Culture of life means changing hearts, president tells March for Life

By Jerry Filipeau
WASHINGTON (CNS) — “A true culture of life cannot be built by changing laws alone. We’ve all got to work to change hearts,” President George W. Bush told tens of thousands of participants in the 34th annual March for Life Jan. 22.

Bush spoke by phone at the beginning of a two-hour rally on the National Mall preceding the marchers’ slow, peaceful trek around the Capitol to the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court.

With temperatures hovering right around freezing, the marchers packing several square blocks of the Mall and overflowing onto side streets turned the previous day’s snowfall into acres of muddy slush.

Among featured speakers was U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, a Kansas Republican whose appearance at the microphone sparked huge cheers from a large Kansas delegation just in front of the stage. Hundreds of people in all parts of the crowd waved blue “Brownback for president” signs, reflecting support for his decision to make a bid for the Republican presidential nomination next year.

“We need a culture of life that respects all life … from conception,” Bush told the thousands of pro-life demonstrators gathered at the mall.

Pro-life official decries passage of ‘misguided’ stem-cell bill

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A pro-life official of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops criticized House passage Jan. 11 of a bill that would expand federal funding of stem-cell research that involves the destruction of human embryos, but expressed confidence that an expected presidential veto of the “misguided and unethical legislation” would stand.

Richard Doerflinger, deputy director of the bishops’ Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, said in a statement that the 253-174 vote indicated that there were not enough votes to override the veto that President George W. Bush has promised.

The bill now goes to the Senate for a vote; if it passes there, it will be sent to the White House for action by Bush.

But Doerflinger said both houses of Congress should turn their attention “to stem-cell research that poses no moral problem — constructive research that is already beginning to help...”

Pope baptizes infants, calls sacrament invitation to human freedom

By John Thavis
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI closed out the Christmas season at the Vatican with an annual Mass to baptize infants and kept up a tradition of his own — an extemporaneous sermon on the meaning of the sacrament.

Baptism is not some “magical” rite of words and water, but a lasting invitation to human freedom to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, the pope said Jan. 7, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

As the cries of babies echoed through the Sistine Chapel, the pope poured water from a gilded scoop onto the heads of 13 infants and pronounced the words welcoming them into the church. Most were children of Vatican employees.

He held a prepared text in his hand as he gave his homily, but referred to it only sporadically, preferring to ad lib as he did the year before. One by one, he explained the symbols of the sacrament, then spoke about its central meaning.

In a sense, he said, Christians are “adopted” by God the Father in baptism. In a similar way, the church should be seen as the mother of this family, he said.

“This we see that Christianity is not only a spiritual or individual reality, a simple subjective decision that I make, but is something real and concrete and material. The family of God is constructed on the concrete reality of the church,” he said.

In World Day of Sick message, pope laments deaths from curable diseases

By Cindy Wooden
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The incurably and terminally ill have a right to medical treatment and spiritual assistance to ease their suffering and help them die with dignity, Pope Benedict XVI said.

In his annual message for the World Day of the Sick, the pope said the world needs to do more “to promote policies which create conditions where human beings can bear even incurable illnesses and death in a dignified manner.”

In addition, he said, more structures must be put in place to ensure the dying have pain medication, human assistance, and spiritual accompaniment as they die with dignity.

“The church wishes to support the incurably and terminally ill by calling for just social policies which can help to eliminate the causes of many diseases and by urging improved care for the dying and those for whom no medical remedy is available,” the pope said in the message published Dec. 13.

The World Day of the Sick is celebrated Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. In 2007, the annual Vatican-sponsored conference and principal Mass for the observance will be held in Seoul, South Korea.

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SEE EVERY CHILD…, P. 3

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Boston’s Cardinal O’Malley focuses column on abuse

BOSTON (CNS) — In a column marking the fifth anniversary of the crisis over clergy sexual abuse of children, Boston Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley said that scandal was a “dark and unmitting truth” that “always remains in my heart and mind.”

Cardinal O’Malley’s comments appeared Jan. 7 as an opinion piece in the Boston Globe, the daily newspaper whose unrelenting expose of child sex abuse by priests in the Boston Archdiocese turned the secret of such abuse into a national crisis five years ago.

Cardinal O’Malley noted that on Jan. 6 Catholics celebrate the Epiphany, “the manifestation of God’s love for all humanity.”

“Five years ago, as we marked the feast on Jan. 6, 2002, the devastating revelations that Catholic clergy had sexually abused children shook the Archdiocese of Boston and the wider community,” he said.

“The impact of the clergy sexual abuse scandal has reached deep into the lives of parishioners and the faith-filled priests who minister to them. They have borne the shame, grief, and confusion of these devastating revelations with heroic faith,” he said.

“During the course of the past five years we have learned much due to the generosity of so many who have committed themselves to the rebuilding of the church,” the cardinal wrote. “There is much yet to be done to regain confidence and trust. The feast of the Epiphany reminds us that the church’s mission is to make God’s universal love visible in the manner in which we live out our faith.”

The Globe’s investigative series on abusive priests focused especially on how successive archbishops of Boston regularly returned many of them to ministry after counseling or treatment, without undertaking measures to prevent contact with children.

The Globe coverage prompted other major newspapers across the country to conduct similar investigations, and as the crisis built nationwide the bishops took the unprecedented step of setting a strict anonymity policy to be followed by all bishops in dealing with allegations of abuse and with those priests who were found to have sexually abused children.

The wide news coverage and new church policies led thousands of victims to come forward and report childhood sexual abuse by priests — in many cases revealing for the first time abuse that had occurred decades ago.

The crisis led to Cardinal Bernard F. Law’s resignation as archbishop of Boston in December 2002. Cardinal O’Malley replaced him the following July and quickly raised $85 million settlement with more than 500 clergy abuse victims in the archdiocese.

NOW YORK (CNS) — Religious groups have sparred the unity in their diversity and work together to ensure that broadcasters respect their obligation to serve the needs of all viewers and listeners — and not only those who are seen as mainstream.

This was a conclusion at a historic round-table forum on region and broadcasting held Jan. 9 at the WNET television studio in New York.

Representatives from two dozen Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Islamic groups met with two commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission for a spirited discussion organized by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in cooperation with the National Council of Churches and the United Church of Christ.

Media consolidation, in which large companies own television, radio, newspaper, cable and Internet outlets in a single market, is seen as a hindrance to creativity and the thoughtful portrayal of religious viewpoints and shared values.

The effect of consolidation, according to Bishop Joseph A. Galante of the Camden, New Jersey, a former chairman of the USCCB Committee on Communications, is “we get fed a steady diet of ‘reality’ programs and drivel.

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Bishop Kevin Vann has announced that in the next few weeks the safety of children will be a “focal point of our communities.”

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Forum examines media obligation to serve all audiences

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In World Peace Day text, pope urges respect for dignity, human rights

By John Thavis

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Welcoming in the new year at the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI said a world suffering from wars and terrorism can find peace only through respect for human dignity and human rights.

The pope celebrated Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica Jan. 1, which he described as World Peace Day, and quoted from his peace day message, saying the value of the theme of his peace day is “The Human Person, the Heart of Peace.”

In order for peace agreements to last, the pope said, they must be based on respect for the dignity of the human being created by God. This dignity is the foundation of peace and cannot be viewed as something subject to popular opinion or negotiations between parties, he said.

He urged the international community to make greater efforts to ensure that “in the name of God a world is built in which essential human rights are respected by all.”

Every Christian has a special vocation as a peacemaker, he said.

“Faced with threats to peace, unfortunately always present, and situations of injustice and violence that continue to persist in various regions of the world, faced with continuing armed conflicts often forgotten by the vast public opinion and the danger of terrorism that disturbs the serenity of peoples, it becomes more necessary than ever to work together for peace,” he said.

Speaking from his apartment window above St. Peter’s Square, the pope returned to the theme of his peace day message, saying the value of the human person is the key to lasting peace.

“Today one talks a lot about human rights, but it is often forgotten that they need a firm foundation, not a relative one, not one subject to opinion,” he said.

And this foundation can only be human dignity. Respect for this dignity begins with the recognition and protection of the person’s right to live and to freely profess his religion,” he said.

The pope offered a prayer to Mary for increased respect for human dignity and for the “firm repudiation of war and violence.”

On Dec. 31, the feast of the Holy Family, the pope prayed at his noon blessing for all families, especially those in difficulty.

“May they know how to resist the disunifying pressures of a certain contemporary culture that undermines the very foundations of the family institution,” he said.

Later the same day, the pope presided over a prayer service in St. Peter’s Basilica to give Thanksgiving at the end of the year. He said he wanted to offer particular thanks to Mary for the “special protection” she gave him during his pilgrimage to Turkey a month earlier.

The pope also reflected on New Year’s Eve celebrations, a few hours before Rome exploded in its annual midnight frenzy of fireworks and “spumante.”

Such festivities are common social rituals, the pope said, but are often experienced as “an evasion of reality, as if to exercise the negative aspects and invoke improbable fortunes.”

The Christian approach to the end of the year should be far different, he said. Like Mary, the mother of God, the Christian community should be keeping its gaze fixed on the baby Jesus, he said.

The pope then paid an evening visit to the Vatican’s own Nativity scene, a tall structure erected in the middle of St. Peter’s Square. After kneeling in the square to pray, he was helped up inside the replica of the grotto of Bethlehem for a close-up view of the larger-than-life scenes.

For the complete text of Pope Benedict’s World Peace Day message, visit the Vatican Web site at www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20061208_xl-world-day-peace_en.html.

Every child who is born brings the smile of God, says pope in celebrating baptisms

Pope encourages today’s ‘Wise Men’ to shape a world based on Christ

By John Thavis

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI said the age of globalization is challenging political, scientific, and religious leaders to shape a new world order based on spiritual values.

This means an encounter with the “light of Christ,” which can reveal the deepest values of all cultures, the pope said.

“To all people of our time, I want to repeat today: Do not be afraid of the light of Christ!” he said.

The pope made the remarks at a Mass Jan. 6 on the feast of the Epiphany, which marks the manifestation of Jesus as savior to the world. In his sermon, he recalled the New Testament account of the three Wise Men or Magi, guided to Bethlehem by a star, who were the first to come and adore Jesus.

The Wise Men were mysterious but important figures as the church began its mission of bringing Christ to the world, he said. Then he posed the question, “Who are the Wise Men of today?”

He answered by identifying three classes of leaders: political authorities, people of intellect and science, and the leaders of the world’s faiths. All three categories are important as the church continues its task of transforming the world, he said.

“Two thousand years later, we can recognize in the Magi a sort of prefiguration of these three dimensions that make up modern humanism: the political, scientific, and religious dimensions. The Epiphany shows them in a state of ‘pilgrimage,’ that is, a movement of searching that has its ultimate point of arrival in Christ,” he said.

The world has changed dramatically since the birth of Christ, the pope said. Today a global civilization is emerging that no longer has Europe or even the West as its center, he said.

The explosion of mass media, a key component of this new civilization, has connected people around the globe and created an immense flow of information, but also seems to obscure humanity’s ultimate goals and weaken the capacity for critical judgment, he said.

The pope noted that the Second Vatican Council in its closing messages in 1965 made a point to address politicians and scientists, asking them not to forget God in their work and not to forget Christ as the great builder of peace and order in the world.

Today, he said, it is particularly important to add to this list the leaders of the great non-Christian religions, “inviting them to confront themselves with the light of Christ, which came not to abolish but to bring to completion what the hand of God has written in the religious history of civilizations.”

“Christ is the light, and light cannot obscure but only enlighten, clean up, reveal. No one therefore should be afraid of Christ and his message!” he said.

He added that, even if Christians through the centuries had fallen short of Christ’s own teachings and betrayed him with their behavior, that does not lessen the importance of his message but only throws it into higher relief.

After the Mass, tens of thousands of Italians streamed to St. Peter’s Square to listen to the pope’s noon prayer and to visit the Vatican’s giant Nativity scene. The Epiphany, a national holiday in Italy, is largely dedicated to children, and the square was full of young people.
Women’s Super Bowl Retreat to be held Feb. 2-4

The annual Women’s Super Bowl Retreat, offered during Super Bowl weekend at the Catholic Renewal Center (CRC), will be held Friday evening, Feb. 2, at 7:30 p.m., through noon on Sunday, Feb. 4. CRC is located at 4503 Bridge Street, next to Nolan Catholic High School, in East Fort Worth.

The presenter for this year’s retreat, Sister Fran Ferder, FSPA, is an author, therapist, and expert in human communication, according to a CRC press release. Focusing on the topic “Can We Talk? Deepening Relationships through Communication,” Sister Ferder will lead participants in the reflection on important themes of human communication from Scripture and human psychology. “Openness, self-knowledge, good communication skills, and willingness to help us experience the kind of communication in relationships that we can truly call holy,” state retreat materials.

All women are invited to participate. The cost of the retreat is $108. Reservations are requested by Jan. 29. For more information or to register, call CRC at (817) 431-2020.

SEAS School in Keller to host open house Jan. 28

SEAS School in Keller, which will host an open house Sunday, Jan. 28.

Calix support group meets monthly at Holy Family

Calix, a monthly support meet for Catholics who are alcoholic and others who are struggling with addiction and seeking recovery, is offered the first Saturday of each month at Holy Family Church, 1501 Pershing Ave. in West Fort Worth. The next meeting will be held Feb. 3, beginning at 10 a.m. in the chapel.

Calix meetings focus on enhancing spiritual growth through sharing Eucharist, discussion, and fellowship. For more information, call Beacon Joe Milligan at (817) 757-4708 ext. 105 or Tim S. at (817) 757-1519.

Yoga / Meditation Retreat to be held at CRC, Feb. 23-25

A Yoga/Meditation retreat will be offered at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street, in East Fort Worth, Feb. 23-25. The retreat will begin at 7 p.m. on Friday and will conclude Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m.

The retreat, led by certified yoga instructor Janie Portolese, will be an opportunity to enjoy relaxation, learn deep-breathing methods, and receive direction in achieving easy meditation. It is designed for students of all experience levels.

Prior to an early registration deadline of Feb. 5, the cost is $154, which includes lodging, vegetarian meals, and classes. After that date, the cost is $164. For those interested, experienced meditation therapists will be available to provide massages at the cost of $50 per session. For more information or reservations, e-mail to yoga@stetown.com, or call (254) 975-2048. More information may also be found online at www.stephenville.com/yoga.

‘Gather Up the Fragments’ to be theme of Lenten retreat at CRC, March 16-17

Sister Margarita Armendariz, ASC, a certified spiritual director who has served in the dioceses of El Paso and Las Cruces, will return to the Catholic Renewal Center of North Texas to lead a Lenten retreat, "Gather Up the Fragments." The retreat will begin Friday, March 16, at 7:30 p.m. and conclude Saturday, March 17, at 5 p.m.

Through prayer, teachings, and dynamics, we will walk through a four-step process in which we allow ourselves to transform the broken pieces of our lives into bread for a hungry world...." CRC materials explain. CRC is located at 4503 Bridge Street, next to Nolan Catholic High School, in East Fort Worth. An overnight room and meals are included in the $195 fee. For more information or to make a reservation by the March 12 deadline, call CRC at (817) 429-2920.

St. Augustine Men’s Purify Group meets weekly

The St. Augustine Men’s Purify Group, a support group for men continuing on March 18 and impurity such as those found on the Internet, meets Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, 1001 Willis Lane in Keller, in Room 213, and on Sunday evenings at 7 p.m. at the Padre Pie Hou, 13614 Cuenca St, in the Parish Hall.

For more information, visit the group’s Web site at www.staugmen.com or e-mail to Mark at semenpurity@yahoo.com or call the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish office at (817) 451-6005.

Marriage Encounter weekend to be held Feb. 16-18 at CRC

A Marriage Encounter weekend will be held at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth. Marriage Encounter, a marriage enrichment program, is centered on three principles: building communication between husband and wife; removing the commitment to marriage vows, and strengthening the couple’s faith.

It is a great opportunity for a weekend of peace and renewal, to deepen, renew and refresh your marital love, according to Marriage Encounter program leaders.

Reservations are required. For more information or to make a reservation, call (817) 451-6005. Information is also available online at www.tcxame.org.

Author Linda Schubert to speak at Magnificat breakfast Feb. 24

Magnificat, a ministry to Catholic women, will be sponsoring a breakfast for women only Saturday, Feb. 24, at the DFW Hilton, 1800 Hwy. 26 East in Grapevine, from 9 a.m. to noon. The event will include opportunities for eucharistic devotion, the sacrament of penance, and time with prayer leaders.

The breakfast’s keynote presentation will be offered by lay evangelist and author of the best-seller Miracle Hour Schubert will discuss prayer, healing, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Tickets purchased prior to the Wednesday, Feb. 21, deadline at Keypalces Catholic Books and Gifts in Arlington; Little Angels Boutique in Coppell; or Catholic Art & Gifts in Farmers Branch, or by calling Lucy Gonzales at (972) 353-2318.

For more information about Linda Schubert, visit www.lindaschubert.com on the Web.

Seminars on annulment process to be offered Feb. 6

Father Hector Medina, pastor of St. Matthew Church in Arlington, will lead an intensive two-session course titled “I’ll Die Deux Du Parfum: Marriage! A Sacramental Sign of God’s Faithful Love.” The course runs from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Good Shepherd Church, 1000 Tinker Road in Colleyville.

This course will be for those who are divorced and wish to remarry, as well as those taking part in the RRC process, often have questions about a decree of nullity. “Through prayer, it means for them and for the children of a marriage that is declared ‘invalid.’ This is an opportunity to have the answers to questions pertaining to the sacra-ment of marriage and to learn about the possibilities for healing within the context of the annulment process.”

All are invited to attend and to bring a friend. Childcare is available if requested prior to Jan. 26. To arrange for childcare or for more information, call the church office at (817) 421-1387.

Official Assignments

The following assignments have been made by Bishop Kevin Bann:

Father Karl Schluchen has been assigned as the pastor of St. John the Apostle Parish, North Richland Hills, effective Feb. 24.

Father Timothy Thompson has been assigned as the pastor of St. Mark Parish, Denton, effective Feb. 24.

Dr. Toni Cran-ven to explore Book of Psalms in four-part series

Dr. Toni Cranven, who is the I. Wiley and Elizabeth Bosence Professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, will present a four-week series on the Psalms at St. Andrew Church, 5717 Stadium Drive in South Fort Worth. The sessions will be held on consecutive Thursday evenings, Feb. 1, 8, 15, and 22, in the parish hall from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The series will focus upon the shuffle of Psalms and the range of the prayers. “The whole of life is meant for public and personal worship — celebration and joy, grief and loss, lament and praise,” say program materials. “Come, bring your memories of the Psalms and learn more.”

All are invited to attend. To reserve childcare, call (817) 924-5951 at least 48 hours prior to session. To register for the series, call the pastoral center at (817) 927-5383, or e-mail to aquarector@ standrews.org.

Sensible Scriptu-ry Study to begin March 11 in Grapevine

“Would you like to get more out of Mass? Would you like to know where Catholic doctrine is found in the Bible?” ask organizers of “Sensible Scripture Study” at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Grapevine. A five-week course, designed to give participants specific techniques for reading and understanding Scripture, will be held March 11 through April 4 in the parish hall, located at 861 Wildwood Lane in Grapevine.

Sessions will be held from 10:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. on consecutive Sundays, beginning March 11. (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church Parish office at (817) 431-3857.

“Through prayer, teachings, and experiences, we will find ourselves transformed,” state retreat materials. “Come, bring a spot or for more information, contact Dan Lubly at (817) 560-2452 ext. 259, or by e-mail to dubbly@ fediosc.org.

Faith and Fiction group to discuss novel "Stones from the River" Feb. 15

“Faith and Fiction: Conversations on Literature and Imagination” will host a venue for discussing novels and films with themes that shed light on the journey of faith, will meet Thursday evenings at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street, Fort Worth. The topic of discussion will be the novel “Stones from the River” by Ursula Hegi.

Those planning to participate are asked to read the book, reflect on it and arrive prepared to come to the session with questions, insights, or observations to share. A reception will be held from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., and the discussion will take place from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. To ensure good conversation, space will be limited. To reserve a spot or for more information, contact Dan Lubly at (817) 560-2452 ext. 259, or by e-mail to dubbly@ fediosc.org.

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A Marriage Encounter weekend will be held at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth. Marriage Encounter, a marriage enrichment program, is centered on three principles: building communication between husband and wife; removing the commitment to marriage vows, and strengthening the couple’s faith.

It is a great opportunity for a weekend of peace and renewal, to deepen, renew and refresh your marital love, according to Marriage Encounter program leaders.

Reservations are required. For more information or to make a reservation, call (817) 451-6005. Information is also available online at www.tcxame.org.
Nolan Catholic to present 26th Mardi Gras event  Feb. 10

Nolan Catholic High School will present its 26th annual Mardi Gras Dinner, Auction, and Dance Saturday, Feb. 10, at the Fort Worth Convention Center in downtown Fort Worth.

“Mardi Gras is a grand tradition at NOCHS,” according to 2007 event chair Jerry and Kerry Reis. “We want to invite everyone to share in the magic of this wonderful event.”

Although Mardi Gras is a great way for the Nolan Catholic community to come together for an evening of fun and fellowship, income generated from this event helps to fund improved academic services, facilities, and programs. It also helps to keep tuition at the lowest possible level, according to a Nolan press release, and provides financial aid for families who otherwise would not be able to share in the benefits of a Catholic education.

The evening’s activities will include a live auction, items on which to bid include a trip to Los Cabos, Mexico. A silent auction format using bid boards will also be conducted during the evening.

Reserved Krewes, which seat 10 and come with special amenities, are $290; individual seats are $125. Each and open seating. For more information on the Mardi Gras event, visit online at www.nolancatholic.org; e-mail to madrigal@nolancatholic.org or call the school office at (817) 457-2920.

Denim and Diamonds Dinner, Auction set for Feb. 17

All Saints Church will host its 10th annual Denim and Diamonds Dinner and Auction Saturday, Feb. 17, at Lockheerd Martin Recreation Center, 5400 Bryant Irvin Road, Fort Worth. The event will begin at 6 p.m. and will conclude at midnight.

The evening’s program will include dinner provided by San Ysidro Catering. Music will be provided by DJ Bob Bonilla. Volunteers David and Mary Vela will be honored for their 10 years of service on the event’s committee.

The cost per ticket is $35 prior to the dinner or $40 at the door. Advance tickets for a reserved table of 10 may be purchased for $350. Limited seating is available. Tickets may be purchased at All Saints School, 2006 N. Houston in Fort Worth, at the All Saints Church rectory, or by calling (817) 798-5519.

For more information or to make a donation, contact Gladys Perales at (817) 578-3519 or by e-mail to gperales@allsaintschurch.org.

Catholic Divine Ministry Conference to be offered in Belleville, Illinois

“Building Blocks: Structures for Healthy Relationships,” a multi regional conference to be offered by Catholic Divine Ministry of The North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics, will be held March 31-April 1 at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, 442 South De Mazenod Drive, in Belleville, Illinois.

The conference will feature a presentation on healthy relationships given by family therapists Dr. Joy Marks and Dr. Marks, who serves as executive director of Marriage for Life, Inc., also conducts retreats and seminars designed for youth, singles and engaged and married couples. He serves as a commissioner on the Florida Council on Aging, and Family Support Initiatives.

Conference participants may register prior to Feb. 27 deadline by calling (817) 394-6272 or (314) 241-3400 ext. 6272, or by visiting the Shrine Web site at www.snows.org. Hotel reservations may be made prior to Feb. 27 by calling (818) 397-6700 or (800) 682-2879. Prices for hotel rooms range from $46 for one person, to $50 for two persons, and with four persons per room. Participants must note their registration is for the Catholic Divine Ministry Conference when registering at the hotel.

For more information about the conference, contact the diocesan Life service at (817) 560-3500.

Texas Mission Council to hold conference at Cedarvale Feb. 16-18

The Texas Mission Council invites all Catholics who are interested in the missionary work of the Catholic Church to attend its annual mission conference at Cedarvale, the Austin Diocese Retreat Center, from Friday, Feb. 16, through Sunday, Feb. 18.

The conference will focus upon the call for U.S. Catholics to become active missionaries in today’s world. Julie Lapen, a former missionary and current educator in modern, short, sharp, roles, will serve as keynote speaker and director of the conference’s dialogue sessions.

The Texas Mission Council organized under the auspices of The Texas Catholic Conference, exists to create mission awareness and support through collaborative efforts of diocesan mission directors, representatives of mission organizations serving in Texas and individuals and groups interested in mission work.

Anyone interested in any form of mission work are invited to attend the conference. For more information, contact Linda Mowbray at (713) 977-0512 or (713) 688-1066; e-mail to mlindamowbray@aol.com or visit the Web site at www. txe missioncouncil.org.

Knights of Peter Claver Council #89 plans Mardi Gras event

The Knights of Peter Claver Council #89 of Our Mother of Mercy Church in Fort Worth, will hold their 17th annual Mardi Gras and Zydeco Dance from 8 p.m. to midnight on Saturday, Feb. 17. The event will be held at the Meadowbrook Lions Club, 6015 Craig Street in Fort Worth. All proceeds will be used to assist in funding the many charitable activities of the Knights’ organization throughout the year.

The theme of this year’s event is “A New Orleans Good Time in Fort Worth, Texas.” The $20 donation per person includes authentic Louisiana gumbo and red beans and rice. For more information or to purchase a ticket, call (817) 756-5762, or contact any of the Knights of Peter Claver at Our Mother of Mercy Church.

St. Joseph’s singles group to host Sweetheart Dance– Feb. 10

A Sweetheart Dance, benefiting the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics--Region 10, will be held Saturday, Feb. 10, at St. Joseph Church, 217 S. Green Oaks Blvd. in Arlington.

A potluck dinner will begin at 7 p.m. with dancing to DJ music following at 8 p.m.

The St. Joseph Parish singles group, who is hosting the event, invites both singles and couples to attend. For more information, call Greg Mills at (817) 731-4666; Vince Chiarello at (817) 866-7276; or Sylvia Salinas at (817) 845-2718.

For more details about the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics, visit online at www.nacdc.org.

Marriage Encounter of North Texas gathering set for March 4

The National Marriage Encounter of North Texas will hold its annual gathering, Sunday, March 4, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4093 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth.

The evening will begin with a potluck dinner, followed by a program and a brief annual meeting. Drinks and the main dish will be provided, participants are asked to bring a side dish, salad, or dessert to share. Those planning to attend are also asked to bring a “white elephant” gift for exchange.

For reservations or more information, call (817) 451-6005.

Mother-Daughter Tea planned for Feb. 25 at Catholic Center

A Mother-Daughter Tea, sponsored by the diocesan Office of Family Life, will be held Sunday, Feb. 25, from noon until 4 p.m. at The Catholic Center, 800 West Loop 803 South in West Fort Worth.

Young women, ages 10 to 13, are invited to attend with their mother, grandmother, or other special woman in their lives to spend an afternoon sharing experiences of being female. Discussion from a faith-based perspective will concentrate on the physical, emotional, and psychological changes that occur in young women during the adolescent years and will address many relationship issues faced by teens today.

A light lunch, tea, and dessert will be served. The cost is $12.50 per person. For more information or to make a reservation, call Nancy Novak at (817) 656-9633 or Kathy Stojak at (817) 773-8096. Space is limited.

Dr. Saundra Kennedy to speak on ‘What is a Catholic?’ Feb. 1

Dr. Saundra Kennedy will offer a presentation entitled “What is a Catholic?” at Good Shepherd Church, 1000 Timker Road in Colleyville, Thursday, Feb. 1, from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Dr. Kennedy is a national consultant for William H. Sadlier, Inc., a publisher of religious education materials. Kennedy holds a doctorate in education and religion from Columbia University in New York.

All catholics, directors of religious education, and others with an interest in religious education are invited to attend the free presentation. Ginny Phoenix and Mary Kelly, coordinators of religious education at Good Shepherd, encourage all to attend, saying, “Dr. Kennedy’s presentation is dynamic, humorous, and full of practical suggestions.”

For more information, contact Mary Kelly or Ginny Phoenix at (817) 412-1387.

Seymour’s Czech community to lead Polka Mass in Arlington, Jan. 28

The Czech Community of Sacred Heart Church, Seymour, along with Sacred Heart pastor Father Richard Eldridge, TOR, will bring a Polka Mass to Arlington Jan. 28. The Sacred Heart Czech Choir and musicians will lead the Mass at the 12:30 p.m. Mass at their sister parish, St. Vincent de Paul Church, 5819 W. Pleasant Ridge Road in Arlington.

Bohemian sausage and kolaches will be served for lunch following Mass.

All are welcome to attend. For more information, contact St. Vincent de Paul Church at (817) 478-8206.
More than 2,000 years ago, the Magi embarked on a journey of faith to find the Christ child, guided only by the brilliance of a new star.

So the feast of the Epiphany seemed an appropriate time for a gathering of parish leaders eager to continue their own faith journey while leading others to Christ.

Five hundred and fifty catechists, Catholic school teachers, pastoral council members, and others called to serve the church in the Diocese of Fort Worth attended a Ministry Formation Day Jan. 6 at Nolan Catholic High School in East Fort Worth. Bolstered by an array of informative small group sessions and a keynote address by Bishop Kevin Vann, the event registered one of the biggest turnouts in its history.

Greetedwarmlywithastandingovation, the bishop used the occasion to point out how the story of the Magi and the challenges facing today’s ministry leaders are intrinsically linked. In his home state of Illinois, the Catholic community of Peoria honors the legacy of the Three Kings with a longtime ritual that doubles as an outreach ministry. Each Jan. 6, teams of three men travel from house to house in the town delivering gifts and the message of Christ’s birth.

“I hope all of us here today can stop a little and appreciate this day and take what we are learning, praying, and reflecting on into the context of the Epiphany,” he told the crowd, before asking some thought-provoking questions. “How do the Magi teach us about our journey of faith? What are the gifts in our lives that we need to present to others?”

In his address, Bishop Vann also announced plans to release a statement on the nature of the church as “communion” (communion) in the near future. The local church is the strongest when its parts are not isolated but united together as a community of faith, he said. It’s a theme discussed in many writings by Pope John Paul II and now Pope Benedict XVI.

“We’re not a bunch of individual churches or communities but a family of faith — a ‘communion’ of faith,” he added. “Especially at this time of year — the Epiphany. We should reflect on how God showed his love for the whole world through the Christ Child and the Magi and how that brings us together as a diocese and a family of faith.”

Bishop Vann ended his remarks with an excerpt from Pope Benedict’s Christmas Day 2005 homily.

“When we celebrate the Eucharist we find ourselves in Bethlehem in the house of Bread. Christ gives himself to us and in doing so gives us his peace. He gives it to us so that we can carry the light of peace within and give it to others.”

The bishop’s message of peace and unity resonated with audience members who traveled from as far away as Gainesville, Morgan, and Glen Rose to attend Fort Worth’s Ministry Formation Day. Similar programs are held each year in Wichita Falls and Mineral Wells.

“I think it’s a great idea to bring the parishes closer together and start thinking of ourselves as one spiritual community,” explained Mark Philp, a member of St. John the Apostle Church in North Richland Hills.

Fellow parishioner Byanka Peffers agrees. “We need to be one church — a global church — and not think of ourselves as a bunch of separate parishes.”

Kevin Prevou, director of the diocesan Office of Youth Ministry and Adolescent Catechesis, organized the Ministry Formation Day and was pleased with the layout and program structure chosen by the planning committee. This year’s Fort Worth event, which made available sessions in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, included an additional set of small group sessions. The crowd also benefited from easier access to an exhibit area where 30 Catholic vendors advertised products and resources.

“We wanted to change the setup in the main area, so we could incorporate the keynote sessions and the exhibitors in the same location,” Prevou said. “We think this was a great success.”

A color brochure publicizing the event and the ease of online registration boosted attendance. “I think all of that added to the energy around the day,” Prevou said. “Additionally, I think Bishop Vann’s keynote address went very well.”

Anthony Roffino, who attended a 2006 Ministry Formation Day, was glad he returned for this year’s program.

“It’s an awakening and a great way to start the year,” enthused the Glen Rose resident, who belongs to St. Rose of Lima Church.

“It brings things into perspective,” Roffino said. “I believe that if you put faith in God, all things will come to us.”
At Life Revival Youth Rally, former ‘Apprentice’ cast member Tarek Saab talks to teens about importance of…

Story and Photos by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

“We have a culture that is totally, undeniably addicted to entertainment.”

The author of that statement should know. He became an instant celebrity after appearing on one of the most highly rated and critically acclaimed reality TV shows ever, “The Apprentice.”

As a recent graduate of The Catholic University of America, Saab now uses his business acumen and genius group MENSA, Saab now has had the opportunity to speak about faith to those in the entertainment industry. From the boardroom to the boardwalk, Saab has been given a platform from which to speak about faith to those in the enter-

ment. He credits that opportunity to his father, who is a devout Catholic and daily Mass goer.

Saab told the North Texas Catholic, “It’s no mystery that those in the entertainment world have a strong voice with youth. I’m trying to do something positive with the voice that’s been given to me.”

The attractive, articulate “Apprentice” star wielded some of that celebrity influence during an appearance at the Life Revival Youth Rally 2007, held Jan. 12-13 at St. John the Apostle Church in North Richland Hills.

More than 375 teens and their parents braved torrential rains and a winter storm warning to hear Saab talk about his “Apprentice” experience and to listen to his life-affirming message.

Hosted by St. John’s youth ministry program, the two-day rally is designed to expose young people to a broad range of issues that affect their physical and spiritual health. Other speakers who were invited to present

life-oriented views included musician Daniel diSilva, leader of the jazz-funk group Crispin; Jessica Voletske; Potter’s House minister Anthony Myers, and Carol Everett, a former abortion center director. Father Bernard Marie Murphy, a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal, spoke with teens during small group breakout sessions and celebrated Mass with them Saturday evening. Music, art projects, and a youth talent show also highlighted the weekend’s theme “Life Revolution — it’s more than you know, it’s deeper than you think, it’s now.”

“We want to help teens understand the sanctity, dignity, and value of life, including their own,” explained St. John Youth Director Suzette Chaires, who planned the program along with teen leaders and Sue Laux, director of Youth for Life in the diocese. “Every year we’ve had the rally there has been a conversion of hearts.”

Some participants come to the event because their friends belong to the parish. “There are young people who never have been taught the right thing to do when it comes to alcohol or sex,” Chaires added. “We teach them that pure love leaves them open to God’s abundant blessing.”

Preaching and teaching life lessons to teenagers isn’t easy, so members of the planning committee tried to choose speakers who would appeal to young listeners. The 9th through 12th graders had no problem relating to the boyish-looking “Apprentice” cast member who shared some inside information about the filming of the reality TV show before launching into a heartfelt talk about the importance of prayer over popularity.

Selected as a cast member for the fifth season of “The Apprentice” after a production crew visited his office at Texas Instruments in Dallas, Saab was surprised to find himself shownered with attention just days after the first show aired.

“Every day I’d go on the Internet and see my face splattered on the screen and people talking about me on blogs,” he explained. “There were different articles in the newspapers too. I began to think, ‘Gosh, this is more than just being on a show.’ People are really captivated by reality TV, and that’s a little bizarre.”

“Why do we need to know about these things? Because, as my father used to say, ‘Evil happens when good men do nothing,’ ” Saab continued. “And the only way to stop evil starts with a change of heart and a change of behavior.”

The newlywed who lives in Keller with his wife, Kate, encour- age young men in the audience to embrace their natural inclination to provide and protect. “One of the ways we protect those around us from evil in today’s environment is to change the way we act,” he pointed out. “Pornography and how we look at and treat women is part of that. We need to recognize that some of the entertainment we’re addicted to, and some of the things society tells us are perfectly fine, are really not good for us.”

Addressing the female members of the audience, the speaker called women the heart and soul of the family and the world. “They represent our compassionate emotion and thought,” said the Maronite Catholic who was born in Lebanon. “Women are leading the charge in how we view the dignity and sanctity of life. If you’re not passionate about it, if you’re not thinking about it, then no one else is.”

He counseled the teenage girls to show their respect for life through chastity and respecting the physical nature of womanhood.

In closing, Saab asked the young audience to study and know their Catholic faith, read the lives of the saints for inspiration, and receive Christ in the Eucharist.

“You have an opportunity to interface with God in a very real way in the Eucharist,” he said. “Recognizing that privilege is one of the key steps to understanding what life is truly all about and what I’m talking about in terms of the dignity and sanctity of life.”

Raised in public housing by divorced parents, the self-made CEO of the Christian apparel company Lionheart considers himself blessed. In his short life, he’s worked his way up to a six-figure salary, traveled all over the world, and had his life profiled in US Weekly and TV Guide.

“Put none of it truly made me happy,” Saab admitted. “Happiness doesn’t come in the form of being worshiped. Happiness comes from worship. It comes from submitting ourselves to something greater than we are.”

That was the message 14-year-old Kochitl Juarez-Jacinto wanted to hear when she decided to at- tend the rally for the first time with friends.

“I resolved to put God in the middle of my life, so this is one way of doing that,” said the St. John’s youth group member. “All of the speakers were good. I learned a lot of new things about abortion and other issues like teen suicide. I’ll definitely be back next year.”
Texas couple’s child born on Roe anniversary seen as a miracle baby

By Janet M. Crowe

EL PASO (CNS) — Sofia Alomia of El Paso will celebrate her first birthday this January much like any other toddler. However, amid the cake and presents, Sofia’s parents, Yvonne and Santiago Alomia, will take time from the joyous celebration to commemorate the millions of babies killed by abortion.

Sofia was born Jan. 22, 2006 — the 33rd anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion throughout the nine months of pregnancy.

She could be considered a miracle because several doctors, fearing she might have a severe cardiovascular disorder, repeatedly urged her parents throughout the pregnancy to abort her.

But Yvonne Alomia refused to consider abortion, despite the repeated urging of doctors, colleagues, friends, and her own patients from her optometrist practice.

Sofia was born with heart problems. When she was 3 days old she had heart surgery. She is due to have a second surgery after her first birthday and faces additional heart surgeries, but her parents are optimistic.

“We would not do anything differently,” Alomia said, and Sofia’s every smile proves that “it has definitely been worth all the trials.”

During her third month of gestation, Sofia was diagnosed with DiGeorge velocardio-facial syndrome; a portion of her 22nd chromosome was missing. It can result in conditions ranging from relatively mild to severe, including cleft palate, Down syndrome, immune system deficiencies, kidney abnormalities, and cardiovascular diseases. The concern for Sofia was cardiovascular.

Two fetal echocardiograms showed no pulmonary arteries from the baby’s heart to her lungs, which meant she might die shortly after birth or have a range of critical medical problems affecting her health and life. The doctors said the arteries perhaps existed and maybe were too undeveloped to see, but they also strongly encouraged Alomia to terminate the pregnancy.

Alomia and her husband concentrated on what Sofia would need after she was born. Late in the pregnancy, Sofia’s heart was enlarged and appeared to fill her chest cavity, making successful heart surgery questionable.

Still, Alomia refused to consider aborting her baby but sought advice from doctors, priests, and El Paso Bishop Armando X. Ochoa on making a decision regarding extraordinary medical measures, including immediate surgery after birth, which might only cause Sofia pain without increasing her chances of survival.

“We just wanted to make the best decision according to the progress that Sofia made or did not make,” Alomia said in an interview with The Rio Grande Catholic, El Paso’s diocesan newspaper.

“We were expecting her to die within hours of birth since no pulmonary arteries were seen and it was the most probable outcome,” she said.

A Caesarean section was scheduled for Jan. 24, 2006, but during morning Mass Jan. 22, Alomia went into labor, and the doctors decided to deliver the baby at 3 p.m.

Alomia considers the day and time of Sofia’s birth no mere coincidence. She credits the intercession of a neonatal nurse on duty at the El Paso hospital who began praying her Divine Mercy chaplet when Sofia was delivered, who convinced the neonatal doctor to take a second look at the baby and who talked Alomia into surgery for Sofia.

Recalling that Jesus died at the age of 33, Alomia stated, “I do not feel that Sofia’s birthday, the 33rd anniversary of Roe and the C-section starting at 3 p.m. are coincidences.”

Alomia feels that her difficult pregnancy was planned by God so she and her husband would “reach out to people who have had abortions and convince them of God’s infinite mercy and to let people know it is wrong to abort.”

Although many people urged Alomia to have the abortion, many others supported her decision to nurture life.

“The response was incredible and is still ongoing. The people of El Paso are beautiful people, and we are thankful to God for allowing us to be surrounded by them,” Alomia said.

For others experiencing a difficult pregnancy, Alomia recommended Prenatal Partners for Life (www.prenatalpartnersforlife. org) for assistance and support.

Alomia said she would tell those parents: “They are not alone and that God has a special plan for each and every one of us.”

Natural Family Planning classes will be offered

The Couple to Couple League offers classes in the sympto-thermal method of Natural Family Planning. The group finds Natural Family Planning to be safe, healthy, and effective, and indicates that many couples who use NFP “grow in love and respect for one another as they learn to appreciate God’s design for marriage.”

NFP classes will be offered Jan. 28 at 3:30 p.m. at Sacred Heart Church, 1501 9th Street, Wichita Falls, by Charles and Renée Girard-Gatland, (940) 655-2235; and Jan. 28, 6 p.m., at Mary Immaculate Church, 14032 Dennis Lane, Farmac-

KXEB radio’s Teresa Tomeo to speak at women’s breakfast

Women for the Third Millennium will be holding a women’s breakfast Saturday, Feb. 3, at the Cooper Guest Lodge – Berkeley Room, 12230 Preston Road in Dallas. Registration will begin at 9 a.m., with breakfast following at 9:30 a.m.

The guest speaker will be Teresa Tomeo, radio host of “Catholic Connection” on Dallas’ KXEB 910 AM. Tomeo will present a program entitled “Extreme Makeover: Seeing Ourselves Through the Eyes of Love.”

Women for the Third Millennium is an organization designed to promote and support the authentic dignity and femininity of all women.

Reservations are required. To register by the Jan. 29 deadline or for more information, call Patricia Sher (214) 348-6191, or Carolyn Rekerdes (214) 739-9257, or visit the Web site at www.womenthirdmillenium.org.

Bill Pasteur receives Pro Vita award from Mother and Unborn Baby Care

Dedicated pro-life advocate Bill Pasteur received the prestigious Pro Vita (Pro Life) award from Mother and Unborn Baby Care of North Texas at a small gathering of pro-life volunteers just before Christmas. The honor has only been bestowed four times in the 22-plus-year history of the organization, according to information from Chuck Pelletier, founder of Mother and Unborn Baby Care. Past award recipients have included Father Tim Thompson and Father James Hart.

“If we had a dozen more people with [Pasteur’s] intelligence, dedication, and perseverance working for the babies and their moms, we’d see the number of abortion victims in the Diocese of Fort Worth decline substantially, if not disappear altogether,” Pelletier said, upon making the award presentation. Pasteur is credited with founding NE Tarrant Right To Life (a stand-alone organization; not an affiliate of the National or Texas Right To Life groups) over two decades ago with his wife, Ta-

mita, and several other dedicated pro-lifers in the Hurst-Euless-Bedford, Mid-Cities area.

Pasteur’s efforts in the very early years were met by huge success, Pelletier noted, explaining that Pasteur and his group were able to eliminate the practice of abortions at John Peter Smith county hospital. Pelletier credits Pasteur with saving “countless thousands of lives” because of his work with JPS in the mid 1980s. Pasteur has continued to ensure that the hospital has not returned to the practice of abortion because of his ongoing work with the JPS board and its CEO.

Pasteur’s most recent pro-life efforts successfully culminated in the city of Bedford passing a resolution asking for Planned Parenthood to close its offices in the Mid Cities.

“Pasteur truly imbuces the Pro Vita spirit in both prayer and action,” Pelletier said in a written statement. “He is a real blessing to all of [the babies and their moms] and to the church in Fort Worth.”

Yvonne Alomia plays with her daughter Sofia in their home in El Paso. Sofia will celebrate her first birthday this year on the Jan. 22 anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. Her mother Yvonne feels that is significant because during a difficult pregnancy she was frequently advised to have an abortion rather than carry Sofia to term. (CNS photo/Noemy Gonzalez, Rio Grande Catholic)
Father Harry Fisher, senior priest of the diocese, dies at age 92

Father Harry W. Fisher, 92, formerly the oldest living priest of the Diocese of Fort Worth, died Sunday, Jan. 7, following several months of hospice care. The funeral Mass was celebrated Saturday, Jan. 13, at his home parish of Sacred Heart Church in Muenster, with Bishop Kevin Vann presiding. Vigil services were held at Holy Family Church in West Fort Worth Thursday, Jan. 11, and on Friday, Jan. 12, at Sacred Heart Church. Burial was at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Muenster.

Harry Walter Fisher was born Nov. 6, 1914, in Muenster, one of 12 children born to Joseph Sr. and Emma Pulte Fisher. His father and his uncle, John Fisher, were the original owners of the well-known Fischer’s Meat Market of Muenster, founded in 1927 and still owned and operated by members of the Fisher family.

Fr. Fisher grew up on his family’s farm, leaving Sacred Heart School as a teenager in order to work on the farm and in the oil fields to help support the family after the death of his mother in 1930. He served with the 32nd Infantry Division in Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines during World War II, spending 654 days in combat duty.

After the war, Fr. Fisher traveled through the Northwest and Southwest United States, working in the harvest fields before returning home to Muenster to pursue his dream of becoming a priest. With the encouragement of Father Thomas Weinzapfel of St. Pius X Church in Dallas, Fr. Fisher entered St. Mary College in St. Mary, Kentucky, in 1956, later transferring to St. Bernard Seminary in Cullman, Alabama. He went on to complete his theological studies at St. Maur Seminary in South Union, Kentucky. Fr. Fisher was ordained May 30, 1964, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Dallas at age 50, by Bishop Thomas Gorham of Dallas.

The newly-ordained priest’s first assignment was to serve briefly as associate pastor at St. Mary Church in Gainesville; he went on to assignments at Holy Family, St. George, and St. Rita churches in Fort Worth, and at Sacred Heart Church in Wichita Falls before serving as pastor at St. Jude Church in Burk Burnett from 1973 to 1976. He then served as pastor at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Pilot Point from 1976 until 1982, when he was assigned as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Seymour and of St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Megargel.

In August 1989, Fr. Fisher officially retired, but went on to serve as pastor of St. John Church in Valley View for 11 years before retiring from active ministry at the age of 86 in 2000.

While living with the family of longtime friends Judy and Larry Snyder, parishioners at Holy Family Church in Fort Worth, he continued to inspire all who knew him with his special care for the elderly, as he traveled to retirement communities and nursing homes within the Fort Worth area, celebrating Mass and praying with the residents of the homes.

Carol Coffey of St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Pilot Point recalled his years at the rural parish. "His love for children, the sick, and the elderly was always evident," she wrote. "He spent many hours visiting the sick and shut-ins, and the children were always there to grab his hand and walk out of church after Mass with him."

“He was such a loving, wonderful man,” said his friend and caregiver Judy Snyder, noting that she first met Fr. Fisher in 1973 when he was first sent to St. Jude Church in Burk Burnett. “My husband and I always promised him that he had a home with us. My children grew up thinking of him as a grandfather. He had such a sense of humor; he was full of life, and he continued, always, to have a strong desire to serve.”

Remembered for his storytelling abilities and his talent for gardening and for baking and sharing homemade bread, Fr. Fisher was also fondly praised by others who recalled his gratitude for his own priestly vocation.

He is survived by his sister, Lorena Taylor of Muenster; many nieces, nephews, and extended family members; and by longtime family friend Judy Snyder, her children, Keith Snyder and Keisha Matthews, and their spouses, and the six Snyder grandchildren.

MARCH 2007 SPRING BREAK SPECIALS
CHINA - Beijing, Xian (Terracotta Warriors), Shanghai - $1,099 per person - March 9 - 16, 2007 (3 meals daily)
ITALY - Rome, Florence, Assisi, Papal Audience, Basilicas of Rome March 10-18, 2007 $1,809 or 1 night extra - S. Giovanni Rotondo (St. Padre Pio) - March 10-19, 2007 - $1,999 per person
Prices - per person double breakfast/lunch/dinner + airfare from DFW

June 22-30, 2007 - SUMMER CRUISE - RT BOSTON
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FATHER HARRY FISHER
The checkout lines at the grocery store are clogged with a small army of weary shoppers, bound for home after a long day’s work.

Ordinarily, this is a store I find pretty pleasant to shop at. It’s right on the way home from work, so it couldn’t be more convenient. It carries the brands we like, at prices that seem competitive. The produce is usually fresh, and the layout of the aisles makes sense.

Perhaps most appealing though, is that since the store opened years ago, it’s made it a practice to hire mentally challenged folks as sackers and stockers. Many of these workers have been there a long time, and that, combined with my observations as a regular customer, give me confidence that they are well-treated, valued employees. I like supporting such a socially responsible enterprise.

But tonight, I and my fellow shoppers are doing a slow burn. It’s quarter to six on a cold Thursday evening, and as we stand impatiently in our heavy coats and hats, the lines are moving at a molasses-in-January pace. We are chafing, not only at the guilty knowledge that we ought to have shopped more wisely last weekend, but even more at the utterly inexplicable, though consistent, shortage of checkers and sackers at such a busy time of day, a practice the store’s management seems to have enshrined in policy.

So in spite of my usual customer satisfaction, tonight I am sympathetic to the grumbles and gripes being muttered back and forth among the waiting shoppers. And when the woman in front of me makes a few sideways cracks about how annoying it all is, I nod and smile in support.

The checker is flustered, uncertain how to react, but I cannot help but put in my two cents. I tell her that I for one appreciate the store’s hiring policies, and ask her to be sure to tell her manager that their hiring people like Little Bobby is more than a little comforting to then recognize the hidden beauty of solidarity and compassion in ordinary life.

The checker looks confused and troubled. “See him; that one over there?” she asks, whispering loudly. The checker looks in the direction of her glance.

“She means Little Bobby?” she asks. “I look too, now, as do all the people in earshot. Little Bobby [not his real name] is one of the store’s developmentally handicapped employees. “Well, he’s just standing there not doing anything. You should tell your manager,” the woman says forcefully, then grins at all of us as she rolls her cart toward the door.

Finally, the girl announces the total, more at the utterly inexplicable, though consistent, shortage of checkers and sackers at such a busy time of day, a practice the store’s management seems to have enshrined in policy.

The woman ... starts to leave, then stops to make one more comment. “See him; that one over there?” she asks, whispering loudly... It stuns me. “See him?” I nod and smile. Finally, the girl announces the total, more at the utterly inexplicable, though consistent, shortage of checkers and sackers at such a busy time of day, a practice the store’s management seems to have enshrined in policy.

The woman declares, and starts to leave, then stops to make one more comment. “It stuns me...”

TCC’s ‘Legislative Rally Days’ will put bishops’ agenda before the Texas Legislature

By Jennifer Carr

The Catholic Health Association of the U.S. and Canada, Dan’s column earned the same recognition in 2003 and again in 2003. Dan and his wife, Theresa, have two children, Kate and Peter.
Facts vs. Politics
on stem cells

By Richard D. Doerflinger

In short, these cells (along with similar cells recently found in cord blood, bone marrow, and elsewhere) may have the practical advantages of embryonic stem cells for helping patients, with none of the practical or moral disadvantages. And the 4 million live births in this country every year offer an ample supply of such cells for treatments without harming anyone.

A n unusual thing happened on the way to Congress’s latest vote on stem-cell research: A science journal, and secular news media, got something right on this issue.

Media bias in favor of the (speculative) “promise” of embryonic stem cells obtained by destroying embryos has been obvious for years. As for the journals, three of the most prestigious — Nature, Science, and the New England Journal of Medicine — had to retract part or all of articles extolling advances in that field in the past two years when it turned out they were misleading or falsified. But on Jan. 7 the journal Nature Biotechnology reported a real breakthrough, and the media accurately noted how it changes this debate.

The advance comes from researchers at Wake Forest University in North Carolina and Children’s Hospital in Boston, who isolated extremely useful and versatile stem cells from the amniotic fluid surrounding unborn children in the womb. The cells were found in fluid left over from amniocentesis procedures, but could also be obtained from this fluid or the placenta at the time of live birth. The cells grow rapidly and easily, and apparently produce a wide variety of cell types for research and future therapies, without forming the tumors that have plagued many animal trials using embryonic stem cells.

In short, these cells (along with similar cells recently found in cord blood, bone marrow, and elsewhere) may have the practical advantages of embryonic stem cells for helping patients, with none of the practical or moral disadvantages. And the 4 million live births in this country every year offer an ample supply of such cells for treatments without harming anyone.

By Kathy Cribari Hamer

Our family was lucky this year. We celebrated two weddings, a baptism, and a cure. And, although they were large and life-altering, those events were simply ceremonial.

The more vital, essential elements were more significant: We experienced two marriages, a new life, and the improved health of someone we love. To borrow a favorite phrase from Father Jim Pemberton, one of our newest diocesan priests, “We were blessed.”

Once, in mid-summer, all these happy events coincided. The baby, Emma, was christened, and Abby, who would be married just one month later, was the baby’s godmother. Emma’s father Dustin had just finished his first round of chemotherapy, one-third of the way back to health; Julie and Matt were congratulated at a family engagement party.

To enrich those joys John’s student, Michael, arrived for the weekend. Michael has become an essential element himself, since John met him at Malibu High School in California. Michael is an artist, an extraordinarily intuitive and brilliant individual. He is also autistic.

Michael gave the toast to celebrate Julie’s engagement.

“Welcome congratulations Julie and Matt. Thanks everyone for coming for engagement for party. We are buckaroos, we are live in Los Angeles, my California, where many years ago we were all buckaroos and we all have fun and my friend Kaffy and Abby and Meredith and John. We went to Texas to the buckaroo … like Walker Texas Ranger! We went to the church, to Dustin house and families.

“We celebrate and have a wonderful congratulations Julie and Matt and a wonderful marriage and a wonderful happy ending after all and Julie and Matt is like Princess Bride! Have a wonderful story and wonderful the end and a wonderful happy end after all.”

Peppered his thoughts with film references, Michael has a romantic and poetic heart. He also walks on his toes, a wonderful happy ending after all and Julie and Matt is like Princess Bride! Have a wonderful story and wonderful the end and a wonderful happy end after all.”

Michael looks up at the sky and says, “Are you having you good day?”

For the past two months, another love story has unfolded, as my friend Pat lives in a hospital room after being struck by a huge, falling tree limb, a week before Thanksgiving. Pat’s survival and health remain in question.

See HAMER, p. 22
Young people get energized for pro-life march by coming cone long lines

At vigil Mass, Cardinal Rigali says that 'reasons for rejoicing' exist despite legalized abortion

By Pat Mullan
WASHINGTON (CNS) — Despite the fact abortion has been legal throughout the United States for 34 years, there are "reasons for rejoicing," primarily because of lower abortion rates and increased public opposition to abortion, Cardinal Daniel N. Rigali of Philadelphia.

Cardinal Rigali, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Pro-Life Activities, was principal celebrant and homilist at a Jan. 22 Mass on the eve of the annual March for Life. It was held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

"The rate and number of abortions in the United States continue to decline, most notably among teens," he said to a crowd of more than 10,000 at the Mass during the hour. He said many young people "are wisely choosing to obtain from sexual activity, because of religious and moral values and also to avoid sexually transmitted diseases."

"To be free of disease, to be free of the fear of disease, to be free of a broken heart — this is the freedom that we cherish, the freedom that we protest, and we recognize that it is not optional," he added.

Despite an afternoon snowstorm that made Washington's streets slick, the shrine was again filled to capacity with the crowd estimated at 10,000.

"It gets everyone hyped up for the March for Life. It was held at the basilica, the shrine estimated the number at 10,000," said Andrew Hanley, a youth rally at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington Jan. 22.

"Jesus infuses his power in our hearts," he said. "This gives us the power to influence the world in the name of human life."

"We need to influence the world in the name of human life," he said.

"In the midst of the challenging darkness of modern times, there are new reasons to hope that the truth that God's law will prevail as a great light in our nation as our people move in conscience from its earliest and most vulnerable stages onward. This indeed is something radically wrong with our society, and protecting the unborn is a great light in our nation, addressing human rights," he said.

"Our parents could get away with murder, but they chose something else," he said.

"We survived because we were wanted," he said.

Tens of thousands march on Capitol Mall to promote Culture of Life

By John L. Carroll
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Senators, workers in trenches agree: Children must get health care

By Nancy Frazier O’Brien
WASHINGTON (CNS) — Among four U.S. senators in Washington, there was optimistic talk of a bipartisan commitment to expand health coverage for the nation’s 9 million uninsured children. But 40 miles away at a Catholic hospital in Baltimore, there was more nitty-gritty talk of getting children into state and federal health programs and keeping them there.

Both events were part of a national town hall meeting on children’s health care, broadcast by satellite to 34 hospitals across the country Jan. 11. National sponsors of the meeting included the Catholic Health Association and the Campaign for Children’s Health Care, whose partners include Catholic Health Initiatives and Network, a national Catholic social justice lobby.

“We’re the only industrialized nation that doesn’t cover all its children,” said Sister Carol Keehan, a Daughter of Charity who is CHA president and CEO, in a panel discussion during the broadcast.

She finds that situation perplexing, adding, “We love our children as much as any other nation.”

Universal coverage of children also would be good for society. Studies have found that children who receive regular health care are less likely to miss school and do better in school and in life.

According to the four senators who spoke at the town hall meeting, prospects are bright for the reauthorization of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, known as SCHIP, and possibly for expansion of the joint state-federal Medicaid program to cover more children of the working poor.

Although SCHIP has brought health coverage to an estimated 6 million U.S. children since it began 10 years ago and another 28 million children are enrolled in Medicaid, more than 9 million remain uninsured. Nearly three-fourths of those 9 million are eligible for Medicaid and/or SCHIP but not enrolled, according to the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured.

At a Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, a group of hospital officials, political aides, medical professionals, and others who watched the national town hall presentation shared their day-to-day struggles with kids who are healthy, and brainstormed about ways to bring more children into the programs.

Kathleen Westcoat, president of Baltimore HealthCare Access, the lead outreach and eligibility determination agency in Baltimore City for the Maryland Children’s Health Program, said efforts to enroll more children have been hurt by a new federal requirement that applicants and their families seeking renewal — prove both their U.S. citizenship and their identity.

The requirement has led to such absurdities as “sending an infant to the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) to get an identity card,” Westcoat said.

Back in Washington, Sen. John D. “Jay” Rockefeller IV, D-West Virginia, said SCHIP was developed “in the most ideal circumstances, which all of us here yearn for — totally bipartisan atmosphere.”

Rockefeller would like to see a major expansion of health coverage for children, his MedIKids proposal, which he admitted “has gotten absolutely nowhere” since it was first introduced in 2001, would enroll every child in Medicaid at birth and automatically cover them through college.

Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, who sponsored both SCHIP and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, said the federal poverty line.

Congress does this year, political pundits seem to agree that health care will be a crucial issue in the 2008 election.

“I promise that in 2008, [health care] will be the biggest issue in the election,” said Terry McAuliffe, former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, at a forum in Washington late last year sponsored by Geiselef on Health Care, an organization seeking to find common ground on health care.

And Ed Gillespie, former head of the Republican National Committee, agreed, calling health care “the defining domestic policy debate in the 2008 presidential campaign.”

New ‘Seeking Balance’ statement lists priorities for next farm bill

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The National Catholic Rural Life Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, has joined 350 other organizations in a statement calling for substantial revisions to U.S. agriculture policy.

The600 members, representing the continued loss of farms, farmers, and valuable farmland. Unprecedented farm and agribusiness consolidation limits competition and innovation in the marketplace,” the statement said, “Seeking Balance in U.S. Agriculture Policy.”

The statement “has contributed to the overproduction of certain crops, creating artificially low prices that imperil the livelihoods of farmers here and abroad,” the statement said. “Moreover, the benefits of farm subsidies are disproportionately concentrated in very large farms and specific regions of the country, neglecting entrepreneurial and diversified farms and regions that raise livestock and grow other types of crops, including fruits and vegetables. As a nation, we can and must do better.”

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Pope encourages terminally ill to turn to God with complete trust

From page 1

they end their earthly lives.

This is a right belonging to every human being, one that we must all be committed to defend,” he wrote.

Writing directly to those suffering from incurable and terminally illnesses, the pope said, “I encourage you to contemplate the sufferings of Christ crucified and, in union with him, to turn to the Father with complete trust that all life, and your lives in particular, are in his hands.”

“The Pope encourages terminally ill to turn to God with complete trust

at your side, helping you in your hour of need and thus making present Christ’s own loving mercy toward those who suffer.”

Amniotic-fluid stem cells hailed as another alternative to embryo use

By Nancy Frazier O’Brien
WASHINGTON (CNS)—The recent announcement by scientists at Wake Forest and Harvard universities that the amniotic fluid surrounding a child in the womb can be the source of medically useful stem cells is the latest in a series of studies showing the research value of the byproducts of live birth. (CNS photo/courtesy of Wake Forest University)

President Bush promises veto of stem-cell bill

FROM PAGE 1

patients with dozens of conditions in clinical trials.”

“Unlike embryonic stem-cell research, research using stem cells from adult tissue, umbilical-cord blood, amniotic fluid, and other sources is showing enormous promise and is likely to produce new treatments for patients now living,” he added.

Noting that most Americans prefer stem-cell research that takes place “without harming or destroying human life at any stage,” Doerflinger said, “the truly statesmanlike approach to this issue would be to take up this challenge, supporting medical progress that all Americans can live with.”

During the House debate on the legislation, Rep. Chris Smith, R-New Jersey, decried the abundance of misinformation surrounding the debate on stem-cell research and called for federal resources to go to effective, ethical stem-cell research.

Before the vote, Philadelphia Cardinal Justin Rigali, chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, urged House members to “consider the fundamental moral line” they would cross if they approved H.R. 3, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007.

Cardinal Rigali called it a “sad reality” that other forms of stem-cell research have received inadequate funding and attention while there has been “an exaggerated and almost exclusive focus on destructive embryo research in the political and policy-making arena.”

“Even the national cord-blood stem-cell bank that Congress approved a year ago, which could benefit many thousands of Americans immediately, has received minimal funding,” he said.

Other forms of stem-cell research made news Jan. 7 based on a report from scientists at Wake Forest and Harvard universities that said the amniotic fluid surrounding a child in the womb can be the source of medically useful stem cells. The report was published in an online edition of the journal Nature Biotechnology.

In a letter to House members dated Jan. 9 and released Jan. 10, Cardinal Rigali said the lawmakers should support “better solutions” than the “most speculative and most divisive type of stem-cell research,” that which involves the destruction of embryos.

“And a practical level, embryonic stem-cell research has been as disappointing in its results as it has been divisive to our society,” he said. “After almost three decades of research in mouse embryonic stem cells and nine years in the human variety, researchers can scarcely point to a safe and effective ‘cure’ for any condition in mice let alone human beings” using embryonic stem cells.

“At the same time,” he continued, “ethically sound research using nonembryonic stem cells has continued to advance, helping patients with over 70 conditions in early peer-reviewed studies.”

“Since Congress debated this issue last summer, further evidence has emerged on the versatility of adult stem cells, and on the likelihood that they can be reprogrammed to enhance this quality,” he said.

Cardinal Rigali told House members also to consider “the fundamental moral line” they will cross by approving the measure.

“The federal government has never taken the crass utilitarian approach of forcing taxpayers to support the direct killing of innocent human beings at any stage of development, in the name of progress,” he added.

Bishop Wenski expresses hope for immigration reform law in 2007

By Agostino Bono
WASHINGTON (CNS)—Growing public awareness that U.S. immigration laws are out-dated, inhumane, and unfair increases hope that Congress will pass a comprehensive im-migration reform bill in 2007, said Bishop Thomas G. Wenski of Orlando, Florida.

Immigrants illegally entering the United States face exploitation by employers, abuse by smugglers, and death in the desert, he said.

Immigrants “are hardworking, not lawbreakers. An antiquated system is breaking them,” he said during a Jan. 18 teleconference with representatives of Hispanic, labor, business, and public policy organizations.

The organizations form part of the Alliance for Immigration Re-form 2007, which plans to pressure Congress and President George W. Bush to enact a law this year.

Bishop Wenski represented the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at the teleconference. He is a former chairman of the bishops’ migration committee and has been involved for decades in church immigrant programs and issues in Florida and on the national level. He currently is chairman of the bishops’ inter-national policy committee.

During the teleconference, speakers supported legislation that would include a temporary work program for foreigners, a path to legalization for the 12 million immigrants in the U.S. illegally, and improved measures to help employers verify the legal status of their workers.

They said that the shift of con-
Pope says Christians show ecumenical commitment through charity

By John Thavis
Rome Bureau Chief
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI offered prayers for this year’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, saying Christians need to demonstrate their ecumenical commitment through concrete acts of charity.

The pope, speaking at his weekly general audience Jan. 17, said the road to Christian unity was a long and difficult one, but the important thing is not to become discouraged. Prayer is essential for ecumenical progress, he said.

“Every Christian worthy of the name should unite with their brothers and sisters to implore the gift of unity and communion,” he said.

The pope, who addressed about 6,000 people in the Vatican’s audience hall, was scheduled to close the Jan. 18-25 Christian unity week by presiding over a vespers liturgy with other Christian leaders in the Rome Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

He said the theme of this year’s prayer week, “Open our ears and loosen our tongues,” referred to Christ’s healing of a deaf man and to the missionary responsibilities of all Christians.

Through baptism all Christians have been freed from “spiritual deafness,” he said, and become capable of listening to God’s word and communicating it to others.

“The theme underlines how important it is to translate the message of Christ into concrete initiatives of solidarity,” the pope said.

“This favors the path of Christian unity, because every action, however small, which Christians make together to relieve the suffering of others helps make more visible their communion and their fidelity to the commandment of the Lord,” he said.

The pope asked everyone to pray for “significant steps on the road of full communion” between Christian churches, not only during the week dedicated to ecumenism but every day of the year.

Over time, the pope said, he has come to appreciate the deep desire for unity among Christian leaders. This desire was especially evident in his recent meeting in Istanbul with Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, he said.

The pope also noted that in Italy and some other countries Jan. 17 was dedicated to Christian-Jewish relations.

“Friendship between Jews and Christians, in order to grow and be fruitful, must be founded on prayer,” he said.

“I ask everyone to pray insistently so that Jews and Christians may respect each other, appreciate each other, and work together for justice and peace in the world,” he said.

QUESTIONS:

What emotions or memories arise in you when you hear the words, “Do not be afraid”? Name a recent time or times, when your faith in God’s promised reward helped dispel your fears so you could serve the Lord.
The saving grace of my 20s was that [young adult] Bible study group. When I think of what it means to be church, I think of them. The age of completion and dominance, rather it was the beginning of the end of “knowing it all” as a teenager.

How did I go from knowing everything to questioning everything in just a few months? How was I going to be a professional at my job? How was I going to finish school? How was I going to get around when my car seemed to only run every third day and on Fridays with odd-numbered dates?

Speaking of dates; how was my relationship with Jesus? They are the people who I grew to. Is it you? If not, pray that the one the Lord is thinking of hundreds of young adults. Those who are looking for it, cannot find a group to hook up with. One person stepping up at my parish changed the lives of hundreds of young adults. I shudder to think of that time of my life without that group, but the shudder turns to outright quaking when I think of the tens of thousands of young Catholics who have not had this experience, and even if they are looking for it, cannot find a group to hook up with.

For information on Young Adult Ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth go to www.fwdioc.org. Click on Faith Formation, then Young Adult Ministry.

Jeff Hedglen, youth minister at St. Bartholomew Parish in Southwest Fort Worth, is the principal organizer of Camp Fort Worth each summer. Readers with questions can contact Jeff at jeff@stbartsfw.org.
Células madres de líquido amniótico aclamadas como otra alternativa a uso de embriones

Por Nancy Frazier O’Brien

WASHINGTON (CNS) — El anuncio reciente por parte de los científicos en las universidades Wake Forest y Harvard de que el líquido amniótico que rodea al niño en la matriz puede ser fuente de células madre con posibilidades útiles es sólo lo más reciente en una serie de estudios que demuestran el valor investigativo de los productos secundarios del nacimiento vivo, de acuerdo con el diputado del director del Secretariado para Actividades Pro Vida de los obispos estadounidenses.

Richard M. Doerflinger dijo a Catholic News Service el 8 de enero que los varios estudios han demostrado que la placent, la sangre del cordón, el propio cordón umbilical y otros productos secundarios del nacimiento “pueden todos contener células madre muy versátiles, con múltiples formas posibles de aplicaciones medicas”, añadió. “Estos productos secundarios del nacimiento y del parto pueden y deben seguir siendo estudiados.”

“Una vez más la inmensa extensión de la misión pastoral del clero católico en Estados Unidos a la mitad para 2020”.

Por Jerry Fiteau

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Caridades Católicas USA lanzó el 10 de enero una ambiciosa campaña para recortar pobreza en Estados Unidos a la mitad para el 2020.

“En los Estados Unidos a principios de los años 80, cuando Al Gore predicaba la ‘defensa de los pobres.’...Monseñor Vann anuncia el envío por correo del nuevo recurso para el abuso sexual.”

Encamación Torres cosecha maíz cerca de un poblado de San Nicolás de los Ranchos en el estado de Puebla, México, el 17 de enero. Reciente alza del precio de la leche, la harina de maíz y otros suministros alimenticios ha causado protestas, especialmente entre los pobres. La Conferencia Episcopal Mexicana expresó su preocupación acerca del alza de precios, diciendo que “el alimento suficiente y que se pueda adquirir es un derecho humano inalienable.” (Foto CNS/Steven H. Miller)

Estatuas de los Reyes Magos son llevadas por bote en el lago Capiitlán, México, el 8 de enero durante un festival religioso que honra a los santos patronos del pueblo. En la tradición mexicana los tres reyes traen a los niños regalos de Navidad el “Día de los Reyes”. (Foto CNS/Steven H. Miller)
Comencemos el año nuevo invocando a nuestra Madre

Oración a la Santísima
Virgen María inspirada en los escritos del Papa

Por Pedro A. Moreno, OPL
Director, Instituto Luz de Cristo

Madre de Dios y madre nuestra María, tú viva santa le ha dado al mundo el ser más importante, la verdadera luz, Jesús, tu Hijo, el Hijo de Dios y nuestro hermano mayor. Gracias por el don de tu Hijo.

Amor es lo que ha motivado tu completa entrega a la llamada de Dios, y te has convertido así en fuente de la bondad encarnada, el amor encarnado, que mana de Él el Amor de Dios hecho carne salvadora. Ayúdanos a responderle siempre al Señor de la misma manera que lo has hecho tú, con amor filial y confianza en los caminos del Señor.

Revélanos a Jesús, muestranos a Jesús. Guíanos hacia Él. Ayúdanos a comprender la gran Verdad de su Buena Nueva y caminar siempre dentro de la Iglesia que Jesús fundó sobre Pedro, la Iglesia Católica y cuida de nuestros pastores, sacerdotes, diáconos, religiosos y religiosas.

Instruyenos y Enseñanos a conocer a tu hijo Jesús como tú lo conoces, personal e íntimamente. Enseñanos a acogerlo como el centro de nuestras vidas y la fuente de vida eterna que es. Guíanos por el camino del verdadero discípulado, disciplulado que comienza con el amor y respeto en cada familia y que continúa en cada comunidad parroquial. Virgen María, ayúdanos a mantenernos entusiasmados por tu divino hijo Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemente cargando nuestras cruces diarias mientras proclamamos con Jesús y seguir valientemen...
Cardenal O’Malley, de Boston llama abuso ‘verdad oscura’ en iglesia

BOSTON (CNS) — En una columna marcando el quinto aniversario de la crisis por el abuso sexual de niños por clérigos, el cardenal Sean P. O’Malley, de Boston, dijo que ese escándalo es una ‘verdad oscura y constante’ que tenía que ser enfrentado.

Los comentarios del cardenal O’Malley fueron publicados el 7 de enero como un escrito de opinión en el Boston Globe, diario cuya exposición persistente del abuso sexual por sacerdotes en la Iglesia norteamericana motivó el cambio de la cultura y la convicción del secreto de tal abuso en una crisis nacional hace cinco años.

El cardenal O’Malley señaló que el 6 de enero los católicos celebrarán el aniversario del “manifiesto del amor de Dios por toda la humanidad”.

“Hace cinco años, mientras marcábamos la fiesta el 6 de enero de 2002, las revelaciones desvastadoras que clérigos católicos habían abusado sexualmente de niños sacudieron la Arquidiócesis de Boston y la comunidad en general”, dijo él. “El contraste entre la fiesta, que celebra la luz de Cristo, y la verdad oscura y constante del abuso sexual por clérigos parecía, originalmente, imposible de aceptar”.

“Pero la verdad del abuso tenía que ser confrontada”, añadió él. “Estos crímenes contra los niños fueron aún más aterradores porque fueron cometidos por hombres que juraron emular a Cristo y fueron habilitados por la falla del liderato de la iglesia en responder apropiadamente”.


Los obispos mexicanos expresan su preocupación sobre el alza de precio de alimentos

CIUDAD DE MÉXICO (CNS) — La Conferencia Episcopal Mexicana expresó preocupación sobre el aumento de productos alimenticios básicos.

“El alimento suficiente y que se pueda adquirir es un derecho humano inalienable”, dijeron los obispos el 17 de enero. “Este derecho implica un compromiso para que se produzca y se ofrezcan suministros alimenticios a precios asequibles a la gente en las regiones más pobres del país, dijeron los obispos.

La especulación de precios es injustificable y “un crimen ante Dios y el pueblo”, dijeron, llamando a esta práctica poca ética y un ‘pecado social’.

Los obispos expresaron que contra el gobierpo de México y a la sociedad mexicana a que se reaccione de una manera vigorosa y rápida en contra de cualquier estafa con precios injustos y prácticas ilegales de monopolio.

Los mexicanos han estado protestando en contra del reciente aumento de precios de la leche, harina de maíz, y algunos otros suministros alimenticios de primera necesidad.

El precio de la leche ha aumentado cerca del 50 por ciento. El alza de precio de la harina de maíz ha causado que la tortilla, que es alimento esencial para una mayoría de familias mexicanas, aumente también.

El cardenal Norberto Rivera Carrera de la Ciudad de México dijo, el 13 de enero, que le preocupaba que el alza de precios causara dificultades a las familias.

El cardenal también expresó confianza en el gobierno mexicano y aplaudió el aforo en las tarifas para mayor cantidad de maíz importado proveniente de los Estados Unidos.

Por Agustino Bono

WASHINGTON (CNS) — El aumento en la conciencia pública de que las leyes de inmigración ya están anticuadas, son inhumanas e injustas, acrecienta la esperanza de que el Congreso apruebe un proyecto de ley de reforma completa de inmigración en 2007, dijo el obispo Thomas G. Wenski de Orlando, Fl.

Inmigrantes que ingresan ilegalmente a los Estados Unidos se enfrentan a la explotación por parte de los patrones, a abuso por parte de contrabandistas y a la muerte en el desierto, dijo.

Los inmigrantes “son trabajadores y no son violadores de la ley. Un sistema de leyes anticuado los quebranta”, dijo una teleconferencia del 18 de enero con representantes de organizaciones hispanas, de trabajo, de negocios y de plan de acción nacional.

Las organizaciones forman parte de la Alianza por Reforma de Inmigración 2007, que tiene planes de ejercer presión ante el Congreso y el presidente George W. Bush para que aprieven y aprueben una ley esta misma semana.

El obispo Wenski representó a la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos en la teleconferencia. Con anterioridad, había ocupado el cargo de presidente del comité de los obispos encargado de inmigración y ha estado involucrado durante décadas en programas y asuntos de inmigración en Florida y con alcance nacional dirigidos por la iglesia. Al presente, el obispo Wenski es el presidente del comité de plan de acción internacional de los obispos.

Durante la teleconferencia, los presentadores de ponencias se manifestaron por una legislación en la que se incluya un programa de trabajo temporal para extranjeros, un camino para la legalización de los 12 millones de inmigrantes que se encuentran ilegalmente en los Estados Unidos y mejores medidas para ayudar a los patrones a que verifiquen el estado legal de sus trabajadores.

Se dijo que el cambio de control en el Congreso favorece a los demócratas, unido al apoyo de Bush por una legislación de reforma completa, aumenta la posibilidad de una nueva ley este año.

“Aquellas personas ven a los asentamientos como problema. Los seres humanos no son problema. El problema es las leyes anticuadas”, dijo el obispo Wenski.

Los Estados Unidos no pueden darse el lujo de contar con un gran segmento de la población que ocupe un puesto desigual ante la ley, dijo, refiriéndose a los inmigrantes que ingresan ilegalmente al país.

“La última vez que la sociedad de Estados Unidos creó una clase marginada, se le llamó ‘Jim Crow’ (o segregación racista)”, dijo, refiriéndose a las leyes de segregación que discriminaban a los afroamericanos en las regiones del sur, que empezaron después de la Guerra Civil y permanecieron hasta bien entrado la década del 1950. “No creo que queramos crear otra clase marginada”.

El obispo Wenski dijo que habido algo de reacción violenta” por parte de algunos católicos que están en contra de los obispos debido al fuerte apoyo que los dignatarios de la iglesia le han dado a las medidas por una reforma completa de inmigración, pero la mayoría de los católicos apoyan los esfuerzos de reforma.

Se había dado cuenta de que el sistema actual es injusto, dijo. “Nuestra gente católica cree en el juego limpio”, dijo.

El obispo mencionó las re- dadas que se llevaron a cabo en el mes de diciembre en plantas de empacadoras de carne, en varios estados del país, en busca de trabajadores sin residencia legal. Un resultado de las redadas fue que a los niños se les dejó abandonados en las escuelas pues sus padres habían sido arrestados y no podían ir a recoger a los niños como de costumbre en la escuela, dijo. Cualquier sistema en el que sea permitido “no es ni ade- cuado ni justo”, añadió.

El obispo dijo que la diversi- dad de grupos representados en la alianza demuestra que existe un amplio consenso de base a favor de la reforma de inmigración.

R. Bruce Josten, vicepresidente ejecutivo de la Cámara de Com- mercio de los Estados Unidos, dijo que no es cierto que los patrones quieran mitigar las restriccion- nes de inmigración para poder tener contino acceso “a mano de obra barata” proveniente del exterior.

“Necesitamos un mecanismo que saque a los trabajadores de las sombras para que puedan trabajar legalmente” en los Es- tados Unidos y luchar por mejor pago, dijo.

Josten también apoyó un programa de trabajo temporal mediante el cual se les permita a los trabajadores extranjeros el ingreso a los Estados Unidos a fin de que se llenen las plazas vacantes de trabajo. Y cuando haya escasez de trabajadores de Esta- dos Unidos.

Los trabajadores temporales mantendrían su trabajo bajo la protección de las mismas leyes que los hacen trabajadores de Estados Unidos, dijo.

La aplicación estricta de las normas en contra de trabajadores ilegales, como las redadas, tam- bién crean problemas para los patrones, dijo.

California ha venido sufriendo por escasez de trabajadores despar- ticipa; y, sin embargo, debido a la aplicación intensificada (de la ley), los trabajadores se muestran renuentes a cruzar la frontera y los patrones se muestran reacios a contratar más gente, dijo.

En la nueva legislación se necesita incluir un sistema de seguridad para comprobar el estado legal de los trabajadores, dijo.

Tamara Jacoby, miembro del consejo de gobierno del alto rango del Instituto Manhattan, dijo que las encuestas demuestran que los sentimientos en contra de la inmigración no pasan del 20 por ciento.

“Queremos permanecer como una nación de inmigrantes”, dijo.

Además de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de EEUU, de la Cámara de Comercio y del Instituto Manhattan, entre los miembros de la alianza se incluye el Sindicato Internacional de Empleados de Servicio, la Asoci-ación Nacional de Restaurantes, el Consejo Nacional de La Raza, la Asociación Americana de Abo- gados de Inmigración y el Foro Nacional de Inmigración.
By Jerry Filteau
WASHINGTON (CNS) — “Poverty remains our nation’s most serious political blind spot and one of our nation’s most profound moral failings,” says the new policy paper of Catholic Charities USA, “Poverty in America: A Threat to the Common Good.”

The policy paper, published in the form of a 28-page booklet released Jan. 10 at a briefing on Capitol Hill, sets the framework for Catholic Charities’ new Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America. The paper is also available in Spanish.

The goal of the campaign is to cut half by 2020. That would mean that the 37 million Americans now living below the poverty line, who form 12.6 percent of the country’s population, would have to drop to about 6 percent within 13 years.

“Poverty in this nation is an ongoing disaster that threatens the health and well-being of our country, which our children will inherit,” the paper says.

It says the spread of poverty in America “has been largely ignored” in recent years by politicians and the media, while the federal government “has substantially reduced the resources” devoted to assisting the poor.

“Poverty in America has been a conscious and deliberate retreat from our nation’s commitment to economic justice for those who are poor,” it says.

The paper pledges Catholic Charities USA, and its members — more than 1,700 local agencies and institutions nationwide — “to attack the structural roots of poverty by advocating in Washington, D.C., and state capitals for the policy changes outlined in this paper.”

It pledges a campaign to speak out in the public square and raise public understanding of poverty and its causes.

In Catholic Charities agencies will continue to serve individuals and families who are poor, uphold their dignity, and work to enable them “to actively participate in and share in the responsibility for addressing the issues brought to them by our doors.”

At the same time, it says: “Faith-based groups and the nonprofit sector do not have the resources to replace those functions, and we share the legitimate responsibility of government and the private sector. Catholic Charities USA will not accept the proposition that agencies such as ours should substitute for some of the basic functions of government.”

It says Catholic agencies will work in partnership with other social service agencies, the private sector, the nonprofit sector, and government on programs to decrease poverty.

The paper bluntly confronts the question of the revenue needed to fund such programs. “The taxes on America’s wealthiest families and on businesses have been reduced dramatically in the past few years,” it says.

It says Catholic agencies will work in partnership with other social service agencies, the private sector, the nonprofit sector, and government on programs to decrease poverty.

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Local Catholic Charities joins national campaign to reduce poverty

In a Jan. 22 press release, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Worth announced that it has joined the multi-year initiative lead by Catholic Charities USA to cut poverty in half by 2020.

Father Larry Snyder, the president of Catholic Charities USA, spoke Jan. 10 at a Catholic Charities press conference on Capitol Hill in Washington where he unveiled its plan to cut poverty in America in half by 2020. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)
Hamer…

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II also established a specific procedure for giving his resignation, in case he would not have been able to carry out his ministry as pope to the very end,” Cardinal Dziwisz said. “So, as one can see, he considered this possibility,” he said.

The book recounts other behind-the-scenes moments, according to excerpts provided by the Italian publisher, Rizzoli:

— On Sept. 11, 2001, shortly after two planes crashed into the twin towers in New York, the phone rang in the pope’s office in Castel Gandolfo outside Rome.

“On the other end of the line was the frightened voice of Cardinal (Angelo) Sodano, the secretary of state. We turned the television on, and the pope was able to see those dramatic images, the collapse of the towers with so many poor victims imprisoned inside.”

The pope passed the rest of the day going back and forth between the television and the chapel to pray, he said.

“He was worried, strongly worried, that it wouldn’t end there, and that the attack could set off an endless spiral of violence,” Cardinal Dziwisz wrote.

— Recalling when the pope was shot in 1981, Cardinal Dziwisz said he was convinced his assailant, the Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca, was “sent by someone who thought the pope was dangerous.” He said it seemed logical to conclude, at least as a hypothesis, that the Soviet KGB was involved — an allegation made later by Agca when he described a supposed “Bulgarian connection” to the shooting.

But Cardinal Dziwisz added: “In fact, there was no belief in the ‘Bulgarian connection,’ nor in the many other reconstructions in circulation.” Likewise, he said, he gave no credence to journalistic theories that the disappearance of a Vatican City teenager, Emmanuela Orlandi, was in any way connected to the papal shooting.

— Toward the end of the book, Cardinal Dziwisz described the pope’s final moments.

“It was 9:37 p.m. We had noticed that the Holy Father had stopped breathing. But only in that precise moment did we see on the monitor that his heart was no longer beating; he had stopped.” Someone, he said, blocked the hands of the clock to mark the hour of the pope’s passing. Those around the pope’s bed began singing a Te Deum of thanksgiving, not a requiem.

“We were crying. How could one not cry! They were tears of both sadness and joy. It was then that all the lights in the house were turned on. ... And then, I can’t remember. It was as if it had suddenly become dark. It was dark above me, and it was dark inside of me,” he said.

Skiing escapes helped keep JP II from feeling a prisoner of the Vatican

From page 24

mountain excursions.

And the odd thing was that, for a long time, no one recognized the pope, Cardinal Dziwisz said. He would dress as other skiers, with a skijacket, beret, and sunglasses, taking his place in line at the lifts with the rest.

One of the first people to recognize the pope was a young cross-country skier, a boy no more than 10 years old, who was lagging behind the rest of his family when he came upon the papal party. He asked them if they had seen his family go by, and one of the priests pointed to the trail.

At that moment, the pope arrived at the bottom of the slope.

The boy looked astonished, pointed to the pontiff and began yelling, “The pope! The pope!”

One of the pope’s aides intervened quickly: “What are you saying, silly! You’d better think instead about hurrying up, you’re going to lose your group.”

The boy skied away, and the pope and his friends quickly returned to their car and headed for Rome before the word got out.

By Jean Denton

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CATHOLIC ART AND GIFTS

Boutique in Coppell; or Catholic Art and Gifts: These Catholic stores: Keepsakes Catholic will be on prayer, healing, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Contact information will be available following the presentation. Call Luke Gonzales at (877) 393-2518 to purchase tickets for any of these Catholic stores. Keepsakes Catholic and Gifts in Arlington; Little Angels Boutique in Coppell; or Catholic Art and Gifts in Farmer’s Branch. Additional information about Schubert may be found on her Web site at www.sampg.org, or e-mail to Mark at seasmenspurity@yahoo.com.

MAGNIFICENT BREAKFAST

Maggie, a Catholic mother of five, will sponsor a breakfast with praise and eucharistic devotion (open to women only) from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Call Linda Hiltun in Grapevine. The keynote speaker will be Linda Schubert, lay evangelist and internationally known speaker, and Dr. Michael V. Hiltun, ke"ller, Miracle Hour. Schubert’s focus will be on prayer, healing, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Contact information will be available following the presentation. For more information, call Steve Kellmeyer at (817) 481-2685 or e-mail to skellmeyer@stfrancisgrapevine.org.

CATHEDRAL RETREAT

The retreat will begin Friday, Feb. 2, at 7:30 p.m., through noon Sunday, Feb. 4. CRC is located at 4503 Bridge East in Fort Worth. Written and video summaries of this retreat will be available following the retreat. For more information, call Steve Kellmeyer at (817) 481-2685 or e-mail to skellmeyer@stfrancisgrapevine.org.

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ST. AUGUSTINE’S GROUP

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SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton School, 2016 Willis Lane, Keller, open house Feb. 25, from noon to 2 p.m. Call (817) 990-5279. To schedule a tour, call the school office at (817) 431-4484.

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New book offers inside glimpse of John Paul II’s life in Poland and Rome

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service
ROME

Pope John Paul II consulted with top aides about possibly resigning in 2000 and set up a “specific procedure” for papal resignation, says a new book by the pope’s former secretary.

The pope eventually decided that it was God’s will that he stay in office, despite the illness that left him more and more debilitated, wrote Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz of Krakow, Poland, the late pope’s closest aide.

In the book, A Life With Karol, Cardinal Dziwisz offers an inside glimpse at key moments of Pope John Paul’s life in Poland and his 26-year pontificate. The book was to be published in Polish and Italian in late January.

In his last will and testament, made public after his death, Pope John Paul strongly hinted that he had considered resignation as he prepared to turn 80 in the year 2000.

Cardinal Dziwisz said the pope, an avid skier and hiker in his youth, often felt pent up inside the Vatican.

In the winter of 1981, the pope, his secretary, and two of his Polish aides decided to make a “getaway” to the mountains from the papal villa in Castel Gandolfo. They packed into a car owned by one of the priests, in order not to raise suspicions, and when they passed the Swiss Guard post one prelate opened wide a newspaper to hide the pontiff in the back seat.

Then they drove to the central Italian ski town of Ovindoli without an escort, winding through mountain towns and carefully respecting the speed limits.

Once they arrived, they chose a deserted slope and the pope was able to ski all day long. On the way back, the pope smiled and said, “We did it!” It was the first of many such escapes, the papal secretary said.

In the beginning, no one — including journalists and other Vatican officials — knew about the pope’s secret outings.

Hardly a Vatican prisoner: JPII made secret outings

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service
ROME (CNS) — Pope John Paul II made more than 100 clandestine trips to ski or hike in the Italian mountains and was rarely recognized by others on the slopes, his former secretary said.

Polish Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz described the secret outings in a book of memoirs, A Life With Karol, which was being published in late January. An excerpt appeared Jan. 23 in the Rome newspaper Il Messaggero.

The cardinal, who was Pope John Paul’s personal secretary for 38 years, wrote that the pope, an avid skier and hiker in his youth, often felt pent up inside the Vatican.

In the winter of 1981, the pope, his secretary, and two of his Polish aides decided to make a “get-away” to the mountains from the papal villa in Castel Gandolfo.

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