are in need of financial support as well as volunteer support to help provide services. Our location has received less coverage than the more highly populated areas affected by the storm, and we have had little response to our requests for assistance.

Persons interested in donating can do so by visiting www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org and selecting the “Network for Good” donation button. Personal or Corporate checks can also be mailed to P.O. 829, Beaumont, TX 77704-0829 for “Project Ike.” Individuals or groups who wish to volunteer their time and service can contact me at 409-924-4422.”—Ginger Culver, Vice President of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas.

“Catholic Charities is providing emergency and case management services at island and Mainland locations. Volunteers are needed who can assist with case management and counseling services, and to help clean residences. To volunteer, contact Beth Zarate with Catholic Charities at 713-874-6654. Donations of gift cards are also requested as a means to provide assistance in a dignified manner to those needing small appliances, medicine, food, gasoline, and more. Gift cards can be mailed to 2900 Louisiana St., Houston, TX 77006. Please note that the donation is for hurricane recovery. Financial donations can also be made online at www.catholiccharities.org. And last but not least, we can always use prayers to support thousands of individuals who are struggling to regain a foothold in life.”—Deacon Joe Rubio, Vice-President of Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Families are fearful in light of the economic crisis and many people are suffering from “disaster fatigue.” The storms have passed from the immediate memory of those not directly affected and many have made donations already. But so much more is needed. Please pray for, and if possible, donate time or treasure to aid Catholic Charities around the state in ministering to those affected by Hurricanes Ike and Dolly.

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4 dr., V-6, EPA Hwy. 29 MPG Est., nice - *See Website*
02 Ford Expedition XLT STK# 7289\$6,995
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06 Dodge Grand Caravan SXT STK# 7300.....\$13,995
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05 Saturn VUE, STK# 7304.....\$13,495
2 Owners, Non-Smoker, V6, EPA 28 MPG Hwy. - *See Website*
07 Ford E350 12 passenger van, STK# 7274.....\$16,995
1 owner, only 24,307 mi., like new! Warr. - *See Website*
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Non-Smoker, 48,403 Mi, EPA 30 MPG Hwy. - *See Website*
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Reduced \$100/Day. Only 34,882 Miles. - *See Website*
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1 Owner, Non-Smoker, EPA 25 MPG Hwy - *See Website*
04 Chevy Suburban “LS” 2500, STK# 7086.....\$13,495
1 Owner, Tow Package, 3 Seats - *See Website*
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1 Owner, Non-Smoker, 48,599 Mi., Very Nice - *See Website*
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04 Toyota Camry SE, Local Doctor's Car STK# 7306\$14,995
Leather, V-6, Only 48,346 miles - *See Website*
04 Nissan “Frontier” Crew Cab V-6 XE, STK#7312.....\$12,495
Lady Owned, Non-Smoker, 58,244 Miles - *See Website*

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President-elect Obama and Planned Parenthood

With the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States, Planned Parenthood (PP) achieved a major political goal. Obama had courted PP's endorsement, which he received, and PP's Action Fund did a lot during the campaign to push the Obama candidacy.

Obama's promise

When Barack Obama appeared at a PP event during the primary campaign, he promised PP, "The first thing I will do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act."

What is the Freedom of Choice Act?

Simply put, if passed, the Freedom of Choice Act would do away with all legal restrictions on abortion. It would eliminate parental consent laws, waiting periods, restrictions on partial-birth abortion and any other restrictions that have been enacted at the state and federal level.

FOCA would not prevent pro-life activity by groups and individuals. Picketing, prayer vigils, sidewalk counseling, pregnancy resource centers, truth tours, GAP projects and much more could all continue as before.

What is the actual wording of FOCA?

FOCA is a bill introduced in Congress. It must be voted on and approved by both chambers of Congress and then signed into law by the president. There are currently two bills in Congress: one in the House (H.R.1964) and one in the Senate (S.1173). Both bills contain the same wording:

(a) Statement of Policy – It is the policy of the United States that every woman has the fundamental right to choose to bear a child, to terminate a pregnancy prior to fetal viability, or to terminate a pregnancy after fetal viability when necessary to protect the life or health of the woman.

(b) Prohibition of Interference – A government may not –

- (1) deny or interfere with a woman's right to choose –
 - (A) to bear a child;
 - (B) to terminate a pregnancy prior to viability; or
 - (C) to terminate a pregnancy after viability where termination is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman;

or

- (2) discriminate against the exercise of the rights set forth in paragraph (1) in the regulation or provision of benefits, facilities, services, or information.

(c) Civil Action – An individual aggrieved by a violation of this section may

obtain appropriate relief (including relief against a government) in a civil action.

What is the status of FOCA bills?

It is important to note that in January we will have a new Congress. The current Congress is designated as the 110th Congress. It will cease to exist at the end of the year. In January 2009 all of the newly elected members of the House and Senate will be part of the 111th Congress.

All existing bills must be re-introduced in the new Congress and assigned new numbers. Then the legislative process for each of them starts from scratch.

The current House bill (H.R.1964), originally introduced on April 19, 2007, was referred to the Judiciary Committee on May 4, 2007, and has sat there ever since. It has 109 co-sponsors. The current Senate bill (S.1173) was also originally introduced on April 19, 2007, and referred to the Judiciary Committee, where it still sits. It has 19 co-sponsors, including Barack Obama.

Again, these current bills will disappear with the start of the new Congress, and the bills will have to be re-introduced. Under normal circumstances, it would take months for them to come up for a vote, but they could be fast-tracked.

What can you do?

Despite the fact that Obama is actively supporting this bill and the Democratic Party is firmly in control of both chambers of Congress, passage of this bill is not inevitable. Pro-life members of Congress and their staff believe that FOCA can be stopped. But doing so will require a very active campaign by pro-lifers across the country.

The first and most critical part of the effort to stop FOCA is for people to contact members of Congress and let them know how they feel about FOCA. Remember that FOCA is an extreme measure that even many people who call themselves "pro-choice" are against.

1. Remind your congressional representatives that the overwhelming majority of Americans are in favor of parents being notified when their minor children are to have an abortion. Over 30 states have laws in place requiring some form of parental notification. Yet FOCA would undo this legal requirement.

2. Point out that almost all Americans find the partial-birth abortion procedure abhorrent and want it stopped. Yet, FOCA would strike down all the laws against this procedure.

Information from the American Life League

Editor's note: To find out how to contact members of Congress one may go to: http://uspolitics.about.com/od/usgovernment/a/contact_congres.htm

A message from the Knights of Columbus:

Dear friend of the unborn:

It has been a difficult struggle, but the pro-life movement has accomplished many things since the Supreme Court's decision to preempt all state and federal laws regulating abortion in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. While achieving the ultimate goal of overturning *Roe* remains somewhere in the future, we have been able to achieve many small successes along the way:

- the Hyde Amendment, which restricts federal funding for abortions;
- the federal law banning partial birth abortions, which was finally upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in April 2007;
- the "Mexico City Policy," which has

barred the use of federal taxpayers' money to pay for abortions in other countries;

- laws in 44 states that preserve a parental role when children under 18 seek abortions;
- laws in 40 states that restrict late-term abortions;
- laws in 46 states that protect the right of conscience for individual health care providers;
- laws in 27 states that protect the right of conscience for institutions;
- laws in 38 states that ban partial birth abortions;
- laws in 33 states that require counseling before having an abortion;
- and laws in 16 states that provide for ultrasounds before an abortion.

All of these restrictions on abortion -

Which child should die?

A worried woman went to her gynecologist and said: "Doctor, I have a serious problem and desperately need your help! My baby is not even one year old and I'm pregnant again. I don't want kids so close together."

So the doctor said: "Ok, and what do you want me to do?" She said: "I want you to end my pregnancy, and I'm counting on your help with this."

The doctor thought for a little, and after some silence he said to the lady: "I think I have a better solution for your problem. It's less dangerous for you too."

She smiled, thinking that the doctor was going to accept her request.

Then he continued: "You see, in order for you not to have to take care of two babies at the same time, let's kill the

one in your arms. This way, you could rest some before the other one is born. If we're going to kill one of them, it doesn't matter which one it is. There would be no risk for your body if you chose the one in your arms."

The lady was horrified and said: "No doctor! How terrible! It's a crime to kill a child!"

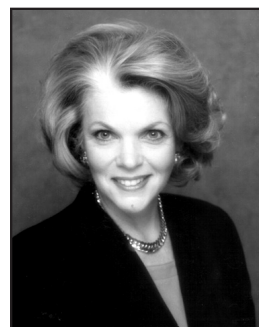
"I agree," the doctor replied. "But you seemed to be OK with it, so I thought maybe that was the best solution."

The doctor smiled, realizing that he had made his point. He convinced the mom that there is no difference in killing a child who's already been born and one who's still in the womb.

The crime is the same!

Anonymous forward through e-mail.

LIFE ISSUES FORUM: Moving Forward



By Susan E. Wills

Are you a pro-life Catholic struggling with how the future may look for pro-life efforts?

Many of us are anxious over the fate of unborn children should President-elect Obama act on

his statement to Planned Parenthood that he will sign the "Freedom of Choice Act" (FOCA), a ruinous bill that would eliminate virtually every pro-life law and policy in the country. Funding limitations, informed consent, parental notification, clinic health/safety regulations, conscience protections for health care providers and hospitals—all would end under FOCA.

Many are depressed that we may soon, through our taxes, be forced to pay for the destruction of boys and girls by abortion and human embryo research.

Have Catholics and the rest of the country abandoned their pro-life convictions? Is it over? Short answers: No, and it's not over until the right to life is guaranteed to all Americans!

A recent Marist poll commissioned by the Knights of Columbus again showed that – when presented with clear choices in a polling question – only 8% of Americans favor abortion on demand throughout pregnancy. The poll also found that 60% of Americans favor banning all abortions, or limiting them to the rare cases of danger to

the mother's life, rape or incest.

The 54% of all Catholics (45% of weekly Mass-goers) who voted for our new President generally did not do so because of his support for abortion. They largely voted on the basis of other issues they saw as pressing, and didn't really see their core values on life being threatened. As pro-Obama law professor Doug Kmiec put it: He was "sounding more Catholic than most Catholics I know." The President-elect spoke often of "reducing abortions" and finding "common ground" on the issue. The question is whether that was sound, not substance.

A BeliefNet survey of Evangelical voters found that 86 percent of those supporting the new President agreed with his view that the best way to reduce abortion is

**On reducing abortions...
"Abolitionists did not work simply to reduce the number of slaves, but to end completely that odious violation of human rights."**

"by preventing unintended pregnancy (through education and birth control), or by

providing financial assistance to pregnant mothers." It sounds good, but it's simply untrue that birth control programs reduce abortions; and most women seek abortions for reasons other than or in addition to financial need. In any case, simply reducing abortions is not the point of the pro-life message. Our goal is a society that respects and defends every human life from conception onward. Abolitionists did not work simply to reduce the number of slaves, but to end completely that odious violation of human rights. And we must work tirelessly to overturn the evil and unjust law that effectively denies the humanity of unborn children and allows them to be torn limb from limb.

So how do we move forward? The Catholic bishops of the United States pointed the way at their recent general meeting. They pledged the resources of the Church to mobilize the Catholic community to oppose FOCA and all other attempts to eliminate existing pro-life laws and policies. This will include a massive education and postcard campaign beginning in January, urging members of Congress to reject the abortion extremism of FOCA.

If we respond, as the bishops have called us to, we can defeat FOCA and retain our freedom to help build a culture of life.

Mrs. Wills is assistant director of education and outreach, Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Go to www.usccb.org/prolife to learn more about the bishops' pro-life activities.



“Death House” documentary at VC

The Victoria College will host Rev. Carroll Pickett, VC alumnus, for a screening of the documentary “At the Death House Door” at 1 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 26, in the VC Fine Arts Auditorium. The film is a personal and intimate look at the death penalty

in the state of Texas through the eyes of Rev. Pickett, who served 15 years as the death house chaplain to the infamous “Walls” prison unit in Huntsville.

During Pickett’s remarkable career journey, he presided over 95 executions, including the world’s first lethal injection. After each execution, Pickett recorded an audiotape account of his trip to the death chamber. The documentary also focuses on the story of Carlos De Luna, a convict Pickett counseled and whose execution troubled Pickett more than any other. He firmly believed De Luna was innocent, and the film tracks the investigative efforts of a team of Chicago Tribune reporters who have turned up evidence that strongly suggests he was. A discussion and question and answer period will follow the screening. Parish and school groups are invited to attend. The event is free and open to the public, but reservations, particularly for groups, are requested. To make a reservation or for answers to questions, please contact Darin at (361) 582-2417 or via e-mail at darin.kazmir@victoriacollege.edu.

2009 SWLC Study Week

The 2009 South West Liturgical Conference will be held January 14–17, 2009, in Denver, Colo. Pinnacle, Pulpit & Pew ~ The Eucharist celebrated, the Word proclaimed, the Mission lived ... will be presented by keynote speakers Rev. Msgr. James Moroney, Mr. Bill Huebsch, Sister Kathleen Harmon, SNDdeN, Rev. J-Glenn Murray, SJ, and Most Rev. Joseph N. Perry, auxiliary bishop of Chicago. Come to the Pinnacle, the Glory of the West! for the 47th Annual Southwest Liturgical Conference Study Week

For more information or to register, please go to: www.swlc.org; Liturgy.Office@archden.org; or call (303) 715-3156.

“The Priests in Concert at Armagh Cathedral,” various dates, PBS

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) — Growing up, brothers Eugene and Martin O’Hagan and their closest friend David Delargy, all from Northern Ireland, shared an interest in music and enjoyed singing together. An even more significant bond was their Catholic faith, and the three — nicknamed “Holy, Holy, Holy” by schoolmates impressed by their piety — were eventually ordained to the priesthood.

Intent on using music to spread the word of God, and despite the demands of parish life, they’ve continued to perform together, and their ensemble — called simply the Priests — is featured in the hour-long musical special “The Priests in Concert at Armagh Cathedral” directed by Chris Cowey, and produced by WLIW for airing on PBS stations throughout December. (Check local listings.)

Touchingly, the clergymen pause to salute their former music teacher, Sister Mary Gertrude, now 93, who beams from her front-row seat as they dedicate their rendering of “Jesu Joy of Man’s Desiring” to her.

The richness and clarity of the Priests’ performance — which also includes a stirring delivery of the Christmas favorite

“O Holy Night” — makes this a delightful holiday treat.

More reviews are available online at www.usccb.org/movies.

TV program notes — week of Dec. 14

By Harry Forbes and John Mulderig Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) — Here are some television program notes for the week of Dec. 14. They have not been reviewed and therefore are not necessarily recommended by the Office for Film & Broadcasting.

Sunday, Dec. 14, 12:30-2 p.m. CST (EWTN) “In Concert: Corrette’s Christmas Symphonies.” Chamber ensemble La Fantasia performs the Christmas symphonies of 18th-century French composer Michel Corrette.

Sunday, Dec. 14, 9-10 p.m. CST (EWTN) “Joyful Hour.” The story of Joseph and Mary is interspersed with teaching regarding the rosary. Actor Pat O’Brien and family are shown praying the rosary.

Sunday, Dec. 14, 9-10 p.m. CST (PBS) “Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton.” Filmmaker Morgan Atkinson’s documentary provides a look at the life of Father Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and writer considered one of the most influential spiritual voices of the 20th century, through interviews with his friends, scholars and authorities on spiritual life. The film examines Merton’s life at Kentucky’s Abbey of Gethsemani, as well as his experiences in New York City, at the Redwoods Monastery in California and at the Christ in the Desert Monastery in New Mexico.

Monday, Dec. 15, 7-8 p.m. CST (ABC) “I Want a Dog for Christmas, Charlie Brown!” (TV-G — general audience).

Wednesday, Dec. 17, 9-10 p.m. CST (EWTN) “Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon: The Divine Liturgy.” The Divine Liturgy of the Maronite rite, presided over by Maronite Bishop Robert J. Shaheen of the St. Louis-based Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.

Thursday, Dec. 18, 9-10 p.m. CST (PBS) “Faith Hill, Joy to the World: A Soundstage Special Event.” Faith Hill presents selections from her holiday album “Joy to the World.” (TV-G — general audience).

Special Collections

Tri-Conference Fund for Retired Religious - Dec. 14 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.

Extraordinary Form of the Roman Latin Rite (Traditional Latin Mass) — is celebrated every Sunday at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church, Shiner at 11:00 a.m. For more info. call (361) 594-3836.

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](http://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 2009 are: Feb. 6-8; March 13-15; April 24-26; June 26-28; Sept. 11-13; and Nov. 20-22. For more info., call (361) 573-0828 ext. 30. All registrations are on a first come, first serve basis. Fee must accompany registration form.

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 other dates in Texas, please go to www.retrouvaille.org or www.helpourmarriage.org.

The Beginning Experience — The Beginning Experience is 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@yahoocom; 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 De Los Santos (361) 894-6950. 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.**

When & Where

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 or see the Web site at www.presidiolabahia.org. Upcoming events:

- Dec. 6
 - 22nd Century Re-Enactors Frontier Rendezvous.
 - Christmas in Goliad Las Posadas Procession. A traditional Mexican Cultural event recalling Mary and Joseph’s search for lodging.
 - 40th Annual La Bahia Awards Presentation. A ceremony honoring authors/writers of Spanish Colonial Texas History will be held in the chapel of Our Lady of Loreto and will be sponsored by the Sons of the Republic of Texas.
- Dec. - TBA
 - Christmas Concert featuring Mary Ann Williams and Becky Johns. Call the Presidio for date and time.

Picnics, Activities, etc. December

New Taiton — The Oblate Club of St. John’s Church will be hosting their Annual Games Party Dec. 7 at 6:00 p.m. at the Taiton Community Center. There will be games, door prizes, raffle, a mini raffle, silent and live auctions and plenty of good refreshments. Come and join the fun!!!!

Victoria — KJZT Society 101 Christmas Party Dec. 7 beginning at 2:00 p.m. with dinner at 4:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Victory Cafeteria. Meat will be furnished, bring covered side dish. Members and families are invited, make reservations by call-

ing (361) 573-2669.

Tivoli — The Catholic Community of Austwell/Tivoli will hold their Annual Parish Festival Dec. 14 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Tivoli serving homemade chili, chicken noodle soup, sandwiches, desserts and much more starting at 11:30 a.m. Come enjoy arts and crafts, cakewalk, color wheel, live auction, raffle, bingo and more. Look for signs on Hwy. 35 at Tivoli.

Victoria — Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Dec. 14 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.

Flatonia — A Mass will be celebrated Dec. 28, on the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in the Chapel of the Holy Innocents at Raphael’s Refuge. The service will begin at 11:00 a.m. The chapel is located approximately two miles west of Flatonia (2715 US Hwy 90 West). The celebrant will be Rev. Dean Wilhelm, vice-rector at St. Mary’s Seminary in Houston; the Revs. Joe Hybner and Edward Bartsch will concelebrate. If you have questions, call Midge Elam at (361) 865-3021 or (361) 258-1514.

Upcoming Events

Victoria — The Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Sisters are hosting a “Come and See” Weekend on January 10-11, 2009 for single Catholic women between the ages of 18 and 50 who want to know more about Sisters and their way of life at Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria, Texas. If you are interested, you may check them out at www.iwbsvictoria.org or call (361) 575-7111 or e-mail iwbsvoc@yahoo.com for more details.

Victoria — Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Jan. 18 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.

Victoria — The Spirit Wind Retreat on Jan. 25-28, 2009, at the Spiritual Renewal Center is limited to only 25 women. The retreat cost is \$350.00, which includes all meals and single occupancy lodging for three nights. Retreat deposits and fees are non-refundable. Make checks payable to Spirit Wind Ministry and mail to: Susan Oakley, 103 Woodmere, Victoria, TX 77904. Please include your name, address, telephone number and email address with your deposit. For additional information contact Susan Oakley at 361/576/1515 or e-mail smoak53@msn.com.

Victoria — Knights of Columbus Council 1329 chicken-barbecue fund-raiser Feb. 15 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.

San Antonio — Catholic Men’s Conference, March 14, 2009
Corpus Christi — March 23 -24, 2009 — Why Be Catholic? When You Can Be Anything Else! Speakers Father Mitch Pacwa, Steve Ray, Tony Melendez, and more TBA.

Do You Have A When & Where Item?
FAX To: (361) 573-5725
E-mail: janakr@victoriadiocese.org
ASAP



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) Mary Haas, Regina Janak, John Quarry, Minnie Bochat, Mike Brown; Chris Alvarez, Sharon Jones, Sue Ellen Galvan, Janie Carrales; Msgr. Eustace Hermes, Cynthia Brewer, Ray Beth Sills; Jeri Joseph, Martha Pearson-Vela, Sister Digna Vela, Barbara Parkan, Melissa Perales; Jose Ortega, Debbie Vanelli, Bishop David Fellhauer, Mariah Raz and Gary Rangnow.



One day at a time ~ a deacon's journey with diabetes, from dialysis to transplant

By Cynthia Brewer

Jim Koenig, a deacon at St. Mary's Parish in Victoria since 1994, received a most wondrous gift this year with a kidney transplant, allowing him to discontinue dialysis treatments.

Deacon Jim was diagnosed with Diabetes Type 1, Juvenile Diabetes, when he was just 15 years old. He was able to control the disease through diet for nearly a decade before he had to begin daily insulin shots.

He spent the next 37 years going on with his life, aided by the shots. He married his wife, Laurie, on Sept. 24, 1977; raised three boys; and worked for the O'Connor family, taking care of their radio system for the ranch, oil field and family. He then went through the rigorous diaconate study program before being ordained a deacon for the Diocese of Victoria.

Eventually the diabetes brought on renal (kidney) failure, and he had to begin dialysis treatments. In June 2001 he began receiving dialysis treatments three days a week, and in August of the same year, he was put on the waiting list for a kidney transplant.

Jim said there are two ways to obtain a kidney for transplant: one is to receive a cadaver kidney from a donor who has died from an injury or accident and had offered to donate his or her organs prior to the accident; the other is to receive a kidney from a live donor.

When Jim was put on dialysis and was now to the point that he needed a kidney transplant, a story was run about him in the April 2002 issue of *The Catholic Lighthouse*.

From that story came an offer of a kidney from a live donor. His wife, Laurie, works as a nurse at the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Convent in Victoria. One of the religious sisters offered her kidney, was tested, and her blood and tissue matched Jim's.

Everyone was so excited. A benefit barbeque and auction was set up for him. It was one of the largest benefits the community had seen. The faces behind the faces, Laurie said, were Linn and Les Boehm and Josie Marbach.

"They were the faces behind so much goodness. They came forward and said they wanted to give a benefit. We are still overwhelmed with the goodness that came from them and so many good people," Laurie said.

The religious sister's next step was to go to the transplant center in San Antonio for final tests. It was there that the center said she didn't make the final cut. She was not qualified. The second test showed she had a high glucose intolerance.

"San Antonio's guidelines are very high," Jim said. "It's for the protection of the donor."

"The first one (possibility for a transplant) was a big

let down," Jim said. "... because the first time out she was a match, the donor was ready to donate, we had a benefit."

"I thought, 'Oh this is no big deal, just grab a donor, get tested, have a surgery and have a normal life again,'" Jim said. "So it was a big let down."



Deacon Jim Koenig
and his wife,
Laurie, six months
after his transplant.
(Inset: Deacon
Jim at St. Mary's
Church, Victoria.)



"It was," Laurie said, "not only for that reason, but because we had the benefit, everybody knew and asked, and we'd say 'Yep, it's going to happen.' I felt guilty and overwhelmed, and the donor was let down."

Jim continued his three hour and 45 minute dialysis treatments beginning at 3:30 a.m. each and every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Over the next seven years 10 lovely people volunteered to be tested — to be a potential kidney donor for Jim.

Out of those, only a handful passed the first part — matching his blood and tissue type — and out of those only two, the very first volunteer and the last volunteer, got to the final test. The last one was a member of St. Mary's Parish.

Again, the last volunteer didn't pass the final test. "Sometimes when testing," Jim said, "they'll find that the possible donor has a high glucose intolerance that might be an indicator that they could become a diabetic later on or present future health problems."

The first volunteer was in 2002; the last in January of 2008. So for almost six years, Jim and Laurie managed through these hope-filled tests, only to be let down. He was still on the cadaver waiting list, but he was number

25.

Then at 8:30 Saturday morning, May 31, 2008, they got the call from the Transplant Center in San Antonio saying they had a kidney for Jim and asking, "How soon can you be here?"

"Laurie was working," Jim said, "so I called her first, and by 11:30 a.m. we were there."

Laurie and Jim drove the two-hour distance from Victoria to San Antonio. "When I saw an 18-wheeler ahead, I thought another obstacle to add to the seven years," Laurie said. "But then it would make a turn before I even got up to it."

"The road was always open and every access I needed I had. Every opportunity was open for me. We weren't driving fast," Laurie said, "but everyone pulled on to the shoulder and let us by. It was as if they knew we were on a mission."

"It was awesome, I knew who was actually driving that car," she said.

When they arrived, Jim was very calm because he didn't think it was going to happen. Since it was the first call, he doubted he'd be selected. "I've been disappointed

so many times. We'll just go and see what takes place," he thought.

There is always a "primary" and a "secondary" candidate. The primary would be the first choice, but if they had a fever or any simple illness — a cold, the flu or anything that could jeopardize the surgery — it could go to the secondary; or it could be that a kidney could work with one person but not the other.

It wasn't until later that afternoon that Jim finally asked if he were the primary, and they said yes, you're good to go. It was about then that they found out the donated kidney came from a 20-month old baby.

He went down for surgery at 5 p.m. and got out at 9 p.m.

Laurie wasn't anxious through the surgery. "I had been doing this for seven years," she said. "Once he went in, he could still be sent right back out; nothing was for sure until it was all said and done. I was just kind of numb."

"Jim didn't do any bargaining with God," Laurie said. "He just said what will be, will be."

Jim has walked by faith. "If I was supposed to have a