And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2: 9-11
The Good News

... New Year 2008

Even though it seems that one day melts into the next and an old year into the new one, yet a New Year does challenge us to New Beginnings! In that spirit of moving forward, once again I wish to express my very best personal greetings to you and your loved ones. I pray that this New Year of 2008 will be a very special year of God’s grace and love for you.

Our Archdiocese is blessed by Almighty God with many, many good and faithful people who enthusiastically, joyfully and competently minister in and for the Church. These people — ordained, religious or lay — do more than work. They are committed to the Church. They are people of faith. They are dedicated to the mission of the Church. Consequently we have wonderful parishes, missions and schools. There are programs and services of all kinds from preschool activities through nursing home care. Catholic Charities and other organizations of the Church are ministering to people all over our Archdiocese. Religious education programs are conducted at most parish sites, at every school and at the Catholic Pastoral Center.

Precisely because we do have so many dedicated people in this Archdiocese, there are countless opportunities for every single Catholic person to grow in faith. Opportunities to learn more about our Catholic religion and to become involved in the life of the Church are readily available. Therefore, as your Archbishop, I am issuing an invitation to every Catholic person living in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. In fact, I will extend this invitation to everyone throughout this New Year. Basically my invitation to you is that you strive to live the fullness of our Catholic faith throughout 2008. This is a new year with new opportunities for you and me to discover and to follow God’s plan for us.

My first 2008 invitation to you is a reminder that the Mass, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, is the heart of our Catholic faith. The value and worth of the Mass comes from Jesus since it is the re-enactment of His life, death and resurrection. Through the sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus offers Himself to His Father in heaven for us. He also offers Himself to us in Holy Communion under the appearance of bread and wine which has been changed into His Body and Blood.

The beauty, the meaning and the effectiveness of the Eucharistic celebration comes directly from God through His Son Jesus for our salvation. We need the Eucharist to be healed and forgiven. We need Jesus to strengthen and help us. He and He alone can lead us safely on the path of daily life. Only Jesus can grant us eternal peace and life in heaven.

At the Last Supper, Jesus entrusted the Catholic Church that He was forming with the care and custody of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Shortly after the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the Apostles and their followers recognized the significant, indeed the necessity, to gather regularly on the first day of the week to celebrate Mass and receive Holy Communion. The Church realized that through the Sunday Eucharistic celebration, they were best able to keep the command of the Lord: “Keep holy the Sabbath!”

As Catholic people in 2008, we continue to gather to celebrate weekend Masses in our parishes. Because of the need we have for the Eucharist and out of reverence for the Lord Jesus who gives Himself to us, the Sunday Mass is not one option among many devotions. The celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is an essential act of worship. If we are to be loyal, faithful Catholic people, we must respond to the invitation of Jesus to participate and to celebrate Sunday Mass.

This New Year 2008 can be the best year of our lives if we make our Sunday Mass a priority. We do this not simply because it is a serious obligation binding us under mortal sin. We participate and celebrate Sunday Mass every single weekend because it is the most positive way that we can receive God’s love and love Him in return. The Church, in its official teaching and legislation, has given us the serious obligation to celebrate Mass every Sunday so that we could properly praise and honor Almighty God and grow in His love.

Celebrate Sunday Mass every weekend in 2008 and you will have a truly happy, holy and blessed New Year. The Lord is with you and you will remain with you!

Archbishop Ordains Two to Diaconate on Dec. 27

OKLAHOMA CITY — Archbishop Eusebius Beltran ordained Joseph Patrick Schwarz and Christopher Tran to the diaconate during a ceremony Dec. 27. The ordination was celebrated in the Chapel at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Both Deacon Schwarz and Deacon Tran are scheduled to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders in May. They will be joined in that ordination by James Andrew Wickersham.

Deacon Schwarz was born April 8, 1978, in Salt Lake City, Utah. His parents are Max and Patricia Schwarz of Okarche. His home parish is Holy Trinity Church in Okarche. He received his bachelor of science from Oklahoma State University and was accepted as a seminarian in 2001. He completed the Pre-Theology program at Conception Seminary College in 2003 and in 2007 he graduated from Notre Dame Seminary with a Master of Divinity. Deacon Tran was born Feb. 12, 1965, in Hue, Vietnam. His parents are Hoanh Tran and Tron Bui. His home parish is Saint Andrew Dung-Lac Church in Oklahoma City. He graduated from Kean University with a bachelor of arts in 1989. He was accepted as a seminarian in 2004.

My invitation to you is that you strive to live the fullness of our Catholic faith throughout 2008.
**Unintended Consequences**

**Mary Diane Steltenkamp Has Looked Into The Faces of Those Who Are Suffering Under Failed Immigration System**

By Ray Dyer

*The Sooner Catholic*

OKLAHOMA CITY — Mary Diane Steltenkamp has been involved in the ministry of healing for years. She was the first nurse hired to establish the Parish Nurse Program, now known as Faith Community Nursing. She helped pioneer this kind of healing that embraces not only the physical, but the emotional and especially the spiritual well-being of a person. She has advocated for better access to health care for all Oklahomans and recently she’s had her heart broken as she witnesses firsthand the “unintended consequences” of the immigration laws.

Steltenkamp serves as coordinator for the Faith Community Nursing program operated by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. She said the new state law aimed at the Hispanic population that is living here illegally has extreme difficulties. In a podcast with people who are already facing the consequences of the immigration laws.

Loving God, may the goodness and love, You so generously lavish on us, grow to a deep gratitude in our hearts, so strong in its thanksgiving, that sharing freely of our unique gifts becomes the norm and pattern of our lives.

O’my God, help us realize that these gifts rendered to Your family bring meaningful fulfillment, making our lives worthwhile and bearing generous fruits in others.

Dear God, may our gifts motivate those around us to also accept Your love into their hearts — creating a community of faith, caring for Your family and committing us to share our spiritual and material gifts as an outward sign of Your love! Amen

Then there’s the story of the 21-year-old woman who was living an active and normal life until her kidneys failed. Years ago her father had come to the U.S. as a permanent resident and petitioned for his spouse and children. The papers were finalized for the rest of the family but the young woman turned 21 before she could be made legal. Consequently, it put her in another category requiring a longer time before she could acquire legal status. A few months ago she became quite ill, showing up in the emergency room with renal failure requiring emergency dialysis. Steltenkamp said dialysis would be much more affordable if it was administered at a clinic, but chronic dialysis is not considered an emergency so there is no coverage. “The most expensive treatment a person can get is in the hospital emergency room. It would be so much more cost effective to have quality regular dialysis than to access the emergency room with multiorgan consequences. Yet, there is not a chronic dialysis unit that will take this woman.

“Our Catholic teaching tells us that basic health care is a right and not an option,” Steltenkamp said. “It is the necessary element for the dignity of the human person. These days are difficult for those of us who can offer little to no resources for the many medical needs. It is a time when our hearts break too, along with so many who suffer from lack of care.”

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**Prayer for the Success of the 2008 ADF Appeal**

O’ Lord, our God, create in us a heart opened to Your love. Expand our hearts to accept the unlimited love You give us. May we not reject this gift so freely given!

Gracious God, overwhelmed by Your love, may we be moved to change our priorities, placing You and our trust in You at the center of our lives.

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Gracious God, overwhelmed by Your love, may we be moved to change our priorities, placing You and our trust in You at the center of our lives.

**2007 ADF Annual Appeal**

As of Dec. 19, 2007 the ADF totals look like this: 10,673 donors.

Pledges of $3,145,916.47.

Receipt of $2,946,486.93.

Write-offs of $5,643.50

Balance of $193,786.04.

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A job offer from Oklahoma meant the now 59-year-old truck driver would make more money in a state with a much lower cost of living. The route he was offered would be much shorter, enabling him to be home most evenings with his family. They also would be closer to another son and grandchildren, all who reside legally in Oklahoma. With their now 23-year-old adopted, disabled son, the couple moved from California to Oklahoma with great hope for a better life. Instead they have found great obstacles getting the proper medical care for their son, Steltenkamp said. They are now stuck.

“It’s heartbreaking,” she said. She said federal law apparently required them to adopt the boy before his 14th birthday, but they did not know this. As a consequence, the boy does not qualify for any services.

“I was able to get the medicine they need for him from the free clinics in the Oklahoma City area, but that’s not a guaranteed source,” Steltenkamp said. “If the clinics have the medicine they will provide it, but there is no guarantee they will always have it.”

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**By Ray Dyer**

**The Sooner Catholic**

California just before HB 1804 took effect on Nov. 1 of last year. Steltenkamp said about 20 years ago, two Catholic nuns living in Mexico came across a young boy who was being severely neglected. “They found him curled up inside a closet,” Steltenkamp said. She said the boy, about 3 years old, weighed maybe 50 pounds and had been left for dead.

The nuns cared for the boy, but knew the kind of medical help he needed could only be found in the United States. They contacted their friends who were living in California. The couple agreed to take the little boy in and care for him. The man and woman were legal residents. The man worked as a long haul truck driver. In the beginning, the woman stayed home to raise the young boy who was eventually diagnosed with cerebral palsy, and had a history of meningitis and seizures. By residing in California, the young boy could receive assistance from a state-operated Resource Center. This agency provided for schooling, a wheelchair and a caseworker who visited the home regularly, assuring that the boy was well cared for. The mother also received “respite” which allowed her to be a full-time employee. The young boy received necessary medicine (close to $1,000 monthly) as well as coverage for emergency hospital visits. They would eventually adopt the boy as their legal son. They did this when he was 19.

Fast forward to now.

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**Hear It Now**

New Podcast Online

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Gracious God, overwhelmed by Your love, may we be moved to change our priorities, placing You and our trust in You at the center of our lives.
Fear May Have Kept Hispanic Community Away From Shelter

By Mauro Yanez
The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Fear may have kept Hispanic people from taking shelter at the Cox Convention Center following the historic ice storm and bitter cold that ravaged Oklahoma in early December. With hundreds of thousands of residents lacking power and temperatures dipping into the low 20s, the Cox Center in downtown Oklahoma City was opened as an emergency shelter. Even though hundreds found comfort inside the center while emergency crews worked to restore power, the number of Hispanic people there could be counted on one hand.

Volunteers from Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and other local churches and organizations offered support to the people who took shelter at the Cox Center. Several noted the absence of the Hispanic community.

“Anyone coming to this shelter is able get meals and water regardless of their immigration status so everyone will get help,” said Natalie Scott with the American Red Cross. “We are not here collecting immigration papers; however, I am very surprised not to see almost any Hispanics here except for one Hispanic man and another Hispanic family.”

Tim O’Connor, executive director of Catholic Charities for the Archdiocese, said fear and uncertainty kept the Hispanic community away from the Cox Center.

“This demonstrates how high the level of fear is in the Hispanic community,” O’Connor said, referring to the suffering caused by Oklahoma’s new illegal immigration law. O’Connor said the law, known as House Bill 1804, caused people to choose suffering inside their frigid homes rather than risk possible arrest. “No one at the shelter was checking immigration papers, but because of the presence of police officers for security reasons, it caused an element of fear among the Hispanic community and they chose to stay away.” O’Connor called it very sad to think that Oklahoma law caused the elderly, as well as the very young, including infants, to suffer in the cold because of the fear caused by HB 1804.

The lone Hispanic man at the shelter the evening of Dec. 13 said he became so cold in his home he felt he had no other choice than to enter the shelter. “It was difficult for me to stay at my home without power and such cold, but thank God I found this shelter.”

Ice Leaves Sacred Heart in the Dark, but Faith Burns Bright

By Eileen Dugan
The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — The ice storm picked an extraordinary week to snatch power from Sacred Heart Church. Not only did it choose to knock out power to the parish during its annual Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 3-12), it also disrupted the cherished Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. But there was no heat.

For eight days Sacred Heart Parish in the Capitol Hill area of Oklahoma City remained in the dark, but nobody missed Mass. Every day, regardless of the fog, snow or ice, Mass was celebrated — by candlelight. Candles also lit the church for a funeral and a wedding. But there was no heat.

When asked what it was like celebrating Mass without power, Pastor Father Anthony Taylor answered, “Cold!”

“We lost power about 2 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 10. The electricity was out from then until Monday, Dec. 17,” Father said. “We didn’t cancel any Masses. We even had a funeral and a wedding when it was 40 degrees in the church. At the wedding, the bride, the mother of the bride, the mother of the groom and the girls in the wedding party were very brave. They were all wearing sleeveless dresses and shivered through the whole ceremony.”

On the Sunday during the power outage, Sacred Heart held three Masses in the unheated gym. Throughout the ice storm, Mount Saint Mary High School, just across the street, never lost power. “They were very good to us,” Father Taylor said. “We have nine Masses every weekend at Sacred Heart. That Sunday, Mount Saint Mary’s let us have the other six Masses in their auditorium.”

As the power outages continued, Sacred Heart Church remained cold, especially on Wednesday, Dec. 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It was positively frigid in the building as the congregation gathered at 4 a.m. for the “Mañanitas.” At this annual event everyone sings together to honor the Virgin of Guadalupe. These events mark two important. Christmas and Easter are more important.

For many of the families, they have limited resources. It makes it a tough road for most of them,” Smith said.

Catholic Charities Workers Help Support Victims of Ice Storm

By Connie Blaney
Catholic Charities

OKLAHOMA CITY — In December, thousands of people were affected by one of the worst ice storms in Oklahoma’s history. In the first few days of the storm, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission reported approximately 500,000 without power. The storm caused more than 20 deaths due to vehicle accidents, fires and carbon monoxide poisoning.

“Although the stories were as unique as the individuals, the majority were parents concerned for providing shelter and food for their families. For many of the families who came to us for assistance, they have no support system. Their only choice was to go to the shelter at the Cox Convention Center,” Smith said. “One family said they had to return their Christmas presents to buy groceries.”

Catholic Charities Disaster Response Team took action immediately to help those in need. Staff from several departments assisted at the Cox Center’s temporary shelter. Catholic Charities staff worked alongside others from American Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way, 211, NorthCare, Office of Emergency Management and other agencies. After the Cox Center shelter closed, a one-stop disaster resource center was opened at West Town, located in Oklahoma City. Catholic Charities continued to provide case management at that location.

In addition to those helped at the Cox Convention Center, staff at Catholic Charities also answered hundreds of phone calls at the main office with information, referrals, intakes and financial assistance. Thousands of dollars was provided in immediate assistance through the agency’s Disaster Relief Fund. Catholic Charities will also work with many clients in long-term recovery efforts. “It is our goal to help people return to their pre-disaster level. However, for many of these low-income families, they have limited resources. It makes it a tough road for most of them,” Smith said.
Entrance Rites: Preparing Catholics to Meet God

This is one in a series of articles intended to help explain the Mass.

By Father Tom Margevicius

Let's look closely at the beginning of Mass.

Of course, we don't think that in the Upper Room one of the apostles fired up an organ, Jesus put on a stole andchasuble, got in line behind the altar servers carrying incense andcandles, and they sang "Gather Us In" before beginning the Last Supper.

Around the year A.D. 155, St. Justin explained to a pagan emperor how Christians did it: "On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read ..." (See "Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1345).

The rest of St. Justin's liturgy looks remarkably familiar, and it is reassuring that the early church celebrated Mass pretty much the same way we still do. But notice that St. Justin says nothing about the entrance rites. These developed gradually over several hundred years.

• Altar. One of the earliest things to develop is the symbolism of the altar itself. At the start of Mass, when everyone reaches the sanctuary, we bow to the altar, even if the tabernacle is in a different chapel. And bishops, priests and deacons kiss the altar. Why?

That's because, according to St. Ambrose (late 300s), the altar is a symbol of Christ. The liturgy calls Jesus Christ priest, victim and altar; as High Priest, he makes the offering (Hebrews 5:1-10). As Victim, he is the one being sacrificed, the Lamb who was slain (Revelation 13:8).

But why altar? St. Paul says we "offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, our spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1). Since we know the Father accepts Christ's sacrifice, we place our lives on Christ himself; he is the one through whom we sacrifice our lives. Reverencing the altar is reverencing Christ himself.

• Greeting. The celebrant greets the assembly with the Sign of the Cross and a scriptural text such as "The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." (Titus 1:4).

This is much richer than merely saying, "Good morning." No matter how much the priest and people like one another, something more is happening: The priest is wishing God upon the people, and the people respond not just to the man, but to Jesus Christ himself.

That's why the literal translation of the people's response is, "And with your spirit." Christ greets his bride (the church), and the bride greets the spirit of Christ present in the priest.

• Penitential rite. Are you ready to meet Jesus, who really comes to us in the Eucharist? Sometimes, neither am I. That's why we usually ask for mercy next. This can take several forms: The most ancient predates even the use of Latin in Mass: We cry out "Kyrie eleison," Greek for "Lord have mercy."

The Confiteor ("I confess ") first shows up around the eighth century. And sometimes, such as at Easter and Masses, we renew our baptismal promises and replace the penitential rite with a sprinkling of water.

The Gloria comes from the song the angels sang at Jesus' birth (Luke 2:14) and originally was used only during the Christmas season. It found its way into Mass during the sixth century. Christ is born anew in each Mass we celebrate, and we sing his praises with the angels and saints who are continually praising him. Each time we pray Mass, we join with the liturgy already going on in heaven (CCC, 1090).

• Opening prayer. The opening prayer is also called the "collect." The priest intones, "Let us pray," and then a brief silence follows. The silence is not just waiting for the server to bring the book; each of us is supposed to be praying silently during that time, and after a short while the priest "collects" all those silent prayers into the opening prayer. When the priest ends, we all acclaim "Amen!" signaling our agreement with the prayer, and we are ready for God to speak to us.

Father Tom Margevicius is instructor of liturgical theology at St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity in St. Paul.

Scholarships Available from the Catholic Foundation

The Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma Inc. is pleased to announce that it will award a number of higher education scholarships for the 2008-09 academic year to qualifying Catholic students who are residents of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Seminarians and students enrolled in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Ministry program are also invited to apply provided they meet eligibility requirements.

St. Gregory University in Shawnee and Newman University in Wichita, Kan., have again generously agreed to match the Catholic Foundation scholarship awards for students enrolling at these schools.

The Catholic Foundation will also award the P.B. Connelly Medical Scholarship to Catholic students of low to moderate means. These applicants must be enrolled in the University of Oklahoma - School of Medicine.

Additionally, the Helen R. Hall Nursing Scholarship is offered by the Catholic Foundation to full-time Catholic students enrolled at St. Gregory University in Shawnee.

And the Bob Little Pastoral Musicians Scholarship is available to Catholic students pursuing a degree in pastoral music at the college or university of their choice.

The Catholic Foundation guidelines for eligibility are as follows:

* The Applicant must demonstrate academic/scholaristic ability,
* The Applicant must show financial necessity,
* The Applicant must be a full-time student (12 hours/semester minimum),
* The Applicant must be a resident of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and a registered and active member of a Catholic parish.

For an application or additional information, contact The Catholic Foundation, P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73123 Phone (405) 721-4115, e-mail tboothe@catharchdioceseokc.org

Applications must be completed and returned to The Catholic Foundation no later than Monday, April 4, 2008.
Are Catholic Funerals Relevant to Catholics Today?

Editor's Note: The following was presented during the annual convention of the Catholic Cemetery Conference held in Phoenix. It was modified for publication in the Catholic Cemetery magazine and is reprinted in a series that will run in this and following issues of the Sooner Catholic.

By Reverend Stephen J. Bird

An article in the May 4, 2007, issue of the newspaper USA Today caught my eye. It was an article concerning funerals in Phoenix and originally appeared in The Arizona Republic.

The article told about a variety of interesting services. "Craig Hansen once re-created a casino inside his Phoenix funeral home where mourners, in honor of the departed, played slot machines. The idea was to create the noise and activity of gambling, and the money dropped into the slots went to the deceased’s favorite charity. At another farewell, the funeral director simulated a campsite because the deceased loved to camp. The director pitched a tent and brought in a faux fire." The article went on to say, "Changing attitudes about death and dying have contributed to how a person is remembered."

In my own experience, I am occasionally invited to attend a funeral at a church that is not Catholic. What seems to be popular now in other churches is a lengthy video production showing photos from the life of the deceased, accompanied by recorded music.

Sometimes, it seems as if the service is all about the person who died and has little to do with what God has done and is doing. Here is another trend: The body is frequently buried in a private, family ceremony prior to the funeral service.

In both Catholic and non-Catholic circles, we have seen a great increase in the use of cremation in recent years. I will look at cremation later.

But first, let us go back in time. Think about the way that great Egyptian leaders were buried: their bodies mumified and elaborate tombs built. Even though we might call them pagan, they certainly had some idea about the importance of the body and some idea about an afterlife.

In our own day, we get a sense of the importance of the body when there is an accident or disaster. Often, heroic efforts are made to recover the body of a drowning victim, the victims of a plane crash or disappearance, and the victims of a coal mining accident such as the recent mine collapse in Utah.

The early Christians built upon the Jewish and pagan traditions of burying the body. The Catholic Church has a rich tradition, centuries old, when it comes to both caring for the dying person and caring for the person after death. And of course, we are also concerned about the family and friends of the deceased person.

If those who are not Christians go to great lengths to care for the deceased, there is all the more reason for us, as Christians, to care for those who have died.

St. Augustine (who lived in the last half of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century) said, "The bodies of our deceased must not be treated lightly or disregarded, particularly the bodies of the faithful or of virtuous men; for these bodies were used by their souls in a holy manner as instruments and agents for the performance of all their good works. Now if they who do not believe in the resurrection of the flesh are so anxious about the care of the physical body, how much greater should be our concern, we who do believe!"

May our tender care for the body of our deceased which is destined, as we know, for an eternal resurrection be, then, a manifestation of the faith and love within us."

I believe that what St. Augustine spoke about 16 centuries ago is very relevant today. We need to rediscover the richness of what the Catholic ritual offers in its current ritual. While some Catholics are asking to add various elements that they have observed in non-Catholic or non-religious funeral services, I believe that, instead, we need to explore what the Catholic ritual already provides.

We cannot change the Church’s ritual. However, the Church recognizes that we live in an era when personal choice is important. So the Church provides us with many options within the structure of the funeral rites. At a time of emotional stress, such as the death of a loved one, we need (and often yearn for) signs of stability that help anchor us as we face an uncertain future.

Families do not have to “invent” a ceremony from scratch. We are given a structure, which we can adapt to our particular circumstances. This is a gift from the Church. And if the rituals are done well and the various options utilized, I have found they can be very relevant to those of us who live in the 21st century.

The name of our current Catholic ritual is Order of Christian Funerals (OCF). It is called an “Order” because it contains many options from which to choose. Some of these options can be led by a parish leader, a volunteer, a family member, a member of the funeral home staff or a cemetery employee.

Before a person dies, there are prayers for the dying. Immediately after death, there are comforting prayers for the deceased and the family. There are optional prayers to be used when the family first gathers in the presence of the body. We have a short and beautiful ritual that can be used before the body is transferred to the Church.

Provisions are made for Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer if these seem appropriate. But the three principal forms of prayer are the Vigil of the Deceased (which we sometimes call the “wake service”), the Funeral Liturgy (usually a Mass), and the Rite of Committal that takes place at the cemetery. I will look more closely at these three services: the Vigil, the Funeral, and the Committal.

The ritual says, “In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by His death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity.” (OCF #1) “Catholic funeral rituals express our continuing love and care for the deceased, and these rituals can begin that inward letting go which will hand over the deceased to God’s mercy. These same rituals seek also to help us put our own lives back together again with new hope for the future.”

Rev. Stephen Bird is pastor of Epiphany Parish in Oklahoma City. He also serves as director of the Archdiocesan Office of Worship and Spiritual Life. Father Bird may be reached at (405) 722-2110 or epiphany@epiphanyokc.com.

Across Oklahoma

Pastoral Ministry Spring Semester

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Pastoral Ministry Program begins the spring 2008 semester on Jan. 14. Five courses are being offered this semester: Christology, Theology and Methods of Ministry, Theologies of Conversion, Theology of Mar and Christian Discipleship in the 21st Century. Anyone interested in taking a course is encouraged to register soon. Complete course and registration information is online at www.catharchdioceseok.org, or contact the Office of Education, Pastoral Ministry, or you may call or e-mail the Pastoral Ministry Office at (405) 721-4208, cgrimes@catharchdioceseok.org.

Priest to Discuss Divorce

OKLAHOMA CITY — Pastor Rick Stanberry, Pastor of Christ the King Catholic Church and Judicial Vicar of the Marriage Tribunal, will conduct a seminar for divorced Catholics on Jan. 16 at 7 p.m. at Christ the King in the East Formal Room. All are invited. The seminar will help remove many misconceptions people have about the Church’s teachings on divorce and will help those who are divorced understand their options in the Catholic Church, including annulments and remarriage. For more information, contact the parish office at (405) 842-1481.

St. Pat’s Day Ball To Benefit Catholic Charities

OKLAHOMA CITY — The 2008 St. Patrick’s Day Grand Marshal Ball will be held March 8, 2008, at the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club. Tickets will be on sale in February for the annual fundraiser which benefits Catholic Charities Homeless Services in Oklahoma City.

Artist Lucille "Lou" Flanagan Ackerman, 2008 St. Patrick’s Day grand marshal, will be recognized at the event. The charity ball will feature dinner, a live auction and an evening of dancing to a live band. The evening will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Individual tickets for the ball are $125 per person. Individual tables and corporate tables are also available. For information on corporate sponsorships, contact Toby Boothe or Jane Moon at 523-3000. For more information on the ball, go to www.catholiccharitiesok.org.
Resurrection Cemetery Chapel: A Reliquary of Saints

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the Faithful, grant to the souls of Thy servants departed the remission of all their sins, that through our devout prayers they may obtain the pardon which they have always desired. Who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

By Christina T. Ford

The Catholic cemetery is more than just a burial ground; it is a religious institution, a reliquary of saints awaiting that final glorious moment of resurrection, the unification of body and the soul of Christ. The Catholic cemetery is a sacred place, and it has been established by the Church to carry out appropriately and reverently, the Corporal Work of Mercy: the burial of the dead.

It has been said of shrines that they are the “places of grace, designed primarily to lead man to heaven; they defend the faith which bring men there and they are as undying as the loving devotion which we are prepared to put to our “Mother Church.”

Resurrection Cemetery Chapel was designated a shrine. A place of pilgrimage, Resurrection Cemetery was visited as such in 1983, and again in the Jubilee year of 2000.

The chapel, built at the center of the cemetery in 1962, was the only one of its type in the country. The chapel floor, in the shape of the Greek cross, has floor crypts. The idea of crypts in the church floor came about hundreds of years ago when nobility seeking to be close to God in death, would bequeath large sums of money to build churches and then request that their remains be entombed in the church.

Even further back in history, the early Roman catacombs, when discovered, had memorial chapels built over them in remembrance of a certain saint. San Sebastiano is one church in Rome built over a network of catacombs to glorify St. Sebastian, a Christian martyr. The most famous of churches, of course, is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, also named the Church of the Resurrection, which was built over the tomb and site of the resurrected Christ.

Is it mere coincidence that Resurrection Memorial Chapel was built physically and spiritually within the principle of the Resurrection and also tied to the glories of true historical events?

The floor crypt concept for the chapel originated with Brother Joseph Levesque, founder of Resurrection Cemetery and the Brothers of St. Joseph, a community of monk-like brothers serving the Church, engaged in the Corporal Work of Mercy and seeking spiritual fulfillment in doing so. The chapel was brought to fruition by an architectural firm with both Brother Joseph Levesque and Father John Walch (now deceased). Father Walch was an internationally-known artist for years and was the illustrator for the Extension Society calendar.

Some of his work resides in the Vatican.

Constructed of most durable materials, the outside is granite and slate. The roof is copper and is topped with a cupola on which stands a four-sided cross, reflecting the universality of the Church — north, east, south and west, also representing the true Greek cross on the floor below. Accompanying the cross is a bronze outline of Archangel Gabriel, blowing his trumpet, for he is announcing the Resurrection.

Inside, the floor is made of terrazzo, locally done by an “old world” artisan. All the walls are marble: Roman travertine, French rouge antique and Belgian black and gold. The inner walls are adorned with beautiful hand-carved wood sculptures, again, designed by Father Walch, coming from Italy. “The Raising of Lazarus” adorns the west wall and the east wall possesses “The Pieta.” The sub-floor crypts, venting system and plenum chambers were designed by Brother Levesque.

Entombed in the Belgian black and gold marble walls are the four bishops of Oklahoma and the second archbishop of Oklahoma City. Many former priests are entombed in the floor. Similar floor crypts for lay Catholics are located in the nave of the chapel. This very fine chapel reflects evidence of our belief and faith in regard to our burial of the dead and to the faithful in Oklahoma. This chapel is truly a reliquary of saints.

Christina Ford, general manager and chief operating officer, Resurrection Memorial Cemetery in Oklahoma City, may be reached at (405) 721-4191 or cristford@aol.com.
Adopt a Family for Christmas Project: A BIG Success

Catholic Charities annual Adopt a Family for Christmas project in the Oklahoma City area was a huge success with 338 families (approximately 1,700 persons) adopted for the Christmas season. Individuals, churches, businesses and families adopted an individual or family, purchasing Christmas gifts, clothing, toys, gift cards and food.

“This was a blessed time for families who would not have had a Christmas if it were not for the generosity of so many people in our parishes and community,” said Becky Van Pool, director of Parish Outreach and Program Development.

“Even with some delays due to the ice storm, we have managed to arrange for pickup and deliveries with everyone receiving their presents for Christmas. It has been overwhelming to see the joy in giving from so many people as they bring their gifts for their adopted family. We are so grateful. God bless everyone for helping in this year’s project,” Van Pool said.

This is the 12th year that Catholic Charities has sponsored the Adopt a Family Christmas program.

Columbia Square Construction on Target in Lawton

By Connie Blaney
Catholic Charities

LAWTON — The renovation of Columbia Square Apartments is on schedule with three new buildings now completely enclosed. Chuck Wade, a member of the Catholic Charities board of directors and Columbia Square board of directors, reported on the progress shortly before Christmas.

The first apartment building was occupied in early December. There are currently 31 residents living at the affordable housing complex. A second building was expected to be complete at the end of December. Residents will be able to move in upon completion of each building. Plans are under way to have an open house party for the residents when the Community Center is finished. A welcome basket will be presented to each resident as they move into the new apartments.

Completion of the entire project is scheduled for December of 2008.

A name change for Columbia Square is being considered by the board of directors. The board and representatives in the Lawton community believe that a name change would improve the image of the property in the community,” said Wade. He said several names are being considered.

The 64-unit Columbia Square Apartments, originally built in the 1970s, was demolished earlier in the year and will be rebuilt from the original apartment foundation. The apartments will offer new and affordable two- and three-bedroom apartments. The renovation is being done in phases allowing construction to take place with minimal impact to the residents. The complex has 10 separate buildings and a community building with a management office. Columbia Square is located at NW 4th Street and Columbia Avenue in Lawton.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and Mercy Housing Services, a national nonprofit housing developer, are the lead development partners in this project. Financing is being provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Enterprise Community Investment, Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency, Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka, Bank of Oklahoma and Catholic Charities. Gorman Management, first hired in 2003, will continue to manage the complex.
Sanctity of Life Mass

Acknowledging the 35th Anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Decision

January 23, 2008

6 p.m. Mass

Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Principal Celebrant

Most Rev. Eusebius J. Beltran,

Presentations to follow Mass for Teens with Dr. Rick Boothe,

3 Reasons to Choose Life and Adults will have a panel discussion on Life Issues

Refreshments will be served

More information Call Judy Reilly at Catholic Charities (405) 523-3009

Sponsored by: Archdiocesan Sanctity of Life Committee

Retreat Offers Healing Help for Those Sexually Abused

OKLAHOMA CITY — From Grief to Grace weekend retreats are a beautiful opportunity for any person who has struggled with the emotional and spiritual pain of sexual abuse. The retreat is a very specific process designed to help you experience the love and healing of God. It is also an opportunity to surface and release repressed feelings of anger, shame, guilt and grief. From Grief to Grace invites participants to journey through the retreat in the name of love — love for themselves, love for family and friends, love for those who have suffered unspeakable abuse and mistreatment, and love for the suffering body of Christ, who cries out for comfort in the midst of profound betrayal and abandonment. From Grief to Grace will support and assist participants in a spiritual journey to help them face the depth and tragedy of their abuse while reclaiming their value and dignity as daughters and sons of a loving God.

From Grief to Grace is a journey of faith. The Living Scriptures, together with the journaling, group activities and discussions, offer a spiritual process for healing through the Living Word of God. By entering into an intimate and powerful journey through the sorrowful mysteries, participants are invited to travel the paschal mystery of their own lives, and unite their suffering with the passion of Christ — the one who came to conquer all evil and death. In return, they receive new life as they participate in the dramatic victory of His resurrection.

The retreat begins June 19 at 6 p.m. and concludes Sunday, June 22 at 4 p.m. Pre-registration is required. Cost is $175 for materials, lodging and meals. Some financial assistance is available. Space is limited. For more information, call (405) 709-2707 or e-mail okgrieftograce@yahoo.com. All inquiries are confidential. This program is an apostolate of the Catholic Church, but those from other faith backgrounds are welcome.
Pro-Life Priest, Fr. Frank Pavone, to Keynote Rose Day

OKLAHOMA CITY — Father Frank Pavone, considered one of the nation's most prominent pro-life advocates, will be the keynote speaker at the annual Rose Day event. Rose Day is held at the state Capitol each year in celebration of the sanctity of life. The event encourages state lawmakers to support pro-life issues. This year's Rose Day will be held Feb. 6 with Father Pavone scheduled to address the audience at 10:30 a.m.

Father Pavone has been active in the pro-life movement since 1976.

Cardinal John O'Connor ordained him to the priesthood in 1988. Father Pavone did parish work and taught in seminaries. In 1993, with the permission of Cardinal O'Connor, he became national director of Priests for Life. In this full-time position, he has traveled to all of the 50 states and to five continents, preaching and teaching against abortion and helping other priests to do the same.

He conducts seminars on pro-life strategy and is regularly invited to speak at national and international pro-life gatherings. Father Pavone appears often on national programs such as Larry King Live, Good Morning America, The O'Reilly Factor, and other shows on all the major networks. He is quoted in papers such as the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. He is seen daily on EWTN and heard on Vatican Radio. His publications are distributed worldwide.

Many Americans became aware of Father Pavone during his very public struggle to save the life of Terri Schiavo. He was with Schiavo in her final moments and was an outspoken advocate for her life.

Under Father Pavone’s leadership, the Priests for Life staff has grown to 50 full-time employees.

Blessed Mother Teresa asked Father Pavone to address the clergy of India on the life issues. He has addressed the pro-life caucus of the U.S. House of Representatives, and was asked by the Vatican to help coordinate pro-life activities throughout the world as an official of the Pontifical Council for the Family. Norma McCorvey, the “Jane Roe” of the Supreme Court’s abortion decision Roe vs. Wade, called Father Pavone “the catalyst that brought me into the Catholic Church.”

Susan Lepak, associate director of the Archdiocesan Office of Family Life, met Father Pavone years ago. She encourages all Oklahoma Catholics to pay attention to what this extraordinary priest has to say.

“I met Father Pavone 10 years ago when he came to Oklahoma City to speak at a packed conference,” Lepak said. We later became friends through the Come Aside Retreats and our work together in Rachel’s Vineyard and other pro-life conferences. Lepak called Father Pavone “an inspirational, energetic and dynamic speaker” who lives and breathes the Gospel of Life.

Time to Reprogram the Stem Cell Debate

When the founder of human embryonic stem cell research says a new advance spells “the beginning of the end” for his field, we should pay attention.

That happened last month, when Dr. James Thomson of Wisconsin and Dr. Shinya Yamanaka of Japan discovered how to “reprogram” ordinary adult cells to act like embryonic stem cells. Dr. Thomson said these induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) “meet the defining criteria we originally proposed for human ES cells, with the significant exception that the iPSCs are not derived from embryos.”

That is a very significant exception, in light of the past nine years of intense debate over destroying embryonic human beings for their stem cells. Dr. Thomson says the new cells will replace those taken from embryos: They are noncontroversial, are easily produced, and can be an exact genetic match to particular patients (the elusive goal that scientists pursued unsuccessfully by trying to clone human embryos).

Dr. Thomson now admits he always had moral qualms about destroying embryos. “If human embryonic stem cell research does not make you at least a little bit uncomfortable, you have not thought about it enough,” he says. And Dr. Yamanaka has told the New York Times how a flash of moral insight, experienced while looking through a microscope at an embryo in a fertility clinic, led him to the stem cell breakthrough of the decade. “When I saw the embryo,” says Dr. Yamanaka, father of two girls, “I suddenly realized there was such a small difference between it and my daughters ... I thought, we can’t keep destroying embryos for our research. There must be another way.” And he went out and found it.

This looks like a happy ending, a win for science and ethics. But politicians and biotechnology CEOs, who have invested money and reputations in embryo destruction, fought this advance every step of the way, and are not ready to give up yet.

A few months ago these critics said Yamanaka’s advance in “reprogramming” adult mouse cells was a fluke — until it was confirmed by three other teams of scientists. They blocked legislation to provide federal funding for such research — but President Bush promoted it, and signed an executive order to ensure funding. They said it wouldn’t work the same way in human cells — until it was confirmed by three other teams of scientists. They may want to listen to the scientists themselves, who are heaving a sigh of relief that they no longer have to be involved in this dirty business.

Doerflinger is deputy director of the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. To learn more about the bishops pro-life activities, go to www.usccb.org/prolife.

Church Provides Outreach to Build Safe Communities

Safe Place Faith Community is a parish-based outreach ministry for victims of relationship violence within the parish and the community. The goal of the program is to assist victims of all types of relationship violence (sexual, physical, emotional), including children, the elderly, spouse, etc. The program was implemented by our archdiocese in October 2006. It is based on the Bishops Document, “When I Call for Help,” usecb.org/family-help.shtml. The purpose of the program is to work with local certified domestic violence agencies to provide resources, training and other assistance to a core team of individuals in parishes. There also will be a support team to perform other needed means of support and ministry. An educational component will help bring a greater awareness and recognition of this all too common and yet hidden problem.

Training is provided by the Office of the Attorney General, the Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the Office of Family Life, Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Topics include Domestic Violence 101, When to Refer, How to Refer, Listening Skills, Signs of Domestic Violence and How to Make a Safety Plan. For more information, call the Office of Family Life at (405) 721-8944 or e-mail susanlepak@yahoo.com
Project Gabriel: Life Support for Mothers and Their Unborn

When Jane became pregnant, she was hopeful that this would be the opportunity for her boyfriend to step up and do the right thing. But he said he wasn’t ready for the responsibility of being a father, he couldn’t afford it, if only the timing were different. She went to her parents, who lived in a small town in another state. Her parents said, “What will the family say, what will the neighbors say, what will everyone think of you being pregnant with a mixed race child?” They told her that she should just get rid of it and hope to God she never makes the same mistake again.

After she had the abortion, she became suicidal. Her parents were sorry, her boyfriend was sorry. All of them said that they wished they would have helped her make another choice. She was hopeful that if she got pregnant again, things would turn out differently. So she did. But things didn’t turn out differently. This time she was pregnant with twins and the same boyfriend was doubly furious. Her parents wondered how she could be so stupid to let this happen again? The boyfriend showed up with $450 for the abortion. She was almost 12 weeks along by now. She called me, once more distraught. She said she couldn’t have these babies. But she didn’t want to live if she had to abort them. Once again she was abandoned by the people she loved most in the world.

I asked Jane if all of the tears she had shed for her child lost to abortion were in vain. Would her grief over his death allow her to take the life of his brothers? Could she consider choosing a family who would love them and cherish them the way that she would if she could only find a way to keep them? The answer was in those questions. Most women who choose abortion say that if only one person would reach out to them with love, compassion and encouragement, they could have chosen life for their babies.

Jane used the $450 to pay her rent. She made an appointment with a nonprofit adoption agency. She carefully sifted through notebooks of families until she found just the right one. She met with them and told them of her hopes and dreams. She asked for an open adoption, where she could receive pictures and letters and updates.

Jane’s water broke 11 weeks and five days prior to her due date. Her labor was short and hard. Two beautiful boys emerged, one 3 pounds and 1 ounce and one 3 pounds even. For the next six weeks, she spent every day from early in the morning until late in the evening caring for those boys. And then, when they were 5 pounds 1 ounce and 5 pounds even, she placed them in the hands of the waiting family she had chosen to love them. Jane receives updates every week. She is a college student now. Jane wants the boys to be proud of the choices she made after she gave them to their adoptive parents. She is going to be an elementary school teacher. Jane hopes that when the boys come looking for her, they will see that she is making a difference and that her sacrifice and tears were worthy of the loss she feels.

I was fortunate and blessed to be her Project Gabriel volunteer, to walk with her through the tears and joy at the birth of these boys. I celebrate with her the news and the new pictures and the straight As on her report card. The boys are now 19 pounds 1 ounce and 19 pounds even. And Jane has made a difference in my life. And I say she is a good mother.

To become a Project Gabriel volunteer, call the Office of Family Life at (405) 721-8944 or e-mail okc-gabriel@yahoo.com.

Scars of Abortion Find Healing Grace in Rachel’s Vineyard

Rachel’s Vineyard is a ministry of the Office of Family Life that brings hope and healing to those who have suffered the death of a baby from abortion. This weekend retreat gives mothers and fathers the opportunity to mourn the child or children they have lost and to recognize that these children are living with the Lord. They are also able to finally accept the forgiveness of the children, of God, and are able to forgive themselves. The last retreat for 2007 had 12 participants, including one man. They were white, American Indian, African American, and Asian including some whose home country was not the U.S.A. They were Catholic, Protestant and Buddhist. They ranged in age from 20 to 71. The babies were lost from as little as six months ago to as long ago as 41 years. Only God could put together such a puzzle with no flat sides. The following comments from two women explain what happens:

In those three days, something did change, drastically. I was finally able to begin to release my past and accept God’s grace. For the first time, I began to really believe in the forgiveness of Christ.

“I just want you to know that you and the Catholic Church helped me more than anything — I have felt unbelievably better since I went to the retreat, like a huge weight has been lifted off of my shoulders. It’s still hard and I get very sad but I don’t hate myself every day. It really changed my life. Thank you for everything you’ve done for me. I will never forget it as long as I live.” Susie

“In January of 1981, a 17-year-old girl walked into a clinic. She was bright, strong, hardworking, full of hope for the future, and pregnant. A few hours later she emerged no longer pregnant. For $300 she had allowed the abortionists to take her child. Unknown to her at the time, they also took her dignity, her trust, her hope for the future, most of her strength, and in some way, part of her soul. That young girl was me.

“Twenty-three years later, I was walking into a different place. I was walking into a Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat. I was afraid. I didn’t really trust these people, but I knew this was my last hope. Twenty-three years of hiding, carrying the guilt of my abortion, and at that point, the almost constant mourning my child, had exhausted me. If something didn’t change for me, I could no longer go on.

“In those three days, something did change, drastically. I was finally able to begin to release my past and accept God’s grace. For the first time, I began to really believe in the forgiveness of Christ. I was fortunate and blessed to be her Project Gabriel volunteer, to walk with her through the tears and joy at the birth of these boys. I celebrate with her the news and the new pictures and the straight As on her report card. The boys are now 19 pounds 1 ounce and 19 pounds even. And Jane has made a difference in my life. And I say she is a good mother.

To become a Project Gabriel volunteer, call the Office of Family Life at (405) 721-8944 or e-mail okc-gabriel@yahoo.com.
From Grief to Grace: How One Person Found Joy Again

“Through prayer, God reveals Himself above all as Mercy — that is, Love that goes out to those who are suffering, Love that sustains, uplifts, and invites us to trust.”

John Paul II, Crossing the Threshold of Hope

Invitation to New Life

It seems appropriate that nine months after attending a Grief to Grace Retreat, I am invited to reflect upon the new life that God has given me. In March 2007, the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City offered this retreat for those wounded by sexual sin. Throughout the four-day retreat, I sensed God inviting me to trust in His goodness, His mercy and His unfathomable love. I’ll never forget the words of hope spoken to me in the confessional, “Doors are going to open for you and when they do, walk through them.”

Reclaiming the gift of sexual dignity

Exposure to pornography at a very young age led to distorted perceptions of beauty and the gift of sexuality. I experienced my first sexual violation as an adolescent, which deepened my confusion with regard to sexuality and body image. Rather than living life in freedom, I was consumed by the need to suppress disturbing memories and images. As a high school senior, I sought professional help and began to sort through some of the traumatic events. By the age of 30, my life was a success by most standards. I had completed undergraduate studies, a master’s degree and had a good job. Moreover, I had a healthy prayer life and continuously sought God’s healing through the Sacramental life of the Church. Occasionally, concerned friends and family members would question why I seemed so sad. At one point, while attending a vocational discernment retreat with a religious order, the Mother Superior’s parting words to me were, “You need to live and find joy.” This became my daily prayer. God, please help me find joy. Help me let go of the painful memories of the past.

From Grief to Grace

Revisiting the past is never a pleasant experience but that is exactly what I needed to do. The weekend retreat provided the time and space to reopen these old, festering wounds. With the help of the retreat facilitators and retreat participants, I was able to confront the past and the residual anger, shame and fear. In turn, I was able to support others. Christ met us in each memory, assuring us of His presence both then and now. It took several weeks to recover from the weekend, which was exhausting both emotionally and physically. The end result was worth every effort. I recently attended a meeting with two other retreat participants. Much to my surprise, they did not recognize me! We laughed about the solemn, sad person they encountered at the Grief to Grace retreat. She was brought back to life. It is true that Jesus makes all things new. It feels great to be able to trust again.

2008 Pro-Life Events

January 22

Ecumenical Prayer Vigil: To mourn the 35th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, please join Archbishop Eusebius J. Beltran on Jan. 22, 2008, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Oklahoma State Capitol, Fourth Floor Rotunda. Let us remember all of the victims, living and dead, of this notorious decision to legalize abortion in our country. We will gather for one peaceful hour of Scripture, Prayer and Song to show our solidarity as people who recognize our Creator as the sole authority over the dignity and sanctity of human life. For more information, call The Office of Family Life, Archdiocese of Oklahoma City; (405) 709-2707, e-mail: susanlepak@yahoo.com.

January 23

Sanctity of Life Mass: Acknowledging the 35th anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade decision, Jan. 23, 2008, at 6 p.m. at Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Principle Celebrant: Most Reverend Eusebius J. Beltran. Presentations to follow Mass with Dr. Rick Boothe for teens (Three Reasons to Choose Life) and a panel discussion for the adults on life issues. Refreshments will be served. For more information, contact Judy Reilly at Catholic Charities, (405) 523-3009. Sponsored by the Sanctity of Life Committee.

February 5

Father Frank Pavone, Moderator General of Missionaries of the Gospel of Life and Director of Priests for Life, will speak at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 N. W. Expressway at 7 p.m. Don’t miss this rare opportunity to hear Father Pavone discuss life issues and what we can do to live the Gospel of Life. For more information, contact the Office of Family Life at (405) 709-2707 or e-mail susanlepak@yahoo.com.

February 6

ROSE DAY at the State Capitol.
WASHINGTON — The National Review Board (NRB), a lay body appointed by the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to review the church’s handling of the sexual abuse of minors by clerics, cited accomplishments, unfinished work, and challenges that lie ahead, it said.

“Church efforts for prevention, healing and vigilance will be demanded for the rest of our days,” Judge Merz said. “The price of this crime is steep both in the pain felt by victims and the shadow cast on the reputation of innocent Catholic priests. Most priests have never abused a child or even someone’s trust in them, but they bear shame by association. It’s not right, but that’s the fact.”

“Bishops have taken a strong approach to dealing with this crisis,” Judge Merz said. “Sexual abuse of children is not a problem in the church alone, but bishops as moral leaders must stand in the forefront of protecting children. The NRB is proud to collaborate with the bishops in the protection of children and young people.”

The report is addressed to the U.S. Catholic faithful and is “a record of accomplishments, unfinished work, and challenges that lie ahead,” it said. The report praised the USCCB audit process by which “dioceses and eparchies have been audited to assure the implementation and maintenance of the standards established” in the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which the bishops created in 2002.

“Those audits provide substantial evidence of the bishops’ efforts to protect children and respond to the abuses of the past and present. As of 2006, 98 percent of the dioceses and eparchies are participating in the audits. Those audited are in full compliance with the standards set for the audits,” the report said.

The report also noted that “over 6 million children have participated in educational programs and over 1.6 million background investigations have taken place” as part of diocesan safe environment programs.

However, the NRB urged an expansion of the audits to measure “the quality of the work that the dioceses and parishes are doing.”

“The board is encouraging the USCCB to do random audits of the parishes to work toward establishing best practices in educational programs, victim care, background checks and investigation of allegations,” the report said. “During 2007, to provide a model to study for the future, a number of dioceses volunteered to pilot audits at the parish level. The NRB fully supports and encourages these parish audits.”

The report cited six challenges which the board said “are not easily resolved since they involve extremely complex issues.”

“One of the most significant issues is the need for a greater understanding of victimization and its consequences. Discussions with victims provide evidence of serious needs that still must be addressed in order for the victims and their families to find the healing that they need,” the report said.

“Another set of issues relates to the relationship of the Church to its priests, the vast majority of whom are not involved in the scandal, but many of whom feel alienated from both the bishops and the laity.” In addition, “There is a particular need to provide appropriate protection and restoration for those accused but later found innocent.”

The board called for “greater speed in the process of determining credibility of allegations and consequent responses, as well as determination of an appropriate role for the Church in the supervision of offenders.”

It also noted that parishes “also become victims of sexual abuse. Members of parishes experience both a sense of betrayal or outrage over accusations that lead to the removal of a pastor or associate. Often parishioners do not know how to respond to victims and their families and agonize over the lengthy process of determining appropriate responses. This is an area that needs much more attention.”

The NRB also cited the need to keep church members better informed on the positive responses the bishops have made and more active observers of the programs and processes in their parishes and dioceses.

“Such communication is vitally important since the work of the National Review Board is strengthened by vigilant parents and parishioners who investigate the presence and quality of the programs in their parishes and dioceses,” the report said. “The obligation to provide safe environments that prevent damage to children, young people, families, parishes, dioceses and the Church rests with all Catholics.”

The full report can be found at www.usccb.org/nrbreport2007.

Across Oklahoma

English Classes Start
OKLAHOMA CITY — English classes at El Centro de Oportunidades begin Jan. 8. Classes are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Citizenship classes are on Wednesdays from 6 to 8 p.m. Child care available. For more information, call Robyn at 609-2889.

Clases de ingles en El Centro de Oportunidades empiezan de nuevo el 8 de enero. Las clases son los martes, miércoles, y jueves de 6:30-8:30 p.m. Clases de ciudadanía son los miércoles de 6:00-8:00 p.m. Guardería disponible. Para más información llame a Robyn al 609-2889.

Catholics Returning Home
WOODWARD — Catholics Returning Home begins Jan. 7 in northwest Oklahoma which includes Woodward, Buffalo, Mooreland and Shattuck. This is for Catholics who have left the Church and would like to come back in to communion with the Church. For more information, contact Peggy Kitchens at the parish office at (888) 256-5305.

Weight Loss Plan Starts
OKLAHOMA CITY — New Year, New You. Become the person you were created to be. Join our healthy lifestyle weight loss program. Come for a free introductory meeting Jan. 7 from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Saint Francis of Assisi Church, 1901 NW 18th St., third floor of the Meerschaert House. For more information, call Lillian Brejda at 787-2570.

Marian Conference Jan. 11
Registration and reservations are now being accepted for the ninth annual St. Louis Marian Conference. All Catholics and non-Catholics are invited to attend. The St. Louis Marian Conference is located at the Adam’s Mark Hotel in downtown St. Louis at 4th and Chestnut Street. The Marian Conference is a fabulous three-day event from Jan. 11-13, 2008. Please allow this wonderful spiritual event to be your winter retreat and fresh start to the new year. Registration is only $35. Hotel reservations at 1-800-444-2326.

Bereavement Ministry Training
OKLAHOMA CITY — This year’s Bereavement Ministry training will be offered by The Samaritan Ministry. This all-day workshop, Feb 9, will focus on providing organized, caring ministry for the sick, the homebound and their caregivers. Practical elements of the training will include how to start up this ministry within a parish, how it can compliment and work with other parish ministries (especially Stephen Ministry and those who are hospice volunteers), and how to recruit and train volunteers. To register, contact the Office of Family Life at (405) 721-8944.

Marriage Encounter
OKLAHOMA CITY — Don’t wait, start the new year by attending a weekend with your spouse that will change your life together forever. Next weekend date: Jan 18-20, 2008. Oklahoma City contacts are Dave and Pat Cunningham, (405) 728-3259; John and Tena Franklin, (405) 209-3512; Dan and Jean Forgue, (405) 760-0390 or (405) 60-0349. E-mail partspeople@cox.net.

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An Eye for an Eye — Killing Won’t Bring Mother Back

When the new DNA studies showed us that Robert Miller was not the man who raped and killed my mother, it also pointed the finger at a Ronnie Lott, who for some strange reason had been cleared several years earlier when Miller was convicted of raping mom. I told Lott’s defense attorneys that if he was convicted, I would testify against the death penalty at his sentencing trial. That news traveled very fast.

When it came time for my testimony, the judge called a break for lunch. I would be the first on the witness stand when we returned. During the break the judge called me into his chambers and asked what I planned to say to the jury. I told the judge that I wanted the jury to know why Jim Fowler, Goldie Fowler’s oldest son, did not want the death penalty for her killer. I wanted the jury to know how I felt about life in prison without parole. I did not want Lott to be merely put to sleep, never to wake again. The judge said, “You will not.” I was told I could tell the jury that Goldie Fowler was my mother and the punishment I wanted was life without parole. No more, no less. I was shocked. Needless to say, Lott received the death penalty. He can be reached at jh2bears@cox.net.

Life. Period.

By Jim Fowler

now sits on death row at the state prison in McAlester, going through the appeals process which will take many years and a lot of your tax dollars.

Killing Ronnie Lott will not bring my mother back. All we do with the death penalty is repeat the crime of murder. We become much the same as those we punish. The only difference is motive.

We are all God’s children. We must re-create our respect for life. Every life has value. We have the death penalty in Oklahoma because we, the citizens, have not told our legislators that we want it abolished once and for all. Follow the wishes of our Church. Do not kill.

Jim Fowler, a member of Saint Charles Parish in Oklahoma City, is an outspoken opponent of the death penalty. He can be reached at jh2bears@cox.net.

The Pregnant Women Support Act is truly a common-ground initiative to reduce the number of abortions in the United States,” McQuade said, “Everyone can agree that no woman should choose abortion under financial duress or because she is threatened by domestic violence during her pregnancy.”

McQuade noted that S. 2407 includes “vital provisions supporting pregnant and parenting university students, a population particularly at risk for considering abortion.”

Author Provides In-Depth Look at Mexican-American Catholics

Mexican-American Catholics.


The Catholic Church in the United States has been growing in population partly due to Hispanics or Latinos immigrating to this country from Latin America, with most being from Mexico since it is in the southern border of the United States. Immigration from Mexico has been legal and illegal. The Catholic Church, no matter what the immigrants’ status, still wishes to minister and help them. In some states this is a risky venture.

Father Eduardo C. Fernandez, S.J., wrote this book to help clergy, religious and lay ministers to better minister to the Mexican and Mexican-American Catholics in their parishes. This is the third volume in the Paulist Press’ pastoral spirituality series. Fernandez being of Mexican-American heritage and having spent time researching Mexican spirituality and culture and also being involved in the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS), places him in a good position to write on this topic. He teaches pastoral theology and missiology at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley and at the Graduate Theological Union. He earned his doctorate in theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1995.

There are seven chapters in this book. In Chapter 1, Fernandez gives a summarized history of Mexico and its religious history. There are 30 centuries involved in this short history. The Indian cultures of the Maya, Aztec and others have influenced Mexican spirituality, as has the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mary, the mother of Jesus, appeared to St. Juan Diego in 1531 as an Indian maiden and the image that was left on St. Juan’s cloak helped to convert many Indians. Mary still holds a high position in Mexican spirituality. In Chapter 2, Fernandez discusses Mexican-American religious and secular history in the United States. Mexican-Americans were not treated very well by American Catholics and other Americans. American bishops who were sometimes immigrants did not understand the Mexican culture and some did not try. The Catholic Church in the United States created national parishes which have over time disappeared. There seems to be a need for Mexican or Spanish language national parishes today, but this cannot always be done due to the shortage of Spanish-speaking priests.

In Chapter 3, Fernandez presents Mexican spirituality. Mexican spirituality is on the emotional level. Mexicans like ritual, processions, devotions, music and color. They want to have an emotional experience when they go to church. Protestant churches have used this to convert Mexicans to their churches. In Chapter 4, Fernandez examines some of the Mexican feasts and customs. Many feasts involve food and great celebrations involving the family and community. Mexicans like to celebrate baptisms, first communions, confirmations and other sacraments on a grand scale. Family and the extended family are very important in these events.

Chapter 5 discusses Hispanic theology and theologians who are Catholic and Protestant. Fernandez discusses who the leading theologians are in creating a Hispanic theology. They are men and women from Latin America and the United States and Europe. Liberation theology has an influence on this theology. In Chapter 6, Fernandez presents the common questions about Hispanic ministry and how to better minister to this growing community in the American Church.

Chapter 7 is on sources to help in Hispanic ministry. Fernandez lists books, Internet sites and such. He ends the book with endnotes and a glossary.

Father Fernandez is a co-author of “United States Hispanic Catholics: Trends and Works, 1990-2000” (2005). This current book, “Mexican-American Catholic,” is highly recommended to those needing information for Hispanic ministry and those wanting information on Mexican culture and spirituality.

Brother Benet Exton is a Benedictine monk at Saint Gregory’s Abbey, Shawnee. He serves as the librarian and writes reviews regularly for several Catholic publications, including the Sooner Catholic.

Senator Praised by Bishops for ‘Pregnant Women Support Act’

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) praised Sen. Robert Casey (D-PA) for introducing the Pregnant Women’s Support Act (S. 2407), a bill to provide resources and support to pregnant women. “By providing practical resources and information, the bill will empower pregnant women to make healthy choices for themselves and their children, born and unborn,” said Deirdre McQuade of the USCCB’s Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities.

“The Pregnant Women Support Act is truly a common-ground initiative to reduce the number of abortions in the United States,” McQuade said, “Everyone can agree that no woman should choose abortion under financial duress or because she is threatened by domestic violence during her pregnancy.”

McQuade noted that S. 2407 includes “vital provisions supporting pregnant and parenting university students, a population particularly at risk for considering abortion.”

The Pregnant Women Support Act will also ensure that pregnant women are not denied coverage by insurance companies; establish a toll-free number for resources during pregnancy and after birth; provide parenting education in maternity group homes; provide qualified new mothers with free home visits by registered nurses; and codify the current regulation allowing states to provide Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) coverage to unborn children and their mothers. It will also encourage adoption by expanding adoption credit and adoption assistance programs.

Rep. Lincoln Davis (D-TN) and 35 co-sponsors introduced nearly identical legislation in the House (H.R. 3192) on July 26, 2007. “Thanks to the courageous leadership of Representative Davis and Senator Casey, Congress has a long-overdue opportunity to help make abortion rare. We wholeheartedly support this constructive bill and urge the House and Senate to pass it for women, their families, and the common good,” McQuade said.
Keep Your Heart and Year Wide Open to God

Somewhere along the line, optimism got a bad rap. It was linked to Pollyanna, and it never escaped the association. Over time it morphed into a synonym for naiveté and ignorance. Meanwhile, cynicism was married to the Simpsons and hence, became cool. To be cynical is to be savvy and witty, a wisecracking pessimist, nobody's fool.

American public life, with its steady string of scandals, molds this cynical disposition. We, the onlookers, learn to expect the worst. If a politician is peaking in the polls, we wait for the other shoe to drop. “He’ll butcher the debate,” we predict. “A skeleton will come out of her closet.”

We’re equally cynical of actors and athletes: “He’s back in rehab,” we say. “I wonder how the Vikings will blow this lead.”

And we apply this thinking to our personal lives, making cynical remarks to provoke chuckles and to prepare ourselves: Low expectations make for minimal disappointment.

When we fall into this mode of thinking, we don’t fret; cynicism seems to be a choice like any other. Are you a Coke or a Pepsi person? A glass half empty or a glass half full?

But that cliché strips outlet of its spiritual essence. Optimism is not a casual preference; it is a belief in an infinitely generous Lord who repeatedly fills the cup ‘til it overflows.

This idea was a cornerstone of the preaching and writing of St. Francis de Sales, a 17th century French bishop. He identified it as a virtue and gave it a wonderful name: joyful optimism.

St. Francis didn’t lead a charmed life. He knew suffering and injustice. But he also knew the greater power of God’s redeeming love and the greater possibility of God’s inspiring hope. And he worked to help others know it.

When his friend, St. Jane de Chantal was recovering from illness, he wrote her an encouraging letter: “Keep your heart, my dear Daughter, wide open before God; always go joyously in his presence. He loves us, he cherishes us, he is all ours, this sweet Jesus … Even if we have bitter waters up to our neck, while his mantel lifts up, we have nothing to fear.”

Francis and Jane founded a school called Visitation. Across the ocean and centuries later, Visitation students still learn about joyful optimism. It blossoms in various ways.

Take Mary Engelbreit, who attended the Visitation in St. Louis. If you don’t recognize her name, you’ve seen her greeting cards with their signature checks and cherries. Joyful optimism is infused in her illustrations. They are, as St. Francis would say, “full of joy, brimful of God.”

Mary’s art has been given a label that makes her bristle: cute. The half-compliment seems to insinuate, “What an idealistic little world you draw.”

Mary’s response: “What’s wrong with that? Don’t you wish you lived there, too?” Besides, she has said, “What I draw is taken from my life. I honestly had a wonderful childhood.”

Despite the sorrow Mary has known, she chooses to focus on the joy and to share it with others.

We are all called to practice this virtue, and the new year offers a perfect chance. We must tackle that blank calendar with joyful optimism, keeping our hearts wide open before God.

Yes, 2008 will bring changes and challenges — in public and private spheres. We’ll have a new president, new addresses, new jobs and new relationships to navigate.

But the year also holds surprising blessings from a creative, generous God. Joyful optimism begins simply: Rise each morning, inhale deeply and whisper, “Here we go, God!”

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn. E-mail her at christinacap@gmail.com.

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Christians Obligated to Evangelize by Word, Action

WASHINGTON — Christians are called to evangelize, that is “to proclaim Jesus Christ by one’s words and actions” to all people, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) emphasized in a recent “Doctrinal Note on some Aspects of Evangelization.”

“Every person has the right to hear the ‘Good News,’” the Note said. Every Christian has the corresponding duty to help people meet Jesus Christ, a task that must be accomplished not only by words, but also by one’s actions, it added.

The Note was sent from the CDF to conferences of bishops worldwide to be made public Dec. 14, when it was to be published in L’Osservatore Romano, the Vatican official newspaper.

It was signed by Cardinal William Levada, prefect of the CDF, and Salesian Archbishop Angelo Amato, CDF secretary.

The CDF issued the statement because of “a growing confusion” about the Church’s missionary mandate, the Note said. For example, some maintain that “any attempt to convince others on religious matters” somehow infringes on the freedom of the person. Some argue that conversion to Christ and to the Catholic faith should not be promoted because it is possible for people to be saved without explicit faith in Christ or formal incorporation in the Church. The Note, CDF said, “is intended to clarify certain aspects of the relationship between the missionary command of the Lord and respect for the conscience and religious freedom of all people.”

The CDF highlighted anthropological, ecclesiological and ecumenical implications of evangelization.

In noting anthropological implications, the Note said that human freedom cannot be separated from its integral reference to truth. Teaching and dialogue, it said, constitute “a legitimate endeavor and a service capable of making human relationships more fruitful.”

Communication of religious truths so that they might be accepted by others is also in harmony with the natural human desire to have others share in one’s own goods, the Note said.

Evangelizers themselves benefit from evangelizing, it added. “Every encounter with another person or culture is capable of revealing potentialities of the Gospel which hitherto may not have been fully explicit and which will enrich the life of Christians and the Church.”

The Note underscored the attitudes which should accompany evangelization and said that whatever fails to respect the dignity and religious freedom of the partners in dialogue, such as coercion or improper enticement, has no place in Christian evangelization.

It also warned against relativism.

The Church’s task of evangelization is endangered, it said, “by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only de facto, but also de iure.” Such theories overlook the fact that human freedom is not indifference; it is rather directed toward truth.

In noting ecumenical implications, the CDF spoke of a close connection between evangelization and ecumenism in the sense that Christian divisions seriously compromise the credibility of the Church’s evangelizing mission. The more ecumenism brings about greater unity among Christians, the more effective that evangelization will be.

When Catholic evangelization takes place in a country where other Christians live, Catholics must take care to carry out their mission with “both true respect for the tradition and spiritual riches of such countries as well as a sincere spirit of cooperation.”

The CDF noted ecumenism’s different dimensions: listening, “as a fundamental condition for any dialogue”; theological discussion, “in which, by seeking to understand the beliefs, traditions and convictions of others, agreement can be found, at times hidden under disagreement”; and witness and proclamation “of elements which are not particular traditions or theological subtleties, but which belong rather to the Tradition of the faith itself.”

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Cardinal Presides Over Methodist Event

ROME, (Zenit.org). — The president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity presided over a Methodist celebration — an event he said would have been unthinkable a few years ago.

Cardinal Walter Kasper led an anniversary celebration Dec. 3, marking the birth of Charles Wesley (1707-1788), one of the initiators of the Methodist congregation. The ecumenical event was organized by the World Methodist Council and held at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. It was attended by the highest Methodist leaders and the Anglican Communion.

“It does not mean that tomorrow there will be unity with the Methodists. It would be naive to think that. But something is seen to be moving. It is clear,” said Cardinal L’Osservatore Romano.

After the words of John Barrett, president of the World Methodist Council, Cardinal Kasper read a message in which he emphasized the opportunity “of celebrating this anniversary singing some of Charles Wesley’s hymns, which are interpreted in the Catholic churches of the English-speaking world, and have enriched our praise and our celebration of the saving grace of God throughout generations.”

“I trust that our dialogue will continue,” the cardinal concluded.
Buenas Noticias...

...Año Nuevo 2008

Mis queridos Hermanos y Hermanas de Cristo:

Aquí les presento el Año Nuevo 2008 para que todo el mundo reúna a todos los que deseen acompañarnos en las celebraciones de este año.

Aqui les presento el Año Nuevo 2008 para que todo el mundo reúna a todos los que deseen acompañarnos en las celebraciones de este año.

Al celebrar la Misa dominical todos los fines de semana en el 2008, lograremos una verdadera felicidad, una santidad y un bendito año nuevo.

Resurrección. Mediante el sacrificio de la Misa, Jesús se convierte en Dios y en el Padre en el cielo por nosotros. Cristo se siente a nosotros en la Santa Comunión bajo la apariencia del pan y el vino, convertidos en su Cuerpo y Sangre. La belleza, el significado y la abrazada de la celebración Eucarística viene directamente de la Resurrección del Señor Jesús.

Nuestra Archidiócesis está bendecida por Dios Todopoderoso con mucha, pero mucha gente fiel, quienes alegres, competentes y con entusiasmo, hacen un ministerio por la Iglesia. Esta gente: ordenados, religiosos o laicos, hacen más que un trabajo. Eso es ministrado por la Iglesia. Estos son gente con y están dedicados al ministerio del servicio. Consecuentemente tenemos unas parroquias, escuelas y obras misioneras.

Para que logremos el año nuevo con muchas oportunidades para todos, necesitamos que la Santa Comunión se vuelva cada año y que la Eucaristía sea cada día.

Matachine olvidaron frío, lluvia y cansancio para hacer peregrinación
La diversidad es testimonio de integridad y no de amenaza

Surgen nuevas propuestas para modificar la ley HB1804

Por Mauro Yam
Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Muchas personas de buena voluntad pueden ayudar a parar a los inmigrantes como parte de la sociedad, pero lamentablemente algunos se han dedicado a divulgar y promover lo negativo como caracteríti- ca de un grupo étnico determinado.

En Oklahoma, el año pasado muchos medios de comunicación se dedicaron a informar sobre inmigrantes, sin evitar dar voz a los que denunciaban algunas prácticas de algunas personas en Oklahoma, que de hecho violan la ley y el derecho a un tratamiento igual.

En las elecciones de 2008, se creó un centro para juristas de los estados que ofrecen servicios de inmigración a los inmigrantes. Es un centro donde se fomenta el diálogo constructivo entre personas, entre comunidades y líderes políticos. Un grupo de líderes políticos de alto nivel se ha reunido en varias ocasiones para discutir cómo mejorar la ley HB 1804 y las leyes de inmigración en general.

A la derecha, el abogado Richard Klinge y la periodista del senador. El senador desprecia la ley HB 1804. Quien dijo en su rueda de prensa lo siguiente, "No creo que haya en Oklahoma ningún legislador que quiera hacer la ley HB 1804 mejor. Se ha repetido en los documentos y en el Congreso de Oklahoma.

Al respecto, en una rueda de prensa estuvo el Padre Tony Taylor, quien es párroco del Sagrado Corazón, y miembro del Consejo Social de la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City y quien dijo, "Obrando con la ley HB 1804 es una ley malo, y no se debe a valor de nuestras sociedades.

Otro legislador que apoya la propuesta del senador es el representante republicano Shane Vetter, quien dijo en su rueda de prensa lo siguiente, "No creo que haya en Oklahoma ningún legislador que quiera hacer la ley HB 1804 mejor. Se ha repetido en los documentos y en el Congreso de Oklahoma.

A la derecha, la periodista del senador. El senador desprecia la ley HB 1804. Quien dijo en su rueda de prensa lo siguiente, "No creo que haya en Oklahoma ningún legislador que quiera hacer la ley HB 1804 mejor. Se ha repetido en los documentos y en el Congreso de Oklahoma.

Cuidar a los enfermos y desvalidos es un acto permanente de servicio a Dios

Caridades Católicas trabajan incansablemente a favor de la vida

Por Mauro Yam
Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Con un gran espíritu y virtud de caridad, la enfermera graduada Mary Diane Steinhamp, quien trabaja para Caridades Católicas como coordinadora del programa de enfermería a la comunidad de 10, ha dicho que bajo ninguna circunstancia las enfermeras dejarán de prestar sus servicios a los indocumentados en las parroquias católicas.

El programa de enfermería se ha implementado en muchas parroquias de la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City como parte de la iniciativa católica para defender la vida.

La enfermera Steinhamp decía: "Queremos garantizar que toda persona, sin importar su condición legal en este estado, reciban cuidados médicos apropiados y para eso estamos moni-
Elementary School Principal
St. Mary’s School in Ponca City is seeking a principal who will be a faith leader as well as academic leader for the school. St. Mary’s has preschool through eighth grade, enrolls approximately 150 students. Applicant must: 1) be a practicing Catholic; 2) have a master’s degree in educational administration or a related field or be working toward such a degree; 3) have a minimum of three years teaching experience, preferably in a Catholic school. Salary is based on qualifications and experience. Position available June 1, 2008. For an application, contact Office of the Superintendent, P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City 73123, (405) 721-4202, or contact mduabay@-catharchdioceseokc.org.

Groundskeeper needed
National Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague has an opening for a groundskeeper/facilities maintenance person. Responsibilities include maintain the Shrine grounds including trees, shrubs, grass, sidewalks, parking lots; snow removal; painting; general handyman and other duties as needed. Must be physically able to lift at least 60 pounds and willing to work outdoors in all weather conditions. Some weekend and evening hours may be required. Salary commensurate with experience. To apply, send resume to National Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague, P.O. Box 489, Prague, Okla. 74864 or e-mail: shrine_iop@hotmail.com

Administrative Assistant
Catholic Charities is seeking an administrative assistant for a new position. The successful candidate must have the following qualifications: a self-starter with the ability to multi-task; proficient in the use of PowerPoint, Word, Access, Excel and Publisher; possess excellent communications skills including composition and proofreading; excellent interpersonal skills including the ability to interact in a positive way with clients and donors. Salary is dependent on education, experience and relevant job skills. Bilingual candidates preferred. Resumes and salary history should be sent to: Human Resources, Catholic Charities, 1501 N. Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City 73106 or by e-mail to nlargent@catholiccharitiesok.org.

Full-time Bilingual Counselor
Catholic Charities/St. Joseph’s Counseling Center is seeking a full-time bilingual (Spanish) licensed counselor to provide professional counseling and related services to individuals, couples and families. Services will be provided in the St. Joseph’s Counseling Center at Catholic Charities and at selected parishes within the community. Please submit a cover letter and resume to Human Resources, Catholic Charities, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, 1501 N. Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City 73106 or nlargent@catholiccharitiesok.org.

Maintenance Employee
Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School is looking for a maintenance department employee. Resumes and references should be mailed to L.D. McGowin, Maintenance Director, 801 NW 50th St., Oklahoma City 73118. Any questions may be directed to 405-663-0006 Ext. 241.

Teacher Sought
Sacred Heart Catholic School in El Reno is seeking a kindergarten teacher. Applicants must have a license or certification in early childhood. Please submit resumes to Principal Shannon Statton, 210 S. Evans, El Reno, Okla. 73036 or fax to (405) 263-3818.

Job Coaches
The Center of Family Love in Okarche is looking for job coaches. This position is best described as a mentor for our community-based clients helping them to get to their jobs as well as helping them to understand what their employer needs and expects from them. For more information, call John Isenegger at the Center of Family Love, (405) 263-4658 or fax your resume to (405) 263-4653.

Direct Care
The Center of Family Love in Okarche is looking for direct care technicians. These openings are at both the ICF M/R and the Loosen Center. We pay well and have a significant shift differential. We provide training and have a paid time-off program. For more information, call John Isenegger at the Center of Family Love, (405) 263-4658 or fax your resume to (405) 263-4653.

Soccer Coaches
St. Gregory’s University, a Catholic Benedictine university and a member of the NAIA Sooner Athletic Conference, seeks a full-time head men’s soccer coach as well as a full-time head women’s soccer coach. Qualified candidates will have thorough knowledge of all phases of coaching soccer and experience in recruiting, fundraising, scheduling, must maintain field and summer camps. Evidence of successful coaching experience, ability to work with a culturally diverse population, excellent oral and written communication skills required. A bachelor’s degree is required/master’s degree preferred. Send a cover letter, resume and three references to St. Gregory’s University, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee, Okla. 74804 or e-mail hr@stgregorys.edu. Open until filled.

Adjunct Faculty
The College for Working Adults at St. Gregory’s University on the Shawnee campus has openings for adjunct faculty at the undergraduate and graduate level: General Education, Business and Business Law, Computer Science, Professional Development and Psychology. A master’s degree is required, preference for candidates with experience teaching adults. Candidates must be supportive of and willing to contribute to the Catholic and Benedictine identity of the university. Send a cover letter, vita and transcripts to hr@-stgregorys.edu or mail to Dr. Denise Short, Associate Dean, St. Gregory’s University, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee 74804.

Campus Minister
St. Gregory’s University in Shawnee is looking for a campus minister. Responsibilities: Overseer and implement a comprehensive Catholic and Benedictine campus ministry program. Coordinate student-led retreat ministry as an outreach to area parishes and high schools (Buckley Team). Coordinate student liturgies and student liturgical ministries and assist in the planning of campus-wide liturgies. Provide catechetical and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, discussions on Catholic social teaching, small faith groups, etc. Develop service and mission trip opportunities for students. Maintain a pastoral presence among students, faculty and staff. Qualifications: Master’s degree in Theology or Pastoral Ministry preferred. Bachelor’s degree and experience in Youth/Young Adult Ministry will be considered. Mature understanding of the Catholic faith tradition and ability to communicate the tradition creatively and pastorally to young adults. Willingness to work some evenings and weekends. Send cover letter, resume and references to St. Gregory’s University, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee 74804, or e-mail hr@-stgregorys.edu.

V.P. of Institutional Advancement
St. Gregory’s University invites nominations and applications for the position of vice president of Institutional Advancement. The vice president reports directly to the president and will be responsible for the planning and direction of all philanthropic initiatives for the university. The vice president will plan and lead all advancement initiatives to capitalize on the university’s success story, engage a broad range of constituents and grow the endowment. Will work closely with staff, senior administrators and board members to identify short- and long-term priorities for fundraising and manage a portfolio of major gift prospects. The university is currently in the silent phase of a major capital campaign. A master’s degree is preferred. It is strongly preferred that this individual be a practicing Catholic with knowledge of Benedictine spirituality.

Electronic applications are preferred and should include a cover letter and resume. Nominations or requests for the complete position specifications may be sent directly to the university: Shingi Goto, Executive Vice President, St. Gregory’s University, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee 74804 or sngoto@stgregorys.edu. (405) 878-5435.
Pope’s Address Focuses on Peace and Economic Inequalities


“Pope Benedict XVI’s call for nations to show ‘greater determination’ for ‘a progressive and mutually agreed dismantling of existing nuclear weapons’ is urgent and should be of the highest priority for citizens of the world,” said Cardinal Francis George.

“The pope’s concern for the environment is also paramount.”

Pope Benedict also stressed the importance of the natural family.

“The family is the first and indispensable order of peace,” he said. “It is no wonder, therefore, that violence, if perpetrated in the family, is seen as particularly intolerable.” He added the family is vital to creating world peace “because it enables its members to have decisive ways to experience peace.” He added that “whatever, even unknowingly, circumstances the institution of the family undermines peace in the entire community, national and international, since he weakens what is in effect the primary agency of peace.”

The pope also stressed the need to care for the environment.

“One area where there is a particular need to intensify dialogue between nations is that of the stewardship of the earth’s resources,” he said. “The technologically advanced countries are facing two pressing needs in this regard: on the one hand, to reassess the high levels of consumption due to the present model of development, and on the other hand, to invest sufficient resources in the search for alternative sources of energy and for greater energy efficiency.”

“The emerging countries are hungry for energy, but at times this hunger is met in a way harmful to poor countries which, due to their insufficient infrastructures, including their technological infrastructure, are forced to undersell the energy resources they do possess,” he said. “At times their very political freedom is compromised by forms of protectorate or, in any case, by forms of conditioning which appear clearly humiliating.”

The pope also addressed economic inequalities among nations.

“Efforts must also be made to ensure a prudent use of resources and an equitable distribution of wealth,” he said. “In particular, the aid given to poor countries must be guided by sound economic principles, avoiding forms of waste associated principally with the maintenance of expensive bureaucracies. Due account must also be taken of the moral obligation to ensure that the economy is not governed solely by the ruthless laws of instant profit, which can prove inhuman.”

The pope stressed the importance of basic moral norms, the natural law.

“For the sake of peace, a common law is needed, one which would foster true freedom rather than blind caprice, and protect the weak from oppression by the strong,” the pope said. He added that “in many situations, the weak must bow not to the demands of justice, but to the naked power of those stronger than themselves. It bears repeating: Power must always be disciplined by law, and this applies also to relations between sovereign states.”

The pope added that people are capable of discovering “this common moral law which, over and above cultural differences, enables human beings to come to a common understanding regarding the most important aspects of good and evil, justice and injustice. It is essential to go back to this fundamental law, committing our finest intellectual energies to this quest, and not letting ourselves be discouraged by mistakes and misunderstandings.”

Cardinal George said the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) urges all in the United States to “read carefully the pope’s message.”

“It points out that every one of us, individually and as a nation, bears responsibility for peace-making, which begins at home both in how we treat one another and how we use all the earth’s resources,” Cardinal George said.

Calendar

7 Catholics Returning Home begins in northwest Oklahoma which includes Woodward, Buffalo, Mooreland and Shattuck. This is for Catholics who have left the Church and would like to come back in to communion with the Church. For more information, contact Peggy Kitchens at the parish office at (580) 256-5305.

Weight Loss Plan Starts. Become the person you were created to be. Join our healthy lifestyle weight loss program. Come for a free introductory meeting from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Saint Francis of Assisi Church, 1901 NW 18th St., third floor of the Meerschaert House. For more information, call Lillian Brejda at 787-2570.

8 Mount Saint Mary home basketball game vs. Luther, Girls V at 6:30 p.m. and Boys V at 8 p.m.

8 McGuinness Home basketball game vs. Western Heights, V girls at 6:30 p.m., V boys at 8 p.m.

8 English classes at El Centro de Oportunidades will begin Jan. 8. Classes are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30. Citizenship classes are on Wednesdays from 6 to 8 p.m. Child care available. For more information, call Robyn at 609-2889.

10-12 Bishop McGuinness Boys Basketball Classic.

12 Pre-Cana. A day for couples preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage. To register, contact the Office of Family Life at (405) 721-8944.

12 Day of Reflection for fifth- through 12th-graders working on Religious Scouting awards. This is a one-day event with Mass at St. Mary’s Church in Medina. To register, contact the Youth Ministry Office at (405) 721-9220.

12 The Benedictine Oblates of Red Plains Monastery will meet from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. They join the Community for Vespers, followed by a potluck dinner. For more information, contact Sister Eunice at 373-4565, orosbokc@ionet.net.

12 Bingo Night at St. Joseph’s Church in Norman. Light supper at 6:30 p.m. Games begin at 7 p.m.; second session at 8:30 p.m. $5 per session, no limit on blackout cards, group photo of all the winners.

15 Mount Saint Mary home basketball game vs. OCS, Girls V at 6:30 p.m. and Boys V at 8 p.m.

17-25 Monthly Novena to the Infant Jesus, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, Natl’ Shrine of the Infant Jesus, St. Wenceslaus Church, SH-99 7 miles N. 1-40 or 20 miles S. I-44 at Stroud exit, Prague, (405) 567-3080.

18-20 Marriage Encounter weekend. To register, contact the Office of Family Life, (405) 721-8944.

18 Mount Saint Mary home basketball game vs. Heritage Hall, Girls V at 6:30 p.m., Boys V at 8 p.m.

18 McGuinness Home basketball game vs. McAlester, V girls at 6:30 p.m., V boys at 8 p.m.

19 Convalidación. A Spanish-language marriage preparation program for couples that are married civilly or through common law and want to have their marriage blessed by the Church. To register, contact the Office of Family Life at (405) 721-8944.

20 The Catholic Daughters of Holy Cross, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. 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 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, contact Janet Mildfelt at (405) 848-6275 or Deacon Jim Breazile at (405) 377-9478.

21 Father Thomas Dubay, a well-known retreat master and expert in the spiritual life, will hold a conference at Epiphany Church, 7336 W. Britton Road, Oklahoma City, at 7 p.m. Those attending are asked to bring items such as small tubes of toothpaste, shampoo, soap, granola bars, etc., for the Sisters of Villa Teresa’s Pantry for the homeless.

20 Pilgrimage Sunday, 10:45 a.m. Anointing of the Sick, 11 a.m. Mass, noon lunch, 1 p.m. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Prayer of the Chaplet of the Infant Jesus and the Litany of the Infant Jesus, Natl’ Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague is located in St. Wenceslaus Church, SH-99 7 miles N. 1-40 or 20 miles S. I-44 at Stroud exit, Prague, (405) 567-3080.

20 Taize Prayer, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Red Plains Monastery, 728 Richland Road SW, Piedmont. For more details, call 373-4565. Optional video on Taize prayer at 6 p.m.

20 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 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, contact Janet Mildfelt at (405) 848-6275 or Deacon Jim Breazile at (405) 377-9478.

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In The Father’s Footsteps

12th Annual Catholic Men’s Conference

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His footsteps.”

(1 Peter 2:22)

OKLAHOMA CITY — The 12th annual Catholic Men’s Conference, In The Father’s Footsteps, will carry the theme this year of “PERSEVERANCE.” The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 16 at Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School.

Joe Elbow, board member of the Oklahoma Fellowship of Catholic Men, sponsor of the conference, said the speakers scheduled for this year’s conference will greatly inspire and challenge men to live their lives in a more Christ-like manner.

“Once again, we are blessed to have Archbishop Beltran in attendance to open us in prayer and to close the day with the Celebration of Mass,” said Elbow. Reconciliation will take place during the day as well.

Each year the conference has drawn men of all ages and backgrounds from across the Archdiocese and from as far as Tulsa and Wichita. Staying true to form, the conference scheduled for this year’s conference will greatly inspire and challenge men to live their lives in a more Christ-like manner.

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“At the end of the day, our event will have delivered men an authentic Catholic toolbox to make their journeys more productive and to help them persevere in their trials,” said Elbow.

The following are glimpses of the speakers scheduled to address this year’s conference.

TAREK SAAB

He interviewed with Donald Trump to be “The Apprentice” but Tarek Saab found his real calling building a business that spreads our faith among young men. In just one year, his Lionheart Apparel has become the fastest-growing Christian clothier in the country and Saab has emerged as a dynamic speaker whose devout Catholic lifestyle, youth and diverse adventures appeal to both fathers and sons.


RICHARD LANE

His father is legendary football player Dick “Night Train” Lane, but it was his mother’s insistence that if he didn’t want to go to his church, he had to go to “somebody’s church” that set Richard Lane on a path to serve the poor, needy and suffering through preaching, teaching and sharing the Word of God.

Lane and his wife, Donna founded Qorban Ministries — the name drawn from the Hebrew word that means dedicated to God (Mark 7:11) — to bring love, compassion and a helping hand to the disenfranchised inner city neighborhoods of St. Louis, Mo. Quickly emerging as a prominent and formidable lay Evangelist, Lane challenges all to do as St. Peter did and “Get out of the Boat!”

GUY DOUD

Growing up in a household where stability was strained by alcoholic parents, Guy Doud began life as the subject of ridicule and hated school to the point of despair but went on to become a respected educator and author honored as National Teacher of the Year. In the eighth grade he found in one of his teachers what he says every child needs: at least one adult that is irrationally positive about them.

Doud’s message deals with the essential building blocks of life: love, family, relationships, success and dreaming dreams. He shows how we can all be either molds or destroyers of dreams.

GUS LLOYD

When Sirius Satellite Radio called Gus Lloyd last year, they weren’t looking for Howard Stern’s latest sidekick—they were offering Lloyd a spot on the soon to be launched Catholic Channel. Moving beyond the comfort zone of his familiar Tampa radio market, a job that he took a year after the tragic murder of his brother in the chaos after Hurricane Andrew, Lloyd broadcasts his daily morning show from a makeshift studio in his suburban home. His listeners are quickly learning that the congenial host of “Seize the Day” is serious about his faith, his profession and his daily reminder to live every day as if it were your last. Hearing Lloyd soothe a distressed caller, you hear both his empathy for their heartache and a knowing comfort that his faith has given him — and them — the tools to persevere.

How to Register

Conference Information
Phone: (405) 245-8042
Conference E-mail:
info@catholicmen.net

The registration fee is $39 for adults paying by Feb. 4 and $49 after that date and at the door. Students are $15 anytime. We have a great new registration system online that will debut in the next few weeks — timed to start up when our brochures are mailed. The system is very easy to use and offers state-of-the art security. Brochures will be available in parishes statewide beginning in January and running through to the day of the conference. Our Web site is www.catholicmen.net.