Speakers at Canon Law convention say there’s room for improvement in church consultation

FORT WORTH (CNS) — There’s room for improvement in church consultation, said speakers at the annual convention of the Canon Law Society of America.

The Code of Canon Law prescribes various structures for church consultation, but they are not always effective in practice, the speakers said during the Oct. 9-12 meeting in Fort Worth.

The theme of the convention, “Consultation in the Life of the Church: In Service of Community,” was inspired by Pope John Paul II’s 2001 apostolic letter, Novo Millennio Ineunte (At the Beginning of the New Millennium). In it the late pope called for strengthening a “spirituality of communion” by effectively using the structures of participation and consultation provided for in church law.

In an Oct. 9 keynote address, Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, identified consultative bodies on all church levels, from the Synod of Bishops and College of Cardinals assisting the pope, to various lay and priests’ councils helping diocesan bishops, and finance and pastoral councils aiding pastors.

“Truly, the Code of Canon Law proposes perfect structures for consultation,” Cardinal Rodriguez said. However, they will be effective only if those who request and offer advice have the ability to listen, especially to “listen wisely,” he added.

Msgr. John Strynkowski, former executive director of the U.S. bishops’ Secretariat for Doctrine See Consultation…, p. 13

Bishops from Americas discuss threats to life, U.S. border fence

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The breakdown of families and threats to human life, from abortion to the death penalty, are challenges that Catholics in the Americas must confront, said a group of bishops meeting at the Vatican.

The council of bishops charged with monitoring and promoting follow-up to the 1997 Synod of Bishops for America and to Pope John Paul II’s 1999 post-synodal document, The Church in America, met at the Vatican in early October.

In addition to denouncing threats to human life, council members — from North and South America as well as from the Vatican — also offered a harsh assessment of plans to construct a fence along the U.S.-Mexican border.


“The wall along the United

VATICAN NEWSPAPER — Pope Benedict XVI reads the Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano, in this 2005 photo. The newspaper’s editorial views correspond to Catholic teaching and positions taken by the pope. An exhibit on the 145-year history of the Vatican newspaper is currently on display in Rome. See story, p. 24 (CNS photo/L’Osservatore Romano)

Pope says Christians can be missionaries to those near and far

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — All Christians are called to be missionaries, sharing the good news of God’s love in their families, workplaces, or in far-off lands, Pope Benedict XVI said.

“Mission starts from the heart,” the pope said during his midday Angelus address Oct. 22, which was World Mission Sunday.

“The love that moved the Father to send his Son into the world and [moved] the Son to offer himself for us to the point of dying on the cross, that same love was poured by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers,” he said.

Converted and saved by love, every Christian is called to proclaim “the good news that God is love and, in this way, save the world,” the pope said.

Because mission is a matter of sharing the love of God, every Christian can and must be a missionary, he said.

Missionary work is not limited to traveling far away to proclaim the Gospel to people who have not heard the message, he said. Missionary work also can be striving to make one’s family life holy, living one’s professional life “with a Christian spirit,” or dedicating one’s life to God in the priesthood or religious life.

SIM grants help parishes, schools with limited resources make necessary repairs

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Charlene Hymel might be the only person thankful for the ongoing drought in North Texas.

Cloudless skies mean one thing for the St. Rita School principal: “Cloudless skies mean one thing — the only person thankful for the ongoing drought in North Texas.

There won’t be any rain leaking through the roof and into the hallway, the water trickles down the wall and makes a puddle.”

“When it starts to rain, my husband and I come to the school to salvage the units. Fortunately, the school was able to salvage the units. Fortunately, the school was able to salvage the units. Fortunately, the school was able to salvage the units.

During the last downpour, a leak in the roof soaked computers in the fifth grade classroom. Fortunately, the school was able to salvage the units.

“I’ve been principal for four years, and I’ve been fighting this problem the whole time I’ve been here,” she says in frustration. Thanks to Sharing in Ministry, the Annual Diocesan Appeal, relief is on the way. St. Rita is one of a dozen schools and parishes slated to receive a capital grant to help with costly repair work or building projects. The SIM campaign is currently underway in the Diocese of Fort Worth with a goal to raise $2,600,000 for a variety of critical and immediate needs of the local church here in the 28 counties of the diocese. To date, $1.7 million is committed toward the goal.

See SIM helps…, p. 8

North Texas Catholic

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIocese OF FORT WORTH

Vol. 22 No. 18 November 3, 2006

DEDICATION OF BASILICA CHAPEL — A girl participates in the dedication of Our Lady of La Vang Chapel at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington Oct. 21. The chapel was a gift from Vietnamese-Americans. See story p. 15 (CNS photo/Matthew Barrick, courtesy of the National Shrine)

DEDICATION OF BASILICA CHAPEL — A girl participates in the dedication of Our Lady of La Vang Chapel at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington Oct. 21. The chapel was a gift from Vietnamese-Americans. See story p. 15 (CNS photo/Matthew Barrick, courtesy of the National Shrine)
We thank God for our increase of vocations, and those who will respond to God’s call to serve the Church

Isaac Orozco,
Thomas Kennedy,
Jonathan Wallis,
and Ray McDaniel will be ordained to the priesthood next summer, giving us the largest priestly ordination class for our diocese ever! We thank the Lord for their willingness to say yes to his call and for all who nurtured and supported that call....

“The Mother and Head of all of the Churches of the City and the World.” This makes it the Cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, and in that sense, it outshines even St. Peter’s Basilica! What we are reminded of by this feast day (where on the weekday the Gloria and even the Credo are recited or sung) is the nature of our communion of Faith with the Universal Church. The identity of the communion of the particular church is the bishop and the diocese. The particular church, then, must be in communion with the Universal Church and the Bishop of Rome. Thus, this basilica is a powerful reminder not only of the glory of the Risen Savior, but that the Church is truly universal and is not congregational or even national. This is simply illustrated by using the term “The Catholic Church in the United States” or the “Catholic Church in France” rather than the “American Church” or the “French Church,” for example.

On this day, it would be well to pray in gratitude and support of all of the men and women of the armed forces who have served our country both here and overseas. I think of my own father and his generation who served in the Second World War. I remember visiting the D-Day cemetery at Omaha Beach in France, in the company of a man who was visiting his brother’s grave and had not seen his brother since he had left home in 1939.

We must also pray for peace, as I think of the words of Pope Benedict XVI this year on Jan. 1: “Every community should undertake an extensive process of education and witness aimed at making everyone more aware of the need for a fuller appreciation of the truth of peace. At the same time, I ask for an increase of prayers, since peace is above all a gift of God, a gift to be implored incessantly....”

We are very proud of the fact that Isaac Orozco was ordained to the transitional diaconate at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome on Oct. 5, and on Nov. 4, Thomas Kennedy, Jonathan Wallis, and Ray McDaniel will be ordained to the transitional diaconate. They will be ordained to the priesthood next summer, giving us the largest priestly ordination class for our diocese ever! We thank the Lord for their willingness to say yes to his call and for all who nurtured and supported that call, including their seminaries communities in Rome at the North American College and Assumption in San Antonio. Please keep praying for a generous response in our diocese to the call to serve the Lord as priests and religious.

Finally, as I mentioned in my last column, November is the month of all of the faithful departed. This would be an ideal month to visit our cemeteries and pray for all those who have died, as it is a spiritual work of mercy.

This month especially, and the ending of the calendar and the church year, remind us that no matter how important our project, point of view, ministry, or service may be, it all comes back around to the greatest gift of all, our eternal salvation.

God bless you always.

Isaac Orozco,
First diocesan Spanish-language vocation retreat is offered

Unique opportunity allows those looking into a vocation to open the door a little wider

Story by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen / Photos by Donna Ryckaert

Growing up surrounded by people of Hispanic heritage, Martha always knew what direction her life was expected to take.

“You get married and have children; that’s the pattern,” the 32-year-old woman explains. “Even the spiritual retreats I went on as a teenager focused on family issues and parenting kids.”

The Busqueda (Search) and Jornada-Juvenil (Youth Journey) weekends she attended never discussed the possibility of a religious vocation.

“You have to be self-driven to learn more about that,” Martha adds. “It’s up to you to look for answers.”

Fortunately, that’s changed. Spanish-speaking Catholics who are trying to discern a religious vocation in the Diocese of Fort Worth now have a new resource at their disposal. A vocation awareness retreat, conducted entirely in Spanish, was sponsored recently by the Serra Club and the Diocese of Fort Worth.

The first-time event, held at the Catholic Renewal Center in East Fort Worth, brought together 18 adults who have expressed an interest in religious life. Organizers designed the retreat to appeal to men and women between the ages of 18 to 35.

“That’s a really good age for discerning and searching,” says Sister Yolanda Cruz, SSMN, associate director of Children’s Catechetical Ministry for the diocese. “There are a lot of potential vocations in the Spanish-speaking community, and we need to reach out to them.”

Working toward that objective, the Diocesan Hispanic Vocation Committee has tried to develop different activities and events. The weekend retreat was the culmination of those efforts.

The varied schedule included group and panel discussions, Mass, holy hour, singing, personal reflection time, and one-on-one visits with representatives of different religious orders. Prayer and spirituality were the topics of a keynote address delivered by Sister Gabriela Martinez, SSMN, Saturday evening.

“She stressed the importance of prayer and of having a spiritual director in their lives to help guide them in discovering where their road is leading,” Sr. Yolanda said.

Earlier in the day, retreat participants were invited to meet personally with visiting religious. The 30-minute chats received high marks in follow-up evaluations.

“People were particularly touched by the individual conferences,” she said. “It was an opportunity for them to interview with sisters and priests, ask questions, and hear the different responses.”

The small, intimate gathering generated a comfortable, safe environment for people contemplating a serious decision.

“Everybody there had the same interest,” she said. “It was a chance for like-minded people to come together for meals, prayer, and talks.”

Father Kyle Walterscheid, associate director of Vocations, who will succeed Father Anh Tran as diocesan director of Vocations in January, said that inviting young men and women who are interested in religious life to a retreat is like sowing a garden.

“You can’t bear fruit unless you plant the seed,” he explained. “These are people who are beginning to discern a vocation. They’re trying to understand where they fit within the church, and we want to give them the tools to do that.”

For many, the weekend was an eye-opening experience.

“It let them know there’s another door open to them in life. That’s something they may not have realized before,” Fr. Walterscheid said.

Retreat facilitators continue to meet with interested candidates for more intensive discernment during a series of informal gatherings held weekly at St. Patrick Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth. Bishop Kevin Vann attended the group’s Oct. 19 meeting to discuss the fear and apprehension involved in answering a call to religious life. During the discernment process, individuals are advised to speak with a spiritual director once a month and expand their involvement in parish activities.

“And I’m trying to get priests and sisters to journey individually with young men and women who are discerning,” Fr. Walterscheid explained.

Offering the vocation awareness program in Spanish proved beneficial beyond improved communication.

“It showed these people the church is truly interested and cares,” Fr. Walterscheid suggested. “Using native language is always the best way to reach someone whether they’re Vietnamese or Hispanic.”

Martha, who speaks both English and Spanish, says the retreat replaced the confusion she felt with information. After meeting with representatives from several different religious congregations, the young professional is now planning to visit some convents to learn more.

“I hope to find out if that’s truly where my niche is,” she says. “This weekend was a good way to guide that decision.”
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Holy Rosary School to host ‘Little Gobbler Thanksgiving Party’ Nov. 17

A ‘Little Gobbler Thanksgiving Party’ will be hosted Friday, Nov. 17, from 5 to 11 a.m. at Holy Rosary School, 1515 S. Green Oaks Blvd. in Arlington.

According to its Web site, Holy Rosary School proudly serves the children of seven distinct parishes. All parish toddlers and pre-school-age children are invited to gather at the school library for a morning of stories, songs, a ‘Turkey Play,’ snacks, and colorful crafts. Although the party is designed for children ages 2 through 5, older and younger siblings are welcome to attend as well. Non-parish friends and family are welcome too.

Admission is free; reservations are appreciated. For more information, call (817) 419-6800.

Serra Club announces dates for Vocation Poster Contest

Each year students in Catholic schools or religious education classes are invited to participate in the Serra Club’s Vocation Poster Contest by drawing a picture which best illustrates the contest’s theme. The upcoming contest’s theme is ‘Going to the Whole World and Proclaiming the Good News to All Creatures.’

Letters have already been sent out to Catholic schools and religious education classes containing the poster contest forms, which are to be returned on or before March 3. The deadline for submitting posters is March 1. The judging of the posters will take place March 14, and the awards ceremony will be held April 22 at St. Patrick Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth.

The local Serra hopes that the youngsters will use this opportunity to focus on the theme and personally consider whether they may be called to a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. First place winners for each grade level will receive a $100 savings bond; second place winners will receive a $50 savings bond, and third grade winners will receive $10.

For more information about the poster contest or the Serra Club, contact Father Anh Tran, diocesan director of Vocations, at (817) 560-3500 ext. 106.

Cardinal Newman Lecture to be presented Nov. 18

The College of St. Thomas More in Fort Worth will present its annual Cardinal Newman Lecture Nov. 18 at St. Mary the Virgin Church, 1-408 N. Davis Drive in Arlington. The topic of the lecture will be ‘Why Do Catholics Eat Fish on Friday?’ — The Catholic Origins to Just About Everything, written by author and lecturer Michael Fassel, assistant professor of pastoral studies at Baylor University.

The cost is $10, including dinner for non-college students. All persons are invited to attend. For more information, call the College of St. Thomas More at (817) 923-8455 or visit www.cstm.edu.

Singles Silent Retreat to be held at Montserrat Nov. 17-19

All singles are invited to participate in the annual Singles Silent Retreat, to be held at Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House, 600 N. Shady Shore Road, Lake Dallas. The retreat will be offered Nov. 17-19, beginning with supper on Friday evening and continuing through lunch on Sunday.

The retreat will offer a mostly silent atmosphere with time for personal prayer, private prayer, and opportunities to walk along the lake or visit the library. The silent retreat will end with Adoration and the sacrament of reconciliation will be offered. Retreatants are also welcome to schedule time for spiritual direction with Jesuit priests.

The Singles Silent Retreat is open to single adults of any age. Those who have been separated, widowed, divorced, or never married are welcome too.

Individual rooms will be provided. Payment for the retreat is based on a donation for food and personal needs. Payment options are available. For reservations, call Montserrat at (940) 521-6020, or e-mail retreat-wamu@msatm.net. More information about Montserrat can be found online at www.montserratretreat.org.

For more information on singles activities in the Diocese of Fort Worth, visit the diocesan Web site at www.fwccc.org/default.asp?ID=01.

Women’s tea, auction to be held at St. Francis of Assisi Parish Nov. 5

All women are invited to attend a benefit tea and auction Sunday, Nov. 5, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., sponsored by The Mothers with Young Children Ministry (MVC) of St. Francis of Assisi Church, 861 Wildwood Lane, in Grapevine. The annual event, which will be held in the parish’s Family Life Center, enables MVC to provide Christmas gifts to local needy families and assist them in covering basic needs such as utility bills and groceries.

MVC is comprised of Christian mothers who are raising their children for their families and children. The group supports both recreational and pastoral activities that minister to its members, St. Francis Parish, and the community.

As a part of the celebration of MVC’s 10th anniversary, auction items will include a two-night, weekend stay at the Gaylord Texas, a two-hour cruise on Lake Grapevine, and a party for 15 kids at KidZKutz Museum. There is no admission fee. For more information, contact Wendy Cronin at (972) 906-9982 or e-mail to wendyacronin@comcast.net.

St. Rita Garden Club to host art sale Nov. 5

The St. Rita Garden Club has announced that it will be hosting an art sale Sunday, Nov. 5, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the Formation Room (enter from the parking lot on the side) at St. Rita Church, 5550 East Lancaster Avenue in East Fort Worth. Featured at the sale will be original paintings of Mary Shaw. There are 11 paintings in all, signed and framed and in various sizes, depicting landscapes, florals, and still lifes.

The Garden Club will provide refreshments and snacks during the sale.

For more information, contact the parish office at (817) 451-9395.

Nolan Catholic High School to open House Nov. 11

St. John the Apostle Parish, 7421 Glenview Drive in North Richland Hills, will host its annual Boots ’n Bow Ties Auction Saturday, Nov. 11, in the school gym. The event will begin at 6 p.m. and continue until 1 a.m.

Dinner will be catered by the Outback Steakhouse, and there will be music for dancing. Live and silent auctions will take place throughout the evening.

Ticket prices are $40 per person. For reservations or for more information, contact Pam Lazenby at the school office at (817) 284-2228, or e-mail to plazenby@stjs.org.
Father John Dear challenges others to practice Jesus’ example of non-violence

By Mark Schatzman Correspondent

More than 100 people of various faiths, ages, and backgrounds gathered at the Catholic Renewal Center of North Texas in East Fort Worth to listen to Father John Dear, SJ, speak on “Jesus, Bearer of God’s Peace and Justice.” This presentation was arranged by the Sisters of Mary of Namur and the diocesan Office of Peace and Justice.

Fr. Dear, a 47-year-old Jesuit priest who is currently living in New Mexico, kept the large group engaged with his personal history of non-violence and how he continually tries to emulate the non-violent teachings of Jesus. Fr. Dear, a prolific writer with over nine books on non-violence to his credit, not only writes on non-violence but he “walks the talk.”

Using the foundation of Jesus’ teachings on peace (examine the Sermon on the Mount for clarification), Fr. Dear recounted his actions in numerous war zones across the world. He spoke of wars and murders enacted in the “name of God” and challenged the assembly to return to the teachings of the Beatitudes and “love your enemies” as Jesus specifically told us to do — not “love your friends and nuke all the others.”

Engaging in civil disobedience for years, Fr. Dear has been arrested in the name of Jesus’ peace more than 70 times, spending eight months in jail for one particular non-violent demonstration.

“I learned more about the Scriptures in jail than in the four years of seminary. It was perhaps the most profound spiritual experience of my life — to truly live out the call of Jesus for peace.”

— Father John Dear, SJ

The event was a benefit for the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur’s peace and justice projects and Pax Christi. It also celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Office of Peace and Justice in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Those interested in learning more about Fr. John Dear’s call to non-violence should consider reading his books, including JESUS THE REBEL: BEARER OF GOD’S PEACE AND JUSTICE, or visiting his Web site at www.FatherJohnDear.org. For more information on small groups concerned with non-violence, contact Ralph McCloud, diocesan director of the Office of Peace and Justice at rmcloud@fwdioc.org or (817) 560-3300 ext. 305.

PREPARING FOR ALL SAINTS — Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls recently hosted a couple of family gatherings in preparation for All Saints Day, a holy day celebrated by the Catholic Church Nov. 1. Close to 70 families participated, creating family pennants and learning more about the saints. As a concluding activity, a special “Pumpkin Prayer” was offered while a pumpkin was carved using Christian symbols.

Brandon Malone and Cecilia Parker are shown getting a closer look at the unique carvings. Fun was had by all, stated Linda Price, parish director of religious education.

Actor Tom Key to perform ‘Screwtape in Person’ Nov. 11

“Screwtape in Person,” a program based on C.S. Lewis’s The Screwtape Letters, will be presented by actor Tom Key at Highland Park Presbyterian Church, 3821 University Boulevard in Dallas, Saturday, Nov. 11. Check-in will begin at 7:45 p.m. and the show will start at 8 p.m.

The event, which will include a silent auction and dinner, will benefit the College of St. Thomas More in Fort Worth and the C.S. Lewis Center for the Study of the Common Tradition.

According to an event press release, Tom Key has brought C.S. Lewis to life before audiences throughout the United States and Britain, including Oxford, where he appeared at the request of Lewis’s stepson, Douglas Gresham. His award-winning performances from off-Broadway to Los Angeles include the celebrated musical “Cotton Patch Gospel,” which he co-authored with the late singer-songwriter Harry Chapin.

Tickets for “Screwtape in Person” are $70; cocktail attire is requested. For tickets or for more information, call Nancy Lovell at (214) 563-7799.

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St. Vincent de Paul Men’s Club will host golf tournament

The St. Vincent de Paul Men’s Club will sponsor a golf tournament Saturday, Nov. 11, at Mansfield National Golf Course, 2750 National Parkway in Mansfield. The tournament, to played in a four-man Florida scramble format, will have a 1 p.m. shotgun start.

The cost is $65 per person, or any donation will be accepted. According to an event press release, the tournament will benefit Holy Rosary School, Autism Speaks, and Harold Weidhaas.

All are welcome to join in the fun. To register or to make a donation, call Brian Murphy at (817) 451-9144 or e-mail to bkmurphy@sbcglobal.net; or call Pat Irwin at (817) 919-0485.
Dioscan

Special Collection: Catholic Communication Campaign

Catholic Charities social worker, dies at age 85

Sister Rita Critser, IHM, former Catholic Charities social worker, dies at age 85

Sister Rita Critser, 85, a member of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) religious congregation for 57 years, died Oct. 15 at the IHM motherhouse located in Monroe, Michigan. She was a former Catholic Charities social worker in the Hurst-Euless-Bedford area.

To Bertha (Keller) and Earle Critser in New Albany, Indiana, Sept. 14, 1921, Sr. Rita was the eldest of three daughters.

She entered the IHM convent in June 1939 and professed her final vows five years later. Taking the religious name of Sr. Mary (IHM) religious congregation for 57 years, died Oct. 15 at the IHM motherhouse located in Monroe, Michigan.

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SIM helps get much-needed projects off the ground

From page 1
“During this, our 24th campaign, the generosity of our Catholic families in the diocese continues to inspire me,” says John Honaman, director of Stewardship and Development. “Through the continued prayers of all of us, I am hopeful donations will set an all-time record this year.”

For Hymel and the 229 students who attend St. Rita School, assistance can’t come soon enough. The school’s flat roof enables rainwater to pool for several days before the sun dries it up. “Parent volunteers have patched the roof many times, but some of the leaks are hard to find,” the principal explains. “Moisture gets beneath the shingles and moves.”

Estimates to repair or replace the roof range from $5,000 to $90,000. The school community is appreciative for any help from Sharing in Ministry it can receive. “Money is always an issue in Catholic schools. We operate on a very tight budget,” the educator points out. “Tuition wouldn’t begin to cover the cost of fixing the roof. Without help from the diocese, we would just keep patching the problem.”

Although the Annual Diocesan Appeal supports a myriad of causes—from Catholic Charities to faith formation programs— one-third of the money donated is given directly to parishes or schools for specific projects. Catholic families in the diocese are generous when the collection basket is passed on Sunday, but Barbosa believes placing a stipulation on the gift is a good idea. “We have to take pride in our parish, get involved, and show that they are.”

Parishioners of San Mateo Mission in Fort Worth are working hard to raise $100,000 in order to receive a matching grant from Sharing in Ministry. Plans are to tear down these two older structures to make way for a new religious education building. (Photo by Donna Ryckaert)

Although the Annual Diocesan Appeal once before, remembers Cassandra Reyes, students at St. Rita School in East Fort Worth, exit a pew after a Saturday Mass. Despite recent drought conditions in North Texas, St. Rita Principal Charlene Hymel gets nervous when she sees rain clouds develop because of the major leaks present throughout the school facility. A Sharing in Ministry grant will help the school to pay for these much-needed repairs. (Photo by Donna Ryckaert)

“In order to repair this roof, we would have to cover the cost of our religious education building,” the principal explains. “Parent volunteers have patched the roof many times, but Barbosa believes placing a stipulation on the gift is a good idea. ‘We have to take pride in our parish, get involved, and show that they are.’”

Parishioners of San Mateo Mission in Fort Worth are hoping for similar support as they try to raise money for a religious education building. (Photo by Donna Ryckaert)

Parishioners of San Mateo Mission in Fort Worth are working hard to raise $100,000 in order to receive a matching grant from Sharing in Ministry. Plans are to tear down these two older structures to make way for a new religious education building. (Photo by Donna Ryckaert)

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Elections 2006

The two documents that follow were issued by the Texas Catholic Conference on behalf of the bishops of Texas to offer general guidance to Catholic voters for the 2006 elections.

October 19, 2006

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Our airwaves have been filled with political ads as we prepare for the November elections. We write to you to encourage you to exercise the important privilege and responsibility we have as citizens by voting.

The Catholic Church does not endorse specific candidates. However, we do uphold important principles outlined by our bishops’ conference in the document “Faithful Citizenship.”

Issues to Consider

1. Protecting Human Life. Our foundational principle to protect the life and dignity of all human persons calls us to work to end abortion, euthanasia, destruction of human embryos, cloning, assisted suicide, intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks, and the use of the death penalty. This principle leads us to seek peace, raise serious questions about the preemptive use of force.

2. Promoting Family Life. We defend marriage between a man and a woman, work for just wages, and the protection of children. We support parental choice in education, responsible use of media, and technology, and vigorous enforcement of existing pornography laws.

3. Pursuing Social Justice. We show God’s special concern for the poor and vulnerable by supporting programs that create living wage jobs, make health care more affordable and accessible, provide income security for low and average wage workers at retirement, offer safe and affordable housing, protect family farmers and farm workers, and bring about just immigration reform. We seek public policies that work to end poverty, hunger, and discrimination.

4. Practicing Global Solidarity. We work to alleviate poverty worldwide, strengthen barriers against the use of nuclear weapons and reduce the global arms trade, protect refugees, and end conflicts around the globe. We bring our vision and values to the changing global economic structures.

We ask you to use these Christian principles to measure the various candidates and what they bring to the service of our government and society at large. We also ask that you consider the following rights and duties as a part of properly forming your conscience. Please pray, think, and vote so that we as Christians will exercise the great privilege that is ours to participate in the democratic process and to uphold the values of Christ in our society.

Prepared by
Bishop Gregory Aymond
Bishop of Austin

Rights and Duties:

We, the Catholic Bishops of Texas, exercising our role as teachers, offer the following guidelines to help Catholics form their consciences on matters related to our most basic obligation of citizenship: voting. The following guidelines are intended for educational purposes only. We do not intend to endorse or oppose any particular candidate, political party, or political action committee. Rather, it is our hope that these guidelines will show how our Catholic faith and human reason shape our thinking, choosing, and acting in daily life.

The Right and Duty to Vote.
Catholics live in the world, but they should not live by worldly values that give too much importance to power, possessions, and pleasure as ends in themselves (cf. 1 John 2:16). Catholics have the same rights and duties as other citizens, but are called to carry them out in light of the truth of faith and reason as taught by the Catholic Church. For example, they are called to respect human authority and obey those who govern society “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Peter 2:13-17).

The Duty to Form and Follow One’s Conscience.
We are conscientious voters when we are guided by our consciences. Conscience is a law “written” by God on our hearts that disposes us to love and do good and avoid evil (cf. Romans 2:12-16). The conscience is like an inner voice that has the authority of the very voice of God. We have a serious duty to follow the guidance of conscience. To act against the judgment of conscience when it is certain about what is good and evil has the same seriousness as disobeying God.

It is important to remember however that it is possible for our conscience to be certain and at the same time incorrect about what is good and evil.

A Conscientious Voter’s Dilemma.
In light of the above, it is a correct judgment of conscience that we would commit moral evil if we were to vote for a candidate who takes a permissive stand on those actions that are intrinsically evil when there is a morally-acceptable alternative. What are we to do, though, when there is no such alternative?

Because We Have a Moral Obligation to Vote,
deciding not to vote at all is not ordinarily an acceptable solution to this dilemma. So, when there is no choice of a candidate that avoids supporting intrinsically evil actions, especially elective abortion, we should vote in such a way as to allow the least harm to innocent human life and dignity. We would not be acting immutably therefore if we were to vote for a candidate who is not totally acceptable in order to defeat one who poses an even greater threat to human life and dignity.

 Voting is a Moral Act.
It involves duties and responsibilities. Our duty is to vote in keeping with a conscience properly formed by fundamental moral principles. As Bishops we are not telling Catholics which candidates they should vote for. Rather, we simply want to teach how we should form our consciences and consider the issues in light of these fundamental moral principles.

Originally approved and released by the Kansas Catholic Conference with signatures of all the bishops. Adopted, approved, and released by the Texas Catholic Conference with signatures of all the bishops of Texas.
True reverence prepares our hearts for worship

By Dan Luby

H er silent greeting is expected now, one of the comforting certainties on which my wife and I count when we go to our “regular” Mass and sit in “our” pew on Sunday mornings.

Our long-time friend sits in the same place with her mom and dad every week, always on the aisle, in a pew in the very last row, right in the thick of the heaviest foot traffic. Whether we have gotten there early enough to walk sedately to our seats, or are rushing at the last minute, she and her folks are always there, well settled in their places. I suspect they come pretty early, at least partly because she is so eager to be there.

When she spots us, her face brightens, her dark eyes glittering, and her sweet face breaking into a welcoming smile. As we pass by, she turns in her seat to reach out, always tentatively, to hold our hands.

Mostly, she remains silent when she greets us. Once in a great while she will hold up two or three fingers and whisper very softly, but with conspiratorial intensity, words to the effect that Christ highly values this exchange of mutual recognition and affection helps ready me for the great celebration of love and grace which follows. Seeing our friend, receiving her warm smile and heartfelt welcome always quiets me, helps me to let go of the preoccupations tugging at my thoughts, to become present to who I am, who we all are, and who we belong to.

That kind of presence, it seems to me, is a good way to imagine the virtue of reverence.

I have been thinking about reverence a lot lately, ever since I sat in on a listening session in one of the parishes of our diocese recently. They’re developing a comprehensive pastoral plan and, wisely, the pastor and his advisors have organized an extensive series of meetings for parishioners to express their hopes and dreams, their complaints and questions and kudos, regarding life in the parish.

On the morning I’d been invited to observe, there was much mention of “reverence.” People wanted more of it, in a variety of settings, but chiefly on Sunday mornings at Mass.

They cited some of the more egregious violations of liturgical decorum—watch alarms chiming during the readings, loudly whispered side conversations, chewing gum in the Communion line, ostentatious checking of watches during the homily, and, my favorite liturgical blood pressure spike, answering cell phones and conducting conversations during Mass(!). I nodded in agreement, and my own irritation at such behavior surged as I remembered similar experiences.

Reading between the lines, I suspect they were also expressing a desire for more silence inside the worship space, more attention given to the dialogue of the liturgy, listening more carefully and responding more intentionally. Again, I was sympathetic to these implied recommendations.

But I was troubled too. Because it’s possible to have all these things—silence and decorum and fixed gazes and folded hands and crisp responses and all the other outward markers of traditional piety—without genuine reverence.

This homemade ritual exchange of mutual recognition and affection helps ready me for the great celebration of love and grace which follows. Seeing our friend, receiving her warm smile and heartfelt welcome always quiets me, helps me to let go of the preoccupations tugging at my thoughts, to become present to who I am, who we all are, and who we belong to.

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How, I wondered, to imagine its core?

I mentioned all this to my wife. Lamenting my inability to find the right way to express this important reality. Later that morning she called, my muse, to say that the image for reverence that had come to her was the memory of our friend’s weekly greeting from the back pew.

Respectful and affectionate presence, open hearted welcome, joy in recognizing the other, eagerness to share good news, confident expectation of something wonderful about to happen—these, it seems to me, are indeed signs of deep reverence.

Most of what happens at church to communicate a lack of reverence arises more from inattention than from malice.

But I was troubled too. Because it’s possible to have all these things—silence and decorum and fixed gazes and folded hands and crisp responses and all the other outward markers of traditional piety—without genuine reverence.

Eventually, positions of authority often become positions of power and privilege, doing more for the self-image of those who exercise it than for those whom they serve.

That is why the image of the Good Shepherd, or of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples, is so powerful—and it reminds us that Jesus calls us to exercise authority humbly, as a service, to be constructive not destructive. This is a call to littleness, a call to live as Jesus taught: They came to Capernaum, and when he got into the house he asked them: “What are you arguing about on the road?” They said nothing, because on the road they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the twelve to him and said: “If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all—and servant of all.”

Mary Regina Morrell, is the associate director of the office of religious education for the Diocese of Metuchen, in New Jersey.

Jesus calls leaders to walk path of ‘littleness’

By Mary Morrell

“**What does Jesus want us to imitate him?** Jesus is asking us to follow him on a path of littleness, forgiveness, trust, communion, and vulnerability....”

— Jean Vanier

R ecently, while visiting a nearby parish, I watched the efforts of a young mother who was attempting to correct her mentally challenged son as he repeatedly spoke out loud during Mass. For a time her efforts were met with an increasingly audible spilling-out of words, but eventually, at the last minute, she and her folks are always there, well settled in their places.

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The Forgotten War on Poverty

By Stephen Kent

To be impoverished in the richest country in the world is to be an internal alien, to be a member of another culture that is radically different from the one that dominates society.

— Alison Boisvert, a social worker for 22 years.

Amidst the publicity surrounding the current incarnation, an earlier metaphorical war should not be overlooked.

That is the War on Poverty, declared by a president of the United States more than four decades ago. It is ongoing and, with poverty more than holding its own, victory appears no closer.

There are some 37 million people in the United States today living under the poverty line, according to an annual report from the U.S. Census Bureau. That number represents 12.6 percent of the nation’s population.

The federal government defines the poverty level to be $19,971 for a family of four. While the poverty level in 2005 remained “statistically unchanged” from 2004, the Census Bureau said median household income rose by 1 percent, reaching $46,326. The median income is the point where half make more, half make less. While obviously some must be at the top, some must be at the bottom, the gap — which is widening — need not be so great. In fact, biblical justice demands the gap not be great.

One would think the fact that one of eight citizens in the world’s largest economy lives in poverty would be continual front page news.

One reason that it is not results from the major overhaul in the welfare system 10 years ago.

Politicians delight in pointing out the decline in the number receiving public assistance. About 4.4 million families received welfare payments in 1996; about 1.9 million receive payments today.

“Most of the people who leave welfare for work are leaving for jobs that pay $7 or $8 an hour,” said Joan Emshner of the National Women’s Law Center. “Under the best of circumstances, they are just getting by.”

A single parent of two, working full time at the minimum wage would gross $10,812, only two-thirds of the $15,577 defined as the poverty level for a family of three.

“I’m afraid that we are creating a permanent underclass of people who leave welfare but cannot escape long-term poverty,” said Father Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA. “These families continue to work two or three jobs, but still cannot provide for their families’ basic needs,” he said.

Catholic Charities agencies nationwide are on the front line meeting these people. The number of people receiving emergency services from Catholic Charities — food, shelter, clothing — has increased by 30 percent in the past three years, Fr. Snyder said at his agency’s national convention in September.

Proposed changes in welfare laws will further impact these numbers.

Politicians, especially in election years, trumpet the declining number of welfare clients. There are, however, not fewer poor people — just fewer poor people receiving help.

But we should be made uncomfortable — very uncomfortable — by the challenges to justice this represents. Reducing welfare rolls is no comfort when it means cutting people off from resources, causing them to remain in poverty. Being “not statistically different” from one year to the next is no victory. A “culture of poverty” is growing in the United States, a social worker told the Catholic Charities convention, resulting in generational poverty affecting two more generations of a family.

“I’ve watched the development and the final institutionalization of a permanent underclass in the richest country in the world,” said Allison Boisvert, a social worker for 22 years. “To be impoverished in the richest country in the world is to be an internal alien, to be a member of another culture that is radically different from the one that dominates society,” she said.

Poverty is unacceptable to Christian justice. In this country especially, it is by no means insurmountable.

The words of Christ, “The poor you will always have with you” were never meant to be an expression of resignation or futility nor an excuse for the lack of concern that we must have for the poor.

The war on poverty is not one from which we can cut and run.

Stephen Kent is the recently retired editor of The PROGRESS, the Catholic newspaper of the Diocese of Seattle.

Halloween costumes and childhood. It’s all pretty

Funny place to find saints, but I did see a large number of them recently at a Fort Worth Halloween celebration Boo at the Zoo. They were called parents.

They were carrying infants, pulling wagons, repositioning crowns, horns, and tails. There was even a family of “Incredibles,” in matching red, super-hero costumes.

Pushing a stroller loaded with what was almost certainly an incredible baby, was the dad, “Bob,” whose spandex jumpsuit with stuffed muscles made him look more uncomfortable than powerful. He seemed as if he would be more at ease in an everyday businessman persona than the one he and his wife “Helen” had adopted that night at the zoo. Their matching children, “Violet, Dash, and Jack-Jack,” however, seemed comfortable in their roles, and with their bulging bags of candy.

“How do you take an average dad, and talk him into dressing up like that?” I wondered aloud. “Oh, I don’t know,” my son-in-law Dustin immediately retorted, with a twisted grin. “Ever heard of the M&M family?”

“Okay,” I admitted. “One year I did sew different colored M&M’s for each of my children to wear. But you’ll notice there was no body-clinging stretchiness, nor metallic-shiny fabric involved, and the M&M package costume I wore was completely squared off, showing only my lower limbs out of the bottom hem.

“Sure, I made a mistake in dressing as the yellow package for ‘peanut M&M’s,’ while the children all went as ‘plain M&M’s,’ which — duh — should have come from a dark brown package. But maybe I wasn’t their Momma Package at all, as onlookers may have expected. Perhaps instead I was an older sister, a stepmother, or chocolate-children’s benevolent Aunt M.

“Seriously, I think we may well have been a portrait of the first ever ‘blended’ M&M family,” I told Dustin. “Face it, in the world of Halloween dress-up, I was cutting-edge, melt-in-your-mouth politically correct — and with a thin candy coating.”

It is much easier to walk around a fall carnival with your grandchildren, I have discovered, than it ever was to do so with your children. But this is not because of the “love them, spoil them, and give them back” cliché, that people have been using since long before I understood what it meant.

When I first heard that, I wondered, “Why would anyone ever want to give children back?” I would love to keep them, I knew, and to be the one who fed them, helped them with homework, made shampoo-ice-cream cones with their hair at night in the bathtub.

Parenting was a job I never wanted to quit early, because that would have meant giving up the significant memory of looking through a rearview mirror and watching chubby cheeks chewing oatmeal cookies or whatever after school treat I may have brought along for their three-o’clock snack.

Even worse, I may have missed some of the memories that even today sit on the bronze-baby-shoe-shelf of my mind: the sight of children running from the school door
Despite our differences, God connects us through faith

On paper and online, Catholic singles of the Diocese of Fort Worth have been defined as “young ones and once young”; divorced, separated, widowed, or never married; and people committed to helping build ministries through activities that support and assist parish-based programs.

But at their annual singles Mass and dinner, Bishop Kevin Vann defined them differently, and in one word: Crystal.

In his homily at the Oct. 7 Mass at Keller’s St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Bishop Vann looked out at the crowd in the church’s two center sections and told a story of a woman he had met while a pastor, when he went out regularly on “Communion calls.”

“She was 85 or 90, and had been a flapper!” Bishop Vann related. “We got along pretty well, and when I left that parish, she gave me a crystal.” The bishop explained that when she held the crystal up to the light, the light shone through and scattered. “You had to look at all of it,” the bishop said, “and in one sense, that crystal reminded me of our faith.

“Like the crystal, our faith is an entity,” he said, “one thing through which God comes through.”

The bishop was speaking of the challenges of life, and explained that the assembly was made up of people who had experienced life’s challenges in a variety of ways. To them, he gave a simple reminder: “When our own lives are not holding up with what God has promised us, still in every moment God asks us to come to him like little children, and he blesses us.

The Fort Worth Diocesan Singles Council, which has been functioning in the diocese for about 15 years, provides a variety of resources, from grief and loss support groups to weekend retreats, instructions concerning marriage and annulment, plus service projects, mission trips, and even a summer campout.

For the annual October liturgy and dinner, singles came from throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth, carrying non-perishable food items to donate to a food bank and serving in all areas of ministry for the liturgy. After Mass, they gathered in the parish hall for food, dancing, and icebreakers that brought the whole crowd off their chairs and into the middle of the music-filled room.

Singles Council representative Mike Wuller, who energetically coordinated the gathering, explained that there are three facets to the organization. The first is “spiritual,” Wuller explained, followed by “social” and “service.” “If you get the ‘me,’ through the spiritual,” he said, “you get to the ‘we,’ through social events, and you get to the ‘thee,’ through service.”

The Singles Council provides major activities once a quarter; monthly council meetings; and always, according to their official information, they seek God’s direction and respond to needs as they are presented.

“We feel the Lord has called for a response from us … who are singles … to address the needs of the singles of the diocese,” the council’s leaflet explains. “Especially welcomed are those from rural areas, desiring Catholic singles support and fellowship.”

“Our lives are like different dots,” Bishop Vann told the assembly at the singles Mass. “But only God connects the dots. He helps us to see what he does — the big picture of things.”

Concluding, the bishop spoke his thanks to the singles, who, Wuller said, offer much more to the diocese and each other than just an occasional social event. Expressing his gratitude to the singles community for their prayers and their concern for one another, Bishop Vann said, “Thank you for all you do, and all that you are, and what you do for Christ’s church.”
Sister Mary Alberta Meyer, former educator, nurse, dies at age 94

Sister Mary Alberta Meyer, 94, a member of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, died Oct. 23 at Our Lady of Victory Center in Fort Worth. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at OLV Center Thursday, Oct. 25. Interment was at Mount Olivet Cemetery in North Fort Worth.

Born to Czechoslovakian immigrants April 21, 1912, in Wichita Falls, Mary Anna Meyer was raised on the family farm just outside of the city. She was the ninth of 11 children. Her mother took outside employ- ment in order to pay for the education of the girls of the family to attend the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Wichita Falls, administered by the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur.

After the death of her mother, the young Mary Anna had to leave school in order to help to support her family. She lived with an older sister until she was able to pursue her dream of entering religious life. In 1934, at age 21, she joined the congregation of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur. Taking the religious name Mary Alberta, she made per- petual vows in August 1942.

Trained as a teacher, Sister Mary Alberta spent 36 years teaching students in Catholic grade schools in Fort Worth, Dallas, Sherman, Denison, and Beaumont, and in California.

“She was extremely adaptable, and she thrived in all of the school environments,” said Sister Joan Markey, SSFN, explaining that Sr. Mary Alberta taught in many different schools because of her willingness to respond wherever there was a need. “She was so genuine, so gentle, and such a dear person. She was very much loved, wherever she went.”

A niece, Wanda Elder of Decatur, noted that Sr. Mary Alber- tina obtained an LVN (Licensed Vocational Nursing) certificate in 1972 from St. Joseph School of Nursing at age 60. “She began this totally new kind of work because she said that she was too old to keep teaching in the classroom,” explained Elder, adding that Sr. Mary Alberta then began a new career as a nurse at the Our Lady of Victory infirmary. She went on to serve as the much-loved school nurse at Corpus Christi Academy Minor Seminary from 1986 to 1991.

After returning to OLV Cen- ter in 1991 to serve as assistant nurse, Sr. Mary Alberta gradually retired to take up the ministry of intensive prayer for seminarians and priests and for special intentions.

“She was a woman of deep faith, prayer, and dedication,” said Sr. Joan. “She was extremely person- able, and so kind and gentle,” added Elder. “Of course, her main commitment was always to prayer.”

Sr. Mary Alberta is survived by three sisters, Alma M. Zeissel, Bertha Miller, and Elsie Thomas; many nieces and nephews and their families; and the sisters of her religious community. Memo- rials in her honor may be made to the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, 909 West Shaw Street, Fort Worth, TX 76110.

Pope says predecessor’s methods to spread Gospel must be studied

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The message as well as the meth- ods used by Pope John Paul II to spread the Gospel must be studied and duplicated, Pope Benedict XVI said.

“John Paul II, philosopher and theologian, great pastor of the church, left a richness of writings and gestures that express the desire to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout the world,” the pope said.

Meeting approximately 800 directors and supporters of the John Paul II Foundation, Pope Benedict said their efforts to gather, analyze, and make known the late pope’s teaching must also include efforts “to touch the mystery of his holy heart.”

The pope did not make any other reference under the process to the beatification and canonization of his prede- cessor.

The Oct. 23 audience marked the 25th anniversary of the John Paul II Foundation, established initially to strengthen the ties between the Vatican and Poland, spread the spiritual values ingrained in Polish culture, deepen reflection on the Christian roots of Europe, and provide scholarships for students from Eastern Europe.

After communism fell in Eastern Europe and as Pope John Paul aged, the foundation began a major push to collect, archive, and promote the study of the pope’s ministry.

Thanking the foundation supporters — including Polish Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz of Krakow, Pope John Paul’s longtime personal secretary, and U.S. Cardinal Adam J. Maida of Detroit, a longtime foundation board member — Pope Benedict said Pope John Paul’s teaching not only must be preserved, but must be shared with future generations.

Consultation, collaboration can resolve tension, says speaker

FROM PAGE 1

and Pastoral Practices, called consultation “a necessity and demand that flows from the very nature of the church.”

He also emphasized the impor- tance of listening by those who engage in dialogue, and said effective dialogue requires a spirit of humility.

Msgr. Strynkowski, who addressed the group Oct. 12, proposed two means for strengthen- ing consultation in the church. He suggested that bishops schedule parish visits not just for confirmation, but to get to know the joys, sufferings, and needs of the faithful. “Bishops need to cultivate knowledge of their people,” he said.

He also proposed a national dialogue to identify characteris- tics that people want in a bishop to aid the selection process. Father John Beal, associate professor of canon law at The Catholic University of America in Washington, said the call for bet- ter structures of participation and consultation is not new, but has taken on a “particular urgency” because of the clergy sexual abuse crisis and “because of the difficult challenges and painful decisions that the church faces as we grope our way in the uncharted, brave new world of the 21st century.”

Fr. Beal, who spoke Oct. 11, suggested the church look to the corporate world for examples of effective consultation.

“The church is not a business, of course, but, insofar as it is a human organization, the church is a lot more like a business corpo- ration than we usually recognize — and perhaps more like one than we care to admit,” he said.

According to Fr. Beal, busi- ness leaders who have survived recent fierce competition have evolved from a highly centralized, top- down command and control style to a more consultative ap- proach.

Church governance structures that “make room for decentral- ized decision-making and effective consultation of the faithful in matters of governance would actually be more in harmony with canon law than those we have now,” Fr. Beal said.

“Wouldn’t it be ironic,” he asked, “if following the lead of the corporate world reminded us of how to be a church?”

In a convention seminar, Father Patrick Brennan, vicar for Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, identified is- sues that affect collaboration and consultation between bishops and priests.

He said forums and structures of consultation will be effective only if bishops and priests have “some degree of personal relation- ship” and the maturity and social skills necessary to engage in constructive dialogue.

They must also have a “proper understanding” of a priest’s promise of obedience to his bishop. This obedience should be modeled on Christ who came “to hear” the Father and do his will. “There was no sense of domination or submission in this relationship,” Fr. Brennan said.

“Consultation and collabora- tion can resolve tension,” he said, “but they can also create tension.” He said priests are sometimes afraid to express an opinion to the bishop and among brother priests. “Obviously, in such an atmosphere, there can be no constructive consultation and collaboration. But tension can be good. It urges us toward resolution,” he said.

Fr. Brennan also spoke of a “malaise among clergy that works against consultation. When priests are overworked and tired, they focus on their rough assignments and ‘want no diocesan involvement,'” he said.

He advised greater emphasis on human formation in the seminary and after ordination to enable bishops and priests to engage in dialogue.

Young Serra Community of Dallas welcomes young adults from throughout North Texas

The Young Serra Community (YSC) of Dallas, an organiza- tion dedicated to supporting young vocations and to de- veloping spiritual growth within its membership, is undertaking a campaign to inform young Catholics in the North Texas area about the group and the opportunities it provides for its members.

“The Young Serrans are indi- viduals, single or married, mainly in their 20s or 30s, who meet regularly for Mass, eucharistic adoration, dinners, and topi- cal studies,” says Cheryl Vaca, a member of YSC. “The group participates in a unique combi- nation of spiritual, service, and social activities.”

Vaca urges area Catholic young adults to consider mem- bership in the group, saying that those who are seeking deeper spiritual meaning and a group of friends who care about the Catholic faith will benefit from involvement.

For more details, contact Cheryl Vaca via e-mail to young serracommunity@yahoo.com or call (972) 488-8578.

CATHOLIC SCIENCE NEWS

Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, in Wichita Falls, adminis- tered schools in Fort Worth, Wichita Falls, administered by the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, is undertaking spiritual growth and establishment in order to pay for the education of the girls of the family to attend the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Wichita Falls, administered by the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur.

After the death of her mother, the young Mary Anna had to leave school in order to help to support her family. She lived with an older sister until she was able to pursue her dream of entering religious life. In 1934, at age 21, she joined the congregation of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur. Taking the religious name Mary Alberta, she made per- petual vows in August 1942.

Trained as a teacher, Sister Mary Alberta spent 36 years teaching students in Catholic grade schools in Fort Worth, Dallas, Sherman, Denison, and Beaumont, and in California.

“She was extremely adaptable, and she thrived in all of the school environments,” said Sister Joan Markey, SSFN, explaining that Sr. Mary Alberta taught in many different schools because of her willingness to respond wherever there was a need. “She was so genuine, so gentle, and such a dear person. She was very much loved, wherever she went.”

A niece, Wanda Elder of Decatur, noted that Sr. Mary Alber- tina obtained an LVN (Licensed Vocational Nursing) certificate in 1972 from St. Joseph School of Nursing at age 60. “She began this totally new kind of work because she said that she was too old to keep teaching in the classroom,” explained Elder, adding that Sr. Mary Alberta then began a new career as a nurse at the Our Lady of Victory infirmary. She went on to serve as the much-loved school nurse at Corpus Christi Academy Minor Seminary from 1986 to 1991.

After returning to OLV Cen- ter in 1991 to serve as assistant nurse, Sr. Mary Alberta gradually retired to take up the ministry of intensive prayer for seminarians and priests and for special intentions.

“She was a woman of deep faith, prayer, and dedication,” said Sr. Joan. “She was extremely person- able, and so kind and gentle,” added Elder. “Of course, her main commitment was always to prayer.”

Sr. Mary Alberta is survived by three sisters, Alma M. Zeissel, Bertha Miller, and Elsie Thomas; many nieces and nephews and their families; and the sisters of her religious community. Memo- rials in her honor may be made to the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, 909 West Shaw Street, Fort Worth, TX 76110.
Bright sunshine helped fuel a joyous turnout of more than 175 people at St. Paul Church in Electra Sept. 22. They gathered to recognize 100 years of Catholic presence in the community. Bishop Kevin Vann celebrated the early Sunday Mass, later joining those who attended a centennial Mass in Electra Sept. 22. They gathered to recognize 100 years of Catholic presence in their community.

The providentially pleasant weather was especially welcome, as only a week earlier the community had endured recording-breaking rain and accompanying flooding. During Mass, Bishop Vann was assisted by Deacon Patrick Burke, parish pastoral administrator, and Deacon Don Warner, diocesan director of the Office of Permanent Deacons.

Bishop Vann’s homily commenced the parish’s love of its heritage and devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and to St. Francis Xavier, patron saint of missionaries — a love long demonstrated in the community’s pioneering spirit of service and sacrifice. He referred to the patronage of St. Paul, arduous missionary to the Gentiles, as he encouraged the congregation to persist in its trust in God’s love and guidance.

A parish hall breakfast reception followed the centennial Mass. Highlighting the event were various displays of families representing parish communities past and present, viewed by happily chatting visitors, coming from as far away as Louisiana and Colorado.

One special visitor was Sister Ursula McGann, SU, who noted, “I wouldn’t have missed it for the world.” The septuagenarian, now stationed at San Antonio’s Oblate School of Theology, was inspired by fellow Oblate nuns who once taught in Electra and with whom she once taught in Dallas. She first knew Bishop Vann as a seminarian.

The eldest parish member is octogenarian Johnny Eckelkamp, who still lives in his family’s original farmhouse.

“Being a part of this church and its Catholic tradition means a lot to me,” Eckelkamp reflected, “especially having been around some early pioneers.” Another descendant of the founders of the Catholic community in the area, Gene Flusche, 70, stated that being part of this legacy “has been an integral part of my life.” During one juncture, Flusche proudly showed off the Mount Carmel Cemetery, also noting the original rectory (now in private ownership) and the old foundation of the first church nearby. Flusche, grandfather to a sixth-generation descendant, and Flusche family members join the Eckelkamp family in keeping the cemetery well-maintained.

St. Paul guests packed the nearby junior high school cafeteria to enjoy a deli-catered luncheon and words from Bishop Vann, Deacon Burke, Billy Don Clark, and Chris Finch. The latter paid tribute to many parishioners by presenting participation certificates.

During his closing remarks, Deacon Burke, St. Paul pastoral administrator since early 1984, expressed his appreciation of the community’s strong ties. He spoke of his “mind and heart being filled with memories of those who have gone before us,” while professing his loyalty to parishioners still living.

In a separate interview, Deacon Burke, a New Orleans native, acknowledged that much prayer and cultural adjustment have occurred for him and his family during his pastoral “adventure” in North Texas. Deacon Burke, who also oversees Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park, said, “[Now] I can’t picture myself anywhere else,” calling his flock, “family.”

He reiterated the words of a New Orleans Dominican nun, who once advised him, “God’s providence will not take you where his grace cannot keep you.”

Electra is 32 miles west of Wichita Falls in Wichita County. Named after famed ranching settler Tom Waggoner’s daughter, Electra, it once was a thriving oil boom town. Today it’s home to some 3,000 people. According to The Handbook of Texas, a Catholic presence was established as the community of Mount Carmel by Emil Flusche in 1906. It was the last of a number of such farming colonies and churches established by the German brothers Emil, August, and Anton Flusche.

In October 1906, Emil acquired acreage north of Electra to provide for a church, rectory, school, and cemetery. He selected one of the highest hills around for Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Later, St. Francis Xavier Church was built in Electra to better accommodate the burgeoning local population. As the local population declined, the two congregations merged into St. Paul Church, which celebrated its first Mass in fall 1966. A bell donated by the Flusche and Eckelkamp families in those early years is still in use today by St. Paul Parish.

In 1986, St. Paul was featured on “Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt.” Kuralt was exploring how churches coped without priests. News reached his TV team of St. Paul’s longstanding endurance. What resulted was its faith community being among several nationwide to illustrate how communities managed to resourcefully deal with the priest shortage.
National Shrine’s new Our Lady of La Vang Chapel is gift from Vietnamese-Americans

By Carol Griffith
WASHINGTON (CNS) — Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl of Washington celebrated Mass and dedicated a chapel to Our Lady of La Vang, the Madonna of Vietnam, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Oct. 21.

The new chapel is a gift from Vietnamese-Americans to the Washington shrine, emphasizing the solidarity between Catholics in the United States and Vietnam. Approximately 5,300 people — from as far away as California, Texas, Mississippi, and Massachusetts — attended the ceremony.

Archbishop Wuerl greeted them with “Peace be with you” in Vietnamese.

The story of Our Lady of La Vang goes back to the 18th century. Beginning about 1798, the emperor of Vietnam, during a period of political upheaval, restricted the practice of Catholicism and persecuted believers.

Catholics fled to the nearby jungle, known as the La Vang region, in what is now the Quang Tri province in central Vietnam. Legend has it that the name “La Vang” derives from the words for “crying out,” referring to the sounds the displaced people made while attempting to chase away wild animals or their cries for help.

While in hiding, every night people gathered at the foot of a large tree to pray the rosary. One night they saw an apparition of a beautiful woman in a native Vietnamese blue and white dress of a beautiful woman in a native Vietnamese blue and white dress.

Announcing herself as the mother of God, she consoled the people and promised to receive their prayers. She then gave the Catholics a sign of her loving care: the leaves of a fern to use to treat their physical illnesses.

Mary appeared many times at the same place throughout a nearly 100-year period of religious persecution. The first of several churches at the site in La Vang was built in 1802. The area became the National Marian Center of Vietnam in 1961. That same year Pope John XXIII elevated the Church of Our Lady of La Vang to the rank of a minor basilica.

The Oct. 21 dedication ceremony in Washington began with a procession around the circular drive of the shrine, against the backdrop of a cloudless fall day.

Groups of women in yellow, blue, turquoise, and rose dresses and headpieces that are traditional to Vietnam and a group of men in dark blue traditional outfits — amid celebrants in Western dress — carried blue and white flags as they processed in groups according to their state of residence. A large choir, accompanied by drums, assembled on the steps.

A cross-bearer was at the head of the procession, followed by participants carrying brightly colored flags and several men carrying a small statue of Our Lady of La Vang on a carved stand. The procession began with a dance by a group of young women in traditional dress and the release of balloons.

The chapel was planned as a sign of devotion and hope in Our Lady of La Vang and to express gratitude to the United States for taking in many Vietnamese refugees, he said.

On this day, “the Vietnamese church stands hand-in-hand with the American church” in dedicating the chapel,” he said.

Bishop Luong concluded his homily with a prayer: “Our Lady of La Vang, protect us, give us hope, and show us the way to Jesus, our eternal destiny and redemption.”

On the altar, a column of red marble holds a pedestal upon which stands a 5-foot statue of Our Lady of La Vang holding the infant Jesus. Each color of the statue is marble obtained from a different part of the world. The crown, headband, and a starburst mosaic behind the statue are made of gold leaf. The walls and floor are marble, and the ceiling above the altar is a dark blue mosaic with 24 stars, which represent the hours of the day.

On the walls, a plaque tells the story of the Marian image and two mosaics depict the Vietnamese martyrs and people devoted to Our Lady of La Vang.

Pope urges university students to help heal ‘crises of culture and identity’

By Cindy Wooden
VATICAN CITY(CNS)—Pope Benedict XVI urged university students to help heal “the crises of culture and identity” by searching for truth and meaning in their studies and in their lives.

Inaugurating the academic year in Rome, where university classes begin in October, Pope Benedict visited Pontifical Lateran University Oct. 21 and met students and professors from all the city’s pontifical universities after an Oct. 23 Mass.

In speeches to both groups, the pope said education should hone a student’s thirst for truth and meaning, especially when his or her studies are taking place at a Vatican-chartered university.

“When the students and staffs are combined, the pontifical universities in Rome make up a group of about 15,000 people from all over the world,” the pope said.

In his Oct. 23 speech in St. Peter’s Basilica, the pope reminded the group of “the priority importance of one’s spiritual life and the need, alongside cultural growth, for a balanced human maturation and a deep ascetic and religious formation.”

The pope said that studying theology and other subjects in preparation to serve the church “presupposes an education in silence and contemplation because it is necessary to be able to hear with one’s heart the God who speaks.”

In his Oct. 21 speech at Lateran University, where he dedicated the remodelled library and an auditorium bearing his name, Pope Benedict said pontifical universities must challenge students to look for more than just new experiences.

Students, he said, want help responding to questions about the meaning of their own lives and about human existence.

“Overvaluing ‘doing,’ obscuring ‘being’ will not help restore the fundamental balance needed to give one’s existence a solid foundation and a valid goal,” he said.

Catholic universities, he said, must help students aspire to know and love God and to follow him by obeying his commandments.

POPE GREETS STUDENTS — Pope Benedict XVI attends a ceremony inaugurating the new academic year at Pontifical Lateran University in Rome Oct. 21. The pope said education should hone a student’s thirst for truth and meaning. (CNS photo/ L’OSSERVATORE ROMANO via Reuters)
Border fence among issues discussed at Synod of Americas review meeting

FROM PAGE 1

States-Mexico border will not resolve the problem of the migratory flux between the two countries and will not help establish a coordinated and humanitarian migration policy,” the bishops said.

In an Oct. 21 statement about the council meeting, the bishops expressed concern about attempts to introduce or expand access to legalized abortion in many countries. They also stated that public debate about abortion “unfortunately has caused a polarization among Catholics” in the countries.

The poor and weakest members of society are the first victims of the growing “culture of death,” the bishops said. They are threatened not only by abortion, but also by euthanasia and by the death penalty.

“Social and ecclesial situations on the continent show signs of hope and concern,” the bishops said. Throughout the 1997 synod, many bishops referred to North and South America as one continent.

Some countries are facing a political crisis where democratic structures are threatened by “demagogic” forms of government, “often of a neo-Marxist stripe,” which manipulate the poor and their desire for economic development, the bishops said.

In Central and South America, they said, serious poverty continues to mark the lives of millions of people and many countries are suffering violence connected to drug and weapons trafficking.

Looking at good news from the Western Hemisphere, the bishops pointed particularly to an increase in the number of diocesan priests since 1995 and in the number of young men entering the seminary in North and South America.

New Jersey bishops pledge to protect heterosexual marriage after ruling

TRENTON, New Jersey (CNS) — New Jersey’s bishops have pledged to work with state lawmakers in drafting same-sex union legislation that protects the concept of marriage “as the union of one man and one woman” and promotes “child well-being in one-stem.”

The pledge came after New Jersey’s highest court ruled Oct. 25 that same-sex couples are due the same rights and benefits as married couples under the state constitution’s equal protection clause.

But the State Supreme Court in its 4-3 decision said that the state Legislature must decide whether to grant this equality through marriage or another form of civil partnership. It gave the Legislature 180 days to modify current laws or to draft a new one.

The bishops’ Oct. 25 statement, signed by Newark Archbishop John J. Myers, conference president, said the Legislature is “where the discussion of marriage rightly belongs.”

“For the sake of constitutional democracy as well as for the sake of marriage itself, the proper place for such discussion must rest with the elected representatives of the people of this state,” said Archbishop Myers.

New York Catholic Conference may seek relief from drug mandate

ROCHESTER, New York (CNS) — The New York State Catholic Conference may petition the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse a decision by the state’s highest court that would require religious employers, such as Catholic dioceses, to provide contraceptive and abortion drugs, as part of prescription-drug coverage in their employee health plans.

The ruling to uphold the state-mandated coverage was issued Oct. 19 by the New York Court of Appeals. “We are very disappointed with the Court of Appeals decision and firmly believe that it is in error,” said a statement from Richard E. Barnes, executive director of the conference, which represents the state’s bishops on public-policy matters.

“Any religious organization must have the right in American society to uphold its own teachings, even if those teachings are unpopular or counter-cultural,” Barnes added. “Plaintiffs will give every consideration to asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review it and reverse it.”

U.S. military archdiocese head: Modern war changes ethical challenges

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As the nature of war and conflict changes, so do the ethical challenges faced by members of the military, said the head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, Archbishop Edwin O’Brien, whose flock includes all U.S. Catholic military and their families, was one of the speakers at an Oct. 23-27 Vatican conference for military ordinaries, the bishops in charge of the spiritual care of their nations’ armed forces.

While a Catholic military chaplain’s ministry always will center on celebrating the sacraments — in a base chapel or a field tent — he also is called to be “an ethicist, helping form and guide” the approach of his unit and the concrete behavior of its members.

Archbishop O’Brien, in his keynote address at the Vatican conference, Archbishop O’Brien said modern shifts in when a nation feels called to deploy troops raise new ethical questions. Ethical guidelines for a “just war” — including the principles that actions are proportionate and that targets are not — were developed in the light of conventional wars between two countries or clearly identified groups. Now, he said, ethicists must deal with “asymmetrical war,” a conflict such as terrorism where the two sides are not clearly identified similar entities and where the battlefield can be anywhere.

Pope says military chaplains must help troops focus on peacemaking

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While the ideal that modern armies exist only for defense, security, and freedom is not yet a reality, Catholic military chaplains must help members of the armed forces focus on peacemaking, Pope Benedict XVI said. “The church is missionary by its nature, and its first task is evangelization, which aims at proclaiming the witness of Christ and promoting his Gospel of peace and love in every environment and culture,” the pope said.

The Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions represents of the world’s major Christian communities.

The pope has called for a common witness,” the pope said during an Oct. 27 meeting with Catholic military chaplains in Rome. Since 1957, the conference has brought together top officials of the international offices of 18 Christian churches and denominations for informal discussions.

The secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity who heads the conference, said that the conference does not include representatives of the Anglican Communion, mainline Protestant federations, the Salvation Army, Orthodox churches, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mennonites, and others.

Pope says Christians must heal divisions to be sign of hope

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christians have a responsibility to heal their divisions so that they can be a real sign of hope for the world, Pope Benedict XVI said. “Those who profess that Jesus Christ is Lord have logically divided and cannot always give a consistent common witness,” the pope said during an Oct. 27 meeting with representatives of the world’s major Christian communities.

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Advocates demand better pay, conditions for U.S. farmworkers

By Kathrynne Skonicki

ROMEUILVILLE, Illinois (CNS) — Consumers should pay more attention to the origins of the food they purchase, said the executive director of the St. Louis-based National Farm Worker Ministry.

“I think for the average consumer it’s really easy to forget. Out of sight, out of mind. It’s easy not to pay attention,” he said.

He said farmworkers’ annual wages range between $10,000 and $12,000, barely above the federal government’s poverty level of $9,800 for an individual.

Farmworkers who get paid per bushel get no reimbursement for sick days, a rainy day, or a bad crop.

Farmworkers in California, Florida, North Carolina, and Washington state are also fighting for basic rights including a place to get something in 105-degree temperatures, clean drinking water available to them during work breaks, and sanitary bathroom facilities near the work site.

“They are also campaigning for better living conditions, including screens on their windows and homes that do not have leaks. People of faith need to stand up for these basic human rights, Nesmith said. “From our perspective, God calls us to treat all people with respect.”

Holy Cross Brother David Andrews, executive director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, likewise noted that the dignity of the human person is central to Catholic teaching; the farmworkers are then clearly in need of respect and support in their efforts for economic justice. Since everyone eats — Catholics eat, they have a role to play in bringing about justice and peace.”

Decades of advocating, picketing, and protesting have brought about some positive changes such as better health care and educational opportunities. Just this summer, California adopted permanent standards for outdoor workers to prevent illness caused by heat. But pesticide dangers and working conditions are among other issues to be addressed.

Nesmith said some campaigns to correct abuses have been particularly successful because they have involved consumer pressure.

For example, in 2001 farmworkers from Immokalee, Florida, who typically make about $7,500 during a season, organized a national boycott of Taco Bell and its parent company, Yum Brands Inc., to call for better wages and working conditions for tomato pickers.

Two years later they mounted a 10-day hunger strike at the company’s Irvine, California, headquarters. In 2005 the corporation agreed to demands of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

Coalition members came to Illinois Oct. 20 to protest at the international headquarters of McDonald’s in Oak Brook. They were taking part in a nine-day tour that started in Florida as part of the coalition’s “Campaign for Fair Food” initiative.

In September, the U.S. bishops issued a statement urging McDonald’s to provide better wages and working conditions for the Florida workers who pick the tomatoes used at the fast-food restaurants.

Chicago association executive Conway chosen to head CPA

By Lou Baldwin

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) — More than 100 U.S. Hispanic priests met in Philadelphia Oct. 9-13 to discuss the pastoral challenges of serving the nation’s rapidly growing Hispanic Catholic population.

The five-day meeting was the 17th annual convention of the Asociacion Nacional de Sacerdotes Hispanos (National Association of Hispanic Priests).

Philadelphia’s Cardinal Justin Rigali, who celebrated an Oct. 9 Spanish-language Mass for the group at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Peter and Paul, told them their ministry “is of tremendous importance for the future, not only of the Hispanic community in the United States, but the whole church.”

The cardinal urged them to “be a bridge in what you do and what you say.”

There are approximately 4,200 Hispanic priests ministering in the United States, serving a Hispanic Catholic population of roughly 25 million, according to the group’s president, Father Andres Mendoza of Lubbock.

Any Hispanic priest living in the United States can join the association, but Fr. Mendoza said most of the members are sons of immigrants or are immigrants themselves. He said he came to the United States from Chihuahua, Mexico, 13 years ago.

“I feel very happy in the United States,” he said. “I had to learn another culture, another language, and another reality. I feel very accepted. And I think Hispanic priests are a blessing for the church.”

The homilist at the Mass in the Joliet Diocese, about 85 percent of fruits and vegetables.

Hispanics are among the largest single ethnic group in the U.S. church, but without more priests and vocations, “we don’t have the pastoral ministry to support these people, and it’s a big challenge,” Fr. Mendoza said.

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Hispanics are becoming the largest single ethnic group in the U.S. church, but without more priests and vocations, “we don’t have the pastoral ministry to support these people, and it’s a big challenge,” Fr. Mendoza said.

Part of the problem is that some in the pool of prospective priesthood candidates are held back by a lack of education, a lack of the English-language skills required by most seminaries, or even a lack of documents showing they are legally in the United States, he said.

“I think the bishops have to have an open mind, and help them, in one way or another, to fix their papers,” he added.

The deep inroads being made by Pentecostal churches into the Latino culture are also challenging the Catholic faith and its traditions among Hispanics — not only here, but in all of Latin America. Fr. Mendoza noted that the culture of the Hispanic people can be hostile to the emotionality of Pentecostal worship services, which may draw in Latinos with that type of spirituality.

To counter that, he recommended that priests ministering to Hispanics stress movements such as charismatic renewal and the Cursillo movement, which seeks to promote individual and organized apostolic action.

The homilist at the Mass in the cathedral was Archbishop José H. Gomez of San Antonio, a former president of the association. His mother was raised in Texas, but he was born in Monterrey, Mexico, and came to the United States 20 years ago.

Hispanics can enrich the U.S. church through the integration of their gifts of culture and faith, Archbishop Gomez said. They are open to the values of family, community, and forgiveness because they are Catholic, he said.

“Within this challenge right now, he said, is resolving the problems of immigration through laws that recognize immigrant people as human beings with rights and duties.”

The shortage of Hispanic priests is not just in the United States, the archbishop said. Mexico has about 10,000 priests for 100 million Catholics, compared to 40,000 priests for nearly 70 million Catholics in the United States.

Previous generations of immigrants from Europe were able to obtain priests from their home countries to serve their pastoral needs. Because of the shortage of priests throughout Latin America, however, immigrants from those countries have not been able to get comparable numbers of priests from home to serve them.

Because many of the new immigrants come from rural areas where the priest shortage is most acute — where Mass is celebrated perhaps once a month — they are not schooled in the Catholic faith when they arrive, Archbishop Gomez said.

“It is important for us that young Hispanic Catholics continue high school [and] go on to college for the good of society,” he said, adding that this would also open the doors for more Hispanic priests.
Pope: Christians are called to be like St. Paul, ‘the 13th apostle’

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Like St. Paul, Christians are called to place everything in their lives at the service of Jesus Christ, Pope Benedict XVI said.

At his Oct. 25 weekly general audience, Pope Benedict said he would begin a series of talks about important personali-
ties of the primitive Christian community, beginning with St. Paul, often called “the 13th apostle.”

Unlike the Twelve, who followed Jesus during his public ministry, Paul was called by the risen Christ, Pope Benedict said.

“Paul was a devoted follower of the (Jewish) law whose initial hostility to the Gospel suddenly melted when he encountered the risen Lord on the road to Damascus,” the pope said.

In his New Testament letters, St. Paul’s “own accounts of his dramatic conversion speak not only about his vision of Jesus but also his call to be an apostle,” the pope said.

From the moment Christ called him, his life was completely dedicated to spreading the Gospel and encouraging the young Christian communities, the pope said.

“From Paul we learn to make Christ the center of our lives and to see all things in the light of God’s reconciling love,” he said.

Even though St. Paul is not mentioned in the Gospels, “certainly after Jesus himself, he is the person about whom we are most informed” because of the accounts of the Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament letters “that come directly from his own hand, and which — without an intermediary — reveal his personality and thoughts.”

The letters are filled with accounts of shipwrecks, imprisonment, hunger, cold and the anger of his own people, the pope said. But St. Paul continued to travel and preach the Gospel until his martyrdom in Rome.

“How can we fail to admire such a man? How can we not thank the Lord for having given us an apostle of this stature?” the pope asked.

From the moment of his conversion, “all of his energies were placed at the exclusive service of Jesus Christ and his Gospel,” Pope Benedict said.
A few years ago, America magazine published an article that raised the question of how many Catholics, Protestants, and men and women of good will made the heroic choice to shelter Jews from the Nazi Holocaust. The question was phrased something like “A half million Schindlers?” referring to the well-known story of German industrialist Oskar Schindler’s acts and reflecting the estimate some scholars make of the numbers of rescuers.

The Scripture reading from Daniel for this week makes a promise for apocalyptic times: “At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book [of life].” This reading goes on to speak of those who “lead the many to justice” being “like the stars forever.”

The Church is rich with stories of communion that extend to all the faithful who have entered the eternal beatitude. This connection with the saints gives us a deeper understanding of what it means to be the Body of Christ. Through it we are mystically connected to all believers past and present. It is hard to fully understand the unity we have with the people in heaven. We cannot see or hear them, and it is not typical to have direct communication with them, yet throughout our life we always felt a connection. I would like to share three stories of communion that I have had with the saints.

I never remember meeting my godmother. I am told that my mother’s sister, Margery, did meet and hold me many times when I was young, but she contracted ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) and died when I was three years old. Even though I never knew my godmother, I have always felt close to her. As I grew older and learned of the Communion of the Saints, I understood why I always felt connected to her. There were times I wished I had a godmother who I could visit, write letters to, and get advice from, but at the same time, knowing that my godmother was praying for me in heaven has brought me more comfort than I could have imagined.

I was 26 years old when my mother died, and though I still miss her greatly, I am grateful for the comfort she would never meet my wife was very sad. I think they share with her is not gone. There are times when I think of her life, and often she appears in my dreams. I wasn’t married when she died, and the thought that she would never meet my wife was very sad. I think they would have really liked each other. One day, before we got married, my wife told me she had been talking to my mom in prayer. I was deeply moved by this, especially when I realized they had met after all.

Lastly, my wife and I suffered six miscarriages early in our marriage. One of the things that helped us get through that difficult time in our lives was knowing that we would meet them someday in heaven. When I think of them I have definite pictures in my mind of what they look like. They are all the same age (around nine years old) and have blond hair, which is strange because no one on either side of the family is blond. I realize that my images of them may not turn out to be true, and there is no way to know what they will really be like in heaven, but I know one thing for sure, I cannot wait to meet them!

Our communion with the saints offers us a connection to the life that lies ahead of us. We also gain access to a huge choir of intercessors on our behalf until we join them. The Communion of the Saints is the lived reality of what we experience when we walk down the aisle at Mass and say “Amen” to the Eucharist, for it unites us to the full implication of the statement we say amen to: “The Body of Christ.” It is not an accident that we call this sacrament Communion.

Jeff Hensley, 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.

QUESTIONS:

How might God be asking you to use your gifts and talents, your presence, to offer compassionate service to others?
Le damos gracias a Dios por el incremento de vocaciones al sacerdocio

Por favor continúen orando para que más jóvenes respondan generosamente al llamado del Señor para que se sirvan como sacerdotes, religiosos y religiosas.

La estructura ha tenido varias adiciones y reconstrucciones al pasar los años, pero celebra con belleza y majestad la fe católica. Fue aquí, en el baptisterio, donde se cantó por primera vez el Exultet. Fue aquí donde, por muchos años, los obispos de Roma residieron. La inscripción en latín sobre la puerta principal proclama que esta basílica es “Madre y Cabeza de todas las Iglesias de la Ciudad y del Mundo.” Esto la establece como la Catedral del Obispo de Roma, y en ese sentido, tiene aún mayor rango que la Basílica de San Pedro!

Sacerdotes hispanos estadounidenses se reúnen, discuten retos pastorales

Philadelphia (CNS) — Más de 100 sacerdotes hispanos estadounidenses se reunieron en Philadelphia del 9 al 13 de octubre para discutir los retos pastorales de servir la población católica hispana que crece rápidamente.

La reunión de cinco días fue la 17ma convención anual de la Asociación Nacional de Sacerdotes Hispánicos. El cardenal Justin Rigali, de Philadelphia, quien celebró una Misa en español el 9 de octubre para el grupo en la Catedral Basílica SS. Peter and Paul, les dijo que su ministerio “es de tremenda importancia para el futuro, no sólo de la comunidad hispana de Estados Unidos, sino también de la iglesia completa”.

Hay aproximadamente 4.200 sacerdotes hispanos ministrando en Estados Unidos, sirviendo a una población católica hispánica de aproximadamente 25 millones, de acuerdo con el presidente del grupo, padre Andrés Mendoza, de Lubbock. Cualquier sacerdote hispano que viva en Estados Unidos puede unirse a la asociación, pero el padre Mendoza dijo que la mayoría de los miembros son hijos de inmigrantes o son inmigrantes ellos mismos. Él dijo que vino a Estados Unidos desde Chihuahua, México, hace 13 años. “Me siento muy feliz en Estados Unidos”, él dijo. “Sí, tuve que aprender otra cultura, otro lenguaje y otra realidad. Me siento muy aceptado”.

El desafío más grande que enfrentan los católicos hispanos estadounidenses es una escasez de líderes hispanos en la iglesia, creó el padre Mendoza. “Los sacerdotes católicos hispanos que vienen aquí necesitan hablar ambas idiomas. Tienen que ser bilingües para poder formar líderes y tener mayor influencia”, él dijo.

El padre Mendoza dijo que la segunda tarea de ellos es desarrollar vocaciones religiosas importantes entre los hispanos de Estados Unidos, pidiéndole a los jóvenes que descubran su llamado de Dios.

Los hispanos están convirtiéndose en el grupo étnico más grande en la iglesia estadounidense, pero no tienen más sacerdotes ni vocaciones, el padre Mendoza dijo: “No tenemos el ministerio pastoral para apoyar a estas gente y es un gran reto”.

Parte del problema es que algunos en la fuente de prospeción candidatos al sacerdocio son retenidos por falta de educación o falta de las habilidades lingüísticas en el inglés requeridas por la mayoría de los seminarios, o hasta falta de documentos demostrando que están legalmente en Estados Unidos, el padre Mendoza dijo. “No somos capaces de tener una mente abierta y ayudarlos en una forma u otra a arreglar sus documentos”, añadió él.

También retando la fe católica y sus tradiciones entre ellos es la emoción de las lecturas de la semana, en los cultos dominicales en todo América Latina — están las incursiones profundas hechas por las iglesias pentecostales en la cultura latina. El padre Mendoza señaló que la cultura del pueblo hispano puede ser hospitalaria a otros, incluso en la iglesia hindú.
Rodeada de personas con herencia hispánica durante toda su vida, Martha siempre sabía la dirección que se esperaba que su vida tomará.

“Uno se casa, tiene hijos; ése es el patrón”, explica la mujer de 32 años. “Incluso los retiros espirituales que acudí como adolescente estaban centrados en situaciones familiares y la crianza de los hijos”. Tampoco los movimientos de Búsqueda y Jornada Juvenil que asistió los fines de semana hablando sobre la posibilidad de una vocación religiosa.

“Es necesario tener motivación propia para enterarse más sobre ese tema”, agrega Martha. “Uno mismo tiene que buscar las respuestas”.

Afortunadamente, eso ha cambiado. Los católicos de habla hispánica de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, que tratan de discernir si una vocación religiosa es el camino que deben tomar, ahora cuentan con un nuevo recurso. En días recientes, el Serra Club y la Diócesis de Fort Worth patrocinaron un retiro de concientización sobre vocaciones completamente en español. Este suceso, que se realiza por primera vez y se llevó a cabo en el Centro de Renovación Católica, reunió a 18 adultos que han expresado interés sobre la vida religiosa. Los organizadores diseñaron el retiro con los intereses en mente de hombres y mujeres entre los 18 y 35 años.

“Esa es una buena edad para discernir y buscar”, señala la Hermana Yolanda Cruz, SSMN, directora auxiliar del ministerio de catequesis de la diócesis. “Hay mucho potencial para las vocaciones en la comunidad de hispanohablantes y necesitamos llegar a ellos”.

Con ese objetivo en mente, el Comité de Vocaciones Hispánicas de la Diócesis ha tratado de crear distintas actividades y eventos. El retiro del fin de semana fue la culminación de esas labores.

El programa variado consistió en debates en grupo y en panel, Misa, hora sagrada, cánticos, tiempo de reflexión personal y visitas individuales con representantes de las distintas órdenes religiosas. La oración y la espiritualidad fueron los temas de un discurso principal que dio la Hermana Gabriela Martínez, SSMN, el sábado por la noche.

“Ella enfatizó la importancia de la oración y de tener un director espiritual en la vida de los asistentes para ayudarles a decír dir la trayectoria de sus caminos”, señaló la Hna. Yolanda.

“Ella también se sintió personalmente a los religiosos visitantes. Los diálogos de 30 minutos recibieron alusas calificaciones en las evaluaciones postesores a la actividad. “Los asistentes se sintieron particularmente conmovidos con las conferencias interiores”, dijo. “Fue una oportunidad para entrevistarse con hermanas y sacerdotes, hacer preguntas y escuchar las distintas respuestas”.

La reunión íntima y pequeña propició un ambiente más ameno y seguro para las personas que consideran formalmente tomar una decisión.

“Todos tenían el mismo interés”, agregó. “Fue una oportunidad para reunir durante comidas, oración y conversaciones a personas que piensan de forma semejante”.

El Padre Kyle Walterscheid, director auxiliar de vocaciones, quien reemplazará al Padre Anh como director diocesano de vocaciones en enero, dijo que invitar a hombres y mujeres interesados en la vida religiosa es como sembrar un jardín.

“No es posible cosechar frutos sin sembrar semillas”, explicó. “Éstas son personas que están comenzando a discernir sobre una vocación. Están tratando de entender dónde encajan en la Iglesia y queremos darles las herramientas para hacerlo”.

Para muchos, el fin de semana fue una experiencia que les permitió abrir los ojos.

“Les enseñó que hay otra puerta abierta para ellos en la vida. Tal vez no habían cobrado conciencia de esto antes”, señaló el Padre Walterscheid.

Los encargados del retiro se han seguido reuniendo con los candidatos interesados para permitirles discernir más intensamente durante una serie de reuniones informales celebradas semanalmente en la Catedral de San Patricio. Kevin Vann, obispo de Fort Worth, asistió a la reunión del grupo celebrada el 19 de octubre para hablar sobre el miedo y la aprensión que se suscitan al responder al llamado a una vida religiosa. Durante el proceso de discernimiento, se les recomienda a las personas hablar con un director espiritual una vez al mes y aumentar su participación en las actividades de la parroquia.

“Estoy tratando de que los sacerdotes y las hermanas comparten individualmente con los jóvenes que están en proceso de discernimiento”, explicó el Padre Walterscheid.

Oferecer el programa de concientización de vocaciones en español brindó beneficios que trascienden más que sólo mejorar las vías de comunicación.

“Les demostró a los asistentes de que la iglesia está realmente interesada y se preocupa por ellos”, sugirió el Padre Walterscheid. “Usar el idioma natal siempre es la mejor manera de llegar a una persona, ya sea vietnamita o hispana”.

Martha, quien habla inglés y español, dice que el retiro reemplazó la confusión que tenía antes de distintas congregaciones religiosas, la joven profesional está planeando ahora visitar algunos conventos para estar mejor informada.

“Espero determinar si es ahí donde está mi nicho”, señala. “Este fin de semana fue una buena forma de dirigir esa decisión”.  

América

Primer retiro de vocaciones en español abre más amplias las puertas a los que consideran una vocación por Joan Karkowski-Gillen fotos por Donna Ryckaert

Arriba: (I. a D.) la Hna. Inés Díaz, SSMN; la Hna. Flor Barreto, HJC; y la Hna. Yolanda Cruz, SSMN, aplauden con entusiasmo al participar en el primer retiro diocesano en español para promover vocaciones.

Arriba: el Padre Kyle Walterscheid (izq.), subdirector de Vocaciones responde las preguntas de Francisco García acerca de la vocación sacerdotal.

Izquierda: la Hna. Merys Jiménez, HJC, (centro), río con Luz Romero (izq.) y Maribel López que quieren discernir su posible llamado a la vida religiosa.
Misa en San Antonio honra nuevo santo que tiene conexión con arquidiócesis

SAN ANTONIO (CNS) — San Rafael Guizá Flores, santo con conexión con el mundo de San Antonio, fue honrado en el día de su canonización en Roma con una Misa especial en la Catedral San Fernando, donde él predicó mientras estaba en exilio desde su México natal a fines de la década de 1920.

Los celebrantes principales en la Misa del 15 de octubre fueron el arzobispo José H. Gómez, de San Antonio, y su predecesor, el arzobispo emérito Patrick E. Flores. También celebrando estuvieron el obispo Emidon Cardomy, de Corpus Christi; el padre David García, rector de San Fernando; y el padre jesuita James Empereur, vicario parroquial de la catedral. Una gran asamblea de sacerdotes y diáconos también participó.

“Bendito sea Dios que nos dio este gran hombre”, dijo el arzobispo Flores en su homilía. “Y bendito sea este gran hombre por todo lo que él nos ha enseñado”.

El arzobispo Flores nació en 1878 a una familia rica. Como sacerdote y luego como obispo de Veracruz, México, él utilizó su riqueza para ayudar a construir orfanatos, clínicas y un seminario para niños dispuestos por todo lo que él nos ha enseñado”. De acuerdo con el arzobispo Flores en su homilía, el arzobispo Flores, que también fue administrador apostólico en Estados Unidos, fue enviado por el congreso de 700 millas de muralla de ley autorizando la construcció ición de los planes de construir cerca de las familias y las amenazas de las primeras víctimas de la creación entre los católicos “en los países”.

El muro a lo largo de la frontera Estados Unidos-México no resolverá el problema del flujo migratorio entre los dos países y no ayudará a establecer una política de emigración coordinada y humanitaria”, dijeron los obispos. En la declaración del 21 de octu bre se reunió el congreso expresó preocupación por el aumento de la migración internacional y de inmigración en México.

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En el seminario de los sacerdotes de la Arquidiócesis de San Antonio y su predecesor, el arzobispo Flores, dijo el obispo pasó algunos días en San Antonio y vivió brevemente en el convento de las Hermanas de la Divina Providencia en Castrovillar antes de mudarse a Austin, donde él estuvo en la Iglesia Our Lady of Guadalupe durante más de dos años.

Cuando alojó la Gran Depreciación en 1929, él vendió su anillo episcopal al obispo de Oklahoma, otra vez para ayudar a aquellos que estaban en necesidad. En un raro giro del destino, este anillo llegó más tarde al arzobispo Flores como expresión de gratitud de parte de la familia de un hombre que el arzobispo se lo sirvió como ministro en Houston.

Después de la muerte del hombre, el arzobispo Flores de San Antonio, el que dio el nombre domini co, visitaron al arzobispo Flores en la cancelería. Ellos le regalaron un anillo que su padre quería que el arzobispo tuviera y sólo sabían que éste había pertenecido a un obispo mexicano.

El arzobispo Flores fue sorprendidó más tarde cuando fue descubierto que éste había pertenecido al obispo Guízar, por quien él había tenido una devoción espe cial desde sus años de seminario.

América

La espiritualidad familiar

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

Es impresionante la cantidad de personas que todavía creen, equivocadamente, que eso de vida espiritual o espiritualidad es solo para los sacerdotes, religiosos, religio sas o diáconos. Toda persona, no importa su situación o condición social está llamada por Dios para tener una amistad cercana y personal con Él. Esta relación personal e íntima con Dios se llama santidad.

Para la mayoría de los creyentes y seguidores de Cristo nuestra casa o apartamento es también nuestro lugar especial donde estamos con la familia y con Dios. El clero y los religiosos tienen conventos, monasterios o casas para pro vocar y servir a los demás en el mundo. Nosotros también servimos a aquellos que nos ofrecen una casa como un refugio.

En la Iglesia muchos tienen una vocación especial para santificarse dentro de los diversos lugares especiales de formación religiosa o conventos y su trabajo tiende a ocu rrir dentro del ámbito de la Iglesia. Los demás bautizados, seglares o laicos, tenemos una vocación para santificarnos en el mundo y sus diversas realidades del mundo en que vivimos. El Papa Juan Pablo II en su Exhortación Apostólica Christifideles Laici, nos habla sobre esto...

La vocación de los fieles laicos tiene la santidad que implica la vida según el Espíritu se exprese particularmente en su in servencia en las realidades temporales y en su participación en las actividades terrenas. De nuevo el apostol nos anuncia diciendo: “Todo cuanto hagáis, de palabra o de obra, hacedlo todo en el nombre del Señor Jesús, dando gracias por su medio a Dios Padre” (Col 3, 17). Refiriendo estas palabras del apóstol a los fieles laicos, el Concilio afirma categoricamente: “Ni la atención de la familia, ni los otros deberes secu adres deben ser algo ajenos a la orientación espiritual de la vida”... “La unidad de vida de los fieles laicos tiene una gran importancia. Ellos, en efecto, deben santificarse en la vida profesional y social ordinaria. Para tanto, para que puedan responder a su vocación, los fieles laicos deben considerar las actividades de la vida cotidiana como ocasión de unión con Dios y de cumplimiento de su voluntad, así como también de servicio a los demás hombres, llevándolos a la comunión con Dios en Cristo”.

Cristo nos llama a un amor intenso con Él. Esto comienza desde nuestro bautismo y sigue creciendo por medio de los demás sacramentos, sobre todo la Eucaristía, pero también va creciendo mientras cumplimos cristianamente con nuestros deberes diarios. En efecto, casamiento, crías, cuy tas, compra, comida, colegio y todas las demás res-pensabili dades diarias, si las cumplimos con amor y lo hacemos con nuestros corazones llenos de Dios, nos ayudaran a estar más cerca de Cristo y extender su Reino.

Por eso les recuerdo, no tenemos que huir del mundo para ser buenos discípulos del Señor. Cristo nos invita a estar en el mundo sin ser del mundo. No está mal tener nuestra Biblia en una mano y el control remoto del televisor en la otra.

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

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 noroeste de Fort Worth con su esposa María María y sus tres hijas María, Patricia y Mirangela. Pedro es Laico Dominico.
Violence makes living ‘a nightmare’ in Iraq, says Caritas official

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The war in Iraq has made day-to-day living “a nightmare,” with violence, poverty, and malnutrition on the rise since the start of the U.S.-led invasion, said an official of the Catholic Church’s charity network.

The head of Caritas Internationalis’ Middle East desk, Sebastien Dechamps, said “the needs are immense” for the people living in Iraq and for the thousands who have fled to neighboring countries.

Run by local staff for the past 15 years, Caritas Iraq has reported that the humanitarian situation has visibly worsened since 2003, Dechamps said in Oct. 19 written responses to questions by Catholic News Service.

“Daily life has become a nightmare. You hardly have one hour of electricity per day; access to food, water, health [care, and] education has deteriorated. But most of all, the lack of peace, the violence, and the anarchy are everywhere, and give a sense of hopelessness,” he wrote.

Some studies have shown a 35 percent increase in poverty since 2003, and a Pentagon study released in August “estimates that about 25.9 percent of Iraqi children examined were stunted in their physical growth due to chronic malnutrition, which is on the rise,” he wrote.

Staff at Caritas centers meet “the human face of poverty” every day as they reach out to those most in need: the sick, the poor, infants, and children suffering from severe malnutrition, the Caritas official wrote.

The chaos and violence on the ground have made monitoring humanitarian conditions and determining an accurate death toll very dangerous and difficult for organizations like Caritas.

On Oct. 12 the British medical journal The Lancet published a survey that estimates 601,000 civilians have been killed because of violence since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. The survey said that, taking into consideration a margin of error in the statistics, civilian deaths caused by violence could range from 426,000 to 794,000.

However, U.S. President George W. Bush and some other government and military officials dispute the accuracy or credibility of the report. Another independent British group, Iraq Body Count, for example, puts the toll based on media reports at 43,000 to 48,000 civilian deaths.

Dechamps wrote that he and his colleagues “don’t see why [The Lancet] study would not reflect reality.”

Referring to the margin of error in The Lancet study, he said the difference between 400,000 and 600,000 innocent people dead “is of no moral/human interest” as both figures “are appalling.”

Caritas workers in Iraq, he wrote, “would confirm that they probably don’t know a single family who would not have lost at least one member to violence in Iraq in the last three years.”

The general feeling among Iraqis is that “this is a civil war; people are afraid; most of them have no more hope in the future,” said Dechamps.

“Iraqis are fleeing from their country by the thousands,” he said. These are families who have sold everything and “are just looking for a ‘normal life’ where kids can go to school,” he said.

The study published in The Lancet was done by the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and Al Mustansiriya University School of Medicine in Baghdad, Iraq. The study gathered data from 47 clusters of 40 households each throughout the country, which it then projected on a national level.

The interviews were done from May to July. The researchers said that their methodology was the same used by others to determine civilian deaths as a result of wars in Democratic Republic of Congo, Kosovo, and Sudan.

The 601,000 deaths through violence represent 2.3 percent of the Iraqi population of 26 million.

Offre Joie brings Christians, Muslims together to rebuild Lebanon

By Michael Hirst

HOULA, Lebanon (CNS) — Lebanon’s new school term finally got under way in mid-October, but in southern areas — Lebanon’s new school term was completely destroyed by Israeli strikes during the 34-day conflict with Israel, many destroyed schools will not die, because we have the power to live together, rich in our differences.” — Melhem Khalaf

North and South, between Christian, Sunni, Shiite, and Druze,” said Torbey. “Our aim is to unite the Lebanese family. Ours is an NGO (nongovernmental organization) that accepts volunteers whatever their religion and helps the needy whatever their religion.”

Paintings by the volunteers on the school’s walls depict communities living together, mosques alongside churches. There is an area controlled by Hezbollah, but the militant Shiite organization leaves the group to its own devices.

“Hezbollah know exactly what we’re doing, but they leave us alone because we are working for regeneration in southern Lebanon,” Torbey said.

Offre Joie is funded largely by overseas donations and runs on a budget of less than $100,000 a year. Although it has strong Catholic links — approximately half its volunteers attend St. Joseph University — Offre Joie prides itself on its apolitical, nonconfessional approach.

“We welcome the diversity,” said its founder, Melhem Khalaf, a 43-year-old French lawyer. “Through our core tenet of respect for each other, we don’t eat meat on a Friday in line with Christian beliefs. Nor do we eat pork out of respect for Muslims.

“By working together, we work as a team, giving the volunteers a stronger sense of citizenship and ownership over the future of Lebanon,” he said.

Offre Joie, founded in 1985 to help the needy during Lebanon’s 1975-1982 civil war, was well positioned to devise an aid plan and put it into action this summer. From the first day of the conflict, the group set up food centers, delivered some 2,000 meals to displaced families, and established a hot line and a crisis operation for organizations like Caritas.

“We are a sign to the world that Lebanon will not die, because we have the power to live together, rich in our differences.”

By Michael Hirst

HOULA, Lebanon (CNS) — Lebanon’s new school term finally got under way in mid-October, but in southern areas — Lebanon’s new school term was completely destroyed by Israeli strikes during the 34-day conflict with Israel, many destroyed schools
Vatican newspaper L’Osservatore Romano marks 145 years as ‘genuine face of the church’

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Juggling a phone, tapping out headline changes on his keyboard, and greeting yet another visitor to his second-floor office inside the headquarters of L’Osservatore Romano, Antonio Chila’ serenely glides through the myriad of tasks that continually fly his way.

Like a controller at a major airport’s air traffic control tower, the chief editor of the Vatican newspaper must keep scores of incoming calls, e-mails, edited news articles, faxes, and requests on his radar and guide them all to their proper place.

Freshly typed copy of Pope Benedict XVI’s remarks in German from his Oct. 25 general audience lands on Chila’ desk just as the paper’s German section calls to say the text has been revised to reflect the pope’s spoken remarks.

Translators check each prewritten papal text against what the pope actually says, since he often speaks off the cuff. Chila’ then sends the modified copy by fax and e-mail to the Secretariat of State for approval before he can direct it to the layout staff.

Just the barest hint of exasperation tinges the chief editor’s voice when an anxious caller urges him to publish a picture of her order’s mother superior kissing the pope’s hand at the audience that wrapped up less than an hour before.

“Sister, I know this is important to you, but if I had to publish every photo of all the religious and bishops who kiss the Holy Father’s hand, I would have to put out a 250-page paper every day,” he says, sighing into the phone.

Published within the Vatican, the semiofficial newspaper was born 145 years ago during a high-tumultuous time for the Papal States. Italy’s unification began in 1861, and the new kingdom’s first legislators declared Rome the capital.

The pope’s temporal power and the territories he controlled were under increasing threat by growing Italian nationalism. Pontifical authorities soon supported the idea of having a newspaper that would uphold the importance of the Papal States and the values they espoused.

The first issue of L’Osservatore Romano appeared in Rome July 1, 1861, and was “deliberately polemical and propagandist,” according to the Vatican’s Web site.

The paper’s motto, which remains unchanged today under the masthead, included two snippets from the Gospels: “Unicoque Suum” (“to each his own”) and “Non Praevalebunt” (the forces of evil “shall not prevail”), said Chila’.

But over time the newspaper took on a more objective and pastoral stance, and today it prides itself in “presenting the genuine face of the church and the ideals of freedom,” said Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican’s secretary of state.

L’Osservatore Romano became “an instrument for spreading the teachings of the successor of Peter and for information about church events,” he said in an Oct. 24 speech inaugurating a new exhibit dedicated to the founding and history of the newspaper.

The Oct. 24-Nov. 10 exhibit, housed in a city government building, was sponsored by both the Vatican newspaper and the provincial government of Rome.

The joint initiative reflects the mutual respect and collaboration that have colored church-state relations since the so-called “Roman question” was resolved with the Lateran Pacts of 1929.

The exhibit shows how L’Osservatore Romano has become a forceful champion of human rights and a vocal proponent of peaceful, nonviolent solutions to the political and social upheavals of the 20th century and beyond.

Each pope has used the paper as an international soapbox to launch appeals against “the useless massacre” of World War I and to condemn anti-Semitism, totalitarianism, and “atheist communism.”

When Europe was darkened by World War II, the Vatican newspaper spoke out against injustices without threat of being silenced or shut down, and the paper offered a ray of hope by documenting the church’s efforts in providing food and shelter for Italy’s displaced.

Chila’ told Catholic News Service Oct. 25 that, just as it did then, L’Osservatore Romano still exerts “notable influence” in both political and religious spheres.

Not only are readers 100 percent certain that the exact words of the pope and church officials appear on its pages, but international news is treated with an objectivity that journalists from either political extreme find laudable, Chila’ said.

And the number of copies printed and sold “is a secret,” the English edition alone reaches more than 129 countries.

Besides the daily paper in Italian, L’Osservatore Romano publishes weekly editions in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and a monthly paper in Polish.

The future for reaching out to even more readers worldwide is the Internet, Chila’ said, but for now L’Osservatore Romano only has a copy of its front page online.

Through its new site, www.photo.va, the paper now offers for sale to the public its daily treats and exhaustive archives of photos.

Chila’ said staffers are looking at ways to also sell L’Osservatore Romano in its various language editions online, but progress has stalled over fears of the potential hacking of content.

“Our computer technicians tell me that [hackers] can infiltrate if they are good, and they’ve been able to break into NASA and CIA [Web sites] so imagine with our paper,” he said.

It is imperative the paper’s content be absolutely immutable, not only because readers expect to find the pope’s exact words there, but also because it also acts as an official organ announcing papal appointments of a new bishop or cardinal, the creation of new dioceses, and who the pope received in private audience, he said.

Though the paper “tries to be objective to the utmost,” Chila’ said its content and editorial comment “come down hard” on abortion, euthanasia, and workers dying on the job due to negligence.

“In these cases we are, let’s say, very critical against those who carry out these crimes,” which also include unjust warfare, he said.

“We’ve had much difference of opinion with the United States government” over its recent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, he said.

However, in the fog of rhetoric, the newspaper’s moral guidepost is clear.

“When the pope takes a position, that is our official position which we go with and follow,” he said.

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Father Giuseppe Mazza, a professor of communications at Pontifical Gregorian University, said Pope John Paul and the media were “enchanted with each other.”

Overcoming concerns about profaning the papacy by being extraordinarily available — including holding full-blown press conferences during papal trips — Pope John Paul revolutionized the relationship between the media and faith, creating faith in the media,” Fr. Mazza said.

The archbishop and the professor spoke at an Oct. 16 press conference marking the release of Karol Wojtyla: A Pontifical Life, a book of 60 Italian-language essays about the late pope’s attitudes toward the media and their attitudes toward him.

The essays are based on speeches delivered at a May conference at Gregorian University by communications specialists, scholars, journalists, and politicians.

The book also included a DVD of clips compiled by RAI, the Italian state television network, illustrating the points conference speakers made about the pope’s mastery of television communications.

Pope John Paul II changed media efforts of papacy, says Archbishop Foley, Vatican communications official

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope John Paul II revolutionized the communications efforts of the papacy, particularly through his use of television, said U.S. Archbishop John P. Foley.

“He gave himself to the world through the media,” said the archbishop, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

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WHEN ALL THE BODIES HAVE BEEN BURIED IN DARFUR, HOW WILL HISTORY JUDGE US?

President Bush: Genocide is happening right now in Darfur. You can end it.

400,000 people dead. 2.5 million displaced. Untold thousands raped, tortured and terrorized. Men. Women. Children.
Ending the horror will take immediate action by a strong United Nations peacekeeping force. And that will take leadership from President Bush.

Stop the Genocide. | www.SaveDarfur.org
Hamer…

From page 11

to my car, with papers in hand, wind blowing their hair back, and smiles threatening to pop off their faces.

Those were days that went by faster than trees lose their fall leaves in North Texas, moments that were shorter than the time between the first day of November and the first day of January in every rapidly-flying year.

If I could be Mrs. Incredible, I would use my superhero powers to fix that. To slow down the speed of things.

Now, after speeding days and flourishing joys, after the costuming, teaching, and graduating of five children, I find myself the grandmother of three, and it is a lot easier than mothering, even though it sometimes is a little sad.

For grandparents it may be easier. I think, not because we “give the kids back to their parents,” but because we gave the parents to those kids. Because we already did it, taking care of kids is easier now than it felt like it was then — incredible.

That night at the Halloween party, I had no responsibility at all, just an opportunity to enjoy watching parents and children celebrating an autumn social in the outside night air. Hundreds of families, whether or not they could afford the price of admission, paid to bring their children to a community party where they would celebrate a custom that is part of our collective memory.

However it is that they do it, whether they choose to dress as cartoon characters or robots, and whether or not their parenting skills are of the superhero variety, parents want good things for their children. Good health and education. Good food and fun.

And hopefully they strive for a solid foundation of faith. All those things are the things we worked on before them, and the things they will spend good time and money to continue after.

“Let’s line up over here and shoot baskets,” parents would lure their children to the game booths. “Let’s have something to drink. Would you like to watch a magic show? Over there we can see the animals! Walk carefully. Say ‘Excuse me.’ Hold my hand.”

And many times I heard parents repeating a phrase that we all think we invented: “Look at me.”

“Did you hear that?” I asked my daughter Meredith, who was steering Sam and Nattie through the crowds.

“How odd,” I went on. “When we want our children to listen, all generations say the same thing: ‘Look at me.’ Not ‘Listen to me,’ but ‘Look at me.’

“I know,” Meredith answered. “I say, ‘Look in my eyes.’”

Sounded to me like a tangled combination of instruction, direction and hypnotic suggestion. But who was I to question a psychologist, and in fact I might say her youth and parenting skills make her an ‘Incredible’ without the costume.

I, on the other hand, am merely a seamstress who specializes in candy clothing.

By Jean Denton

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MINISTRY FOR GAYS / LESBIANS

A day of preparation for couples seeking to have their marriage validated within the Catholic Church will be offered Nov. 11 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth, adjacent to the Catholic Family Life Office at 600 N. Shady Shores, Lake Dallas.

For more information or to register, call the diocesan Family Life Office at (817) 560-2452 ext. 304 or e-mail her at jlocke@fwdioc.org.

GRIEGO AT (817) 421-1387, OR HANK AND ADRIAN’S FLOOR & TILE

The 11th Annual Christmas Book Sale will be held Nov. 11 at Mansfield National Golf and Country Club by the Fort Worth Diocese Women’s Catholic Newman Community. Admission is free, and all are welcome.

For additional information, call Genni Sayers at (817) 737-6768 ext. 109.

INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING

An interfaith Thanksgiving service will be celebrated Nov. 19 at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church, 1810 N. Tabor St., Fort Worth. The service will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the church. The following reception, to be held in the parish hall, will conclude by 9 p.m. A turkey and all the trimmings will be served. For more information about the celebration or to RSVP prior to the Nov. 20 deadline, call the church at (817) 560-3300 or e-mail to rsvp@holihood.com.

INTERVENTION STUDY WEEK

The Diocese of Fort Worth is seeking candidates for the position of director of Tribunal. The director is responsible for developing, implementing, and maintaining the policies and procedures of the diocesan office, “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” for training, compliance, and reporting. The director is also responsible for the diocesan level for the coordination, communication, and combination of spiritual, service, and social work. The director will interact with parishes, contact Cheryl by e-mail at youngserrans@yahoo.com or call (972) 488-8578.

NOLAN CATHOLIC OPEN HOUSE

Nolan Catholic High School, 4501 Bridge St., Fort Worth, will host an Open House Nov. 11 from 1 to 3 p.m. This event will offer an opportunity to learn about Nolan Catholic and to meet and visit with Jesus staff. Meals will be provided from Friday dinner through Sunday lunch. For more information, contact Admissions at (817) 321-6020 or e-mail to retreat@fwdioc.org.

CHRISTMAS BOOK SALE

The Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street, Fort Worth, will host its annual Christmas Book Sale Nov. 17-19. Many gift items and books will be available for $1 each or a total price. For additional information, contact the CRC at (817) 429-2920.

SINGLEST CHRISTMAS DANCE

The Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street, Fort Worth, will host its annual Christmas Dance Dec. 9 from 8 p.m. to midnight in the parish’s Family Life Center, 6159 Pershing Ave., Fort Worth. The cost of the dance is $6 per person plus a dish to share. For more information, contact Monica Molina at (817) 737-6768, Vince Chavez at (817) 869-5726, or Sylvia Salinas at (817) 845-2718.

THE SISTERS OF HOPE WILL HOST A “COME AND SEE” WEEKEND AT HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC RETREAT CENTER IN SAN ANTONIO. The weekend will begin Friday, Dec. 8, at 5 p.m. and conclude Saturday, Dec. 9, at 6 p.m. The Sisters of the Holy Spirit, inspired by their foundress Margaret Mary Healy Murphy, are called to live in community, to serve people who are marginalized, oppressed, or economically poor. For more information, contact Sister Veronica calf by phone at (210) 534-5149 or via e-mail at holyspiritshop.org. Other information may be found on the diocesan website at www.fwdioc.org.
Cardinals pitcher Jeff Suppan tells Catholic school students

Good Newsmaker

知 you believe, what you believe

By Jean M. Schildz / St. Louis Review
Newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Louis

St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Jeff Suppan wowed his fans one day in September, and he wasn’t even on the mound.

He received a standing ovation from more than 400 youth and adults following his talk on how he lives out his Catholic faith as a professional baseball player and in his daily life.

Suppan spoke at St. Joseph’s Academy in Frontenac. The event was sponsored by the Parent Network of Catholic High Schools.

The Cardinals hurler — whose team won the World Series in five games in October, defeating the Detroit Tigers — encouraged the middle school and high school students “to keep Jesus No. 1” in their lives.

“I try to put Jesus in front of everything I do,” said Suppan, adding that he tries to let Jesus lead him and not “try to do it on my own.”

As Catholics, they will be regularly questioned about their faith, Suppan told the youths. Now, he said, is the time for them to gain a good foundation.

“You need to know why you believe in what you believe in, because you will be challenged” by others, particularly other Christians, he said.

That has been his experience, Suppan said. Growing up in California, he attended St. Bernardine of Siena School in San Bernardino and Crespi Carmelite High School, an all-boys Catholic school in Encino.

At 18, he signed to play baseball right out of high school and never went to college. It was his first time away from family and friends. Drugs, promiscuity, sex, and pornography were readily available. He turned to God for help.

At the encouragement of a friend, he began to seriously study his faith, so he could be better prepared to defend it.

People always ask me why I believe what I do. And the only response I had was ‘because I believe.’ My biggest challenge was to learn, to take my formation and learn more about why I believed…. I believed 100 percent, but I had to learn why.”

A priest he met in Boston got him going to confession regularly. He found that the more he felt Jesus was helping him “carry the load.” Suppan said he encounters Christ in confession and receives grace to help overcome future temptations.

Suppan also spoke about the importance of the Eucharist, attending Mass, and taking part in eucharistic adoration.

He told the crowd, “I love going to Mass. Nothing about Jesus is boring to me…. Because Jesus sacrificed for me, it’s the least I could do.”

Now in his 12th season in the majors, Suppan noted that playing sports is good preparation for life. “I always made baseball practice. That’s discipline, and you can apply that to your faith and many areas of your life. That dedication and fortitude that I learned going through rough times, I’ve applied that to my life as a Christian.”

“Pray to your angel,” he told the crowd. “Use your angel’s help. I always actually ask for help. I always actually ask for the protection of my angel. I think it’s important because there’s a big battle out there going on over us. You guys may not see it, but just remember, pray to your angel for protection.”

During his talk he showed a 16-minute home movie of his November 2005 visit to the Vatican, where he met Pope Benedict XVI, and to Assisi, Italy. He also took several questions from the audience, even drawing laughter with tongue-in-cheek responses. Asked what his favorite pitch was, Suppan replied, “A strike.”

“My biggest challenge was to learn, to take my formation and learn more about why I believed…. I believed 100 percent, but I had to learn why.”

Left:
St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Jeff Suppan chats with the crowd while waiting to give a talk on living out his Catholic faith at St. Joseph’s Academy in Frontenac, Mo., Sept. 14. More than 400 middle-school and high-school students along with adults heard the professional baseball player explain why his faith is so important to him. His talk was sponsored by the Parent Network of Catholic High Schools. (CNS photo/Mark Kempf, St. Louis Review)