By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service
WASHINGTON — More than 140 Christian leaders issued a joint declaration Nov. 20 pledging renewed zeal in defending the unborn, defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and protecting religious freedom.

The 4,700-word statement, called the “Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience,” was signed by 14 Catholic bishops, evangelicals, and Orthodox leaders and other Catholics. The document pledges the group’s “obligation to speak and act in defense of these truths” and stressed that “no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence.”

About 16 religious leaders who signed the document attended the Nov. 20 press conference in Washington to unveil it. Washington Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl, who welcomed the group to Washington, said the document was “with a collective voice.”

Several speakers pointed out that the issues highlighted in the “Manhattan Declaration” are not new, but there is a new urgency to defend them.

“Justice demands that we not remain silent,” said Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia.

Some speakers mentioned the possibility of civil disobedience, if necessary, to defend their beliefs.

“There are limits to what can be asked or imposed on our consciences,” said Robert George, a member of the document’s drafting committee and a jurisprudence professor at Princeton University.

George, who is Catholic, said any protests or acts of resistance “would be carried out respectfully” and with nonviolence.

The document states that the signers “will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide, and will be an enormous disappointment.”

By Nancy Frazier O’Brien
Catholic News Service
WASHINGTON — The health reform legislation now before the Senate is “an enormous disappointment, creating new and completely unacceptable federal policy that endangers human life and rights of conscience,” the chairman of three committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said Nov. 20.

A letter from the three chairmen outlining the USCCB’s problems with the Senate bill’s provisions on abortion and conscience protections, coverage of immigrants, and affordability for low-income Americans went out about 24 hours before the Senate voted, 60-39, to begin debate on the legislation.

The debate was expected to begin Nov. 30 after senators returned from a weeklong Thanksgiving break.

The Senate’s Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, drawn up by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada from legislation approved earlier in two Senate committees, “does not meet ... moral criteria” outlined by the bishops, especially on the use of federal funds to pay for abortions, the letter said.

“We believe legislation that violates this moral principle is not true health care reform and must be amended to reflect it,” said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston and Bishops William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, Ill., and Martin E. Wunderlich of Buffalo.

In their letter, the committee chairmen said the Senate bill as currently written “does not live up to President (Barack) Obama’s commitment of barring the use of federal dollars for abortion and maintaining current conscience laws.”

Bishops, evangelicals, and Orthodox leaders sign Manhattan Declaration

U.S. religious leaders pledge renewed commitment to conscience issues

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service
WASHINGTON — More than 140 Christian leaders issued a joint declaration Nov. 20 pledging renewed zeal in defending the unborn, defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and protecting religious freedom.

The 4,700-word statement, called the “Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience,” was signed by 14 Catholic bishops, evangelicals, and Orthodox leaders and other Catholics. The document pledges the group’s “obligation to speak and act in defense of these truths” and stressed that “no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence.”

About 16 religious leaders who signed the document attended the Nov. 20 press conference in Washington to unveil it. Washington Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl, who welcomed the group to Washington, said the document was “with a collective voice.”

Several speakers pointed out that the issues highlighted in the “Manhattan Declaration” are not new, but there is a new urgency to defend them.

“Justice demands that we not remain silent,” said Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia.

Some speakers mentioned the possibility of civil disobedience, if necessary, to defend their beliefs.

“There are limits to what can be asked or imposed on our consciences,” said Robert George, a member of the document’s drafting committee and a jurisprudence professor at Princeton University.

George, who is Catholic, said any protests or acts of resistance “would be carried out respectfully” and with nonviolence.

The document states that the signers “will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide, and
Pope, Archbishop of Canterbury pledge continued dialogue

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While some pundits have sounded the death knell for ecumenical relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, a Vatican official and Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury, the Anglican spiritual leader, pledged to move forward.

The pope and archbishop met privately at the Vatican for about 20 minutes Nov. 21.

A Vatican statement said the two leaders reiterated “the shared will to continue and to consolidate the ecumenical relationship between Catholics and Anglicans.”

And, its said, they discussed the work their representatives were to begin Nov. 23 preparing for a third round of study by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, the body for official theological dialogue.

The statement said the two leaders discussed “recent events affecting relations between the Catholic Church and Anglican Communion,” a reference to Pope Benedict’s apostolic constitution establishing “personal ordinariates” — structures similar to dioceses for Anglicans who want to enter full communion with the Roman Catholic Church while maintaining some of their Anglican heritage.

The announcement appeared to cause some tension, mainly because Archbishop Williams was not informed about the papal pronouncement shortly before it was announced publicly in late October.

Despite the Vatican’s clear statements that the move was a pastoral response to people who contacted the Vatican seeking to become Catholic, many headlines treated it as the Vatican taking unfair advantage of tensions within the Anglican Communion over the ordination of women as priests and bishops.

In an interview Nov. 21 with Vatican Radio, Archbishop Williams said he told the pope that the way the announcement was handled “put us in an awkward position,” but he also said media presentations of the announcement as a “dawn raid on the Anglican Communion” were simply wrong.

“People become Roman Catholics because they want to become Roman Catholics, because their consciences are formed in a certain way and they believe this is the will of God for them. And I wish them every blessing in that,” the archbishop said.

“But I don’t think it’s a question of the Roman Catholic Church as it were trying to attract by advertising or by special offers,” he said, adding that for that reason “I don’t particularly worry about it.”

Asked for the pope’s reaction, the archbishop said, “The main message was that the constitution did not represent any change in the Vatican’s attitude toward the Anglican Communion as such. As for the issue of ordaining openly gay men and blessing gay marriages, which a few Anglican provinces have done, Archbishop Williams told Vatican Radio the official policy of the Anglican Communion remains opposed to such practices.

“We have to keep considering this, praying about it (and) reflecting without creating too many facts on the ground that pretend the debate is settled,” he told the radio. At the same time, he said, it must be done in a way that shows how much “we value and appreciate the contribution made already by many faithful gay and lesbian people who serve as clergy and laity in the church.”

Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Archbishop Williams both said they thought the next topic to be treated by ARCIC would be the relationship between the local and universal church.

Archbishop Williams told Vatican Radio that if ARCIC studied the topic, the question of the ordination of women probably would come up, at least in the context of the decision-making authority of local dioceses or provinces.

Cardinal DiNardo tells teens Jesus wants them ‘to be branches of the vine’

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (CNS) — Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston reminded thousands of teens who packed a Kansas City arena that Jesus is the vine and they are the branches and that in the Eucharist they become one with him.

“Where does Jesus live?” he asked the teens. “He doesn’t answer to an address on San Jacinto Drive in Houston. Jesus abides with his Abba, his daddy, his Father. There are many houses in his home, and he wants all of you, and me, to be branches of the vine.”

The cardinal and his director of youth ministry, Brian Johnson, delivered the morning keynote address Nov. 20 at the first general session of the 2009 National Catholic Youth Conference in the Sprint Center.

“It’s not enough to come to this weekend and act crazy and go ‘Woooooo0000000!’” he said. “We need to be the hands of Christ in our world.”

The Nov. 19-21 conference, which had as its theme “Christ Reigns,” drew delegates from New York and Los Angeles, La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Galves-ton-Houston, the Diocese of Fort Worth, and points in between, arraigned on several diocesan lands.

Wearing T-shirts imprinted with their diocese’s name or a catchphrase, the teens streamed into the arena and found their places. Some donned silly hats topped with cows, lambs, clocks or cheese, denoting something about their home diocese.

Christian rock bands entertained the teens until musician and speaker Steve Angrisano entered the arena to sing and speak until it was time for the keynote.

All action on the stage was visible on four huge video screens hanging over the stage, and smaller TV monitors near the floor.

In his remarks, Cardinal DiNardo recounted the Gospel story of the loaves and the fishes, and said: “Jesus is the bread of life. He said it himself, ‘The bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.’”

The cardinal urged the teens to find intimacy with God through the Eucharist. “In the Eucharist, we become one with Jesus,” he said. He suggested they go to confession frequently, and talk to God, asking forgiveness often.

“Two words melt the Father,” he said. “Those two words are ‘I’m sorry.’”

Johnson told a story about his stay in a hospital during Hurricane Ike. He was overlooked in the general melee of evacuation, so he got out of bed, grabbed his IV stand and went on his own.

“The Christ in us calls for us to get up and do something, not just lie there waiting for someone else to do it for us,” he said. “Our God is a God of second chances, over and over and over again.”

The young church in the United States knows how to put Christ in action, he said. “You have to walk to the walk. It’s not enough just to talk it. ... Don’t hold Christ in. Share him, give Christ to others. That is the Eucharist.”

He then began to sing “Veni Creator Spiritus,” slowly encouraging 21,000 teens to join him.

Dressed in gold and burgundy vestments, Bishop Robert W. Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kansas, the heads of the two host dioceses, climbed the ramp to the stage for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

They were accompanied by several priests, deacons, and seminarians.

Deacon Justin McMenamy read the passage about the road to Emmaus from the Gospel of St. Luke: “Were not our hearts burning within us? ... He was made known to us in the breaking of the bread.”

On the altar the monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament gleamed in the flickering light of the candles. Images of it filled the video screens hanging from the ceiling and the floor-level TV monitors.

While the prelates, priests, and deacons knelt in prayer before the altar, teenagers bowed their heads or knelt on the floor, if they had room. Within a few moments, the huge arena was silent, except for muted singing from the “animators.”

After a time of silent prayer, the prelates rose and Archbishop Naumann lifted the monstrance.

The Knights of Columbus led the clergy off the stage, followed by Bishop Finn and Archbishop Naumann, who, with a gold hou- meral veil draped over his shoulders and covering his hands, held the monstrance.

While the prelates and priests in the forefront, a procession formed. Teens and adults left the Sprint Center, still quiet. Bishop Finn and Archbishop Naumann led the procession to the convention center, another venue for the conference where an adoration chapel had been set up.
Vatican officials say church must improve service to deaf community

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While the Catholic Church no longer considers deafness an impediment to ordination, there are only 13 priests in the world who were ordained deaf, said officials of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry.

Msgr. Jean-Marie Mpndawatu, undersecretary of the council, said eight of the 13 work in the United States; two minister in Great Britain and one each serve in Brazil, Congo, and South Korea.

Father Savino Castiglione, a member of the Congregation of the Little Mission for the Deaf, said the problem is not one of barriers imposed by the church, but is a result of practical educational difficulties.

A deaf seminarian needs a sign language interpreter or tutor for his six years of philosophy and theology classes, something which is expensive, particularly because “it is difficult to use sign language to translate such abstract concepts” as those found in philosophy and theology, Father Castiglione said.

The lack of deaf priests was one of the topics discussed Nov. 17 when the pontifical council presented the program for its annual international conference. The theme of the gathering Nov. 19-21 is “The Deaf Person in the Life of the Church.”

Archbishop Zygmunt Zirowski, president of the council, said there are more than 278 million deaf people in the world, and at least 1.3 million of them are Catholic.

“That is a lot and the Church must act,” the archbishop said.

Without adequately prepared priests and other pastoral workers and trained sign language interpreters, he said, the Church is making it difficult, if not impossible, for its deaf members to participate fully in parish life and liturgies, to learn about their faith, and to contribute to the life of the Church.

Msgr. Mpndawatu said he expected the conference to launch a strong call for seminaries to at least offer future priests training in sign language because the pastoral care of deaf Catholics requires it.

“Just think how hard it would be to go to confession” if one could not find a priest who would understand, he said.

Luca Lamano, who was born deaf and teaches deaf children, attended a Catholic school for the deaf in Rome where Mass was celebrated each week and the sacrament of penance was offered by a priest who knew sign language. But his local parish did not have interpreters.

“My dad said it doesn’t matter if you don’t understand, it is important to participate, but I didn’t like,” he said. He stopped going to Mass until he met his wife, a committed Catholic who knew sign language.

The following morning we were set to see our beloved pope, Benedict XVI, at his weekly papal audience. It was amazing to gather together for prayer and an audience with the pope. In the papal auditorium, filled to capacity with more than 8,000 people representing Christianity from all over the world, we prayed and listened intently as the pope proclaimed a message that was part of a series of talks he has given to reinvigorate Christians. As you may know, he has been especially concerned about the diminished numbers of European faithful. This has come about even though they have received the greatest of blessings from our Lord and the richest of heritages through a history of saints and martyrs, heroes and heroines who have laid before us the deposit of faith from Christ himself.

Thus, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized in great detail the reforms made by the Cluniac Reform of the 10th and 11th centuries that restored the Rule of St. Benedict among the Cluny monks, emphasized the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, and elevated the Mass with more solemnity, hymns, and prayers. This renewed sense of the holy within the walls of the Cluni Benedictine Monastery began to spread all over Europe (1,200 monasteries in all). As these reforms were implemented, the monasteries were also freed from the local control and abuse of nobles, as they came under the direct authority of the Roman pontiff.

There is so much more to share about our time with Pope Benedict XVI. One of the many great experiences was our group catching the eye of the pope in a brief moment as our diocese was named and 500 of us faithful from Fort Worth cheered with great enthusiasm. We definitely caught our pope by surprise as a great smile came across his face. Later, with great joy, Bishop Vann was able to meet the pope for a few moments and share the diocese’s enthusiasm over our pilgrimage to Rome. Another great moment we shared was watching Monsignor Charles King, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton, along with our wonderful Sister Francesca Walterscheid, from the Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur, as they shook hands with the pope. There is a photograph in this edition of the North Texas Catholic of that special moment which says it all.

As you can see, that was just the first 24 hours in Rome, and I didn’t share the half of it! Nevertheless, I will continue to share more stories in the next article. This trip to Rome really captured so much for me: our Catholic tradition, our hopes, the love I have for our diocese, our bishop, our priests, our brothers, our sisters, our youth, and our families.

It has impressed upon me the inner desire of every Christian to serve the Lord with all their might and the natural desire for more men and women who understand and embrace the Christian faith, to yearn to dedicate their lives to the Lord through the religious life.

Father Kyle Walterscheid is the director of Vocations for the Diocese of Fort Worth. He can be reached by e-mail to kwalterscheid@fwdioc.org.
Advent reconciliation service for Deaf Community to be held Dec. 13

The Deaf Community Advent Reconciliation Service will be held at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13, in the chapel at St. John the Apostle Church, 7341 Glenview Dr., North Richland Hills.

"Celebrate the season of Advent by preparing your heart and mind for Christ," says Mary Cinatl, director of Deaf Ministry. Father Ken Robinson will celebrate Mass and hear confessions in American Sign Language, English, and Spanish. Attendees are encouraged to bring their Bibles and rosaries to pray with while they wait. For more information contact Mary Cinatl at mcinatl@fwdioc.org.

Cardinal Newman Institute to offer 10-week course on the Old Testament

The Cardinal Newman Institute will begin a 10-week course on "The Theology of the Old Testament" Jan. 9. The study will concentrate on the meaning of significant passages, events, and terms as well as God's relationship to and through the primary biblical characters in salvation history. It will also provide an understanding of the Old Testament prefigurations and establishes the foundation for the teaching of Christ and the Church. Although this course is especially appropriate for persons involved in Bible Study groups, all will find this course enriching to Cursillistas who desire to grow and be renewed in their understanding and commitment to the Cursillo Movement. The purpose is to become stronger leaders in the Cursillo Movement, both as individuals and as a community.

Space is limited, so those planning to attend should make arrangements as soon as possible. The application can be downloaded at www.fwdioc.org/deafministry. For more information, call Mary Jean Nagy at (817) 226-1110, or e-mail her at mjeannagy@yahoo.com.

Cursillo community plans second retreat for Cursillistas

The Fort Worth Cursillo Community will host a "Cursillo of Cursillos" Dec. 10-13. Cursillo of Cursillos, a three-day weekend for all Cursillistas in the United States, will be held in English. This weekend consists of three days of talks and meditations that are spiritually challenging, enlightening, and enriching to Cursillistas who desire to grow and be renewed in their understanding and commitment to the Cursillo Movement. The purpose is to become stronger leaders in the Cursillo Movement, both as individuals and as a community.

Space is limited, so those planning to attend should make arrangements as soon as possible. The application can be downloaded at www.fwdioc.org/deafministry. For more information, call Mary Jean Nagy at (817) 226-1110, or e-mail her at mjeannagy@yahoo.com.

Couple to Couple League offers Natural Family Planning classes

The Couple to Couple League offers classes in the symptothermal method of natural family planning for married and engaged couples. Since the course consists of three classes at monthly intervals, engaged couples are encouraged to attend a course beginning at least four months before their wedding.

To register for a course starting Dec. 13 at 2 p.m. at St. John the Apostle Church, 7341 Glenview Dr., North Richland Hills, contact Andrew and Samantha Mudd at (817) 284-5177. To register for a supplemental postpartum class (for those couples who have previously attended a CCL course) on supplemental postpartum class, contact Father Warren Murphy, TOR, at (817) 927-5838, or Sister Rose at (817) 529-7370, or Sister Anne at (817) 269-5861.

Annual Respect Life Mass to be celebrated Jan. 9 at St. Patrick’s

All are invited to participate in the annual Respect Life Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral, 1206 Throckmorton St. in downtown Fort Worth. The Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Kevin Vann, Saturday, Jan. 9, at 7 p.m. The celebration will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the abortion issue, and will mark the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. A candle-light procession will be held in remembrance of the millions of deaths that have occurred as a result of abortion.

For more information, call Chasenee Ruth-Killgore at (817) 560-3300 ext. 257.

Ministry with gay, lesbian Catholics announces holiday schedule

The regular monthly meeting of The Fort Worth Diocesan Ministry With Lesbian and Gay Catholics, Other Sexual Minorities, and Their Families will be held Thursday, Jan. 28, at 7 p.m. at the Catholic Renewal Service at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10, at the Catholic Renewal Center Chapel, 4503 Bridge Street, Fort Worth. A pot-luck dinner will follow. Meat will be provided. The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, Jan. 28, at 7 p.m. at the Catholic Renewal Center. For more information, contact Father Warren Murphy, TOR, at (817) 927-5838, or Sister Rose at (817) 529-7370.

Courage group meets twice monthly

Courage Digital, a spiritual support group for Catholics striving to live chaste lives according to the Catholic Church’s teachings on homosexuality, meets the second and fourth Friday evenings of each month. For more information, e-mail to CourageDFW@Catholic.org or call (972) 538-5453.

Mount Carmel Center to offer series on theology of revelation

Mount Carmel Center, 4600 W. Davis St., Dallas, will offer a two-part series, “Det Verbum: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” presented by Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD. Part one of the conference will be offered Jan. 16, will examine the theology of revelation as presented in the first half of the Vatican Council’s document (Chapters 1-3). Part two of the conference will be offered Jan. 23, will examine the theology of revelation in the second half of the Vatican Council’s document (Chapters 3-6). Both sessions will be held from 10 a.m. to noon.

For more information, contact the center at (214) 531-6224 or visit the Web site at www.mountcarmelcenter.com.

UTA Catholic Community to sponsor respect life art competition

The University Catholic Community at UTA is sponsoring a winter art competition entitled, “Amor Vitae: Love of Life in April.” Entries will be judged based on quality and the artists’ presentation of how they depict the Culture of Life, a respect for all forms of life that opposes abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, human cloning, stem cell research, contraception, and embryonic stem cell research. This show is open to high school juniors and seniors and under-graduate college students. There is a $5 entry fee for each piece submitted.

To receive an application, call the University Catholic Center at (817) 460-1155. For more information check the Web site at www.utacatholics.org or look for the “Respect Life Art show” group. Additional information may also be obtained by contacting Stephanie Milligan at the University Catholic Center at smilligan@fwdioc.org or Matt Redden at matt@fwdioc.org.

Social Media

The University Catholic Community at UTA is sponsoring a winter art competition entitled, “Amor Vitae: Love of Life in April.” Entries will be judged based on quality and the artists’ presentation of how they depict the Culture of Life, a respect for all forms of life that opposes abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, human cloning, stem cell research, contraception, and embryonic stem cell research. This show is open to high school juniors and seniors and under-graduate college students. There is a $5 entry fee for each piece submitted.

To receive an application, call the University Catholic Center at (817) 460-1155. For more information check the Web site at www.utacatholics.org or look for the “Respect Life Art show” group. Additional information may also be obtained by contacting Stephanie Milligan at the University Catholic Center at smilligan@fwdioc.org or Matt Redden at matt@fwdioc.org.
Why Catholic? participants finish first 6-week session, look forward to remainder of program

By Nicki Prevou
Editorial Assistant

Bill Peters isn’t reticent about sharing his hope for what the Why Catholic? program can do for his beloved parish, St. Bartholomew Church in Southwest Fort Worth.

“Our primary goal for Why Catholic? is that it will help us to build community within the parish,” says Peters, who with his wife, Barbara, serves as coordinator of Why Catholic? sessions at St. Bartholomew. “Those of us who were fortunate enough to experience the RENEW program all those years ago wanted to revitalize the concept of share groups within the parish. We want people who attend one Mass regularly to know people who attend the other Masses. We want everyone to get out of their comfort zone and meet new people and get more involved.”

More than 700 St. Bartholomew parishioners participated in Why Catholic? small groups in both English and Spanish this fall. Peters added, noting that many parents of children in religious education programs attended Why Catholic? sessions held at the church each week while their children were in class.

“The materials are excellent, and we have had so many people saying, ‘My group is great, and we’ve gotten to know each other so much better,’” he adds. “We’ve also had several of our groups volunteer to take care of families in need this Christmas, especially families that have been affected by domestic violence. This program is a good way of reinforcing the message, ‘If you’re going to say you’re a Christian, then walk the walk, and get involved in service.’”

Anthony Roffini, coordinator of Why Catholic? sessions at St. Rose of Lima Church in Glen Rose, has also seen positive results from the program, he says. “We’re a small rural parish, so I was pleased to have two good groups complete the first six weeks of sessions,” notes Roffini. “It’s been great to see the response. People did not want another Bible study; they wanted something like this, with good discussion and sharing. No matter how much you know about the Church and its teachings, you can’t help but learn something from these sessions. I know that I’ve looked forward to going each week.”

Carla Gonzales was a facilitator for Why Catholic? at St. Patrick Catholic Parish wrote recently to the NTC about her experience just after her small group’s first meeting in her home. “Father Richard Flores, rector of St. Patrick’s Cathedral did a fantastic job, in getting the word out about the program,” she wrote, “and more than 10 percent of the parish signed up.”

“At our first session, I was glad to hear the reasons many joined the Why Catholic? program,” she wrote. “Some were there to learn more about their faith so they could pass [it] on to their children. Others were there to study the faith through the Catechism,” and some, she wrote, were using the Catechism as a reference for the first time and discovering the wonders of both the United States Catechism for Catholic Adults and the CCC while still others wanted to “get to know” the parishioner they sit by every Sunday. Father Carmen Mele, OP, diocesan coordinator of the Why Catholic? program, says that he has received completed evaluations from most of the 55 parishes that offered Why Catholic? sessions this fall. “I’ve been very pleased by the positive response,” he says. “Our parishioners are saying that Why Catholic? helps us to better understand and appreciate our Catholic faith, and that’s very satisfying to hear.”

Bishop Kevin Vann’s commitment and support for Why Catholic? have been invaluable, adds Fr. Mele. “He is extremely inclusive, and it was very important to him that we reach out to the different cultural groups of the diocese to make the program accessible to everyone. I know that has made a difference to our pastors, and strengthened their own commitment to getting parishioners involved in this way.”

Materials in Spanish, English, and Vietnamese have been provided to groups throughout the diocese, says Fr. Mele.

Christina Hoang, who with her husband, Deacon Michael Hoang, attended Why Catholic? sessions offered in the Vietnamese language at Our Lady of Fatima Church in East Fort Worth, says that the three groups of parishioners who attend the sessions have become gradually more comfortable with the faith-sharing format over the six weeks of meetings.

Some of our members are very reserved, and not used to this kind of program, but people are finding out how good it is to just learn and talk together,” she reflects. “It’s enriching for everyone, and it has given people an opportunity to open up and just talk about their Catholic faith. I know people are looking forward to our next sessions. I think they will be offered again during Lent.”

Program encourages participants to open up in small groups

Why Catholic? Journey Through the Catechism is a ministry of RENEW International, a Catholic organization based in Plainfield, New Jersey, and an adult faith formation process based on Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. According to RENEW International officials, the four-year, 48-session process encourages learning in a prayerful, small community setting. Small group sessions are held in churches and in private homes.

Over 7,000 Catholics within the Diocese of Fort Worth are involved in this program, with the encouragement of Bishop Kevin Vann, marking the 40th anniversary of the diocese through participation in Why Catholic?, a program that is partially funded by the All Things Possible capital campaign. According to the program’s diocesan coordinator, Father Carmen Mele, OP, participating parishes have now completed the first sessions of the program’s four books, The Profession of Faith: What We Believe.

Additional sessions will be offered in parishes over the next three and a half years, with sessions based on topics such as the sacraments, integrating faith in daily life, social justice, and prayer.

For more information about how to participate in Why Catholic? in your parish community, contact your parish office, or call Fr. Carmen Mele, OP, at the diocesan office at (817) 560-2452, ext.262.
Diocesan Young Adult Ministry plans first ‘Justice Rocks’ social justice conference Jan. 23

By Michele Baker
Correspondent

On Saturday, Jan. 23 the Service and Justice Team of the Young Adult Council will host “Justice Rocks,” a social justice conference for young adults. The day-long bilingual event will take place at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington beginning at 11 a.m. and will include group breakout sessions, exhibition booths for community service organizations, and an evening concert.

“This event is about Catholic Social Teaching,” said organizer Brittany Caldwell of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Fort Worth. “The Service and Justice Team of the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, CEO of Catholic Charities of Fort Worth. Major talks of Justice Rocks will be in English, but simultaneous translation with headsets will be available. Couple of breakout sessions will be in Spanish.

Austin-based folk singer/songwriter Grace Pettis will perform a concert from 8 to 9 p.m., followed by Christian band Soundwave from 9 to 10 p.m. Tejano band, Juntos con Cristo or JCC will be playing in another room from 8 to 10 p.m.

“I think the exciting part of this is that Brittany Caldwell came up with this herself,” said Kevin Prevou, director of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries for the Diocese of Fort Worth. “She got onto this notion of having a social justice conference. At first I thought there was no way that could happen at this stage in the council’s development, but Brittany stayed with it. She took on everything from making budget proposals to enlisting the help of other team members to come up with the name ‘Justice Rocks.’”

Prevou added that the Young Adult Council has been meeting for almost two years, and its purpose is to be the vehicle to help Young Adult Ministries grow in the diocese.

“At the heart of YAM was to figure out an organizational model to facilitate that plan. At present very few parishes have ministry programs geared specifically to young adults,” Prevou said. “Our desire is to bring together young adults from the various parishes throughout the diocese by offering programs designed to engage young adult Catholics. “Justice Rocks promises to be a great day of faith and fellowship,” said Prevou. “Hopefully, people will come away with a better idea of why the Church puts so much focus on social justice.”

All adults between the ages of 18 and 35 are invited to attend “Justice Rocks.” Registration is $25 ($35 after Jan. 4) and includes lunch, dinner, conference, and concert. Participants may register online at www.fwyam.org/justicerocks or contact the office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministries at (817) 560-2452, ext. 261.

Keepsakes Catholic Books & Gifts
Christmas Sale
10 to 50% off selected items
2304 W. Park Row, Suite 20
Arlington, TX 76013
(817) 275-3727

Donate That Vehicle!
Toll Free 1-888-317-7837
Have title in hand when you call

• Tax Deductible
• Trucks, SUV’s, Cars & Vans
• Free Vehicle Pickup
• Most Running & Non-Running Vehicles Accepted

Society of St. Vincent dePaul Vehicle Donation Program
Proceeds benefit needy throughout North Texas

SPECIAL PILGRIMAGE TOURS FROM DFW FOR 2010
•SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION/STEPS OF ST. PAUL
•HOLYLAND/MT. SINAI - Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Dead Sea, St. Catherine’s Monastery - April 15 - 26 - $2,699 - 12 days
•Holyland without Mt Sinai - April 15 – 23 - $2,199 - 9 days

Prices - per person dbl. occ. incl. air/taxes DFW, breakfast/dinner, 1st class hotels + pvt. facilities, priest, local escort, coach/driver.
•NORWEGIAN FJORDS/COASTAL CRUISE - FROM $2,699
12 day cruise + all meals, air, taxes, transfers - Sept 20–Oct 3, 2010
Above programs personally escorted by Michael and Sue Menof CALL GOLDEN WORLD TOURS – Tel: 972-934-9635 for details
Catholic Charities announces homeless prevention program

By Nicki Prevou
Editorial Assistant

Catholic Charities Diocese of Fort Worth, Inc. has announced that a new homeless prevention program has been established, with the goal of expanding service to families in need throughout a 26-county region in North Texas.

“In a time when most people are tightening their purse strings, Catholic Charities Diocese of Fort Worth, Inc., has seen an increase in the number of families in need, with many coming to the agency’s doors for the first time,” said Sara Ramirez, Catholic Charities vice president of development and public relations, noting that the agency is now serving an increasing number of unemployed clients who are experiencing financial crisis because of a lack of income and adequate health care.

The new homeless prevention program will significantly expand services outside of Tarrant County, said Ramirez, adding that the agency will now serve 26 of 28 counties in the diocese, including Tarrant, Denton, Cooke, Wise, Johnson, Parker, Palo Pinto, Erath, Hood, Somervell, Comanche, Eastland, Stephens, Shackelford, Jack, Young, Throckmorton, Montague, Clay, Archer, Baylor, Knox, Wichita, Wilbarger, Foard and Hardeman.

The homeless prevention program will provide rental and utility payment assistance, security deposits, case management, and credit counseling. The Fort Worth agency is partnering with local parishes and organizations to create office space in the counties where Catholic Charities is offering these services for the first time, said Ramirez.

In addition to providing services to those at risk of homelessness, Catholic Charities will also lead efforts to establish homeless prevention councils in each of the areas served, with the goal of bringing community organizations together to coordinate service to the homeless and those at risk of losing their homes.

“Nationally, Catholic Charities USA has established the goal of cutting poverty in half by 2020; the agency feels that these new efforts will help contribute to the accomplishment of this important goal,” concluded Ramirez.

Individuals in need of assistance may contact Catholic Charities’ Central Intake program at (817) 534-0814 for more information, and for access to the screening process for the program.

Catholic Charities seeks archival items centennial anniversary

By Nicki Prevou
Editorial Assistant

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Fort Worth, will celebrate the organization’s centennial anniversary of service to North Texas in 2010.

“In just a few short months we will be celebrating our 100th birthday in serving this community and we are working on collecting and making从这个日期记得到来 possible,” said Sara Ramirez, Catholic Charities vice president of development and public relations. “We are currently working on putting together a Catholic Charities history book, as well as highlighting our history for all to see in our new facility, located in South Fort Worth at 201 Thornhill Road, is scheduled to be completed in early 2010.

“Although we have some records from our past, we are actively seeking pictures, articles, and items that reflect our rich history,” added Ramirez. “If you or someone you know has a past connection with Catholic Charities we would love to get copies of pictures or items (ranging from 1910 to 2010) so that we can add them to our collection.

To loan or donate archival items, contact Rachel Wilkes at (817) 413-3916 or at rwilkes@ccdofw.org.

Diocese of Fort Worth commits to dialogue with Anglican diocese

Bishop Kevin Vann and Fort Worth Anglican Bishop Jack Iker, along with a group of Catholic and Anglican priests, have begun meeting regularly as part of the Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue.

The group has committed to meet regularly, in the words of Bishop Vann in an interview Dec. 2, “We’ve been looking at things we have in common.” He said that as part of that process of looking at the things shared, “We will be reviewing the Apostolic Constitution, using that as a vehicle for dialogue.”

Bishop Iker in an interview Dec. 3 said “I’ve been grateful for the warm personal friendship Bishop Vann and I have developed since he’s been the bishop here. We both wanted to extend that friendly relationship among the clergy and laity of the two dioceses,” he said. “We share a common mission,” said Bishop Iker, “which calls us to work for deeper unity among all Christians.”

Catholic priests involved in the dialogue include Father Jonathan Wallis, associate pastor of St. Matthew Church in Arlington, Father Jeff Poirot, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Mineral Wells, Monsignor Charles King, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Denton, and Father David Bristow, pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Fort Worth.

Diocesan

TRIDENTINE MASS

LATIN MASS

ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION CHURCH

509 W. MAGNOLIA, FORT WORTH

HIGH MASS SECOND AND FOURTH SUNSAYS

LOW MASS FIRST AND THIRD SUNSAYS

The Margaret Roper School

at the College of St. Thomas More

conveniently located adjacent to TCU

Grades 9 - 12

For information, call John Heitzenrater at (817) 923-8459

What do you want?

Discover desires of the heart, yours and the Lord’s

• SILENT RETREATS
• RETREAT WORKSHOPS
• EVENINGS & SATURDAYS OF THE CAMPION SPIRITUALITY CENTER

MONTSERRAT RETREAT HOUSE

Register Today!

phone: 940-321-6020

or online at MONTSERRATRETREAT.ORG

Visit our website for complete calendar and info

También podemos desarrollar programas en español

What do you want?
Missionary image of Our Lady of Guadalupe visits multiple locations in diocease

Story and Photos by Juan Guajardo Correspondent

Ralph Lira was having a bad day at work. But a visitor, traveling by FedEx, arrived at his home that afternoon and made his day.

“She came at three o’clock at the Divine Mercy hour,” Lira said. “Exactly, right on the money at three o’clock, I mean the Chaplet of Divine Mercy was starting to play on the radio — amazing.”

That visitor was a life-size missionary image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The image of Our Lady, which miraculously appeared on St. Juan Diego’s tilma (a rough, woven cloth) in 1531 in response to first bishop of Mexico Juan Zumárraga’s request for proof that the Virgin had visited Juan Diego, as he had asserted to him. That miraculous image helped convert an estimated 9 million Aztecs to Catholicism. It’s now venerated by an average of 10 million pilgrims yearly at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.

For one week, the missionary image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, under the care of a team of local parishioners known as the guardian team, visited various locations in Denton and finished the week with a Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral. Lira helped coordinate and gather the guardian team.

While not the 477-year-old original, the missionary image is a stunning, detail-rich digital replica measuring four feet by six feet. This replica has been blessed by Monsignor Diego Monroy, rector of the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City and has been touched to the original image. The missionary image that visited the diocese is one of eight in the world and one of only four traveling throughout the U.S.

Several faithful believe the missionary image has performed miracles.

“What makes something attractive? I think it is obviously the story,” Father Tim Thompson, pastor of St. Mark said. “There are lots of images of Mary, and a lot of them are beautiful images. I think this is a beautiful image, but it is the story that is connected to it, the reaching out to the forgotten, the whole transformation of the American scene by her presence.”

Editor’s Note: Pope John Paul II promulgated the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a feast day for all of the Americas in January 1999, also referring to her as the Star of the First and New Evangelization. Since Mary is depicted as being with child in the image, she is also known widely as the Patroness of the Unborn.

A family venerates the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe before Mass at St. Mark. The Missionary image of Our Lady of Guadalupe visited St. Mark Parish in Denton on Friday Nov. 20 and stayed there for all weekend Masses. The Missionary image was blessed by the Monsignor Diego Monroy, rector of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico and then touched to the original image. There are only eight exact digital replicas and only four are in the U.S.

* * *

Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations throughout the diocease

ST. PATRICK CATHEDRAL, 1206 THROCKMORTON ST., DOWNTOWN FORT WORTH — 2ND CONSECUTIVE DIOCESAN CELEBRATION

5 a.m.: “Mañanitas” serenade in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Matachines from St. Peter the Apostle Church will pay homage to Our Lady with traditional sacred dances.

6 a.m.: Bishop Kevin Vann will preside at the bilingual Mass; Father Richard Flores, rector of the cathedral, will concelebrate as Mariachi Estampa de Mexico leads the congregation in song and local dance groups Ballet Folklórico de Fort Worth and Danza de Guadalupe perform special dances in honor of the Blessed Mother during the offertory.

Following the liturgy, an outdoor reception will be held and will include Mexican sweet bread, hot coffee and chocolate, and musical performances.

5 p.m.: The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, having been carried in a procession from the St. Patrick driveway on Throckmorton Street in a horse-drawn carriage, will be brought into the cathedral and moved to a place of honor.

6 p.m.: A live re-enactment of the Apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to St. Juan Diego at Tepeyac.

7 p.m. Bilingual Mass will be offered with a reception following. Free hot coffee, hot Mexican chocolate and pan dulce (Mexican sweet bread), provided by Esperanza’s Café and Restaurant will be served.

ST. ANN CHURCH, 100 SW ALSBERY RD., BURLESON

7 a.m.: Matachines, dancers, featuring Los Danzantes Guadalupanos de Santa Ana. A procession and a reenactment of Our Lady’s apparition to St. Juan Diego are going to be part of the festivities. Holy Mass will follow with Mariachi for the traditional Mañanitas.

ST. GEORGE CHURCH, 3500 MAURICE ST., FORT WORTH

7:30 p.m.: A Mass will include a reenactment of the apparition of Our Lady and a procession of Our Lady for the celebration with the Matachines’ dance.

After Mass, Father Thu Nguyen will dedicate a recently renovated room inside the church that features a full-length, hand-painted mural of St. Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe at dawn in the mountains of Mexico. Mariachi, Matachines’ dances, Mexican food and festivities will culminate the event. All are invited to attend.

For more information about the OLG Mass and dedication, contact Fr. Thu Nguyen at tnguyen@charterinternet.com or call (817) 831-4404.
The organ needs about a month and the new organ was played during a Mass celebrated by Bishop Kevin Vann, he played a brand new $1 million pipe organ donated by an anonymous family at Arlington’s St. Maria Goretti Church.

“We saw how fortuitous it would be in the plan of God. It would be put off until it was the feast of Christ the King,” Fr. Gigliotti said. “Organ music is called the king of music in the Catholic Church. All instruments give glory to God,” said Fr. Gigliotti, whenever they’re played with loving reverence, tastefully, and aesthetically, “but the organ in our tradition, since the seventh century, has always been the premier instrument for giving glory to God.”

“His holiness, reputation for miracles, and his fame as a confessor brought hordes of visitors to see the obscure and humble cook. He died at the convent, was canonized in 1807, and is the patron of Blacks in the United States.”

Story and Photos by Juan Guajardo

Correspondent

For years organist Todd Hughes played an old electronic organ prone to growing, rattling, and making distorted sounds. But last week, during a Mass celebrated by Bishop Kevin Vann, he played a brand new $1 million pipe organ donated by an anonymous family at Arlington’s St. Maria Goretti Church.

“We saw how fortuitous it would be in the plan of God. It would be put off until it was the feast of Christ the King,” Fr. Gigliotti said. “Organ music is called the king of music in the Catholic Church. All instruments give glory to God,” said Fr. Gigliotti, whenever they’re played with loving reverence, tastefully, and aesthetically, “but the organ in our tradition, since the seventh century, has always been the premier instrument for giving glory to God.”

Fr. Gigliotti says the organ is just one sign of the influence adoration has had on his parish community.

The new organ stretches across the entire back wall of the choral terrace and houses a staggering 60 ranks of pipes holding 3400 pipes overall. It has two divisions: the gallery division, which sits in the choral loft and the chancel division, which rests behind the main altar grate. The chancel division contains the pontifical trumpets — a unique feature often seen in grand basilicas. The organ has four sets of keyboards as well.

“It’s magnificent. I don’t believe that building has ever heard such sounds,” Hughes said. “There are tons of wonderful soft sounds, lyric [sounds] and beautiful flutes and strings and reeds, which are the festival trumpets which can overwhelm and inspire people to sing. It does have a purpose besides just being beautiful to look at.”

Organ-playing requires lots of mental focus, familiarity with the keyboards and quick footwork for certain notes. The need for coordination between the organist, priest, and choir adds to the complexity of the instrument, Hughes said. Hughes, St. Maria’s organist for the past 12 years, is excited about getting to know the instrument better and playing it at many more Masses.

Bishop Kevin Vann said a blessing over the organ on Sunday while Father Michael Ciski, TOR, sprinkled it with holy water.

During the homily Bishop Vann said the organ would be beneficial to the parish.

“The gift of music helps us praise God,” Bishop Vann said. “It helps us to raise our hearts, minds, and thoughts to God.”

By Michael Demma

Contributing Writer

On Thanksgiving morning 30 volunteers from Diocese of Fort Worth parishes joined Bishop Kevin Vann, Father Michael Kmiotek, CFR, and the rest of the community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal serving smiles, hot coffee, pastries, and fruit to approximately 300 homeless of Fort Worth. The event took place at Unity Park near Lancaster.

The regular St. Benedict the Black volunteer hosted the event with other churches joining in serving and providing food. Other Christian churches and organizations helping included: Feed by Grace, U Turn, The Cowboy Church, and Webb Chapel Methodist. Volunteers provided fruit and pastries.

For some volunteers, the highlight of the day was visiting with the men and women, sharing smiles and stories, and seeing Jesus in their brothers and sisters.

Guests commented to Bishop Vann and Fr. Michael that St. Benedict’s is a place of calm, peace, and friendship, an alternative to standing in lines.

One homeless guest remarked to a volunteer on Thanksgiving, “The word is on the street that St. Benedict’s is a special place. You don’t know what peace you have brought to this area. Please never stop coming.”

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal opened St. Benedict the Black Mission with support from Bishop Vann and diocesan staff. Brother John Mary, CFR, heads the mission and the volunteer team serving dignity, love, and food every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Evangelization comes in the form of praying the “Angelus” with the homeless guests, and distributing Catholic literature and rosaries.

St. Benedict’s Mission has been a beacon of Catholicism among the homeless in Fort Worth. According to Catholic Online, St. Benedict the Black was born a slave near Messina, Italy, but was later freed by his master, becoming a hermit. When Pope Pius IV disbanded communities of solitaries, he became a Franciscan lay brother and cook at St. Mary’s convent near Palermo.

“He was appointed, against his will, superior of the convent when it was officialized and his name was printed in newspapers. After serving as superior, he became novice master but asked to be relieved of this post and return to his former position of cook. His holiness, reputation for miracles, and his fame as a confessor brought hordes of visitors to see the obscure and humble cook. He died at the convent, was canonized in 1807, and is the patron of Blacks in the United States.”

St. Mary’s convent near Palermo.”

He was appointed, against his will, superior of the convent when it was officialized and his name was printed in newspapers. After serving as superior, he became novice master but asked to be relieved of this post and return to his former position of cook. His holiness, reputation for miracles, and his fame as a confessor brought hordes of visitors to see the obscure and humble cook. He died at the convent, was canonized in 1807, and is the patron of Blacks in the United States.”

St. John Mary is collaborating with the neighborhood association and other Christian organizations to ensure the dignity of the homeless is not reduced to just serving food but rather showing the love that each human being deserves as God’s children. Other Christians who want to serve the poor in a calm and dignified manner can share the Unity Park facility.

LEFT: The choir sings during the 1 p.m. Sunday Mass. They were accompanied by the new pipe organ for the first time.

AFTER: St. Maria Goretti Parish organist Todd Hughes plays the organ on the first weekend, a Mass was played during a Mass. Hughes has been the organist there for 12 years. An anonymous family donated a $1 million organ to St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington. Bishop Vann blessed the organ as Fr. Michael Ciski, TOR, sprinkled it with holy water.
Faith is our response to revelation and leads to an intimate relationship with God

By Lucas Pollice

As we continue our journey through Why Catholic? and begin the season of Advent, it is very fitting that we now take a deeper look at the meaning and importance of faith. Faith is our response to what God reveals. It is not merely the intellectual assent to a revealed truth which we cannot fully understand; it is the full submission and surrendering of our whole self, our intellect and will, to all that He reveals to us.

Faith is at the very foundation of the Christian life because it is our response to the invitation of our Creator to have communion with Him. It is through faith that we completely open ourselves to Him and come into relationship with Him.

Man’s Search for God

Man is created by God in order to be in his presence and be filled with his life. When He created Adam, He “blew into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7). This breath of life is divine life, an intimate union and sharing of life in God. It is our very nature as human beings to desire God and to be in communion with Him. This is what is meant when the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “man is by nature a religious being” (see CCC, 28).

We all have a “God-sized” hole in our hearts, which only He can fill. We long to answer the questions of life, and fill our emptiness with truth, to have fullness of life. St. Augustine realized this profound truth about human nature when He beautifully wrote, “You made me O God to live forever in your love; my heart will not rest until it rests in you.”

Because man’s reason is darkened by sin, and because we are finite, physical creatures, we can come to know God only in a very limited sense and only through what He has created. This is why so many expressions of religious belief worshipped nature.

However, God loved us so much and desired to once again have communion with us, He unfolded his loving plan of salvation in which He chose to reveal Himself to man. He did this first, through his gradual revelation of Himself to his chosen people as seen in the Old Testament, and then, in the fullness of time, He completely revealed Himself to us through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the perfect man who completely reveals man to himself and once again offers to all people that union with God for which all men have been searching throughout history. That union with the transcendent, the divine, is what fulfills man’s nature and gives life its ultimate meaning. “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Faith: Our Response to God

Faith is our response to this gift of revelation that God freely offers to us through Christ. It is not just a mere intellectual activity, or simply accepting something as true that cannot be “proven.” Rather, it is the complete submission of our intellect and will to God who reveals Himself and offers salvation to us. It is an offering up to our Creator, a renouncing open of our hearts and minds to Him so that we may fully receive all that He desires to give us.

Our response to Him in complete submission is called the “obedience of faith.” We hear and see what He has spoken to us, done for us and asks of us, and we accept it with our whole minds and hearts so that God’s salvation may be accomplished in us. Vatican II teaches us this full meaning of faith:

“The obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26; see 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) “is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,” and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him.

— DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON DIVINE REVELATION, 5

Responding to faith does involve our intellect; it is the assenting of our minds to revealed truths that we cannot yet fully know in this life. But God does not just want us to know Him intellectually; He wants us to live in Him and know Him intimately! Therefore, a complete response of faith also involves the submission of our wills, a surrendering of all that we are and all that we do. Through our obedience of faith, God can transform us, heal us, and use us as his instruments, so that we can fully experience and participate in his life.

It is vital for us to remember that faith is the full submission of ourselves to that which we believe. It goes beyond mere intellectual belief in the fact that it is an act of intellect and will, requiring our whole reason, our heart, our thoughts, and our actions.

The Life-long Journey of Faith

Faith is an ongoing process, not just a one-time event of “coming to faith” or receiving Christ for the first time. Our hearts and minds must be open to God and his salvation each and every day, so that He will be able to accomplish his work within us. Faith is the beginning of eternal life that will be fulfilled when we one day enjoy the fullness of God’s presence in heaven. This openness, this “obedience of faith” to all that God has revealed to us through Christ is the disposition we ought to have throughout our lives. Life, for man, is a journey of faith and ongoing conversion in which we turn away from sin and toward God. We come to know that transcendent God who draws us into relationship with Himself through a continuous renouncing open of our hearts and minds to Him and all that He desires for us and desires to give us.

Therefore, through the obedience of faith, the complete submission of our hearts and minds to God, we completely surrender and open ourselves to his revelation so that we may become holy and pleasing in his sight and accomplish his works. It is a total submission; it is holding nothing back. We give Him our reason, our intellect, our will, who we are, and what we do; and we allow Him to guide us and to help us to live the way that He wants us to live. This surrendering allows God to penetrate our life, our entire being, so that we may be transformed and become holy, allowing Christ to work in and through us so that we may share in his very life. “It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

May we, during this Advent season, not only recognize this gift of faith in our lives, but also more fully surrender ourselves to Christ so that we may be an even brighter light of faith to a world that very much needs the hope and light of Christ.

Lucas Pollice is director of Catechesis and Adult Faith Formation and RCIA for the diocese. Lucas holds a degree in theology from the Franciscan University of Steubenville and has a master’s degree in theological studies from the Institute for Pastoral Theology at Ave Maria University. He is an adjunct professor of theology with the Cardinal Newman Institute in Fort Worth. Lucas and his wife, Mary, have five children, Cecilia, Nicholas, Timothy, Christian, and Julia.
When they opened the gift, I imagined their little faces would be confused.

“The money in this envelope is not for you,” my letter to our children, nieces, and nephews began. “It is being sent, in celebration of St. Nicholas Day, so that you may learn, like the Patron Saint of Giving, the true joy that comes when you give to others.”

I’ve been an aunt and mother long enough to know that when kids rank presents, the “HERE’S-SOME-MONEY-YOU-CAN’T-HAVE” gift might put me right up there with relatives who give socks. However, I had been inspired by an unexpected encounter, and sending the unusual present was a risk my husband and I were willing to take.

It was the week before Thanksgiving, in a crowded grocery store, where I was looking (as always) for the shortest checkout line. Happily, I spotted a young woman, with two small children, who did not have much in her basket. “Lucky me,” I thought, excitedly, as I zoomed in behind her. “I’ll be out of here in no time!” Quickly I began unloading my (very full) basket of turkey, vegetables, pies, and other treats when I noticed a slow-down. The young lady before me was counting out her money and searching through her pockets. The tired cashier said politely, “Do you think you have any coupons?” I stopped unloading and sighed — so much for the short line.

The young lady looked through her purse, and then again, through her pockets. (How valuable could the coupons be?) I continued waiting (a bit impatiently) as she carefully counted out her dollars and sighed, “Thank you. May you continue to be blessed!” The cashier said, as she squeezed my hand and handed me my receipt. I walked slowly back to my car, thankful that God had placed me in that particular check out line behind that particular person. How truly wonderful it felt to be a tiny part of God’s plan! Eight dollars. I was stunned at how such a small amount of money could make a difference.

The experience was powerful, and in the days that followed, my husband and I decided that we wanted the youngest members of our extended family to experience a similar joy.

So in early December, in celebration of St. Nicholas Day, envelopes containing money for others are sent. In the flurry of twinkling lights, decorated toy aisles, and slick television ads for the latest electronics — we send simple instructions and a small amount of cash. We have been surprised to learn of all the creative and thoughtful ways that the young people on our family tree spend “their gift.” St. Nicholas, who spent his life helping others, I hope, would be proud.

Kathryn Rhadigan is a professional speaker/trainer and freelance writer. She has served as director of development at Holy Rosary Catholic School in Arlington and as an RCAI Adapted for Teens instructor at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington. She and her husband John have children attending both Nolan and Holy Rosary Catholic Schools.

Finally, she nodded yes. She then reached over and hugged me. The cashier was crying. The young mom was crying. And, of course, I was now crying. It was quite a picture: three strangers hugging and crying in a busy grocery store! “Go on,” I told her. “Take your babies and have a Happy Thanksgiving.”

The young woman walked away, and the cashier (who now seemed as familiar as an old friend) rang up my groceries. “May you continue to be blessed!” the cashier said, as she squeezed my hand and handed me my receipt. I walked slowly back to my car, thankful that God had placed me in that particular check out line behind that particular person. How truly wonderful it felt to be a tiny part of God’s plan! Eight dollars. I was stunned at how such a small amount of money could make a difference.

The experience was powerful, and in the days that followed, my husband and I decided that we wanted the youngest members of our extended family to experience a similar joy.

So in early December, in celebration of St. Nicholas Day, envelopes containing money for others are sent. In the flurry of twinkling lights, decorated toy aisles, and slick television ads for the latest electronics — we send simple instructions and a small amount of cash. We have been surprised to learn of all the creative and thoughtful ways that the young people on our family tree spend “their gift.” St. Nicholas, who spent his life helping others, I hope, would be proud.

Kathryn Rhadigan is a professional speaker/trainer and freelance writer. She has served as director of development at Holy Rosary Catholic School in Arlington and as an RCAI Adapted for Teens instructor at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington. She and her husband John have children attending both Nolan and Holy Rosary Catholic Schools.

I’ve been thinking about A Christmas card for the Pope

Today I saw a Web site that can mail my Christmas card to Pope Benedict.

A quick glance at the Web site surprised me, setting me thinking, and I immediately cocked my head, scratched my chin, and looked up in the air, where, as though I were in a line-drawn comic strip, I saw sketches of two potential Christmas cards. First was a Texan card. My grandchildren and I were pictured on it, dressed in jeans, eating corny dogs at the Fort Worth Stock Show. On a ribbon overlay, in gold text, the card read, “Christmas Greetings to Your Holy Home from Our Western Home.” Nice.

The other card in my mind was locally relevant, and had a spirited theme. It showed purple-clad grandkids with me at a TCU football game: “All We Want for Christmas is a Big 12!”

That idea was fun at first, but the longer I looked at it, seemed less and less practical for Pope Benedict. Who knows, he might not follow college athletics. Sure, he’s a direct descendant of the original “Big 12,” but his “Big 10” is a little different than football’s.

Reluctantly slapping the grin off my face, I told myself this sort of materialistic jest was nowhere near what the Web site had in mind. They weren’t thinking of people sending photos and detailed holiday letters to the Pope.

Imagine him leafing through all those glittery cards, printed with wreaths and snowy fences. Imagine him hearing folksy holiday letters about everyone’s summer vacations, pets, and retired husbands who have recently taken up golf.

But what the Web site suggested was more serious than that. They were proposing cards of support and love to the pontiff. Their advertised card was printed in red script circled with holly, and read, “We offer you our love to the pontiff. Their advertised card was printed in red script circled with holly, and read, “We offer you our constant prayer, unwavering fidelity, and loving obedience, as you continue your apostolic mission as the Vicar of Christ and the successor of Peter.”

This third variation, which was a real Christmas card to the pope, was the best. It was suitable, with a sincere thought. Oddly, however, after my immediate light-hearted view of the card-sending scenario, this real card made me sad.

I wanted to show respect to Pope Benedict. But I didn’t want to send him a mass-produced e-greeting. Subconsciously I seemed to have thought it would feel better to send him a personal card. Maybe even talk to him directly.

See Hamer, p. 22
40 Days of growth, change

Participants witness effects of prayers

Story and Photos by
Juan Guajardo
Correspondent

It’s a cool October night and the streets are silent in front of Planned Parenthood except for the sound of the occasional car driving past or the hushed voices of the handful of individuals praying the Rosary as part of a coordinated international effort to speak out against abortion.

Since 2007, people of all ages and backgrounds have come together for a 40-day prayer-filled campaign called 40 Days for Life. 40 Days is an ecumenical campaign encouraging pro-lifers to pray in front of abortion clinics throughout the country at any hour of the day, making for a 24/7 prayer vigil that’s racked up hundreds of thousands of hours of prayer, Rosaries, and Divine Mercy Chaplets all for the cause of ending abortion.

Fort Worth’s second campaign took place this fall outside the Planned Parenthood clinic at the intersection of Daggett Avenue and Henderson Street near downtown Fort Worth and drew larger participation than last year, according to campaign director Jeff Williams. He estimates at least 600 people came out to pray.

“The people who are going out there to pray, they all get the sense that what they’re doing is making a difference, and they do receive a sense of fulfillment and experience personal growth,” Williams said.

Williams believes the prayers did not go unheeded. He heard of people stopping to show support for the prayer participants. He even heard that a Planned Parenthood employee thanked the people praying. He also received a personal story of a participant who wrote that she witnessed some women turn away from a Planned Parenthood facility. The women, she said, later drove by and thanked the vigil participants.

The prayer vigil also touched the hearts of the countless participants who went out to pray. The campaign gave many an opportunity to experience moments that brought them closer to Christ.

On the Front Lines

Leslie Skero went out to pray whenever she could. She ended up going out to pray on 32 different days, often accompanied by her daughter, Josie. Skero said she felt a call to do more for unborn babies. So after a long day working at her two businesses, Skero, a single mother, would go out and pray for a half hour instead of going home to rest.

“That was a commitment I made and I’m glad I made it,” she said. “It definitely brought me closer to God. It was definitely special. The closest I ever felt to Christ was as I was standing there on the corner of Daggett and Henderson holding the sign that says ‘Pray to end abortion.'”

“For a while I left the Church. I used to be Catholic and pro-abortion believe it or not,” Skero said. “At 23, I was all for abortion believe it or not,” she said. “I had my conversion. My heart changed and I knew abortion was wrong.”

With a greater appreciation for life, Skero found a passion for promoting respect for life. This year, she took up the responsibility of teaching respect for life as a youth life coordinator at St. Peter

A little mira om God

Katrina Pittman went out to pray on several occasions an old pickup with a big thumbs-down flag that read “Every American non-Christian ... exactly what was abortion” with “Pray to end abortion”

Katrina Pittman prays on Saturday morning Oct. 24, at the break of dawn. She was one of only two people out praying at the time. According to Jim Utterback, the other volunteer praying at that hour and a core member of the campaign, Mrs. Pittman would show up every Saturday at the same time to pray.

Robert Simmons and his wife Deborah pray together outside the Planned Parenthood facility on Henderson Street early on Friday morning Oct. 30. They came out often to pray; no matter the weather.

Dozens of people came out to pray on the last day of the 40 Days for Life campaign Nov. 1 in front of the Trinity Valley Planned Parenthood Clinic.

Participants witness effects of prayers

40 Days of growth, change
A stay-at-home mom, pregnant with her third child, she found the solitude helped her in prayer but also felt that providing a public presence might encourage others to join in and support the pro-life movement.

“I know you can pray from home, but I feel that when you’re standing there, you’re really focused on the task of praying to end abortion,” Pittman said. “I was always touched and moved by Pope John Paul II, mostly his words to ‘be not afraid,’ to go out and be a visible presence, and witness the word of Jesus.

This was Pittman’s first year participating in 40 Days for Life, and she was excited yet apprehensive on her first trip to pray outside the clinic. Pittman knew it would be dark and cold. But she didn’t know if people would react harshly, or honk and be rude and distracting.

“The whole experience blends into one long day, but I just think it was very beautiful,” Pittman said. “I was always standing there in the dark praying and one of the most memorable things I remember was when you kind of felt like ‘Wow, I can’t stand here much longer, my back’s hurting or I’m tired, I’m cold,’ and right then the sun would appear like a little miracle from God and kind of warm you up and remind you that it’s a new day, there’s a lot to look forward to, and there’s a lot of hope in people’s faith and in society.”

‘Prayer Can Move Mountains’

Knowing that abortions occur every week at Planned Parenthood on Henderson Street, Tim Schauf just couldn’t sit back and watch. So he went out to pray on five different Saturdays. Some weekends his wife and two children would accompany him.

“My inspiration is just an overwhelming passion for this issue,” Schauf said. “I truly believe that we are in the midst of another holocaust, just like in Germany when people knew that Jewish people were being exterminated, and they didn’t say anything about it. Of course, in Germany at that time you would fear for your life if you tried to speak out against it.

“It’s a very powerful movement,” he said, “and we know that prayer can move mountains, and we know that it is working, and the best way is just to pray and be there and not be confrontational and aggressive.”

Schauf believes the silent prayer is beneficial to the women seeking abortions. Sometimes it helps deter them, but when it doesn’t, the prayer may touch them later in life and help them realize abortion is not a solution. Schauf used to be a sidewalk counselor and has been active in the pro-life movement for a few years. He believes more people are supporting the movement and the quiet approach of prayer.

“We really care about our brothers and sisters. The Bible says we are our brother’s keeper, and we can’t just go about our business when we know innocent children are being killed on the other side of town every day,” Schauf said.
Bishops OK marriage pastoral, ethical directives, liturgy translations

Baltimore (CNS) — The U.S. bishops took their final look at the English translation of the Roman Missal and approved documents on marriage, reproductive technologies, and medically assisted sex abuse being conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a staunch defense of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development against charges that it funds groups that opposed church social or moral teachings.

They passed a $444.5 million budget for the USCCB in 2010 and approved a 3 percent increase in 2011 in the assessment on dioceses to fund the work of the conferences, as priorities and plans and an operational strategy for the next two years.

The bishops made their own an earlier statement by Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago, USCCB president, pledging continued efforts to keep health care legislation abortion-neutral and thanking House members who had supporting those efforts. 

The 15-page document “Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology” says that although the Catholic Church shares the pain of married couples facing infertility problems, some reproductive technologies “are not morally legitimate ways to solve those problems.” It was approved Nov. 17 by a vote of 220-4, with three abstentions. 

Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said the new document would “fill a true pastoral need” among U.S. Catholics for a better understanding of the difference between the Catholic understanding and the secular understanding of human life.

The bishops also overwhelming approved a revision to the directives that guide Catholic health care facilities, clarifying that patients with chronic conditions who are not imminently dying should receive food and water and medically assisted nutrition and hydration for those who cannot take food orally.” says the revised text of the “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services” prepared by the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Doctrine.

“This obligation extends to patients in chronic conditions (e.g., the ‘persistent vegetative state’) who can reasonably be expected to live indefinitely if given such care,” the new text adds.

The bishops spent an hour Nov. 17 hearing and discussing a preliminary report on the John Jay study of the causes and context of clergy sexual abuse of minors.

Researchers Karen Terry and Margaret Smith told the bishops that early findings confirm “a steep decline” in sexual abuse cases after 1985. The findings also show diocesan responses to incidents of sex abuse have changed substantially over a 50-year-period, with an increase in administrative leave for accused abusers and a decrease in the number of accused abusers reinstated.

They also said information they have gathered so far shows no indication that homosexuality increases the chance that a person will be an abuser.

Commissioned by the bishops, the full study is expected to be released in December 2010.

The bishops ended the day with a report from Bishop Roger P. Morin of Biloxi, Mississippi, CCHD subcommittee chairman, who responded to an attack from a coalition of Catholic groups promoting a boycott of this year’s CCHD collection the weekend of Nov. 21-22. The coalition claims some organizations that receive funding are not in line with church teaching.

Bishop Morin called such claims “outrageous” and pledged “our ongoing efforts to ensure that all CCHD funds are used faithfully, effectively, and in accord with Catholic social and moral teaching.”

See BISHOPS, P.15
Cardinal George discusses role of priests, need for unity within church

BALTIMORE — Reflecting on the work under Catholic auspices, Chicago Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called on his fellow bishops to reflect on their relationships with their priests and help them grow in holiness and unite with them around Jesus.

In his Nov. 16 speech opening the bishops’ fall general assembly in Baltimore, Cardinal George also addressed ways of strengthening church unity, particularly with regard to Catholic universities, “to media claiming the right to be a voice in the church,” and to organizations that do various work under Catholic auspices. He also spoke about the challenges of the church being a “leaven for the world’s transformation,” such as in the ongoing national debate about health care reform.

In his traditional presidential address at the beginning of the Nov. 16-19 meeting, the cardinal framed his thoughts on the role of priestly ministry as a part of the Year for Priests proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI in June.

Without a priestly ministry rooted in holy orders, he said, the ministry of teaching about the faith would fall primarily to professors, “whose obligation is first to seek the truth in the framework of their own academic discipline and whose authority to teach derives from their professional expertise.”

Without ordained priests, the “only instance of real governance in any society would be that of civil and political leaders,” Cardinal George continued. While their authority comes from God through the people they have sworn to serve, he noted, that role confers no religious authority and “a civil government has no right to deprive the church of freedom to govern herself by her own laws and under her own leaders.”

Cardinal George also noted that without ordained priests, the role of spiritual counseling would fall to therapists — “dedicated to their clients and skilled in examining the dynamics of human personality, but without consideration of the influence of God’s grace.”

And finally, without ordained priests “the church would be deprived of the Eucharist, and her worship would be centered only on the praise and thanksgiving.”

Meeting Highlights

2009 USCCB fall general assembly

- Accepted the English translations and U.S. adaptations of the final five sections of the Roman Missal.
- Heard reports on the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the Synod of Bishops for Africa, Catholic relief services and a recent survey on religious vocations.
- Approved a document criticizing reproductive technologies.
- Approved a pastoral letter on marriage.
- Viewed the first of several planned videos on protecting and promoting marriage.
- Pledged to continue efforts to keep abortion out of health reform legislation.
- Agreed to a $144.5 million budget for 2010.
- Approved a priority plan and a 380-page operational strategy for the work of the USCCB.
- Heard Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago envision the challenges of a world without priests in his address as USCCB president.
- Heard a preliminary report on the causes and context of clergy sexual abuse of children.
- Selected five new chairman-elect for USCCB committees and board members for CNS and CLANC.
- Approved revised directives for the withdrawal of medically assisted food and water at Catholic health facilities.
- Approved the English translations of the Faith, Nurture Hope, Celebrate Life” and a series of “strategy and operational plans” for offices and departments of the USCCB for the next two years.
- On Nov. 16, the first day of the meeting, the bishops heard a report on health care reform and reaffirmed as a body Cardinal George’s statement expressing the bishops’ commitment to keep health reform legislation in the Senate abortion-neutral.
- A successful effort by USCCB leaders and staff members to press lawmakers to keep abortion out of the House’s Affordable Health Care for America Act provides an example for the future, according to the chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.
- “It was a good example of how we as a conference can work together to have a positive influence on legislation,” said Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York, in a report to his fellow bishops.
- Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York delivered a report on the activities of Catholic Relief Services, which included a four-minute video. He praised CRS, the U.S. bishops’ overseas relief and development agency, for its “life-saving work.”
- The meeting opened Nov. 16 with talks by Cardinal George and Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the Vatican’s nuncio to the United States. Its public sessions ended at midmorning Nov. 18 with a viewing of the first of several planned videos promoting marriage and a report on the state of vocations to the religious life.

Fresh palette: Artists say they’re ready to support church’s mission

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Ask and you shall receive. The art world is ready to collaborate with the church in creating inspirational modern art, said some artists who took part in a landmark meeting with Pope Benedict XVI. After decades of disinterest or suspicion, the rapport between art and religion is ready to be restored. If the church wants art to support its mission, all it has to do is call. “The artist is really at the service of society, but to serve you have to be asked,” said John David Mooney, a sculptor and installation artist from Chicago. Polish film director Krzysztof Zanussi told Vatican Radio that the church has to take the first step in approaching artists “because it’s for sure that artists will never take that step.”

Cardinal George also noted that without ordained priests, the role of spiritual counseling would fall to therapists—“dedicated to their clients and skilled in examining the dynamics of human personality, but without consideration of the influence of God’s grace.”

And finally, without ordained priests “the church would be deprived of the Eucharist, and her worship would be centered only on the praise and thanksgiving.”

Luxury, waste are unacceptable when hunger is on the rise, says pope

ROME — Luxury and waste are unacceptable, especially when hunger — the cruellest form of poverty — continues to rise, Pope Benedict XVI told world leaders at a summit on food security Nov. 16 during the opening session of the United Nations’ World Summit on Food Security.

The pope condemned the greed that fuels speculation on food prices, aid that debilitates agricultural production and exploitation of the earth’s resources. The three-day conference in Rome brought together leaders and delegates from countries around the world to find solutions to end hunger and malnutrition and find ways to stabilize food prices.

The pope said the growing number of hungry people in the world is not directly linked to increased population. There is enough food to feed the world, he said, adding that food shortages are caused by the rising price of foodstuffs, “the reduction in economic resources available to the poorest peoples and their limited access to markets and to food.”

Philippine bishops support new rice strains to help fight hunger

MANILA, Philippines (CNS) — The Philippine bishops’ bioethics office said it supports efforts to develop new rice strains to solve a rice shortage in Asia as long as doing so does not harm the environment. Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi of Caceres told the Asian church news agency UCA News the church will back the introduction of new rice strains if they will help feed more than 1 billion malnourished Asians and Africans. He said Nov. 17 that the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines initially was against genetically modified organisms when the technology was “not yet so well-defined.” The archbishop noted “a gradual evolution” toward acceptance as it became apparent genetically modified organisms offered food safety and security as well as environmental sustainability. The archbishop spoke as more than 700 scientists and agriculturalists discussed new rice strains at the Sixth International Rice Genetics Symposium in Manila Nov. 16-19.

Pope names Notre Dame professor to theological commission

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI has named John C. Cavadini, chairman of the University of Notre Dame’s Department of Theology, to the International Theological Commission. The appointment was announced Nov. 19 by the Vatican. Cavadini also directs Notre Dame’s Institute for Church Life and in September was named co-chairman of the university’s new Task Force on Supporting the Choice for Life. The 30 members of the International Theological Commission conduct research on theological topics and serve as advisers to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.
Pope says contemplation, pursuit of understanding are keys to theology

By Sarah Delaney
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Although there are different approaches to the study of the Scriptures, theology is rooted in contemplation based on faith and the pursuit of understanding, Pope Benedict XVI said at his weekly general audience.

Illustrating the lives and teachings of two 12th-century theologians from the St. Victor monastery in Paris, the pope spoke Nov. 25 about the different ways Christian thinkers have sought truth from the Bible.

Hugh of St. Victor, who was a respected teacher at the abbey until his death in 1141, emphasized the importance of the literal or historical sense of the Scriptures “as the basis of theology’s effort to unite faith and reason in understanding God’s saving plan,” the pope said.

His student, Richard of St. Victor, “stressed the allegorical sense of the Scriptures” as a means to present spiritual teachings to the faithful, the pope said.

Their examples “remind us that theology is grounded in the contemplation born of faith and the pursuit of understanding,” Pope Benedict said.

Hugh was above all a teacher and believed that theology was based on a “loving study” of the Bible, because “to know God, one must begin with that which God himself wished to reveal through the Scriptures,” the pope said.

Hugh also gave particular attention to the sacraments in his treatise “On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith,” the pope said. In it Hugh described a sacrament as a “corporate or material element” that is able to represent “an invisible and spiritual grace,” Pope Benedict explained.

Richard, who came from Scotland and who was prior of the abbey from 1162 until his death in 1173, realized the importance of a literal study of the Bible, “but, unlike his teacher, he favored the symbolic, allegorical sense,” the pope said.

Richard proposed a spiritual path by practicing virtue and learning to “discipline and order feelings and emotions through the use of reason,” the pope said. Once a person has reached equilibrium through a dialogue between faith and reason, he is ready to pursue contemplation, the pope said, explaining Richard’s teachings.

Both of these “outstanding theologians” wrote about and taught the importance of the concept of the Trinity, the pope said. Richard, in his treatise “On the Trinity,” explains that “Father and Son find themselves in an eternal exchange of love, happiness, and goodness, which requires the presence of a third person, the Holy Spirit,” the pope said.

Understanding the Trinity should inspire men and women today in their own human relationships, the pope said.

“Think how the world would change if — in families, in parishes, and in other communities — relationships were made following the example of the three divine persons,” he said.

“Everyone would live not only with others, but for others and in others.”

The pope delivered his talk in the packed Paul VI audience hall.

December 13, Third Sunday of Advent.
Cycle C. Readings:

1) Zephaniah 3:14-18a
Psalm) Isaiah 12:2-6
2) Philippians 4:4-7

Scripture Readings

By Sharon K. Perkins

A couple of years ago, I was able to visit my younger brother in California, and we spent an enjoyable two days touring several vineyards in Napa Valley. As a novice wine taster, I tried different vintages and learned about the primary factors — weather, the quality of the grape crop, and the skill of the winemaker — that make some vintage years better than others.

Historically, I’ve had good years, too — and some that were not so good. Like many people, I can pinpoint certain times in my life that seemed to bring one misfortune or hardship after another. In 12 months’ time during 1994-95, my husband and I both lost our jobs, my childhood home was destroyed by a tornado, and I was debilitated by an acute case of postpartum depression. Caught up in our troubled circumstances, we knew a discouragement that made it difficult to see how God was present or how things would ever get better.

The readings today hold several keys to not only surviving, but thriving, in tough times: prayer, thankfulness, and generosity. In St. Paul’s epistle, he plainly tells us to “rejoice in the Lord always,” and to “have no anxiety at all,” but to offer our prayerful petitions to God with thanksgiving. In the Gospel, John the Baptist tells his expectant hearers to be satisfied with their wages and to share their resources with the needy. These were the preferred means of not only preparing for Christ’s coming, but of recognizing Christ’s presence in their midst.

Looking back now on the trials of 1994-95, I remember well the “crop” of challenging events and the stormy “weather” of our circumstances when it was difficult to maintain a positive attitude and proper perspective. Tough times can indeed bring despair and discouragement. But ultimately, the Lord — the “skilled winemaker” — is able to be present in all our circumstances, filling every year, even in times of adversity, with his grace and peace.

QUESTIONS:

When have you experienced discouragement due to difficult circumstances? In this time of preparing for the Lord’s coming, how can you replace discouragement with gratefulness and joy?

Copyright © 2009, Diocese of Fort Worth
The time grows short until we celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus as an infant. Our waiting in hope is soon to be fulfilled. Many years ago during the season leading to Christmas — a time when, most of us would agree, Christmas is over-commercialized with too much tinsel and artificial snow, too many lights and too little connection to the underlying reason for the season — my wife stood along the upper rail of a mall overcrowded with Christmas shoppers. A wistful look came over her face, and a smile, and she said, “This is the one time of the year when you know that everyone here is thinking about what they can buy for someone else.” Of course, she was right.

Hope is more than a feeling, more than a bit of wishful thinking. It has substance. Some Scripture scholars have described more than 300 Old Testament passages that point to the birth of Jesus. Many of them could not have been interpreted until after their fulfillment. But after the fact, they obviously direct our attention to how Jesus was to come into the world. At least three of them are found in the readings for today.

The Micah reading may be the most stunning of these, speaking as it does of one whose “origin is from of old” coming forth from Bethlehem, one who would “stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the Lord,” whose “greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth,” who “shall be peace.”

Then the psalmist tells the Lord in his hymn of praise and supplication: “Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved. May your help be with the man of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.”

And in the Gospel of Luke, Elizabeth, Mary’s cousin, pregnant with John the Baptist, feels him leap in her womb as Mary approaches carrying the yet to be born Jesus. She says, “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” Mary becomes, even then, before Jesus’ birth, our example in the faith, the first to believe in the son of man.

**QUESTIONS:**

How can you nurture the virtue of hope in your life and the lives of those around you?

---

**Scripture Readings**

December 20, Fourth Sunday of Advent.
Cycle C. Readings:
1) Micah 5:1-4a
   Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
2) Hebrews 10:5-10

By Jeff Hedglen

October 25 of this year on the social networking site Facebook a friend posted this remark: “I need to call an exterminator to get rid of all these humbugs ruining the Christmas mood.” To that I replied: “Christmas? It is not even Advent. Sounds like the Humbugs are sane people who know it is not Christmas yet, no matter what Wal-Mart wants you to believe.” My friend fired back with a comment that really got me thinking.

He said: “Excuse me, Mr. Hedglen, but perhaps you can explain to me why it’s acceptable to appreciate Easter-themed music year-round, and Christmas music during only certain times of the year (which ironically does not include the liturgical season of Christmas, itself)?”

As much as I hated to admit it, my friend was right. Easter-themed music is all over our Mass-music-number-boards and Christian radio stations no matter what month it is, but Christmas music is relegated to the six weeks prior to Dec. 25, and maybe a few days afterward.

When I clicked out of Facebook I started thinking about the implications of what my friend had said, and it dawned on me that Advent is a year-round holiday too. The three comings of Jesus celebrated in Advent — his coming in time to 2000 years ago, his coming in our hearts every day, and his awaited second coming — are present every time we go to Mass.

At Mass we hear the Scriptures proclaimed. These words were written centuries ago, yet they have the power to touch and transform us today. Additionally they are packed with messages to point us to eternity. I am constantly amazed at the emotions these ancient words can evoke and how they can cause such longing for something more real than what this world offers.

We encounter a priesthood that began in Genesis chapter 14 when Melchizedek “brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram” (Genesis 14:18). Our priesthood is also rooted in the Levitical priesthood that offered blood sacrifices for the atonement of sin. These Old Testament embodiments of priesthood continue in our priests today as they offer the sacrifice of the Mass, which is made possible in Jesus the eternal high priest.

Most especially we encounter the three comings of Jesus every time we receive the Eucharist. Jesus offered his Body and Blood at the last supper and on the cross. We receive this same Body and Blood in every eucharistic feast. It is this very same eating of Flesh and Blood that Jesus refers to when he says: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day” (John 6:54).

The reality of Jesus continually coming in the past, present, and future is tied up with the Greek word anamnesis.

If you smell a certain scent or hear a particular song and you are transported in your mind back in time to a specific time and place. The difference here is that it is not we who are transported; rather the event that happened 2,000 years ago is made present again before our eyes.

The advent of Jesus is truly a year-round event, but the Church highlights it in the four weeks prior to the celebration of Jesus’ birth, so that we can more deeply believe the words we say when we proclaim the mystery of our faith: “Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life, Lord Jesus, come in glory.”

Jeff Hedglen, youth minister at St. Bartholomew Parish in Southwest Fort Worth, is the principal organizer of Camp Fort Worth each summer. Readers with questions can contact Jeff at jh@stbarts.info.org.
Informes dicen que el Papa Juan Pablo II más cercano a ser declarado venerable

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — Los cardenales (y obispos) miembros de la Congregación para las causas de los santos votaron unánimemente el 16 de noviembre para recomendar que el Papa Benedicto XVI reconociera formalmente que el Papa Juan Pablo II vivió heroicamente las virtudes cristianas, informaron los periódicos italianos.

El Vaticano no negoció confirmó que la votación ocurrió porque se supone que el proceso sea secreto, hasta que el Papa Benedicto firme el decreto reconociendo la virtud heroica de su precursor y lo declare venerable.

El Papa Benedicto generalmente firma una docena o más decretos tres veces al año: en abril, en junio y en diciembre.

Los miembros de la con- gregación de los santos se reúnen regularmente para estudiar las historias de la vida, el testimonio presencial y otra documentación promoviendo las causas de los santos propuestos. La información es contenida en un positivo, o documento de postura, preparado por el promotor de la causa del individuo. Cuando los cardenales y los obispos están satisfechos que el positivo está completo y demuestra que el candidato a la santidad vivió una vida santa extraordinaria, ellos recomiendan que el Papa firme el primer decreto.

Una vez que el promotor de una causa identifica un milagro potencial atribuido a la intercesión del candidato, la documentación es entregada a la congregación de los santos. Un panel de médicos, un panel de teólogos y los miembros de la congregación a ellos deben recomendar que el Papa firme un segundo decreto reconociendo el milagro.

Cuando los decretos que reconocen las virtudes heroicas y el milagro son firmados, una fecha es fijada para la beatificación del candidato.

Como milagro para la beatificación del Papa Juan Pablo II, el promotor de su causa ha promovido la curación de una monja francesa. Ella fue alegadamente curada de la enfermedad de Parkinson, la misma enfermedad que sufría el Papa Juan Pablo.

USCCB llama ‘una enorme decepción’ proyecto de ley de salud del Senado

WASHINGTON (CNS) — La legislación de reforma médica que ahora está ante el Senado es “una enorme decepción, creando política federal nueva y totalmente inaceptable que pone en peligro la vida humana y los derechos de conciencia”, dijeron los directores de tres comités de la Conferencia Estadounidense de obispos católicos (USCCB) el 20 de noviembre.

La carta esboza los problemas que la USCCB tiene con las cláusulas del proyecto de ley del Senado acerca de protecciones en cuanto al aborto y la conciencia, la cobertura de inmigrantes y el cuidado asequible. 

Se esperaba que el debate comenzara el 30 de noviembre.

La Ley de protección del paciente y cuidado asequible, del Senado, redactada por el líder de la mayoría Harry Reid, de Nevada, partiendo de leglislación aprobada anteriormente en dos comités del Senado, “no satisface ... los criterios morales” esbozados por los obispos, especialmente en el uso de fondos federales de pagar por abortos, dice la carta.

“Aceptamos que es necesario el cambio de ciertos obstáculos en el acceso a los servicios médicos, pero hay un límite a lo que puede ser aceptable, y creemos que este proyecto de ley supera esa meta”, dice la carta.

Los obispos también lamentan que el proyecto de ley del Senado sea una forma de “amenazar el trabajo de milagros” que se proponen con los demás proyectos de la ley.

Los obispos escriben que se oponen a una serie de “disfraces” que buscan hacer a la ley “parecer al menos moderada y razonable”. 

Los obispos apoian el 16 de noviembre, los obispos aprobaron el presupuesto de $144.5 millones para 2010, que representa un aumento de menos de un 0.2 por ciento en comparación con el año 2009, y un 3 por ciento de aumento en la valuación de fondos que las diócesis aporta como apoyo del trabajo de la USCCB.

Aguadentaron un plan de prioridad, titulado Profundiza en la fe, alimenta la esperanza, celebrá la vida y una serie de "estrategia y planes de operaciones" para oficinas y departamentos de la USCCB, proyectados para los próximos dos años.

Los obispos aprueban carta pastoral sobre matrimonio, directivas éticas y traducciones litúrgicas

BALTIMORE (CNS) — Los obispos de Estados Unidos dieron la última revisión a la traducción al inglés del Misal romano y aprobaron documentos sobre el matrimonio, la tecnología reproductiva, y nutrición e hidratación con ayuda médica, durante la asamblea general de otoso que se celebró el 16 al 18 de noviembre en Baltimore.

Los integrantes de la Conferencia de obispos católicos de Estados Unidos, (USCCB, por sus siglos en inglés) terminaron su trabajo público a media mañana del 18 de noviembre, y pasaron el resto del día en sesión ejecutiva. El obispo Michael J. Hoeppner de Crookston, Minnesota, presidiría la oración matinal y la reflexión del 19 de noviembre.

Además de su carta de tres páginas, ellos enviaron a cada senador una hoja de datos disuasiva para refutar "varios malentendidos y reclamos falsos" sobre la enmienda Stupak aprobada en Baltimore, y que aproximadamente alcanzaran la cifra de 300, escucharon también un informe preliminar sobre el documento Causas y estudio en contexto de abuso sexual de clérigos, que dirige el John Jay School of Criminology, y una firme defensa de la Campaña católica de desarrollo humano, en contra de grupos que proveen fondos y se oponen a las enseñanzas sociales o morales de la iglesia.

Los obispos aprobaron un presupuesto de $144.5 millones para 2010, que representa un aumento de menos de un 0.2 por ciento en comparación con el año 2009, y un 3 por ciento de aumento en la valuación de fondos que las diócesis aporta como apoyo del trabajo de la USCCB.

El arzobispo Timothy M. Dolan, de Nueva York, presentó un informe sobre las actividades de Catholic Relief Services (CRS), que incluyó un video de cuatro minutos de duración. El arzobispo albó a CRS — agencia de auxilio y desarrollo a ultramar que depende de los obispos de los Estados Unidos — por su “trabajo de salvar vidas”.

La asamblea se inició el 16 de noviembre con plática del cardenal George, y el arzobispo Pietro Sambi, nuncio del Vaticano ante los Estados Unidos. Las sesiones públicas terminaron a mitad de mañana del 18 de noviembre, con la exhibición del primero de varios videos planeados en los que se promueva el matrimonio, y un informe sobre el estado de las vocaciones para la vida religiosa.

El obispo Placido Rodríguez, de Lubbock, hace anotaciones durante la reunión general de los obispos estadounidenses en Baltimore, el 17 de noviembre. (Foto/ Bob Roller)
El Papa hace petición por derechos de niños migrantes y refugiados

Por Sarah Delaney
Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — El Papa Benedicto XVI pidió a gobiernos y organizaciones internacionales dar atención especial a los derechos de los niños inmigrantes, quienes en muchos casos son víctimas de explotación y abandono.

Los menores de edad obligados a inmigrar por razones de pobreza, violencia o hambre son los más vulnerables, dijo.

El Papa hizo los comentarios en su mensaje anual para el Día mundial del migrante y el refugiado, el cual será celebrado el 17 de noviembre.

El obispo Diego Monroy, de la basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en México, bendijo la imagen misionera y luego hizo que se tocaran el original y la réplica. Solamente hay ocho exactas réplicas digitales, y solo cuatro están en los Estados Unidos. (NTC foto por Juan Guajardo)

Mantenga presentes sus bendiciones durante Adviento, sugiere el Papa

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — Adviento debe ser un tiempo cuando los cristianos mantengan presentes las pequeñas bendiciones que reciben cada día, bendiciones que son muestras del amor de Dios, sugeró el Papa Benedicto XVI.

Adviento. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

Un día de fiesta — y reforzar los derechos de los niños inmigrantes, tales como la educación, el trabajo para enviar dinero a sus familias, así como la protección de los niños migrantes y los refugiados, dijo el Papa el 27 de noviembre.

El Papa hizo los comentarios en su mensaje anual para el Día mundial del migrante y el refugiado, el cual será celebrado el 17 de noviembre.

El obispo Diego Monroy, de la basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en México, bendijo la imagen misionera y luego hizo que se tocaran el original y la réplica. Solamente hay ocho exactas réplicas digitales, y solo cuatro están en los Estados Unidos.

Una familia venera la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe antes de la misa en la parroquia de San Juan Bautista el 20 de noviembre. La imagen misionera de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe tuvo una parada en Denton el viernes, 20 de noviembre, donde se quedó durante todas las misas el fin de semana. El obispo Diego Monroy, de la basilica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, en México, bendijo la imagen misionera y luego hizo que se tocaran el original y la réplica. Solamente hay ocho exactas réplicas digitales, y solo cuatro están en los Estados Unidos. (NTC foto por Juan Guajardo)
Plataforma de comunicación de Jesús es ‘la persona humana’, dice obispo

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (CNS) — Como los padres ya saben, si uno quiere hablar con un adolescente, envíe un mensaje de texto.

Antes de comenzar su homilía durante la Misa de cierre de la Conferencia nacional de la juventud católica el 21 de noviembre, el obispo Jaime Soto de Sacramento, California, sacó su teléfono móvil.


El obispo Soto retó a los adolescentes a conectarse con el arzobispo Roger L. McSpadden, THE LEAVEN (21 de noviembre. (Foto CNS/Susan McSpadden, THE LEAVEN)

Steve Angriano entretiene a jóvenes con música cristiana durante la Conferencia nacional de la juventud católica el 22 de noviembre. (Foto CNS/John Caulfield, CATHOLIC KEY)

Steve Angriano entretiene a jóvenes con música cristiana durante la Conferencia nacional de la juventud católica el 22 de noviembre. (Foto CNS/John Caulfield, CATHOLIC KEY)

“Menos humilde para poder conocerles, conectarse con ustedes y servirles en la caridad y en la verdad. Él es la dirección IP (protocolo de Internet) del camino, de la verdad y de la vida”.

“Este ha sido tradicionalmente la campaña más exitosa en la historia de la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos, la cual es un testimonio de la gratitud de muchos por los servicios que han recibido de las ordenes religiosas”, dice la Hermana Janice Bader, de las Hermanas de la preciosísima sangre, de O’Fallon, Missouri, y directora ejecutiva de la NRRO.

“Me siento continuamente alentada por la afluencia general de los católicos hacia este fondo cada año”, declaró la Hermana Bader. “Incluso en estos tiempos de dificultades económicas, los católicos en toda la nación encuentran formas de devolver su gratitud a los religiosos y religiosas que tanto se sacrificaron por nuestra Iglesia y nuestro mundo”, comentó.

La colecta de 2008 recaudó 28,2 millones de dólares. Desde 1988, los católicos han donado cerca de 500 millones de dólares. La colecta es coordinada por la Hermana Bader. (CNS/Susan McSpadden, THE LEAVEN)

El obispo Jaime Soto de Sacramento, California, se dirige a los jóvenes reunidos para la Conferencia nacional de la juventud católica el 21 de noviembre. (Foto CNS/John Caulfield, CATHOLIC KEY)

La crisis de los fondos de pensión para religiosos se desarrolló a medida que cambiaba la composición demográfica de los institutos religiosos, pues actualmente hay más miembros de mayor edad que jóvenes. El problema se agrava con los elevados costos de la atención de salud, los cuales se han disparado. Hoy día, en los Estados Unidos, hay más de 35,000 religiosas y religiosas y con edades por encima de 70 años, de los cuales más de 5,500 requieren cuidados especializados.

Históricamente, los religiosos y religiosas de edad avanzada trabajaron durante años por salarios muy bajos, que fueron reivindicados en sus ministerios, como escuelas y agencias de servicios sociales. En el pasado, cuando había suficientes miembros jóvenes que se ocupaban de cuidar a los mayores, la jubilación no era una prioridad.

“Se espera que en los próximos 10 a 15 años, el número de religiosos con edades entre 25 y 74 años declinen de manera pronunciada, y que el ingreso de los institutos religiosos sea sustituido por los religiosos y religiosas de edades por encima de 70 años, de los cuales más de 23 millones de dólares permitió a la NRRO distribuir de estos donativos se distribuyen casi inmediatamente para apoyar el cuidado de religiosos y religiosas ancianos.”

La colecta de 2008 permitió a la NRRO distribuir más de 25 millones de dólares a 483 institutos religiosos. Estos fondos ayudaron a los religiosos ancianos, que no pueden aportar a la iglesia ni a sus parroquias. La crisis de los fondos de pensión para religiosos se desarrolló a medida que cambiaba la composición demográfica de los institutos religiosos, pues actualmente hay más miembros de mayor edad que jóvenes. El problema se agrava con los elevados costos de la atención de salud, los cuales se han disparado. Hoy día, en los Estados Unidos, hay más de 35,000 religiosas y religiosas y con edades por encima de 70 años, de los cuales más de 5,500 requieren cuidados especializados.

Históricamente, los religiosos y religiosas de edad avanzada trabajaron durante años por salarios muy bajos, que fueron reivindicados en sus ministerios, como escuelas y agencias de servicios sociales. En el pasado, cuando había suficientes miembros jóvenes que se ocupaban de cuidar a los mayores, la jubilación no era una prioridad.

“Se espera que en los próximos 10 a 15 años, el número de religiosos con edades entre 25 y 74 años decline de manera pronunciada, y que el ingreso de los institutos religiosos sea sustituido por los religiosos y religiosas de edades por encima de 70 años, de los cuales más de 23 millones de dólares permitió a la NRRO distribuir...”
Web site offers resources for celebrating Advent, Christmas seasons

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Suggestions for daily prayer, reading, reflection, and action throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons and other resources are part of a new Web site created by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The site, www.usccb.org/advent, features interactive online calendars with a menu of resources for each day of Advent, which began Nov. 29, and the Christmas season, which ends Jan. 10 with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Featured throughout the calendar are video clips of USCCB members and staff discussing their favorite Old Testament stories, passages, and characters.

The site includes Scripture resources focusing on the Old Testament; recommendations on holiday-themed movies from the USCCB’s Office for Film & Broadcasting; selections from the USCCB publication Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers; and suggestions for remembering the needs of immigrants and the poor throughout Advent and Christmas.

Also available are printable calendars in English and Spanish with ideas for daily family activities to mark the two seasons.

The U.S. Bishops’ Department of Communications created the site with funding from the Catholic Communication Campaign.

Ecumenical pledge to stand together for principles in public square gains support

FROM PAGE 1

Euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any urging purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family.”

When asked by a reporter about the issue of civil disobedience, Archbishop Wuerl said: “We hope it does not come to that.”

Recent news reports have claimed that the Archdiocese of Washington and its social service arm, Catholic Charities, are threatening to stop providing social services if the District of Columbia City Council’s proposed same-sex marriage bill passes.

The archdiocese said it will continue its outreach services, but its work would be significantly limited as the bill offers little protection for religious beliefs and would require Catholic Charities to recognize and promote same-sex marriage in employment policies, and adoption and foster-care policies.

Catholic Charities’ homeless shelter, counseling, and adoption programs are funded with $20 million in government contracts and about $10 million in funds from the archdiocese.

The Catholic Church also has been vocal in supporting health care reform that does not include coverage of abortion.

When asked by a reporter if it would be a sin for a Catholic legislator to vote for health care coverage that included abortion, Cardinal Rigali emphasized the desperate need for health care reform and simply stated that “abortion was out of the question.”

The current health care debate in Congress, and local discussion about same-sex marriage laws, were not as pronounced last summer when the group of religious leaders first met in New York to draft this statement. Some of the signers said although the document could have been written ten years ago or even years from now, it has particular significance right now.

“We see an increase in the threat to human life,” said George, noting that the current administration and Congress have supported abortion measures and also embryonic stem-cell research, an action which he said “ups the ante very much so.”

On life issues, the declaration urges “all elected officials in our country, elected and appointed, to protect and serve every member of our society, including the most marginalized, voiceless, and vulnerable among us.”

In its defense of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, it notes a progressive erosion of the culture of marriage due to infidelity, high divorce rates, and out-of-wedlock births.

The document states that the “impulse to redefine marriage in order to recognize same-sex and multiple-partner relationships is a symptom, rather than the cause, of the erosion of the marriage culture” and it further adds that “no one has a civil right to have a nonmarital relationship treated as a marriage.”

On the issue of religious liberty, the document highlights weakened or eliminated conscience clauses that force “pro-life institutions (including religiously affiliated hospitals and clinics), and pro-life physicians, surgeons, nurses, and other health care professionals, to refuse abortions and, in certain cases, even to perform or participate in abortions.”

It also notes the use of “anti-discrimination statutes to force religious institutions, businesses, and service providers of various sorts to comply with activities they judge to be deeply immoral or go out of business.”

The documents signers urged the public to sign the online version of the document at http://manhattandeclaration.org. As of Dec. 4, the document had more than 250,000 signers, according to the Web site’s counter.

One of the initial signers, Archbishop John C. Nienstedt of St. Paul and Minneapolis, one of 14 Catholic bishops and archbishops among the original signers, described the document as an attempt to “light a fire.”

“Hopefully that fire will catch on and touch the troops in the rank and file,” he told The Catholic Spirit, the archdiocesan newspaper, adding that parishes should take up the issues raised in the document.

“The church, by her very nature, is not a political animal,” the archbishop added, “but the church has to continue to teach and educate people in these very essential issues.”

Editor’s Note: To view the Manhattan Declaration in its entirety and the list of initial signers, go to HTTP://manhattandeclaration.org or simply enter ManhattanDeclaration.org in your browser.

Bishops find Senate health care bill falls short in many areas

FROM PAGE 1

Centre, New York and John C. Wester of Salt Lake City. “If that fails, the current legislation should be opposed.”

They head the USCCB committees on Pro-Life Activities, on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and on Migration, respectively.

In addition to their three-page letter, the three leaders sent each senator a copy of a four-page fact sheet designed to refute “a number of misunderstandings and false claims in the House-passed Stupak amendment, which they called “a modest and reasonable measure.”

The amendment reflects “existing federal abortion funding policies in the context of health care reform,” the fact sheet says.

“Under this policy, anyone who actually wants abortion coverage can buy it with their own money; the government does not use taxpayer funds for abortions; and no one who opposes abortion is forced through their health premiums to pay for other people’s abortions.”

In their letter, the committee chairmen said the Senate bill as currently written “does not live up to President (Barack) Obama’s commitment of barring the use of federal dollars for abortion and maintaining current conscience laws.”

“The bill provides federal funding for plans that cover abortion and creates an unprecedented ‘strike and surcharge’ in such plans that will require pro-life purchasers to pay directly and explicitly for other people’s abortions,” they said.

“In addition, the bill seriously weakens the current nondiscrimination policy protecting providers who decline involvement in abortions, providing stronger protection for facilities that perform and promote abortion than for those which do not,” the USCCB letter said.

The bishops also urged changes in other parts of the Senate legislation.

“We support the inclusion of all immigrants, regardless of status, in the insurance exchange…(and) the removal of the five-year ban on legal immigrants accessing federal health benefit programs,” they said.

To bar undocumented immigrants from purchasing health insurance with their own money “would harm not only immigrants and their families, but also the general public health,” the letter said. And to penalize legal immigrants would be unfair in light of the praise for them “in past immigration debates for their many contributions and for playing by the rules,” it added.

The Senate bill also would leave more than 24 million people without health insurance, the bishops said, urging the expansion of Medicaid eligibility for people living at 133 percent of the federal poverty level or less.

The federal poverty level for a family of four in 2009 was $22,050; at the 133 percent level, families of four making up to $29,327 would be eligible for Medicaid.

The letter also recommended changes to help keep out-of-pocket health care costs down for low-income families.

The bishops cited several aspects of the Senate bill that they support and urged that they be retained.

“Reforms that will strengthen families and protect low-income vulnerable people — such as eliminating denial of coverage based on pre-existing conditions including pregnancy; eliminating lifetime caps; offering long-term disability services; and extending dependent coverage of uninsured young adults — are significant steps toward genuine health care reform,” the letter said.

The USCCB representatives said choices made in the health reform debate “are not just political, technical or economic, but also moral decisions” and that the questions they raise “are not marginal issues or special-interest concerns.”

“They are the questions at the heart of the health care debate: Whose lives and health are to be protected and whose are not? Will the federal government, for the first time in decades, require people to pay for other people’s abortions? Will immigrants be worse off as a result of health care reform?” they said. “This legislation is about life and death, who can take their children to the doctor and who cannot, who can afford decent health care coverage and who are left to fend for themselves.”
Hamer...

**FROM PAGE 11**

I imagined myself introducing the pope to my family.

“These are my children, your Eminence. This one played soccer, this one loves to draw, this one can make movies…” Pope Benedict might ask names and ages, significant questions, and (what is the German word for schmooze?) — we would have a happy visit.

Immediately I asked myself how different was the thought of having that chat, or sending a card, not to the supreme pontiff on earth, but straight to our holy Father in heaven? (What is the word for schmoozing with the Lord Himself?)

God would have unlimited time to tear open our clumsily-constructed greeting cards; for personal meetings he would be unhampered by time and energy restrictions; there would be no scheduling difficulties, no security, no protocol and of course, no one else in his infinite mind would be as important to Him as we would be at that very moment. That’s the important part, and it appealed to the child in me. No one would be nearly as important as we would be right then, to Him.

This year for Advent I have been using The Little Blue Book, a gift from my parish. A pocket-sized paperback of readings and reflections for 26 days of Advent and 17 days of the Christmas season, it is based on six-minute reflections on the infancy narrative of Luke. In its simplicity, it is exactly what I need in my life today.

The Little Blue Book lacks sophistication. It isn’t cerebral or highbrow in presentation, yet it is insightful, with a depth of wisdom we require even when we don’t know it’s missing. It is the book’s simplicity that communicates with us as children, causes us to think honestly about our lives, and work on them in small, manageable doses.

The first day of Lent it spoke of Elizabeth, her barrenness, and the barren-like failures we endure in our lives. “God does things through us that we cannot do or even measure,” the little book’s lesson stated, simply.

The next day it spoke of the angel who appeared to Elizabeth’s husband Zechariah, telling him the Lord had heard his prayer to have a child. “Do not be afraid… You will have joy and gladness,” the angel said. The Little Blue Book summarized the event succinctly: “Sometimes we’re afraid to pray for things that seem unrealistic.”

So far, during Advent, I have been reminded my life is important, that God had something particular in mind when he created me. I also have been told not to be afraid, but to be open for God to do his work through me.

All these came from the Little Blue Book.

During Advent, the liturgical season of preparation, we take on activities that in some ways oppose each other. In an intense period of prayer and introspection, we end up struggling to schedule the prayer, and setting our introspection aside until we can escape the biggest crowds most of us will see all year. It’s a quagmire. But somehow, today when I read about sending Christmas cards to the pope, I received a combined self-searching yet playful moment. I re-experienced ongoing respect for the vicar of Christ on earth and enjoyed the warmth of simple childish love for my Lord in Heaven.

And I got to laugh in enjoyment of this season, which, along with my Little Blue Book, will guide me directly to the solemn moment commemorating Jesus’s birth.

This year, perhaps it was God who was sending Christmas cards.

Kathy Cribari Hamer, a member of St. Andrew Parish, has five children, Meredith, John, Julie, Andrew, and Abby. In May, her column received the second place award for best family life column by the Catholic Press Association for the second time in two years at the Catholic Media Convention in Anaheim. In 2005, Kathy’s column was recognized with the first place award in the same category.

---

Knights...

**FROM PAGE 24**

The Knights responded by dedicating the proceeds from their annual golf tournament to helping Virginia. The council raised $2,600 from the tournament, plus an additional $1,000, the council earmarked earlier to buy supplies for the roof and other projects for Virginia’s house.

On Saturday, Nov. 14, at 7 a.m. Deacon Tomas Baca blessed the project as members of Knights of Columbus Council 8493, and Holy Cross’s ladies club and youth group, along with other parishioners from Holy Cross, arrived to replace the roof. Allied Waste donated a Roll-Off Dumpster to make the clean-up process easier.

The group worked until 5 p.m., and from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, with the men working on the roof and the women and youth clearing the yard. As they removed shingles, they discovered part of the decking also needed to be replaced.

“We ended up replacing 16 sheets of plywood,” said Grand Knight John Nowicki. “We finished at 2 o’clock Sunday … the storms came in, and it was no security, no protocol and of course, no one else in his infinite mind would be as important to Him as we would be at that very moment. That’s the important part, and it appealed to the child in me. No one would be nearly as important as we would be right then, to Him.

This year for Advent I have been using The Little Blue Book, a gift from my parish. A pocket-sized paperback of readings and reflections for 26 days of Advent and 17 days of the Christmas season, it is based on six-minute reflections on the infancy narrative of Luke. In its simplicity, it is exactly what I need in my life today.

The Little Blue Book lacks sophistication. It isn’t cerebral or highbrow in presentation, yet it is insightful, with a depth of wisdom we require even when we don’t know it’s missing. It is the book’s simplicity that communicates with us as children, causes us to think honestly about our lives, and work on them in small, manageable doses.

The first day of Lent it spoke of Elizabeth, her barrenness, and the barren-like failures we endure in our lives. “God does things through us that we cannot do or even measure,” the little book’s lesson stated, simply.

The next day it spoke of the angel who appeared to Elizabeth’s husband Zechariah, telling him the Lord had heard his prayer to have a child. “Do not be afraid… You will have joy and gladness,” the angel said. The Little Blue Book summarized the event succinctly: “Sometimes we’re afraid to pray for things that seem unrealistic.”

So far, during Advent, I have been reminded my life is important, that God had something particular in mind when he created me. I also have been told not to be afraid, but to be open for God to do his work through me.

All these came from the Little Blue Book.

During Advent, the liturgical season of preparation, we take on activities that in some ways oppose each other. In an intense period of prayer and introspection, we end up struggling to schedule the prayer, and setting our introspection aside until we can escape the biggest crowds most of us will see all year. It’s a quagmire. But somehow, today when I read about sending Christmas cards to the pope, I received a combined self-searching yet playful moment. I re-experienced ongoing respect for the vicar of Christ on earth and enjoyed the warmth of simple childish love for my Lord in Heaven.

And I got to laugh in enjoyment of this season, which, along with my Little Blue Book, will guide me directly to the solemn moment commemorating Jesus’s birth.

This year, perhaps it was God who was sending Christmas cards.

Kathy Cribari Hamer, a member of St. Andrew Parish, has five children, Meredith, John, Julie, Andrew, and Abby. In May, her column received the second place award for best family life column by the Catholic Press Association for the second time in two years at the Catholic Media Convention in Anaheim. In 2005, Kathy’s column was recognized with the first place award in the same category.

---

Knights of Columbus Council 8493 from Holy Cross Parish helped to put a new roof on Virginia Frasier’s home. Fraser, a widow who is legally blind, she cares for her 12-year-old granddaughter. Fraser faced losing her home, but Richard Anderson, a local lawyer and Knight helped her save it. The Knights’ efforts allowed her to get home insurance.
**ADVENT PERFORMANCE**

The Offering of Song: An Advent Tradition will be held Sunday, Dec. 13, at 3 p.m. at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, 509 W. Magnolia Ave., Fort Worth. There will be a concert of music, readings, and a call to prayer. Most of the music will be performed by the St. Mary of the Assumption Church Choir, with enrichment by the adult group. The St. Mary of the Assumption Church Choir will offer its Advent concert, which is free, and is to be held on the third Sunday of each month at 3 p.m. in the chapel of Holy Family Church, 6150 Pershing Ave., Fort Worth, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., to pray together, share their vocal music call, listen to God’s word, and bestow upon the sacred space, and to share a meal together. For more information, contact Father Kyle Walterscheid, director of music, (817) 560-3300 ext. 110 or kwalterscheid@diocsw.org.

**MISSION SEMINAR AT OLQ**

A monthly support meeting for Catholics held at Holy Family Church, 6150 Pershing Ave., held at Holy Family Church, 6150 Pershing Ave., on evenings and Saturday afternoons. All are invited to come for an evening of prayer, supper, and sharing, hosted by the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, the first Friday of each month from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Victory Center, 909 W. Shaw, Fort Worth. For more information, call Sister Yolanda Cruz, SSAM, at (817) 923-3091 or ycroz@ sbglobal.net.

**SOUTHWEST LITURGICAL SUNDAY**

This year the Southwest Liturgical Conference Study Week will explore the theme “Many Cultures: One Church at Prayer.” Jan. 13–16 at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston. The 48th annual conference, hosted by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, will feature over 40 scholars, theologians, priests, religious, and professional pastoral ministers. The keynote address will be delivered by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston. Also delivering a session is the keynote conference speaker, Father Dan Fohey, Cap., Dr. Richard McCarron, and Dr. Rosemarie Massetti. A banquet will be held at The St. Mary of the Assumption Church, 1200 S. Davis, Afton, from 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. For more information, contact Mary Hernandez or visit the Web site at www. southwesternliturgy.org or call (817) 277-4859.

**COURAGE SUPPORT GROUP**

Courage ODFW, a spiritual support group for Catholics struggling to live chaste lives according to the Catholic Church’s teachings on homosexuality, meets the second and fourth Fridays of each month. For more information, e-mail CourageODFW@dioceseoffortworth.org or call (972) 938-5432.

**RESPECT LIFE ART CONTEST**

The University Catholic Community at UTA will sponsor a juried art competition entitled “Many Lives: One Hope.” The competition will be judged based on artistic quality and the artists’ presentation of how they depict the culture of life that opposes abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, capital punishment, human cloning, stem cell research, contraception, and other social concerns. This show is open to high school juniors and seniors. Artists or their parents must attend the show in order to be eligible to enter. Entries must be received by Dec. 15. No more information visit the Web site at www.utcatholic.org.

**MOUNT CARMEL CENTER**

Mount Carmel Center, 4600 W. Davis St., Dallas, will host “A Conversation: Church and Verbum: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” presented by Father Stephen Sanchez, OCD. Part one of the conference, to be offered Jan. 16, will examine the theology of revelation in the second half of the Vatican Council’s document (Chapters 1-3). Part two of the conference, to be offered Jan. 23, will examine the theology of revelation in the second half of the Vatican Council’s document (Chapters 3-6). Both presentations, to be held in the St. Augustine Room, are free and open to the public. For more information, contact Matthew Redden at (817) 460-1155 or mredden@mountcarmelcenter.org.

**TOPIC OF THE MONTH**

The topic of the month is “The Sacrament of Marriage.” All are invited to attend a vesper service on Jan. 16 at 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Baptist Church, 1801 St., Fort Worth. For more information, contact Father Bill Meeks, pastor, at (817) 392-6677.

**MUNSTER K OF C CENTENNIAL**

The Knights of Columbus Council #1459 from Munster will celebrate its centennial this month. A special Mass at 5 p.m. at Sacred Heart Parish, 714 Pleasant Ave., Munster, will be held to celebrate this event. Also available online. For more information visit the Web site at www.munstercouncil.org.

**SANMN ANNIVERSARY**

The Sisters of St. Mary of Namur will be celebrating their 150th year of service in 2009. The Sisters, who used to be nuns in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur in New Orleans, are making plans to celebrate the sisters’ years of service at events scheduled for Saturday, March 6, at Noan Catholic High School in Fort Worth and Saturday, April 24, at Bishop DuBourg High School in New Orleans. For more information visit the Web site at www.sanmn.org or contact the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur at (817) 239-5636 or ssmn137@yahoo.com.

**ST. JOSEPH LITANY**

To request a copy of the prayer card for your parish, contact Sister Mary St. Joseph, OSF, 811 N. Main, Hurst, TX 76054.

**SERVICES AVAILABLE**

To request a copy of the prayer card for your parish, contact Sister Mary St. Joseph, OSF, 811 N. Main, Hurst, TX 76054.

**CLASSIFIED SECTION**

To request a copy of the prayer card for your parish, contact Sister Mary St. Joseph, OSF, 811 N. Main, Hurst, TX 76054.
Inside... This issue of the NTC

Why Catholic? small groups learning about the faith through study of the Catechism have caught fire across the diocese. More than 2,000 Catholics are taking part in 55 parishes.

The missionary image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a full-size photographic replica of the original in Mexico City, and it was here recently. To marry it brought a message of hope.

In their three-day fall meeting in November, the U.S. Bishops approved documents on marriage, reproductive technologies, nutrition and hydration, and more.

MAILING LABEL: Please enclose label with address change or inquiries concerning mail delivery of your paper. Thank you.