

The Catholic Lighthouse

The Cradle of Texas Immigration



VOL. 25, NO. 8

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF VICTORIA IN TEXAS

December 2011

LAWS ABOUT CHURCH SECURITY

**You can, and should,
form an
EYES and EARS
TEAM
(The EE TEAM)**



Since 1999, 237 victim deaths have occurred on church property. To try to decrease that number in the future, 30-year veteran police officer Jimmy Meeks holds Church Safety Seminars in the Southern United States. On November 15, 2011, he presented the seminar at Central Church of Christ in Victoria. In a file photo, Officer Meeks is shown conducting a Church Safety Seminar in El Dorado, Arkansas.

Church Safety

“Don’t let your faith dumb you down”

By Cynthia Brewer

The church that Officer Jimmy Meeks and his wife were married in later became a place that would forever be remembered as the house of worship where 15 people were gunned down, five of whom died. The event took place June 22, 1980, at the First Baptist Church of Daingerfield, Texas.

Officer Meeks, a 30-year veteran police officer and a Baptist minister of 40 years, now teaches other churches how to keep their flocks safe from the violence that permeates society.

Since May of 2009 Officer Meeks has participated in over 40 church safety seminars at which over 650 churches have attended.

The Victoria area Catholic churches were well represented at Officer Meeks’ Church Safety Seminar that was held at Central Church of Christ in Victoria November 15, 2011. After seeing the presentation myself, I’m very glad to know that the Catholic churches were involved, and I’m hoping each of them implements the safety program right away.

“I’m a Certified Crime Prevention Specialist, and helping churches stay safe is a passion of mine - and a ministry,” his

See Church Safety, p. 7

Vatican to welcome Christmas with carols this year

By Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican is planning to sing its way into the Christmas season this year, with a chorus and orchestra leading Christmas carols at the annual unveiling of its Nativity scene.

The hour-long evening ceremony Dec. 24 will feature traditional Christmas songs in several languages, performed by a 100-person choir and orchestra in St. Peter’s Square.

The Vatican is arranging for worldwide television broadcasts of the event, according to Archbishop Claudio Celli, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. He described it as a “sung meditation” on Christmas.

As usual, Pope Benedict XVI is expected to bless the gathering from his apartment window above the square.

Vatican workers were already building this year’s Nativity scene, which features larger-than-life statues of the Holy Family and the Magi, plus new elements each year.



BIRTH OF CHRIST—The birth of Christ is depicted in stained glass at St. Michael’s Cathedral in Toronto. The Dec. 25 Christmas feast commemorates the birth of Christ. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 9 in 2012. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)

Diocesan Transportation Policy Released

The Diocese of Victoria has released a comprehensive Transportation Policy. According to Mike Brown, diocesan CFO, the policy was two years in the works.

“There were actually four different policies in use by four different offices in the diocese, Mr. Brown said, “It was time to have one consolidated policy issued by the diocese.”

The impetus to get this project set up was when the diocese joined the Catholic Umbrella Pool, what is known as CUP II, through its insurer Catholic Mutual Company. As part of the pool, the diocese joins about 60 other dioceses in self-insuring the level of liability from \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000. Instead of paying a premium to an insurance company for this level of coverage, the diocese makes an equity contribution to the pool.

After 10 years, the diocese will be eligible to receive dividends. Mr. Brown stated that he looked at a diocese similar in size and demographics to our diocese that had joined CUP II 20 years ago. Instead

of recording an expense of approximately \$500,000 for this level of coverage for the 20-year period, the diocese reviewed has, in fact, only paid a net of about \$60,000 after subtracting dividends received and the value of their equity position in CUP II. It made business sense to join CUP II.

Upon joining in 2010, one of the requirements was to have a Diocesan Transportation Policy. The policy is required as a direct result of the claims paid out by Catholic Mutual involving drivers, both volunteer and employees.

In recent cases, the courts have found that volunteers, through the agency relationship, have created liability for the parishes and/or dioceses. Catholic Mutual believes that the potential claims to be paid over the next several years could possibly exceed the level of claims paid as a result of the sexual abuse scandal.

In response to this requirement, Bishop David E. Fellhauer appointed a Diocesan Transportation Committee (DTC) made up

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Bishop Fellhauer's Schedule

- December**
- 8** 10:27 a.m., Mass St. Joseph High School, Victoria
 - 10** 11:00 a.m., Mass for deacon candidates' retreat, Spiritual Renewal Center
 - 12** 2:00 p.m., St. Mary Altar Society Christmas gathering, Victoria
 - 16** 10:30 a.m., Rehearsal for Diaconate Ordination, Our Lady of Victory Cathedral
 - 17** 10:00 a.m., Diaconate Ordination, Our Lady of Victory Cathedral
 - 21** 3:00 p.m., Diocesan Finance Board meeting, Chancery Office
 - 23** 11:30 a.m., Chancery closes for the holidays, return Tuesday, January 3, 2012
 - 24** 4:00 p.m., Mass, Incarnate Word Convent Infirmary, Victoria
12:00 Midnight Mass, Vigil of Christmas, Our Lady of Victory Cathedral
 - 29** 6:00 p.m., Mass, Serra Club seminarians and religious in formation Christmas gathering, Holy Family Church, Victoria
- 2012**
- January**
- 2-6** Texas Bishops' retreat, Oblate Renewal Center, San Antonio
 - 7** 4:30 p.m., Mass, St. Mary Church, Praha
6:30 p.m., Mass, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
 - 8** 6:30 a.m., Mass, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
8:00 a.m., Mass, St. Mary Church, Praha
9:30 a.m., Mass, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
 - 8-12** First week of Diocesan Priests' retreat, Spiritual Renewal Center
 - 14** 4:30 p.m., Mass, St. Mary Church, Praha
6:30 p.m., Mass, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
 - 15** 6:30 a.m., Mass, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
8:00 a.m., Mass, St. Mary Church, Praha
9:30 a.m., Mass, St. Joseph Church, Moulton
 - 15-19** Second week of Diocesan Priests' retreat, Spiritual Renewal Center

Letter to the Editor

Hello,
My name is Alicia Salinas; we are a family of four, myself and three children with Autism. One of my autistic children only has one lung and a lung disease called Bronchiolitis Obliterans. He requires oxygen along with several medications, including breathing treatments four times a day and does not attend school.

Because of family problems, I'm facing several hardships, but being without a vehicle is my main concern, especially since I need transportation for their medical appointments. If anyone knows of an organization that would donate a vehicle, I'd love to hear from them.

I am also an Army Veteran and can provide proof of my honorable discharge. My children's caseworker knows all about my family's needs and our current situation. If necessary, their caseworker, along with several other professionals from school, will be more than happy to verify the facts and information about our family as well.

If there's anyone who can help us with more information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Alicia Salinas

Editor's note: Please contact the editor, Cindy Brewer, at The Catholic Lighthouse if you can assist Alicia with a vehicle. She is from the Diocese of Victoria.

Chancery Office Holiday Schedule

The Chancery Office will be closed Dec. 23 at 11:30 a.m. through Jan. 2, 2012, for the Christmas and New Year Holidays. It will re-open on Jan. 3 at 8:30 a.m.



~New E-mail Address~

To send local stories, photos or festival announcements, please use *The Catholic Lighthouse's* new e-mail address: Lighthouse@victoriadiocese.org. Thank you!

Diocesan Transportation Policy Released

Continued from p. 1

of the directors of four diocesan offices. The members are: Mr. Brown; Debbie Vanelli, Youth Office; John Quarry, Catholic Schools Office; and Melissa Perales, Safe Environment Office. The DTC worked with the bishop in formulating the policy and will continue to report directly to him.

The new transportation policy applies to all individuals, employees and volunteers, who drive on behalf of their parish or school. To date, over 800 Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) record checks have been run on individuals who desire to drive in some capacity for their parish or school. Of this number, approximately 12% have been rejected due to their license status or driving record. Brown stated that "Even though no one likes having the policy, the fact that over 100 drivers have been rejected, definitely indicates that a policy was needed."

So, what is required with this new policy and to whom does it apply? If you are driving as an employee or volunteer for a parish or school, you must complete the driver information form; be either 21 (for the transportation of articles) or 25 (for the transportation of people); have an approved driving record as determined by a DMV check; and carry the appropriate amount of insurance. If you are

See *Diocesan Transportation*, p. 3



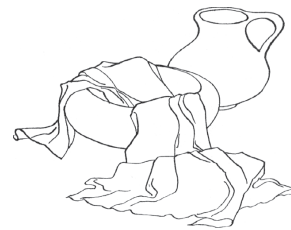
Bishop's Secretary celebrates 80th Birthday

Minnie Bochat, the administrative assistant to Bishop David E. Fellhauer celebrated her 80th birthday October 25, 2011.

Minnie has worked for the Diocese of Victoria since its inception in May 1982, first as secretary to Msgr. Thomas C. McLaughlin in the Vicar General, Chancellor and Judicial Vicar offices. She became secretary to Bishop Fellhauer when he was installed as bishop of the diocese in May 1990. She has been the bishop's secretary for 21 years.

Happy Birthday, Minnie!

I have given you a model to follow



So that as I have done for you, you should also do. John 13:15

With praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God
The Diocese of Victoria
joyfully announces and invites you
to
An Ordination to the Order of the Diaconate
through the imposition of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit by the Most
Reverend David E. Fellhauer, J.C.D., Ph.D.
Bishop of the Diocese of Victoria in Texas
on Saturday, the seventeenth of December in the year Two Thousand and Eleven
at ten o'clock in the morning at
Our Lady of Victory Cathedral
1309 East Mesquite Lane
Victoria, Texas 77901

Ordinandi
Kenneth Wayne Fishbeck
Larry Wayne Koether

DSA & Reflection of Faith Capital Campaign Updates

2011 DSA

Diocesan Goal:	\$ 1,471,384.00
Parish Pledge Totals:	\$ 684,369.78
Parish Contribution Totals:	\$ 655,772.28
Number of Parish Families Participating:	3,616

Reflection of Faith Capital Campaign

Diocesan Goal:	\$ 9,000,000.00
Parish Pledge Totals:	\$ 12,938,271.48
Parish Contribution Totals:	\$ 9,821,503.48
Number of Parish Families Participating:	6,768



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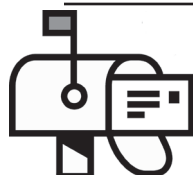
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DIOCESE

The Catholic Lighthouse
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DIOCESE OF VICTORIA

Diocese of Victoria
1505 E. Mesquite Lane P. O. Box 4070
Victoria, Texas 77903

COMPARATIVE STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES - UNRESTRICTED OPERATING FUND

YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2010 AND 2009

	2010	2009
Support and Revenue:		
Contributions, Bequests and Grants		
Diocesan Services Appeal	\$ 1,307,180	\$ 1,269,776
Capital Campaign	137,659	-
Gifts and Bequests	-	172,194
Other	24,824	(5,929)
	1,469,663	1,436,041
Assessments and Fees for Services		
Engaged Encounter	29,143	33,541
Office of Youth Ministry	76,581	87,536
Permanent Diaconate	12,337	29,026
Safe Environment	16,441	18,676
School Office	90,224	104,002
Spiritual Renewal Center	362,479	305,601
Tribunal	15,690	17,918
Other Department Fees	10,121	10,376
	613,016	606,676
Auxiliary Activities and Other		
Administrative Fee - Deposit & Loan Fund	111,736	120,813
Catechetical Office	16,762	18,032
Disciples on the Journey	41,155	53,748
Lighthouse	13,715	13,452
Sale of Liturgical Books	5,320	4,154
Other Income	12,526	15,197
	201,214	225,396
Investment Income	13,858	14,307
Total Support and Revenue	2,297,751	2,282,420
Expenses:		
Diocesan Services Appeal	16,709	17,284
Catholic Lighthouse	149,444	147,386
Chancellor/Tribunal	79,375	86,917
Diaconate	45,801	53,458
Disciples on the Journey	36,303	52,693
Engaged Encounter	36,610	36,507
Infirm and Needy Priests	19,135	5,351
Liturgical Commission	12,652	6,160
Office of Youth Ministry	196,086	193,487
Religious Education	134,649	139,723
School Office and Subsidy	152,435	164,905
Seminarians	253,327	152,121
Special Projects	173,546	174,592
Spiritual Renewal Center	592,972	434,896
Vocation Office	4,324	16,971
Total Program Services	1,903,368	1,682,451
Management and General Activities:		
Administrative	626,132	647,402
Cancelled Pledges (previously recognized as revenue)	-	109,817
Total Expenses	2,529,500	2,439,670
Revenue Over (Under) Expenses	\$ (231,749)	\$ (157,250)

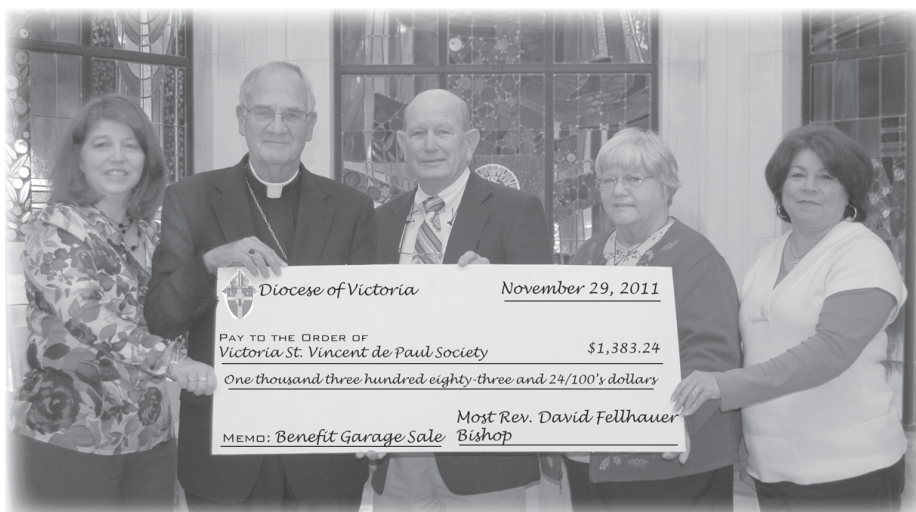
Comments:

Income from the Capital Campaign was recognized in the year pledges were received. In 2009, cancelled pledges exceeded the previously recognized revenue. In 2010, revenue exceeded what had been previously recognized.

The expense category "Special Projects" includes items such as USCCB Dues, Texas Catholic Conference Dues, Retired Priests Health Insurance, Support of the Holy See, Property Taxes and other special expenses.

Some of the expenses for the Vocation Office for 2010 were classified differently in 2010 as compared to 2009. If the classifications had been the same, the expenses for 2010 would have reflected a slight increase.

Operating Expenses have exceeded revenues for the past two years. The operating deficit was covered from funds accumulated from previous years' operations.



DIOCESAN GARAGE SALE PROCEEDS GO TO SVdP SOCIETIES—Bishop David E. Fellhauer presents a check for \$1,383.24 to the presidents of the Victoria area St. Vincent de Paul societies on behalf of the Diocese of Victoria chancery office staff who held a garage sale and food drive November 19, 2011, with proceeds going to the societies. Pictured from left are Debbie Vanelli, president of Our Lady of Victory SVdP; Bishop Fellhauer; Cliff Moczygamba, president of Our Lady of Lourdes SVdP, Sue Cotton, president of St. Mary's SVdP, and Janie Carrales, administrative assistant of the Diocese of Victoria Catholic Schools, who thought of and coordinated the garage sale for the SVdP societies. The event was a great success. Thanks to all who contributed and purchased items.

"... strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

Colossians 2:7

Dear Catholic Faithful of the Diocese,

The Diocese of Victoria is publishing a Statement of Activities for the Diocesan Operating Fund for the years ended December 31, 2010 and 2009. In the past, you have always been provided a copy of our anticipated operating budget through the Diocesan Services Appeal (DSA). In discussions with the Finance Council and Bishop Fellhauer we decided to provide to you the actual results of operations for the years indicated.

You will notice that in the two years presented, the operating revenues received were not sufficient to offset the expenses incurred. The deficit was covered from unrestricted funds accumulated from previous years' operations and/or bequests. Even though the budgets presented to you for the previous two years did not anticipate a deficit, we knew it would be a challenge to operate at a break-even level due primarily to three factors. The three factors are the continued increase in the cost of providing health insurance for our employees; the increasing cost of educating seminarians; and finally, the increased cost of operating the Spiritual Renewal Center. The cost of health care benefits and the cost of educating our seminarians continue to grow at rates greater than 10%, which is far beyond the rate of inflation. The cost of operating the Spiritual Renewal Center increased when we opened the new multi-purpose building known as Hermes Hall. The sizes of retreats have decreased since we opened the new facility. The increase in expenses was anticipated, as well as a growth in revenues. Due to the current sizes of retreats, the growth in revenues for the Spiritual Renewal Center has been less than projected.

During this same period, Bishop Fellhauer wanted the increases in DSA to be held to a minimum. The bishop was well aware of the difficulties facing our parishes in meeting their own obligations in the difficult economy we have faced since the middle of 2008. In fact, from 2007 through 2009, even though operating expenses were increasing, the DSA goal only increased \$18,955. In 2010, as compared to 2009, the DSA goal increased \$67,708. The actual percentage increases for DSA from 2005 through 2010 were:

	DIOCESAN SERVICES APPEAL GOAL	PERCENT INCREASE
2005	\$1,228,800	
2006	\$1,237,250	0.007%
2007	\$1,263,145	2.091%
2008	\$1,282,100	1.500%
2009	\$1,282,100	0.000%
2010	\$1,349,808	5.281%

The average yearly increase in dollars in the DSA goal since 2005 has been \$24,202, which has not in fact kept up with the actual cost of operations.

The challenge for the future will continue to be maintaining reasonable increases in the DSA while managing the upward pressure on expenses.

Our diocese continues to be blessed because of your generosity. The diocese continues to be in good financial position thanks to the past and present stewardship of Bishop Fellhauer, his staff and consultants.

Sincerely,
Michael J. Brown
Chief Financial Officer



Bishop David E. Fellhauer takes the lead in complying with the Diocese of Victoria Transportation Policy by having his driving record checked by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles. He is assisted by employee René Garcia (l.) of the Business Office and employee Melissa Perales (r.) of the Safe Environment Office.

Diocesan Transportation Policy Released

Continued from p. 2

transporting articles, you must carry the state minimums of liability and property, which are \$30,000/\$60,000/\$25,000. If you are transporting persons, you must have coverage equal to or greater than \$100,000/\$300,000/\$50,000. If you are transporting children or vulnerable adults you must also comply with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policy. A vulnerable adult is one who has either diminished mental or physical capacity and is thus unable to know what is acceptable or defend themselves.

The forms to be completed by all drivers may be found on the diocesan web site: www.victoriadiocese.org. There is a link on the web site to the policy and forms. In the near future, frequently asked questions

will be posted to the web site. If you have questions about the policy, please contact one of the individuals on the DTC.

Frequently Asked Questions:

If two eucharistic ministers are taking communion to the hospital and they ride together in the same vehicle, what level of insurance is required?

Reply: Since the purpose of the trip is not to transport people but to transport the Blessed Sacrament to the patients in the hospital, the state minimums of \$30,000/\$60,000/\$25,000 is required.

For more Frequently Asked Questions: www.victoriadiocese.org/transportation



Kristopher Fuchs received the ministry of reader at the Pontifical College Josephium Nov. 13. Pictured from left are Father James Wehner (rector), Bishop David Choby (Nashville), Father Dan Morales, director of vocations for the Victoria Diocese, and Kristopher Fuchs. (Photo by seminarian Patrick Welsh of the Diocese of Columbus.)

Victoria seminarian installed as reader

Seminarian Kristopher L. Fuchs from the Diocese of Victoria received the ministry of reader during the Institution of Readers and Acolytes, which took place at the St. Tiribius Seminary Chapel, Pontifical College Josephium, Columbus, Ohio, on November 13.

Kristopher's hometown is Needville,

Texas.

First-year theology students installed as readers are commissioned to proclaim the Word of God in the liturgical assembly and to catechize the faithful.

The college was honored to have the Most Reverend David R. Choby, bishop of Nashville, as the principal celebrant.



Jacob Koether and Scott Hill are installed as acolytes at St. Mary's Seminary. Pictured from left are Jacob Koether, Bishop Fellhauer, Scott Hill, and Rev. Dan Morales, director of vocations and pastor of St. Mary's in Victoria.

Victoria seminarians installed as acolytes

HOUSTON—Jacob Koether and Scott Hill were installed as acolytes on Sunday, November 20, 2011, during Mass at St. Mary Seminary in Houston by Bishop David Fellhauer.

Scott, of St. Roch Parish in Mentz,

and Jacob, of Holy Cross Parish in Bay City, both attend seminary at St. Mary's in Houston, and are Theology II students. Next year they will be serving in a pastoral year assignment in the diocese.



KJZT EDUCATES SEMINARIANS—The Catholic Family Fraternal of Texas (KJZT) Clerical Endowment Fund made a contribution towards the Diocese of Victoria seminary bursary in the amount of \$3,897 for the education of seminarians. Mrs. Mary Ann Marek, KJZT state director, presented the donation to Bishop David E. Fellhauer November 17, 2011, on behalf of the State Office and members and friends of societies in the Diocese of Victoria (2009 and 2010 contributions). "We are thankful for the opportunity to support the education of young men studying for the priesthood in the Victoria Diocese," stated Loretta Stahl, KJZT state president, in a letter to Bishop Fellhauer.

Seminary Burses

Seminary burses are a permanent fund used for the education of future priests for the Diocese of Victoria. The goal of each bursary 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 30, 2011

	TOTALS		
— Diocese Of Victoria General Bursary			
Previously Reported	\$100,614.00	— Rev. John C. Peters Bursary #5	Previously Reported \$2,364.00
In memory of Deacon Wearden by		In memory of Henry Jalufka by	
LeRoy & Betty Brunner	200.00	Marty and Karen Steffek,	
In memory of Doris Berger Lyssy by		Kelsey & Dillon	10.00
M/M R.H. Bochat	<u>25.00</u>	Sherry Hale	10.00
Total	\$100,839.00	Francis and Allyne Fisbeck	50.00
— CDA #369 St. Ann Bursary #2			
Previously Reported	\$8,673.99	Ervin & Bernice Neskora	10.00
In memory of Pat Chumchal by		Nell Fikac	20.00
CDA Court #369	<u>25.00</u>	Willie Barborak	10.00
Total	\$8,698.99	Glen and Mary Janca	10.00
— Rev. Joseph Hybner			
Previously Reported	\$2,411.00	Daniel and Martha Brom	10.00
In honor of Rev. Hybner's B-Day by		Sidney and Barbara Jasek	20.00
Midge Elam	25.00	Agnes Olsovsky	10.00
In honor of Rev. Hybner's B-Day by		Fred and Debbie Huser	10.00
Arnold, Rosemary, Jennifer and		In memory of Gene Drozd by	
Barbara Riske	<u>20.00</u>	Ervin and Bernice Neskora	10.00
Total	\$2,456.00	In memory of Irene Mendel by	
— KJZT, Catholic Family Fraternal Of Texas			
Previously Reported	\$9,403.98	Ervin and Bernice Neskora	10.00
Annual donation by KJZT	<u>3,897.00</u>	Willie Barborak	<u>10.00</u>
Total	\$13,300.98	Total	\$2,564.00
— Rev. Joseph Koebel			
Previously Reported	\$6,658.00	— St. John Church For Rev. Brian Crookes Bursary #2	
Donation by CDA Court #1595	150.00	Previously Reported	\$4,971.00
In Honor of Rev. Koebel by		In memory of Irene Mendel by	
Ervin and Catherine Buchta	<u>10.00</u>	Elsie Farek	10.00
Total	\$6,818.00	Lillian Besetzny	10.00
— Msgr. Thomas C. McLaughlin			
Previously Reported	595.00	Albert & Dorothy Olsovsky	10.00
In memory of Pat Chumchal by		Alphonse Besetzny	10.00
VFW Ladies Aux Post 4146	<u>25.00</u>	Richard, Jeanie and Bruce Bures	40.00
Total	620.00	William and Mary Lou Dujka	20.00
— Frs. Okrulik & Verdarme			
Previously Reported	\$10,422.89	Jerome and Georgia Pavliska	20.00
In memory of John Novak by		Kenny and Sue Zapalac	20.00
M/M Elroy Brogger	25.00	Dennis and Carol Siegel	<u>20.00</u>
In memory of Ella Arnold by		Total	\$5,131.00
Mrs. Anton Schoener	<u>25.00</u>	Those wishing to begin a bursary or to contribute to an existing seminary bursary may do so by sending their contributions with the appropriate bursary designation to:	
Total	\$10,472.89	SEMINARY BURSES	
— Rev. Celestino Say			
Previously Reported	\$4,765.00	DIOCESE OF VICTORIA	
In memory of Doris Lyssy by		P. O. BOX 4070	
Sylvia and Bob Melnar	<u>25.00</u>	VICTORIA, TX 77903	
Total	\$4,790.00	Existing Burses	
— Rev. Jerome J. Stryk			
Previously Reported	\$13,879.50	• Rev. Msgr. Julius Petru Bursary #2	
In memory of M/M Frank Stryk by		• Rev. Joe Levya	
Dan Stryk	<u>100.00</u>	• Rev. Marcus Valenta	
Total	\$13,979.50	• Rev. Godfrey F. Kuratko	
		• Rev. Msgr. John Hanacek	
		• Sophie Schmidt	
		• Rev. Sean Donohue Bursary #2	
		• Rev. Msgr. Robert Schmidt	
		• Rev. Msgr. Vaclavic Bily	
		• St. Mary's Church - Praha	
		• St. Mary's Church - High Hill	
		• Sr. Perpetua Hawes	

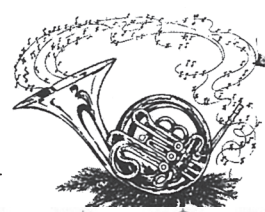
If you have a musical gift on your wish list, let us help

Tee's Music House

Beeville Kenedy Victoria
361-362-0828 830-583-9786 361-575-0204

Child's Guitar 30" - Assorted Colors	\$42.99
Youth Guitar 34" - Assorted Colors	\$59.95
Snare Drum w/stand & sticks	\$129.95
Artist Concert Guitar - Assorted Colors.....	\$89.95
Electric Guitar - Assorted Colors	\$139.95
Acoustic Dreadnought Guitar Pkg.....	\$139.95
Electric Guitar Combo	\$199.95
Electric Guitar Package.....	\$229.95
5 pc. Drum Set w/Cymbals	\$449.95
Violin Outfit Complete.....	\$119.95
Tubular Guitar Stands	\$14.95
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L a y a w a y s W e l c o m e



Texas CDA members attend the second biennial conference/retreat held for the CDA Campus Court in San Antonio Oct. 28-30, 2011. Six of the nation's thirteen CDA Campus Courts are located in Texas.

CDA Campus Court holds second Biennial Conference/Retreat

SAN ANTONIO—The second Catholic Daughters of the Americas (CDA) Campus Court Biennial Conference/Retreat was held October 28-30, 2011, at the Drury Inn, San Antonio.

Participating were Saint Mary's University, San Antonio; Texas Women's University/University of North Texas, Denton; University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio. Texas also has Campus Courts at Baylor University, Saint Thomas More University and Stephen F. Austin University.

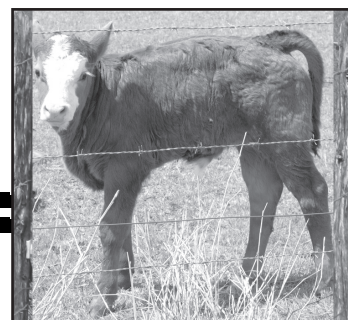
The members in attendance shared the successful results of their various service events stating that their "idea bank" is used for strengths and interests that move members forward in faith with service events that work for the specific members and the targeted recipients. Through campus cross sharing, they found that obstacles shared may be turned into opportunities on a new path.

Celebrant Reverend Skip Stander, Bells of Saint Mary's chaplain, simplified the many options offered in life and in Scripture stating that "How we do what we do for God's glory is shown by how we use our gifts in word and deed. Recognize the need and then move into your motto of unity and charity."

Various operations and spiritual presiders were: Francesca Garcia, St. Mary's; Kailey Veteto, UIW; Campus Court State Chairman Barbara Britton, San Antonio; Saint Mary's advisor Irene Quesnot; First Vice State Regent Peggy Rosales, Austin; Second Vice State Regent Eve Trevino, Corpus Christi; Selena Rangel, St. Mary's; State Regent Carolyn Malik, Shiner; National Director Olga Samaniego, El Paso; State Public Relations and Scrapbook Chair Terrie Vacek, Willis. Also in attendance was Immediate Past State Regent Sheila Martinka, Houston.

SHUTTIN' THE GATE

Editorial by Cynthia Brewer, editor



Do we really know when our family is complete?

Recently I went to the Victoria Women's Clinic to have some blood work done. As I walked into the lobby entrance I came directly in contact with a huge advertisement trying to convince "me", or "everyone", that "we know when our family is complete, so why wait, insist on Essure" — a permanent, irreversible birth control (sterilization) procedure.

I told the receptionist that I was offended by this advertisement, and asked her to please let whomever is in charge know my feelings.

I was then called into the second waiting room, only to have another advertisement, same size, same message, "blaring" its commercial to all who entered the room.

I wondered, who do "we" think we are thinking we "know" when our family is complete? Can any of us read the future?

The woman in the ad is quite young and so is her daughter. How is the woman to know that her family is complete? What if her child dies? What if her husband is killed? Perhaps she might marry again.

What if her new husband would like to have children with her?

It sounds like "we're" playing God, but without all of God's knowledge. I guess this is nothing new.

I know that many remarried couples regret the sterilization procedures they had in their first marriage. After having an annulment and coming into the Catholic Church, the new couple hopes a sterilization reversal procedure will allow them to start their combined families. A lot of prayer follows the reversal procedure.

Back to the ad in Victoria Women's Clinic. This isn't the first time I've been offended by the clinic's business of reproductive services.

In the small room where blood pressure and weight is taken, there's been an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper tacked to the wall stating, "If you plan on having a tubal ligation after your pregnancy, please let the doctor know by your XX week of pregnancy" (I don't remember the specific week). And every time I have an appointment there, I am asked what form of birth control I'm using — as if I'm supposed to be using birth control.

There is another option. For those who were not aware, Natural Family Planning is

the only Church-approved form of family planning to space the births of children.

According to a story in the Science Daily at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/02/070221065200.htm> the Sympto-Thermo Method (STM) of Natural Family Planning is effective as any birth control and almost as effective as the Essure rate of 99.8 percent.

"In the largest, prospective study of STM, the researchers found that if the couples then either abstained from sex or used a barrier method during the fertile period, the rate of unplanned pregnancies per year was 0.4% and 0.6% respectively. Out of

all the 900 women who took part in the study, including those who had unprotected sex during their fertile period, 1.8 per 100 became unintentionally pregnant. For cycles in which couples had unprotected sex during the fertile phase, the pregnancy rates rose to 7.5 per 100 women and 13 cycles.

"The drop-out rate from using STM for reasons such as dissatisfaction or difficulties with the method was 9.2 per 100 women and

13 cycles, and compared well with the drop-out rates from other methods of family planning, which can be as high as 30%, although direct comparisons are difficult due to methodological problems."



What's Happening in Your Parish?

SHCS remodels classrooms

HALLETTSVILLE—Through the generosity of the Dickson-Allen Foundation, the two-year project at Sacred Heart School recently completed renovations of storage and classroom areas, purchased technology equipment, and is able to provide students with state of the art classrooms.

Students are enjoying the new-remodeled classrooms with the ceiling mounted projectors, Elmos, whiteboards, and carpeting.

Storage and office areas on the second floor of the high school wing were converted to two classrooms by tearing down walls, creating new walls and ceilings, installing heating and air conditioning systems, and re-finishing the floors. Second floor restrooms were also remodeled to accommodate the additional students on the second floor.

The second floor originally housed the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, but in recent years the second floor was used for offices, storage rooms and a library. With the increase in student enrollment over the past few years, the school needed to add additional classrooms.

Sacred Heart School faculty and students are deeply grateful to the Dickson-Allen Foundation for their support of the school and programs.



Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

The Diocese of Victoria is accepting applications for a full-time Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Candidates must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and or considerable experience in youth ministry. Applicants must be a practicing Catholic and be certified in youth ministry studies. Please send your resume to the Business Manager at 1505 E. Mesquite Ln., Victoria, Texas 77901. For additional information or for an on-line application go to www.victoriadiocese.org.

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

Reporting Child Abuse

Hotline
1-800-252-5400

Come & See

Single Catholic women (18 through 50 years of age, who are discerning God's call) are invited to attend a "Come and See" weekend at Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria on January 21-22. Please check us out at www.iwbsvictoria.org or call (361) 575-7111 or e-mail iwbsvoc@yahoo.com for more details or to make a reservation. We'll be waiting for your response.



In the Diocese of Victoria, we are fortunate to have David and Annie Coffey, who teach the STM to married couples.

The Coffeys have scheduled four different opportunities to attend a series of STM Natural Family Planning classes during the 2012 year. The classes will be held once a month on Sundays from 1 to 3 p.m. at Our Lady of Victory library in Victoria.

The schedule is as follows:

Winter class series: Jan. 8, Intro and Class One; Feb. 12, Class Two; and March 11, Class Three and completion certificate.

Spring class series: April 22, Intro and Class One; May 20, Class Two; and June 24, Class Three and completion certificate.

Summer class series: July 15, Intro and Class One; August 12, Class Two; and Sept. 9, Class Three and completion certificate.

Fall class series: Oct. 14, Intro and Class One; Nov. 11, Class Two; and Dec. 9, Class Three and completion certificate.

Please contact Annie at victorianfp-teachers@yahoo.com or at (361) 579-8464 for questions or to register.

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Place: Holy Family Parish, Victoria
Time: 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Date: March 11, 2012
Fee: \$20 a team

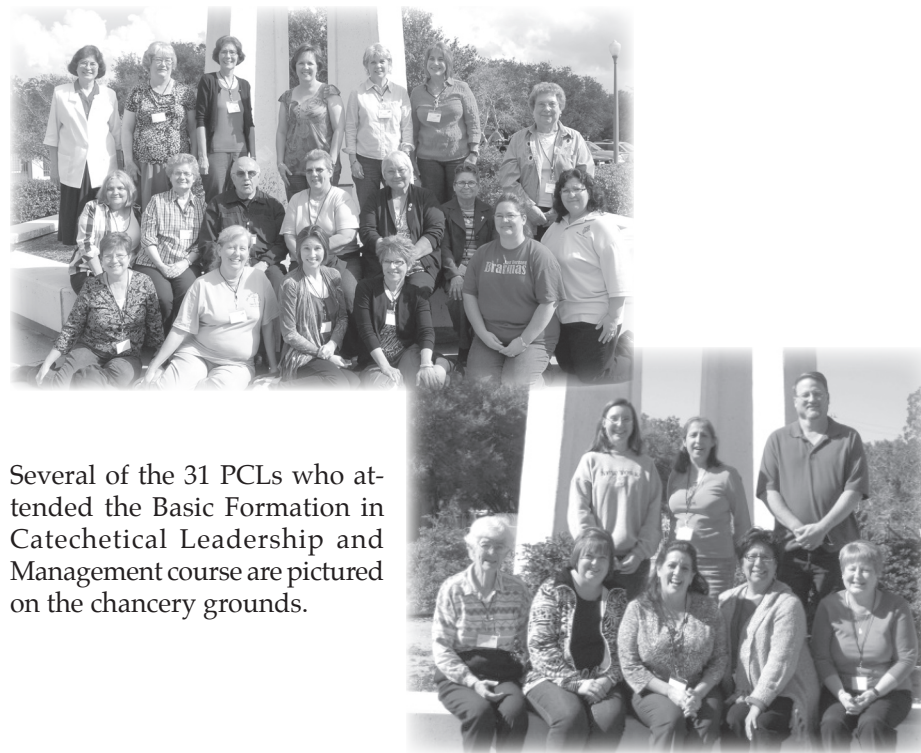
Deadline for Registration form and fee is: March 2, 2012

Call: 361-573-0828
Mail to: Catechetical Office
P O Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903

Adult teams can be made up of individuals, catechists, Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters, ACTS, etc.

Teen teams can be made up of youth group members, school friends, confirmation students, etc. Students must be attending high school.

Family teams can be made up of parents, children, grandparents, aunts, etc. (Family teams must include one or more children.)



Several of the 31 PCLs who attended the Basic Formation in Catechetical Leadership and Management course are pictured on the chancery grounds.

Basic Formation in Catechetical Leadership and Management Training

Thirty-one parish catechetical leaders from 17 parishes attended the Basic Formation in Catechetical Leadership and Management course, a four-day, 24-hour basic training. This training is a requirement for anyone serving as a parish catechetical leader (PCL) in the Diocese of Victoria. A PCL is one who serves as the director/assistant coordinator of the Parish Religious Education (Catechetical) Program in a parish. The following documents were provided for each participant using funds from the Capital Campaign: *General Directory for Catechesis*, *National Directory for Catechesis*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, *Evangelization in the Modern World*, and *Catechesis Tradendae*.

The training consisted of four, six-hour sessions. In Session I “The Ministry of Catechesis”, the vision and goals of catechesis, the ministry of the PCL; and the role of the PCL were studied and discussed using the above-mentioned documents.

The topics covered in Session II “Program Development and Administration” were program models; developing a parish catechetical program; working with volunteers; scheduling, budgeting and record keeping; choosing catechetical textbooks; and the use of media.

In Session III, Sacramental Preparation Programs for Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, and RCIA with Children were studied and discussed. Sample texts and other resources from various

publishers were made available. Working with families was another topic for this session.

The fourth and last session, “Leadership”, covered the following topics: ministry of leadership; relating, dealing with conflict, and decision making; time management, burnout and stress; and PCLs in relation to the diocesan church – bishop, Safe Environment, Catechetical Ministry, Youth & Young Adult, Catholic Schools, and *The Catholic Lighthouse*.

The following persons attended the training; however, a certificate of completion was issued only to those who completed the 24-hour training. In addition to the certificate, each attendee received a small gift. Those attending were: Doris Anel and Patricia Kromka of St Agnes in Edna; Laurie Bautista of Our Lady of Lourdes in Victoria; Peggie Creuzbaour of Holy Rosary/Sts. Peter & Paul in Hostyn/Plum; Dena Denbo of Holy Cross in Yorktown; Sister Joyce Jilek, CDP of St. Anthony in Columbus; Patricia Krenek, Denise Tovar, and Pamela Youngblood of Holy Cross in East Bernard, Mary Machacek and Sharon Patek of Sts. Cyril & Methodius in Shiner, Angela McConnell of Sacred Heart in Hallettsville; Gloria Morales of Immaculate Conception in Goliad; Father Charles Sonnier and William Reardon of Queen of Peace/St. John the Baptist in Sweet Home/Koerth; Terri Busha of Holy Cross in Bay City; Donna Kozelsky of Sacred Heart in Flatonja; Janet Bubela of St. John in Hungerford; Amanda Carlin

and Cecilia Pena of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Bay City; Dana Daughtry of St. John in St. John; Sister Susana Islas, MCSH of Our Lady of Sorrows in Victoria; Mary Luchak of St. Michael in Weimar; Nicole Michalke of St. Rose of Lima in Schulenburg; Betty Mitchell of Our Lady of Victory in Victoria; Ernestina Ruiz and Janie Villasana of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Wharton; Dawn Villasana of St. Joseph in Boling, and Elida Salazar of Parish of the Nativity in Eagle Lake. A make-up session will be offered in the near future for those who were not able to attend all the sessions.

Vocation Awareness Days

On January 10 and 11, 2012, over 200 fifth graders from the Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Victoria will attend Church Vocation Awareness Days at Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Convent in Victoria. The students will hear a number of talks about religious life and the priesthood, as well as visit the Incarnate Word Gift Shop and the Hall of Memories at the convent. The Vocation Awareness Days are sponsored by the Vocations Office of the Diocese of Victoria, the Serra Club of Victoria, Knights of Columbus Council #1329, the Catholic Daughters of Court St. Ann #369 and the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament.

Question Corner

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service



Can Catholics become Masons?

Q. Are Catholics allowed to join the Masons? I know that a pope a long time ago said no, but is that still in force? If Catholics aren't allowed to join, why is this so? (Colonial Heights, Va.)

A. The clearest answer to your first question comes from quoting the declaration issued in 1983 by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: “The church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic associations remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the church, and, therefore, membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive holy Communion.”

That declaration of the CDF was signed by its then-prefect Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI). It was approved and ordered to be published by Pope John Paul II, and it remains in force today.

What prompted the CDF to issue the statement requires a bit of (convoluted) history.

For the two-and-a-half centuries prior, at least seven popes had consistently prohibited Catholics from joining the Masons. Canon 2335 of the church's 1917 Code of Canon Law had stated: “Those who join a Masonic sect or other societies of the same sort, which plot against the church or against legitimate civil authority, incur excommunication.”

In 1974, Cardinal Franjo Seper, then-prefect of the doctrinal congregation, in a letter to Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, concluded that “Canon 2335 regards only

those Catholics who join associations which plot against the church.”

Cardinal Seper evidently meant that, if a particular Masonic society did not plot against the church, while membership for Catholics was still forbidden, a Catholic who did join was not thereby excommunicated.

But understandably, some dioceses in the United States misinterpreted the Seper letter to mean that membership in the Masons could now be permitted, the result being that a number of American Catholic men did join.

In 1983, when the new (and current) Code of Canon Law was published, no mention was made of the Masons by name. The offenses punishable by excommunication were reduced from 37 to seven -- thus fostering again the (mis)understanding that Catholics were now free to join the Masons.

This necessitated the publication by the doctrinal congregation, later in 1983, of the quite specific prohibition against joining, which I quoted above.

Canon No. 1374, effective Nov. 27, 1983, replaced canon No. 2335 of the 1917 codification. It states: “A person who joins an association which plots against the church is to be punished with a just penalty; however, a person who promotes or directs an association of this kind is to be punished with an interdict.”

Why the prohibition?

The reason is that Freemasonry is, at its heart, not a social club but a religion. It is a religion of rationalism, which, as Pope Leo XIII stated in his 1884 encyclical “Humanum Genus,” has as its fundamental doctrine “that human nature and human reason ought in all things be mistress and guide,” and it denies “that anything has been taught by God.”

According to Freemasonry, God is the great architect of the universe, reachable by reason alone, and the possibility of divine revelation is rejected.

As a 1985 report by the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pastoral Research and Practice explains, “the lodge honors Jesus Christ as it honors Socrates, Buddha and Muhammad. It cannot acknowledge any special spiritual claims by Jesus, since this would violate the basis of Freemasonry.”

The awkwardness of this prohibition comes from the fact that more than 3 million American men are Masons and that the majority of Americans (including many Masons themselves) probably view Masonry as chiefly a social and philanthropic fraternity — and certainly the impetus of the Second Vatican Council has been to collaborate with all people of good will on projects that are worthy.

But this does not override the fact that a Catholic who joins the Masons and who takes the time to examine its core beliefs will discover that he has joined another and very different religion.

Masonry's fundamental tenets are simply incompatible with Catholic faith and practice, which explains why the U.S. bishops' committee felt compelled to conclude in its 1985 letter that “the position of the church remains what it has been for many years: Catholics in the United States and elsewhere may not be Freemasons.”

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, N.Y. 12208.)



Church Safety

Continued from p. 1



Attending the annual meeting and investiture of the Southwestern Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem from the Diocese of Victoria were I.-r. Sir Joseph J. Morris Sr., KGCHS, Lady Joyce B. Morris, LGCHS, The Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer, KC*HS, Bishop of Victoria; Lady Jo Ann Jalufka, LC*HS; and Sir Daniel Jalufka, KC*HS.

Southwestern Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem holds annual meeting

SAN ANTONIO—The annual meeting and investiture of the Southwestern Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel and the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center and Lila Cockrell Theater in downtown San Antonio, Texas, October 21-24, 2011.

A traveler's Mass was said at the St. Joseph Church downtown, Friday evening. The celebrant was the Most Rev. Oscar Cantu, KC*HS, Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio. Concelebrant was Rev. Msgr. Patrick Ragsdale, KCHS. The church dates back to November 5, 1868, when the cornerstone was laid. The church was founded by and for German Catholic settlers in San Antonio, who wanted a national "parish" where services would be conducted in their native tongue. The music was provided by an all-male choir, which was begun years ago to provide music for their Masses.

There was also a traveler's Mass said at the hotel. Following Mass, some members attended a river ride and dinner on the Riverwalk.

An orientation meeting for investees, members and guests was held in the convention center ballroom. Some members went on a tour of missions and San Fernando Cathedral. Saturday afternoon recitation of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy was said, followed by the memorial and promotion Mass and vigil, all held in the Lila Cockrell Theater.

Promotees from the Diocese of Victoria are Sir Daniel Jalufka, Knight Commander with Star Holy Sepulchre, (KC*HS), Sir Thomas P. Vacek, Knight Commander Holy Sepulchre (KCHS) and Lady Donna Vacek, Lady Commander Holy Sepulchre (LCHS). The principal celebrant and homilist for the Saturday Mass was His Excellency, the Most Rev. Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSpS, KC*HS, Archbishop of San Antonio; concelebrants were all archbishops, bishops and priests of the order, in the presence of His Eminence Daniel Cardinal Di Nardo, KGCHS, Grand prior and Archbishop of Galveston-Houston. Rev. Mr. Thomas Houle, KHS was Deacon of the Word and Rev. James Orr, KCHS, was Deacon of the Eucharist. Altar servers for Saturday and Sunday Masses were from Assumption Seminary in San Antonio. Rev. James G. Stembler, KCHS, was the ecclesiastical master of ceremonies. His Excellency Dennis M. Malloy, KGCHS, Lieutenant, Southwestern Lieutenancy, U.S., presided with Chancellor Sir Steven R. Pinion, KCHS. In the evening, a black-tie reception and seated dinner was held in the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center Ballroom for members and guests. Following the dinner, exposition, night prayer and all-night

adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was held in the Grand Hyatt Bonham Room.

The SW Lieutenancy annual meeting took place Sunday morning and was called to order by His Excellency Dennis M. Malloy, KGCHS. It was noted that our lieutenancy will again send to the Holy Land \$1,000,000 for the sixth successive year. This contribution is to support schools, churches, hospitals, seminaries, university and the preservation of Christianity in the Holy Land. Only two to three percent of the population is Christian.

The investiture Mass and ceremony was held Sunday afternoon in the Lila Cockrell Theater. The principal celebrant and homilist was His Eminence Daniel Cardinal Di Nardo, KGCHS. Concelebrants were all members of the order — archbishops, bishops and priests. One new investee into the order was His Excellency The Most Rev. Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSpS, KC*HS, Archbishop of San Antonio. Rev. Mr. Jerome Kozar, KCHS was Deacon of the Eucharist and Rev. Mr. John Schwartze, KCHS was Deacon of the Word. The lieutenant and chancellor were present.

The white tie reception and seated dinner was Sunday night for members and spouses only in the convention center foyer and ballroom. Brother David Carrol, FSC, Ph.D., KGCHS, Catholic Near East Welfare Association spoke at the dinner and at the Saturday, morning orientation meeting. It ended Monday morning with a traveler's Mass in the Lila Cockrell Theater.

Attending from the Diocese of Victoria were The Most Rev. David E. Fellhauer, KC*HS, Bishop of Victoria; Sir Joseph J. Morris, Sr., KGCHS; Lady Joyce B. Morris, LGCHS; Sir Daniel Jalufka, KC*HS, promotee; and Lady Jo Ann Jalufka, LC*HS.

The annual meeting and investiture next year will be held in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center, October 12-15, 2012.

brochure reads.

Officer Meeks used the first segment of his presentation trying to break the "dumbing-down-hold" in which Christians seem to be trapped.

To the more than 200 participants from over 40 churches, Officer Meeks opened his presentation by listing a number of violent acts that have taken place at houses of worship in the United States just since August 3, 2011. The number was 23 known incidents of violence on church property — in a time period of less than three months.

Then he stated that since 1999, 237 victim deaths have occurred on church property. Statistics of Deadly Force Incidents (DFI's) at Faith-Based Organizations in the United States came from http://www.carlchinn.com/Church_Security_Concepts.html. DFI's include abductions, attacks, suspicious deaths, suicides and deadly force intervention/protection).

Rhetorically he asked, "Why do we have to do this, have security programs?" Because, he said, of:

Liability — People are beginning to have expectations that there will be security at public gatherings

The MOM Factor: The Mind Of Man Factor — we've got to understand that people are capable of great evil — to which he reminded participants that the first violence against Christians happened to St. Stephen in Jerusalem; he also quoted Jesus' own warnings: Matt. 10:17, and again, after Jesus received praise at the wedding feast in Cana, it says, "He didn't trust any of them." As to violence, he said, "I'm never surprised — I'm only surprised it's not more."

Biggest obstacle is mental

He said "I hear people say, 'I don't need (a security plan), I've got a big angel,' but that doesn't mean you won't be killed. Jesus had 72,000 angels and he was always in danger."

Often he is asked, "Why have a Church Safety Seminar? Why can't we just trust God?" His response, "That's a religious thing; it's not reality."

"We think 'bad people' wouldn't do something evil or violent in a church because it's the 'temple' of God," he said, "but our bodies are the true temple of God and 'bad people' hurt persons' bodies all the time. A church is no more sacred to a criminal; it's just an easier pickin' place," he said.

"The preaching that 'Harm never comes to God's Children' and 'We just speak the name of Jesus and drive out evil,' is usually done by big preachers with their own body guards," Officer Meeks said.

"I know there are a lot of miracle stories, but there are also a lot of tragedy stories. And yes, we're supposed to trust in the Lord, but that doesn't mean we aren't supposed to be prudent and protective of the flock," he reminded the audience. "In the Bible there are many references to 'being on guard' and 'staying alert.'"

In the second half of the seminar, Officer Meeks went into what to do to avoid violence at one's church. He introduced what he and a friend developed called the "Church Safety Starter Kit", which

teaches one "What's going on and what to do about it."

Following is a sampling of what he teaches. To be properly prepared, it is recommended to book a presentation by Officer Meeks, go to his Web site at www.safechurch.org and order his Church Safety Starter Kit.

There are three kinds of people in the world, he stated:

Sheep — who need to be protected

Wolves — from whom we need to be protected, and

'Jesus loving' Sheep Dogs — those willing to die for the sheep

~Watching and Listening~

"The most important thing to do," Officer Meeks warned, "is to set up a safety team to 'Watch' and 'Listen,' it's your 'Eyes and Ears Team'."

The tragedies occur because people were not paying attention and thought, 'It's probably nothing.'

The safety team should consist of men and women; especially include women because they're more perceptive — they see and hear better and pick up on things men don't catch, he said.

Following are his suggestions in forming an EE Team:

Select the leader

The pastor shouldn't be the leader, he has enough to do; include him in the start up but release him as soon as possible. "His job is to pray and preach," Officer and Minister Meeks said.

The leader chooses others — selects one or two people he can trust to choose others.

Don't advertise this in the bulletin, no one needs to know you have a security program, and don't take volunteers, "Jesus never took volunteers, he chose his disciples."

Initiate an interview process: know their background, do background checks and keep it on file.

The Seven Lines of Defense — have EE team members at:

Sunday School Rooms

Detached Buildings

Church offices

Church building when unoccupied

Parking lots — that's where violence starts — have someone there until parking lot is empty

Foyer — point of entry

Throughout sanctuary: seat EE members strategically throughout sanctuary — watching and listening; any armed police officers should be in back; don't allow anyone to approach front of church once service starts — unless they're part of the service; and all who arrive late to the service should be escorted to a seat by an EE team member.

Officer Meeks continued to list what to be looking for, which groups to monitor, and what to be doing while monitoring the church property and its flock.

Dan Marshall, a member of Central Church of Christ and a 28-year veteran of law enforcement, organized the Church Safety seminar with the Victoria Police Department after he saw one of Officer Meeks' presentations in Longview, Texas.

"He just captivated me," Mr. Marshall said of Officer Meeks. "I'm concerned about the welfare of the church," he said. "I see wake-up calls everywhere."

"That's what I need to be doing," he said to himself, "and while I'm doing it at my church, I need to go about getting it set up in other churches."

To appeal to all denominations, Mr. Marshall solicited sponsorship support from various churches, receiving sponsorship from six others, including Our Lady of Victory and Holy Family parishes in Victoria.

"It was just a real blessing seeing us come together," he said of the interdenominational support of the program.

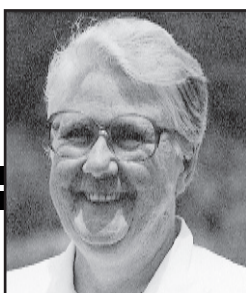
Welcome a new staff member



The Office of Child and Youth Protection now has an administrative assistant. She is Dora Ochoa Hernandez and she assists Melissa Perales, the office director, in supplementary oversight, operation and maintenance of the Diocesan Safe Environment Program, which includes assistance in program operations, background check operations, education training, compliance monitoring and reporting procedures. She also helps with the Diocesan Transportation Policy. Welcome to the chancery office, Dora!



SISTERLY THOUGHTS



By Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS

Waiting, Waiting, Waiting

As I write this, I see so many people waiting: ranchers, farmers, land owners, gardeners, plant nursery operators, store owners, and so many more. I have seen ranchers sell their cattle at low prices because they cannot afford to feed their herds through the coming winter, while ranchers who still have cattle are scrambling to find hay at an affordable price. I've seen farmers plowing under their undeveloped crops because it would cost more to harvest them than they are worth. I have seen too many tractors and harvesting machines by the roadside with "For Sale" signs. Landowners are lamenting the dying trees and the sparse vegetation for their animals and the wildlife that depends on natural foliage. Gardeners are saying "I won't plant anything; it's too dry" thus reducing the nursery owners' cash flow. Food prices rise; retail stores and businesses are suffering when customers are financially strapped due to the prolonged lack of rain. The list of hardship continues and includes all of us. We are all waiting and hoping for the blessing of sufficient rain — rain that will replenish the lakes, the ponds, and the parched soil. Yes, we are all waiting, hoping, and praying for that gentle life-giving rain.

This time of hoping and waiting reminds me of the people who lived before the time of Jesus. They had been promised a Redeemer; how they must have longed

for his coming! Like them, we, too, are in a period of longing — of waiting for the celebration of his birth. This period of longing, Advent, is a season in which we are reminded to wait and to look forward to celebrating Christ's birth, to his coming at the end of the world and to his coming to us every time Mass is being offered! If we want to enter into the spirit of Advent, we'll have to slow down enough to get into "waiting mode" and be patient with ourselves and one another. If we must busy ourselves, let it be in reaching out to meet the needs of others and in reminding one another of this great mystery. We can put out a lawn nativity display and dust off the crèche set that will be the center of our indoor Christmas decorations.

Moreover, as we are in this "waiting" mode, we must remember to remain alert so that we recognize Jesus in the persons and events that we encounter. If we can keep our focus on the meaning of the season, we won't allow ourselves to become overly preoccupied and distracted by all the external aspects of Christmas preparation. In the spirit of the shepherds on the hillside, we'll be patiently caring for our sheep — those about us who need our love and service — and remaining ready to receive Jesus, the long-awaited promised one who came to give us life!

May we all have a hopeful (and rainy) Advent and a blessed Christmas!

Long-time Czech heritage promoter Rudolph A. Klecka dies

EAST BERNARD—Rudolph "Rudy" Klecka Sr. of East Bernard, Texas, passed away peacefully on November 20, 2011. He was born to John and Caroline Toman Klecka in East Bernard, on May 10, 1919, and lived his entire life in East Bernard, an active member of Holy Cross Catholic Church faith community as a member of the Knights of Columbus #2500. He was also a member of the American Legion, Post 226 in East Bernard.

On November 28, 1941, he married his high school sweetheart, Henrietta Urbish Klecka.

In 1946 they opened their small business, Klecka's Dry Goods and Cleaners on Leveridge Street, where they also sold Czech crystal, jewelry and other items brought from the Czech Republic.

Rudy served in the U. S. Army from 1941 until the end of World War II in 1945. While stationed in England, he met several Czech aviators serving in the R. A. F., which proved to be lifelong friendships. From 1969 through 2004, Rudy and Henrietta led tours as Klub Kontinental primarily to the Czech Republic and kept up with these aviators and their families. Thousands of Czech and American Moravians found their relatives and at the same time, kept the ties between a free USA and a Communist ancestral home, and with it, hope for freedom alive.

After the 1989 Velvet Revolution in

Czechoslovakia, Rudy and Henrietta joined several Czech American and Czech émigré physicians in the Houston area as founding board members to found The Texas-Czech Physician Exchange Program, hosting Czech doctors for three-month exchange studies tours at the Houston Medical Center. With his wife, Rudy was also board member of the Czech Culture Center in Houston.

In 2005, Rudy was the recipient of the "Czernin Palace Bronze Memorial Medal" in gratitude to him and Henrietta for their significant contributions in preserving and promoting relations between the Czech Republic and the United States of America.

Rudy is survived by three sons: Rudy Nathan, James Michael (Patricia), Edward Henry (Angelita), eight grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren and a brother, August, of East Bernard. He was preceded in death by his parents, seven siblings and his wife, Henrietta.

Funeral Liturgy was celebrated at Holy Cross Church in East Bernard, on Nov. 25. Memorial donations may be sent to Holy Cross Church, P.O. Box 1325, East Bernard, Texas 77435; the Texas-Czech Physician Exchange Program or the Czech Cultural Center in Houston. Contact information is available from the Davis-Greenlawn Funeral Home at 281-341-8800 or at davisgreenlawn@yahoo.com.

Religious Sisters attend LCRW regional meeting

Sister Evelyn Korenek and Sister Mildred Truchard of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Sisters attended the Leadership Conference of Religious Women Region XII Fall Meeting in McAllen, Texas, on October 18-20, 2011.

The meeting focused on issues faced by those working near the Texas-Mexico border. The main speaker was a young immigration lawyer who explained the difficult process that immigrants face as they struggle to overcome legal hurdles.

We visited La Posada in San Benito where the Sisters have a shelter for recent immigrants who have legal documents but need further processing. While they are waiting, they learn skills that will help them succeed in their new life in the U.S.

The meeting participants were most impressed by all that is being done to empower the residents through educational opportunities, English language instruction, and catechesis.

Letter to the Editor

The following is a thank you note from an incarcerated man, Armando, who attended the October ACTS Retreat at Stevenson's Unit in Cuero.

10-29-11
Acts Retreat

The reason I am up here in front of you guys is because God has placed me here. You know, the past 2 days have been extremely wonderful for me. I didn't realize that attending an ACTS Retreat I would actually feel the love and the presence of God. I have found myself to be happy and excited just by listening, singing and praising the Lord.

I would like to give a special thanks to all the volunteers that have put all this together and extend my love and appreciation to you all's wives and families who have done all the baking of the delicious free world cookies we all ate.

Last night when I went to my cell and read each and every letter that was in my bag and I must say that I was touched by what every individual had to say. Most letters asked if I could feel the presence of God the Father, of his son Jesus and of the Holy Spirit and I must admit that I do! I do feel the presence of God and its the best feeling I have ever experienced in my life. I was surprised to learn that all you volunteers involved in this retreat have been preparing for this weekend for the past 13 weeks. Just when I thought people in the free world didn't care, this comes up.

I thank each and every one of you for all of your thoughts, efforts, spiritual guidance, mental support, time, love and most of all - for you all's dedication.

I have had hard times trying to break down exactly what it is to have faith to believe in someone who we cannot see, touch, or hold. Most people want or need something tangible to grasp onto in order to believe, but have I realize that faith is to believe when there is no answer. Faith is to believe something within yourself, in your heart knowing that it is right. I now have that faith and will trust that God will guide me in the right direction that will bring joy and peace into my life.

I would also like to thank a good friend of mine "Julio" for convincing me to attend this ACTS Retreat and reassuring me that this would be something that would be life changing for me. Had Julio slipped up on his good peer pressure, I wouldn't have been standing here in front of you all. I would have missed out on this opportunity to start anew and be at peace with myself and others as well as missing the opportunity of having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

May God Bless all of you here in this retreat and I truly hope that everyone has been touched in a special way as I have.

Sincerely (YBIC)
Armando, Cuero, Texas



THE CATHOLIC LIGHTHOUSE AND INCARNATE WORD SISTERS SHARE AWARD—The editor of *The Catholic Lighthouse* newspaper, Cynthia Brewer, and assistant, Regina Matus-Janak (far right) present the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Award from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith to Incarnate Word & Blessed Sacrament (IWBS) Sisters Evelyn Korenek and Laura Toman (far left) on behalf of missionary Sister Rebecca Janacek, IWBS. *The Catholic Lighthouse* won Honorable Mention 2011 'Interviews With Missionaries' for a story on Sister Rebecca's missionary work titled "Sister Rebecca: Kenyan Daktari Ya Watu, Wanyama Na Mtu Ya Duka (Doctor, Veterinarian and Shopkeeper)". The award will go into the IWBS archives.

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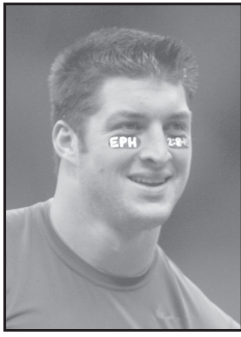


GUEST COMMENTARY

An advent lesson courtesy of quarterback Tim Tebow

By Joe Towalski, editor, *The Catholic Spirit*, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

A lot of ink is being spilled on Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow. Sports pundits are incredulous that this less-than-stellar passer has helped to turn his team into a contender for the NFL playoffs. Unlike most other football players, however, Tebow has also come under scrutiny for the way he publicly witnesses to his Christian faith – something he references in nearly every interview and public appearance.



Tim Tebow

This open embrace of faith, by all accounts, has been ingrained in Tebow for a long time, although it received a great deal of national attention for the first time when the former star quarterback for the University of Florida and Heisman Trophy winner appeared in TV ads with a pro-life message during the 2010 Super Bowl.

As a member of the Denver Broncos, he occasionally takes a knee in prayer – a phenomenon now known, and sometimes spoofed, as “Tebowing.” He started a recent postgame news conference by thanking “my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” The son of former missionaries, he works with a foundation that bears his name to help sick and orphaned children around the world. That foundation is now teaming up with another organization to build a children’s hospital in the Philippines.

Like him or hate him, Tebow seems nothing but sincere about his beliefs – a fact his coach, John Fox, acknowledged in a recent online story about the quarterback. “He’s real,” Fox said. “He walks the walk. A guy like that in today’s society, in my mind, ought to be celebrated, not scrutinized to the level that he is.”

But Tebow is scrutinized because, to some, his public displays of faith are irksome, bothersome, too “in your face.” These critics often have no problem with his beliefs, they just wish he would keep them private and not wear them on his sleeve to the extent he does.

Those critics should be more concerned, however, about the antics of others that are as public but certainly not worthy of emulation: athletes guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct on and off the field, coaches and politicians caught in scandals, celebrities whose commitment to marriage lasts a whopping 72 days.

With Tebow you get something genuine – a role model. What you see on the outside is what’s on the inside, particularly when it comes to his spiritual life.

In the same story in which his coach was quoted, Tebow had this to say: “That’s the thing about my faith: It’s not just something that happens when you’re at church or happens when you’re praying or reading the Scripture. It’s a part of who

you are, as a person, as a player, in your life and everything. And it should be who you are because you’re not just a Christian or a believer at church. That’s who you are everywhere, and it shouldn’t matter what situation or what setting you are in. Hopefully, you’re the same guy everywhere.”

And, therein, is a lesson for all of us this Advent season: to spend this season of waiting to welcome Christ once again by synching our everyday lives with our beliefs, to translate our words and prayers into action, to live out what we profess on Sunday during the other days of the week – at home, at work, at school and in our communities.

Advent isn’t about Black Friday or Cyber Monday or buying evermore stuff that other people don’t need or, frankly, often don’t want. It isn’t about office parties. It’s about making room for Jesus in our lives and bringing the hope and peace of Christ into the lives of others.

We celebrate Advent when we make a deeper commitment to prayer in our lives. To spending more time with loved ones who need our presence more than our presents. To bringing hope to the poor and lonely through service and financial contributions that will improve their lives by helping them meet basic needs.

Advent is about living out what we believe and not being afraid to share and show our faith to the rest of the world, even if someone gives us grief about it.

That’s an Advent lesson for us, courtesy of Tim Tebow.

Note: See page 15, for story about University of Arkansas football player Garrett Uekman, who died from an untreated heart condition.

Celebrating New Catholic Schools

In the past ten years, in spite of the economy and escalating building costs, more than 460 new Catholic schools opened across the nation. Countless others, have expanded both their vision and their

St. Joseph High News

STJ Flyer Marching Band – SUPERIOR!

The Texas Private School Music Educators Association hosted the private schools state marching band contest on October 28, 2011, at Legacy Christian Academy in Frisco, Texas.

The St. Joseph High School (STJ) Flyer Marching Band from Victoria, for the sixth consecutive year was awarded a Superior-First Division Trophy. The STJ Band is one of only eight private school marching bands across the state of Texas to receive this award.

The STJ Marching Band is under the field leadership of senior, Mark Chavez. Band director for the STJ Marching Band is Daryl McCulloch

Students Earn AP® Scholar Awards

Seven STJ students have earned AP® Scholar Awards (Advanced Placement) in recognition of their exceptional achievement on AP® Exams.

Stephanie Kasper ‘11 qualified for the AP® Scholar with Distinction Award; Jared Poland ‘11 and John Seale ‘11 qualified for the AP® Scholar with Honor Award; and Jaelyn Boozalis ‘12, Maddison Franklin ‘11, Aimee Fries ‘11, and Wade Perry ‘11 qualified for the AP® Scholar Award.

The College Board’s Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) provides willing and academically prepared students with the opportunity to take rigorous college-level courses while still in high school, and to earn college credit, advanced placement, or both for successful performance on the AP® Exams.

Youth Calendar of Events

January 19—Retreat Formation/Policy and Procedure Session

January 21—Confirmation Retreat at St. John Nepomucene Church in New Taiton

January 28—Pro-life Rally in Austin

February 2—Retreat Formation/Policy and Procedure Session

February 4—Youth Leadership Training (Spectacular Planning) at the Chancery in Victoria

February 19—Youth Spectacular at Holy Family in Victoria

February 25—Foundations Youth Ministry Class - 9:00 - 12:00 noon at the Chancery



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For more information contact:

Debbie Vanelli or Wendy Eggert at the Office of Youth Ministry at

(361) 573-0828 ext. 2232/ ext. 2250 or

e-mail at dvanelli@victoriadiocese.org or weggert@victoriadiocese.org

new youth office e-mail ym@victoriadiocese.org or

visit our Web site at www.victoriadiocese.org/youthoffice



2011 DIOCESAN VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONS—Our Lady of Victory School 8th grade Volleyball team captured the 2011 Victoria Diocesan Athletic League AA Championship defeating Sacred Heart of Hallettsville and St. Ludmilla of Shiner. The Lady Eagles went 4-0 in district and also won first place in the Industrial and VISD Cade tournaments. Team members are back row (l to r): Coach Kathy Sullivan, Chloe Cisneros, Hannah Novosad, Ashley Jones, Christine Janak, Abigail Bradicich, Madison Foeh, Katie Huddleston; front row (l to r): Skylar Clark, Kenedi Pope, Kacie Knippa, Kristen Fisher and Malary Michalka.

physical plants to serve the educational needs of youth.

The largest number of schools has been in the Mideast with 117 openings, closely followed by the West with 112 and the Southwest with 95. Yet every region has experienced growth, according to statistics collected by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) beginning in 2000 through the most recent report for 2010-11 school year.

Too often news coverage today reports on Catholic school closings and consolidations — admittedly there are many — without giving the other side of the story. The missing information is equally as compelling, newsworthy and even a little sensational.

There are a total of 6,980 Catholic elementary or secondary schools in the United States. What sets these Catholic schools apart from other schools in the nation?

Three things, say educators, parents, and community leaders: faith, academics, and service. Children are taught faith — not just the basics of Christianity, but how to have a relationship with God. Academics, which in Catholic schools are held to very high standards, help each child reach his or her potential. Service — the giving of one’s time and effort to help others, is taught both as an expression of faith and of good citizenship.

Reprinted from the Momentum (NCEA Journal) Sept./Oct. 2011 issue.

St. Joseph High students to perform in the Victoria Ballet “The Nutcracker”

The following St. Joseph High School students will be performing in “The Nutcracker” for The Victoria Ballet Theatre, December 8-12, at the Leo J. Welder Center for Performing Arts: Megha Chandna, Kathryn McCoy, Elisabeth High, Brooke Sanders, Jon-Anthony Cavazos, Kellie Gray, Julia Dotter, Sarah Dodson, Katie Krueger, and Ainsley Tharp.



BOY SCOUT TROOP 228 MEMBERS EARN RELIGION AWARDS—Five Boy Scouts, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus in Yoakum, earned their Ad Altare Dei religion emblem beginning October 2010 and completing September 2011. These boys diligently worked as a group studying the seven sacraments of the Catholic faith. Father Matthew Huehlefeld, pastor of St. Joseph in Yoakum, presented the boys with their religion emblems during Mass on Sunday, October 23, 2011. Pictured, bottom row, l. to r.: Gabriel Garcia, Michael Chomout and Travis Beem; top row: Father Matthew, Clayton Wenske, Reed Gearson and Bill Briscoe (Ad Altare Dei counselor).



CDA COURT 2275 HONOR DECEASED MEMBERS—On Oct 29 San Roberto Bellarmine CDA Court 2275, El Campo, honored members who have died in the past year at San Robert Bellarmine Church with Father Lawrence Matula officiating. Pictured, l. to r., are Carol Perez, daughter of Mary Helen Rivera; Anita Guerra, Selia Benavidez, Helen Escobar, Pauline Saucedo and Terri Beltran; back row: Elma Escobar, Eloisa Cantu, Adelma Martinez, Becky Estrada and Mary Ellen Benavidez.



Pictured above are candles decorated with pictures of the deceased CDA Court 2275 members. From l. to r., in the order of going to Jesus, are Mary Helen Rivera, Yolanda Salazar, Aunt Mary Delgado, Olga Baisa, Aurora Ratcliff, Margarita Bustamante, Olga Ochoa, Henrietta Rivera, Angelita Cardenas, Guadalupe Trevino, Gloria Vela, Manuela Salinas and Irene Benavidez.



ALL SOULS' DAY CELEBRATED 15TH-CENTURY STYLE—To celebrate All Souls' Day, the classes of Sister Emiliana Grafe and Sister Colette Kouba – both Incarnate Word Sisters and 4th and 6th Grade Religion class teachers at Sacred Heart in Hallettsville – revived an ancient, lost tradition. At least as far back as the 15th century in England, poor children would knock on doors on All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day and ask for alms in exchange for prayers. It is a reminder of the religious conviction and belief in the power of prayer. Some Catholic families have tried to revive the spiritual aspects of Halloween by distributing Soul Cakes. In late medieval England, bread was known as cake. The 6th graders formed five family groups and thought of family members who have died. When the 4th grader knocked at the door, she would say, "Soul cakes, soul cakes, a prayer for a soul cake." The 6th grade student, who answered the door, responded by saying, "Please pray for my grandmother." The 6th grade student could name any member who had died. The 4th grader then knelt down and said a prayer for whomever they mentioned. Then the 4th grader received a Soul Cake. The students really entered into the experience, and it helped them appreciate the value of prayer for the deceased. What a great way to bring trick-or-treating back to its Catholic roots.

CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS

Victoria's St. John Post 1269 Auxiliary members participated in the Victoria Veterans' Day Parade and the following wreath-laying program. Pictured in the parade vehicle are Mrs. Lupita Martinez, president of St. John's Post Auxiliary and newly elected national director; Mary Reyes, Post 1269 secretary (and driver). The auxiliary members serve proudly and enjoy the work they do," said the post president.



SACRED HEART JCDA SHOW RESPECT TO LOVED ONES—The Junior Catholic Daughters and Catholic Life Insurance Branch #22 join hands to make a difference on Wednesday, October 26, 2011. Each year, the Junior Catholic Daughters go to the Sacred Heart Cemetery around All Souls Day. This year, Catholic Life Insurance Branch #22 joined in helping the JCDA by donating flowers to be placed on the graves. They cleaned the graves that needed to be cared for and visited their loved ones' graves to show their respect. A big thanks to Catholic Life Insurance Branch #22 for helping the JCDA make a difference!

THANKSGIVING BLESSINGS IN SCHULENBURG

In celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday, St. Rose students have been involved in a number of worthy projects to help them count their blessings and assist those in need. Each student brought a donation of non-perishable food for the local area food pantry at the school's annual Thanksgiving Mass, held Nov. 17. Each year



students bring food from their own homes to share with those in need. SRL classes collected enough food items to present 11 baskets to families served by the Family Crisis Center. Each Thanksgiving basket had all the items for an entire Thanksgiving meal – from the turkey to the cranberry sauce and every ingredient in between. Traditionally the 3k and 4k students dress as the pilgrims and Native Americans of the first Thanksgiving. They processed into the school's Thanksgiving Mass with their donations; from left are Cade Ohnheiser, Tyler Fey, Eli Foster and Lilly Bratz.



ALL SAINTS BEGAN AS ORDINARY HUMANS

St. Philip Catholic School 8th grade students in El Campo held their annual Saint's Parade on All Saint's Day under the direction of religion teacher Mrs. Alexis Jasek. Each student selected two saints, learned about their history and then dressed as and told about one saint. The theme of the parade was "...all Saints began as ordinary humans, just as you and I, and lived extraordinary lives by choosing to listen to the call to follow Christ..."



ST. PHILIP SCHOOL ENTERTAINS ON VETERANS' DAY—Veterans and members of the El Campo community were invited to St. Philip the Apostle School's 2011 Veterans' Day Program November 11, 2011. The St. Philip students in grades 4 through 8 participated in the program under the direction of Janice Cox, music director. The students also played hand bells in their performance. Above, students are meeting veterans and guests.



CATHOLIC DAUGHTER DAY—Local Court Our Lady of the Gulf #2267 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas celebrated National Catholic Daughter Day, October 22, 2011. Attendees are pictured with their pastor, Father Ty Bazar in the back, and the officers, front row l. to r.: District Deputy #34 Georgia Mikosh; Regent Cynthia Escalera; Vice Regent Alicia Morales; Treasurer Carol Stewart; and Secretary Leah Suarez. Not pictured: Margaret Yanta, financial secretary.



HELPING HANDS—Junior Catholic Daughters of the Americas #206 helped clean up St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery on a windy and chilly October 28, 2011. The members and their parents and some grandparents cleaned up the cemetery in preparation for All Souls Day where many family members come to the cemetery to visit deceased loved ones. Pictured, front row: Chloe Victor, Ella Boswell, Constance Chomout, Emily Matussek and Kaylee Garza; middle row: Sierra Johnson, Hannah Boswell, Kylie Stary, Sophie Jahn, Abbie Heiman and Jordan Garza; and back row: Joslynn Ornales, Penelope del Castillo, Shelby Stary and Angelica Pena.



YOAKUM JCDA DONATES TO BLUE SANTA—Basketballs, footballs, toys and diapers are a few of the items that were cheerfully donated to the Blue Santa program of Yoakum by Junior Catholic Daughters of the Americas #206 of St. Joseph Church at their November 10, 2011, meeting. Officer Abel Rosales of the Yoakum Police Department accepted the donations and is pictured on the right with the JCDA members.



PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY CELEBRATED—St. Agnes Parish Family honored their pastor, Reverend Michael Petering, with a Priesthood Sunday celebration on October 30, 2011, in the parish center. Parishioners showed their appreciation with a covered-dish luncheon and a musical program presented by the Children's Choir. Many thank you cards and posters, created by the Religious Education students, were on display and were given to Father Petering. About 100 parishioners attended the event. Pictured is the St. Agnes Children's Choir entertaining Father Petering and the parishioners.



PROMOTE—Right, Sir Daniel Jalufka, Knight Commander with Star Holy Sepulchre, (KC*HS) was promoted in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem at the annual meeting held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel and the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center and Lila Cockrell Theater in downtown San Antonio, Texas, October 21-24, 2011. He is from the Diocese of Victoria. There were two others promoted: Sir Thomas P. Vacek, Knight Commander Holy Sepulchre (KCHS), and Lady Donna Vacek, Lady Commander Holy Sepulchre (LCHS), but were not in attendance. Pictured with Sir Daniel is His Eminence Daniel Cardinal Di Nardo, KGCHS. See complete story on page 7.

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Cutting Edge

By Sister Margie Lavonis, CSC
Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame



God's Greatest Gift

The present economic crisis can provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas, rather than on the materialistic spirit that often permeates our Western culture. Since so many people are unemployed or under employed and many family incomes are shrinking, a lot of people will have to limit the type and number of gifts they give. This might be a blessing in disguise. It can provide us a chance to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

Gift giving is a wonderful tradition but too many of us tend to go overboard and often measure another's love and care by the gifts they give and receive. And some people give gifts out of a feeling of obligation or just because someone gives them one. Many feel embarrassed if a person gives them a gift and they have nothing to give in return.

Gift giving is meant to be a sign of one's love, not an obligation. God showed his love by giving us the greatest gift of all—his son, Jesus Christ. I heard it put simply in a Christmas homily. The priest said that Christmas is God's way of showing us how much he loves us. That sums up the message of Christianity.

Whether we recognize it or not, God's love touches every human being and the

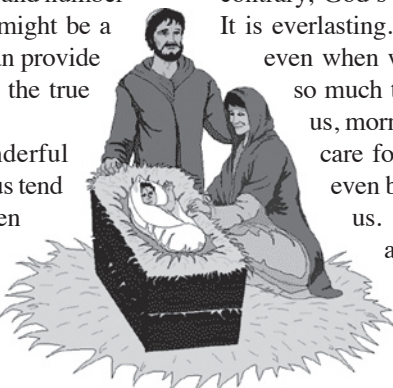
world. Without this divine love nothing would exist. God's love is the glue that keeps the world together and gives us hope.

Material gifts don't last forever. Many things get lost, broken, lose their usefulness or we get bored with them. On the contrary, God's love for us never fades. It is everlasting. God is always faithful, even when we are not. God loves us so much that he desires to be with us, morning, noon and night. His care for us is so great that God even became a human being for us. This is what we celebrate at Christmas. Sure, it is always nice to give and receive gifts, but our greatest gift is salvation given by Jesus.

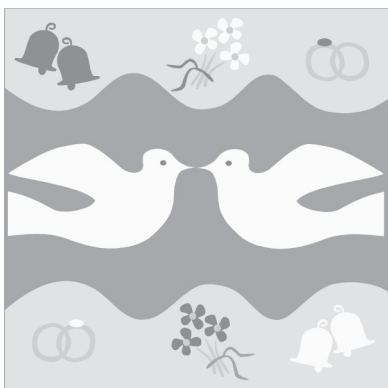
God's gift is love and the way God loves is through us. We are his instruments of love. God can't give a hug, but we can.

During this Christmas season we can give the kind of gifts that don't require a lot of money and won't overtax our credit cards. Let us give of ourselves rather than material things we may not be able to afford. We can work on mending or renewing old relationships. Or we can do that charitable act that we often think about but never seem to get around to carrying out. Let us live out our good intentions. Other things we might do are to visit or call people we know who are lonely and need some comfort. We might offer to babysit for a young couple who rarely get time alone. These little kindnesses are often appreciated more than another bottle of perfume or shaving lotion.

Gift-giving is okay as long as it doesn't get in the way of the reason for this season. And parents, teach your children the true meaning of Christmas. Let them know that your love for them is not measured by what is under the tree.



Longest Married Contest



Do you know of a couple you think might be the longest married couple in the Diocese of Victoria? If so, please send their names, their parish, the number of years they've been married, and the date of their sacramental wedding to *The Catholic Lighthouse* by January 10, 2012! We'll make the announcement in the February issue of *The Catholic Lighthouse*. Include submitter's contact information.

December Puzzle Prize is a book on Pope John Paul II and Business

"John Paul II showed me what real leadership looks like. He modeled for me how to pursue our God-given potential. Not coincidentally, this also makes us and those around us better employees, more capable of and more willing to work hard at building a stronger company. That's something that makes both good human sense and good business sense."

- Andreas Widmer

Former Swiss Guard, CEO, and business leader Andreas Widmer gives a be-

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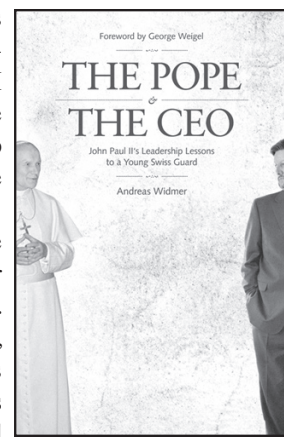
November Puzzle Contest Winners Announced

The winner of the November contest and the book *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians – The Religious Roots of Free Societies* by Marcello Pera with a preface by Pope Benedict XVI is Elizabeth Janak of Queen of Peace Parish in Sweet Home. The winners of the children's contest are Ethan Sanchez of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Victoria (10), and Makensie Till of St. Philip School in El Campo (8). They each will receive a gift from the Incarnate Word Gift Shop. The winner of the December Puzzle Contest will win *The Pope & The CEO – John Paul II's Leadership Lessons to a Young Swiss Guard* by Andreas Widmer and published by Emmaus Road Publishing, Steubenville, Ohio; emmausroad.org. Please mail all completed December puzzle forms to arrive in *The Catholic Lighthouse* office, P. O. Box 4070, Victoria, TX 77903 by Tuesday, January 3, 2012.

hind-the-scenes look into Pope John Paul II, "the most authentically human person I've ever met," and reveals how those memories shaped and forged his success as a corporate executive. In what papal biographer George Weigel calls "a powerful example of leadership at work," Widmer recounts his personal experiences serving Blessed Pope John Paul II in the Swiss Guard, and the secrets of successful leadership that he learned at the feet of the great pope.

Andreas' insights from daily life with a great man like John Paul II drives home the point that business decisions can be made from purely human motives OR with God's inspiration for us and for our work.

The Pope & The CEO offers nine chapters of stories and reflections about John Paul II and practical applications connecting those teachings to the world of business, big or small, and to anyone wanting to lead a team of people in today's world.



This up-close look at the pope's influence raises the bar for leadership to new heights. Christian executives, CEOs, entrepreneurs, small business owners—anyone who wants to avoid mediocrity—will find the lessons Widmer learned and imparts both inspirational and practical.

Published by Emmaus Road, this is a first of its kind look into the life of a Swiss Guard and what he learned from perhaps the greatest Christian of our time. Widmer's observation of John Paul II, and his direct experience of the late pope's approach to leadership, had a profound impact on the way he sees the centrality of human interaction: "When you were with the Holy Father, you felt like you were the reason he got up in the morning."

Cardinal Peter Turkson comments that this book is "an excellent tribute to the memory of [Pope John Paul II] and a commendable guide to successful entrepreneurship."

Widmer learned from the pope that moral leadership doesn't just make a difference for the leaders themselves, but makes a difference for their companies, customers, and teams. Companies, led by a strong, moral leader, says Widmer, also have a proven track record of performing better in the long run.

The Pope & the CEO retails for \$12.95 from Emmaus Road Publishing www.emmausroad.org; 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" paperback, 152 pages. For a chance to win *The Pope & the CEO*, complete the December Family Puzzle Contest and mail it to *The Catholic Lighthouse* to arrive in the office by January 3, 2012.

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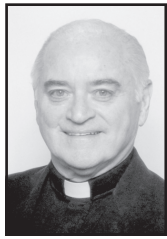
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Spirituality for Today

By Father John Catoir
Catholic News Service



Christmas and the divinity of Jesus Christ

The church has a grave responsibility to insist that the purity of revelation be upheld.

Why?

Because, in our pop culture, the divinity of Christ is constantly being challenged.

One of the bestselling books in recent years was "A Course in Miracles," which has spawned dozens of other self-help books. It teaches pious platitudes -- and promotes theological errors!

Here are just a few errors that I found in it:

1. "There is no need for help to enter heaven, for you have never left."

2. God does not help because there is no need for such help.

3. Jesus was merely a man who saw the face of God in all his brothers and sisters.

4. Jesus became identified with the Christ, this is what all of you must become.

5. Jesus is a carrier of a single message, the love of God. It is possible to read his message and benefit from it without accepting him into your life.

All of the above propositions are FALSE.

What is TRUE is the following:

1. God is in heaven, we are in the far country, and the wise ones among us are striving to

get there.

2. We do need God's help to come home to heaven.

3. Jesus is truly divine, and he teaches his followers to see God's face in everyone.

4. Jesus alone is the Christ; we are all invited to share in his divine life.

In a section of the book entitled "Walking With Christ," we read, "And what of him (Jesus)? What does he want of you? ... If he be the leader or the follower to you, it matters not. ... The voice

you hear in him is but your own ... voice requesting what you want."

This is rubbish, pure heresy. The ideas in this book will confuse and disquiet a person of faith. They contain a denial of the divinity of Jesus, and a rejection of his unique role in salvation history. They disregard the essential idea that our surrender to the objective will of God is what Jesus demanded of us.

Jesus is not merely a gifted human being; he is the Messiah, the Christ, the incarnation of God.

We need Jesus -- and the church that he founded -- to teach us the truth of divine revelation.

There is a growing disconnection between pop culture and the truth of Christianity.

Jesus is Lord.

When you say "Merry Christmas" this year, remember that the Divine Infant is the incarnation of the holiness of God.

Pro-life advocate will speak with VC Lyceum Lecture series

Rebecca Kiessling will speak January 31, 2012, as part of the Victoria College Lyceum Lecture series. She will tell her stirring story of hope. Kiessling is a pro-life advocate with the perspective of someone who would not be here today if abortion were legal in Michigan at the time of her conception.

Kiessling was conceived as a result of rape. Her mother, who attempted on two occasions to abort her, gave her up for adoption when she was an infant.

When Kiessling met her birth mother and learned of this as a

teenager, she struggled to figure out who she was and how to feel good about being alive. Since then, she has realized that life is a gift and every child is precious. Her unique perspective on such a polarizing issue highlights a very different viewpoint on two relevant women's issues: rape and abortion.

Now a family law attorney and women's advocate, Rebecca Kiessling will speak at noon on Tuesday, Jan. 31, at the VISD Fine Arts Center at 1002 Sam Houston Drive, Victoria.

Pope says prostitution, pornography threaten human dignity of women

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI called for an end to prostitution and pornography, saying the practices denigrate women and represent "a serious lack of humanity." The pope made the remarks as he welcomed Reinhard Schweppe as Germany's ambassador to the Holy See Nov. 7. The pope's talk focused on the church's role in defending human dignity. "A relationship that does not take into account the fact that a man and a woman have the same dignity represents a serious lack of humanity," the pope said. With

the "materialistic and hedonistic tendencies" that seem to be gaining space in the West, there is a growing form of discrimination against women, the pope said. "The moment has come to energetically halt prostitution as well as the widespread distribution of material with an erotic and pornographic content, including through the Internet in particular," he said.

Advent Prayer

Father, in the wilderness of the Jordan you sent a messenger to prepare people's hearts for the coming of your Son. Help me to hear his words and repent of my sins, so that I may clearly see the way to walk, the truth to speak, and the life to live for Him, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sunday Readings from Dec. 11 to Jan. 15

December 11 —
Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11
Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54
1 Thessalonians 5:1-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 18 —
Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Psalms 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

December 25 —
Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
At the Vigil Mass

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalms 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Matthew 1:1-25

December 25 —
Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Mass at Dawn

Isaiah 62:11-12
Psalms 97:1, 6, 11-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:15-20

January 1 —
Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Numbers 6:22-27
Psalms 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

January 8 —
The Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

January 15 —
Second Sunday
In Ordinary Time

1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19
Psalms 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10
1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20
John 1:35-42

All daily and Sunday readings, as well as a daily reflection video, are available in text or video at:

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Pope Benedict XVI's Intentions December 2011

General Intention: That the nations of the earth, through knowledge and mutual respect, may grow in harmony and peace.

Missionary Intention: That children and young people may be messengers of the Gospel and that their dignity may always be respected and preserved from all violence and exploitation.

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- Set up a plan of action to ensure your safety. Hide car keys, personal documents and money in a safe place. Determine somewhere to go in an emergency.
- Find local resources that help battered women and their children. Counselors at Catholic Charities agencies can provide emergency assistance and other help.
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides crisis intervention and referrals to local service providers. Call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224 or e-mail ndvh@ndvh.org.

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Umbert the Unborn

by Gary Cangemi

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2. PLANNED PARENTHOOD DOES ONLY **ONE** ADOPTION FOR EVERY **135** ABORTIONS.

3. BUT DOESN'T ADOPTION TURN PEOPLE INTO PARENTS, AS IN PARENTHOOD?

4. THIS ORGANIZATION NEEDS SOME SERIOUS RE-BRANDING!

www.umberttheunborn.com



Deacon Catarino Villanueva, who was ordained in 2010 and now serves at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Harlingen, Texas, is shown on active duty as a member of the National Guard deployed to Afghanistan in 2005. While in that country, he and chaplain assistant Deacon Paul Rodriguez of the Diocese of Austin, remodeled a dilapidated chapel on Forward Operating Base Ghazni, complete with a tabernacle, Stations of the Cross, and a red sanctuary light. (CNS photo/courtesy Deacon Villanueva)

Time in Afghanistan made deacon grateful for country, religious freedom

By Rose Ybarra
Catholic News Service

HARLINGEN, Texas (CNS) — When Deacon Catarino Villanueva arrived on Forward Operating Base Ghazni, Afghanistan, in 2005 for a yearlong deployment with the National Guard, he immediately looked for opportunities to practice his Catholic faith.

“I wanted to see what they had there as far as my spirituality,” said Deacon Villanueva, who was ordained to the permanent diaconate in December 2010 and assigned to Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Harlingen. “There was nothing there, just a bare tent with some makeshift benches.”

Deacon Villanueva, who was discerning a call to the diaconate at the time, became fast friends with a Catholic chaplain assistant, Deacon Paul Rodriguez of the Diocese of Austin.

“There was a lot of work to do on the chapel and I had been praying to God that someone would help me,” Deacon Rodriguez said.

“(Deacon) Villanueva walked into the chapel and introduced himself. He told me he was considering being a deacon.”

Both men were inspired and determined to revamp the chapel. They also began praying the Liturgy of the Hours together every day.

“We wanted something better for our troops,” said Deacon Villanueva, who was with Charlie Company 3/144 Infantry. “Deacon Paul was starting to remodel that chapel and so I started helping him out whenever I could. I would get up in the morning and we’d go out and do a mission.”

“As soon as we’d come back, we’d take care of our vehicles and our weapons and clean everything up, then I would run out to the chapel and help him paint, cut boards and put up the walls and the ceil-

ing,” he said in an interview with *The Valley Catholic*, newspaper of the Brownsville Diocese.

Deacon Rodriguez said soldiers rarely used the chapel because it was so hot and leaked when it rained. He and Deacon Villanueva used sheets of Styrofoam that were leftover from the food shipments as insulation between the wood in the new chapel.

The men had a tabernacle and a rug made by the local villagers and ordered a red perpetual light and Stations of the Cross to complete the chapel.

The chapel was dedicated on Easter 2006, which also happened to be Deacon Rodriguez’s birthday. A priest flew in to celebrate Mass that day for the troops.

“It was the greatest birthday present,” said Deacon Rodriguez, who recently returned to the U.S. after a deployment to Iraq. He serves at St. Margaret Mary Church in Cedar Park.

With the new tabernacle, Deacon Rodriguez was able to store consecrated hosts and have more Communion services between visits from traveling priests, who flew in every now and then to celebrate Mass.

“It was important for me and Deacon Paul to have Eucharist for the soldiers, to offer these Communion services,” said Deacon Villanueva, a married father of four and grandfather of six. During his tour, he went from discernment to decision and completed a formal application to the diaconate formation program.

Deacon Villanueva served in the Army from 1979 to 1990, leaving at age 30. At age, 45, he re-enlisted and was deployed to Afghanistan.

“I wanted to continue to serve my country,” he said. “I felt that it was something that I needed to do.”

Deacon Villanueva’s time in Afghanistan made him more grateful than ever for his faith and for his country, for the religious freedom that we have and the opportunity to attend Mass regularly, daily, if desired.

He said some Afghans were hired to do maintenance work on the base. Although Deacon Villanueva and other Christians on base never proselytized, some of the workers were interested in the Catholic faith and quietly inquired about it. Islam is the official state religion of Afghanistan and there is not a single, public Christian church left in Afghanistan, according to the



Ekol Ankourajman (Encouragement School) is an after school study program for 70 young adolescents and teenagers that come to our Louverture Cleary school each day to learn reading, writing and other skills they need to improve their situations. Every school day at 3:30 p.m., 25 of our Louverture Cleary students become Ankourajèyo (encouragers) as they greet their students at our library door and ask them how their day was. Our students are there for support and encouragement as well as knowledge.

Haitian school getting back to normal

By Jon Kennedy

The Haitian Project, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, is a Catholic Mission which supports and operates Louverture Cleary School (LCS), a tuition-free, Catholic, co-educational secondary boarding school for economically under-privileged Haitian children. Learn more at <http://haitian-project.org/about.htm>. Donations may be sent to: The Haitian Project; P.O. Box 6891; Providence, RI 02940

Eight o’clock in the morning is when most jobs begin in the United States. Here at LCS, however, things work a bit differently. By 8:00 a.m., the 11 year-old to 19 year-old LCS students have already accomplished the following: showered, cleaned their dorms, eaten breakfast, attended a small group meeting (led by Rheto [12th grade] and Philo [13th grade] students), attended the 1st period of class, read the Gospel in the language of the day, sang the Dessalinienne – the national anthem of Haiti – and raised the Haitian, US, and LCS flags. By 8:00 a.m. the students have already started 2nd period in what will likely be a busy and very productive day.

Classes continue throughout the day with students transitioning from Haitian Literature, to philosophy, to English, to physics, to Spanish, to physical education. By 3:30 p.m., classes have finished and “netwayaj” has begun – the daily cleaning of the school led by the oldest students. Following netwayaj is an hour of free time, dinner, and then study hall from 7:30-9:30 p.m. Then it’s lights out on campus at 10:00 p.m., bringing an end to another packed day.

An essential component of life at LCS is community service, in which students of all grade levels participate. For example, the LCS Timoun Program offers an early childhood education to children from the “zone,” our Santo 5 neighborhood. Working alongside Christina Moynihan, director of Community Outreach and the wife of The Haitian Project’s president, Patrick Moynihan, the volunteers, the Haitian staff, and LCS students give their time and energy to serve the children of the neighborhood. Nearly as tiny as the Timoun children themselves, Dimanche Mirey-de-Bertin, a Sizyem (7th grade) student, volunteers weekly with the program. Instructing mathematics, reading, and writing, Dimanche enjoys the opportunity to help others. As she explained, “I feel happy because I love children and teaching others to write and to read will help their future.”

It is not only children from Santo 5 to whom LCS students offer their time and talents. Each day, after classes finish, the older LCS students operate an

education and literacy program called Ti Ekol. Adolescents from the Santo area as well as members of the LCS staff, such as our cooks and maintenance crew, attend classes taught by LCS students. Jean Louis Olgivens, a Rheto student, teaches mathematics, science, and social science. It is Olgivens’ second year teaching and he finds great meaning in his work. He commented, “It is good to serve people before yourself, that is why I do Ti Ekol ... If I give my help, those children can move forward and have a place in society.”

Community service does not only occur inside the school’s walls. Our students understand that they have an obligation to spread the mentality of LCS throughout Haiti. Around 3:45 p.m. each day, over 100 LCS students leave the school and clean Santo 5 and Route Nationale 3, the main road connecting Port au Prince to Croix des Bouquets, a nearby city. Jeff Benoit, a Sekond (11th grade) student, has participated in LCS’s off-campus trash program since its expansion during the fall of 2009. This year he is the program’s student leader and is responsible for planning, delegating, and ensuring that all work groups are held accountable for assigned projects. Confident and always smiling, it is clear that Jeff is not only picking up trash, he is also changing Haiti. As he explains, “When I think of the meaning of the work we do, I see it as a way to show the Haitian people how to protect the environment, and it also teaches the students how to work. We see how this work is useful and by working together we can change the future.”

Further down Route Nationale 3 is a long-time partner of LCS, a medical clinic and rehabilitation center operated by Memphis Medical Missions. With volunteer medical professionals from all over the world, there is a daily need for translators capable of interpreting in multiple languages. Fortunately, LCS sends a group of student translators to the clinic each morning to provide free translating services to the international medical staff – whether they are from the US, Canada, or Chile. Being able to speak four languages makes our students invaluable, and they love the opportunity to serve and practice their language skills. Rose Martine Clerge, a Sekond student, often translates at the clinic and describes her motivation to serve as a “need to participate in helping my country. We always say the youth are the hope for Haiti; translating allows me to be that hope.”

From the testament of our students, we can see that they have the right motivation to do service. On a practical basis, this pays off when they are looking for work. Employers like experience, especially this kind of *real world* experience.

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THE POPE SPEAKS

Pope Benedict XVI



CNS photo from Reuters

Pope praises efforts to ban death penalty, tells of the joy of the Benin people, and reminds that Christ is victorious

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Benedict XVI gave a special greeting of encouragement to delegations meeting in Rome — including a group from Illinois — to promote the abolition of the death penalty.

During his weekly audience Nov. 30 at the Vatican, Pope Benedict said he hoped the work of the delegations would “encourage political and legislative initiatives being promoted in a number of countries to eliminate the death penalty” and promote progress in penal law that speaks equally to “the human dignity of prisoners and the effective maintenance of public order.”

The 12-person Illinois group, members of the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, was led by state Rep. Karen Yarbrough. Under Gov. Pat Quinn, Illinois became the 16th state to abolish the death penalty in March.

Following the audience, Yarbrough told Catholic News Service that the papal audience represented a capstone to an intense year of efforts that paid off with legislation banning capital punishment in Illinois.

The Nov. 29-30 Rome meeting, sponsored by the Sant’Egidio Community, encouraged people in cities around the world to join a public demonstration of opposition to the death penalty. In Rome, for example, the Colosseum was to be lit up Nov. 30 to show the city’s adherence to the initiative.

Yarbrough said that “lighting the Colosseum, once a place of death, means a lot.”

The main part of the pope’s audience talk dealt with the significance of prayer in the life of Jesus Christ and in his relationship with God, a continuation of his series of reflections on prayer.

Through prayer with God, the pope said, Jesus “received the confirmation of his mission” among men.

Jesus learned to pray from his very

Time in Afghanistan made deacon grateful for country, religious freedom

Continued from p. 14

U.S. State Department.

“We taught some of them how to pray the rosary, which they had to do in secret,” Deacon Villanueva said. “The Afghan people face grave consequences if they are caught practicing Christian activities.”

Deacon Rodriguez planned to take the tabernacle with him when he left Afghanistan since many of the military chaplains are not Catholic. The next group of soldiers that came in, however, happened to have a Catholic priest among them, which is rare, Deacon Rodriguez noted.

“I requested that the tabernacle be sent to me when they left,” said Deacon Rodriguez, who sought to protect the tabernacle.

After that group left, an Orthodox priest was assigned to the area and he wanted to continue using the tabernacle. Then a group of Polish soldiers came in and also used the tabernacle.

“So many Catholics following us there, it’s not a coincidence,” Deacon Rodriguez said. “If you build it, they will come.”

devout mother and the Jewish tradition, but the real source of his prayer was his “eternal communion with the Father.”

Pope Benedict said Jesus teaches today’s Christians that prayer must be constant, profound and characterized by “self-surrender and complete openness to God.”

At the audience in the previous week, Nov. 23, Pope Benedict XVI said his second trip to Africa left him convinced that the joy and faith of the continent’s people — especially the young — represent a hope for all humanity.

The pope made the remarks at his general audience Nov. 23, three days after returning from a weekend visit to Benin in West Africa, where he unveiled a major document on the future of the Church on the continent.

The pope said the visit, in particular the “unforgettable” Mass he celebrated for 50,000 people in a Cotonou stadium, showed that faith in Christ is capable of uniting generations and responding to their expectations.

“Through the joy and enthusiasm of the entire population, especially the children who represent the future, one could see the freshness of the ‘yes’ to life and the perception of reality in its connection with God,” he said.

He said his meeting with schoolchildren in Ouidah was a highlight of the visit, demonstrating that Africa has a “reserve supply of vitality” that will help Catholics in their task of evangelizing. His document, he said, was designed to help Catholics live their faith fully and become builders of communion, peace and justice in their societies.

The pope addressed about 7,000 people in the Paul VI audience hall, reviewing the trip in detail and greeting pilgrims in 10 languages. His words of greeting to a group of Gypsy peoples from Hungary drew a lively round of applause.

In his Nov. 16 weekly audience in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Benedict said belief in Resurrection means belief in final victory of love.

Believing in Christ’s resurrection means that no matter how difficult life gets, one believes that love and goodness are far more powerful than hatred and evil, he said.

“Yes, in the world there is much evil, there is a permanent battle between good and evil and it seems that evil is stronger. But, no, the Lord is stronger,” the pope said. “Despite all the things that make us doubt the positive outcome of history, Christ wins and goodness wins. Love, and not hatred, wins.”

Just a few days before the feast of Christ the King, Pope Benedict spoke at his audience about Psalm 110, a psalm about a king, which the New Testament repeatedly holds up as a reference to Christ.

The pope said he wanted to give Catholics a taste of praying with the biblical psalms, which “reflect various life situations and emotional states” in people’s attitudes toward God — from thanksgiving to desperate pleas for God’s help.

Stories by Sarah Delaney, John Thavis and Cindy Wooden with the Catholic News Service

University of Arkansas football player recalled as ‘an amazing soul’

By Catholic News Service

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (CNS) — The Catholic community in Little Rock and Fayetteville joined the rest of the state in mourning the death of University of Arkansas football player Garrett Uekman.



University of Arkansas football player Garrett Uekman (CNS photo/Wesley Hitt, University)

As a testament to what classmates, friends and family members thought of Uekman, a string of candlelight vigils, rosaries and prayer services were held in both areas before his Nov. 28 funeral

Mass at Christ the King Church in Little Rock. More than 1,100 people attended his funeral, including coach Bobby Petrino, a member of St. Joseph Church in Fayetteville, as well as university officials and football players.

Uekman, 19, played in a televised game against Mississippi State Nov. 19 at War Memorial Stadium in Little Rock, the same venue where he played for Catholic High School. He returned to Fayetteville that night, but the next morning he died from an untreated heart condition.

On Nov. 25, Uekman was remembered during one of the Razorbacks’ biggest games in decades, a loss to No. 1 Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Stickers, posters and armbands with “88,” Uekman’s jersey number, were often seen as memorials to the player.

Uekman’s funeral Mass was celebrated by Msgr. Lawrence Frederick, rector of Catholic High. He was assisted by six Little Rock diocesan priests.

At the conclusion of the Mass, Steve Straessle, principal of the high school who also taught Uekman, said the former

student’s legacy will be that he lived the school’s motto: “Never be a bystander.”

“If your faith is tested, defend it. If someone is hungry, feed him. If one is downcast, encourage him. If your test is difficult, prepare for it. If your friends are in trouble, step up. If the little guy needs you, be there,” he said.

“Bystanders watch life go by. People like Garrett Uekman get in the game,” he continued. “Bad things happen when bystanders are in the crowd. Good things come forth when people like Garrett Uekman come forth. You don’t live your dreams by twiddling your thumbs.”

Straessle said even as a freshman Uekman presented himself as a role model.

“He stood out as a gifted athlete and one of the smart kids, but more importantly he slowly built a solid reputation as a man of faith, a man who respected and adored his family. To say that the other boys looked up to Garrett Uekman is to say that Mount Everest is a mountain. He was just that good.”

“He was such a wonderful student. He excelled at everything. He always gave 100 percent. Everybody looked up to him,” said Christie Powell, the parish’s youth and religious education director. She taught Uekman religion and art in grade school.

On the high school football team, he was a tight end and was heavily recruited in the spring 2010. His dream was to play for the University of Arkansas and wanted to make his “mark” in football. This season he played nine of the 11 games for the No. 6 Razorbacks as a tight end.

While in college, he attended Mass at St. Joseph Church and St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish in Fayetteville, but he still could be found often at Immaculate Heart of Mary attending Mass with his parents and sister.

Powell said she was not surprised to see him play football on Saturday and on Sunday morning he’d be sitting with his family in the usual pew.

Annual Collection Supports 34,000 Retired Sisters, Brothers, Priests in Religious Orders

The 24th annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious will be taken up December 10-11, 2011, in the Diocese of Victoria. Sponsored by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) in Washington, D.C., the appeal asks Catholics to Share in the Care of more than 34,000 women and men religious past age 70.

Last year, the Diocese of Victoria contributed \$56,160.24 to this collection. In 2011, the Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament received a combined total of \$78,549.56 in financial assistance made possible by the national appeal. Additionally, religious who serve or have served in the diocese but whose communities are based elsewhere may also benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious.

“We are continually humbled by the generosity shown this appeal,” said NRRO Executive Director Sister Janice Bader, a member of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, Missouri. “Since the fund was launched in 1988, Catholics have donated \$643 million to assist religious communities in caring for their elder members.”

As a result of the 2010 collection, which garnered \$26.7 million, the NRRO was able to distribute \$23 million to religious communities to help support the day-to-day care of senior members. An additional \$2.7 million was allocated toward initiatives targeted for religious communities with the greatest needs. Ninety-three cents of every

dollar aids elderly religious.

While the response to the collection is unprecedented, so is the need. In 2010 alone, the total cost of care for women and men religious past age 70 exceeded \$1 billion dollars. Nearly 5,000 religious required skilled care. At the same time, however, religious communities strive to minimize costs. In fact, the NRRO reports that the average cost of care for religious past age 70 dropped slightly this year.

For more information, please visit www.retiredreligious.org.

It’s Not too Early to Plan a Vacation!
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Meeting Highlights

2011 USCCB fall general assembly

APPROVED

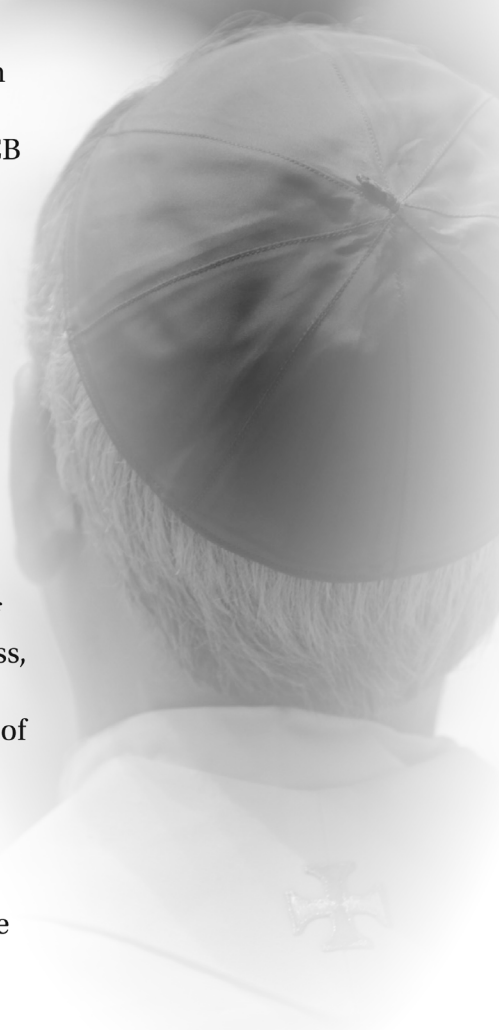
- Optional memorials for Blessed John Paul II and Blessed Marianne Cope for U.S. liturgical calendar.
- Budget of \$217.4 million for 2012 and 3 percent increase in diocesan assessments for 2013.
- Establishment of Subcommittee on Health Care Issues under Committee on Doctrine.
- New guidelines for administering USCCB national collections in dioceses.

HEARD REPORTS ON

- Threats to religious liberty in the U.S.
- Efforts to strengthen marriage.
- Situation in Iraq .
- Expanding the Project Rachel post-abortion healing program.
- New Roman Missal translation.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Heard Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York, in his first presidential address, encourage efforts to restore the luster, credibility and beauty of church in eyes of its members and others.
- Chose Archbishop J. Peter Sartain of Seattle as secretary-elect.
- Learned that a new ordinariate will be created Jan. 1 to bring Anglicans into the U.S. Catholic Church.
- Welcomed Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano as new apostolic nuncio to the United States.



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CUA president pleased ruling confirms legality of single-sex dorms

WASHINGTON (CNS)—John Garvey, president of The Catholic University of America, said he was “gratified” by the dismissal of a complaint filed against the university saying its single-sex dorms discriminated against women. “We were confident from the beginning that our actions were entirely legal,” Garvey said in a statement. The Nov. 29 order by the District of Columbia’s Office of Human Rights said offering only single-sex dormitories is not unlawful discrimination under the city’s Human Rights Act. It noted that if colleges were to comply with the complaint’s reasoning, it would cause “a prohibition on same-sex bathrooms, locker rooms and sports teams, which would lead to absurd results.” The complaint was filed by John Banzhaf, a public-interest law professor at George Washington University, also in Washington. Banzhaf filed another complaint in October against Catholic University, saying the school discriminated against Muslim students by failing to provide prayer rooms free of Catholic symbols. The complaint is still pending before the Human Rights Office. In an Oct. 28 statement to parents, students and faculty members, Garvey called that complaint a “manufactured controversy.” The order dismissing the complaint against

single-sex dorms pointed out that Banzhaf only provided “conjecture and speculation” instead of facts about how single-sex dorms might negatively affect women. It also said Banzhaf “has not demonstrated that women would not have equivalent access to educational opportunities or be subject to any material harm.”

Obama said to seek balance

WASHINGTON (CNS)—A White House spokesman said the Obama administration is working to “strike the right balance between expanding coverage of preventive services and respecting religious beliefs” as it decides on a religious exemption to the mandate that all health plans cover contraceptives and sterilizations by Jan. 1, 2013. “This decision has not yet been made,” said Jay Carney, press secretary, in response to a question at the Nov. 29 White House press briefing. Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, announced an interim final rule Aug. 1 that would require all health plans to cover contraceptives — including some that can cause abortions — and sterilizations free of charge. Only religious employers meeting four criteria would be exempt from the mandate. Those requirements are that the organization “(1) has the inculcation of religious values as its purpose; (2) primarily employs persons who share its religious tenets;

(3) primarily serves persons who share its religious tenets; and (4) is a nonprofit organization” under specific sections of the Internal Revenue Code. Leaders of various Catholic and other faith-based organizations have protested the exemption as too narrow and have said such a mandate could force them to stop offering some social services, education or health care to the general public. A 60-day comment period on the proposed religious exemption ended Sept. 30 and a final decision was expected from HHS by the end of the year. In the meantime, the contraceptive mandate as an “interim final rule,” as the federal government terms it, has “the full force and effect of law.” After any such comment period, a federal agency could issue a revised final rule “or confirm the interim rule as final.”

Senate committee passes bill to repeal Defense of Marriage Act

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Senate Judiciary Committee voted Nov. 10 to repeal a federal law defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman. But according to a number of lawmakers, it does not appear the legislation would have enough votes to pass the full Senate or the House if it makes it that far. The committee, which began debate on the measure Nov. 3, voted 10-8 along party lines to repeal the De-

Bishop of San Angelo honored with San Juan Diego Leadership Award

SAN ANTONIO—The Mexican American Catholic College honored Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI, with the San Juan Diego Leadership Award for his life-long commitment to Hispanic Ministry. The award, a beautiful crystal eagle, was presented during the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) General Assembly on November 14, 2011.



Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

MACC president, Dr. Arturo Chávez and the chairman of the board, Most Rev. Oscar Cantú, presented the award. “The eagle is a powerful and meaningful symbol for both the United States and Mexico representing courage and integrity. It represents St. Juan Diego who’s indigenous name means, He Who Speaks Like an Eagle,” explained Dr. Chávez. “Hispanics are already the majority of U.S. Catholics under the age of 25. Unfortunately, they are leaving the Church in record numbers to join other denominations actively seeking them out through home visitations and lively worship services in Spanish. Leaders like Bishop Michael are needed now more than ever to find innovative ways to bring the Gospel and catechesis to Hispan-

ics and all Catholics searching for belonging and meaning.” Bishop Pfeifer’s longstanding commitment to the mission of MACC, including his 25 years of service on the board, is a testament to the importance of the Church’s outreach to Hispanics. During his 15-year tenure as chair, he was instrumental in expanding MACC’s mission to become an institution of higher education precisely to prepare seminarians, deacons, religious and lay leaders to effectively and faithfully promote the Church’s call for a new evangelization

Bishop Pfeifer was born in Alamo, Texas, and ordained to the priesthood in 1964. In 1985 he was appointed bishop by Pope John Paul II to serve as Shepherd for the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo. Prior to this, he served in parishes and schools in Brownsville Texas, Mexico City, and Oaxaca, Mexico. Bishop Pfeifer also served as provincial superior for the Southern U.S. Province and Mexico for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the ‘80s. He is renowned for his sense of humor, humility, and results-oriented leadership at the Texas Catholic Conference and is on several USCCB committees, especially promoting Multicultural and Hispanic Ministry. For more information on MACC please visit www.maccsa.org.

fense of Marriage Act (DOMA). The U.S. bishops urged the Senate Judiciary Committee not to repeal the federal act, calling it important for human rights and the common good. “DOMA advances the common good in a manner consistent with the human dignity of all persons,” Bishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of Oakland, Calif., chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, wrote in a Nov. 2 letter to committee members. DOMA defines marriage as a union between one man and one woman and gives states the authority to reject same-sex marriages that may have been legally recognized in other states. The Senate Judiciary Committee began debate Nov. 3 on legislation to repeal the law. Called the Respect for Marriage Act, the legislation would end what its supporters consider illegal discrimination against legally married same-sex couples. However, advocates for traditional marriage said the Senate bill, S. 598, and an identical House bill, H.R. 1116, would open the door to redefining marriage and would eventually force states where same-sex marriage is illegal to recognize such unions. “All persons have a rightful claim to our utmost respect,” wrote Bishop Cordileone. “There is no corresponding duty, however, for society to disregard the meaning of sexual difference and its practical consequences for the common good; to override fundamental rights, such as religious liberty; and to re-define our most basic social institution.” He said DOMA’s definition of

marriage reflects a long-standing consensus based in reason that is “accessible to people of all faiths or none at all.”

Targeting Mormon faith should be off-limits in election, statement says

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Comments made recently about the religious affiliation of presidential candidates — notably the Mormon faith of former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney — have no place in American political campaigns, say several dozen academics, diplomats and other prominent Catholics. In a statement released Nov. 2 at a Washington news conference led by former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican Thomas Melady, the statement says there is “significant danger to the goal of our forefathers; maintaining harmony and understanding among all faiths and rejecting bigoted questions and comments about personal religious beliefs.” Melady said the impetus to issue the statement arose from comments made in early October at the Values Voter Summit in Washington by the Rev. Robert Jeffress, senior pastor of a megachurch, First Baptist Church of Dallas. Rev. Jeffress told reporters that Mormonism is a “cult,” and that Romney is not a Christian. In their statement, the Catholic signers recalled the history of anti-Catholic rhetoric in elections, from the 1928 campaign of Al Smith through John
See Targeting Mormon faith,
p. 17



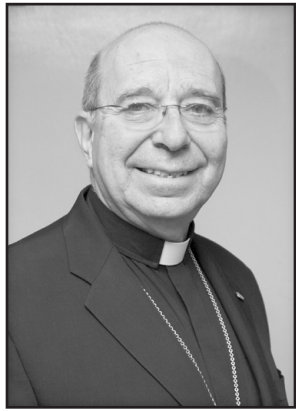
Targeting Mormon faith

Continued from p. 16

F. Kennedy's 1960 race and the 2004 campaign of Sen. John Kerry. It noted that there has been less expression of religious bias or bigotry in recent elections, but that the comments at the Values Voter Summit "bring to the forefront the unfortunate prospect that the discussion of a man's particular religious belief may become a major divisive political issue." It said that as Catholics of different political persuasions, they "wish to cite our concern and our determination to assure that not only civility be maintained in the public discourse but that all inclinations to raise the issue of personal religious affiliation be avoided.

Pope Benedict appoints Bishop Ochoa of El Paso to head Fresno Diocese

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI has named Bishop Armando X. Ochoa of El Paso, Texas, to head the Diocese of Fresno, Calif. He succeeds Bishop John T. Steinbock, who died Dec. 5, 2010, after battling lung cancer. A native of California,



Bishop Ochoa, 68, has headed the Texas diocese since July 1996. Before that, he was an auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles for 10 years. His appointment to Fresno was

announced in Washington Dec. 1 by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, apostolic nuncio to the United States. Bishop Ochoa is one of 26 active Hispanic Catholic bishops in the United States. At the national level, he has served on bishops' committees on vocations, laity, permanent diaconate, Hispanic affairs and migration. "I am humbled and deeply honored that the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI would offer me this new challenge at my age," Bishop Ochoa said in a statement addressed to "my former and new collaborators in the vineyard of the Lord." At a late morning news conference Dec. 1, Bishop Ochoa said he would miss the "friendship and warmth of the people of the El Paso Diocese" when he leaves to take up his new appointment. "This has been my family for the past 15 years," he said. He also said the El Paso Diocese has been working to provide a welcoming atmosphere for Catholics fleeing the violence and turmoil in Ciudad Juarez and the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. The cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez are twin cities joined by four bridges along the Rio Grande. Bishop Ochoa has been a regular participant in cross-border Masses over the years, as well as joining in delegations of bishops and other officials visiting the U.S.-Mexico border. Bishop Ochoa has begun preparations for the Diocese of El Paso to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2014, but the final details of that event will be up to his successor.



World Day for Migrants and Refugees – January 15
Please pray for all homeless people

Mexican groups to governments: Resolve situation of Guatemalan farmers

MEXICO CITY (CNS) — A coalition of Mexican human rights groups has called on the Mexican and Guatemalan governments to resolve the situation of some 300 farm families who fled a violent eviction in northern Guatemala and now reside in squalor on the Mexican side of the border. A report issued by the 10 groups Nov. 22 said at least 100 children were among the displaced families residing in a camp without adequate sanitation a few hundred meters from the Guatemalan border in the Mexican municipality of Tenosique. Some of the residents are ill, while many children suffer from diarrhea. "This is a very desperate situation for the majority of the (displaced people)," Franciscan Father Tomas Gonzalez Castillo, who helps care for the displaced families, said at a Nov. 22 news conference at the Jesuit-run Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez Human Rights Center. The eviction highlights Guatemala's problems with security and human rights as parts of the country — especially the northern department of Peten — have been rife with drug-cartel violence and alleged human rights abuses. The report said the residents of a corn-farming village, Nueva Esperanza, were evicted Aug. 23 by the National Police, Guatemalan army and members of the National Council of Protected Areas; the villagers' homes were burned. The villagers, the report added, supposedly violated a law forbidding the establishment of settlements in protected areas, even though La Esperanza was founded prior to the law's implementation. Guatemalan officials have publicly alleged the families had connections to the drug trade, but Father Gonzalez rejected those allegations.

Church's role in helping immigrants indispensable, says Texas bishop

SAN ANTONIO (CNS) — A Catholic bishop told a San Antonio audience that "as a leaven in the wider community of peoples" and the bearer "of conscience and of hope," the Church must work in favor of the immigrant, preach the Gospel and focus on the youths. After outlining the changing dynamics of immigration and violence and addressing some of the effects on the local communities, Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville offered his "pastoral perspective and some thoughts about the indispensable role of the Church in facing the current reality on the border." He emphasized the need "to call attention to the plight of the innocent who suffer," and to the "urgent task" of connecting youths to the life of the Church. "We must raise a call to conscience for the people of our two great nations to see how a culture of violence and death is destroying a people and a culture that has endured and flourished on both sides of the border for many generations," he said. "This destructive blight affects us in different ways on the two sides of the (Rio Grande) River, but they are interrelated ways. We must insist in season and out of season that a just people distinguishes between the innocent and the guilty, and that a great and generous people respond to the plight of the widows and the orphans, those who mourn the loss of a brother, or a nephew, or a grandson," he added. Bishop Flores spoke at the opening of a recent immigration symposium at the Mexican American Catholic College. "It particularly falls to the whole Church in communion with the bishops in the United States to insist on a national level that current immigration law is neither sufficiently humane nor sufficiently realistic, especially in light of the rapidly changing dynamics affecting our people and our communities," he said. "It is a source of national embarrassment," he

2012 papal trip to Mexico, Cuba being studied seriously, spokesman says

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Vatican officials are at an advanced stage in studying the possibility of a papal trip to Mexico and Cuba in the spring of 2012, the Vatican spokesman said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the spokesman, told reporters Nov. 10 that the nuncios to Mexico and Cuba have been told to inform those governments that "the pope is studying a concrete plan to visit the two countries, responding to the invitations received" from them.

Father Lombardi said a definite decision regarding a trip in the spring should be made within a few weeks. The fact that the nuncios were asked to inform the govern-

continued, "that state and federal officials cannot reach a comprehensive, cohesive, humane and realistic approach to the current crisis." To hear Bishop Flores' address, please go to: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/texas-catholic-conference/id291973744> or go to the December issue of The Catholic Lighthouse on the diocesan website, go to pg. 17, and click on the above link.

Mass unites Mexicans, Americans separated by border fence

ANAPRA, Mexico (CNS) — The Mexican bishop often exchanged glances with his American counterpart as they celebrated the All Souls' Day Mass. But instead of embracing at the kiss of peace, they touched palms — though the chain-link fence. Hundreds of Mexicans and Americans joined their bishops for the Mass, enduring dusty wind that created a brown haze. On the Mexican side of the border, on a lot surrounded by trash, wandering dogs, and food vendors, a handful of the 200 attendees paid little attention to the Mass but clung to the fence and stared longingly at the congregation on the U.S. side. Bishop Armando X. Ochoa of El Paso, Texas, Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and Bishop Renato Ascencio Leon of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, concelebrated the annual border Mass on either side of the fence. The theme for this year's Mass was "Remembering Our Dead; Celebrating Life; Working for Justice." Betty Hernandez, 30, a mother of three and a youth minister at Corpus Christi Church in Anapra, said the Mass helps unify El Paso and Ciudad Juarez in a common cause of remembering those who have died in the drug violence as well as those who died in the nearby deserts, hoping to immigrate to the United States. Making this Mass even more poignant for Hernandez was the death of her neighbor, who was gunned down at a nearby burrito stand the previous week. "Where there is an abundance of pain and death is God's glory for us to hope," she said.

ments demonstrates the advanced nature of the planning, he said.

The Mexican government and Mexican Catholics repeatedly have said they'd like Pope Benedict to visit "and he is happy to finally be able to respond," the Jesuit said. The pope went to Brazil in 2007, but would like to visit a Spanish-speaking country in the region and Mexico is the largest of them.

"Cuba is another country that really wants to see the pope," he said, and a papal visit could offer great encouragement to the people and the country "in an important period of their history."

Father Lombardi said the timing would be related to the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the image of Our Lady of Charity of Cobre, the patroness of Cuba.

"Just looking at a map, you see that Cuba and Mexico are in the same direction from Rome, so it's logical to combine in a single trip these two countries, rather than others that would require a longer and more complex itinerary," the spokesman said.

He excluded other countries being added to the trip and said that because of the altitude of Mexico City, it is unlikely the pope would visit the Mexican capital. "The best alternatives" will be studied immediately, he said.

With the Latin American bishops committed for the past four years to a program of new evangelization, he said, the papal trip to Mexico and Cuba would be a fitting way to prepare the entire church for the *Year of Faith*, scheduled to begin in October 2012.

At a news conference during the Mexican bishops' general meeting in Cuautitlan Izcalli Nov. 10, Archbishop Rogelio Cabrera Lopez of Tuxtla Gutierrez said a Vatican commission would arrive in Mexico in the "coming days" to study the conditions for a possible papal visit.

"The will of the Holy Father is clear ... to visit our country in the coming months," said Archbishop Cabrera, conference vice president.

The bishops, he said, expect the pope to visit much of the country. This would include regions suffering violence from organized crime and also at least one place Blessed John Paul II was unable to visit during his five trips to Mexico.

He said he expected the pope to visit despite any possible controversies it would cause during the campaign for July 1 federal elections.

A visit by Pope Benedict next year would come as Mexico and the Vatican mark the 20th anniversary of the two states establishing diplomatic relations, which ended nearly 150 years of strained relations. Those relations have evolved to the point that a possible visit during an electoral period would probably draw less criticism than during past years: Mexican politicians regularly meet with senior clergy, and the leaders of the bishops' conference met with Mexican President Felipe Calderon on the eve of their latest assembly.

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10 reasons to reject Socialism

Reprinted from *America Needs Fatima*
Web site: www.americaneedsfatima.org/

1. Socialism and communism are the same ideology

Communism is but an extreme form of socialism. From the ideological standpoint, there is no substantial difference between the two. In fact, the communist Soviet Union called itself the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1922-1991) and communist China, Cuba and Vietnam define themselves as socialist nations.

2. Socialism violates personal freedom

Socialism seeks to eliminate "injustice" by transferring rights and responsibilities from individuals and families to the State. In the process, socialism actually creates injustice. It destroys true liberty: the freedom to decide all matters that lie within our own competence and to follow the course shown by our reason, within the laws of morality, including the dictates of justice and charity.

3. Socialism violates human nature

Socialism is anti-natural. It destroys personal initiative — a fruit of our intellect and free will — and replaces it with State control. It tends to totalitarianism, with its government and police repression, wherever it is implemented.

4. Socialism violates private property

Socialism calls for "redistributing the wealth" by taking from the "rich" to give to the poor. It imposes taxes that punish those who have been able to take greater advantage of their productive talents, capacity to work or thrift. It uses taxation to promote economic and social egalitarianism, a goal that will be fully achieved, according to The Communist Manifesto, with the "abolition of private property."

5. Socialism opposes traditional marriage

Socialism sees no moral reason for people to restrict sex to marriage, that is, to an indissoluble union between a man and a woman. Furthermore, socialism un-

dermines private property, which Friedrich Engels, founder of modern socialism and communism along with Karl Marx, saw as the foundation of traditional marriage.

6. Socialism opposes parental rights in education

Socialism has the State, and not parents, control the education of children. Almost from birth, children are to be handed over to public institutions, where they will be taught what the State wants, regardless of parental views. Evolution must be taught. School prayer must be forbidden.

7. Socialism promotes radical equality

A supposed absolute equality among men is the fundamental assumption of socialism. Therefore, it sees any inequality as unjust in itself. Private employers are quickly portrayed as "exploiters" whose profits really belong to their employees. As a consequence, they rule out the system of wage earning.

8. Socialism promotes atheism

Belief in God, who unlike us is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient, clashes head-on with the principle of absolute equality. Socialism therefore rejects the spiritual, claiming that only matter exists. God, the soul, and the next life are illusions according to socialism.

9. Socialism promotes relativism

For socialism there are no absolute truths or revealed morals that establish standards of conduct that apply to everyone, everywhere, and always. Everything evolves, including right and wrong, good and evil. There is no place for the Ten Commandments, neither in the private mind nor in the public square.

10. Socialism mocks religion

According to Karl Marx, religion is "the opium of the people." Lenin, founder of the Soviet Union, agreed: "Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man."

May God protect America from Socialism.

Three Cheers for Compassionate Capitalism!

One More Day Alive ~ Overcoming Life's Great Tragedies One Day at a Time

By Chris Benguhe

Profit and public responsibility, or at least accountability, are not unrelated. In fact, maybe they are inexorably connected to each other. But don't just take my word for it.



The recent backlash over proposed new debit card fees by banks in America is the perfect example. The fact that those banks finally listened to the protestations of their customers is the best news yet for the future of America — and the future of capitalism.

Because the last two years have been a real test for business in America making many wonder if capitalism would survive the backlash of public protests.

But the reality is that outside of a few wacky extremists crying for outright socialism most Americans don't oppose capitalism or profits. What they are fed up with, and rightfully so, is the proliferation of unfettered GREED and the rise of an embarrassingly irresponsible corporate culture of selfishness!

Case in point: the debit card fee fiasco. This all began in September after Bank of America foolishly decided to try to nickel and dime the American public (the same American public who bailed them out with a huge stimulus just a few years ago) by adding a \$5-a-month fee to use debit cards. Other banks soon announced they would do the same.

Within a few months there was a huge public outcry from customers with many threatening to leave en masse. All this finally made all the banks including Bank of America reverse their decision.

Now obviously these banks changed their minds because they realized that in

this particular situation they stood to lose customers. And that would cost them more profit in the long run than they would make in the short run by adding the fees.

But maybe this is more than just an isolated case. Maybe it means that corporate America is remembering the bottom line of capitalism is not just dollars, but SENSE too — common sense that says that caring about people, about the world around you will improve your profits. That's because people are more apt to work for and buy from companies that are nice instead of nasty. It is proven time and time again.

Henry Ford, one of the greatest, and most successful, capitalists in American history — the father of the assembly line — purposely raised his employees' salaries more than he needed to in order to enable them to buy his cars. That wasn't just because he was a nice guy. He knew it would create generations of Ford Customers that would inevitably in the long run earn the company much more than it cost in the short run. But the byproduct of that was he made a whole lot of employees happier and better off too, and he was probably the happier for it as well!

Now I do not think it is government's responsibility to make these companies act morally. (The exception is when the whole game is rigged, for instance in the case of collusion or monopoly.) We need free will and free markets in order for moral decisions to be possible. God does not make us do the right thing, and neither should government.

I truly believe eventually the people will get tired of being taken advantage of, and they will rise up and make these companies do the right thing with the power of their wallets.

But if everything I have said is true then it begs the question: Why have there been so many short-sighted, selfish companies in the last few decades in America?

The answer is simple — stupidity! If everyone (the companies, the employees and the consumers) prospers more in the long run, by running a considerate and socially responsible business, then only a fool would do differently.

But thank God some of those fools are beginning to wise up.

Journey Beyond Tragedy!

Chris Benguhe's latest book, "Overcoming Life's 7 Common Tragedies: Opportunities for Discovering God" offers a practical everyday faithful philosophy on how to apply the "positive potential" of problems to the seven most common catastrophic life situations through revealing personal reflections plus compelling anecdotes of everyday people who found joy through enduring life's greatest tragedies. Read more at <http://onemoredayalive.com/>

Vatican document challenges unjust economic system

By Tony Magliano
Catholic News Service

It's radical!

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace's recently released social justice document titled "Toward Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of Global Public Authority" challenges us to creatively and boldly address the root causes of the world's economic crisis and to make dramatic changes to our largely unjust and sick economic system.

Quoting Pope Benedict XVI, it states that this crisis "obliges us to replan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. The crisis thus becomes an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future."

A compelling part of this new vision, as stated in the document, calls for a world public authority that would work to correct the growing inequality between rich and poor.

Although some will object that this idea is a new unorthodox attack from the left, actually it was proposed by Blessed Pope John XXIII in his prophetic encyclical "Pacem in Terris" ("Peace on Earth").

And "(Pope) Benedict XVI himself expressed the need to create a world political authority, states the document. "This seems obvious if we consider the fact that the agenda of questions to be dealt with globally is becoming ever longer."

The document also asks: "What has driven the world in such a problematic direction for its economy and also for peace?"

"First and foremost," it answers, is "an

economic liberalism that spurns rules and controls."

Yes, indeed, corporate proponents of the unfair "free" market selfishly pushed the federal government to deregulate the financial industry, which, in turn, took away many of the economic safeguards that would have helped prevent the current recession.

The document reminds us that, "in 1991, after the failure of Marxist communism, Blessed (Pope) John Paul II had already warned of the risk of an 'idolatry of the market.'" This idolatry puts personal and corporate profit above people. It stands in stark contrast to all that the Catholic Church teaches in her social doctrine regarding the economy!

Some critics — who desire to silence the document's message — claim that it is a third-rate publication issued by an office of little importance that is tucked far away in the Vatican.

Not true!
Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesperson, said that the document was an "authoritative note of a Vatican agency." And much of its authority comes from its frequent use of papal teaching.

But the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is not interested in arguing the authoritativeness of its document, but rather in getting creative, morally based discussions going on how to build global financial and monetary systems that work fairly for everyone.

The document presents a Catholic road forward, away from unjust economies that greatly favor those with wealth and that largely ignore the working class and poor.

At a time when millions of Americans

are poor, medically uninsured and unemployed, and approximately 1 billion of the world's people are barely surviving in extreme poverty, this bold document provides solid moral principles and fresh practical ideas that, if implemented, will help create financial and monetary systems designed to serve the global common good.

"Toward Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of Global Public Authority" deserves to be widely read, discussed in business forums, studied in universities, debated in the halls of governments and highlighted in homilies!

The Full Text: Note on financial reform from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace may be viewed at: <http://www.news.va/en/news/full-text-note-on-financial-reform-from-the-pontif>

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.



Special Collections

Tri-Conference Fund for Retired Religious

December 11

Church in Latin America - January 22

Ongoing Events

That Man is You! — The men's faith meetings will be held at three parishes in the diocese: Bay City, Holy Cross School cafeteria, Fridays, 5:45 to 7:15 a.m.; Ganado, Assumption parish hall, Wednesdays, 5:30 – 7:15 a.m.; and Victoria, Holy Family education building, Wednesdays, 5:45 – 7:00 a.m. All men are welcome; no fees. More information at: www.thatmanisyou.org.

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 in Victoria. Please call Sharon at (361) 578-7572 before attending.

Gabriel Project—a ministry providing help to pregnant women in a crisis pregnancy – an alternative to abortion – holds monthly meetings open to everyone interested. Meetings, including a light supper, are held in Victoria the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 101 W. Convent, behind St. Mary's Catholic Church, at 6:30 p.m. An Angel Workshop is held at the same location the 3rd Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Please call Barbara at (361) 649-1612 or Linda at 655-3008 for more information. Meetings are held the 4th Tuesday of each month at Holy Family Church in Wharton (2011 Briar Lane) at 6:30 p.m. For more information, please call (979) 532-3593 M-F, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Catholic Family Services—For a listing of e-mail addresses and Web sites of Catholic organizations that focus on the family from marriage preparation to marriage enrichment, fatherhood, parenting, healing, bereavement, separated or divorced, and widowed, please go to the Catholic Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers at <http://www.nacflm.org/>

St. Francis and St. Clare Fraternity/Secular Franciscans—For more information, please go to their website at www.lostrescompaneros-sfo.org. For meeting dates, please call Mary Ann LeBlanc at (361) 575-1858.

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 website at www.victoriadiocese.org/family/ee.htm, or write to: Engaged Encounter, P.O. Box 4070, Victoria, Texas 77903. The weekend is held at the Spiritual Renewal Center. The 2012 dates are: Feb. 17-19, April 27-29, June 29-July 1, Sept. 7-9 and Nov. 16-18. For more info., call (361) 573-0828 ext. 2230. All registrations are on a first come, first serve basis. Fee must accompany registration form.

Natural Family Planning—It is the only Church-approved form of family planning. For information about the Sympto-Thermal Method in the Victoria area, contact David and Annie Coffey at victorianfpteachers@yahoo.com, or see p. 5 "Shuttin' the Gate" for class information.

Retrouvaille—A marriage-healing ministry in the Diocese of Victoria; the word Retrouvaille means 'rediscovery.' Retrouvaille is a program that offers the chance to rediscover yourself, your spouse, and the loving relationship in your marriage. Tens of thousands headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending. Go to www.retrouvaille.org for more information or contact John and Jennifer Vincent at jbyjov@sbcglobal.net or (361)580-2770. Other contacts are at (800) 470-2230 and www.helpourmarriage.org

Marriage Encounter—The Marriage Encounter Weekend is no longer offered in the Diocese of Victoria. Retrouvaille, meaning rediscovery, is the only program offered in the diocese at this time to married couples who would like marriage help. For other programs, please see the Retrouvaille notice (above), contact www.helpourmarriage.org, or go to www.wvme.org for Marriage Encounter Weekends offered outside the Diocese of Victoria.

Goliad—Presidio La Bahia Museum and Visitor Center — a National Historic Landmark — is the only Spanish fort 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 \$4 (ages 12-59); \$3.50 for 60 and older and military personnel and \$1 (ages 6- 11), with children five and younger admitted free. Group rates are available with advance reservations. A re-enactment will be available for school groups with advanced reservations. The fort is handicapped accessible. For more information call (361) 645-3752 or see the website at www.presidiolabahia.org.

Picnics, Activities, etc.

December

Yorktown—Holy Cross Catholic Daughters Court #1598 will hold their annual Santa's Cafe and Craft Show on Dec. 10 from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at the community hall on Community Hall Road. They will be selling soup, sandwiches and sweets. Their craft booths will showcase homemade crafted items and homemade food items as well as scented items, handbags, accessories and jewelry. For more information, check out their Facebook Event Page: Santa's Cafe and Craft Show - Holy Cross Catholic Daughters Court #1598.

Upcoming Events

Victoria—Benefit dinner for the Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Jan. 15 at the CWV Hall (1007 S. Main). A brisket dinner will be served from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. at \$8 p/p. There will be mariachi music, auction (11:45 a.m.) and more.

Edna—Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court Saint Theresa of the Little Flower, #1350, St. Agnes Church, will host a special religious event, "Celebration of Life," at the Jackson County

Services Building, 411 N. Wells, at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 18. This event is for all of Jackson County and the surrounding areas, the youth, parents, ministers and laity from all denominations (and the general public). The program will show the importance of life from conception to natural death, the need for respect, dignity, and justice for all of human life.

Hallettsville— "A Black & White Affair" Extravaganza to benefit Sacred Heart School, Saturday, Feb. 4, at the KC Hall. Social beginning at 6:00 p.m. followed by dinner and dancing with music provided by Cactus Country. There will only be 250 tickets sold. For more information contact Sacred Heart School at (361) 798-4251; Rectory at (361) 798-5888; or Credit Union at (361) 798-4361.

Victoria—Holy Family Games Party Feb. 16 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the activity center. There will be door prizes, food, silent auction and fun. Admission is \$7 p/p. RSVP to Jalayne Tupa at (361) 578-1606; Margaret Beekler at (361) 575-4997; or Milicent Bryarly at (361) 573-3736.

Hallettsville—A Sacred Heart High School All Alumni Reunion will be held on June 23, 2012, at the KC Hall from 3:00-11:00 p.m. Please save this date and make your lodging reservations early. Call Irene Knebel at 361-798-4942 if you would like to assist with the planning or preparation of the reunion.

Masses • Retreats • Conferences

Flatonia —Raphael's Refuge invites you to the annual celebration of the Feast Day of the Holy Innocents on Wednesday, Dec. 28, at 10:30 a.m. Father Joseph Hybner will be the celebrant. Light refreshments will follow. For more information, contact Midge at (361) 865-3021 or visit www.raphaelsrefuge.org

Victoria—God's Embrace Renewal Centers/Victoria Diocese Weekend Retreat will be held Jan. 13, 14 and 15 at the Spiritual Renewal Center. Do you desire Love, Joy, and Peace in your spirit? You are invited to come and join us where you will learn and experience the beauty and gentleness of God's true and intimate love he has for each one of us. The retreat will be facilitated by Michael Fonseca who also is offering a Spiritual Formation Program/Parish Missions throughout the

Arthur, voiced by James McAvoy, center, is pictured in the animated movie "Arthur Christmas." The Catholic News Service classification is A-II – adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG – parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children. (CNS photo/Sony)



Movie Capsules

By Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS)—The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by Catholic News Service.

"Arthur Christmas" (Columbia)

This mostly delightful 3-D animated comedy equips Santa Claus (voice of Jim Broadbent) with a stealth ship, GPS navigation and battalions of ninja-like elves to fulfill the mission of delivering 2 billion gifts each Christmas Eve. Santa's ambitious elder son (voice of Hugh Laurie) runs the sophisticated global distribution network. Decidedly more low-tech is his younger brother (voice of James McAvoy) — the titular character — whose task is to answer, by hand, all the letters Santa receives from children. When disaster strikes in the form of an undelivered present, Santa's aged father (voice of Bill Nighy) joins forces with the junior sibling to come to the rescue, and the duo rockets off on one last mission. Although it has absolutely nothing to do with the true meaning of the Nativity, first-time director Sarah Smith's film does offer a good commentary on the commercialization of the holiday and the importance of family, loyalty and being faithful to one's promise. Some rude humor and cartoonish thrills.

"Hugo" (Paramount)

This family-oriented 3-D fable, set in 1930s Paris, follows the adventures of a 12-year-old orphan (Asa Butterfield) who lives in one of the capital's great train stations. To avoid being shipped off to an orphanage by the merciless officer responsible for the terminal's security (Sacha Baron Cohen), the mechanically gifted lad clandestinely carries on the work of the drunken uncle (Ray Winstone) in whose custody he was left, but who has since disappeared, by keeping all the clocks on the premises ticking. In his spare time, he struggles to repair a mysterious automaton he and his beloved father had been tinkering with before the latter's death. His search for the necessary spare parts brings him into contact with the embittered owner (Ben Kingsley) of a toyshop and with the merchant's adopted daughter (Chloe Grace Moretz), a vivacious girl he swiftly befriends. Adapted from Brian Selznick's best-seller "The Invention of Hugo Cabret," director Martin Scorsese's paean to the City of Lights, the human imagination and — via

Victoria Diocese. For more information please contact Sandy Reese at (979) 541-6881 or sandyreesefoaj@yahoo.com or visit their website www.godsembrace.net.

Victoria—The IWBS Sisters invite single Catholic women (18 through 50 years of age, who are discerning God's call) to attend a "Come and See" weekend at Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria on Jan. 21-22. Please check us out at www.iwbsvictoria.org, call (361) 575-7111, or e-mail iwbsvoc@yahoo.com for more details or to make a reservation.

El Campo—Sanctity of Life Celebration – Human Life is Sacred is sponsored by El Campo Life Advocates and will be held Jan. 25, at 7:00 p.m. and hosted by First Baptist Church on 206 Depot. Speaker to be Senator Glenn Hegar; all are invited. For more information, please contact El Campo Life Advocate Coordinating Activity Director Denise Couey (979) 543-3829 with St. Philip the Apostle Church.

Victoria—The Victoria Candlelight March for Life will be held Thursday, Jan. 26, at 7:00 p.m. with assembly and marching beginning at Northside Baptist Church parking lot at 4100 N. Laurent and continuing to Our Lady of Victory Cathedral, 1309 E. Mesquite Lane, where Father Tommy Chen, the Pro-life director for the Diocese of Victoria, will be the keynote speaker. Candles will be provided and a bus will be available to return "marchers" from OLV to Northside Baptist.


Victoria—The Holy Family Church is sponsoring a Women's ACTS Retreat on Jan. 26-29, at the renewal center. For more information, call Carla Hanes at (361) 648-6964, Tina Kabela at (361) 571-2298, or Marlene Hennessey at (361) 652-0735.

El Campo—St. Philip the Apostle Church presents Sondra Abrahams Feb. 12, at 1:30 p.m. She is from Lake Charles, La. During a near-death experience on the operating table 40 years ago, after being given a drug that stopped her heart, she was given visions of the future. Following her recovery, she shares her experiences with people all over the world. She has been called a mystic and a visionary by priests and bishops, but the only title she claims is "Warrior for Christ". For more information, please contact St. Philip Church at (979) 543-3770.

plot developments concerning the shopkeeper's mysterious past — the pioneers of early cinema casts a charming spell. Only fleeting passages of dialogue touching on adult matters and some mild misbehavior hinder recommendation for all. A few mature references, occasional peril, some implicitly endorsed petty lawbreaking. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II – adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating is PG – parental guidance suggested.

"The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 1" (Summit)

This fourth addition to the blockbuster gothic franchise opens with the nuptials of the ongoing tale's iconic central pair – courteous bloodsucker Edward Cullen and mortal teen Bella Swan – chronicles their problematic honeymoon in Brazil and follows the unexpected pregnancy that results from the trip. With Bella's life endangered by having a baby vein-drainer in utero, the Cullen clan debate what to do, while perennial third wheel Jacob Black finds himself torn between his hopeless love for Bella and the laws of the vampire-hating werewolf pack. "Breaking Dawn" includes a sexual interlude, and some grisly ones, that make it unsuitable for youngsters, though mature viewers will recognize a strongly pro-life message being conveyed via the heroine's unusual plight. Possibly acceptable for some mature adolescents. A scene of semi-graphic marital lovemaking, some gory images, abortion theme, several mild sexual references and jokes, a couple of crass expressions. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III – adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 – parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



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Bishop David E. Fellhauer and the Chancery Office Staff Wish You a Blessed Christmas and New Year!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from (seated l-r) Irene Marler, Cindy Brewer, Regina Janak, Minnie Bochat, Sister Digna Vela, IWBS; 2nd row l-r, Rene Garcia, Dora Hernandez, Tanya Starnes, Janie Carrales, Gary Rangnow; 3rd row l-r, Jeri Joseph, Martha Pearson, Melissa Gutierrez, Chris Alvarez, Debbie Vanelli, Melissa Perales; top row l-r, Wendy Eggertt, John Quary, Bishop David Fellhauer, Mike Brown and Ryan Sprinkle. Not pictured: Msgr. Thomas C. McLaughlin and Father Matthew Huehlefeld.

Christmas Prayer

Almighty God and Father of light, a child is born for us and a son is given to us. Your eternal Word leaped down from heaven in the silent watches of the night, and now your Church is filled with wonder at the nearness of her God. Open our hearts to receive his life and increase our vision with the rising of dawn, that our lives may be filled with his glory and his peace, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Imagining Mary: Christmas paintings that open our eyes

By Christina Capecchi
Twenty Something

I've been shopping for the perfect Christmas card, sifting through Nativity scenes framed in holly berries and bows.

None of the Marys feel right. The lips are taut. The face, unblemished. We see none of the bliss and bewilderment that must have surged after birthing the son of God. We see no emotion at all – serenity as vacancy, sainthood as sedation.

This year's traditional Christmas stamp issued by U.S. Postal Service, Raphael's "Madonna of the Candelabra," shows a stoic Mary casting her eyes away from her infant. Painted in the early 16th century, it was a product of the Italian High Renaissance, but it's hard to imagine the new mom letting a single moment pass without studying the Savior in her hands.

Eventually I found a card that compelled me, the store's last boxed set of its kind. First I noticed the baby, who looks as he should: like a baby. Brown fuzzy hair, apples for cheeks and a light in his eyes. Mary holds him close, kissing his right cheek.

The painting was inspired 11 years ago when Morgan Weistling, now a 47-year-old father in California, heard Steve Amerson's song "Mary, Did You Know?" on the radio. It was the Dolly Parton version.

One phrase stood out to him: "when you kiss your little baby you've kissed the face of God."

"Immediately I felt I was supposed to paint this," Mor-

gan told me. "I had been praying and asking God, 'Give me an idea here.'"

Amerson's phrasing appealed to him. "This little child she bore was God in the flesh, and yet, she cuddled and kissed him just as all mothers do."

The painting poured out of Morgan in three days. He didn't feel the need to sketch in charcoal on his canvas to begin, as he usually does; it was oil paint right away. He didn't go back to make any alterations. The first draft was the final.

Morgan's paintings are so realistic they look like pictures, and he uses people as models. His Mary was 16, a brunette named Katie who had a "sweet humbleness to her," Morgan said. "It wouldn't have worked with a blonde."

The baby was of Jewish descent, born to a woman with a crack addiction and recently placed in a foster home.

Morgan knew he needed to master Mary's kiss, rendering it tender, not "hokey." Her left hand, pressing the swaddled baby to her heart, also was crucial. Morgan had long admired the way Mary's marble hand grips Jesus' side in Michelangelo's *Pietà*.

Morgan's published image, titled "Kissing The Face Of

God," sold out in two weeks. It remains his most popular painting – "my big gift from God," he said – and the only original he's kept, despite a standing offer of \$100,000.

Every year Morgan receives requests to reproduce the image. One year National Geographic used it for a corporate Christmas card.

The painting speaks to the brokenhearted, Morgan told me. "A lot of women who have lost a child really attach to 'Kissing The Face of God.'"

I'm grateful to the artists who help us see ourselves in the Blessed Mother, because she is for everyone. I once spoke to a victim of clergy abuse who had lost her Catholic faith but held on to Mary. I read about a woman whose conversion to Catholicism began in labor, when she called on Mary in urgent prayer: "Don't abandon me now."

This season we celebrate the mother who brings us to God with such capacity for love and grief and everything in between.



Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn. She can be reached at www.Read-Christina.com.

Are You Waiting for Jesus?

By Diocese of Victoria Seminarian
Kristopher Fuchs, Needville

Thanksgiving is over and, "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas." We are having Christmas parties, hanging Christmas decorations, shopping for gifts, and getting ready for everything else that we will need for our celebrations that will occur on Christmas Day. The weeks before Christmas tend to be one of the busiest times of the year. However, at the very same time, the Church is calling us to participate in something very different from the busy, fast-paced rhythm that we often experience during this time. During these four weeks before Christmas, the Church gives us the season of Advent.

Advent is a time of waiting, silence, expectation, repentance, and hope. We must be prepared and disposed to receive Christ when he presents himself. In order to receive Christ, we must prepare our hearts for that reception which is achieved through the quiet expectation that occurs in prayer. This is why Advent is a time of waiting, silence, expectation, repentance, and hope. These things must occur if there is to be a change in our innermost being that will



allow us to recognize Christ and desire Him to enter fully into our lives. However, these aspects can be challenging because they are very contrary to the popular values of modern society and characteristically contrary to how we typically spend this time of the year.

The time that characterizes Advent is very similar to the time that a seminarian spends in the seminary. I think that the seminary is probably misunderstood by many people as just some sort of "priest-school" where a man goes to take classes to learn about God and learn about the practical aspects of being a priest. Although classes are part of being in the seminary, it shouldn't be narrowed down only to an academic endeavor. The seminary is not a place where we only learn about God and his Church, but is a place where we strive to live lives that give witness to Christ's presence in the world. The seminary is a special time to prepare the heart for Christ. It is a time of prayer, work, study, forming friendships, growing in virtue, and much more. It is a time where everything is focused on our goal to be holy. This 'long' period of time (7-9 years) is full of waiting, silence, expectation, repentance, and hope. It is a privileged time that the Church gives us to grow so that we may form our lives to the life of Christ. It calls for a total giving of oneself to be formed by the Church. But this time of preparation doesn't end with seminary. The goal in life after the seminary is still the same: to be holy.

What the Church asks of us during Advent is part of what we should be doing for our entire life. We should

be preparing for the coming of Christ. Our entire lives on earth are a preparation for the encounter with Christ which will come during the Second Coming or by our own death (whichever comes first). Christ calls all of us to a life of holiness. Do we consider our lives a time of preparation characterized by waiting, silence, expectation, repentance, and hope?

If we do not see these characteristics evident in our lives, then maybe we should focus on an essential part of the Christian life: prayer. Do you live a life of prayer? In prayer, we must be willing to sit and wait for God. Many people become frustrated in prayer when they do not feel anything or when they are not doing anything. Prayer seems pointless because it is a waste of time. There are other things that are more productive, so it seems. If this is our attitude, then we have missed the point of prayer. We have to be willing to take that time daily and "waste it" in silence with God. We must spend that time waiting for the Lord, always ready to receive him when he comes, waiting to see his full glory. Waiting, silence, expectation, repentance, and hope are integral parts of prayer and the Christian life.

During these weeks before Christmas, don't forget about Advent. It is very easy to let these four weeks fly by without giving much attention to it. Don't forget about this time the Church gives us to prepare for Christ's coming. Don't forget about the need for change that happens in quiet expectation that should occur in our lives in order to prepare our hearts to receive him.