Annual Appeal About God’s Love, Not Financial Goal

By Thomas Maxwell
Executive Director
Archdiocesan Development Fund

By reaching its goal of $3 million, this year’s Archdiocesan Development Fund Appeal will cover close to 40 percent of the general operating budget of the Archdiocese. However, this annual appeal is not about giving to reach a goal. It is not about giving only from our excess treasures or to be able to say we gave. No, it is about responding to God’s love for us and His gifts to us. It is an expression of our love for God.

You can't give it if you don't accept it — God's love!

Our ability to love flows to us from God’s love through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We have it in us — a glorious gift from God.

Why is it then, that we find it so difficult to accept this great gift by opening our heart and trusting God? Accept the reality that our life is better with it than without — with God in our lives and not a life without Him! We say we love God. But what is the depth of our realization about the true meaning of and the feelings associated with the emotion of our love for God?

PRIDE. Maybe our pride makes it difficult continued on page 3
The Good News

... Archdiocesan Development Fund Appeal (ADF)

A friend of mine, a man of great talent, cares very little about saving money. His philosophy is that money is meant to be used, i.e., spent. He is true to this philosophy as he is not only generous but he also spends freely (but not wildly). One day he told me he had a terrible nightmare. He dreamt that he died and went before Saint Peter. He was immediately informed by Saint Peter that he still had $118.75 in his checking account when he died. He was so distraught that he hadn't spent all his money that he asked to go back to earth. He woke up startled and wondered — was it a nightmare or was it a lesson?

During the past six months, many of us wondered at first if the financial crisis was merely a nightmare or was it a lesson to be learned.

Living in modern America in the 21st century, we may have various economic philosophies and practices. But all of us do know that it takes money to live. The food we eat, the utilities we use, the clothes we wear all cost someone something. Since this is true for every person, it is likewise true for institutions, communities and churches. You, as a member of a particular parish, support your parish by contributing to the weekly collections at Sunday Mass. For your generosity to your parish, I am grateful.

As a member of a Catholic parish, you are also a member of our Archdiocese. All parishes located in a particular defined geographical area form a united community called the diocese or archdiocese. Therefore, all 115 Catholic churches located in central and western Oklahoma and the Panhandle are in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. The chief priest or shepherd of this Church is the archbishop. Through the archbishop's leadership and the collaboration of priests and people of the parishes, unity and orthodoxy are maintained and direction is given for our pilgrimage of life. Through the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments, which the archbishop oversees, our Catholic faith grows and we are guided on the path to eternal salvation. Hopefully we will walk that path safely together to Heaven.

Every member of a Catholic parish, along with their priests, relies directly on the Archdiocese not only for the deeply spiritual realities of the Church but also for many practical needs.

"Every man or woman who has money, has a responsibility to good stewardship and faithful service.

Finances are problematic for everyone. Therefore, I am even more grateful for all that you have done in the past. I hope and pray that you will once again make a positive response to this year's A.D.F. appeal. I also assure you that the budget of the Archdiocese has been reduced and our staff and I commit ourselves to good stewardship and faithful service.

The Scripture verse, which is always true, seems even more relevant for us in these difficult times. Jesus said: "What profit is there for a person to gain the whole world but to suffer the loss of his immortal soul?"

It is this salvation in Jesus Christ that is the goal and the purpose of our Catholic faith. This is the mission of the Church, the Good News of Jesus which is supported by your generous response to our A.D.F. appeal. Thank you and God bless you.

Seminary Burses

A $25 donation was made to the Father Stanley Rother Seminary Burse by an anonymous donor.

A $200 donation was made to the Father Stanley Rother Seminary Burse by parishioners of Sacred Heart Church, El Reno.

A $500 donation was made to the Father Joseph Beltran Seminary Burse by Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Carrier.

A $350 donation was made to the Father Stanley Rother Seminary Burse by parishioners of Epiphany Church, OKC.

A $10 donation was made to the Father Stanley Rother Seminary Burse in memory of Elizabeth Hoehner.

A $200 donation was made to the Father Joseph Beltran Seminary Burse by parishioners of St. Eugene Church, OKC.
Annual Appeal About God’s Love, Not Financial Goal

continued from page 1
to realize God’s love is there for us. A pride that gives God little or no credit for our abilities, our possessions, our riches, or who we are. Maybe it is a pride that generates jealousy because of what others have and what we don’t have? The many Bible stories of the talents given to servants comes to mind here.

FEAR. Maybe our fear makes it difficult to accept God’s love. Fear that God will not be there in times of our need. Fear that our life will be difficult, so we have to take care of ourselves, do things by ourselves. Fear that accepting His love will cause a change in our lifestyle — a new set of wants and needs — different friends. The list could be long. A fear of the challenge itself to make this change. A fear that we cannot live the best of two worlds — we cannot serve both God and the world of secularism. Fear of pain and suffering and sacrifice.

WORRY. Maybe we are so filled with worry and concern for everything about our life and family that there is no time or room in our life for God. Giving to Church on Sunday and saying a few prayers now and then is about the extent of the room and time we give to God, much less give God of ourselves. Maybe we worry more about what we don’t have instead of enjoying what our true blessings really are.

As our acceptance of God’s love and our love for God grows, our world, our life changes.

We begin to find God’s love all around us in everything we see, the wonders of this world and the universe ...

All of these self-imposed restrictions, limitations and doubts will burn up, melt away, be destroyed, then disappear through the burning fire that is God’s love. Don’t we all want to be happy and to find joy and fulfillment in our lives? God wants us to be happy. God created us in order to make us eternally happy. The real path to experience these desires is through the acceptance of God’s “Burning Love,” making time and room in our lives for God — a process that will not happen immediately but over time and with effort we will begin to realize the presence of God’s love for us, in us and around us. His love has always been there and will never diminish or be withdrawn. Greater realization of His love and His presence in our lives will deepen the meaning of our love for Him in return. Our love will become more than just words; there will be emotions akin to the loves we have and have had and shared in our life.

Once we accept and understand these new feelings of true love for God and His love for us, we develop a desire to and real interest in sharing His love with others by returning His love, through His gifts to us, to His family, thereby reaping the benefits of true joy and happiness. Finally, we are using the marvelous gifts given to us for what they were intended. We become living intercessors as we become more and more attuned to God’s love and presence and our need to serve Him and His family. Ephesians 3:17-19 brings these thoughts together “…that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

In the words of Mother Teresa, we see the depth of the love that is possible when we truly love. “I want you all to fill your hearts with great love. Don’t imagine that love, to be true and burning must be extraordinary. No, what we need in our life is the continuous desire to love the “One” we love. I live for God and give up my own self. To surrender means to offer Him my free will, my reason, my own life in pure faith. Surrender is true love, the more we surrender, the more we love God.”

As our acceptance of God’s love and our love for God grows, our world, our life changes. We begin to find God’s love all around us in everything we see, the wonders of this world and the universe — in life and even in death. We find ourselves talking with God at the strangest times and places as we go through each day. Our prayers have more meaning and are more frequent. Our interactions with those around us change. As we are filled with God’s love, we respond, as if with God’s love. We are happy, content and at peace with ourselves and the world. Pain and suffering can more easily be tolerated — all for the love of God!

At this time of the 2009 ADF Appeal, let us re-examine our relationship with God and pledge to do those things necessary to make it a more personal and meaningful relationship. Then, share God’s love for us and His gifts to us with our family, a love in action, a love that is lived with the people of this Archdiocese.

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Romans 12:6-8, “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them …” Finally we will be using the marvelous gifts given to us, for what they were intended! Love gives true value to what we do! 2 Corinthians 9:7-8, “Each must do as already determined without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you. So that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work.” One way to share is by supporting the many ministries that help develop the life of the Archdiocese through their many programs and activities.
Office of Vocations

ADF Supports Effort to Fill Seminary with Future Priests

The primary tasks of the Vocations Office are to recruit candidates for the seminary and then to assist with the formation of Archdiocesan seminarians. This work is done under the guidance of the archbishop and with the assistance of the Seminarian Board. The Vocations director works in close collaboration with staff members at those seminaries chosen by the archbishop where Archdiocesan seminarians receive education and formation. A secondary but very important function of the Vocations Office is to be of assistance to men and women considering vocations to the religious life.

The Vocations Department has two retreats each summer; one for young men and one for young women. Young men and women from the Archdiocese are invited to the retreats that are held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Youth Camp, offering an opportunity to think about their future and discern their vocation in life. Another opportunity for discernment is the annual Come and See Weekend. Young men in high school are invited to visit a seminary and see what daily life is like for a seminarian. A chartered bus takes the students and members of the Vocations Team to Conception Seminary College in Conception, Mo., for a weekend experience to sense the unique vocation of the priesthood. This has proven to be a positive experience and has helped young men to make the decision and take the first step to become a seminarian.

Once the decision has been made to apply, the application process begins. Once the candidate is accepted by the seminary, the formation begins.

For seminarians in Theology, the Archdiocese is responsible for tuition, room and board, books, health insurance and a monthly stipend. For college seminarians, the Archdiocese is responsible for tuition and a monthly stipend. This year, 15 seminarians are studying for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City from 14 different parishes. The parishes are St. John the Baptist, Edmond, Holy Family, Lawton, St. Andrew, Moore, Holy Spirit, Mustang, St. Mark, Norman, St. Joseph, Blackwell, St. Andrew Dung-lac, Oklahoma City, Immaculate Conception, Oklahoma City, Little Flower, Oklahoma City, St. Eugene, Oklahoma City, Epiphany of the Lord, Oklahoma City, St. Charles Borromeo, Oklahoma City, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Oklahoma City.

We hope and pray that we would have a seminarian from every parish. Please pray for an increase in vocations to the religious life for the Archdiocese.

ADF Supports...

Business Office

The Business Office manages the temporal goods of the Archdiocese, maintaining property records for all Archdiocesan property. All property owned by the Archdiocese is held in the name of the archbishop. The Business Office issues each priest a W-2 form at the end of each year, relieving the parishes of this responsibility. After computing the annual financial reports submitted from the parishes, the assessments for Central Diocesan Operations (ACDO) and the Priests Retirement Fund are submitted to each parish and collected by the Business Office. It sends quarterly statements showing payments received for the Assessment of Central Diocesan Operations (ACDO), Priests Retirement Fund and all of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops collections.

The Business Office is responsible for the annual budgeting of the central offices. It assists in setting the Annual Appeal goal by forecasting anticipated income and expenses.

The Business Office also administers the 403(b) retirement plan for employees of the Archdiocese and manages the health and accident insurance and property and casualty insurance for parishes and other entities. The Business Office has many responsibilities from assisting parishes in obtaining loans, preparing deeds, mortgages, mortgage releases, lease agreements, to contracts with hospitals and prisons for chaplain services.

The Web-based database used to manage volunteer and employee applications, background checks and Safe Environment training records is monitored by the Business Office. Assistance is available to schools and parishes that have questions concerning their database accounts.

ADF Supports...

Office of Ministries

The Office of Ministries houses the Office of the Vicar General, the Vicar for Ministries and the Chancellor. The Office of the Safe Environment Coordinator is also an adjunct to the Office of Ministries.

The office is responsible for processing pre-nuptial investigations for the people of the Archdiocese at no charge to the couple. Sacramental records are researched for persons seeking information assistance with marriage or to qualify for government benefits. The office is available to those seeking general information regarding the Archdiocese, Archdiocesan activities and historical information and is responsible for supervising the Archdiocesan archives and collecting and maintaining statistical data for the Official Catholic Directory and various surveys requested through the USCCB.

The Office of Ministries provides legal assistance and research for Archbishop Beltran and other departments and consults with priests of the Archdiocese and parishes on canonical administrative issues and civil legal matters. The office serves as the general spokesperson for the Archdiocese and is responsible for coordinating media contacts and press releases. The Office of Safe Environment conducts state and local educational programs and coordinates the Safe Environment program throughout the Archdiocese.
Permanent Diaconate
Supported by ADF

Many people think of the deacon as that vested man who helps the priest during Mass.

The deacon does assist at Mass by proclaiming the gospel, preaching and distributing the Eucharist. The call of the Order of Deacons, however, is primarily a call to a ministry of service. Today in our Archdiocese we have 82 active deacons who serve in many roles.

These include prison chaplains, parish administrators, directors of religious education and directors of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Deacons do marriage and baptism preparation, baptize people, serve as the Church’s witness to Catholic marriages, teach adult education, plan and officiate at funerals, have communion services in the absence of a priest, take communion to shut-ins and nursing home residents and generally help with various functions within the parish and diocese. Deacons do not take the place of a priest.

They, like a priest, are ordained to serve the people of the Archdiocese.

Although the deacon receives the sacrament of holy orders, he does not necessarily function in the order as his full-time occupation, but remains responsible for the support of himself and his family in his normal job. He offers service as a deacon, dedicating 10 to 12 hours each week to the work of the church.

The ADF is the primary funding source for the formation, spiritual development and education of deacons. The Diaconate program presently has 12 men eligible for ordination in November 2009. The cost of educating these men and their spouses is paid for by ADF. The ordained deacons are required to keep current on their faith and various programs within the church. The ADF helps to pay for these continuing education opportunities.

Each year the deacon is offered a spiritual retreat, part of which is funded by ADF. Thanks to the generosity of the people of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, through the ADF, the Diaconate program is able to grow and to continue to serve.

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal 2009 Gift Form

Mr. and/or Mrs.
Ms., Rev., Dr.: ________________________________

Spouse: _________________________________________

Billing Address: ______________________________________

City, State, Zip: ________________________________

Phone Number: ________________________________

Parish: _________________________________________

Signature: _________________________________________

My Total Contribution is $________ I will pay my balance in the following way:

Amount Paying Today $________

10 pmts. March-Dec

4 pmts. April-July-Oct-Dec

2 pmts. April-Oct

1 pmt. Indicate Month ______

Balance $________

If you want to make a gift over time, consider the following:

10 monthly payments of: $15 $20 $25 $35 $50 $75 $100 $250

Equals a total gift of: $150 $200 $250 $350 $500 $750 $1,000 $2,500

Make Checks Payable to ADF
Mail to: ADF, P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City, OK 73123

Deacon San Nguyen works in prison ministry in the Archdiocese.
Intercessors of God’s Burning Love

These programs, activities and opportunities are spreading and sharing God’s “Burning Love” throughout the Archdiocese. Add your love with the many who labor so fruitfully for God’s family.
Mount Hosts College Fair to Help Seniors Make Decisions

OKLAHOMA CITY — Last-minute decisions about selecting a university. Getting acquainted with colleges. Finding out about scholarship applications. These are just some of the reasons that students need to attend a college fair. For many high school students, selecting a college will be one of the most important and stressful decisions of their young lives.

On Jan. 7, Mount St. Mary Catholic High School’s Counseling Department brought these opportunities to the students of The Mount. For the second consecutive year, college representatives from more than 25 universities and colleges as well as Career Technology and military representatives set up booths for students to learn more information about admissions, scholarships and their deadlines. Since this is the time of year that seniors should have applied or in the process of applying for college admission and scholarships, Mount St. Mary has worked together with college representatives to facilitate these procedures.

“The college fair gave me a better understanding of my choices for both local and out-of-state schools, said Julie Bragg, MSM senior. “I realize that there are more opportunities out there. And what is nice about this setup is that I don’t have to leave the comfort of my own school to get my questions answered.”

MSM’s college fair was not limited to seniors only. Every student was invited to visit and speak with representatives to explore their future choices. Jose Orquiz, MSM junior, said, “I like the diversity of the colleges that are represented here. I am gathering information of all my choices and that will help me prepare for the future.”

Wendy Gavin, admissions counselor for Southern Nazarene University, was impressed by her experience at Mount St. Mary Catholic High School. “Being around the students for a short time, you can tell that this is a true community. Furthermore, this makes our job much easier because the kids feel more comfortable because they can come up to us and ask questions.”

In addition to the MSM College Fair, Mount St. Mary counselor Deborah Wedel is putting in place innovative programs and resources for students and their families in the college selection and admissions process. In December, Wedel, along with Newman University representative Rick Fernandez, organized a financial aids workshop. Charly Smith, a college financial aid counselor, gave a dynamic presentation for seniors and their parents, preparing them for the upcoming process of filing FAFSA forms.

In conjunction with the help of a Catholic Foundation grant, Wedel has also set up a Resource Room where students have access to computers in order to assemble information about colleges, and begin to fill in admissions and scholarship applications.

Bishops Address Opportunities, Challenges for Obama, Congress

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Bishops addressed opportunities and challenges in Jan. 13 letters to President-elect Barack Obama and Congress and promised “to make this period of national change a time to advance the common good and defend the life and dignity of all.”

The letter, which outlined “an agenda for dialogue and action,” was signed by Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. A corresponding letter was sent to Vice President Joseph Biden and each member of Congress.

The letter listed several areas of concern.

On economic challenges, the bishops called for “strong, prudent and effective measures to address the terrible impacts and injustices of the economic crisis” and promised to “advocate a clear priority for poor families and vulnerable workers in the development and implementation of economic recovery measures, including new investments while strengthening the national safety net.”

On health care, they called for “truly universal health-care coverage which protects all human life including pre-natal life” and which includes “a variety of options and ensuring respect for the moral and religious convictions of patients and providers.”

On international affairs, the bishops noted a need for “a responsible transition in an Iraq free of religious persecution.” They also urged efforts for “an end to violent conflict and a just peace in the Holy Land” and continued U.S. leadership in the fight against HIV-AIDS and other diseases in ways that are both “effectively and morally appropriate.” The bishops also promised “to be a voice for the poor and vulnerable in our country and around the world, who will be the most adversely affected by any dramatic threats to the environment.”

They urged repair of “a broken immigration system which harms both our nation and immigrants.” They said such reform “will include a path to earned citizenship with attention to the fact that international trade and development policies influence economic opportunities in the countries from which immigrants come.”

They emphasized support for marriage which, they said, is “a faithful, exclusive, lifelong union of a man and a woman and must remain such in law.”

On education, the bishops promised to “continue to support initiatives which provide resources for all parents, especially those of modest means, to choose education which best address the needs of their children.”

The bishops welcomed government leaders’ “commitment to empower faith-based groups as effective partners in overcoming poverty and other threats to human dignity.” Such partnerships, they said, “do not encourage government to abandon its responsibilities, and do not require religious groups to abandon their identity and mission.”

They also promised to work to protect the lives of the most vulnerable and voiceless members of the human family, especially unborn children and those who are disabled or terminally ill. “We will consistently defend the fundamental right to life from conception to natural death,” they said, and “we will encourage one and all to seek common ground that will reduce the number of abortions in morally sound ways that affirm the dignity of pregnant women and their unborn children.” They said they will “oppose legislative and other measures to expand abortion” and “will work to retain essential, widely supported policies which show respect for unborn life, protect the conscience rights of health-care providers and other Americans, and prevent government funding and promotion of abortion.”
Annual Men’s Conference Set for Feb. 28 at McGuinness

OKLAHOMA CITY — The 13th annual “In The Father’s Footsteps” Catholic Men’s Conference will be held from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 28 at Bishop McGuinness High School, 801 NW 50th.

Doors will open for registration at 7:30 a.m. and Mass celebrated by Archbishop Beltran will be at 4:30 p.m. The sacrament of Reconciliation will be made available throughout the day.

The theme for this year’s conference is “Men of Honor: When a man walks in integrity and justice, happy are his children after him.” (Proverbs 20:7)

The conference will feature three outstanding speakers, as well as a special speaker for young men. Also, breakout sessions, Catholic vendors, a box lunch and live music.

To register, visit our Web site: www.catholicmen.net or look for our brochures at your parish.

Speakers at this year’s conference include:

Deacon Alex Jones

For 25 years, Alex Jones was the senior minister of two Detroit area churches — the second oldest Pentecostal church in Michigan and later, Maranatha Christian Church, a Charismatic church. In 1998, while reading the apostolic fathers in preparation for a Wednesday evening Bible study, Alex Jones discovered the Catholic Church to be liturgical, hierarchical and Eucharistic-centered. In light of that revelation, Alex began a two-year journey into the Catholic Church that culminated in 54 members of his previous congregation entering through confirmation on April 14, 2001.

Alex Jones was subsequently ordained a Permanent Deacon in the Archdiocese of Detroit on Oct. 1, 2005.

Steve Ray

Steve Ray is a convert to the Catholic Church and author of three best-selling books: “Crossing the Tiber,” “Upon this Rock” and “St. John’s Gospel.” He is a popular conference speaker and a regular guest on Catholic Answers Live and many other radio and TV programs, including Fox News. He is the writer, producer and host of the 10-part DVD series The Footprints of God: The Story of Salvation from Abraham to Augustine, filmed entirely on location in the Holy Land and surrounding countries. Steve and his wife, Janet, are owners of Distinctive Maintenance with 500 employees in his home state of Michigan and have four children and six grandchildren.

Father Bruce Nieli, CSP

Father Bruce Nieli, C.S.P., is a Paulist priest, evangelist and missionary living in Memphis. The Paulist Fathers bio notes that Father Nieli, “offers the spirituality of St. Paul the Apostle with a focus on connecting Catholic faith and American culture.” Ordained in 1973, Father Nieli is founding director of the Center for Spiritual Development of the Archdiocese of New York, worked for the Texas Catholic Conference and served as Director for Evangelization of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Historically, Father Nieli is one of our top-rated speakers and returns this year for his third engagement.

Steve Allgeyer

Steve Allgeyer has spent the last 15 years sharing the love of Christ through laughter and powerful testimonies to teenagers and adults all over the world. Steve currently serves as the vice president of Ministry Development for Life Teen Inc., an international youth ministry movement in the Catholic Church. By his own account, Steve spends most of his time loving his family, (wife, Kristy, and their six children) and challenging teenagers to step out of the boat and answer their calling to follow Christ. He advises those young people who respond affirmatively to “Buckle up for the ride of their lives!”

For more information, call (405) 245-8042 or e-mail info@catholicmen.net.

Music Scholarship Available Through Catholic Foundation

The Bob Little Pastoral Musician Scholarship provides for an annual scholarship(s) to be awarded to a student(s), majoring in Pastoral Music, from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. The scholarship award(s) may be used for tuition, books or applied music fees.

Criteria for applying are:

* Be a high school senior, high school graduate or college student majoring in Pastoral Music with a desire to make a career of the same;
* Be an active member of his/her Catholic parish in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City;
* Be one who is or will be attending a degree-granting college or university as an undergraduate student in the fall term of the award year.
* Recipients must possess a 3.0 or higher grade point average.
* The scholarship will be renewable for three (3) years contingent upon the recipient maintaining a 3.0 GPA and continuing to major in Pastoral Music.

Students who wish to be considered for this scholarship will use the standard Catholic Foundation application available from The Catholic Foundation Office, P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73123, at www.cfook.org under Scholarship Recipients or by calling Toby Boothe at (405) 721-4115.

Good Shepherd Training

OKLAHOMA CITY — Christ the King Church will host Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training beginning in February.

This is a Montessori-based program to use in religious education for children ages 3-6. The approach is based on the conviction that God and the child are in relationship. The training is normally done in Kansas City, but Christ the King is able at this time to offer the training in Oklahoma City. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is for anyone interested in the enrichment of their own spirituality or to gain a better understanding of their faith.

Training dates are Feb. 7-8, Feb. 28-March 1 and April 4-5.

For more information, contact RE director Tommy Cordova at (405) 843-4766, Cathy Folmnsbee, (405) 840-0726, or Susan Dolan at (405) 842-0726.

Ministry of Mothers Sharing Begins

EDMOND — Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church will host Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS) beginning Feb. 17 and running through April 16.

This eight-week session is open to all women, not just mothers, and all ages are welcome. The group will meet Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. or Tuesdays from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. No meetings will be held during spring break.

For more information, call Leslie at 330-1446 or e-mail rexstockelcox.net or go to http://www.stjohn-catholice.org/MOMS.htm.
Catholic Education Loses True Friend in Death of Principal Bette Novak

MIDWEST CITY — Catholic education in Oklahoma lost a true friend and hero when Bette Novak died Jan. 14 following a stroke. The mother of Father William Novak, Mrs. Novak was serving as principal of Saint Philip Neri School, a position she held for 18 years, at the time of her death.

Novak devoted much of her career in Catholic education to the students and families of Saint Philip Neri, having taught there from 1980 to 1989. She then taught at Mount St. Mary High School from 1989 to 1991 before returning to Saint Philip Neri as principal.

Sister Catherine Powers, CND, superintendent of Catholic Education for the Archdiocese, said Novak was in every way dedicated to Catholic education. Her commitment was so great that in 2006 she was named recipient of the National Catholic Education Association Distinguished Principal of the Year Award.

“She was so focused on what was best for the students,” said Sister Catherine. “She was also focused on the Catholic identity of the school; she believed that was the reason parents put their children in Catholic schools. So she wanted the Catholic identity the strongest thing in her school. And she did a good job at it. Bette Novak was totally devoted to Catholic education. It was what her life was about.”

As a principal, Novak expected much of herself and she carried the same expectations of her teachers. She led with purpose and compassion and most of all by example.

“She hired the best teachers and pushed them for continuing professional development,” Sister Catherine said. “One summer she had almost all of her teachers at a class offered by my office for a whole week for continuing education.”

But what Bette Novak did above all was love.

In 1989, Sister Mary McGaw, CSJ, wrote an article for the Sooner Catholic about Bette Novak the teacher. Here are a few excerpts taken from that article:

Last year Bette Novak sent a valentine to all the children she has taught in kindergarten during the nine years she has been at St. Philip Neri School. She enclosed a bookmark, “You are loved.”

Children understand a great deal more than we give them credit for, Bette believes.

“This week our school secretary, Christine Mercer, died very suddenly,” Bette said. “We were all very sad. The children loved to go to the office and Mrs. Mercer had been very good to them. We had a prayer service in our classroom, using the story The Fall of Freddie the Leaf” by Leo Buscaglia. And then I said, ‘I want to thank God for all the nice things Mrs. Mercer did for me.’ And the children said, ‘Can we thank God, too?’ So one said, ‘I thank you, God, for Mrs. Mercer because she helped me when I had a bloody nose.’ Another said, ‘Thank you, God. She put a Band-Aid on my cut.’ Another said, ‘Thank you, God. Mrs. Mercer always smiles at me.’ I think our prayer service made the children feel better about losing their friend.”

Saint Philip Neri and Catholic education in Oklahoma can thank God for another dear friend, Bette Novak.

On the day of her death, Sister Catherine went to Saint Philip Neri School to comfort teachers and students. The following day, Dr. Louie Lepak and Sister Betty Kehoe, from Saint Joseph’s Counseling Services at Catholic Charities, met with the teachers and students.

On Jan. 19, Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Bette Novak at Saint Philip Neri Church.

Father Oswalt Works to Develop Catholic War Veterans Organization

An organizational meeting for the Catholic War Veterans will be held at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Oklahoma City on Feb. 18 at 7 p.m. in Rooms 12 and 13. Any practicing Roman Catholic, who is presently serving or has been honorably discharged from having served in any branch of the military forces (active or reserve, or Merchant Marines), is invited to attend the meeting and join the CWV.

Organized in 1935 by an Army chaplain from WWI, Father Edward J. Higgins, and chartered by Congress in 1984 as the only Catholic veterans association, the CWV strives to serve God, country and home. With members in all 50 states and with over 400 posts across the nation, this would be the first possible post in Oklahoma.

Father M. Price Oswalt, a cold-war veteran of the U.S. Army Reserves, is spear-heading the movement to establish a post in Oklahoma.

“I have wanted to serve in some capacity with some veterans organization for many years, but don’t qualify for most, as I never did any active duty time or overseas time. I found the CWV and felt that this was a good organization that would reach a great many people, especially those who share our faith experience and love God and love the Church.” Father Oswalt said that only 15 members are required to form a post. “With four military installations in our state, we certainly will be able to meet that.”

The Catholic Pastoral Center is located at 7201 N.W. Expressway in Oklahoma City. For more information, contact Father Oswalt at (405) 722-2110 Ext. 112 or froswalt@epiphanyokec.com. More information on the Catholic War Veterans can be found at www.cwv.org.
McGuinness Auction Set for Feb. 13

Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School invites you to a sweetheart of a time at the 23rd annual benefit auction, “Sweethearts & Shamrocks,” on Friday, Feb. 13 at 6 p.m. at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. This night of endless love includes dinner catered by The Catering Company and dancing to music by The Wise Guys, a classic rock band performing a wide range of the best-loved popular music that appeals to music lovers of all ages. They put their own unique spin on classic hits of the 1960s, ‘70s and ‘80s by groups such as the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Beach Boys, Roy Orbison, Bruce Springsteen and others.

The live auction features several “love is in the air” vacation packages this year such as an ocean view suite for a week in Pueblo Bonito Emerald Bay, a luxury shopping experience with a $1,000 gift card from Saks Fifth Avenue; round-trip airfare for two to New York City, four nights at the Hilton New York; and tickets for Broadway’s hottest shows. Other items include Notre Dame football tickets, autographed basketballs from the OKC Thunder and the OSU Cowboys. To keep everyone’s Irish eyes smiling, there is also a round-trip, four-night stay at the five-star Disney Resort Hyatt Regency Grand and a NASCAR round-trip airfare for two, four-night stay at select Hyatt Hotels, classroom training and the option to drive NASCAR or SPRINT Cup cars on a professional track.

The highlight of the evening will be the “luck of the Irish” raffle drawing for the grand prize of a 2009 Pontiac Solstice or $20,000 cash. The second prize is a $1,500 Visa gift card and third prize is a 42-inch plasma TV. Raffle tickets are $100 each and can be purchased from McGuinness students or faculty or the night of the auction.

Dress is casual. Proceeds benefit the Bishop McGuinness Endowment Fund and the renovation of the south entry of the football stadium. Tickets for the auction are $100 per person. Reservations are required. For more information or raffle tickets, call Patricia Hudacko at 842-6638 Ext. 239.

Yukon Parish to Offer Information On Catholic Church

YUKON — The parish community of St. John Nepomuk Catholic Church will soon begin inquiry sessions to share with others the truths of the Catholic faith and the fellowship of our parish family. These sessions are for those who would like to look into the Catholic Church and its teachings. The sessions are free and imply no commitment on your part to join the Catholic Church. All are simply invited to learn the truth about the Catholic faith, and to meet some of our parish members who serve in this ministry. These gatherings are open to adult (15+) non-Catholics who are not baptized, as well as those who are baptized Christians from Protestant or Evangelical backgrounds. Practicing Catholics who are bringing inquirers are also welcome.

This is a five-week program, beginning on Wednesday, Jan. 28. Doors will open at 7 p.m.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in learning more, contact Ann Cook in the parish office at 354-2743 or pastoral@sjnok.org.

Across Oklahoma

CCW Central Region Meeting

OKLAHOMA CITY — Patti Keeley, president of the Central Region Council of Catholic Women, invites all Catholic women to attend the next Central Region, which will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 17 at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Registration will be from 9 to 9:30 a.m. Father George Pupius from Immaculate Conception will speak on “Leading us into Lent.” Mass is at 11:30 a.m. followed by lunch in the dining room. Cost for the day is $7.50 and includes lunch. Call your contact for reservation or Jeanne Ferguson at 341-4396. Deadline is Friday, Feb. 13.

Norman Parish Sets Bingo

NORMAN — St. Joseph’s Parish bingo night is scheduled for the second Friday of every month. A light dinner is served at 6:30 and two sessions of games are played, the first at 7 p.m. and the second at 8:30 p.m. Dates for 2009 are Feb. 13, no bingo in March and April (Lent), May 8, June 12, July 10, Aug. 14, Sept. 11, Oct. 9 and Nov. 13.

Mandala Retreat

PIEDMONT — Jan. 31 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with Melissa Anna Letts, OSB. Like other religious traditions you have seen, you will be using sand to create beautiful circular designs as a way to pray. Come to enjoy the freedom to listen, to create your own mandala and to share in this unique prayer style. Place: Art Barn at Red Plains Spirituality Center. Call (405) 373-0804 to register. Fee: $45, includes materials ($10 deposit). Bring a sack lunch.

Rose Day at the Capitol

OKLAHOMA CITY — Feb. 4 in the fourth floor rotunda of the state Capitol building starting at 10 a.m. Presentation of red roses to our legislators to emphasize the importance of the sanctity of life.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend

WOODWARD — Feb. 13-15 will be a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend at the Northwest Inn. All are welcome. For more information or to register, call Matt or Lindsey at (580) 698-2469.

Silent Retreat

OKLAHOMA CITY — On Feb. 20-22, Katie Gordy will offer a silent retreat, God’s Music is Silence. The retreat will be at Mount St. Mary’s High School. The book, “The War of Art” will be provided and the silence will be broken three times to discuss the book. For more information, call 359-2700 or by e-mail at kgordy11@cox.net.
Medical Condition, Not Pregnancy Poses Risk to Health

Various medical conditions can affect a woman’s ability to carry a pregnancy, and at times even threaten her and her child’s life. Some of these conditions include pulmonary hypertension, Marfan’s syndrome and certain congenital problems with the aorta. When a doctor informs a woman that she cannot become pregnant in the future without serious consequences to herself and her baby, having her tubes tied might seem to be the most appropriate response. Some would further argue that since the sterilization would be for “medical reasons,” it would be an “indirect sterilization” and therefore morally acceptable.

Yet in point of fact, a tubal ligation to avoid a future pregnancy would not be an indirect sterilization at all. An indirect sterilization is a procedure that in treating an existing medical problem brings about an unintended loss of fertility. For example, when a patient with cancer receives radiation and chemotherapy, a secondary and unintended effect may be sterility. Or when a man is battling testicular cancer, he may undergo surgical removal of the testes in order to fight the disease, with the undesired consequence that he will become sterile. Indirect sterilizations are morally permissible whenever there is a serious pathology involved, and when the contraceptive effects are unintended.

When a woman suffering from pulmonary hypertension chooses to tie her tubes, however, that tubal ligation does not address or cure her hypertension; she is, therefore, opting for a direct sterilization. A direct sterilization is morally unacceptable because it involves the decision to directly mutilate a healthy system of the body, one that is functioning normally and properly, for the sake of a contraceptive end. Such violations are commonplace today.

In the United States, an estimated 700,000 women undergo surgical tubal ligations each year, and about 600,000 men undergo surgical vasectomies.

Vasectomies and tubal ligations do not treat any actually existing ailment or pathology. When a woman ties her tubes to render any future sexual acts infertile, she is choosing to mutilate a key faculty of her own body because she and/or her husband do not wish to practice periodic abstinence to avoid a potentially dangerous pregnancy. A tubal ligation under these circumstances would not, in fact, be for medical reasons, but instead, for reasons of marital convenience. We have a duty to respect the integrity and totality of our own bodies, and cutting healthy fallopian tubes in a woman’s body is never a morally defensible medical decision.

One of the key errors in thinking that stands behind the decision for surgical sterilization is the belief that men and women should not really be expected to have control or dominion over their sexual drives and impulses. So many today seem to have renounced the project of pursuing self-mastery within the domain of sexuality. While it is clear that we cannot survive without food or water, it is false to assume, as our culture seems to do, that we cannot survive without sexual gratification. Sex is not necessary for individual survival, nor indispensable for a healthy and fulfilled personal life. For a single person, in fact, a healthy and fulfilled personal life will depend on the proper ordering of the sexual faculties through the self-discipline of abstinence, and an attendant growth in virtue. This holds true in marriage as well, where spouses must pursue the discipline of sexual self-restraint at various times if the marriage relationship is to grow and flourish. They may have to practice such discipline under conditions of military deployment, work-related absences and chronic or acute illnesses.

Whenever there may be legitimate reasons to avoid a pregnancy, as in the case of a serious threat to the life of the mother or child, married couples will be called upon to practice a similar self-discipline, by advertising only to those means of avoiding pregnancy that properly respect the gift of their sexuality and their respective masculinity and femininity. Practically speaking, this will entail choosing periodic abstinence during the known fertile times of the woman’s cycle as a means of avoiding a pregnancy. In the past few decades, the techniques of “Natural Family Planning” have become quite sophisticated and precise in their ability to determine when a woman is fertile. Married couples can use this information to limit sexual intercourse to infertile periods, and practice abstinence during fertile periods, when serious reasons warrant it. Respecting marital sexuality in this way, and refusing to compromise our sexual faculties through vasectomies or tubal ligations, promotes important personal virtues within marriage and properly respects the God-given and life-giving designs of our own bodies.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., is Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org.

New Provost Named to Help Lead Saint Gregory’s University

SHAWNEE — St. Gregory’s University recently announced that Richard Ludwick, J.D., D.Ed., has been named to the university’s newly created position of provost. The university’s position of vice president for academic affairs, previously held by Father Robert Busch, Ph.D., will be integrated into the new position. Father Busch now moves into a full-time role as dean of SGU’s College of Arts and Sciences.

Ludwick’s duties as provost will include overseeing academic programs, student life, athletics and enrollment. “I am eager to engage in the exciting and meaningful progress of St. Gregory’s University,” Ludwick said. “Its mission, people and potential are outstanding. I look forward to working with all of the dedicated faculty, staff, students and many friends of St. Gregory’s as we advance our institution.”

Ludwick previously worked as the vice president for enrollment management and student affairs at Albany Law School in New York, the nation’s oldest private independent law school. Before joining Albany Law School in 2005, Ludwick served as assistant dean for student and academic affairs at the University of Florida’s Fredric G. Levin College of Law and as assistant dean for student affairs at the University of Oregon School of Law. Prior to his service in academe, he practiced law in the Midwest and was co-founder and president of Ludwick & LaRue, PC, a firm emphasizing corporate law with concentrations in entertainment/sports law and higher education law.

“The entire St Gregory’s community is pleased to have Dr. Ludwick and his family join our team,” said SGU President Dave Wagie, Ph.D. “Richard brings a wealth of experience and leadership that will serve our university well as we move forward in our future academic and strategic planning.”

Ludwick earned a doctorate in education from the University of Oregon, a juris doctorate from Indiana University-Indianapolis, a master’s degree from Columbia University and a bachelor’s degree from the University of Evansville.

Ludwick and his wife, Melynda, have been married 19 years and have two children, Christianne (18) and Richy (16).

St. Gregory’s University is Oklahoma’s oldest institution for higher learning and the state’s only Catholic university. SGU has locations in Shawnee, Oklahoma City and Tulsa, serving more than 800 students in two colleges — the College of Arts and Sciences and the College for Working Adults.
Buenas Noticias...

Mis queridos Hermanos y Hermanas en Cristo:

Un amigo mío, un hombre de gran talento, le importa muy poco ahorrar dinero. Su filosofía es que el dinero se hizo para ser gastado. El verdaderamente crece en esta filosofía, no solamente porque es muy generoso, sino porque gasta libremente (pero no alocadamente). Un día me dijo que había tenido una pesadilla horrible. Soñó que había muerto y se encontraba frente a San Pedro. Le fue inmediatamente informado por San Pedro que le quedaban 118,75 dólares en su cuenta corriente al momento de su muerte. Estaba tan consternado de pensar que había gastado todo su dinero que pidió ser enviado de regreso a la tierra. Cuando despertó se preguntó: ¿sería esto una pesadilla o una lección?

Durante los últimos seis meses, muchos nos hemos preguntado primeros si la crisis financiera fue solamente una pesadilla o si fue una lección que debemos aprender.

Viviendo en la moderna América del siglo veintiuno, nosotros probablemente tengamos diferentes filosofías y prácticas económicas. Pero todos sabemos que se necesita dinero para subsistir. La comida que comemos, los servicios que usamos y la ropa que nos ponemos nos cuestan algo de dinero. Partiendo de esta premisa en la realidad de cada persona nos comprendería como también por igual para la instituciones, comunidades e iglesias.

Jesús dijo: “¿De que le sirve a uno si ha ganado el mundo entero, pero se ha destruido a sí mismo?”

Ustedes como miembros de una feligresía en particular, apoyan a su parroquia a través de su contribución semanal a la colecta de la Misa del Dominio. Por su generosidad a sus parroquias, les estoy muy agradecido.

Como miembros de una parroquia Católica, usted es miembro de nuestra Arquidiócesis. Todas las parroquias localizadas en un área geográfica definida, forman una comunidad unida llamada Diócesis o Arquidiócesis. Por lo tanto, todos los ciento quince templos Católicos localizados en la parte central y oeste como también en la franja terrestre angosta del noroeste de Oklahoma pertenecen a la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City. El líder sacerdotal o párroco de esta Iglesia es el Arzobispo. A través del liderazgo del Arzobispo y la colaboración de los sacerdotes y las personas de las parroquias, la unidad y la ortodoxia son mantenidas y dadas para nuestro peregrinaje en esta vida.

Por medio de la proclamación del Evangelio y la celebración de los sacramentos, los cuales el Arzobispo supervisa, nuestra fe Católica cree y sigue guías hacia el camino de la salvación eterna. De esta manera, juntos y con esperanza, podemos guiar seguros hacia el cielo.

Cada miembro de una parroquia Católica, junto con sus sacerdotes, depende directamente de la Arquidiócesis, no sólo para las profundas realidades espirituales de la Iglesia, sino también para las muchas necesidades habituales. Los servicios y los programas de la Arquidiócesis complementan y completan la vida de los parroquianos.

Estos ministerios de servicio son descritos en el folleto que ha sido distribuido en sus parroquias. Estos servicios y programas creados por la Arquidiócesis, se hacen posibles por una colecta anual, que yo, como su Arzobispo hago cada febrero. Este donativo es llamado Fondo para el Desarrollo Arquidiocesano, o de manera más simple como A.D.F. La colecta para el A.D.F. del 2009 se conducirá en todas las parroquias el domingo 8 de febrero.

Hoy deseo agradecerles a todos los que generosamente han respondido a mis colectas anteriores. Sin embargo, reconozco que estamos pasando por tiempos difíciles. Las finanzas son un problema para casi uno de nosotros. Por lo que estoy muy agradecido por todo lo que han hecho en el pasado.

Yo deseo y rezó para que ustedes nuevamente respondan positivamente a la colecta del A.D.F. de este año. De igual forma, les aseguro que el presupuesto de la Arquidiócesis ha sido reducido y nuestro personal y yo estamos comprometidos en hacer una buena administración y fiel servicio.

Las Escrituras, dicen siempre la verdad y deben ser más relevantes para nosotros en estos tiempos tan difíciles. Jesús dijo: “¿De que le sirve a uno si ha ganado el mundo entero, pero se ha destruido a sí mismo?”

La salvación está en Jesucristo y en la meta y propósito de nuestra fe Católica. Esta es la misión de la Iglesia, la Buena Nueva de Jesús, la cual es apoyada por ustedes con su generosa respuesta a nuestra colecta anual del A.D.F.

Gracias por su apoyo y que Dios los bendiga.

La verdadera crisis de nuestro tiempo es espiritual

ROMA, (ZENIT.org) — La auténtica crisis que está atravesando la sociedad occidental, es ante todo de naturaleza espiritual, de falta de confianza en el triunfo final del bien sobre el mal. Así lo explica el presidente de la Renovación Carismática Católica Italiana (RCCI), Salvatore Martínez, en declaraciones concedidas a la agencia ZENIT.

Todas las épocas históricas tienen su crisis, afirma Martínez, por tanto la actual situación "no es nueva". La cuestión está en darse cuenta del "origen espiritual" de la actual, basada en una conciencia "cada vez más errónea, decadente, rendida al mal y a todas sus canonizaciones éticas, jurídicas y científicas". Según Slurzo, explica, "el error moderno consiste en separar y contraponer el cristianismo al humanismo: del humanismo se ha hecho una entidad divina, mientras de la religión cristiana se ha hecho un asunto privado".

Martínez recuerda una intervención del entonces Cardenal Joseph Ratzinger en el Sinoitaliano (mayo de 2004), en la que a modo profético decía sobre la crisis: "Europa, precisamente ahora en la hora de su mayor éxito, parece vacía por dentro, como paralizada por una crisis circulatoria, una crisis que pone en riesgo su vida confinándola a trasplantes que borran su identidad. A la ceguera de las fuerzas espirituales que la llevan se añade un ocaso étnico creciente. Hay una extraña falta de ganas de futuro" Para Slurzo, que vivió también una época de fuerte crisis (tuvo que exiliarse a Londres, perseguido por el fascismo), "la verdadera revolución empieza con una negación espiritual del mal y una afirmación espiritual del bien".

Para Martínez, "no habrá una verdadera conciencia social si las reglas del juego democrático se basan en una suma de ‘yoes’ autónomos, supremos, dirigidos cada vez más claramente por los intereses de los lobbies. Se acabaría así por hacer al hombre prisionero de sí mismo, incapaz de alteridad; una especie de hombre incompleto o decaído, extraño a toda implicación civil en la construcción del bien común".
Cultural acceptance an important aspect of the Catholic Faith

New Spanish Culture and Language Classes starting at St. Joseph Catholic Church

By Mauro Yanez
Sooner Catholic

NORMAN — A small group of Catholic faculty from the University of Oklahoma has been supporting the Hispanic Cultural Institute of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Norman. This particular program has reached out to English-speaking Catholics in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

The integration process and awareness of Hispanic culture and its history in the Catholic Church in the United States called attention to dozens of lay people during the past three semesters. This program offers Spanish language and cultural classes in order to create sensitivity about traditions, family values, and strong Catholic faith inspiration that is important here in Oklahoma.

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City has had one of the highest growths of Catholics with Hispanic background in the United States, assuming a correlation between the US census information and The Pew Institute data, which states that 75 percent of Latinos identify themselves as Catholics. Consequently, it is imperative to create acceptance of this reality that is reflected in the universal Catholic Church. For more information to register and enjoy this program, please call St. Joseph Catholic Church at 405-921-8080.

¿Mentes cerradas o corazones abiertos hacia el ser humano?

No hay excusas para no legalizar a los inmigrantes indocumentados

Por Mauro Yanez
Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Pasó el tiempo de alquimia sociopolítica, ahora tenemos un nuevo Presidente y un nuevo Congreso en los Estados Unidos. La gran pregunta: ¿Tendrán el valor moral y el buen corazón estos líderes políticos de abordar que hay que darle una salida inmediata al proceso de legalización de alredeedor de 12 millones de indocumentados?.

La crisis económica no puede ser una excusa para evitar tan histórica responsabilidad ante la humanidad y mucho menos ante los ojos de Dios. No hay duda que Dios nos sugiere y nos enseña hacer el bien en todo momento de nuestras vidas.

Desde el punto de vista moral, la Iglesia Católica sencillamente clama porque este asunto de carácter social como lo es el de la inmigración irregular, tenga una respuesta con solución concreta, positiva, integradora y tangible para poder coadyuvar con el proceso de integración de los inmigrantes que están viviendo en una sociedad donde tienden a ser ignorados, desmoralizados e incluso asesinados.

En el año 2008 según el instituto llamado “Southern Poverty Law Center”, los crímenes por odio racial se incrementaron más que en los años anteriores. Llama la atención que la mayoría de los incidentes reportados por este instituto en su website, los grandes afectados han sido personas indocumentadas de origen hispano.

Aunque algunos medios de comunicación se hacen la vista gorda desde que la economía ha ido en declive sobre este asunto del odio racial. La Iglesia Católica y otras organizaciones no gubernamentales siguen muy de cerca estos acontecimientos.

La escala de violencia puede disminuir cuando se le brinda protección de los derechos humanos de una manera efectiva a los más vulnerables. El proceso de defensa de los derechos humanos no es un asunto cognitivo sino inherente al ser humano. Cada cultura y cada país tienen un sistema de vida que va desde lo bueno a lo malo y de lo equívocado a lo correcto.

Los Estados Unidos es un país con grandes bendiciones, virtudes y patrimonios y uno resultante es su noble pueblo. Desde que los conquistadores pisaron la ciudad de San Agustín en el estado de la Florida en 1565 cuando Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés llegó con una misión llamada “Nombre de Dios” administrada por los franciscanos, San Agustín fue considerada como la primera ciudad de los Estados Unidos donde se celebró por primera vez la Santa Misa.

La historia de los Estados Unidos no está desligada en ningún momento de la Iglesia Católica y mucho menos de la hispanidad, son nojos históricos que Dios estuvo para que permanezcan siempre unidos.

No hay razón para negar el derecho que tienen los católicos de alzar su voz y recordarle al resto del pueblo estadounidense que debemos permanecer unidos en la fe cristiana y en la convivencia de vida pacífica.

No hay razón para negar los derechos humanos más elementales alrededor de doce millones de seres humanos por el hecho de que éstos hayan inmigrado de forma irregular en un momento de supervivencia.

Uno de los principios de la Constitución de los Estados Unidos reconoce en el que todos los hombres son creados iguales, es que acaso este fundamento no coincide con nuestras enseñanzas de Cristo.

Negar que coexista una tendencia a una cultura individualista en esta sociedad global moderna sería el equivalente a negar que el agua no existe.

Debemos aproximarnos más en resolver los asuntos de carácter colectivo y del bienestar común para un futuro mejor a seguirnos en la amistad de la convivencia.

Para San Agustín, Doctor de la Iglesia Católica, filósofo y teólogo, el orden político no está fundado en la fuerza sino en la justicia.

En su grandiosa e histórica obra La Ciudad de Dios, San Agustín nos dice: “Nosotros los cristianos llamamos a los gobernantes felices si mandan con justicia; si entre las voces de exaltado orgullo y los reverentes saludos de excesiva humildad, no son inflamados con el orgullo y recuerdan que son solamente hombres; si ponen su poder al servicio de la majestad de Dios, para extender su abrazo lejos y profundamente; si temen a Dios, si lo aman verdaderamente; si, más que su reino terrenal, aman el reino en donde no tienen compartir su dominio; si son lentos para castigar pero rápidos para perdonar.”
Change Within Can Help Ease Frustration of Expectations

There’s a spiritual axiom that says, “When I am upset, there is something wrong within me that I must change.” I am becoming more in touch with this axiom even though it brings up feelings of frustration and annoyance since I oftentimes want others or situations to be the way I think they ought to be.

However, I am realizing I have no right to make demands of or control others, to tell or dictate to others how they ought to be, nor insist that situations (weather, politics, finances, etc.) be the way I think is best.

The more expectations we have of others and the more focused we are on getting others to change, the more we will experience frustrations and resentments. The more we take others personally and feel hurt, betrayed, rejected and abandoned, the more miserable we are. The more we try to change situations that are out of our control, the more frustrated we will be. The more we worry about others and situations not being the way we want, the more anxious, agitated and upset we become.

As we realize that when we are feeling negative feelings, there is something within us that needs to change, then we can begin to take control of our lives. As we realize we can change something within us to alleviate these feelings, then we become more responsible individuals. As we understand that these feelings are telling us we need to take action about ourselves, we feel empowered. As we take responsibility for changing ourselves, we become more in touch with God’s will for us.

These negative feelings are reminders that we are to accept, let go, set boundaries, change our erroneous thinking, forgive others, be loving and do any number of a myriad of things to cope with our feelings. No matter what, we can become aware of what is happening around us that is contributing to these feelings, caution ourselves not to react in inappropriate and hurtful ways, and make choices to respond in appropriate and loving ways.

However, change is very difficult and oftentimes we will continue to respond in the same hurtful and inappropriate ways while expecting them to change, blaming them, etc. So let’s be patient with ourselves. Some of the more appropriate ways we can respond to these negative feelings are discussed below.

When we are feeling frustrated and angry, we can consider accepting what is happening, especially if we can’t control it, take steps to calm ourselves, and consider what is the best way to cope including removing ourselves from the situation. Acceptance is a real key to serenity, even though what we may have to accept is unacceptable such as terrorists flying planes into the twin towers.

When we are struggling on having things our way or are insisting on keeping what we have or getting what we want and we are experiencing agitation and annoyance, we may consider letting go. Letting go often relieves us of the burden of having things our way and opens the door to peace and serenity.

When we are feeling hurt, inadequate, rejected, discounted, disregarded, we can consider if we have taken someone personally by misinterpreting or giving erroneous meaning to something that was said or done. We can remind ourselves we are children of God and God loves us no matter what and attempt to respond to these feelings in an appropriate manner.

When we worry and feel anxious, we might allow ourselves to worry about something or someone for 20 minutes two or three times a day and relieve ourselves of worrying outside of these times. This allows us to begin taking control over worrying and can help us experience more calm.

Other ways of coping with our feelings include setting appropriate boundaries, journaling, removing ourselves from situations, confronting issues, asserting ourselves, praying, meditating, watching a sunset, the list goes on and on.

The key is to know that when we are feeling upset, hurt, frustrated, resentful, etc., we are to look within and make a change in ourselves. This is a wonderful time when we can pray, seek God’s will for us, ask Him to comfort us and give us the strength to carry out His will. Oftentimes, as we are willing to have God work within us, the negative feelings will soften and we will find peace.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Joe Froehle is a marital, individual and family counselor. He serves in the Counseling Center at St. John the Baptist, Edmond. His work includes many years at St. Anthony Hospital. He can be reached at (405) 359-8539 or by e-mail at jfroehle@subbell.net.

Letter

Taxpayer Friendly

In the Sooner Catholic, January 11th there was an article that was really an eye opener, that I would like to share with your readers.

This article was according to Dr. Karen Ristau, president of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA),

Catholic schools provide $19.8 Billion Dollars savings each year for the nation.

There has been much written in the press that Catholic schools are much more efficient when compared to the public school systems and here are some of them as told to me by public school teachers that I have come in contact with over the years as compared to my own experience of 12 years of Catholic education in St. Joseph’s School in Enid.

1. Public Schools boards members are elected positions and they owe their commitments to their constituents rather than to the teachers and students.

2. Public School teachers have a problem to achieve discipline or correct behavior of a student in their classrooms.

Teachers are limited in how far they can go to discipline a student, if they go too far they can be fired from their jobs.

This wasn’t my experience at St. Joseph’s School, my teachers exercised complete control in the classroom without question. They would not tolerate any miss behavior what so ever. I feel that I am a better man today having gone through very disciplined school. I didn’t appreciate at the time, but I do now.

3. The high cost of educating a student in public schools is due to the high salaries of the administrators, that in most cases do not trickle down to the teachers. I have been told and have heard on television that teachers have to buy some of their supplies that they need in their class rooms out of their own pockets.

4. The National Education Association are a very powerful voting block and have the clout to block school vouchers Catholic and Private Schools. They are more interested in protecting their jobs.

5. School Vouchers will not do away with Public Schools the competition will only make them more efficient.

So in conclusion although Catholic and Private Schools can save taxpayers billions of dollars it wouldn’t do any good unless the voters are given the facts. This can only happen in the message that we can get out in the press.

By Joe Froehle

Saint Francis, OKC
Calendar

JANUARY
25-31 Catholic Schools Week

27 Mount St. Mary home basketball game vs. Jones varsity, 6:30 and 8 p.m.

28 Eucharistic Adoration at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, NW 32nd and Western, every Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to noon. The Rosary is said every weekday at 2:30 p.m. All are welcome.

28 All-Day Adoration. Every Wednesday at St. Eugene Church, 2400 W. Hefner Road. Mass at 6:30 a.m., Exposition of Eucharist at 7 a.m., Confessions, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., Anointing of Sick, 3 p.m. Devotions conclude with multi-lingual evening prayer and Benediction at 7:30 p.m. Contacts: Barbara Curcio, 755-9163, or Gloria Pantazis, 751-7115.

29 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at Epiphany Parish Chapel, every Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and daily (M,T,W,F) from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. All are welcome. Located at 7336 W. Britton Road, OKC.

30 Mount St. Mary home basketball game vs. Luther varsity, 6:30 and 8 p.m.

31 Mandala Retreat, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with Melissa Anna Letts, OSB. Place: Art Barn at Red Plains Spirituality Center. Call (405) 373-0804 to register. Fee: $45, includes materials ($10 deposit). Bring a sack lunch.

31 Mass in Tagalog. St. Paul the Apostle Catholic in Del City will celebrate Mass in Tagalog (Filipino) at 7 p.m. every Saturday. All are welcome.

FEBRUARY
4 Rose Day at the state Capitol from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

6 Mount St. Mary home basketball game vs. Bridge Creek varsity, 6:30 and 8 p.m.

6 Holy Family Home Mass, 11:30 a.m., Holy Family Home, 6821 Eddie Drive, Midwest City. To confirm that Mass will be held that day and for directions, contact the HFMH at 741-7419.

13 First Friday Sacred Heart Mass at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is at 5:30 p.m. Sacrament of Reconciliation before Mass. Mass is at 7 p.m. For more information, call the Office of Family Life at (405) 721-8944 or Diane Grim at (405) 528-6252.

13 Mount St. Mary home basketball game vs. CHA varsity, 6:30 and 8 p.m.

13 Bingo at St. Joseph's Church in Norman. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. with the serving of a light dinner. First session of games begins at 7; second session at 8:30. There are drawings for door prizes.

13-15 Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend in Woodward at the Northwest Inn. For more information or to register, call Matt or Lindsey at (580) 698-2469.

15 The Secular Franciscan Order of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus - Oklahoma Community and Province of St. Therese meets at St. Joseph Carmelite Monastery in Piedmont from 1 to 4 p.m. For more information, call Jim Disbrow at 830-8688.

15 The Community of the Secular Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus - Oklahoma Community and Province of St. Therese meets at St. Joseph Carmelite Monastery in Piedmont from 1 to 4 p.m. For more information, call Susan Staudt at (405) 282-6624.

Jobs Box

Youth Minister Opening
St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Oklahoma City is accepting applications for a dynamic youth, young adult minister. Full-time position with benefits. Send or drop by an application with curricula vitae and references to “Youth Minister Search Committee,” St. Francis of Assisi Parish, 1901 N.W. 18th, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73106.

Bookkeeper
Catholic Charities is seeking a bookkeeper to work in our Oklahoma City office. Successful candidate will have 3-plus years related field experience, non-profit preferred, including payroll and benefits, processing experience a must. Proficiency in EXCEL, Word, Outlook, Internet, ten-key and calculator is required. Experience with Financial Edge, Blackbaud desired. A working knowledge of computers and associated equipment as well as attention to detail, organization skills, accuracy and the ability to work with minimal supervision are essential.

Director of Institutional Advancement
St. Gregory's University Office of Institutional Advancement has an opening for the position of Director of Institutional Advancement and Alumni. We are seeking an assertive, personable self-starter with proven fundraising skills/ experience to assume a leadership position in managing the Institutional Advancement (IA) office. The ideal candidate will have responsibility for developing and implementing IA’s strategic vision, annual goals and the necessary systems/procedures to ensure success. Strong planning, verbal and written communication, and creative application skills are necessary. The ability to motivate and mentor office members as well as develop and maintain relationships with university constituents is paramount. Ideal candidate will have a minimum of three years of senior fundraising experience and a bachelor's degree. A master's degree and experience in higher education is preferred. Send cover letter, resume and references to St. Gregory's University, Human Resources Director, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee, Okla. 74804 or e-mail hr@stgregorys.edu. EOE

Immediate Openings
The Center of Family Love in Okarche has immediate openings for the following: LPNs — Full-time shifts available (3 p.m. to 11 p.m). DCTs — Certified is great, if not we will train. Shifts available are 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Program Coordinator — Four years experience working with people with developmental disabilities or degree combination. To apply, call 263-4658, fax 263-4718, e-mail alemke@cflinc.org or in person at 635 W. Texas, Okarche 73762. EOE

Organist/Music Director in Fort Smith
Christ the King Catholic Church and School in Fort Smith, Ark., is seeking a full-time director of music ministries. Successful candidate will teach music in our pre-K through sixth-grade school and oversee our church choirs. Competitive salary, benefits and retirement. Bachelor's degree required. E-mail résumé, references and inquiries to Rev. Tom Elliott at FatherT@FatherT.com by Feb. 28, 2009.

For up-to-date Jobs Box listing, go to catharchdioceseokc.org and click on the Job Listing button.
A Journey of Love,
A Journey of Faith

Young Couple Has Shared Five Catholic Sacraments

By Ammanda McCabe
The Sooner Catholic

It’s rare these days to find couples who have known each other since they were 4 years old — let alone have shared five sacraments in their lives together! Yet that is exactly the story of Amy Castro Braun and her husband, Justin, parishioners at St. Mark the Evangelist in Norman.

“Justin and I met at Villa Teresa in preschool when we were 4 years old, and continued to go to Catholic schools together,” said Amy Braun. They graduated from Villa Teresa in the fourth grade, then went on to first Sacred Heart and then Mount St. Mary’s High School, where they started dating their senior year and were named basketball homecoming king and queen. Their families also share a history at Mount St. Mary’s. Their fathers played football together there.

“Our families have always attended the same church and we go out to eat after Mass every Sunday. Our mothers are great friends, and even do water aerobics together,” Amy said. “Our families also vacation together in the summer. We are so blessed to have such great Catholic roots and traditions that we can pass on to our child.”

Growing up together meant that the Brauns always shared close ties in the Church. “We celebrated our first reconciliation and first communion in second grade at Villa Teresa,” Amy said. “We celebrated the sacrament of confirmation in eighth grade at Sacred Heart. We were married when we were 25 years old, after dating for seven years, at St. Mark the Evangelist. Our fifth sacrament to share together will be the baptism of our son, Jackson Tylar Braun!”

Their ties in the Church came out in an interesting way at their wedding, too. “When we were married, the Carmelite Sisters from Villa Teresa were so excited! They came to the church early to see me while I was getting ready. After the wedding, Deacon Byron thought it was so great that so many nuns had come to our wedding that he rounded them up and took their picture with us. Of course they were so pleased that two children they helped ‘raise’ were getting married!”

When asked how these shared experiences made their marriage stronger, Amy answered, “We could not have imagined how much our love has continued to grow since we were married. Having a baby allows you to see a whole other side of your spouse, and it makes your commitment to each other and your family blossom even more. We are so thankful that God has blessed our lives in so many ways and given us such great families and friends.”

Archbishop Beltran confirms Justin.

Amy on the day of their First Communion.

New parents means a new sacrament to celebrate with their son, Jackson.

Justin and Amy surrounded by Sisters from Villa Teresa School on their wedding day.