In Lenten message, pope says crucified Christ is reminder to protect human dignity

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Contemplating Christ nailed to the cross should stimulate people to protect human dignity and “to fight every form of contempt for life,” said Pope Benedict XVI in his 2007 message for Lent.

“May Lent be for every Christian a renewed experience of God’s love given to us in Christ, a love that each day we, in turn, must ‘re-give’ to our neighbor, especially to the one who suffers most and is in need,” said the message.

The message was released at the Vatican Feb. 13. The theme of the message is “They shall look on him whom they have pierced.”

Catholics must ensure affection, spiritual support for the sick, says pope

By Cindy Wooden
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Catholics must ensure that people who are sick, especially the terminally ill, receive affection, spiritual support, and medical care to keep them comfortable, Pope Benedict XVI said.

Marking the World Day of the Sick Feb. 11 during his midday Angelus address and an evening meeting with a Rome pilgrimage of the sick in St. Peter’s Basilica, the pope offered his prayers for the sick in St. Peter’s Basilica, and his encouragement to the suffering and to those who care for them.

During the Angelus, the pope called on physicians and

SOCIAL MINISTRY PROGRAM RECOGNIZED — At Dolores Mission Parish in Los Angeles, children who once walked in fear of gang violence after school now laugh and chatter on their way home. Rila Chavez and Rosa Campos of the Los Angeles-based Comunidad en Movimiento received the 2007 Sister Margaret Cafferty Development of People Award during the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington Feb. 11. Comunidad en Movimiento, an organization of Latina women at Dolores Mission Parish, received the award from the U.S. bishops’ Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

(CNS photo/Peter Howard, CCHD)

Fetal pain legislation just one of life-related bills before Congress

By Nancy Frazier O’Brien
WASHINGTON (CNS) — The last pro-life bill to be considered by the 109th Congress became one of the first introduced in the 110th Congress when Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kansas, reintroduced the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act.

The legislation, which died in the House of Representatives Dec. 6 when it failed to receive the two-thirds majority needed to break a procedural impasse, would require that women undergoing an abortion at least 20 weeks into their pregnancy be informed that an abortion causes pain to the fetus.

“It’s a scientific, medical fact that unborn children feel pain,” said Brownback as he reintroduced the bill Jan. 22. “We know that unborn children can experience pain based upon anatomical, functional, psychological, and behavioral indicators that are correlated with pain in children and adults. Mothers seeking an abortion have the right to know that their unborn children can feel pain.”

The bill also would give women the option of choosing anesthesia for their unborn child.

Social ministry central to church life, John Carr tells social ministry leaders

BY JERRY FILTEAU
WASHINGTON (CNS) — The church’s social justice mission is an integral part of its life, and “this is a time for mission,” John Carr, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ secretary for social development and world peace, told a national gathering of Catholic social ministry leaders Feb. 12.

Carr noted that several national figures in Catholic social ministry will be leaving the USCCB staff in coming months as a result of the bishops’ recent decision to downsize their national offices.

Among them are Timothy Collins, executive director of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development; Thomas Quigley, veteran head of the Latin America desk of the Office for International Justice and Peace; and Walter Grazer, head of the environmental justice and peace desks of the USCCB.

The USCCB is not broken, but frankly it is a little shaken,” Carr said. But he added, “Even if there are fewer of us, the mission hasn’t changed…. The question is not who occupies the boxes, the question is how the mission gets done.”

He said the mission remains

SEE MEASURE OF..., P. 12

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World Day of Sick — Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York, chats with Andrew Curran following a Mass marking the World Day of the Sick at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre Feb. 11. World Day of the Sick, instituted by Pope John Paul II in 1992 and celebrated annually on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, affirms the church’s duty to remember and minister to the sick and the suffering. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz, LONG ISLAND CATHOLIC)
In contemplating Christ crucified, we are moved to open our hearts to others, says pope

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While calling Catholics to perform concrete acts of charity during Lent, Pope Benedict XVI’s 2007 Lenten message focuses not on social problems, but on an individual’s relationship with God, said Archbishop Paul Cordes.

Presenting the Lenten message at a Feb. 13 press conference, Archbishop Cordes, president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, said the pope departed from the customary social focus of papal Lenten messages in order to emphasize that Christian charity must have a religious motivation.

The 2007 message, a meditation on the crucified Christ as the fullest sign of God’s love, called on Christians to contemplate Christ’s suffering and then work to alleviate situations in which human life and dignity are threatened by poverty, oppression, exploitation, loneliness, and abandonment.

Archbishop Cordes said Christians must be pleased that “the biblical commandment of love for one’s neighbor” is being followed by a variety of foundations and philanthropic agencies that have no religious motivation.

But at the same time, he said, they must ensure their own acts of charity flow from and witness to the love of God.

“We are not talking about ignoring service to people in order to serve God, but rather of making it clear that precisely by serving others we are serving God,” said the archbishop, whose office promotes Catholic charitable giving and distributes aid in the pope’s name.

The archbishop was joined at the press conference by Italian Cardinal Paul Achille Colombo, president of the John XXIII Foundation, and the press conference by Italian Cardinal Paul Achille Colombo, president of the John XXIII Foundation, and its network of communities for recovering drug addicts and alcoholics, for women freed from prostitution, and for the severely handicapped.

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Baltimore group tries to fill Catholic churches with more men

BALTIMORE (CNS) — Having noticed that men have become a vast minority in Catholic parishes in northeast Baltimore, St. Anthony of Padua parishioner Paul Gerhardt and a group of his friends decided to unite with a mission to lure members of their gender back to church.

So was born the Northeast Catholic Brotherhood a little more than a year ago, and with about 25 men from six faith communities participating, the group has ignited a movement that inspires religious and community involvement.

“We’re a pretty informal group, but they’re serious about getting men back into the church and contributing to the community at large,” said Gerhardt, 50, of Baltimore’s Gardenville neighborhood. “I’m really enthused by what we’ve accomplished in the last year, and I think our outreach efforts are only going to grow.”

Each month the group meets in the rectory kitchen at St. Anthony of Padua for a casual dinner and to plan its outreach programs, ministries, and how to get male Catholics — especially younger men — involved with a mission to lure members of his friends decided to unite into the Northeast Catholic Brotherhood a little more than a year ago.

On a recent Tuesday night over beef stew, about 15 members of the brotherhood met to reflect on the past year and agreed there is hope for their gender’s participation in church activities.

With the group having hosted prayer meetings, liturgy discussions, and several service projects, its progress is steady but sure, said Ken Gray, a 40-year-old father and St. Anthony of Padua parishioner.

“I really believe that we’re going to see an increase in the number of men who are coming back to church,” Gray said. “And I think that’s going to happen in the next few years.”

The group still has no officers and its monthly meetings remain informal, but their commitment to a male population boom in Northeast Baltimore parishes is fierce.

When Gray’s truck was stolen several months ago, the brotherhood collectively prayed for a positive outcome. A few days later Baltimore City Police recovered the vehicle and charged a suspect.

“We prayed that truck back into your driveway,” Gerhardt told Gray. “God is behind us. I’m sure we men have a future in our faith.”

Caritas India plans to include women in all decision-making bodies

MUMBAI, India (CNS) — The Catholic Church’s social service and aid organization in India finalized a proposal to include women in all its decision-making bodies.

Caritas India made the proposal during its national assembly in Mumbai in early February. The decision still will need to be considered by the standing committee of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, reported UCA News, an Asian church news agency.

Women hold about 30 percent of the positions in Caritas India’s national governing body. The percentage of women would increase to 50 percent within a year if the proposal is adopted. The proposal also calls for women to constitute at least 25 percent of other bodies, such as finance and appointment committees as well as administrative bodies of diocesan and regional branches.

“We need to work toward gender equality in decision-making bodies,” said Archbishop Stanislaus Fernandes of Gardhinagar, secretary-general of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India. “We need to respect and give due dignity to women in all fields.”

Rita Noronha, a member of the Caritas India governing body, said that although more women are involved in the social, educational and health works of the church, they are not represented in positions of authority.

Shimray Mungeirehy, who heads Caritas India’s department for promoting gender sensitivity, said Caritas India will apply gender sensitivity in all its projects.

Vocation awareness—Center your family in Christ

By Fr. Kyle Walterscheid

A s we prepare for Lent let us recall what a great gift God has given to the Church in this holy season.

Lent helps us to reach back to our roots, to walk in the ways of Christ in the desert for 40 days and nights. What a wonderful opportunity Lent offers for the family to renew their spirit in Christ, to become stronger and more Christ-centered families. People ask me all the time how they can support their children’s vocation. When we make the choice to enter into any of the many rich prayer traditions the Church offers during Lent, we are already supporting our children’s vocations, creating the time and space for prayer and reflection on the mysteries of Christ.

A family that prays together stays together because each member in the family is being nurtured in their vocation by both God and by their family’s support. Today we balk at the mere suggestion of sacrificing the simplest of things for 40 days and nights, like TV, video games, the iPod, or our favorite food. But dare I suggest a change like this is just what Christ, the doctor of souls, orders?

If as responsible Christian parents we aren’t sowing the seeds of prayer and the Spirit in our children’s souls, then the media will be sowing our children’s minds with seeds of corruption.

While it is true that there is much about this world and the workplace that we cannot control, it is our duty as Christians to take control of our households. When someone comes to your house, what do you suppose goes through their mind? Maybe even, “Oh my God, how dysfunctional; how can they live like this?” or maybe they think “Is this a family living here or stranglers?” Now, what if Jesus was to knock on your door and step into your home? Would Jesus be impressed? Would he commend you for creating a prayerful and peaceful house? Would he see you as a parent living out your vocation with well-disciplined, Christ-centered children?

Lent is the time for us to get reordered, to discipline ourselves to a right order again. Prayer and peace should fill every room and hallway of the home. We can pray the Stations of the Cross, the rosary, the Divine Mercy chaplet, read a chapter each day in the Bible, go to church for a holy hour each week or each day. Or we can choose to clean up our house, throwing out things that dishonor Christ, and create a positive environment for the family as well as friends and visitors. We can reach out to our spouse, children, or friends to truly support their vocation in life. We should never be embarrassed to talk about Christ! “…Whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father” (Matthew 10:33).

Our vocation is the call from God to deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow in the footsteps of the Passion of Jesus. May Christ nourish each of your vocations this Lenten season with fervent prayer and sacrifice, fasting, almsgiving, along with the reordering of our households to the greater glory of Christ.

Along similar lines, I am working with more than 50 men in our diocese this Lenten season with fervent prayer and sacrifice, fasting, almsgiving, along with the reordering of our households to the greater glory of Christ.

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Susanna Cervini

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Along similar lines, I am working with more than 50 men in our diocese this Lent between the ages of 18 and 55 who are discerning a radically different path, the path of the religious life and priesthood. This is a difficult choice to make and more difficult to follow. Please keep them in prayer that they too will discern God’s will for their lives and say YES to their vocational call from God.

Father Kyle Walterscheid, director of the Office of Vocations, as he walked out of Sacred Heart Parish in Munster following his ordination to the priesthood in May 2002. Even then, he appeared to be inviting people to ask if they were being called to a vocation.
Lenten Quiet Day to be held at Carmelite Monastery

Febr. 27
The Carmelite Auxiliary invites all to attend a Lenten Quiet Day Tuesday, Feb. 27, from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Carmelite monastery, located at 5001 Mount Carmel Drive in Arlington. Father James Monaco, T.O.R., will lead the day of quiet reflection with prayer, meditation, and the sacrament of reconciliation for participants.

Those attending are asked to bring a sack lunch for the retreat. For more information, call Kay Fuhrman at (817) 763-9891.

Youth 2000 re-treat to be held April 13-15 at Nolan Catholic

A Youth 2000 eucharistic centered retreat will be held at Nolan Catholic High School, 4501 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth, April 13-15. Led by the Franciscan Friars of the new and sponsored by St. Patrick Cathedral Parish in Fort Worth, the retreat is open to youth and young adults up to age 25.

The Youth 2000 retreat is a weekend of fellowship, music, personal testimonies, sharing faith and more, while focusing on the eucharistic presence of our Lord according to an event flyer. Several talks, including retreat master Father Benedict Grosche, CFR, will offer talks on living an authentic Chrstian life.

In a letter welcoming young people of the diocese to the Youth 2000 retreat, Bishop Kevin Vann says, “I know that Youth 2000 has been a powerful experience of the Lord in the Eucharist and how you can come to know his love in this manner and then be set out to proclaim and live that love. Due to a scheduling conflict, Bishop Rodriguez will not be able to attend the retreat, but adds that “...I will count on your prayers...God bless you for your example of faith and faithfulness to Our Lord and his mission.”

Retreat organizers encourage young people “to come celebrate the feast of Divine Mercy” and “pray for peace in our hearts and in the world with over a thousand young people.”

The “early bird” registration fee, if mailed by March 30, is $40 per person, which includes lunch and dinner on Saturday, but does not include housing. The cost is $50 after March 30. For more information, call (817) 558-9805 or e-mail to information@stpatrickcathedral.2000.com. To register for the retreat, call (817) 717-2516 or e-mail to registration@stpatrickcathedral.2000.com, or visit the Web site at www.stpatrickcathedral.2000.com.

Gather Up the Fragments to be theme of Lenten retreat at CPR

Sister Margarita Armendariz, ASC, a certified spiritual director who has served in the dioceses of El Paso, McAllen and Laredo, will talk 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.

“Though prayer, teachings, and dynamics, we will walk through a four-step process in which we allow Jesus to transform the broken pieces of our lives into bread for a hungry world...,” CPR materials explain.

CPR is located at 4565 Bridge Street, next to Nolan Catholic High School, in East Fort Worth. An overnight room and meals are included in the $15 fee. For more information or to make a reservation by the March 12 deadline, call CPR at (817) 429-2520.

North Texas Catholic announces change in schedule for March

As announced in the last North Texas Catholic newspaper, an upcoming renovation of the NTC office has resulted in the canceling of the March 9 issue. The issue of March 23 will be the only NTC published in March; items to be submitted for that issue must be received by noon on Wednesday, March 14.

The rest of the production schedule is expected to remain the same.

We apologize for any inconvenience this change in the production schedule may cause.

Rachel’s Vineyard retreat to offer post-abort healing

A Rachel’s Vineyard retreat, designed for healing for women and men struggling with the psychological and spiritual pain of abortion, will be held March 9-13.

Rachel’s Vineyard retreats offer a safe, non-judgmental, and confidential environment to those struggling with abortion’s aftermath. The retreat provides the confidential support needed to help participants work through their feelings of shame, guilt, and grief, so that they may be set free in experiencing the healing love and mercy of God.

Mothers, fathers, grandparents, and former participants in the abortion industry—anyone who has been hurt by abortion—is welcome to attend.

For more information or to register, call the confidential help line at (817) 925-4757 or e-mail to forgive@rachels.org. All inquiries are strictly confidential.

*Sensible Scripture Study* to begin March 11 in Grapevine

“Would you like to get more out of Mass? Would you like to know where to begin a Bible study? Would you like to be ‘in the Bible’ ask organizers of *Sensible Scripture Study* at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Grapevine. A four-week course, designed to help participants find specific techniques for reading and understanding Scripture, will be held March 11 through April 15. The group will meet at the parish hall, located at 861 Wildwood Lane in Grapevine.

The sessions will be held from 10:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. on consecutive Sundays, beginning March 11 and continuing on March 18 and March 25. A potluck supper will be served at 6:30 p.m. and the discussion will take place from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. A modest donation of $10 per person is requested to cover the cost of materials, refreshments, and room rental. For more information, contact Steve Kellmeyer at (817) 461-2685 or e-mail to skellmeyer@stfrancisgrapevine.org.

Most Blessed Sacrament Parish announces Lenten video series

The Adult Formation Committee of Most Blessed Sacrament Parish has announced that a four-session video series, titled *“I Believe — We Believe”* will be shown at the church’s chapel beginning Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m.

The program will begin on Wednesday, March 7 and continue on March 14, 21 and 28. A spaghetti supper will be served at 6:30 p.m. and the discussion will take place from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and will include small group discussion following the video presentation.

For more information about the series, contact the parish office at (817) 460-2751.
Youth of St. Philip's to host Vendor / Craft Fair March 17

The Youth Group at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Lewisville will sponsor a Vendor/Craft Fair Saturday, March 17, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the parish Community Life Center, located at 1987 W. Main Street in Lewisville. Approximately 20 booths and a silent auction will be featured at the fair; vendors will include Mary Kay Cosmetics, Home Interiors, Tupperware, and Creative Memories. Booths may be rented by businesses or individuals at a cost of $59 each. Proceeds from the event will help to defray the expense of the youth group’s summer mission trip, a week-long work camp to assist with cleanup and restoration efforts in the New Orleans area.

For more information, to donate silent auction items, or to reserve a booth, contact Sandy Peterson at (972) 571-5905.

Eucharistic adoration to be offered at St. John’s March 23

The Stewardship Council of St. John the Apostle Church will sponsor 40 hours of eucharistic adoration at the parish, located at 3414 Glenview Drive in North Richland Hills. The devotion will begin Friday, March 23, with a 2 p.m. Mass; eucharistic adoration will begin immediately after Mass and will continue until the 5 p.m. Saturday evening Mass. After Mass, the adoration will resume, continuing until the 8 a.m. Mass on Sunday, March 25.

Participants may sign up at the parish March 17-18. For more information, call Mary Anne Lemmon at (817) 427-0953.

Nolan Catholic High School to present spring musical in March

Nolan Catholic High School will present its annual spring musical, “The Little Shop of Horrors,” on two consecutive weekends in March. The program will be offered Friday and Saturday evenings, March 2, 3, 9, and 10, beginning at 7 p.m. each evening.

The cost of admission is $5 for students and $8 for adults.

Nolan Catholic High School is located at 4501 Bridge Street, Fort Worth. For more information, contact the school office at (817) 457-2050.

St. Maria Goretti Parish to host Lenten Fish Fry March 23

A Lenten Friday Fish Fry will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 23, in the St. Maria Goretti School Cafeteria, 1200 S. Davis Drive in Arlington.

Tickets may be purchased for $6 per adult or $4 for each child 11 years of age and under; and are only available prior to the event. No tickets will be sold at the door. Tickets may be purchased in the parish office or from any parish choir member. Take-out meals will be available.

For more information, call the parish office at (817) 274-0643.

Workshops, concert co-sponsored by St. Maria Goretti Parish

Paul Salasavich, director emeritus of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, will serve as conductor at the Choral Festival Concert, to be held Saturday, March 3, at 2 p.m. at the Irons Recital Hall on the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) campus. The recital hall is located at 502 South Cooper Street in Arlington.

The concert will feature the St. Maria Goretti Church Choir, under the direction of Freda Breed. The concert will also include performances by the UTA Chamber Singers and the UTA A Cappella Choir and the Brookhaven Choral Society. The concert repertoire will feature works by Paisistina, Handel, Tchenhoff, and Mulholland. Admission is $5.

The March 3 concert will be the culmination of a week-long choral symposium given by Salasavich, who currently serves as director of music at St. Charles Borromeo Church in North Hollywood, California. The conductor will present workshops and clinics at St. Maria Goretti Church, 1200 S. Davis Drive in Arlington, Brookhaven College in Dallas; UTA, First Presbyterian Church of Arlington; and Highland Park High School in Dallas.

Workshops to be held at St. Maria Goretti Church include “Chant: The Foundation for the Interpretation of Western Music” and an “Influence in Expressive Singing,” and “Teaching Healthy Vocal Technique in a Choral Setting.”

For more information about the workshops or concert, contact Jing Tam by e-mail to kthamasu@edu or call (817) 472-2482.

HispanicMinistry Workshop to be offered at Montserrat

A Hispanic Ministry Workshop, designed especially for pastors and parish and diocesan staff, will be presented at Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House, 600 N. Shady Shores, Lake Dallas. The workshop will be held Monday evening, May 7 through Sunday afternoon, May 10, and will be presented primarily in the English language by a wide variety of presenters representing several universities, Church of Our Lady of Victory School in South Fort Worth were inducted Feb. 14 into the Knapek Chapter of the National Junior Honor Society. They are pictured with the organization’s advisor Mary Jeanns. The National Junior Honor Society was established in order to recognize outstanding students who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of scholarship, leadership, service, and citizenship. (Photo by Juan Karkowski-Gill)

NOMINATE STUDENTS FOR cation.

People and Events

Carmelite Auxiliary to present ‘Trinity of the USO’ March 31

“A Tribute to the USO,” an afternoon of musical performance sponsored by the Carmelite Auxiliary, is scheduled for Saturday, March 31, at 1 p.m. at the Woman’s Club of Fort Worth, 1302 Pennsylvania Avenue, Fort Worth. Vocalists and musicians from throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth will perform favorite hits from the ‘40s, ‘50s, and 60s. Bishop Kevin Vann is scheduled to give a special performance.

Light refreshments will be served. The event will also include a silent auction and a live auction. Items included in the auction include vacation condominium rentals, original art work, and more. The auction preview will begin at 12:15 p.m.

Tickets are $30 per person; no tickets will be sold at the door. All proceeds will benefit the Discalced Carmelites of Aurora, Colorado.

For more information about the workshops or concert, contact Jing Tam by e-mail to kthamasu@edu or call (817) 472-2482.

Hispanic Ministry Workshop to be offered at Montserrat

A Hispanic Ministry Workshop, designed especially for pastors and parish and diocesan staff, will be presented at Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House, 600 N. Shady Shores, Lake Dallas. The workshop will be held Monday evening, May 7 through Sunday afternoon, May 10, and will be presented primarily in the English language by a wide variety of presenters representing several universities, Church of Our Lady of Victory School in South Fort Worth were inducted Feb. 14 into the Knapek Chapter of the National Junior Honor Society. They are pictured with the organization’s advisor Mary Jeanns. The National Junior Honor Society was established in order to recognize outstanding students who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of scholarship, leadership, service, and citizenship. (Photo by Juan Karkowski-Gill)

Single women invited to gather for weekly fellowship at St. Michael’s

All single women, including single mothers, are invited to gather every Wednesday evening at St. Michael Church, 5715 Harwood Road in Fort Worth. For prayer time, fellowship, Bible study, and support, each meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the Formation Room, located on the west side of the parish complex. All singles are asked to bring a Bible, a notebook, and a pen.


Childcare will be provided at no additional cost by contacting Rosemary Keeler at (817) 825-8746 ext. 5, or via e-mail to rkeeler@smcchurch.org.

For more information, contact Jennifer Terbek at (214) 679-8598 or via e-mail to jenfer@stthomaspio.org or to jocelyn_hartman@yahoo.com.

Catholic Schools Office to host Teacher Job Fair March 31

The diocesan Catholic Schools Office will hold a Teacher Job Fair, Saturday, March 31, from 9:30 a.m. to noon at Nolan Catholic High School, 4501 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth. Prospective teachers (Pre-K through 12th grade) will have the opportunity to visit with principals and representatives from the diocesan schools. Applications and benefits information for the coming school year will be available.

For more information about teaching opportunities or the upcoming Teacher Job Fair, contact the Catholic Schools Office at (817) 550-3300 or visit online at www.fwats.org.

Sisters of Holy Family of Nazareth to offer vocation retreat March 17

The Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth will host a Come and See Vocation Retreat for single Catholic women, ages 16 to 35, who are disinterested in a vocation to the religious life. The retreat will take place Saturday, March 17, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the sisters’ provinciate convent, located at 1814 E. Fourth Street in Grand Prairie.

For more information or to register, call Sister Mary Paul Haase, CSFN, at (972) 651-8000 to 1700. North Texas Catholic, February 23, 2007    Page 5

NORMA HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES — Seventh graders (l. to r.) Devon Gillen, Bailey Lemsnire, and Rania Pinto from Our Lady of Victory Schoolin South Fort Worth were inducted Feb. 14 into the Knapek Chapter of the National Junior Honor Society. They are pictured with the organization’s advisor Mary Jeanns. The National Junior Honor Society was established in order to recognize outstanding students who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of scholarship, leadership, service, and citizenship. (Photo by Juan Karkowski-Gill)
Like most 14-year-old boys who love watching ESPN, Stephen Breen considered Lance Armstrong a hero. He read the Tour de France winner’s book, watched him race, and marveled at the world champion’s physical stamina and focused attitude.

A burgeoning athlete himself, Stephen had something else in common with the fellow Texan — cancer. Diagnosed in 1996 with advanced testicular cancer, Armstrong battled his way back from the disease to win the Tour de France three years later.

His young fan wasn’t so fortunate. Stephen had just graduated from St. Andrew School in Fort Worth in 2003, when he began waging his war against Ewing’s Sarcoma, a rare bone cancer that strikes about 150 U.S. adolescents a year.

As his chemotherapy treatments continued throughout the summer and fall, the new Nolan High School freshman proudly sported a LIVESTRONG wristband merchandised by Armstrong’s foundation to raise money for cancer research. The yellow, rubber bracelet symbolized hope for the newly diagnosed patient and paid tribute to the famous cancer survivor.

And then, one day, Stephen took off the bracelet and never put it on again. His parents, Jim and Kathy Breen, noticed it missing from his wrist shortly after their son saw Armstrong featured on a television program.

“During the interview, Lance credited Bristol-Myers, the drugs, and his method of staying in shape, but he never mentioned that God had anything to do with him getting better,” remembers Jim Breen. “Stephen was unimpressed by that.”

A year into his own battle with cancer, and a firm believer in God’s healing power, the sick teenager put away his LIVESTRONG wristband.

“A lot of his classmates knew why Stephen stopped wearing the bracelet,” adds Kathy Breen, “and on the day of his funeral, many of them put their bracelets in his casket.”

Faced with a tragedy or serious illness, some teenagers become angry, isolated victims. For Stephen, the opposite was true. “He was truly, truly faithful, and his illness only made him more spiritual,” his mom says. “He believed he was going to heaven and that God was taking care of him.”

Stephen’s biggest fear wasn’t death. “He didn’t want people to forget him,” Kathy Breen continues, recalling how her son sat down with his parents and quietly made a request. “He wanted us to start a foundation to aid Catholic school kids and help teenagers with cancer at [Cook Children’s Medical Center].”

The weekend before he died on Oct. 4, 2004, Stephen jotted down a reminder of his wishes on the family’s message board.

“We knew what we had to do, and we got going,” says Jim Breen, who started laying the groundwork for the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation within a month of his son’s funeral. Stephen’s personal philosophy, “Live Strong, No Regrets,” became the organization’s motto.

A little more than two years since its inception, the foundation has raised a quarter of a million dollars and has given away $75,000 in tuition assistance to Catholic school youngsters.

“We’ve sent checks to 18 of the 19 schools in the diocese,” Jim Breen says, detailing the organization’s outreach. “We’ve helped 100 kids from 70 different families.”

The Candlelighters, a childhood cancer advocacy group at Cook’s, received $5,000 to fund private patient needs and pay for a family excursion to NIH202 for sick teens and their parents.

The foundation’s success is due largely to the efforts of a dedicated board of directors, more than 100 volunteers, and ongoing fundraising activities. A steak dinner, hosted by the Knights of Columbus at St. Andrew Church last fall, raised $3,000, and a Swing “Fore” Stephen Golf Tournament is planned by the foundation for Sunday, April 29, at the Whitestone Golf Club in Benbrook.

Shortly after his death, Nolan students sold “Live for Stephen” bracelets and organized a “Hats Off to Stephen Day,” donating the proceeds from the sale to the foundation.

And this year, as members of Stephen’s class, now seniors, prepare to graduate from Nolan Catholic High School, the foundation is adding a new dimension to its ongoing philanthropy.

A diocesan-wide youth day, hosted by the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation and endorsed by the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, is set for Saturday, March 31, at the Nolan campus. Labeled the Spirit Games ’07, the daylong schedule includes a festival for children in kindergarten through fourth grades, an academic decathlon, track and field events, athletic games, a food court, and music by the Ben Walther Band. The festivities will begin with an 11:30 a.m. outdoor Mass, celebrated by Fort Worth Bishop Kevin Vann, on the Nolan football field.

The youth day gathering will begin with an opening Mass by Bishop Vann at 10:30 a.m. at Nolan Catholic High School and includes the following events:

• 11:30 a.m. Mass, celebrated by Bishop Kevin Vann
• 6 p.m. concert by the Ben Walther Band
• Motivational talk offered by Steve Allgeyer of Life Teen
• Athletic and academic competitions

Tickets are $10 per person; food may be purchased at the event. Open to all Catholic youth, grades K-12, within the Diocese of Fort Worth.

For more information, visit the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation Web site at www.stephenbreenmemorialfoundation.org, or call the foundation at (817) 846-6887.
Father David Bristow considers his parish, St. Mary of the Assumption Church near downtown Fort Worth, to be a “precious jewel” that requires — and deserves — constant maintenance and care.

His dedication to the parish reaches beyond his service as pastor to the worshipping community; Fr. Bristow also pours hours into addressing the many long-term needs of the actual church structure, an elegant, intricately designed building that is now more than 80 years old.

“I’ve been here [at St. Mary’s] just over five years,” explained Fr. Bristow. “In that time, among other tasks, we have refinished the original hardwood floors and installed a new sound system, a completely new heating and air conditioning system, and a new organ.” Volunteers, including Fr. Bristow and members of his family, worked tirelessly to retrieve art pieces and stone work from the recently-demolished St. Joseph School of Nursing and student nurses’ residence in order to create a new outdoor gathering space at the church.

Not content to rest upon his laurels, Fr. Bristow continues to work on new restoration and improvement projects, including one major task that is especially close to his heart. “We have completed several expert studies in order to determine what needs to be done for the beautiful old windows we have here at St. Mary’s,” he said. “The windows, we know, are in need of major restoration. We need to raise funds in order to undertake that work.”

Fortunately for St. Mary of the Assumption parishioners and the many Fort Worth area residents who cherish the beautiful old church, Fr. Bristow and a small team of his staff members have been participants in the New Dollars/New Partners for Your Sacred Space training program since last year, an opportunity provided by the Partners for Sacred Spaces organization.

Partners, a non-sectarian, non-profit organization based in Philadelphia, opened its Fort Worth office in October 2006. The agency, established in 1989, provides training and technical assistance to communities seeking to preserve historic religious properties. Specifically, the agency assists congregations in the tasks associated with restoring, financing, and renewing their churches, synagogues, and mosques. These buildings, according to Partners’ executive director, local architect James Nader, are increasingly at risk. “Over 93 percent of our congregations with older buildings open their doors to host community service programs every year,” explained Nader. “Research shows that many of these same buildings are dealing with severe repair bills. Without a major infusion of funding, these aging buildings, which we call ‘sacred places,’ may have to be demolished. In the Fort Worth area alone, the value of the resources that these congregations provide to the outreach programs they house is approximately $30 million each year,” he pointed out.

St. Mary’s Church is one of 13 local congregations that has been participating in — and, on several occasions, hosting — the regularly scheduled training modules.

“Fr. David and his team have been enthusiastic, fully-engaged participants in the program,” said Nader. “What a blessing it was for members of the Protestant congregations to get to tour the sanctuary at St. Mary’s. It has also been inspiring to watch the way the St. Mary’s team has operated together, with great efficiency and very focused energy.”

“The Partners program is kind of a think tank,” reflected Fr. Bristow. “Among other services, they teach churches how to apply for grants for assistance to maintain or restore religious spaces. They have given us very practical aid in getting a clear view of how to help our church, and creating a plan for doing that.”

Fr. Bristow hopes that more Catholic congregations in the Fort Worth Diocese will become interested in learning how to preserve their own “sacred places.”

“I hope that others will want to take advantage of the Partners program,” he said. “They are good at what they do, and, for us at St. Mary’s, it has definitely been worth the time we have invested.”

For more information about the Partners for Sacred Places organization, visit the Web site at www.sacredplaces.org, or contact the Texas Regional Office at (817) 965-5072 or via e-mail to nader@ sacredplaces.org.

Left: The Breen family — (l. to r.) parents, Jim and Kathy, and sisters Cortni, (following not pictured) Amber, and Kristi — helps create a brighter future for many young people through the Stephen Breen Foundation.

By helping others, the foundation fulfills that objective and keeps alive the memory of a boy who possessed a wisdom beyond his age. “Stephen was caring, quick-witted, loving boy and a good student. Through his foundation, we’re creating a brighter tomorrow for other remarkable young people.”

NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC, February 23, 2007 Page 7
Diocesan / International

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES PROJECT — A fourth-grade Afghan girl attends school in a village in Baghlan, Afghanistan, Nov. 21. Catholic Relief Services is supporting primary education for children in mainly rural areas of Afghanistan. (CNS photo courtesy of Catholic Relief Services)

Experience a Summer of Faith and Fun at The Pines Catholic Camp

Awesome Activities • Caring Counselors • Life-long Friends Unforgettable Memories • Strong Faith Development

The ONLY Catholic camp in the Southwest accredited by the American Camp Association

Established in 1988 on a 130-acre site in the beautiful Piney Woods of East Texas in Big Sandy. Offering week-long summer camp sessions, from June through early August, for ages 7 to 16.

Open House on Sunday, April 15, 2007, 12 to 4 p.m.
Tour the campsite, meet the staff and enjoy lunch in the Dining Hall.
RSVP to: OpenHouse@ThePines.org
www.ThePines.org

Contact the Business Office at (214) 522-6533 for more information.

Dallas Catholic Charities to hold adoption orientation Feb. 28

Catholic Charities of Dallas will host an adoption orientation information session Feb. 28 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., in the conference room at the Catholic Charities offices, located at 3725 Blackburn in Dallas.

According to material from Catholic Charities, this orientation “is a wonderful opportunity to gain additional information regarding the practices and philosophies of adoption through Professional Counseling and Children Services” (Catholic Counseling Services).

People of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and members of all Christian faiths are welcome to attend. For more information, call Linda Christianson at (214) 526-2772 or 1-800-CARE-002.

For more information about Operation Rice Bowl, visit online at www.crs.org/orb, or contact Ralph McCloud at (817) 560-3300 ext. 305.

Several parishes within the Diocese of Fort Worth are participating during the Lenten season in Operation Rice Bowl (ORB), the official Lenten program of Catholic Relief Services (CRS). ORB, which began in 1975, provides resources on combating poverty. More than 15,000 American parishes, schools, and community groups will take part this year in the program, which helps Catholics to pray, fast, learn, and give in solidarity with those in need.

ORB will offer a focus during Lent 2007 upon the countries of Mexico, Pakistan, Angola, Niger, and Cambodia. ORB’s resource materials offer information about these and other countries, enabling families and parish and school groups to learn about the suffering experienced by the poor within these areas of the world. The Operation Rice Bowl Web site (www.crs.org/orb) provides meatless recipes, prayers, virtual tours, and an interactive global map that explains about Operation Rice Bowl-funded programs.

A new feature on the Web site offers the opportunity for participants in ORB to sign up to receive an e-mail reflection during each week of Lent.

Annually, approximately $8 million are contributed through ORB. Seventy-five percent of Operation Rice Bowl contributions come to Catholic Relief Services to fund development projects overseas and Lenten education projects in the United States. Twenty-five percent of Operation Rice Bowl contributions remain within dioceses in the United States to help fund local hunger and poverty alleviation projects.

A quarter of the funds collected through ORB within the Diocese of Fort Worth are used to assist local food banks and other agencies, according to Ralph McCloud, diocesan director of the Office of Peace and Justice, who also serves as director of the Operation Rice Bowl program for the diocese. Individuals, parishes, and schools may obtain ORB resources by contacting his office, he said.

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Sociologists see strong identity, less commitment in young Catholics

By Nancy Frazier O’Brien
WASHINGTON (CNS) — Young adult Catholics have a strong Catholic identity but do not feel much of a commitment to the institutional church or its moral teachings, two sociologists said Feb. 6 in Washington.

The seemingly paradoxical assessment came from James A. Davidson of Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, and Dean R. Hoge of The Catholic University of America in Washington at a Woodstock Forum on the campus of Georgetown University.

Davidson and Hoge are co-authors, along with William V. D’Antonio of Catholic University and Mary L. Gauthier of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown, of American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church, to be published in late March by Rowman & Littlefield.

The book analyzes Gallup surveys from 1987, 1993, 1999, 2005, and finds that Catholics born after 1979, in what the authors call the “millennial generation,” have deep differences from previous generations of Catholics — differences that are unlikely to disappear when they marry and have children.

“There’s a disconnect between them and the institutional church,” said Davidson. “And when they get older, they are not going to be like the Catholics of previous generations. They are going to be the Catholics they are now.”

Hoge said the disconnect might be exacerbated by the fact that the young diocesan priests who will serve the millennial generation are moving in the opposite direction, becoming more strict about some church teachings and more likely to adhere to the “culturist” model of priesthood as a man set apart than to the “servant-leader model” favored by the majority of older priests.

For example, while 94 percent of priests 35 or younger said they believe ordination confers “a permanent character making [the priest] essentially different from the laity,” only 70 percent of priests ages 56-65 said that. Asked whether the church “needs to move faster in empowering laypeople in ministry,” 86 percent of the priests ages 56-65 and 54 percent of the youngest priests agreed.

For the purposes of their book, the sociologists divided the entire adult Catholic population into four groups — pre-Second Vatican Council, those over 65, who make up about 17 percent of U.S. Catholics; the Vatican II generation, ages 45-64, 35 percent; the post-Vatican II generation, ages 27-44, 40 percent; and the millennials, ages 18-26, 9 percent.

On abortion, 58 percent of the pre-Vatican II generation said opposition to abortion was a core Catholic teaching, but only 7 percent of the millennials did. Sixty-nine percent of the oldest group said homosexual behavior is always wrong, while only 37 percent of the young adult Catholics agreed.

On the question of premarital sex, there was a sharp drop in those who believe it is “always wrong” from the pre-Vatican II generation (62 percent) to the Vatican II generation (26 percent).

The figure was only slightly lower for the post-Vatican II generation (55 percent) and the millennial generation (21 percent).

The margin of error was plus or minus 9 percentage points.

Referring to the forum’s theme, “Young Adult Catholics: Believing, Belonging, and Serving,” Davidson said, “Belonging is not a problem; they feel comfortable calling the church home. And I don’t think serving is a problem. It’s the believing that’s the problem.”

Young adult Catholics see the church as having “no credibility, no plausibility, no authority,” he added. “They practice their faith by caring for other people.”

Responding to the sociologists’ talk, women who work with young Catholics found signs of hope for the church in the next generation.

Catherine Heinhold, a campus minister and director of the Catholic retreat program at Georgetown, said many students believe “it is more important to serve the poor than to go to Mass” but they also feel “a very real, deep desire to grow in their faith and spirituality.”

“They respond well to outreach,” she said, “and they are really hungry for God.”

Sister Mary Carroll Kemp, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary who is a ninth-grade religion teacher at Gonzaga College High School in Washington, said that although community service and retreat programs at the Jesuit-run school are not obligatory, “everyone wants to do them.”

But she said the most important element of the service programs and retreats is the time spent in faith-sharing and reflection each day, “talking the talk about Jesus, the Gospel, and God.”

Pope encourages young people to become ‘witnesses of charity’

By John Thavis
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI urged young people to express love in unselfish ways, looking past social goals of competition and productivity in order to become “witnesses of charity” in the world.

He spoke of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta as an example of a Christian who translated love into concrete action to help the poorest of the poor.

The pope made the comments in a message marking World Youth Day, which will be celebrated in many dioceses April 1-14, Palm Sunday. The text was released at the Vatican Feb. 5.

The theme of the papal message was love, and he began by telling young people that despite emotional disappointments and lack of affection in their own lives, they should know that “love is possible.”

“The purpose of my message is to help reawaken in each one of you — you who are the future and hope of humanity — trust in a love that is true, faithful, and strong a love that generates peace and joy; a love that binds people together and allows them to feel free in respect for one another,” he said.

He emphasized that God is the source of true love and that Christ’s suffering and death on the cross form the perfect expression of this divine love.

The pope focused on three areas where young people are called to demonstrate love of God: in the church, in marriage, and in society.

In the church, which he described as a “spiritual family,” the pope said young people should be willing to help stimulate parish and other activities, even if it means giving up some of their entertainments. They should “cheerfully accept the necessary sacrifices” and testify to their love for Jesus among people of their own age, he said.

The pope said marriage is a “project of love” between a man and a woman that fits into a divine design.

“Learning to love each other as a couple is a wonderful journey, yet it requires a demanding ‘apprenticeship,’” he said. “When couples get engaged, they said, it’s a period of preparation that needs to be lived “in purity of gesture and words.”

Engagement allows couples to practice self-control and develop respect for each other, he said. This is true love, which does not place an emphasis on seeking one’s own satisfaction, he said.

When it comes to the daily routine of family, studies, work, and free time, the pope asked young people to look beyond the cultivation of talents needed to obtain a social position.

“Develop your capacities, not only in order to become more competitive and productive, but to be ‘witnesses of charity,’” he said.

He encouraged young people to study the social doctrine of the church and use it to guide their actions in the world. Love is a powerful social force, the only force capable of changing human hearts, he said.

The pope said Blessed Mother Teresa responded to the search for love by society’s weakest members by taking in and caring for the people who were dying on the streets of Calcutta.

The lives of the saints are full of such lessons, and young people should try to know them better, he said.

The pope also encouraged young people to attend Mass regularly, telling them that the Eucharist is “the great school of love.” He said the sharing of the eucharistic bread kindles a love for Jesus among people of their own age, he said.

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Yes, ‘Repent’ but don’t forget to ‘Believe’

By Dan Luby

__R__epent.” It is often the first word of Lent, spoken over the sandpapery sound of crosses being marked on our foreheads with ashes in one of the traditional formulas of Ash Wednesday: “Repent and believe the Good News.”

It captures, as well as any other word, the spirit and tradition of Lenten renewal. It crystallizes the task of Lent, our long communal journey from winter darkness to Easter light. It speaks of conversion and transformation, of opening ourselves to the power of grace.

Though Catholics of a certain age, especially those who grew up in the Bible Belt, may still think of “repent” as a distinctly “non-Catholic” word, something you might see in lights on a church marquee (until quite recently, an entirely Protestant communications medium), or painted on the sides of barns out in the country or shouted passionately by a perspiring TV evangelist, most of us are used to hearing it as part of the sound track of Lent.

Precisely because we have grown used to it, the word “repent,” and the idea behind it, have grown less powerful with increasing familiarity. It might be useful to reflect on what this central Lenten virtue calls us to.

The biblical word that usually gets translated as “repentance” is “metanoia.” It has the connotation of reversing one’s direction, of “turning around.” It implies not only giving up wrongdoing and falsehood, but embracing more fully and faithfully all that is good, virtuous, true.

In the context of Lent, and in the preaching of Jesus, the call to “repent” is paired with the corresponding command to “believe.”

If we are to believe the truth of Christ’s Gospel, of God’s inexhaustible love and mercy, what are some of the lies, half truths, deliberate misconceptions which repentance and the Gospel of Christ call us to reject? What are some of the frequently practiced behaviors, the widely embraced attitudes, the commonly adopted habits of which we might profitably repent in order to make room in our hearts and minds and spirits for the ever-expanding grace of God?

Here is a Lenten “starter kit” of a few ways of thinking and acting which might be appropriate targets for the Lenten tradition of “giving up.”

**WE MIGHT FRUITFULLY REPENT** of the conviction that life is a zero sum game, a contest in which for every winner there has to be a loser, for every enrichment of one person, another person has to be impoverished. It would help us to prize friendship more than victory; communion more than being proven right.

**WE COULD GIVE UP** believing the worst about people, yearning for the downfall of our enemies, relishing their failures and losses as a false source of encouragement for ourselves. It could open our eyes to the reality of each person’s permanent endowment of human dignity — including our own.

**WE CAN STOP ASSUMING** that people who see things differently from us, who may even disagree vehemently with our most cherished convictions, do so out of willful ignorance and malice. It can help us imagine common ground between ourselves and even our most challenging opponents.

**WE CAN ABSTAIN FROM** attitudes which justify belittling others or dismissing their hopes and aspirations and concerns because “those kind of people” (fill in your own prejudice here) are OK to despise or demean, are not included in Christ’s call to love, are somehow beyond the power of God’s mercy. It might expand our too-limited vision of how much God longs to include all his daughters and sons in his Kingdom.

May the Spirit of true repentance move within us during this new Lenten season. May we give ourselves over to the work of repentance and belief as we prepare ourselves for the celebration of the great Easter mysteries. May we turn away from all that impedes our communion with God and with one another, and turn toward the One whose life, death, and resurrection open up for us the very life of God.

__Stop by anytime; we’ll leave the light on for you__

By Mary Morrell

“For I was . . . a stranger and you welcomed me . . .” — Matthew 25:35

At every change of season, I like to change the welcome sign on my front porch. This year, as I changed from fall to winter on what seemed more like a bittersweet night, my eye turned on the porch light overhead. The warm yellow glow reflecting off the new sign brought back memories of a similar night many years ago.

My husband and I and a few of our children had made ourselves comfortable in the living room to watch a movie. It was around 10 p.m. and some of us, including the dogs, had begun to doze. The night was warm so the front door was open to let fresh air in through the screen.

Without warning the screen door opened and a young, attractive woman stepped into the living room. “Is this the country club?” she queried enthusiastically. Within seconds she realized her mistake.

Half asleep and without moving a muscle from my chair I said with a smile, “I wish.”

Startled, everyone began laughing, astounded at the late night visitor, but not concerned enough to move from their spots — sort of like that watchdog we put so much faith in who opened one eye at the intruder and offered a half-hearted yawn. “I’m so sorry,” she stuttered embarrassed as she backed out onto the porch, “but you have a welcome sign and everything.”

Escorting her back to her friends who waited in a running taxi, my husband directed them to the nearby Elks Club as they cut flowers, or simply a hand-jotted note tucked in our door.

“Why do you suppose someone would expect an experience of welcome, of being wanted and cared for?”

Coming home from school on a dark winter’s night and making the long walk down my street from the bus stop, I had those warm feelings of welcome, of comfort, whenever I saw the amber glow of the living room lamp through the frosted windows. I guess that’s why I got hooked by the Motel Six commercial, “We’ll leave the light on for you.”

That motel served as our place of welcome as we traveled across the country in the worst of weather and, believe me, I was glad to see that light burning when hurricane force winds threatened to blow us into the next state.

Over the years I have come to see these experiences in the light of what it means to be Church.

Jesus extended the invitation, saying, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men. Come, all you who are weary and I will give you rest... Come, follow me.”

He hung out a welcome sign and never shut the door in anyone’s face. He taught us how to be hospitable, to be a people of welcome, to open our doors and our hearts to those who would seek entrance.

What I learned from my parents was to always leave the light on. You never know who might need a place of welcome. What I learned as a Christian is that the light needs to shine through the eyes of the soul, as well as our doors.

So if you’re ever in the neighborhood, stop in. With a house full of people there’s always a light — or two or three — burning in the window.
Texas Bishops statement on the HPV Vaccine

On Friday, February 5, Governor Perry issued an executive order requiring the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to adopt rules requiring the new Gardasil vaccine for girls entering sixth grade as of September 2008. The vaccine is designed to protect girls against some strains of the human papillomavirus, or HPV, that cause most forms of cervical cancer.

The Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas appreciate the seriousness of this healthcare issue; HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the world and in the United States. The proposed rule change is currently recommended by the CDC Committee on Immunization Practices and the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) considers HPV vaccination to be a morally acceptable method of protecting against this disease.

However, we find the Governor’s executive order to be problematic in several ways. Although the NCBC considers HPV vaccination to be morally acceptable, it has also recommended that civil authorities should leave this decision to parents and not to make such immunization mandatory at this time. Also, the American Academy of Pediatrics has judged that school-based mandatory HPV vaccination is premature and should await several years of practice before mandates are considered. The HPV vaccine is a new vaccine that has only been tested among girls 16 and older. While results from those tests have been encouraging, clinicians administering the vaccine to 12- to 17-year-olds, and the general public has very little knowledge of any of the possible negative side effects.

We are hopeful the HPV vaccine offers hope for reducing the number of women developing cervical cancer, it is not a magic bullet and is only one avenue for disease prevention.

HPV is primarily spread through sexual contact which includes, but is limited to, sexual intercourse. The prevalence of HPV among those of reproductive age makes exposure to the virus possible, even in a monogamous marriage, due to the possibility of a spouse’s exposure prior to marriage. Furthermore, we live in a society in which nonconsensual sex remains a threat to young women who desire to be protected from the effects of exposure to HPV. Consequently, the Church recognizes that the most effective way to avoid contracting the virus is for men and women to abstain from sexual relations before marriage and to remain faithful within marriage.

In light of these realities, we, the Catholic Bishops of Texas, call on the Governor to rescind his executive order and allow public debate to go forward on this important healthcare issue.

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Texas Bishops statement on Coal-fired Plants

The Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas seek to offer a constructive contribution to the current and important state debate regarding coal-fired plants. We participate neither as climate experts nor as scientists, but rather as pastors and teachers who are concerned that the moral and human dimensions of these decisions could be overwhelming by the political, economic, or ideological pressures.

As the population of Texas increases and our reliance on energy grows, it is becoming increasingly clear that our state may need to reduce total energy consumption while adopting alternative energy sources and technologies that are more environmentally sound. Texas is already home to five of the top ten mercury-emitting power plants in the country, and the current debate over the proposals to build multiple coal-fired plants in our state has heightened awareness to the human and environmental impact of such plants.

We write with a specific aim for our state to come together across partisan, ideological, and interest groups lines to address the moral, human, and environmental challenges facing our entire community. We ask Texas leaders to adopt policy measures that reflect a framework of principles drawn from four major themes of Catholic Social Teaching and our pastoral experience:

**Upholding the Right to Life:**
It is clear that no overall energy strategy is free from risk to human life. The proposed coal plants, however, could pose significant health problems such as increased susceptibility to bacterial infection and increased cases of asthma. The Church is deeply committed to the protection of human life and the advancement of energy sources that are in the approach to energy. Mercury levels in the air and water pose a particular risk to unborn life, which is of deep concern to the Church. Energy planners and those in authority must do all in their power to safeguard human life.

**A Priority for the Poor:**
We are deeply concerned that the poor and vulnerable in our community will have little or no voice in this vital discussion. Their needs and burdens are likely to be ignored or overwhelmed by other powerful interests. The plants will release sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxides — pollutants which are a particular problem for poor families and children, vulnerable workers, and farmers. They are more likely to be in jobs where they work outside performing physically active tasks in the outdoors, and it is often harder for them to obtain asthma treatments.

Currently, because of their costs, energy efficiency programs are disproportionately available only to people who can afford them. Low-income and middle-income households would actually benefit the most from the reductions in pollution through these energy efficiency programs. Every effort should therefore be made to ensure that poor and middle-income families have access to the same energy efficiency strategies available to wealthier families. Additionally, while we should ensure that programs designed to assist low-income families with heating and cooling bills are adequately funded,

**The Pursuit of the Common Good:**
The challenge of seeking new sources of energy is a pre-eminent example of how our civic debate and decisions should reflect the pursuit of the common good, rather than the narrow search for economic or political advantage. Our obligation to pass on the gift of God’s creation to future generations without doing irreversible harm is but one aspect of the demands of the common good. Equally important is the need for all Texans to have access to clean air, land, and water. We urge our leaders to resist and restrain predictable interest group pressures and narrow appeals. Instead we urge them to help build up common ground for reasonable and effective initiatives for energy conservation and the development of alternative renewable and clean energy resources.

**The Practice of Prudence:**
The traditional virtue of prudence calls for caution in accepting a more prominent role for coal in Texas’ future. The Church cannot ignore the economic benefits that coal brings, but neither can the Church ignore coal’s attendant dangers to human health and environment. If a commitment to coal is made, it should be balanced by a simultaneous commitment to reduce emissions, to invest in the technologies proposed along with comprehensive analyses of alternative strategies and their comparative costs and benefits. A slower review process should also include more time for public input and examination of permits.

3. We call on energy leaders to balance the needs and burdens of the poor with the demands for cleaner energy alternatives. One option to achieve this is to ensure that tax policies and other incentives are structured so that clean energy alternatives can be priced competitively with fossil fuel generation.

The Texas Catholic Conference will work with legislative leaders to address environmental justice within this framework and on these principles. We do so with modesty and respect. While no one has easy answers, we ask you to help define and refine what prudence and the pursuit of the common good require. We seek your help in lifting up and focusing on how our sources of energy production will affect the air, land, and water in our community and the voiceless in our community and around the world. We particularly call for leadership in shaping responses that respect and protect the lives and the dignity of poor families and children.

Approved by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas: Archbishop José H. Gomez, San Antonio; Archbishop Daniel H. DiNardo, Galveston-Houston; Bishop Gregory Aymond, Austin; Bishop Edmond Carmody, Corpus Christi; Bishop Alvaro Corta della Ria, SJ, Tyler; Bishop Daniel V. Elizondo, Victoria; Bishop Charles V. Grafmann, Dallas; Bishop Curtis J. Guillory, SVD, Beaumont; Bishop Armando X. Ochoa, El Paso; Bishop Raymond Peña, Brownsville; Bishop Michael D. Pfeler, OMI, San Angelo; Bishop Placido Rodriguez, Lubbock; Bishop James A. Tamayo, Laredo; Bishop Kevin W. Vann, Fort Worth; and Bishop John W. Yant, Amarillo.

Editor’s Note: The above position statements were sent out from the Texas Catholic Conference Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2007.
Measure of society is its treatment of the least among us, says John Carr

— John Carr, secretary of the Department of Social Development and World Peace at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, addresses the 2007 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington Feb. 12. The annual meeting tackled a range of issues from poverty at home to war and human rights abroad. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec.)

FROM PAGE 1 — to “bring good news to the poor” and to “set the downtrodden free.”

“That mission is our life’s work,” he said.

Carr quoted from Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical, Deus Caritas Est (God Is Love), in which the pope says the church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice” and “charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as ‘social charity.’”

The pope’s message, he said, is that Catholics working for justice “are not inspired by ideologies” but are acting as “persons moved by Christ’s love. Faith shapes our politics.”

“Jesus made it absolutely clear that the measure of our society is its treatment of the least among us,” Carr said.

About 600 people, representing diocesan social ministry programs and Catholic organizations engaged in social ministry across the country, attended the Feb. 11-14 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering. The annual meeting features wide-ranging discussions on social justice and public policy issues and an afternoon on Capitol Hill, lobbying members of Congress on immigration reform, poverty, and a variety of other domestic and international issues.

Carr reminded the group that when they go to the Hill “we’re a community of faith. We don’t bring junkets or campaign contributions.”

“In adding our voices and values and votes, we’re not threatening democracy; we’re expressing it,” he said, adding that they were bringing their values into the public square “to build up the common good.”

Carr said addressing public policy issues from a faith perspective is “a lot more complicated than ‘What would Jesus do?’” Catholic social teaching “offers hard questions, not easy answers,” he said.

He said their message is characterized by a series of “ands” — human life and human dignity, rights and responsibilities, charity and justice, solidarity and subsidiarity, personal values and social values.

He listed a sampling of some of the issues the gathering would be addressing over the next couple of days, including the right to life, immigration reform, environmental responsibility, agricultural policy, the war in Iraq, and the bishops’ call for a policy of responsible transition, peace and justice in the Middle East, the global fight against HIV/AIDS and malaria, and poverty.

Carr reminded the group that much of what they do involves building relationships — in Congress the next day, but also in their parishes when they return home.

He said welcoming and encouraging diversity is part of that. “Look around the room,” he said, his eyes sweeping across an almost entirely white audience. “We do not reflect the church we serve…. We’ve come a long way, but we still have a long way to go.”

Remember social justice roots are ancient, Fr. Ronald Rolheiser tells activists

By Patricia Zapor

WASHINGTON (CNS) — For people doing Catholic social justice work who may have a sense of fatigue, it’s important to recognize that the entire movement is relatively new, yet is supported by theology dating to the time of the Old Testament prophets, said the plenary speaker at an annual social ministry gathering.

Oblate Father Ronald Rolheiser, author of numerous books on spirituality and president of Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, urged people to be heartened by their scriptural mandate as they work to improve the lot of the world’s poor and needy.

Some critics of the church’s social justice emphasis point to its relatively short 35-year history to say the movement is not based upon theological tradition.

But Fr. Rolheiser said the fact is that until about that time, “Roman Catholics were the poor.” It’s only recently that enough of the Catholic population, especially in the United States, was well-educated and affluent enough to start asking questions about poverty, treatment of laborers and immigrants, the environment, and other social issues, he said.

He spoke Feb. 11 at the opening session of the annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering.

He quoted the late Jesuit Father John Arrupe, superior general of the Society of Jesus, who answered a question about why the church was so focused on social justice when it had not been considered important in the past.

“Today we know more,” he said Fr. Arrupe responded.

Fr. Rolheiser traced the scriptural basis for social responsibility through the admonitions of the prophets that mankind would be judged by “the quality of justice in the land,” as in, how widows, orphans, and strangers were treated.

And while Jesus at times affirmed the traditions and rules of the Jewish faith, his most powerful teachings were about bringing justice through compassion, Fr. Rolheiser said.

The parable of the prodigal son, the story of God dividing the “sheep” and the “goats” at the gates of heaven, and even the recounting of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet the night before he died were all proclamations about the need to be compassionate toward others, he said.

Fr. Rolheiser noted that John’s Gospel, which tells the foot-washing story, is believed to have been written 65 years after Jesus died. The church at the time was in turmoil.

“They were fighting about everything, especially the Eucharist,” he said, including who could perform the sacrament, who could receive it, and how often.

With its emphasis on the gathering of the apostles that night and Jesus’ act of washing their feet, John’s Gospel “takes the position that sometimes it’s more important to be together than to be right,” Fr. Rolheiser said.

He said such acts of compassion toward others are the direction that might help resolve some of the world’s contentious problems.

As the Rev. Jim Wallis, executive director of Sojourners and convener of Call to Renewal, a network of churches working to overcome poverty, puts it, the way to live Gospel values is not to be liberal, conservative, or even somewhere in the middle, Fr. Rolheiser explained, but “be a person of compassion and faith.”

Jesus was neither consistently liberal or conservative, the priest explained. “He went where compassion took him.”

Before Fr. Rolheiser addressed the gathering, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development presented its 2007 Sister Margaret Cafferty Development of People Award to Comunidad en Movimiento, an organization of Latina women at Dolores Mission Parish in Los Angeles.

The award is given annually by CCHD, the U.S. bishops’ domestic anti-poverty program, to honor an individual or a group who exemplifies a commitment to the development of people and the elimination of poverty.

Comunidad en Movimiento was started in 1996 by a group of Dolores Mission parishioners to respond to problems in the low-income Latino community of Boyle Heights in Los Angeles. The Latina women who lead the group have organized fellow residents to discuss issues that affect them and get involved in actions to create change.

One project is a neighborhood safety campaign involving 50 trained community volunteers who help children walking home from school arrive safely.

Comunidad en Movimiento has worked on a community policing program and organizes an annual conference on women’s health and well-being.

The award is named for the late Presentation sister who was director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and a member of the U.S. bishops’ CCHD committee.
Vatican paper condemns death penalty as affront to human dignity

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The death penalty “is not only a refusal of the right to life, but it also is an affront to human dignity,” the Vatican said in a position paper.

The paper was prepared for the Feb. 1-3 World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Paris and was released Feb. 7 by the Vatican press office.

“The Holy See takes this occasion to welcome and affirm again its support for all initiatives aimed at defending the inherent and inviolable value of all human life from conception to natural death, in all places,” it stated.

Echoing the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the paper recognized the obligation of governments to protect their citizens, but it also said that “today it is truly difficult to justify” using the death penalty when other means of protection, including life imprisonment for murderers, are possible.

Citing appeals made by Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI for clemency for people condemned to die, the paper said the Vatican supported international campaigns to proclaim a universal moratorium on the use of capital punishment and the abolition of the death penalty worldwide.

It also noted concerns raised in many parts of the world over “recent executions,” obviously referring to the hanging of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and other former officials of Iraq.

“Consciences have been awakened by the need for a greater recognition of the inalienable dignity of human beings and by the universality and integrity of human rights, beginning with the right to life,” it said.

The paper said every decision to use the death penalty carries “numerous risks,” including “the danger of punishing innocent persons” and the possibility of “promoting violent forms of revenge rather than a true sense of social justice.”

A capital execution, it said, “is a clear offense against the inalienable right to ‘life’ and can contribute to ‘a culture of violence and death.’”

“For Christians,” the Vatican said, “it also shows contempt for the Gospel teaching on forgive-ness.”

While an execution “temporarily may alleviate an appetite for revenge,” it said, taking the life of the criminal makes it impossible to fulfill the obligation of justice, which calls for penalties that punish and may help rehabilitate an offender.

The penal punishment was far from the only life-related legislation proposed in the first weeks of the 110th Congress, however.

McQuade said the pro-life secretariat would be working for passage of legislation that would make “truly constructive changes in the lives of women and their unborn children.”

One such proposal is the Pregnant Women’s Support Act, to be introduced sometime soon by Rep. Lincoln Davis, D-Tenne-see. The legislation would provide resources “to help women make life-affirming choices for themselves and their children,” McQuade said.

Among its many provisions, the bill will expand eligibility for the State Children’s Health Insur-ance Program and for the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program, and provide assistance to victims of domestic violence. Pregnant and postpartum women are among those most likely to experience domestic violence, studies have found.

The legislation also includes provisions that will require medical professionals to provide information about abortion and alternatives to abortion that lead to truly “informed consent,” McQuade said.

Also receiving the bishops’ support in the 110th Congress will be the Elizabeth Candy Staton and Parenting Student Support Act, introduced in the 109th Congress by Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-North Caro-lina, and Rep. Melissa A. Hart, R-Pennsylvania, who is no longer in Congress.

By offering housing, day care, and academic accommodations to those who are “pregnant or parenting while pursuing their education,” the bill will give stu-dents choices beyond the usual “abort or drop out of school,” McQuade said.

The USCCB also supports the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, which “came awfully close to passing last year,” McQuade said. It would make it illegal for an adult who is not a minor’s parent or legal guardian to take the minor across state lines for an abortion in order to avoid her own state’s parental notification or consent laws.

The legislation is called the Child Custody Protection Act in the House.

McQuade said the pro-life secretariat also would continue to work for passage of the Abor-tion Non-Discrimination Act, which would guarantee the conscience rights of individuals or institutions who choose not to participate in abortions, and will work to keep in place several provisions that prevent federal tax money from being used to pay for abortion.

The USCCB will oppose ef-forts to expand federal funding of stem-cell research involving human embryos and will support the Alternative Pluripotent Stem-Cell Therapies Enhancement Act, which would fund “lots of kinds of research that would help with the development of new nuclear weapons by North Korea,” McQuade said.

The agreement requires North Korea to close its main nuclear reac-tor, allow international inspec-tors into the country, and begin reporting on its nuclear-related activities.

The nations involved in the talks promised to give major aid, particularly fuel oil, to North Ko-rea in return for its compliance.

In his letter to Roh, the pope said, “the risk of a nuclear arms race in the region” “is a source of concern fully shared by the Holy See.”

He urged the countries in- volved in the so-called Six-Party Talks “to make every effort to resolve the present tensions through peaceful means and to refrain from any gesture or ini-tiative that might endanger the negotiations.”

The pope also repeated a point he had made several times in the past: “Among the alternatives, the death penalty ‘is not only a refusal of the right to life, but it also is an affront to human dignity,’” the Vatican said.

The pope told the presi- dent that he understood the pain people on both sides of the border have experienced over the past 50 years because of the political division of the two Koreas.

“Families have been split, close relatives have been separated from one another,” he said. “Please let them know that I am spiritually close to them in their suffering. On compassionate grounds, I pray for a speedy solution to the problem, which impendes so many from communicating with one another,” he said.

Life-related legislation is proposed in first weeks of 110th Congress

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI told South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun that he shares that nation’s concerns about a nuclear arms race in the region.

With the aid of interpreters, the pope and president spoke privately for 25 minutes Feb. 15 before Pope Benedict handed the president a letter expressing his concerns about North Korea’s nuclear program and about the continued separation of families on either side of the border.

Roh’s visit to the Vatican came just two days after North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States reached a tentative agreement to put a stop to the development of new nuclear weapons by North Korea.

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Protect poor, common good in acting on global warming, bishop says

By Patricia Zapor

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Congress should heed the warnings of a recent report on global warming, with priority given to how climate change affects the poor, the chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on International Policy urged.

In a Feb. 7 letter to congressional leaders, Bishop Thomas G. Wenski of Orlando, Florida, said the recently released report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has clearly and compellingly outlined the case for urgent action to address the potential consequences of climate change.

The letter urged the U.S. government to base responses to global warming on the common good “rather than the demands of narrow interests,” and to place priority on the poor “who will bear the greatest burdens and pay the greatest price for the consequences and costs of climate change.”

In a June 2001 statement, “Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good,” Bishop Wenski noted, the bishops said climate change “is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest-group pressures. It is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family.”

On Feb. 2, the intergovernmental panel, an international working group established by two U.N. agencies, approved a summary report for policymakers, “Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis,” which “assesses current scientific knowledge of the natural and human drivers of climate change, observed changes in climate, the ability of science to attribute changes to different causes, and projections for future climate change.”

Among its details, the report said, “Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level.”

Bishop Wenski noted that the report makes clear that “continued greenhouse gas emissions at or above current rates would cause further warming and induce many changes in the global climate system during the 21st century that would very likely be larger than those observed during the 20th century.”

The report predicted that at the current rate of change, the following will occur:

— Snow cover and sea ice will contract, with increased thawing in the permafrost and arctic summer sea ice almost disappearing by late in the 21st century.
— Heat waves and heavy precipitation will become more frequent.
— Typhoons and hurricanes will become more intense, more frequent and more common farther north and south than has been normal.
— Precipitation will likely increase in high latitudes and decrease in subtropical regions, leading to more flooding in some regions and droughts elsewhere.

Bishop Wenski said, “The traditional virtue of prudence suggests that we do not have to know with absolute certainty everything that is happening with climate change to know that something seriously harmful is occurring. Therefore it is fear that one should have, not wait until the problem gets worse and the remedies more costly.”

“This precautionary principle leads us to act now to avoid the worst consequences of waiting,” he continued. “Prudence sometimes keeps us from acting precipitously. In this case, it requires us to act with urgency and seriousness.”

Bishop Wenski offered the help of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in working to address global climate change on the basis of making the poor a priority, pursuing the common good, and practicing prudence.

“While no one has easy answers,” he said, “we ask you to help define and refine what prudence and the pursuit of the common good require. We seek your help in lifting up and focusing on the ‘green’ message that will affect the ‘least among us’ — the poor, the vulnerable, and the voiceless in our country and around the world.”

The USCCB wants to offer its voice to the national debate on climate change, Bishop Wenski said.

“We participate not as climate experts or as scientists, but rather as pastors and teachers who feel that the moral and human dimensions of these decisions will be overwhelmed by political, economic, or ideological pressures,” he wrote.

CLIMATE CONCERNS: Smoke rises from a chemical company’s stacks in Hamilton, Ontario, Feb. 1. Climate change as an issue holds appeal in the U.S. and abroad, and the church’s social teaching backs up advocacy on it. In Canada, the House of Commons passed a bill Feb. 14 that gives the federal government 60 days to detail measures to meet its Kyoto Protocol obligations. (CNS photo/P. Moczulski, Reuters)
When Claire Therese Heyne was a little girl growing up in Southlake, she liked to cuddle up next to her brothers and sisters at bedtime as their mother read to them from the Lives of the Saints. Stories about virtuous martyrs like St. Lucy and St. Agnes, who were mere adolescents when they left their mark on the world, filled her with awe. Now the 29-year-old is following in their footsteps in a very special way.

On Jan. 1, Claire Therese committed herself to Christ as a consecrated virgin, during a liturgical rite conducted by Bishop Kevin Vann in St. Patrick Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth. The vocation betrays her mystically to the Son of God and dedicates her to the service of his church.

The order of virgins dates back to apostolic times but was “phased out” with the growth of religious communities for women. Today, the church is experiencing a resurgence of the vocation, due partially to a 1996 apostolic exhortation, Vita Consecrata, issued by the late Pope John Paul II.

Although raised in an “exceptional and truly Catholic home by saintly parents,” the theology student says she was unfamiliar with this form of consecrated life until introduced to the rite by a fellow University of Dallas graduate.

“I remember her telling me, ‘the Holy Spirit is nagging me to give you something,’ and she handed me a pamphlet,” says Claire Therese, who later learned that her friend is a consecrated virgin.

“After reading what she had given me, I knew so certainly this is how God was calling me.”

She continued to discern the vocation while studying for her master’s of divinity degree at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, also known as the Angelicum. Two spiritual directors, Msgr. James Conley, who gave her direction while she studied in Rome, and Father Andrew Youman, who currently offers her spiritual guidance, helped her through the process.

Claire Therese announced her decision on Christmas Eve 2004. It’s a Heyne family tradition to sing Christmas carols at an outdoor manger scene set up in the barn on her family’s property, where they have raised a variety of animals across the years.

“I put a ring on the baby Jesus statue,” the young woman says, recalling the symbolic gesture she attached to the announcement. “My sisters and grandmother were crying. They were very happy for me. I’m blessed to have a supportive family.”

While finishing her studies for her degree in Rome, Heyne made a private consecration under the guidance of her spiritual director and former bishop. The public ceremony was held after returning to Fort Worth and meeting with Bishop Vann, who deemed her suitably prepared. As friends and family watched, Bishop Vann presented the young woman with the insignias of her vocation during the Jan. 1 ceremony — a ring, veil, and the book of the Liturgy of the Hours.

“The consecrated virgin is called to serve Christ by serving his bishop and diocese according to the spiritual and practical gifts God has given her,” Claire Therese explains. “Since my return from Rome, my main active service has been teaching.”

A faculty member at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Keller, she teaches English to 137 students. At the beginning of the school year, Claire Therese wrote a letter to the parents of her pupils informing them of her vocation and its significance.

“It’s been a really neat experience for the kids,” she says, adding that she has received only positive feedback from the school community. “They (the kids) seem to pick up on the deep mystery of my vocation more easily and readily than adults.”

The consecrated virgin, who dresses in white and keeps her hair tucked under a scarf, has gotten used to fielding questions from older people. Those who notice her unusual appearance gently ask, “What are you?” Many well-intentioned Catholics often pose an additional query and want to know, “Why didn’t you just become a nun?"

Claire Therese tries to keep her answer simple.

“I tell them that’s just not how God called me,” she says. “The Holy Spirit knows the best path for our souls, and this is the one God has chosen for me.”

“A self-supporting woman who manages her own bills and household, the teacher feels she best serves the church by living independently in the world. In a society fraught with materialism and violence, “people are in desperate need of reminders of heaven,” she observes. “They also need to be reminded of God’s infinite love for them. This is the message the consecrated virgin is especially called to radiate.”

Although she loves working with children and would like to teach religion someday, contemplative prayer is the main focus of her life. As part of the discipline she has set for herself, Claire Therese attends Mass daily and spends at least three hours a day in prayer in front of the tabernacle in her home. She also prays the Divine Office seven times a day.

“Some might think this makes me extra holy or that I pray too much, but neither is true,” she says. “I need to grow in holiness, and it’s because my soul needs so much structure and help that I pray as I do!”

But prayer was a central part of the young woman’s life long before adulthood. As a youngster and teenager, the day started with 6:30 a.m. Mass before school and ended each evening with a family rosary.

While other children collected baseball cards or hung up posters of rock stars or celebrities in their bedrooms or lockers, “Christ was (and is) my hero,” she explains. “My role models were the saints, and my rookie cards were holy cards. It was so helpful and nourishing for me as a youth to be surrounded with images and reminders of the holy men and women who best followed Christ.”

Now the consecrated virgin hopes to serve as a role model for others. When asked whether living her vocation and discussing it freely might inspire others, she responds thoughtfully, “I hope as many women as Christ calls to this vocation respond generously.”

Life as a consecrated virgin is not lonely or without responsibility, she adds, and the strong maternal instinct that helped her nurture younger brothers and sisters is not wasted. The second oldest of eight children, Claire Therese changed her first diaper at age two and was always seen carrying younger siblings. Family members assumed she would grow up to become the mother of a large brood.

“God doesn’t give you a talent and then not put it into service, “ she explains. “I’m asked to be a spiritual mother for the whole church. It’s about giving my life to God and my prayers and penance for the whole church.”

Above: Members of the Heyne family surround Claire Therese with support on her special day.

Above: Claire Therese Heyne processes out of St. Patrick Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth Jan. 1 following her consecration.

Above: Bishop Kevin Vann prays over Claire Therese Heyne at the liturgy in which she committed herself to Christ as a consecrated virgin.

Below: Claire Therese Heyne (center) looks over the list of workshops being offered at the Ministry Formation Day, held Jan. 6 at Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth. (Photo by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen)
Pope says church could not have grown without women’s contributions

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Highlighting the fidelity and responsibility of women in the early Christian community, Pope Benedict XVI said the church could not have grown and developed as it has without the contribution of women.

“The history of Christianity would have had a very different development if it had not been for the generous support of many women,” he said Feb. 14 at his weekly general audience.

Pope Benedict said that as he neared the end of his audience series on the apostles and early church leaders, he wanted to focus on “the many female figures who played an effective and precious role in spreading the Gospel. Their witness cannot be forgotten.”

The pope said the women who helped spread the Gospel and ensure the growth of Christianity — such as Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha, Joanna, Susanna, Priscilla, and Phoebe — should be known, honored, and remembered.

Going through New Testament references to women in the life of Jesus and the early Christian community, Pope Benedict did not get into questions such as the ordination of women to the priesthood and diaconate. Instead, he said Jesus freely chose only men to be among the Twelve Apostles, “fathers of the new Israel” — the church — and he said the New Testament reference to Phoebe as a “deacon” was an indication of her important responsibility in the community at a time before the title took on a “hierarchical” meaning, implying ordination.

Still, the pope said, it must be recognized that “unlike the Twelve, the women did not abandon Jesus at the hour of his passion,” and, in fact, it was a woman — Mary Magdalene — who announced to the apostles the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Of course, the pope said, among the women who played an active role in the life of Jesus and the early church, the most important was Mary, “who, with her faith and her maternity, collaborated in a unique way in our redemption.”

Pope Benedict said that St. Paul, in his New Testament letters, makes clear that women were essential in the life of the early church and that they are called to use their gifts for the good of the community.

St. Paul explained “the fundamental principle according to which, among the baptized, not only is there no longer (a distinction between) Jew or Greek, slave or free, but not even male or female,” the pope said.

“The reason is that we are all one in Jesus Christ,” he said.

“All of us share the same basic dignity, although each with his or her specific function.”

The pope told the estimated 8,000 people at the audience, “We thank the Lord because he leads his church generation after generation, relying without distinction on men and women who make their faith and baptism fruitful for the good of the entire body of the church community.”

Before his main audience, the pope met in St. Peter’s Basilica with 12,000 pilgrims and their bishops from 13 dioceses in central Italy. The bishops were at the Vatican for their “ad limina” visits, which bishops make every five years to report on the status of their dioceses.

Scripture Readings

March 4, Second Sunday of Lent. Cycle C. Readings:
1) Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18
2) Psalm 27:1-7, 9-10
3) Philippians 3:17 to 4:1

QUESTIONS:
How is your prayer life these days? What are some specific plans you can make for spending time with God, seeking him in Scripture, the sacraments, and solitude?

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They went walking outside.

Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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WORDS OF LIFE

March 11, Third Sunday of Lent.

Cycle C. Readings:

1) Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15
Psalm 103:1-4, 6-8, 11
2) 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

By Beverly Czarzynski

Ocasionally, the Lord has a way of placing a person or situation in our lives that provides us with a new perspective or sends us in a new direction.

At the Easter Vigil we watch women, men, and teenagers drenched in the waters of baptism. Who or what gave the nudge that brought them to our church, we might wonder. Perhaps a Catholic friend said, “How about coming to church with me next Sunday?”

I’ve known other stories too: At funerals a tearful adult grandchild reveals to close family and relative strangers what a talented loving person her aged grandparent really was. The person who had just passed left an indelible mark on the speaker’s heart. A man I know obviously has been enormously successful in business, but what I did not know until I had an unexpected conversation with him, is how hard his childhood was. I now understand his devotion to volunteering. He has never forgotten how it felt to be sad and alone.

Before he investigates the bush burning in his path, Moses has been a prince of Egypt, discovered he is the son of slaves, murdered an Egyptian, escaped his would-be captors, become a shepherd for Jethro, the priest of Midian, and married his daughter. In the grand scheme of his life, Moses’ heroic adventures are just beginning as he leads his father-in-law’s flock across the desert toward Horeb. The task of safely shepherding animals across unyielding desert terrain pales in comparison to the role he will soon play in salvation history when he leads the Israelites out of Egypt.

However, before any of these events occur, Moses will be enveloped in the mystery of the God of Creation, the God of Moses’ ancestors, the God who says, “Tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you.”

The ancient one who reveals the mystery, …

QUESTIONs:

Who or what, recently, has directed your consciousness to God’s presence? What new perspectives in your faith life have you gained from these encounters?

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Scripture Readings

The Lenten Challenge: Two Well-lived Lives

By Jeff Hedglen

The fasting and sacrifices we engage in during Lent are meant to cause us to gaze inward and look for ways to live the life of Christ more completely. It is in this spirit that the funeral of a friend and a book about the rock band U2 challenged me to step it up a bit.

My friend Neil died suddenly of a heart attack the day after Thanksgiving. Everyone who knew him was shocked by the news. He was in his mid-40s and left behind a wife and 5-year-old son. He worked in one of the high-rise buildings in Fort Worth for more than 20 years and thus was a fixture in the downtown community.

At the vigil service and funeral there was understandable sadness, but alongside this were memories of how Neil had put hands and feet to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

One person shared about a time he met Neil for lunch. They went walking outside his building when they were approached by a man who appeared to be homeless. Without saying a word Neil reached into his pocket pulled out a $20 bill and a pack of cigarettes and handed them to the man. The friend asked Neil, “Who was that?” Neil replied “I don’t know; we just do that every month or so.”

Another person shared that Neil loved to read Scripture, and when he found a verse he liked, he wrote it down and took it to work. Over time the area in and around his work station became wallpapered with testimony to any and all who walked by.

Story after story came of lunches he purchased for those in need, simple kindnesses he showed to the people he worked with, prayers he said he would (and did) pray for other people in need, and that Neil was always ready to tell anyone who would listen, who Jesus was to him.

While I was still processing this loss and source of inspiration, I was given a book called Walk On: The Spiritual Journey of U2 by Steve Stockman. I have followed this band since the release of their album “The Joshua Tree” in 1987, but I did not know that most of the band met as teenagers in a charismatic youth group. In the years since, the band has soared to the top of the charts, all while fighting to remain true to the faith they had as teens.

To be sure, not every moment in their journey is spotless, and the band is quick to admit that they are sinners like everyone else, but this is not what impressed me about what I read.

I was floored by the many ways Bono and the band are active politically, like working to persuade rich countries to forgive debt of the poorest countries, how Bono often leads prayer and praise in their concerts, making these events possibly the closest thing to a Church many of the concert goers have experienced in a while, and how the “Red Campaign” Bono is spearheading is linking businesses, consumers, and the issue of AIDS in Africa. There are “Red” products like cell phones, clothing, and iPods with significant amounts of their profits going to buy medicine for people in Africa with AIDS.

Upon reflection I realized that the lives of these two very different men have achieved very similar results. The results are similar because both of them have worked in the vineyard God has given them and both have produced a tremendous amount of fruit.

Both of these lives have inspired me to do everything I can, to be all I can, to those who cross my path. Neil challenged me to give to people who ask with love not judgment; Bono challenged me to think big. OK, maybe not U2 big, but bigger that I usually dream.

Both of these stories taught me that what makes a difference in this life we live is making a difference with the life we have. The reality is this: Someone needs to be the light of Christ in our school, job, home, neighborhood, church, grocery store, etc. Neil has done his part, and Bono is busy, so it’s up to you — and me. 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.
El Papa exhorta a la juventud a que exprese amor desinteresado en forma altruista

Por John Thavis
Catholic News Service
CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — El papa Benedicto XVI exhortó a la juventud a que exprese amor desinteresado en forma altruista, pasando por alto sus propios intereses, como muestra la parroquia Misión Dolores en Los Ángeles, en donde los niños caminaban temerosos de violencia pandillera después de que hubieron aprendido a tratar con respeto y compasión a otras personas.

**Desarrollen toda su capacidad; no solamente para poder ser mejores competidores y personas productivas, sino también para presentar testimonio de caridad.**

—El papa Benedicto XVI

En la iglesia, que el papa describió como “una familia espiritual”, dijo que los jóvenes deben estar dispuestos a ayudar a aquellos que se encuentran en situaciones difíciles. El papa animó a los jóvenes a que estudien la doctrina social de la iglesia y a que se esfuercen por comprender los sufrimientos de otros, haciéndolos más conscientes de la dignidad de cada ser humano.

**Se debe de enfatizar que el ‘no’ de la iglesia para ciertas prácticas no constituye una reacción negativa a la modernidad; sino, antes bien, es un ‘sí’ positivo a la dignidad de cada ser humano”, dijo el cardenal William Levada, arzobispo que fue de San Francisco, habló sobre “El papel del Magisterio en Bioética” en el taller de trabajo bajo número 21 para obispos en el Centro Nacional Católico de Bioética, fundado por los Cabilletos de Colón. Más de 150 obispos procedentes de los Estados Unidos, Canadá, Latinoamérica y otras partes, asistieron al taller de trabajo que se llevó a cabo del 5 al 7 de febrero, siguiendo el tema “Aprendímos por Cristo: el Cuidado Católico de la Salud en Tensión con la Cultura Contemporánea.”

La postura de la iglesia con respecto a la tecnología es la de afirmar la dignidad humana, dice cardenal William Levada.

**Se debe enfatizar que el ‘no’ de la iglesia para ciertas prácticas no constituye una reacción negativa a la modernidad; sino, antes bien, es un ‘sí’ positivo a la dignidad de cada ser humano, dice papa Benedicto XVI.**

El papa enfatizó que Dios es la fuente del verdadero amor y que los sufrimientos de Cristo y su muerte en la cruz forman la perfecta expresión de este divino amor.

**amos desinteresado en forma altruista, pasando por alto sus propios intereses, como muestra la parroquia Misión Dolores en Los Ángeles, en donde los niños caminaban temerosos de violencia pandillera después de que hubieron aprendido a tratar con respeto y compasión a otras personas.**

En la parroquia Misión Dolores, en Los Ángeles, los niños que antes caminaban temerosos de violencia pandillera después de que se les enseñó a proteger la dignidad de cada ser humano, han desarrollado toda su capacidad; no solamente para poder ser mejores competidores y personas productivas, sino también para presentar testimonio de caridad.

—El papa Benedicto XVI

El papa dijo que el matrimonio es “un proyecto de amor” entre un hombre y una mujer que se encuentran en el designio divino. “Aprender el amor mutuo entre las dos personas que forman la pareja es una jornada maravillosa: sin embargo, se requiere de un exigente proceso de aprendizaje” dijo. Cuando una pareja se compromete, inicia un periodo de preparación que se necesita vivir “con pureza de gesto y palabra”.

El compromiso les permite a los miembros de la pareja que practiquen control propio y desarrollen respeto mutuo, dijo. Este es el verdadero amor, que no pone énfasis en la búsqueda de la satisfacción personal, dijo. Y cuando se trate de la rutina diaria de familia, estudio, trabajo y tiempo libre, el papa les pidió a los jóvenes que se esfuercen por cumplir con sus obligaciones y que se esfuerzen por ser mejor para los demás.

**La actitud se ha extendido, incluso, se dice con tristeza, entre muchos católicos que creen y practican su fe, que el magisterio de la iglesia es extrema-**

—el cardenal William Levada
Documento del Vaticano condena pena capital como afrenta a dignidad humana

La campaña: “Qué Funcione la Ayuda: El Mundo No Puede Esperar”, dirigida a las naciones más ricas del mundo a fin de que recuerden que han contraído compromisos concretos y que los ciudadanos que votaron a favor de su respectivo gobierno esperan que actúen, dijo Duncan MacLaren, secretario general de Caritas.

La cmpaña consiste en el envío de tarjetas postales a los dirigentes de gobierno de las ocho naciones más ricas del mundo antes de la Cumbre del grupo de países conocido como el G-8 (los Grandes Ocho) que se llevará a cabo en junio; también lograr que los cardenales y obispos se entresián con funcionarios de su respectivo gobierno antes de la junta cimera para que los repre- sentantes políticos recuerden su compromiso.

MacLaren dijo que las orga-nizaciones católicas quieren que los países miembros del grupo G-8 rindan informe durante su junta cimera de los logros que han hecho y de sus respectivos planes específicos para lograr las metas.

El mismo tiempo, mediante la campaña, se les recordará a los respectivos gobiernos de los países más pobres la promesa hecha de canalizar el dinero libre- rado de su respectiva deuda ex- terna y la promesa de aumentar la ayuda para fondos destinados a proyectos de salud, educación y desarrollo, dijo Paul Samangas-sou, próximo secretario ejecutivo de “Caritas África”.

Agencias católicas les piden a los países ricos que den pruebas de aumento de ayuda

Funcionario del Vaticano dice que el mundo debe equilibrar la justicia social y el desarrollo

Pedro Moreno es director diocesano del Instituto Luz de Cristo. Sus escritos espirituales han recibido múltiples premios de la Asociación de Periodismo Católico de los Estados Unidos y Canadá. Vive en el novecientos Forth Worth con su esposa María Mirta y sus tres hijas María, Patricia y Minangela. Pedro es Laico Dominico.
Protejan el bien común al actuar sobre el calentamiento global, dice obispo

WASHINGTON (CNS) — El Congreso debe hacer caso a las advertencias de un informe reciente sobre el calentamiento global, con la prioridad dada a cómo el cambio de clima afectará a los pobres, pidió el director del Comité de Política Internacional de los obispos estadounidenses.

En una carta del 7 de febrero, dirigida a líderes congrestistas el obispo Thomas G. Wenski, de Orlando, Florida, dijo que el informe recién publicado del Panel Internacional sobre el Cambio de Clima ha ex- bozado clara y persuasivamente el caso a favor de acción urgente para atender las consecuencias potenciales del cambio de clima.

La carta pidió al gobierno estadounidense que base sus reacciones ante el calentamiento global en el bien común “en vez de en las exigencias de los intereses estrechos” y poner prioridad en los pobres, “que llevarán la carga mayor y pagarán el mayor precio por las consecuencias de los costos del cambio de clima”.

El panel intergubernamental, grupo internacional de trabajo establecido por dos agencias de la ONU, aprobó el 2 de febrero un informe resumido para los legisladores, “Cambio de Clima 2007: Base de la Ciencia Material”, el cual “evalúa el conocimiento científico actual de los impulsores naturales y humanos del cambio de clima, los cambios observados en el clima, la capacidad de la ciencia para atribuir los cambios a diferentes causas y proyecciones para el cambio de clima futuro”, dijo el obispo.

Entre sus detalles el informe dijo: “El calentamiento del sistema climatológico es inequívoco, ya que es ahora evidente por observaciones de aumentos en el aire promedio global y en las temperaturas oceánicas, el amplio derretimiento de nieve e hielo y el promedio ascendente de nivel del mar”.

Cardenal acoge acuerdo de Corea del Norte de desarmar programa nuclear

ROMA (CNS) — El principal eclesiástico católico de Corea del Sur acogió las noticias que Corea del Norte había acordado apagar su programa nuclear a cambio de ayuda con combustible de parte de países exteriores.

El cardenal Nicholas Cheong Jinsuk, de Seúl dijo que el acuerdo, anunciado en Beijing el 13 de febrero, había “evitado una catástrofe de consecuencias inimaginables”.

“Si las cosas hubiesen ido diferente, habríamos visto un conflicto nuclear que nos habría destruido”, dijo el cardenal a AsiaNews, la agencia misionera basada en Roma.

El acuerdo le siguió a tres años de conversaciones entre seis países, incluyendo Estados Unidos. Corea del Norte prometió cerrar sus principales instalaciones nucleares dentro de un plazo de 60 días y comenzar el proceso de desarme nuclear con inspecciones internacionales. A cambio el país recibiría 1 millón de toneladas de petróleo para combustible.

El acuerdo también puso en movimiento conversaciones sobre una amplia gama de asuntos relacionados, incluyendo la normalización de relaciones norcoreano-estadounidenses.

El cardenal Cheong, quien es también administrador apostólico de la capital norcoreana de Pionyang, dijo que la Iglesia Católica de Corea acogió el anuncio con “alegría y satisfacción”.

Desagradablemente, él dijo, el combustible entregado a Corea del Norte irá probablemente “primero que nada a los tanques de la milicia”, pero él dijo que la gente también se beneficiaría en cierto grado.

El cardenal dijo que el programa nuclear del líder norcoreano Kim Jong-il había hecho “un agujero en el penúmbra coreana y el resto del mundo. En octubre pasado, a pesar de advertencias internacionales, Corea del Norte probó un arma nuclear.

Si hubiese comenzado una guerra, dijo el cardenal Cheong, refugiados del norte habrían inundado el Sur del país.

“Queremos darle la bienvenida a nuestros hermanos que sufran, pero no estamos listos para hacerlo. Sus condiciones económicas son desastrosas y un éxodo masivo se transformaría en una catástrofe recíproca”, dijo el obispo.

Estadísticas del Vaticano confirmaran crecimiento de iglesia

Por John Thavis, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — Las estadísticas más recientes del Vaticano confirmaron que la población y la fuerza laboral eclesiástica continúan cambiando en los países en vías de desarrollo, especialmente aquellos en África y Asia.

Las cifras emitidas el 12 de febrero mostraron que en general el número de católicos aumentó a casi 1,120 millones para finales del 2005, un aumento de 12.7 por ciento de la población total, dijo el Vaticano.

La población eclesiástica creció más rápidamente en África, donde el número de católicos aumentó por un 3.1 por ciento en el 2005...

Católicos impedidos usan su propio sufrimiento para ministrar a otros

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) — Hombres y mujeres de todo el país miembros de una comunidad poco conocida abierta a personas con o sin impedimentos, están imitando al Cristo crucificado al usar su propio sufrimiento para ministrar a otros.

“Las personas impedidas no son carentes de valor”, dijo Maria Burke, de 53 años de edad, feligresa de St. Catherine of Siena, en Horsham, que tiene esclerosis múltiple. “Tenemos algo que dar al mundo. Todavía podemos contribuir”.

Burke es una de 24 mujeres y seis hombres que se han convertido en miembros de los Misioneros Franciscanos de Jesús Crucificado, instituto secular para laicos, muchos de los cuales tienen incapacidades.

Los miembros se consagran a Dios profesando votos perpetuos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia en el espíritu San Francisco. Ellos son llamados a vivir vidas cristianas ejemplares en las circunstancias ordinarias de sus familias, parroquias, trabajos y ambientes cívicos y sociales. Para Burke el instituto es una respuesta a una oración de toda su vida.

“Mucho antes de que yo fuera profesada, me sentía poder de ayudar, de besar y causal”, dijo Burke sobre su condición. “Pasé de usar un bastón a un andador a una silla de ruedas y luché contra eso en cada paso del camino”.

Un día padre Lawrence Gleason, vicario parroquial de St. Catherine en ese entonces, le trajo información sobre los Misioneros Franciscanos de Jesús Crucificado, basados en Albany, Nueva York.

Por una parte del instituto le da a ella “un nuevo modo de ver las cosas”, dijo ella.

“No estoy enojada como lo estaba. Estoy en paz con todo. Es una sensación maravillosa. Esto me ha traído real y verdaderamente paz”, añadió ella.
World must balance social justice, development, says Vatican official

By John Thavis
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A Vatican ofﬁcial urged the international community to examine moral challenges raised by the globalized economy, including the increasing vulnerability of migrant workers and the extreme poor.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the papal nuncio to the United Nations, said globalization places new demands on a traditional responsibility: balancing social justice with economic development.

He made the remarks Feb. 8 at a meeting of the Commission for Social Development of the U.N. Economics and Social Council at the United Nations. His text was made available the following day at the Vatican.

The Vatican representative said migrants have become an important source of labor around the world and deserve “equal pay and equal protection under the law, not least because the jobs they do are often the ones that no one else wants.”

Many migrant workers are forced to work away from their families, and legal arrangements should be made to allow families to reunite, he said.

“Too often a lack of normal family life leads to evils such as human trafﬁcking and prostitution on the margins of migrant communities. The market for such modern slavery could be undermined if allowing families to live together in the receiving country,” he said.

Archbishop Migliore said the U.N. commission should also give attention to the very poor, who are routinely excluded from the right to work and shunned by those with work.

The extreme poor are present in every country without exception, he said. They need access to decent, safe, and fulﬁlling jobs.

“The world is far too rich to let the scandal of extreme poverty continue due to lack of imagination or politics of neglect,” he said.

Archbishop Migliore said that given the dramatic shifts in the population pyramid in many countries, governments would be well-advised to encourage older people to remain in the job market, for example through greater ﬂexibility in pension systems.

Women in the workforce continue to be overlooked or undervalued, he said, leading to discrimination against them in rich and poor countries.

Working parents may need special assistance protected by law so that essential child-raising responsibilities are not neglected, he said. They also need fair wages, which will eliminate the necessity sometimes forced upon the very poor to require their children to work too, he said.

The archbishop said it is now common to outsource production to poorer countries far from where goods are consumed. The practice, often motivated by pressure for higher proﬁ ts, has brought work to many in the developing world, but has inevitably disturbed job sectors in richer countries, he said.
Embracing his Catholic faith changed pop music star Dion's life

BOCA RATON, Florida (CNS) — Fame brought drugs and the fast life for many pop stars decades ago, but for the singer known as Dion it also came with an emptiness and a voracious hunger for more.

“I was always seeking,” said Dion DiMucci, now 67 years old and a member of St. Jude Parish in Boca Raton.

“In the '60s, I used to pray, ‘God, I want to know the truth. Why am I here? I am open and I am ready,’” he told the Florida Catholic, newspaper of the Palm Beach Diocese. “I had a powerful religious experience,” he said. “It changed my life and I have never been the same since.”

DiMucci believes that experience has given him the secret to peaceful living and a good life, and he wants to share his insights with men and teen boys.

So the singer, up for a Grammy for his latest album, “Bronx in Blue,” does so at events in the Palm Beach Diocese, such as a Spiritual Rally for Men planned for March.

“DiMucci tells the story of how he began to reap great rewards along with career success when he slowed down and began to pray and study the teaching of the church and Christ. ‘To know Christ is very freeing and empowering,’” he said. “In my case, it has kept my family together.”

DiMucci is a lifelong Catholic from a big Italian family in the Bronx. He began his music career in the 1950s with Dion & the Belmonts, raking up hits including “I Wonder Why” and “A Teenager in Love.”

DiMucci went solo in the early 1960s rising to the top with hits such as “Runaround Sue” and “The Wanderer.” He landed a spot on the album cover of the Beatles’ “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” in 1967.

Once he embraced his Catholicism, his love of the faith is what keeps me on track. It keeps me hopeful and centered, and it gives me wisdom,” he said.

Dialogue with their Muslim hosts was one of the main goals of the pilgrimage

From page 24 our three tour guides and the families we met. Traveling a mere month after Pope Benedict XVI, the group not only visited many of the Pope’s original destinations, but also met with Muslim educators, professionals, families, and religious leaders committed to promoting interfaith dialogue.

The depth of passion for living out their Muslim faith, explained Romo, “resonated so closely to my own [journey] and took me by surprise. I was amazed by their deep commitment and conviction for living a life of faith.”

The tour was funded and hosted by representatives from the San Antonio Institute of Interfaith Dialog (IID), www.interfaithdialog.org, working in cooperation with St. Mary’s Fund for Judeo Christianity.

Inspired by the teachings of Turkish educator and spiritual leader M. Fethullah Gülen, the IID’s mission is to promote peace and dialogue among people of different faiths.

One of the basic hopes of interfaith efforts, noted Cemal Usak, secretary general of Istanbul’s Intercultural Dialogue Platform, is “to change the average person’s image of the ‘Other,’ so that ‘Desperately in the ‘sacred character and dignity of the person.’ This is, added the pope, “the basis of our mutual respect and esteem … the basis for cooperation in the service of peace between nations and people, the dearest wish of all believers and all people of good will.”

Fr. Miller agrees. “When we realize that ‘the Other’ is as human as we are, and has many of the same values — family integrity, respect for persons, concern to bring up children in loving and positive environment, value of having children, deep faith in God — then we can start dialoguing about how to better understand each other’s core beliefs, which will not always coincide nicely and neatly. Personal acceptance and the building of personal trust come first,” explained Fr. Miller, who has 42 years of experience in the Middle East, including 31 in Turkey.

The Texas group began their Turkey tour in Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, and the ancient capital of both the Roman and the Byzantine empires. Over the next 10 days, the group visited Ephesus, Izmir, Anatolya, Urfa, and Turkey’s capital city of Ankara.

Imam Emrullah Hatipoglu, who greeted Pope Benedict during his visit to Istanbul’s famed Blue Mosque last month, also welcomed the St. Mary’s group to the mosque personally, inviting them across the carpeted prayer hall into his office, where he informally answered questions. “I should thank YOU for coming here, for traveling so far,” he smiled, bringing his right hand to his heart. “I thank you for your vision and for your role in this important work [of interfaith dialogue].

For the Imam (or teacher), nothing in interfaith dialogue compares to a personal encounter. “If you’ve never met a Muslim, you don’t know them as ‘persons.’ You decide what you believe based on what you hear. But if you see and meet people first hand, you begin to know each other as human.”

During his visit, the Pope explained “authentic” dialogue as “based on truth and inspired by a sincere wish to know one another better, respecting differences and recognizing what we have in common.”

Elijah Akhahenda, professor of communication studies at St. Mary’s, echoes the pope’s vision. Seeing firsthand and “listening to stories of how Muslim and Christian communities have been getting along in Anatolia, former Galatia, changed my view about Muslims and the prospect of the two faiths sharing the same physical or psychological space.”

Dialogue with their Muslim hosts was one of the main goals of the pilgrimage

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Contact a priest by a daily mass and rosary 
Call Lourdes Pilgrimages at 1-866-295-8687 toll free or visit www.ourladychapel.com 

SMG LENTE FISH FRY 
A Lenten Fish Fry Friday will be held from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on March 23, in the parish hall, St. Mary's Bistro School Cafetorium, 108 N.W. 4th Ave., Mineral Wells. This event, sponsored by the diocesan offices of Family Life, Marriage and Family Life, of Christ Institute, Marriage Tribunal, Pastoral Planning and Holy Family Finance, offers a day of enrichment that includes (English and Spanish) workshops sessions, and speaker and keynotes. The cost is $20 for an 
vacation purchase tickets and $25 at the door. 

CARMELITE AUXILIARY 

The order of Carmelites has a musical performance sponsored by the Carmelite Auxiliary, is scheduled for March 6, 7 p.m. at the St. Anthony Shrine, 1302 Pennsylvania Ave., Fort Worth. 

For more information, call Sister Jeanne Marie at (817) 481-2665 or e-mail at skinneyj@stfrancisgrapevine.org.

MARRIAGE VALIDATION 

Today...Tomorrow...Forever..."preparation day for married couples planning to have their marriage acknowledged by the church, will be held March 10. Topics will include "Marriage as a Sacrament," "The Church's Role," "Conflict Resolution," and "Limiting." There will be time for couples to focus on their individual relationships. The event will include prayer, silent and live auctions. Featured in the auction are vacation condominium rentals, art items, and more. Platinum sponsors of the event open at 12:15 p.m. All proceeds benefit the Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Arlington. For more information, call Betsy Kalina at (817) 275-0878.

RENEWALCENTER 

The National Renewal Center of North Texas, is scheduled for March 3 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 4503 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth. It will be held from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. 

CAMPUS MINISTRY 

St. Mary’s at the University of Texas at Arlington is seeking a Campus Ministry Coordinator. Responsibilities include coordination of events, support of student groups, and pastoral care for students. The position is a half-time position. Minimum qualifications include a BA from a theological or pastoral ministry, and at least two years of pastoral ministry experience. Send résumés to Holy Family Church; Attn: St. Mary’s Campus Ministry Coordinator; 5801 Peters Colony Rd., Carrollton 75007 or Fax (979) 846-4493; Web site: www.aggiecatholic.org; (979) 846-5717; Fax (979) 846-4493; Web site: www.aggiecatholic.org.

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RACHEL’S VINEYARD 

Rachel’s Vineyard in Fort Worth is holding a weekend retreat for women who need healing following an abortion. This retreat helps to those who struggle with grief, guilt, healing and hope. The retreat is open to all who feel the pain of post-abortion trauma. For more information, contact Rachel’s Vineyard at (817) 923-4757, or e-mail to for@rachelsvineyard.org.

LENTEN RETREAT 

Sister Margarita Armendariz, ASC, a certiﬁed spiritual director who has served in the dioceses of El Paso and Las Cruces, will be in Fort Worth to lead a Lenten Retreat, “Gather Up the Fragments.” The retreat will begin Friday, March 9, at 6 p.m., and will continue through Sunday, March 11, at 5 p.m. “Through prayer, teachings, and discussions, we will work through a process with the Lord, allow Jesus to transform the broken pieces of our lives into bread for a hungry world....” 

ministry@fortworthnorth.org. 

LENTEN QUIET DAY 

All are invited to a Lenten Quiet Day sponsored by the Holy Trinity Auxiliary. The retreat will be held Feb. 27 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Carmelitation, 5801 W. 18th St., Fort Worth. For more information, contact Joe Rodriguez at jrodriguez@stfrancisgrapevine.org or (817) 560-2452, ext. 115.

YOUTH 2000 RETREAT 

The Youth 2000 eucharistic-centered retreat for people ages 13 to 30 will take place April 13, 14, and 15. The retreat, sponsored by St. Catherine of Siena School, Diocese of Fort Worth, will foster eucharistic adoration, inspiring talks, faith sharing, and personal testimonies, according to生活习惯. For more information, call (817) 244-7733 or e-mail to registration@stcatholicschool.edu.

SINGLES SPRING RETREAT 

A singles retreat for men 18 to 35 will be held April 20-22 at River bend Retreat Center in Glen Rose. The theme “We Are Made in God’s Image” will help retreatants strengthen their participation in God’s work. Small group and large group discussions as well as media and panel discussions are planned. The retreat will begin Friday at 8 p.m. and will end Sunday by noon. For more information, call the diocesan office at (817) 294-5899 or Brenda at The Carmelite Center at (817) 560-3300. Registrations are requested by April 8.

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Good Newsmakers

In the footsteps of Pope Benedict XVI, Texas pilgrims engage in dialogue with Muslims in

TURKEY

‘THE OTHER HOLY LAND’

Like an overused kitchen rag, the word tolerance has lost its energy, its ability to convey meaning.

Perhaps nowhere is this truer than in the question of interfaith dialogue. Seeking more than a mere brush with the concept, a group of 12 Texas pilgrims, the majority faculty and staff from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, traveled to Turkey in January on a 10-day interfaith tour.

For Fort Worth-native Wayne E. Romo, the most powerful part of the experience came not from the ancient ruins or the striking buildings, but from “the faith of See DIALOGUE, p. 22

Former St. Paul parishioner Wayne Romo finds common ground with dialogue partners

Turkey is a long way away in culture and geography from Castleberry High School and St. Paul’s Church, where Wayne E. Romo grew up as the second oldest of six children, and where his parents Willie and Henrietta Romo still worship. But for Romo, director of University Ministry at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, it was precisely this new and unknown environment that “enhanced my own Catholic faith in profound ways.”

The interfaith tour provided an “opportunity of walking in the footsteps of Muslims’ faith, to see through their eyes, to experience their passion and conviction, and the joy that faith brings to them,” Romo said, adding, “I was blessed to be able to pray with each of our three Muslim guides at varying times of the trip.” Through that experience, “I found a common place, a unique charisma the three guides exuded — the depth of conviction for their faith practices. I see a close resemblance of this charisma surfacing in many contemporary Christian Catholics, and it was awe inspiring.”

In ministry talk, Romo explained, “we speak of learning to walk in someone else’s footsteps,” as a way of gaining insight into how God is manifested in peoples’ lives. This is what happened to me,” Romo added, smiling. “I see God with different eyes, and I feel enlightened.”

From left to right, Wayne Romo, IID representative and tour guide Fatih Ozcan, and Father Charles H. Miller, St. Mary’s professor of Theology and Archeology, at Harran, where Abraham married Sarah and lived for many years (Genesis) — only miles from the border between Turkey and Syria.

Stories and Photos by
María de Lourdes Ruiz Scaperlanda
Special Correspondent
Former Texas Catholic Press Correspondent

Former St. Paul parishioner Wayne Romo finds common ground with dialogue partners

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